



# EXECUTIVE SEARCH CONSULTANT CALLS: BENEFIT OR BOTHER?

by Marjorie Slater

Many people think executive search consultants are glorified salespeople who scan *Hoovers* and *Zoom* directories in their quests to sell their unnecessary wares to busy business people like you. Consultants may call at inopportune times with grandiose promises of the “ideal” position for you or a “fabulous” candidate for your organization.

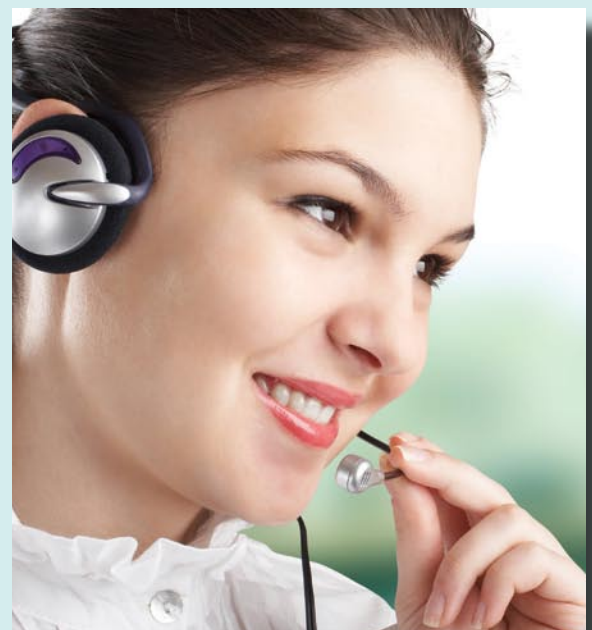
That said, all search consultants are hardly created equal, and many can offer you services you had no idea you even needed. Think about it; you never knew you needed a mocha latte until Starbucks appeared outside the lobby of your building.

## THE TRUTH IS THAT ONE OF THE SMARTEST THINGS YOU CAN DO WHEN A SEARCH CONSULTANT CALLS IS TO ANSWER THE PHONE. HERE'S WHY:

- **Specialized executive search consultants can make your life so much easier.** They operate as professional coaches, career counselors, interviewers, client advocates, negotiators, relocation assistants, and anything and everything required to satisfy the needs of both clients and candidates.
  - Highly-specialized search consultants like those in supply chain management understand a myriad of functions and how they interconnect; titles often overlap or are unclear.
  - Nomenclature in supply chain continues to evolve; only a specialist will have the ability to comprehend the real needs of a position.
  - Supply chain management is a relatively new term and represents one of the few functions that cross industry sectors; therefore, titles may have different meanings in different companies.
  - Search services offer huge value in the corporate environment; understanding market trends and what is taking place in other organizations is important to know.
  - Preconceived notions could make you miss the potential to grow your business and/or your career.
- Keep an open mind, hear what a consultant has to say, and be sure to ask yourself the following questions.

## IF CONSULTANTS WORK ON COMMISSION, WHY WOULD THEY CARE ABOUT MY BEST INTERESTS?

- **Retained search has no financial bias** because consultants are paid a portion of their fees before they begin work; the assignments are exclusive, keeping consultants objective.
- Search consultants work with your people: they act as an extension of a company's human resource department and work in conjunction with human resources and hiring managers.
- Retained search is impartial, seamless, and targeted because the labor portion of the search is outsourced.
- Hiring managers have the ability to evaluate internal and external candidates with objectivity.



## WHAT CAN SEARCH CONSULTANTS DO FOR MY SUPPLY CHAIN AND ME?

- **Executive search consultants improve a company's productivity** while greatly reducing the liabilities associated with the cost of a bad hire.
- Supply chain search consultants provide a professional service for companies that want to attract, hire, and develop top individuals in critical supply chain leadership roles.
- The key "deliverable" is the consultant's ability to assess the degree of potential fit of a candidate to the company culture to insure that the "value add" is immeasurable.
- All specialized search consultants call known key leaders in their area of expertise because good leaders know other good leaders.
- You owe it to yourself to be informed about what is happening outside your company; tunnel vision can be lethal to your career.

## HOW DO I KNOW IF THE CONSULTANT WHO CALLS ME IS A GOOD ONE?

- **By his or her follow up:** A good search consultant will take the time to make sure a position is a "fit" for both candidate and client. If it is, he will do everything necessary to make the interview happen. If it's not, you will have saved yourself a lot of time.
- If your background is not right for an assignment for which you're called, top consultants will want to hear about your career background, and find out what opportunities would be of interest to you in the future.
- When you are solicited by a consultant who shows interest in you, but never furthers the conversation, it is likely that he or she is not the one you should be dealing with.



## WHY NOT SAVE MONEY AND FIND MY OWN PEOPLE?

- **Human capital is critical to the success of any business.** If you needed a major surgical procedure, would you choose a physician based on what he charged for his services or would you want the very best doctor possible?
  - Should managers seek out low-cost alternatives when employees are the key resources that elevate companies over their competitors?

## I'M NOT LOOKING FOR A NEW JOB RIGHT NOW, SO WHY SHOULD I WASTE MY TIME TALKING TO AN EXECUTIVE SEARCH CONSULTANT ABOUT ONE?

- **"Knowledge is power"** and being aware of professional opportunities will help you gain greater perspective of your own career path.
- Executive search consultants can provide objective views about your career as they understand your background, your company, and your business.
- The best search consultants have insight that extends to talent acquisition and acts as a barometer of what is occurring in the marketplace.
- These consultants' knowledge includes organizational structure, strategies, finances, and return on investment (ROI).

## INTERVIEWING IS A GOOD THING AND NOT A ONE-WAY PROCESS.

- **Interviewing is a learning experience** to see if a career change makes good sense and, if so, why, when, and where?
- During the interview process, both parties learn about each other and form impressions about whether or not the "fit" feels right.
- In candidates, employers are looking for motivation, initiative, team-work capabilities, and the ability to solve problems.
- Candidates should have a good understanding of the organization they're interviewing with, its culture, people, and dimensions of the position.

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## COMPANIES WANT TO HIRE THE "BEST AND THE BRIGHTEST."

- **Moving forward with "green" initiatives**, environmental, and public health concerns will continue to be major issues for organizations.
- When global trade considerations are being made this year, decisions of great consequence in supply chain matters will be addressed; the challenges may be overwhelming.
- Top-quality employees with supply chain management expertise will make the difference between companies and their competitors in the global economy.

## HOW DO I PROTECT MY ANONYMITY?

- **Quantify your comfort level** when providing information to a search consultant.
- Should you decide to participate in his or her network and allow the use of your name, ask if the search is retained.
- As members of the Association of Executive Search Consultants (AESC), consultants are ethically-bound to the highest standards of confidentiality.

According to many economic and human resource professionals, we are moving towards the largest talent shortage in history, so "forewarned is forearmed." It can only be of benefit to you to understand the dynamics that rule the world in which you work. The bottom line is, by answering the phone when an executive search consultant calls, you are not only increasing your professional opportunities, you are gaining insight into your own career path which will greatly enhance your professional life.



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