

NPS Interview Transcript

Interview Date: 01.10.25

Client: Vanessa, Heidelberg Materials

Project: Executive Search

Score: 10

FULL TRANSCRIPT

Interviewer

On your experience of working with Korn Ferry and engagements to date so we can feedback to them kind of recommendations of how they can improve their customer service and continue to kind of you know add value. So if you can be as transparent as you feel you know you're able to be then that. Helps us and hopefully in turn helps you too.

Speaker2

Yeah, it's going to be easy because I'm really extremely satisfied about services they delivered and I had already given a feedback to the senior consultant who was on my file. I wrote an e-mail with with some positive feedback, so this is going to be easy for me.

Interviewer

Brilliant. So if we could start off, if you could just explain to me your role and the engagements that you've had with Korn Ferry to date.

Speaker2

Yes. So I'm HR director for the Benelux region, part of the executive committee of Heidelberg Materials Benelux and like a few months ago we wanted to search for a new procurement director, so.

Also part of the executive committee and the the search was highly confidential because the previous procurement director was still in place. So we had decided decided to dismiss her, to fire her.

And we wanted to start with the search before letting go the other person. So I contacted several headhunters of executive search. Of course, one of them was Korn Ferry. I I had already worked in other companies.

Companies with the senior consultant. His name is Olivier Top and so well based on the on the approach they proposed, I decided to work with Korn Ferry.

Interviewer

Great. So you had you'd already had experience of Korn Ferry in previous roles.

Speaker2

Yes, but also the consultant Olivier Top. He worked at Page Executive before and there I worked several times with Page Executive, but with this same consultant. And then when he moved to Korn Ferry, I think I had one collaboration with.

Interviewer

OK, great. And so so from your experience is has this been your first and only engagement with Korn Ferry so far?

Speaker2

Yes.

Yes, indeed, yes. With Heidelberg Materials in my current role, yes.

Interviewer

OK, brilliant. And obviously you've worked with Olivier Top before. Is that the primary reason that you selected them when you? How many other consultancies did you consider?

Speaker2

Two other two others.

Um.

Part of it is indeed the the trust that I have in Olivier Top as a consultant, but the other part is because I really wanted them to explain to me how they would guarantee confidentiality.

Because Belgium is a very small country, everybody knows everybody. So if you say to a candidate that you're looking for a procurement director in the industry and you give some information on the company, then they could immediately find.

Find out for who it is and then the confidentiality would be broken. Um so, but they really convinced me because they have put like 2 sheets of arguments and approach on the way they.

They handle this type of missions, this type of assignments and also with like some references of other clients of similar situations where it had to be really strictly confidential and they they really they their approach really convinced me.

Interviewer

OK, great. And from, I suppose from day one, did you outline kind of how you prefer to work? How was the communication across the whole engagement?

Speaker2

Um.

But they actually were in the lead of how to work together. So they did like a intake conversation. I explained the profile I was looking for. I really took some time because I think that's the most important part, the better you explain the profile you are looking for.

Therefore, the more chances you have, they come with the right profiles. I also

explained my way of working, what I was expecting in terms of timings of reports, reactivity, which is very important to me.

And I clearly also expressed that I expect them to respect the candidates because a headhunter or a recruitment agency is actually also ambassador of our image, of our reputation.

So that's something really important. So we set like the frame, the way we would work together, communicate and that worked really well actually.

Interviewer

Brilliant. Did they help you in building out that profile? Did they bring their success factors, their success profiles to the table?

Speaker2

Yes, they did. They they actually made the the profile description themselves. What they also did is in the very beginning they sent me like some LinkedIn profiles of people where I could then say like not this profile, but this is what I'm looking for. And that really helped to to narrow down the profile.

Interviewer

Right, so.

Speaker2

So this this was really helpful too. Yes, they they did a huge part of the job there in defining the profile we need.

Interviewer

And did they use any of their other tools? When they, I suppose they had shortlisted candidates, did they do an assessment on them? Was that useful if they did?

Speaker2

Yes, the ones they had selected and the ones that I have met, they all these candidates have done a an assessment, yes. And it was the Korn Ferry assessment because we have all our own assessments, but it was actually included in in their package in their approach. So they went through this.

Assessment and was in the report. There were I think like two or three pages on this assessment and then they matched actually the results from the assessment with the profile we need.

Interviewer

OK. So did you find their assessment, um, kind of added value? Was it, how did it compare to your assessment that you have in house?

Speaker2

Yeah.

We did not do the internal assessment for these candidates because we didn't want them to have two assessments.

The thing is, I'm not a huge fan of assessments.

So I think, you know, interview reports are more relevant than assessment reports.

Um, but they they did a great job on the assessment analysis and when I met with the candidates.

It made sense. I mean, what was written in the report of the assessment was aligned with the person I had in front of me, so.

Seems that their assessment system works well, yeah.

Interviewer

Works, yeah. And in terms of the quality and quantity of candidates, did that meet your expectations?

Speaker2

Yeah, definitely. Because in the end they submitted and I have met with three candidates and all three of them were really excellent candidates to that point that I wasn't able.

To put like a preference order, they were quite different, but really excellent candidates. All three of them could do the job and match with our company culture. Really, this was. I have never seen this to have really three excellent candidates on the same level, and so that's also the reason why the three candidates have met with our general manager.

Normally this never happens. It's only you know the the selected one.

Only one candidate meets with the general manager, but here the three were really so excellent that our general manager has taken the time to meet with all three of them.

Interviewer

Wow, have you made a selection now?

Speaker2

It has started two weeks ago, one week and a half ago, yes.

Interviewer

Brilliant. And in terms of, I suppose seeing it through end to end, did the Korn Ferry team support on kind of contract negotiations, compensation or was that was that your responsibility?

Speaker2

That was my responsibility, yes.

And I wouldn't like them to be involved because, you know, their fee is a percentage of the gross salary. So for me there would be a conflict of interest if they would actually negotiate this.

Interviewer

A contact. Yeah, interesting.

Speaker2

But of course they had given me the salary expectations of the candidates, so I had something to build on. I also had given a budget range, so the candidates they presented were all within this range, so no issues there, which was good.

And then we made a nice proposal, which was then what? What they did help is once that I had sent the offer to the candidate to the selected one, they helped and they gave support.

To actually like they contacted the candidate, they say, what do you think about the proposal? And they helped to argument, you know, also because we have a kind of a special bonus system.

And so they they explained that the candidate had to look at the total package not only to the let's say the the basis package, the the gross salary, but also to all the advantages we offer. So they helped to to actually convince the candidate to accept the the offer.

Interviewer

Great. And in terms of follow up, do you expect any support from them for the candidate or yourself now they're in place? Would that be useful or relevant?

Speaker2

Oh, definitely. And I hope they will do so because I so the the the person, her first name is Anne. So since she's there, I, you know, regularly I pass by her office, I say, Anne, how are you doing? Does this meet your expectations, etcetera?

Everything OK, but she will probably not give the same feedback to me then to an external and to confer it. So I hope really that they will do a follow up with and like when she's here like for a few weeks and then maybe within three months or within six months.

Give her a call and really ask like how is it going and then give me the feedback because that's really valuable for me to have this, yeah.

Interviewer

Absolutely. And I mean, is there anything that you would have changed about your engagement with Korn Ferry?

Speaker2

No, the only thing is I I cannot recall in details, but I remember when they had sent me the first candidate report, they had only sent it forty-eight hours before the interview.

And so I told them that for me this was too short. Also because it was the interview was on a Monday morning, I think like it's 7:30 and they had sent me then the candidate reports on Friday evening. So I said to them like, listen, this is too short even.

The business day is too short for me because I have meetings like all day, so I need some more time. So please send me the report like like three or four business days before, because for me it's important to read very carefully the report.

And I prepare my interview based on the report. So this I explained. So they adapted for the following interviews and there was also some information missing, but I can't recall what it was, but information that was important to me to have in the report and so they were.

Very reactive and they adapted it for the next reports. So this is something I really liked. And then wow, no.

Really. They were really excellent, very reactive. Also there was like a interview last minute change, like in the morning I had to change an interview that was supposed to take place in the evening.

And they they were very reactive, changed it, called the candidate, made sure that you know it was explained transparently to the candidate. The reasons why the interview was postponed actually.

So it went all very, very smoothly. Um.

No, they were very client oriented.

Very service oriented, very reactive. You know, I I I really felt like like a client. I really felt like a lot of support from them reactivity.

So it was really a great collaboration, yeah.

Interviewer

Fantastic. So would you would you use them again?

Speaker2

For Exco positions, yes. For other positions, no, because actually their fees are quite higher than all the other headhunters in Belgium.

Yeah. So that's something that, you know, we are in the industry, we are quite pragmatic. And so for senior managers, I would work with other executive search companies, but for Exco level or general management of course there again.

And I would work with with Korn Ferry, definitely, yes. And I had to say in the same period, actually I was also looking for a legal director and I worked with a headhunter that is specialized in legal positions. So the only thing they do is legal.

Profiles.

And it was, it was a mess really. And I will never work with these people again.

Never. And if I would have to do this again because it was also exco level and it was kind of in the same period, I would work with Korn Ferry, definitely.

Interviewer

OK, that's good to know. Would you ever consider using Korn Ferry beyond search as as in more of a consultancy level, whether it's leadership development or succession planning or org design?

Speaker2

No, not really, because I think their core business is headhunting and I have partnerships for, for example, for leadership. We have a partnership with a provider which is really excellent and expert in leadership.

Um, I know they also do like salary benchmarks. Um.

These are typically the kind of things that would be decided by our group in Germany. So not really locally if we would do some exercise like this. And on the other hand, I have quite a big HR team. I have thirty-six people in my team, so I have quite some internal.

Expertise actually. So there are quite a lot of projects that I can handle internally because I have the expertise. So no, for me, contrary is really executive search.

Interviewer

OK, great. I think that's it. So unless, is there anything else that you want to share that would be useful?

Speaker2

OK.

No, I think I've I've given all the feedback that I would like to give. So it's a overall very, very positive feedback. They should continue as they do. And I yeah, I I have already shared my feedback, so I know they they know that I'm very happy with the

collaboration.

So no, I think I've said everything.