



ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS TO ASK A SEARCH FIRM

Before hiring them for an assignment

01

What's your expertise?

There are many different types of firms in the recruitment industry from high-end search firms to high-street agencies, but a true headhunter is someone who will act as an extension of your business to find the perfect person for your company. Sector-specific experience is a big help too so ask them about other searches they've done including recent successes in your space. They should be able to demonstrate knowledgeable insight about your sector including trends and how they impact hiring.

02

How do you differentiate yourself?

If they can't articulate what makes them different in a way that's clear and compelling, how good are they going to be in pitching the opportunity with your company to the very best candidates?

03

What is your success rate?

You should be looking for a company with a 90% plus fill rate on their assignments. Any less and you should be questioning their commitment to the cause. There are some who operate at less than 60%; do yourself a favour and walk away.

04

How do you find people?

Any firm that has a good, long-standing reputation in successfully matching smart people and great companies will have developed some sort of process that increases their success rate. You're not paying them just to post ads or swamp the market with resumes.

Avoid those who talk about mass mailings, online job boards, call lists or any sort of broadcasting of the opportunity because your company's reputation is at stake. Instead look for insightful selection of qualified prospects from a well-maintained network.

05

How much?

Executive Search and Recruitment firms generally charge a flat fee or a percentage of the remuneration in the range of 20 – 40% but don't be afraid to negotiate particularly if you can offer more assignments to get a better deal.

06

Who can I contact for a reference?

Be afraid if they're reluctant to answer this and be a little sceptical if they're too quick to answer! Whilst confidentiality is a factor when it comes to specific searches they've done, you should be able to obtain references or testimonials from both clients and candidates.

07

Why would I pay a headhunter when I can do this myself?

This question should provide some interesting answers. The right answer should detail the unique talents and tools they have that you don't, such as deep personal networks that are industry specific and proven processes for screening prospects.

08

What Guarantees do you offer?

Guarantee periods vary wildly from a few weeks to two years. It's not just the backup of a guarantee you're looking for here but also an idea of how invested the search firm will be in your recruiting process and company. With longer guarantees, search firms are much more selective of the candidates they put forward.

09

How long have you been in business?

Recruiting is a fairly easy business to enter so you want to hear about a steady and a fairly long track record of success. There are some unscrupulous operators out there so it's a good idea to check their website in detail. You should be able to review the profile of the particular Consultant you're talking with. If you can't, that should raise a flag. Ask to see their LinkedIn profile too.

10

When should I see results?

"I'll send some when I get back to the office" is definitely not what you want to hear! The right answer allows the recruiter enough time to fully and completely understand you, your organization, your team structure, your goals and then do their own research before providing you with candidates. Of course, there needs to be respect for your timelines but, by allowing time for them to do their homework, you're ensuring you only see those candidates with the greatest chance of long-term success with your company.