



Serving the Client's Best Interests: The Dilemma in Simultaneous Similar Assignments

By Bruce Dingman

When a search firm presents the same candidate at the same time to more than one client, this is referred to as “parallel processing.” Likewise, if the search firm has a candidate who might be excellent for one client but withholds consideration of him or her in order to present the candidate to another client, how is the search firm acting in the best interest of both clients?

These practices occur commonly in larger search firms where multiple consultants may have similar search requirements or in firms that principally work in one industry or function.

Why should a client care about these practices? It might mean that the candidate that you want to hire suddenly becomes unavailable because he or she “has just taken a job.” And you may not know it was the search firm you hired to fill your position that just played a role in that person taking another position.

We choose to avoid these problems. We do not take on two searches seeking simultaneously the same type of candidate. Recently we were doing a presidential search for one organization when another approached us to also find a president for them. These two firms were peer organizations. Since the second company had flexibility, they’ve hired us to undertake their search when the first client’s search is finished.

Serving the best interest of all our clients is supreme. We may lose some assignments but we know it’s the right thing to do.

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