



Advantages of Using an Executive Search Firm Enrollment Manager, Vol. 7, Issue 4, October 1, 2011

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“A search is hard work requiring daily attention. We bring best professional practice to this critical process,” says Marylouise Fennell, partner in Hyatt-Fennell : Educational Services and Charitable Resources Group.

Hiring a search firm will not only be cost-effective, saving the institution both time and money, but they will enlarge the candidate pool, identify those who might not otherwise apply, and produce a sound, long-lasting fit between candidate and the employer.

Every search is different. The ‘bullpen’ approach used by some ‘headhunters’, in which candidates are recycled for different positions at several different institutions, simply doesn’t meet the needs of either candidates or the institution. We can find many candidates, but only a select few will fit the culture of a given institution.

All colleges and universities should use executive search firms for high-level positions. Here are some additional reasons why this investment is a prudent use of institutional resources.

Executive search firms can shorten the process, thereby maintaining the interest of strong candidates.

A good search takes about five months; it may require a bit less time, but it should not take longer. Initial screening and vetting of candidates can reduce the pool to be interviewed by the search committee to a select list of well-qualified finalists, while also ensuring that the salary and total package expectations are in line with what the institution can offer. By maintaining

frequent contact with top candidates, experienced executive recruiters can also retain their interest. Executive search firms can also bring their expertise to the composition of search committees, further expediting the process. We’ve seen some committees with as many as 25 members , obviously an unwieldy number. We can narrow and refine this process.

Executive search firms can best perform ‘due diligence’, checking off-resume references and thoroughly vetting both candidate and institutional history, preventing costly mistakes in hiring.

Through extensive professional networks within the industry, executive recruiters can personally contact listed and non-listed references, ensuring confidentiality and facilitating the sharing of more personal information about candidates than would typically be obtained by in-house human resource departments. We can also prepare candidates with a more in-depth history about the hiring institution to ensure a strong fit.

Executive search firms can both enhance the quality of the candidate pool and help the institution cull the field to a manageable list of finalists.

The credibility of executive recruiters within their specialty and industry will identify excellent candidates who are not actively “looking,” but who are ready for the next career challenge. For high-level positions, they will produce applicants who would not necessarily apply to a human resources advertisement. In addition,

the extensive resources and contacts of executive recruiters typically go far beyond the several job lists and websites used by in-house hiring offices to identify the best candidates for a particular opening.

When all these advantages of customized, personalized executive search are considered, bringing in a professional firm is money very well-spent.

Dr. Marylouise Fennell, RSM, has spent more than 35 years in higher education administration and search and is among the best-known and highly respected consultants in the field of independent higher education. She served as past president of Carlow University in Pittsburgh and also serves as senior counsel to the Washington, DC-based Council of Independent Colleges. She has consulted widely throughout the world. Dr. Fennell currently sits on three College Boards and is the Chair of the Board of one of these institutions.

Cheryl Hyatt, with almost 20 years of executive search consulting experience, has been responsible for successfully recruiting senior administrative professionals for educational and non-profit organizations. She brings 30 years of management and organizational leadership experience to her role with clients. Cheryl’s breadth of experience, knowledge and contacts make her sought after professionally in her field. Mrs. Hyatt also sits on various non-profit boards offering a variety of expertise to each organization.