



## **Choosing an Executive Search Firm Two Sides to a Very Important Decision**

**By Christopher B. Schoettelkotte**

As a hiring manager today trying to decide which executive search firm to use, you face a tricky situation. You have retained versus contingency recruiters, along with local, regional & national firms to choose from, and they all just keep calling asking for your business. Sometimes I'm sure it feels like you spend more time answering their calls or deleting their voicemails than doing your job.

Let's take a quick look at each of the options.

First on retained versus contingency search, (I do both, It breaks down about 60/40 with contingency winning out.) I have heard many opinions regarding the reasons for working with one type of recruiter or the other.

Some of the arguments. Include:

"Contingency recruiters are unprofessional and lack an understanding of confidentiality."

"Only retained firms can get to the top talent in the marketplace"

"Why should I have to pay a full fee to the retained firm when we found the right candidate through another source?"

"Why pay a retainer with no guarantee of a successful search."

"We used a national retained firm so the Board could say, 'Hey we used so and so,' if things didn't work out!"

"Why pay a retainer when my phone rings off the hook with recruiters willing to work the search on a contingency basis?"

Some or all of these may sound familiar, but none are good reasons to select a certain recruiter. There are very professional contingency and retained recruiters who will keep searches confidential, charge reasonable rates, supply top talent and guarantee the search is successful or refund all or part of the fee.

As for being the scapegoat for the Board, think about how silly that is when you really think about it. No matter how good the search firm is, in the end it is up to those in charge of making the offer to make the hiring decision. An executive search firm is simply responsible for identifying qualified talent and delivering them to the table for the company representatives to inspect and finally make a buying decision.

On the subject of managing the deluge of calls I have some thoughts. First I need to fill you in on who recruiters are. Successful recruiters not only have the sophistication, polish, industry knowledge & contacts, they are also determined, hardheaded, never-say-die producers. That means they are sales professionals in addition to being former Sales Manager's, General Manager's, COO's & Manufacturing Engineers with BA's and MBA's.

Translated simply, they are determined to be the one that gets your attention and gets the opportunity to talk with you about your hiring needs. In short they are not going away.

Instead...

Build a relationship with a couple recruiters in your area of expertise, qualify them with references and meet them face-to-face when possible. Let them understand you and your goals. Let them understand your personal career aspirations and the goals for your current team. Remember, a good recruiter knows his/her marketplace or industry is constantly uncovering talent and opportunities, and can be an excellent business partner.

If he/she also knows your career goals, then you may one day have a new best friend...