



Case Studies

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Private Equity

Background

Our client specialises in the acquisition and development of niche businesses with a focus on investment and growth. Interests are diverse and incorporate many significant industry sectors, including Finance, Healthcare, Distribution, Manufacturing and Real Estate. Founded in 2001, the Group has aggressive expansion plans and is expecting to exceed £200m turnover by the end of 2009 in the UK.

The UK is a key emerging market for the company. Recent acquisitions have included a private members club, a spa / retail group and a high-tech therapy business, amongst others, with a focus on Health, Beauty and Wellbeing.

The Assignment

The client engaged our consultant to carry out a critical assignment to appoint a UK Finance Director, the first Group UK employee. The remit was extremely wide; to establish a robust framework to implement, manage and drive the UK expansion strategy, including identifying target companies for acquisition, carrying out due diligence, presenting proposals to the Board and carrying out the acquisition process. This was a difficult assignment as the right candidate needed a complex mix of skills, including technical accounting, investment appraisal and strong social, management and mentoring skills, and no obvious search route was available. The candidate also needed to be very self-sufficient as they had no immediate peer group in the UK.

The Result

Our consultant took advantage of their strong networking capabilities to identify recommended candidates, together with a targeted online media campaign, followed by in-depth, structured interviews, keeping the client fully informed of progress. The result was a strong shortlist after six weeks from which the client successfully appointed. We have since worked extensively with the client on a number of key strategic appointments across their businesses.

The Chairman commented: "We were delighted with Lucy's genuinely consultative approach to helping us make this critical appointment. She found four excellent candidates, helped us to understand the positives and negatives each person would bring to the business, and she was a pleasure to work with."

Sales Director – Friend Media Technology Services

Background

Powered by its media and content monitoring system, Friend MTS is at the forefront of internet inspection and protection, servicing some of the largest entertainment and media companies on the planet. In early 2007 the business had reached a critical point in its development, and needed to appoint an exceptional sales director to take advantage of the current market opportunities.

As a small business personality was critical, and a key part of the process was to understand fully the drivers of the whole management team.

The Assignment

Denise Friend commented – “We had not previously worked with a search firm and were not convinced of the merits of the search process. Friend MTS was at a critical point and we needed to appoint an exceptional sales director to take advantage of market opportunities, but who would have the personality to fit into an exacting and demanding environment. We didn’t just want a good sales person, we needed a new member of the family. Lucy took the time to really get to grips with us as individuals as well as the needs of the business. She didn’t just take a brief; she made suggestions, challenged our requirements, helped us to understand how different types of people would interact with us. She made the process simple, straightforward and transparent, conducting a very broad search in a complex market.”

The Result

Denise Friend continued to say – “The result was a strong shortlist from which we appointed an excellent sales director who is making a real difference to our business and who we know will be a success. The whole experience was a pleasure and we wouldn’t hesitate in recommending her.”

Marketing Director FMCG

Background

A highly successful global market leader with a track record of excellence in brand marketing required a new Marketing Director for the U.K. With a strong training and development focus, the company had several internal candidates but wanted to look outside in order to further strengthen its cadre of high calibre marketers who had the potential to move into general management.

The Assignment

Operating a well-developed matrix structure, the client's company had a strong focus on global management of key brand equities. For the UK Marketing Director, the challenge would be to operate within this matrix, leveraging core central marketing activity and adapting it for the local market. A well-rounded marketer with excellent strategic skills but also world class implementation capabilities was required.

It was considered that the best approach would be to use Executive Search, focusing on targeted approaches to a limited number of individuals with successful records in well-respected consumer businesses. This was supplemented with the use of an extensive referral network to identify candidates who would not otherwise have been approached. Advertising was considered but thought to be an expensive addition to the process which might not help to access the best candidates who were in good careers and would require real one-to-one effort to engage them in the process.

Competency based interviews focused on challenging strategic capability as well as exploring candidates' records of practical delivery. Candidates' questions were probing and often challenging in their own right, necessitating real depth of understanding of global FMCG marketing in the recruiter. Separating the best candidates from the simply good was very difficult.

The Result

The shortlist contained very high calibre individuals with the right paper credentials but also the motivation to want to take on the challenges of the role.

The National Lottery – Senior Communications Team

Background

Our initial discussions took place as the National Lottery was approaching its tenth anniversary. Since its establishment in excess of £14 billion had been raised for good causes. However, research indicated poor awareness among the general public of the benefits created by these funds. A formal review in 2002 concluded that a specialist independent unit should be established, reporting to a Joint Management Board consisting of Camelot - the operator of the National Lottery, the Department of Culture Media & Sport - the sponsoring Government body, and the Distributors of National Lottery funds. Their remit was to inform the public on how their Lottery money was being spent and to identify ways that Government, Distributors and Camelot, working together, could do a better job of telling people where their money goes.

The Assignment

Our challenge was first to recruit a Director to head the new Unit and then to recruit the supporting senior management team. Working with the Joint Management Board we advised on structure and developed the specifications for the team members. A combination of media including national press was selected to carry the advertisement for the Director role and, not surprisingly, we received a huge response from a vast variety of candidates for this high profile position. Unusually, the long list of candidates was interviewed jointly by a Managing Partner from Snowdon Tate and a senior representative from the Joint Management Board. The subsequent shortlist of 4 candidates was met by the full Joint Management Board and a highly qualified candidate appointed. A similar process was used to recruit the senior managers this time complementing the National press advertising with specialist publications.

Throughout the process we ensured that all members of the tripartite Joint Management Board were kept involved and informed of exactly what was happening and that the various recruitment criteria required by the different members of the team were being met. We also had to assess the extent to which candidates selected for shortlists would be able to work within the highly complex matrix structure. Our approach to achieving a successful outcome was to work closely and collaboratively with the Management Board throughout the recruitment process. Clarity and the setting of common objectives from the start were key, advising and agreeing on structure, remits and remuneration at the outset. The outcome of our close working partnership was the successful appointment of a powerful and productive team.

The Result

Marshall Ayoade, Head of Human Resources for Camelot PLC commented - "When recruiting for the newly formed National Lottery Promotions Unit I found Snowdon Tate to be excellent in their management of the various assignments; in particular the customer service from start to finish was spot-on. The handling of the candidates throughout the entire process was exactly what we were looking for when handling such high profile positions."

Biotechnology start-up – Chief Executive

Background

The client was the Board of a company set up to exploit intellectual property developed in academia. Progress had been strong, backed by a combination of different types of UK and Japanese investment. The original scientific team were leading the company but had increasingly recognised the need for a more commercial agenda to be developed and driven. At the same time, the main investors were keen to see an acceleration in efforts to strike relationships, and ideally make deals, with big pharma. A Chief Executive Officer was sought who would bring commercial focus to R&D prioritisation, create a strong and independent identity for the company and establish profitable customer relationships.

The Assignment

Our challenge was to find someone who had the balance of skills needed; as well as big company experience and team building capability, the right candidate would also be doing most of the initial business development. Given the nature of the investment base, the successful candidate would probably also have strong international credentials. We felt that good candidates would exist in the biotechnology world and started by networking amongst our contact base while identifying names of relevant job holders in other biotechnology companies. This extensive search led to almost one hundred names being identified. Initial contact was made with close to forty of these and 12 were interviewed. A shortlist of five was presented to the client which included candidates from the biotech sector, consultancy and from big pharma. The Chairman met all candidates and asked four back for second interviews in front of the full Board before making an offer.

The Result

The successful candidate had an unusual combination of big company experience and entrepreneurial flair. His referees strongly endorsed his competencies. He also had worked several times outside the U.K. and had all the elements required for a successful business developer. The role was an ideal one for him at this stage of his career, providing him with a platform to test his skills and grow in stature as the company grows.

Global Media Business - Head of CRM

Background

The Client, a global brand and acknowledged leader in direct marketing, was seeking to develop new channels to expand its product and service reach and to unlock the financial potential available from its customer database.

The Assignment

Committed to exploring new methods of driving profitable and incremental revenue the Client required a recruitment solution which would deliver a manager of sufficient experience and stature to grasp the challenge and “hit the ground running”. It was important that the individual should have had previous experience in developing new channels and that they would be capable of establishing a rapport with the various autonomous profit centre Directors, influencing and persuading them to adopt new customer recruitment and retention techniques.

Recognising that a key criterion was to make an appointment within as short a time frame as possible we chose to adopt a combined solution consisting of a Search and national advertising. Our Search was focused within the most progressive membership-based organisations as well as within some of the leading direct marketing agencies. Our advertisement yielded a strong response and, combined with our search candidates, we were able to make an initial selection of 10 candidates for interview. Our objective was to present the Client with as diverse a shortlist as possible containing candidates each of whom, in our opinion, would not only meet the criteria set, but bring a different perspective to the role. Following the second-stage interviews of the 3 shortlisted candidates there was one who was identified as a particularly “good fit” with the culture and senior team. His references were excellent and he was able to negotiate an early leaving date from his previous employer.

The Result

The Client was able to make their appointment sooner than they had anticipated and the successful candidate was delighted to accept a challenge which allowed him directly to apply his pioneering knowledge in a new environment.

Global Head Health Economics – Major Pharma

Background

The Client was a major international pharma company looking to invest in the skills necessary to help the global R&D teams bring a commercial focus to bear earlier in the drug development process. While health economists were already working in R&D and in Marketing, it was felt that an opportunity existed for individuals to focus on value demonstration work within global R&D and each one to work cross-functionally across a therapy area.

The Assignment

It was recognised that a technically qualified candidate with the requisite commercial and team skills would not be easy to find. A Search was instigated amongst likely candidates across Europe and referrals resulted in some candidates also being identified in the U.S. The shortlist of six included individuals from pharma, the medical device industry and also in one instance from a specialist consultancy.

The Result

In addition to the shortlist of qualified candidates, the Client also received information on their current reputation in this area amongst peer businesses as well as a small but useful survey on salary and benefits.

Head of CRM Consultancy – Consumer Insight

Background

A small, well-established company which provides marketing insight consultancy and related software products was at a crucial stage of development. They needed to release their Managing Director from the consultancy role he had been filling in order to concentrate on the next round of venture funding.

The Assignment

The appointment was time sensitive and key to the growth of the company, with the successful candidate working closely with all areas of the business and reporting directly to the MD. Whilst not a board appointment, it was envisaged that this would be a natural progression within a short space of time. Furthermore the consultant needed to be very experienced with the potential to grow a highly respected team, yet the company might appear unattractive as it was still very small with only 15 employees and could not compete with the big salaries offered by others. It proposed overcoming this by providing options based on both individual and company performance.

The recruitment process therefore had to (a) be strictly confidential to avoid competitors realising the potentially fragile stage of the business, (b) overcome any reluctance from the best candidates due to size/prospects and (c) be completed swiftly. Search offered the best methodology to answer these issues and a highly targeted approach was made to individuals with high profiles in successful larger companies. In addition an extensive referral network was used to identify potential candidates who might not otherwise have considered a move.

This delivered fast results and a short list was provided to the client within 20 working days of being instructed. It included interviews which established core competences as well as investigating the practical delivery of consultancy and solutions to varieties of differing clients. All candidates recognised the opportunity to be part of the company's growth but also recognised the risks involved in joining such a small player. Four high-calibre candidates were short-listed and the opportunity to directly discuss and allay their fears was a major success of the search process.

The Result

The successful candidate joined the company one month after the interview, a highly respected consultant from a major competitor who regularly speaks in seminars and conferences. He provided the gravitas and exposure the company needed, whilst the company give him a new opportunity to share in its success.

General Manager – Consumer Healthcare

Background

The Client was a small company with a long tradition of success which was looking to develop the consumer health business more aggressively through acquisition. A General Manager who could lead the consumer part of the business forward was a critical success factor.

The Assignment

It was recognised that although the business was small, it's ambition meant that the successful candidate would probably have bigger company experience and be able to bring process and discipline. Many individuals who are highly successful in larger businesses can find the lean, flat structure of a smaller business tough. For this role, marketing skills were key, but good sales experience was also important as was an appreciation of the regulatory issues critical in OTC. The Search involved looking into key OTC companies as well as businesses marketing personal care products throughout the U.K.

The Result

While the shortlist of candidates was very well received, one individual stood out as having both relevant experience of OTC sales and marketing as well as demonstrable success in large and small environments. His references proved excellent and he was appointed to the role. In addition to being a piece of successful recruitment, the exercise also had the effect of raising the profile of the business with key individuals in the OTC marketplace.