

How to work with a Recruiter

Look for a recruiter that takes an interest in your background and specializes in your industry.

RETAIL **Careers**
A DIVISION OF CAMPBELL, EDGAR INC.

Executive recruiters (also known as headhunters or search consultants) have firmly established themselves as a visible and highly valued fixture in today's employment landscape.

Through their aggressive matchmaking, headhunters affect the careers of individuals, the lives of their families and friends, and the profitability of entire corporations.

No one knows exactly what the business world would be like without the influence of headhunters, but one thing's for sure: sometime in your career, you'll either receive a call from a headhunter, or initiate contact yourself. In either case, you should learn how to work with them effectively, and take full advantage of the many benefits their service provides. Here's what you get from establishing a relationship with an executive recruiter:

- **Greater exposure.** Headhunters not only maintain a myriad of existing contacts within your field, they can also scout out new companies you never heard of.
- **Increased efficiency.** Headhunters are obsessive networks; they spend their time researching and penetrating the job market. Their knowledge can save you time in identifying and pursuing prospective employers.

- **Personalized public relations.** Employers generally look more favorably towards a candidate who's professionally recommended. Headhunters stake their reputations on the quality of their candidates, and will always present you in the best possible light.
- **Confidential representation.** Some job search situations require a great deal of discretion. For example, you may want to explore an opportunity with your present company's direct competitor. In such an instance, a headhunter can present your background confidentially, thereby protecting your identity, and eliminating (or at least minimizing) your risk of exposure.

It makes good sense to build a solid relationship with a competent professional recruiter

- **Authoritative career consulting.** Headhunters can help you determine the job or career track that's right for you, based on current market conditions and your own values and abilities. They're also in a unique position to walk you through (and monitor) each step in your job changing process.
- **Private training.** Headhunters can give you practical, time-tested suggestions on how to strengthen your resume and improve your interviewing technique. In many ways, a headhunter acts as a personal coach.

- **Third-party representation.** As experienced brokers, headhunters find ways to put favorable deals together, and iron out differences you and the hiring company may have regarding your salary, benefits, and relocation package.

In addition, working through a headhunter can actually improve your chances for success once you've been placed. That's because the search fee the hiring company paid the recruiter represents a sizable financial investment in your future success -- an investment worth protecting.

Headhunters: The Missing Link

Headhunting is a multi-billion dollar international industry that acts as the missing link between a half million job seekers and employers each year. At last count, there were over 125,000 executive search practitioners in the North America, according to The Forgyce Letter, the industry's leading trade journal.

There's hardly an industry or profession that hasn't spawned its own coterie of recruiters. They cover every conceivable pocket of the job market, from food sales to machine design to motion picture financing to mortgage banking to freight hauling to data communications to haute cuisine to college administration to city management.

Generally speaking, headhunters work within well-defined niches. To make sense of a complicated employment market, headhunters classify their candidates according to:

- *Title or function*, which refers to their descriptive title or rank within the company, such as president, plant manager, staff accountant, director of nursing, and so on;
- *Skill or application*, which refers to their specialized abilities, such as tax accounting, IBM AS/400 programming, secured lending, and the like; and
- *Product or service*, which refers to the industry in which the candidates do their work, such as plastics, minicomputers, retail, public administration, hospitality, and so forth.

To give you an example, a recruiter might place project engineers (title) with computer-aided design experience (skill) into positions with companies that built submarine hydraulic systems (product).

Other headhunters might place CEOs (title) with plant management experience (skill) who work for companies that process frozen broccoli (product); or district sales managers (title) with marketing degrees (skill) who work for companies that make high-top leather sneakers (product).

Think of your own experience. How would you classify yourself? Your answer will not only help you put your career into perspective; it'll help the headhunter determine whether you "fit" into his or her market niche.

Of course, recruiters can use other means to define their markets. Some, like ourselves, take an industry-specific approach. If you work in the retail industry, you'll find that we don't discriminate because of your title or function, as long as you have experience in our target market.

The opposite approach is taken by the skill-specific recruiters. To them, the product or service of the host company is secondary to the skills of their candidates. This is the preferred method of recruiters who specialize in placement of data processing, accounting, or clerical personnel.

Don't Get Lost in the Shuffle

Even though headhunters can't guarantee you a new job, you have much to gain from working with them. And vice-versa, since you represent an addition to their continuously perishable inventory. While it's true that headhunters owe their allegiance to their client companies (who pay the fees), without candidates to fuel the fire, headhunters simply wouldn't exist.

For each search assignment, headhunters may prescreen hundreds of prospects. Therefore, the majority of their time is spent with the finalists for each open position. The other candidates screened are often also highly skilled professionals, but they who simply don't fit the specific qualifications required by the headhunter's client company -- they're simply in the wrong place at the wrong time.

At Campbell, Edgar, we vow to interact with all our candidates in an honest and personalized manner, but we will only represent the highest caliber retail personnel. We try our best to be up front with every candidate we talk to. If your skills fall outside our area of expertise, we'll try to steer you to another headhunter who can be of assistance, or provide you with some general coaching which will be of value.

Always look for a headhunter who takes an interest in your background, or who specializes in your industry. The last thing you need is to pin your hopes on someone who's not in a position to help you. Be prepared for mixed reviews when you talk to most recruiters. You might very well receive a brush-off like, "I'll call you in a week to 10 days"; or bad advice, such as "You'll never find the job you want with the background you have"; or discouragement like, "Nobody's hiring now." Just keep plugging away at your job search -- and never take "No" from a headhunter.

Of course, even the most qualified candidacy is subject to the whims of a supply and demand job market. In many cases, a headhunter simply won't know what your chances of getting another job might be until he or she puts out feelers or sends you out on an interview. To work most efficiently, invest your time with a recruiter who really wants to help you.

Sigmund, Sherlock, and Donald

Headhunters come from a wide variety of backgrounds, and exhibit the same range of personal merits and character strengths as the rest of the human race. The majority are honest, hardworking entrepreneurs, who work diligently to help candidates find meaningful, rewarding jobs.

It has been said that headhunters can be divided into three different personality types:

[1] *The Sigmund Freud* headhunter is a kindly, wise, and empathic counselor. He or she listens carefully when you describe your values, your job preferences, your personal goals, and your family commitments. The Sigmund Freud headhunter wants to place you with a company you'll feel comfortable working for, and will spend lots of time getting to know you.

[2] *The Sherlock Holmes* headhunter is a clever, relentless, goal-oriented detective, who'll track down and contact every company which might provide a match for your skills. This type can be quite creative in discovering aspects of your background which can be successfully marketed to companies off the beaten track, or only peripherally related to your present industry.

A perfect example of the Sherlock Holmes headhunter is Norman Roberts, who works out of an office in Los Angeles. It was his ingenuity that led to an unlikely (but highly successful) match in 1984. He took an unknown travel industry executive -- Peter Ueberroth -- and placed him as the head of the U.S. Olympic committee.

[3] *The Donald Trump* headhunter is the consummate deal maker. This type is less concerned with whether you're a round or square peg, as long as you can be crunched into whatever hole may be available, or convenient. Headhunters like this tend to give the search industry a bad name because of their insensitivity to the true needs of their clients and candidates; and although they can often produce positive results, many times their high-pressure tactics lead to short-term employment.

While personality and style are important aspects to consider when selecting a headhunter, you should also evaluate the headhunter's past results. Assuming you feel a modicum of comfort with the person you're dealing with, it's a good idea to check into their track record and experience level. If you discover a consistent pattern of success, you're probably off to a good start.

Otherwise, you might find yourself stuck with the fourth type of headhunter: the *Inspector Clouseau*. This type embodies none of the above personality traits, only the endearing, bumbling incompetence of the movie character portrayed by the late Peter Sellers. In his Pink Panther movies, Inspector Clouseau was able to crack the trickiest cases; but only through sheer serendipity or plain dumb luck.

Campbell, Edgar's Objective:

Through reputation and results, Campbell, Edgar will be the best known and most respected recruitment firm for Retail across Canada.

- *We will provide all our clients with professional and friendly service, anticipating and consistently exceeding their expectations, and fulfill their requests in a timely and conscientious manner.*
- *We will interact with all our candidates in an honest and personalized manner, and will represent only the highest caliber retail personnel.*

Some Common Sense Ground Rules

Let's talk turkey for a minute about what to expect from headhunters, and how to establish some common sense ground rules. Here are seven issues you'll want to discuss before you set any relationship in stone:

[1] *Compatibility* -- Make sure you feel comfortable with the style, personality, intensity level, and integrity of the headhunter. As in any other business relationship, you want the other person to understand your needs and act accordingly.

[2] *Confidentiality* -- Make sure your resume isn't going to get plastered all over town without your knowledge. An inept (or anxious) recruiter can overexpose your candidacy; or worse, reveal your intention to change jobs to your own company.

[3] *Good Judgment* -- Make sure you're being sent to interviews that match your background and interests with the needs of the recruiter's client company. The most common complaint from both candidates and employers is that recruiters "throw candidates against the wall to see what sticks."

[4] *Honesty* -- Make sure there's either a bona fide job opening or an upgrade possibility where you're being sent to interview. Otherwise, you'll be spending your valuable time on one wild goose chase after another.

[5] *Tempo* -- Make sure to let the recruiter know at what pace you want to proceed in your search for a new position. If you're not ready to make a change until a later date, or simply want to explore the market, don't let the recruiter waste your time by sending you on an interview.

[6] *Arm-twisting* -- Don't be pressured into accepting a position or a compensation package simply to please the recruiter.

[7] *Exclusivity* -- It's fine to work with a recruiter on an exclusive basis, as long as you feel comfortable with the arrangement, and the recruiter has earned the right of sole representation. On the other hand, you might not want to limit your options. Despite what you may be told, no recruiter has the exclusive "ownership" of your candidacy.

By the same token, you must be fair with headhunters. For example, if you're pursuing a job search on your own or through another party, keep the headhunter aware of your activity, so you don't cross paths. A recruiter's time and reputation are his most valuable commodities; he or she deserves better than to be manipulated or left in the lurch.

Recruiters can't work miracles by waving a magic wand over your resume; all they can do is match your background with a suitable opening, and help guide you through the job changing process efficiently and competitively. While it's true that headhunters have their limitations and can't be all things to all people, it makes good sense to build a solid relationship with a competent headhunter.



Campbell, Edgar Inc. has been assisting Premier Retailers with their recruitment needs since 1993.
For more information on how we can assist you in your career development, call us at
604-946-8535 or 604-321-8515, or visit our website: www.retailcareers.com