

## 9.

## THE EXECUTIVE SEARCH PROCESS

### STEP BY STEP

The framework for the Search Process is pretty much the same for all high-end Search Firms, but different Search Firms tend to customise and personalise the presentation of their search process to fit their company approach. Partly this is also a question of branding, a way of differentiating yourself from your competitors.

I too have customised my presentation below. My presentation of the Search process is not as sales and marketing oriented or as short, concise and neat down to the point, as the presentations of the Search Firms tend to be. Instead of having just some short bullet points describing the search process and then letting the reader try to figure out what they mean, I comment on the various steps more thoroughly.

#### THE INITIAL CLIENT MEETING

The process starts with a Client having a recruiting need, e.g. a new CEO, wanting to meet the Search Firm. In the meeting, the parties try to figure out how to best solve the Client's recruiting need. Nothing sounds more straightforward, but it is far from that easy. There exist both worst-case scenarios and best-case scenarios for such a meeting, and both outcomes are possible.

*Worst-case Scenario:* Neither party has paid proper attention to preparing themselves adequately in advance for this meeting, sometimes not at all. They rely on their experience, play it by ear and just talk about various issues as they come up. No matter how experienced you are, this is a dangerous approach, creating a lot of risk potential. Your memory might fail you. You may forget to discuss something important. You may remember things wrong, your understanding of some issue may not be quite in tune with reality anymore. You just don't know it, because you did not bother to check something out. This is the very meeting where you define the major search coordinates. Get them wrong, and no one should feel surprised if you encounter problems later in the search process. This is the worst way to start a Search Assignment. This should never happen, nonetheless, it does.

**Best-case Scenario:** Both parties come to the meeting well prepared, both having done their homework and the Due Diligence of each other. This way you instantly get on the right track. This way the value added from the meeting will be the best possible. Both parties know what to talk about, what to ask about. This way, both parties stay on top of things. They can concentrate on what is essential and ensure they take up, discuss and evaluate all the key issues relating to the search. This is the way the initial meeting should always happen, both parties well prepared. In short, this is the way you ensure that the Search Assignment gets the best possible start. Please make sure you always do it this way.

#### **THE ASSIGNMENT BRIEF – THE JOB DESCRIPTION – THE CANDIDATE PROFILE**

When coming to the initial meeting the hiring Client should always have a well-prepared Assignment Brief ready when presenting his case to the Search Consultant. The Assignment Brief is the Client's blueprint for the Search Assignment.

The Assignment Brief must be a well thought out, extensive, thorough and truthful company presentation. It must include, e.g. company strategy, goals, challenges, company financials, market position, organisational structure, corporate culture and major stakeholders.

The Job Description and the Candidate profile with the needed career and educational requirements and the Client's expectations and well-defined goals related to the position must also be included.

It is important to identify career opportunities - how to attract potential Candidates, but it is equally important to identify any business-critical challenges that may exist, and that the new employee will face. In the meeting, the Search Consultant brings his/her value added into this discussion through his/her professional expertise, experience and knowledge of the recruiting market potential.

The Search Firm together with the Client defines the final Candidate profile fitting this specific position in the Client company and its company culture and develops an estimated timeline for the search.

#### **THE ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY**

Based on the discussions with the Client, the Search Consultant then creates an Assignment Summary, which is a summary of everything that has been discussed and agreed on.