

OVERCOMING ORGANIZATION ISSUES

Our client was a small, entrepreneurial company that had recently been acquired. The incumbent management was trying to maintain their independence from the parent. We were asked to help them find a new CFO.

Our consultant discovered that the parent and subsidiary management had quite different views of the job. The parent wanted a Plant Controller and the subsidiary wanted a CFO. Local management also wanted strategic financial planning skills, but corporate did not think a strategic skill set was necessary.

Local management did not know how great the disagreement was. Once we made them aware of the problem, they stopped the search for a week and talked the issue through with corporate management. The local managers prevailed. We would find stronger candidates.

After a comprehensive search, we presented two candidates. The favorite was about to be made a very attractive offer by a dot.com company that had also been pursuing him.

But we knew this candidate wanted stability and to be needed more than he wanted stock options. Our consultant arranged for the CEO to take the candidate to dinner after a day of extensive interviewing with our client's management. The CEO pointed out the stability of the company and helped the candidate see how much his talents were needed.

We also knew that management's offer was a little low in light of the competing offer. He asked for and received the flexibility to raise the offer if he needed to. As it turns out, he did. The original offer was increased slightly...and was accepted.

The search took twelve weeks. Two candidates were interviewed. One was hired. The position was filled for 14.6% of salary. What made the search successful was our consultant paying attention to detail: he discovered the differing views of the job. He took the time to discover and understand the motivations of the candidate and to craft an appeal to them. And he knew what it would take to get an acceptance.

MODERN SETTING- OLD VALUES

This is a story of old values in a very modern setting: a dot-com post-IPO...featured on ABC TV...very hip...open warehouse offices...lots of stock options.

With strong, dynamic personalities, the senior managers are start-up drivers. They have a common vision for the goals of the business, but sometimes do not share a common vision for who should be hired. Consensus can be hard to achieve. Consensus mattered because this client wanted us to help them fill three senior management positions. Without consensus about what they were looking for, no candidate would ever be approved by all of the members of senior management. They all had a vote.

Onrushing events continuously overtook them. They were too busy to sit down and give us details about what they were looking for. There was no time. For the creative director opening, the direction was, "Find somebody who is bright."

Our consultant intuitively knew this meant, "Find someone from our industry." There are only 20 companies like our client, so she called them. She talked to their creative directors, found out how the companies worked and what the creative directors did.

Our consultant wrote a qualifications statement from what she had learned and showed it to the chief technology manager. After a few changes, he agreed, happy and a little surprised that she knew the industry and the language so well. She then repeated the process with the president and the CEO. Through good research and diplomacy, she had forged consensus and a recruiting target!

Three candidates were found, interviewed and referenced. Our consultant had won the trust of the senior managers. Her opinions about the candidates were solicited. The senior managers used her assessments as they attempted to reach consensus with each other. They succeeded. The creative director was hired. The cost was 8.37% of salary.

Hard work and trust were the bedrock. Communication and consensus were the foundation. Three senior positions successfully filled was the result. Old values work even in very modern companies.

WORKING WITH A SEARCH COMMITTEE

Sometimes a search is burdened and slowed down with an extra process, but sometimes for very good reasons. And so this story begins...

Our client was an organizational consultant with a relationship to a trade association. The association had asked the consultant to help them find a replacement for their retiring executive director. The consultant knew what she knew, and search was not it, so she called us to help.

The association put together a search committee. We knew that the communication between the consultant and the committee was crucial. As it turned out, the consultant did her job and more. The search was such a success that the association hired a new executive director from our search and, when we last talked, was considering creating a position for a second candidate we had found for them.

The search specification was the product of the search committee, guided by the consultant and our team. But developing the specifications was not just dropping in to someone's office and chatting about the job. We prepared formal documents regarding the qualifications and submitted them for review, as we did for the search strategy as well as the candidates.

Each time we needed a decision from the search committee, the consultant built consensus privately, floating a suggestion to each member individually. By the time the meetings took place, consensus was nearly formed.

When it was time to present candidates...they had all been interviewed by our team and the consultant...we prepared bound books for each committee member. Included were resumes, profiles, reference checks and other supporting material. We presented the books to the committee, walking them through each candidate's background and facilitating a discussion.

With the consultant, the committee interviewed all four candidates, discussing each after each interview and then again at the end of the day.

We had many different clients to delight, and delighted they were. A well planned and meticulously executed strategy, including extensive and considerate communication, were the keys to success.