

# Choosing your senior external recruitment partner

*To whom should you turn when it comes to recruiting the best senior people? After consulting with a number of senior Thames Valley HR professionals, Archer Mathieson consultant James Aston discusses the case for in-house or dedicated recruiters versus outsourced recruitment solutions*

"With today's fight for talent, successful corporates have a choice when it comes to recruiting the best people: appoint a dedicated recruitment specialist or search and selection firm, or contract out the entire function for a third party organisation to run as a managed solution. While the latter might seem the more cost-effective solution in the short-term, it is worth exploring the advantages both methods bring to evaluate the longer-term benefits to the business as a whole.

## Disciplinary focus leads to extensive and current candidate network

The external recruiter will typically be a focused specialist, expert in particular fields such as finance, human resources, marketing or IT, for example.

At the senior end of the market in particular, successful recruitment is about understanding the client and knowing the specific candidate pool. The specialist recruiter, inevitably, will be able to draw upon a stronger network of the best candidate contacts to be approached for a specific role. As Archer Mathieson knows, this individual is not always the one that is currently available for work but might need to be sought out by a dedicated expert.

Building up such a strong and reliable network requires long-term effort, based on extensive knowledge of a particular discipline. Here, the outsourcer is at an immediate disadvantage, focusing on one of many roles in many disciplines at many different levels within the organisation. The recruiter, on the other hand, is working to his or her strengths, at a senior level and in a specific discipline in which he or she has accumulated considerable knowledge over the years.

## Good communication key to successful recruitment

The issue of communication is critical to an effective recruitment strategy. Finding and securing the best people demands regular and frequent dialogues between all the parties concerned.

Brand perception is a central part of recruitment – a company's appeal to candidates is only as good as it is viewed in the marketplace – and these perceptions can be heavily influenced through the good or bad experiences of the recruitment process. Word of a mishandled appointment can travel far and impact negatively on the image and standing of a company to potential employees. Indeed, with the extra chain of command that outsourcing brings, it can take time for (often scant) client feedback to reach a candidate – a delay that can cause real damage. There are not many corporate brands that can withstand this in the long-term.

## Direct relationships ensure best candidates and more targeted solutions

The outsourced recruitment solution generally enjoys long-term contracts during which they will act as an in-house intermediary for the client organisation. One might argue therefore that the outsourcer could develop closer relationships with the client through being based in house. However, an account manager typically oversees an account with a team of far less experienced recruiters (reduced outsourced costs mean reduced salaries for recruiters and hence the inability to attract more experienced consultants) who have to deliver on a wide range of roles. The specialist recruiter, however, will draw on a deep knowledge and wide contact base within a particular discipline as well as a strong and true understanding of their client contacts – specific line managers – and so it could be said, will offer more expert, targeted solutions.

## Delivery of results is proof of quality service

Appointed on an assignment (rather than contract) basis, the external recruiter is only as good as the results of their last job, having no long-term commitment from the client as a security net. This, Archer Mathieson believes, ensures their focus on an ongoing, consistent high quality service delivery.

Where the outsourcing model



James Aston, consultant, Archer Mathieson

can work well is in large organisations where there is high-volume, lower level recruitment or where qualifications (IT programming skills, for example) are more important than personality and team fit. However, at the senior end, in which Archer Mathieson works, the market moves differently. Here, the requirement is for more targeted, specialist, dedicated recruitment resources that can draw upon a strong network of potential candidates that has been built up over time. The limited pool of potential clients for outsourced recruitment is perhaps why so little choice exists with outsourced suppliers in the market.

The thrust of the issue is that – while outsourcing the resourcing function may appear a cost-effective solution in the short-term, shaving money off the bottom line to increase profitability – it may not be the best or most commercial approach in the long-term. People are a company's most important asset and attracting the right people and securing the best talent is imperative to business success

– it is not an area that should be compromised in order to cut costs. Ultimately getting the right people on board at the right time by partnering with the right recruiter will add more to the bottom line and the future success of the company than shaving costs through contracting out the resourcing function."

## What makes a good recruiter?

- Extensive internal resources, a strong research function to support the consulting team
  - Excellent communication with both clients and candidates – prompt, regular, and frequent contact and feedback to both sides
  - Stringent candidate selection criteria – all interviews should be competency based
  - Recognition of lifecycle relationship between clients and candidates – one can become the other tomorrow
  - Proactive effort to hunt down the best talent
  - Strong network of potential candidates, not just those out of work at any given time
  - Expansive database of contacts, ideally maintained by dedicated researcher(s)
  - Specialist fields – finance, HR, Marketing, IT, etc
  - Personal touch
  - Collaborative approach between consultants.
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