



Rare Birds

by Xavière Phisel

Recruiters are definitely confusing people.

They are just as much praised and railed:

Who wouldn't want to have a headhunter in their network who could, when time has come, prove handy in the search of a new career opportunity?

But then aren't headhunters opportunistic providers of CVs? Don't they lack creativity? And what about their ethics?

This quite negative viewpoint has probably found its origin in some bad practices of a few recruiters. Still today our profession is often less considered than strategy consulting and its role regarded as a supplier rather than a trusted advisor.

"Just give them some specs and those loony birds will go find the rare bird that you need and that's about all they're asked".

Actually, many consultants in our profession are passionate about their job, in spite of its difficulties. They share the conviction that a recruitment is not simply a part of the strategy of a company, it is the strategy in itself!

What is a recruitment for a company: Are we only speaking about headcount? A link in a chain?

I would describe it more as the sum of commitments aimed at creating an amalgamation of know-how/company culture/DNA/ambition on the side of an organization, and talent/motivation on that of an individual. This amalgamation will add value to both sides: Achieving goals, creating performance, realizing dreams, making teams work, making profit... for the duration of their commitment to each other.

A recruitment multiplies possibilities. Yes, we are talking about such notions as "prospects" and "alchemy" here, let's honestly face what it implies in terms of mystery and luck. Those dimensions are part of a recruitment, even though we aim at limiting them and controlling their impact.

Others will prefer using the word "forecast", as nothing is ever certain in a recruitment. A failure is always a possibility that we must not underestimate.



Nevertheless, we, Sirca partners, capitalize on our years of experience to carry out the three main stages of our daily responsibilities: The Context Analysis, the Research and the Assessment.

Context Analysis: Confronted to a multitude of different environments, we as our colleagues in strategy consulting are accustomed to explore and scrutinize, to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a given context. In a word, we are able to establish a diagnosis of the situation, from which we will initiate our research.

This analysis, coupled with the understanding of the governance, the personality of the company leaders and the issues, will allow us to draft the profile of the person who will not only "fit in" yet also enrich the alchemical reaction described earlier.

Research: Oh, the quest for the rare bird... emerging part of the iceberg, "sourcing" is often perceived as our essential role. An essential stage in the process of our assignment, research must be carried out with great care, in order to target the right people for our client company and to build with these people (whatever the outcome of our confidential contacts) a trustful relationship.

Assessment: A key stage of the recruitment process and a moment of truth. Is the person facing me the one who will bring to my client the needed synergy? Is the opportunity of the position that we are presenting to this person happening at the right moment for him/her, personally and professionally? Will the candidate enjoy this role, realize his/her potential, get along with the other members of the team?

This matrix of analysis that we have been building over the years allow us to explore alternatives, raise up questions, understand the grey areas, sometimes to pat the elephant in the room and finally get where we wanted: Reaching a firm conviction.

A firm conviction that THIS is the right amalgamation – Or not!

Call it experience, professionalism, but also intuition; All acquired, forged, over the years.

Call it courage as well.

We are living in times when, whatever your responsibilities and industry sector, an error is not well tolerated. A wrong hire – the most costly error in an organization – is not an option.



As a consequence, the pressure on recruiters is important. Many consultants give up and switch jobs, to become coaches or outplacers for instance.

Others are still there! Because they are passionate about their job and persuaded that their added value is crucial for their clients' strategy.

Also because the executive search profession is one of the most demanding business services activity, as it services both clients and candidates.

And finally because... the higher expectations are, the more exciting it is, don't you think?

*by Xavière Phisel
Managing Partner | Sirca Executive Search*

June 2015