

Guest Comment: how a headhunter really thinks

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You send your CV to a reputable headhunting firm. You don't hear from them. You try calling them, but can't get someone to speak to you. You persist and finally talk to someone who is just not interested in meeting you, or talking to you for more than five minutes.

Sounds familiar? Chances are, this is the experience of a vast majority of bankers who have approached search firms to represent them. Here are a few candid tips on how you can really get your headhunter working for you.

Choose the right recruitment company...

There are many search firms out there. You should do some research to find out which ones specialise in your part of financial services. The biggest mistake is to send your CV to a firm which doesn't deal with your sector. Your CV will simply sit in a database and you are unlikely to receive any job interviews.

...and speak to the right consultant

Many recruiters are generalists, or at least they recruit across a vast range of sectors. Finding out the name of the consultant who specialises in your job function is the next important piece of research you should do. Even if you send your CV to the right search firm, if the specialist recruiter doesn't get to see it, you are unlikely to get immediate results.

Don't insist on a face-to-face interview

This is the bane of many recruiters. A candidate sends in her CV, calls the recruiter and insists on a face-to-face meeting as soon as possible.

As a candidate you will want to explain your strengths in person to make sure recruiters understand your career objectives. But headhunters probably don't have any immediate opportunities and they hope you will leave them alone for now.

Much of a recruiter's time is spent getting job orders from clients. If you are the right candidate, don't worry - you will be hunted down! Trying to get an audience with your recruiter will only take him away from getting job orders from clients - your potential employers. So, leave him alone to work with your potential employers. If you are the right candidate, your recruiter will come knocking at your door.

Now, after you have done all that, you wonder why your phone still isn't ringing. Here are some tips on how to make yourself useful, get the attention of recruiters and get them to work for you.

Discuss business opportunities in the market

Share with your recruiter information that you hear about hirings or other events in the market. Headhunters are always keen to receive any information about company developments, especially if they involve potential job orders. If you keep feeding your recruiter with market information, you will slowly find that not only does she remember you well, she will call you more often because you are foremost on her mind.

Keep your recruiter notified about your career

If you have moved on and found a new job, please keep your headhunter informed of your status. This is professional courtesy. Some candidates may think that once their recruiter knows they have been hired, job opportunities will not come their way anymore.

But you should see things from a recruiter's perspective. You would seriously embarrass him, if he introduced you to a prospective client, only to discover that you are no longer available. It reflects poorly on your recruiter and in return, he starts to cast doubt on your professional integrity. Recruiters have an industry blacklist and you wouldn't want to be on it!

Build a long-term relationship

Once you have found that job, don't forget to keep in touch with the consultant on a regular basis. Continue sharing and discussing market information. After all, if your recruiter specialises in your field, she probably knows quite a lot about your competitors as well. And who knows, new opportunities might arise and you could find yourself with another prospect again.

Remember to carry your relationship with that consultant throughout your career. Recruiters often tend to recommend candidates who they have known the longest. Of course this doesn't take away the importance of your basic performance track record. But in these challenging times, try to get whatever support you can. Remember - be consistent in your relationship with your recruiter.

These may sound like simple ideas, but any relationship is a two-way process - it's about giving and receiving.

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