

## ENTREPRENEUR

### When searching for an executive, don't fear 'headhunters'

Executive recruiters can serve a useful purpose in the business world. If you have never considered, or if you are currently considering outsourced recruitment for your company, here's a look at the many benefits you can derive through this process.

A human resources manager recently told me "headhunters" are evil, unreasonably expensive, ineffective, and only a "rubber stamper" of resumes. When I asked if they had a bad experience with "headhunters," the response was "they sent over very poor resumes, and the only work they did was stamp their name on the resume. Also, when I have been in a job search personally, they never found me a job."

There are many corporate searches by outside executive recruiters that take place in Nashville on a daily basis. Why do these companies choose to outsource their recruitment efforts? There are many valid reasons. Here are several areas of consideration where "headhunters" may serve a useful purpose in the business world by assisting human resource executives and hiring managers:

1. Most quality candidates who are employed don't have time to read, research and respond to newspaper ads or Internet postings. The job search can be a full-time job in itself.

In most cases, superior performers are valuable employees and have full-time jobs. With the "run lean" philosophy of many companies today, these performers have more job responsibilities than ever before. They must function with critical deadlines, fewer staff and more overtime.

Most also value a home life and a work-life balance. They aren't going to respond to an ad, simply because they physically don't have the time and energy to do so.

Those who have worked with recruiters before realize the time savings and other benefits that can come their way while using a recruiter. The recruiter can do the legwork, and provide them with pertinent information concerning hiring companies



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CONNIE SPIVEY

and relevant openings. The recruiter can aid the hiring company by performing the search legwork in seeking out, identifying, and pre-screening qualified candidates.

2. No one person, including in-house human resource personnel, can be "networked" into all associations, events, contacts, etc. useful in conducting a specialized broad-based candidate search.

Most human resource departments have numerous responsibilities and have multiple priorities on their agenda. They must seek out, interview, verify and/or test for a wide range of positions in their companies.

This can take tremendous amounts of expertise, time and dedicated effort. A quality specialized recruiter will have various networking resources available to them along with an extensive researched database of prospective candidates.

3. Outsourced recruitment makes sense for companies who desire superior performers. These companies require not only technical expertise in their employees but a high customer service attitude and team players who can assist in growing their companies. They realize that top performers can do the job of more than one person (thereby reducing their staffing costs), and their skills can help take the business to a higher level of performance. Be aware, however, that these superstars will require a competitive salary. A quality recruiter's goal is to be aware of these superstars for future placement when appropriate.

4. Recruiters can bring to the table knowledge of business operations and, optimally, a specialized knowledge of the position. A recruiter should have a high degree of operational knowledge, as

well as a firm grasp of business intelligence relating to the industry and locale of the search.

This background can be a strong aid in determining the "behind-the-scenes" fit for the profile being searched for, and thus lessen the time and expense requirement for the search process. We all know that position descriptions vary widely in terms of detail and completeness. It is very helpful for a recruiter to have a job description for a search. However, you would be surprised at the number of companies that do not have them or do not provide them.

To maximize the benefits recruiters can offer, a company should strive for an established, long-term relationship with an executive recruiter. Expectations should be set and met by both sides.

To locate a good recruiter match for your firm, you may need to do a little research. You might desire to check with your peers, ask for references and ask for a trial run in terms of locating the best recruiter to fit your needs. Just be sure you select your business partner carefully. Once you do, it is in your best interest and your company's to use them effectively. Give them the information they need to do their jobs and return their phone calls. Don't have them search for months, only for you to unnecessarily decide not to hire the position.

This behavior contributes to high fees in the marketplace, and a possible negative perception of your company in the eyes of numerous candidates who interviewed for the position. If you manage a recruiter fairly as you would any important business partner and they deserve your loyalty, you should be able to negotiate reduced fees.

An established relationship will also be a huge time-saver in the long run for you by not having to give the same profile information to every recruiter who calls, and receiving unqualified resumes on your fax or via e-mail.

An argument could be made for outsourcing your position requirement to every recruiter that calls. Consider the

possible trade-offs in this “cast the net wide” approach, such as the time requirement in dealing with many recruiters, the feeling of lost loyalty your ongoing recruiter likely will feel, higher fees, and the risk of a questionable long-term fit with a candidate hired from a recruiter less knowledgeable about your company.

Consider the benefits that can be derived with a long-term loyal relationship with a recruiter. In the situation of a long, difficult search, the dedicated recruiter is more likely to stay on the search instead of pulling off to work on more readily fillable assignments.

Recruiting firms can be a great supplement to an in-house hiring program. There will be times that growth generates urgent hiring peaks, or a specialized position is needed. Recruiters can then fulfill a cost-effective role in ensuring that the hiring goals of the company are met, so that profits and growth can happen when needed.

For these and other reasons, executive recruiters can serve a useful purpose in the business world. Are you ready to reap the benefits of outsourced recruitment? The following table provides a summary of considerations for executives, human resources personnel, or hiring managers in

how to select and gauge the quality of an executive search firm, and thus receive the most benefit from related recruiter fees.

Quite simply, for companies that decide to use executive recruiters and use them effectively, superior performers and enhanced business operations await you.

Here’s a checklist for human resources or hiring managers in selecting a recruiting firm:

- Ask peers for recommendations.
- Ask for references from the recruiting firm.
- Does the recruiting firm have a client agreement form? Have you reviewed it to understand the terms of the working relationship, including guarantees, replacement policy, payment terms, procedures done (do they meet the candidate in person), dispute resolution process, etc?
- Does the firm require candidates to fill out an employment application? Are proper releases obtained?
- Does the firm have a candidate agreement? Does it address confidentiality, counter offer situations, etc.?
- Does the firm perform candidate verifications and reference checks? Before resume submittal?
- Do they follow safe and legal hiring

and interview procedures?

- Do they have a written privacy policy?
- What is the fee structure? Do they give discounts for volume or long-term sales relationships?
- Will the recruitment firm provide free value-added services? If yes, what are they? What about consultative services such as assistance with job descriptions, free relocation assistance and information, custom salary surveys, etc.?
- Do they make every effort to understand the company needs and the candidate profile required? How?
- What is their background that will make them effective?
- How many candidate resumes does the recruiting firm usually need to send over to result in a successful placement? If there are more than three, consider the possibility that the recruiting firm is not capable; or is unable to gain a proper understanding of the job opening requirement.
- Are you comfortable with this firm acting as an extension of, and as a representative of, you and your company?

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Connie Spivey is the president and owner of AccountSource.  
conniespivey@acctgexperts.com ■ 615-791-6592