



EXECUTIVE NEWSLETTER

April 2007

Page 1 of 2

RECRUITMENT TECHNIQUES

Adage One: Role Definition

Senior executive hiring decisions have a dramatic impact on your company's bottom line. At the executive management level, a right hiring decision is a profit maker, with the executive translating their talent and knowledge into generating long-term benefits for the firm. However, a poor choice is most likely to result in pain and financial penalties in the short and long term.

The real impact of a wrong decision is in the lost opportunity cost: lost time, lost revenue, damage to your market image, and negative impact on your company morale. These costs are likely to show up on your company's bottom line for years.

The process followed in recruiting senior executives is the greatest contributing factor in determining success in any executive search effort. Similar comment applies to middle level recruitment. By applying several simple techniques you gain:

- Consistent success in identifying and attracting the talent you want;
- Better utilisation of your recruiting time and dollar; and
- Opportunity to increase bottom line performance.

These techniques, rigorously used by

successful search firms include:

- Adage 1: Role Definition
- Adage 2: Candidate Identification
- Adage 3: Candidate Evaluation
- Adage 4: The Reference and Credential Check
- Adage 5: Candidate Selection
- Adage 6: Job Offer Tactics
- Adage 7: Negotiation
- Adage 8: Bringing the New Executive on Board

Success in executive recruiting is not a matter of chance. There is a right way to do it. We intend providing these series of articles over the next few months to provide a practical view on managing the executive hiring process, and on how to get the best value from your executive search and selection partner.

Adage 1: Role definition

Has this case history happened to you?

Ilam Plains Electronic Systems (IPES) sets out to recruit a Head of Sales. Some informal internal meetings result in the job being rather loosely defined as having responsibility for all sales and marketing. Likely candidates are described as being just like Victor Singh, who is with a competitor. A few others are named as possible candidates but little real thought is given to how candidates are going to be identified

and contacted.

When several candidates finally appear, from several different sources, there is disagreement on whom to hire. As pressure builds to make a decision, a compromise selection which no one really favours, is made. Shortly after starting the job, questions arise whether IPES's new Head of Sales is cutting it. Sure enough, performance continues to disappoint and the inevitable termination follows. Then there is plenty of discussion on what was wrong with the executive's leadership style, team fit and management abilities. No one bothers to look at why the wrong person was hired in the first place, nor are the costs ever discussed. With greater resolve, the recruiting process starts all over again. By the way, IPES is now on its fourth Head of Sales in two years.

Are we overstating it? Perhaps. Is there a better way? You bet!

IPES continued to fail in this particular endeavour because senior management did not properly define their real needs and objectives. Every event and decision made in the recruiting process is derived from the definition of the job and essential candidate characteristics. This is the road map followed to reach the destination: a successful hire.

The executive recruiting process must

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Page 2 of 2

start with a thorough and formal definition of the role and responsibilities, position objectives, and personal and professional attributes necessary for success. Just as important is identifying the environmental factors setting your company apart from all others.

You have heard all this before?

The key is the degree to which the significant components listed above are thoroughly articulated, then applied. In dealing with people and personalities, nuances are important. By the time you complete your internal discussions on role definition, everyone participating in the selection decision should have a sense that they will know the person when they see him or her.

Here is what you should do:

- All decision-makers participate in describing the job content and objectives, performance measures, essential technical and management skills, and the most appropriate personal skills.
 - What are the specific activities involved?
 - What are the contact points in the company?
 - Do you want the job to carry on as before, or start from a new beginning?
 - Establish and agree realistic six-month, one-year and two-year objectives.
 - List experience requirements in

detail. Is experience in your industry really necessary? Must they have had a comparable role? What experience is an absolute must, versus nice to have?

- Define essential personal qualities. Is a compatible style really necessary, or do you want someone to shake the tree for you? What is the person's boss like and what styles will work with him or her?
- With high levels of customer contact, what style and image do you want to project?
- What are all the elements of the compensation package? Gather competitive market data. What are the upper limits for the perfect candidate?

- Create a written position specification documenting the agreements reached and have the decision-makers sign off on it.
- Agree on the decision making process – who will participate, how the final decision will be made, and who will make it.
- Have all the decision-makers review the most critical variables prior to each interview, and again prior to the final decision.

Role definition and the recruiting process may not be an activity you can successfully undertake without assistance. Managers claim they are

very good at recruiting and many are. But the executive search consultant does this for a living; he or she is immersed in it every working day. The role of the executive search consultant is to execute the process, bringing together ideas, people, personalities and perceptions. The result is one aimed at meeting the needs of your organisation. Good search consultants are able to bridge the gap between the “science” of a well-defined, methodical recruitment process and the “art” of getting two parties, who are in essence strangers, to decide to join together.

Now the caveat: Process will not guarantee you will end up with a quality product. However, without the process, you are placing your bottom line in the hands of pure chance that an appropriate selection will be made.

For more information, contact Barry Dreyer or Barry Fitzgerald at Fleet & Partners on (09) 309 3691.

Quality product

“It is because they sell more oil”.

The Chairman of Shell, when asked why the company recruited so many young people with first-class honours from Oxford in philosophy, ancient history, Latin and Greek.

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