



Partnering with a good recruitment consultant

What should you think about when beginning the task of finding a new job? What are the options available to you? How do you choose a recruitment consultant?

There are generally four main ways of securing a new position:

- > Responding to a specific job advertisement, such as print or internet advertising
- > Being introduced via your personal or professional network
- > Working with a recruitment consultant
- > Making direct contact with potential employers

To maximise your chances, your best bet is to employ a combination of the above, rather than relying on just one method in isolation.

Sometimes, the effectiveness of working closely with a consultant can be underestimated. This is due to the poor reputation the industry has developed over time. It is unfortunate that the bad practices of some have tarnished the industry as a whole, as there are some extremely capable individuals and professional firms out there – and I am one of the harshest critics who, most probably, like you have had both good and bad experiences when on the other side of the fence.

The better recruitment consultants are user-friendly and will be helpful in explaining market conditions and assisting you with your career plans. And better still, they're free! Here are my top 5 tips to make the most of the relationship.

1. Choose your consultant carefully

It is always great to be told about an agency or individual that might be right for you. Personal experience communicated by word of mouth is one of the most powerful forms of recommendations possible. So approach friends or colleagues you feel you can speak to confidentially, to understand their experiences. Alternatively, select a specialist in your discipline, who is used to working at your level.

2. The two approaches

Do you want a personalised service, with the aim of developing a long-term relationship with your consultant? Or are you less concerned about developing a personal relationship, as you feel that the value is in a larger degree of market coverage? These are generally the alternatives offered when considering using a small or large recruitment agency. The same could also be said with regards to how many consultants you engage. The more consultants, the less personal the relationship is likely to be as you are not going to have the time to invest into building it.

3. Working together

Once you have identified a consultant you feel comfortable with, ensure you are easy to help. In reality, the 'easier' you are to help or place, the more likely they are to spend time helping you. For example, understand your own strengths and weaknesses, your career goals and job preferences and make sure you communicate these clearly in your cover letter and resume, as well as verbally to your consultant.

4. Communication

When you choose to work with a consultant, you should not be expected to make any sort of exclusive commitment. In reality, your objective is to get the right job for you and that may mean working closely with a small handful of consultants who you feel are most suited to the task. This may take some time to identify those you feel most comfortable working with.

What is important is that there is an open line of communication between yourself and your consultant. This relates to any job search activity that progresses beyond consultant interview. Unless confidentiality requirements exist, there is nothing to be gained from keeping it to yourself. In fact, it could be to your detriment.

For example, you may be in the situation where you are being considered for two roles by two agencies simultaneously. You have a strong preference for role A, but would also happily accept role B. Unless the consultant for role A is aware of the situation you are in, there is little he/she can do to negotiate the most desirable outcome for you. Only the most unscrupulous individual would consider doing anything with the information provided, and you have already decided not to work with them!

5. Keep in touch

Whilst consultants do aim to keep in regular or occasional contact with you, it is a good idea for you to have a contact programme in place. For both parties, the regularity would be determined by how active you are in the market.

Ensure that your consultant always has an updated copy of your resumé, as it is the skills and experience contained within that determine your suitability for roles. If you are being overlooked for roles that you feel you are suitably qualified to perform, your resumé may be letting you down.