



Why bother with headhunters during a recession?

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Why use a headhunter during a recession?

On the face of it this would seem to be an excellent question. If you are recruiting at the moment you might consider yourself as standing out in a market where there are few roles and a host of candidates who are available and keen to work with you.

As with most things, reality is more complicated. Yes, there are a lot of people likely to be looking for their next role as companies restructure, relocate and/or reduce headcount. A good, well-networked Executive Search consultant will know when companies are letting people go and will know who is available. But these individuals will also be visible in other ways. They will be actively marketing themselves and will probably be responsive to advertising. So why would you need to work with a headhunter in these circumstances?

It comes down to our clients' judgement of what is the best way of getting the best possible individual to fit their role. Our experience is that a good headhunter comes into his or her own under these circumstances because we can, quite simply, deliver a better shortlist more efficiently.

Practice makes perfect

"We understand what might not be right for everyone"

The reason for this comes down to doing the basics very well. We spend time understanding our clients at more than just a superficial level so that we appreciate the role in context with the company. We understand what's great about both, but also what might not be right for everyone. Armed with this knowledge and our in-depth experience of the marketplace we can assess those candidates who are

available more thoroughly and efficiently, saving time and getting the best fit.

Teasing out the stars

"Good people are very careful about managing risk in their careers"

what calls they take and whether they engage in a discussion about a new role. A degree of inertia can set in; good people are very careful about managing risk in their careers. Great shortlists need representatives from this group and so the challenge becomes how to engage them. These individuals need to be approached by an informed, experienced (and, to a degree, independent) consultant who can judge in a very short time whether there may be an opportunity to progress. Potential

candidates will spend the time necessary to do this if they feel the consultant knows his or her stuff, but will cut short any call where they feel this is not the case.

Bang your own drum

“Portray your business as clear-thinking and confident, seeking to set the talent agenda”

At a time of uncertainty for many, active search with a headhunter can have the broad additional benefit of portraying the client company as a confident, clear-thinking business seeking to set the talent agenda rather than wait for CVs to come to it.

In conclusion

So can we conclude anything from this? A recession can be a great time to strengthen leadership in a business or to change its focus; a corresponding flow of CVs may look like an attractive solution. But proceed with caution! Time is a valuable commodity and a huge amount can be diverted to meet people based on perceived relevance and availability. Quality and fit are vital and a professional search consultant will know how to assess both of these quickly and efficiently. More critically, the silent majority of quality candidates who are not looking for a new role are less accessible at a time like this and need to be approached by professional consultants who can bring to bear years of experience to help a client ensure that they get the best possible talent.

A Word from the Partners

We hope you've found this piece interesting and useful, and we'd love to hear your thoughts on this subject. If you would like us to explore this subject in more detail, or if you would like to suggest other topics, please don't hesitate to contact us.

We look forward to working with you.

Best wishes

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