



The Risk You Shouldn't Take

What happens if you choose not to use the services of an executive search firm? You significantly increase the risk of hiring the wrong person.

Hiring a new executive—especially for the top job—is a critical intervention in the life and development of an organization. Educational requirements, desired experience, and skill sets are all important in the search process—but far more important are the elements that ensure a fit with the culture and style of the organization. Accurate assessment of the candidate's leadership characteristics and personal qualities is key to making the right choice so that the organization will grow and flourish.

Remember that choosing the right person for the job is the most important decision a leader or an organization can make. It follows that *choosing the wrong person is the most important mistake a leader or an organization can make.*

Consider the costs of a bad hire: disruption of the organization's work, decline in the morale of employees, and strained relations with the executive team and the board. You also waste time in determining that the person is a problem and working through the termination. Finally, you waste the time required to repeat the search process and bring the new individual up to speed. Months are lost in the process.

Consider also the costs of a mediocre hire. Often, people already know someone they would like to work with. The better you know someone, the harder it is to be objective in evaluating their capacity to do a job and fit with the culture. When a search is limited to people already known or applicants (people actively looking for jobs), you often exclude the best candidates and therefore short-change the organization by not hiring the best possible talent. When you use a search firm and decide to choose a known candidate, you can be sure that this person is the best there is. This is why proactive recruitment yields consistently superior results.

The best candidates must often be recruited into the opportunity, and this requires a high degree of professional skill in understanding the hiring organization and the job opportunity and in helping lead the recruited candidate through a career decision process. Many fine candidates have been run off by the lack of careful handling at critical moments in the process.

The vetting of candidates through telephone interviews, face-to-face interviews, reference checks, and background checks requires professional skill and refined intuition. Those of us who are good at it and who do it every day make significantly better judgments than other individuals or committees about the candidates that deserve final consideration. Once the candidate pool is narrowed down to a few candidates, all of whom are capable of performing the job with excellence, and all of whom fit the culture of the organization, the finer points of “chemistry,” style, and fit come in to play, and these judgments are best made by the individual or committee responsible for making the hiring decision.

Hiring without help sounds inexpensive, but it is a poor way to save money. This is, after all, the most important decision you can make. Why increase the risk?