



‘Simon Says’

Issue 12 - February / March 2014



Edward George

How to attract and recruit the top 5% of executive talent every time

Vacancy pending...the challenge begins.

An opening is shortly to become available in your organisation for one of your most senior and strategically important positions. These are big shoes to fill and shareholders demand a newly appointed executive that can assist in taking the company to the next level. This is all happening in the context of a tightened economic climate, competitive downward pressure on margins and a cost efficiency focus; so getting the appointment wrong can and will negatively affect everything including revenue growth, ROI, ability to attract and retain further top talent, and market reputation. The real question then is; how do you ensure that the recruitment process attracts the best; that is, the top 5%?

4 ways to supercharge your Executive shortlist

If you are serious about wanting to snare the industry's best, here are 4 tried and tested techniques that work:

- **Make proactive approaches a must.** Assume the best are not looking. Compliment your advertising strategy by drawing on LinkedIn and other industry networking channels to add depth and strength to your shortlist. A reactive company waits to see who applies; a pro-active company approaches the people they want.
- **Be Strategic.** Consider in advance what will motivate a top tier candidate to join your organisation. For example, claiming to be a great employer will be of no consequence if the candidate is very happy where they are. It would also be naïve to think that money alone will convince your preferred candidate to make the change. Really focus on what the selling points are for the individual and even ask them what they really love about work. Then make sure your position is packed with more of that than their current role.
- **Be authentic and persuasive.** The ability to paint a compelling yet informed picture of a position is not an arbitrary skill that everyone possesses. Approaching potential candidates directly is a sales process rather than an HR function so consider carefully who you allocate internally to make the initial contact. Make sure they are strategic, service oriented, engaging, persuasive and credible. They need to have an intimate understanding of the position.
- **Screen out candidates based on business impact and leadership.** Regardless of individual interview salesmanship, the top 5% will always shine when questions are posed around commercial and strategic business performance and impact. So it is super important that your recruiter truly understands the business context of the role. Sometimes maintaining market share in a saturated market is far more impressive than 400% growth in a market with no competitors.

With these suggestions in mind, there are also some absolute classic mistakes you want to avoid every time.

- **Treating your headhunted candidates the same as those that have applied.** It is worth remembering that when it comes to making direct approaches, you are the seller and not the buyer in the transaction. To some extent this means they are interviewing you. Being able to provide accurate and timely information and using your powers of persuasion will contribute to whether your potential candidate is interested in proceeding any further with their application.
- **Small picture salary band thinking.** You can be sure the industry's top 5% are being well looked after and rewarded handsomely for their contribution. Internal recruiters that focus on presenting candidates who fit within the typical salary band are likely to attract a shortlist that is heavily weighted with solid dependable types. As much as possible try to make business impact and commercial contribution your screening tools rather than salary.
- **Relying solely on online advertising.** Placing an online advertisement to just 'see how it goes' is a cost saving mentality adopted by many businesses that fail to think beyond short term quarterly business results. The absence of a multifaceted recruitment strategy is a genuine business risk as it virtually eliminates the top 5% from applying. These candidates are not looking and you just can't afford for them not to be on your shortlists for key appointments (in fact all appointments).

For key Executive appointments you need great advice on current employment market conditions, available talent and how to approach the market. Please feel free to call for a confidential discussion to understand the importance, and difference that it can make in getting your appointments right.



Edward George provides comprehensive Human Resource Solutions specialising in recruitment and retention strategies, team building and training, exit interviews and outplacement services. If you would like further information about any of our services, email us at perth@edwardgeorge.com.au or phone us on **9457 4566**.

Simon Stibbs is the Managing Director of Edward George Pty Ltd.