

Ten Questions to ask your search firm

All search firms are the same, right? Well, no. And to make sure that you pick the right one for your needs here are ten questions you should be asking of them. Naturally, here at Chesterton Gray, we can answer each one perfectly...

Do you work in my sector?

In today's recruitment market it is highly unlikely that any firms are generalist and cover every sector, although many will say they do just to win the work. You should look for a search firm that has experience of your broad sector so that they understand the issues within it and have the ability and track record to be able to network easily around it.

Will any of my competitors be off-limits?

Whilst you should expect any search firm to have some clients who are direct competitors you do not want to deal with a very niche specific company as you may find that many of your potential target companies are off-limits, which will restrict the search. Assuming of course that you require a candidate from a competitor.

Can you search internationally as well as in the UK?

Nowadays business is cross border and candidates are too, being able to move between companies in the same sector with ease, particularly so in the EU. Ask how they can search overseas and whether they have a proven record of doing so.

How do you find candidates?

A good search firm will start with a blank sheet of paper – since every client and their requirement is unique – rather than just looking at the pool of candidates that they already have on their database. The search should encompass a wide remit including direct search, database search and industry networking. They should willingly work with you and share the target list of companies they will search within and also the list of potential candidates they will be talking to. Look for a firm also that sends regular updates so that you know they are on the case.

How well do you treat candidates?

The biggest complaint candidates have about recruitment firms is that they never hear back from them, so try to get a feel for how the firm treats their candidates. They will after all be representing you in the marketplace during the project.

How long will it take?

A search firm should usually present a shortlist of candidates within 3-4 weeks, although this may take longer if the candidates are international or travel a lot. You should expect that the recruiter will meet face to face, where possible, all the shortlist candidates, providing you with a full report and not just a CV.

What is your experience – how long have you been in business?

This applies to the lead Consultant and their research staff as well as the firm itself. A good, long, track record in the industry should mean that they have great networks and sector knowledge.

What makes you different?

The firm should be able to clearly state with passion and enthusiasm what sets them apart. A good success rate would also be a positive.



Can I contact anyone for a reference?

The recruitment world is notoriously secretive but if they are reluctant to let you talk to a client, or a candidate that they have placed, beware. Whilst some clients will always remain confidential they should let you speak to a satisfied customer.

Do you offer any guarantees?

Most will offer a six or twelve month guarantee whereby if the placed candidate leaves for whatever reason they will replace them free of charge.

If you wish to discuss how we can answer each of these questions then please contact **Paul Holmes**, Managing Director, on 0203 1300 393 or 07831 317794 or by email at ph@chestertongray.com

