



Questions To Ask When Hiring a Search Firm

By Bruce Dingman

When considering the selection of an executive search firm, checking their references is appropriate. This can include former clients, candidates and the professional association, A.E.S.C (Association of Executive Search Consultants). We will be pleased to provide a prospective client with the names of clients and/or candidates.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE RECRUITER:

1. Who will actually be doing the work?
2. How many searches is the recruiter presently handling?
3. For searches given as examples, did this recruiter personally do them or was it someone else in the firm?
4. Will the search firm's client list "block" recruiting from similar industry clients where there might be likely candidates?
5. Is the firm doing a similar search at this time that could cause the best candidates to be unavailable for your search?

QUESTIONS TO ASK REFERENCES OF THE RECRUITER:

1. Was the client satisfied with the quality and quantity of candidates presented?
2. Did the results seem timely?
3. How pleasant, responsive and professional was the recruiter to work with? Would you want to work with him or her again?
4. How responsive was the recruiter to your needs or circumstances?
5. If the search proved lengthy, did the recruiter remain as industrious even after the fee was paid?

We have found that over 90% of the time the selected candidate was found by research done specifically for that search, not from a resume database. A firm touting the assets of their database too strongly may be prone to conduct insufficient research to seek out the best candidates possible from new sources.

Large search firms have some advantages and disadvantages over smaller search firms. Similarly, search firms that specialize in a single industry offer pro and con factors to be considered over a "generalist" search firm. A full discussion of all these considerations should be done before selecting a search firm.

Lastly, use a recruiter with whom you will enjoy working and you can trust. No matter how good the firm's pedigree, how appropriate their experience, or how sterling their ethics, the individual consultant who will handle your search should also be one you want to work with. With many good recruiters available, you will be able to find one who fits in your comfort zone.