



How to get headhunted...a primer for executives

Dear Readers,

Executive recruiters are frequently being asked two questions:

- ▶ How can I improve my chances of being contacted by headhunters?
- ▶ How does the process work once an executive recruiter calls?

We hope that this overview provides some answers. Feel free to contact us if you require additional information.

Yours kindly,

Tilman Bender

Manage your public profile

- ▶ Attend conferences and tradeshows relevant to your industry or area of expertise. Listings in the associated publications (trade show catalogues, directories) are a great way to gain publicity. Many events publish the biographies, and recruiters screen these announcements.
- ▶ Appear in the media – many trade magazines and websites rely on input from trade practitioners and will gladly publish well-written articles relevant to the target group. Develop relationships with editors and PR agencies. Make it easy for them to contact you if they need a quote. Make sure that a new job or promotion is mentioned in the press.
- ▶ List your bio on your company's website. It is a great way to get noticed. Search firms routinely browse websites to locate candidates. If your company does not provide this opportunity, you can arrange a private website with a short biography.
- ▶ Volunteer in an industry association such as a local chapter. Even large, prestigious associations benefit from engaged members. Hosting a user group on the internet can be a great way to raise your profile among your peers.
- ▶ Make certain that you can be found if people are looking for you. Having a simple website can greatly help. Another way to ensure that people will find you is to link up with Google's Adwords program.
- ▶ Consider networking in peripheral industries; many skills are portable between related industries.
- ▶ Be on the lookout for options to network within your own company. Good reputations spread widely and can lead to opportunities in associated companies or overseas subsidiaries.

Be prepared

- ▶ Depending on the stage in your career, two resumes can be handy. The short resume should be no longer than two pages, and be in counter chronological order (current job first). Be precise and focus on core events and metrics. Avoid adjectives in general and superlatives in particular. If you have a short-term employment period (less than one year), state the reason you left.
- ▶ The second resume should expand upon the first. It should capture additional, relevant details. Having an expanded resume can greatly help a recruiter focus on important details and provide a greater comfort level.

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How to get headhunted (cont.)

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- ▶ If you are very uncomfortable providing a resume to a unknown recruiter, offer a biography, such as a speakers brief.
- ▶ Keep headhunters you already know updated about what kind of position you would consider and ascertain if they have your contact information and up-to-date resume.
- ▶ Return calls from headhunters promptly. Being precise, accessible and providing a quick turn-around greatly improves your chances of being contacted again. If a current search is not in line with your background headhunters greatly appreciate it if a prospect provides information about the industry which enables the recruiters to fine tune their research. Referrals are greatly appreciated if the contact is in line with the search. Do not make referrals which could be irrelevant to the search just to please the recruiter. You are not doing him or her a favor.

The process

- ▶ Headhunters are paid to find candidates who match a very specific profile
- ▶ In most cases, the headhunters will develop a specification which outlines the position, describe short and midterm objectives and articulate the ideal candidate profile. The recruiter will turn to his/her existing network but also generate additional research. A good headhunter will canvas the complete industry segment and identify the top executives. In addition, he/she will also determine if the current success of one company can be traced to the current incumbent or if a predecessor played a significant role. The recruiter will pre-qualify you by asking some key questions, including your current compensation level. If an initial fit has been established, he will ask you for a resume and also email you the position spec. After reviewing it you will be interviewed in detail, typically over the phone. Subsequently a personal meeting with the headhunter will be arranged. Based on these interviews the headhunter will prepare a candidate review and submit it to the client. Typically clients are being presented with 3 -6 candidates. Never assume that you are the only candidate or a shoe-in.
- ▶ You will then be interviewed by the client. Typically there are at least two rounds. If the client is based overseas, you can expect an interview in the U.S. as well as a round of meetings overseas. If it is a venture-backed entity you might be asked to meet with some investors as well. A headhunter will also check references and use his own network to verify first impressions. In addition, you will be asked for some private information such as SS# and the years of your graduation so the headhunter can verify your educational credentials. The headhunter will provide feedback and assist in the negotiations. Frequently, candidates and employers have different interests, but a headhunter acts as a sounding board and can help to bridge different perspectives. Headhunters can have substantial influence, but the final word lies always with the client.
- ▶ After you have been hired, the recruiter will periodically check in. Recruiters want their placements to work out well and are always willing to be a sounding board if problems arise.

Recruitment Lingo

Target list: A list of individuals and companies which will be approached for a search. There can be A, B or even C lists reflecting different industries potential executives can be currently employed in.

Shortlist: A list of final candidates.

Exclusive: Retained recruiters work on an exclusive basis; only one firm has been retained to fill a position.

Selection based search: a recruitment firm advertises for a position, screens the resumes and comes up with a short list. Candidates are only drawn from the individuals responding to the ad. This model is used in Europe but has been proven unsuccessful in the States as executives do not respond to classified ads.

Contingency search: Used to staff lower level positions. Several employment agencies receive a job spec and send resumes to the client. No research is conducted.

Confidentiality: Retained recruiters typically refrain from disclosing details without the prior consent of the prospective candidate. Before providing a resume and indicating interest, inquire if the recruiter is retained and works on an exclusive basis.

