

EXECUTIVE SEARCH IN THE DIGITAL ERA

The advent of digitization has obviously changed the best practices and tools of headhunters on all fronts... Thus, various social networks for business professionals are now available in addition to the historical tools, allowing for improved search techniques and a quick identification of key decision makers. But, considering the data overload, despite the data providers' promises, the Search Experts must validate the information thus collected and verify its authenticity.

Indeed, few profiles have a real personal branding policy, ignoring the fact that certain elements, potentially detrimental to their "service offering", are circulating on the Internet, or take a few liberties regarding their data and missions as compared to the actual responsibilities written down in their resumé... In addition, the top management or COMEX members are hardly present on these networks and their identification calls for the use of more confidential sources... Within this context, Networking, the famous "address book" and especially the intuitu personae remain essential. Generally, the Sourcing quality, which is only a part of this process, is no longer the only differentiation criterion, even if nowadays it is easier to become a "headhunter" considering the multiple virtual networks available. Decision-makers are expecting more in terms of support for decision making, notably via skill assessment tools, out of which Assessment is a prime example, but also the search consultant's ability to finalize the Closing and so on... "Expert" knowledge of the targeted market players also facilitates validating the connections, in addition to those provided by the candidate himself/herself. At the same time, training the potential candidates or ensuring their continuous monitoring in addition to the use of trusted assessment tools as regards the needs of the client will make a difference, especially as regards the return on talent. In fact, it is not enough to identify a high potential, it is also necessary to convince him/her of the merits of the approach such as by putting forward the evolution of his/her career in the most objective way possible because the candidate thus approached is, after all, a talent that needs to be convinced. On the other hand, the executives looking to increase their employability are more and more demanding,

looking for meaningfulness and paying attention to the e-reputation of the companies that are interested in them, forcing these latter to develop a credible and, above all, effective storytelling. Even today, 80% of recruitment failures are due to issues of adaptability to the company and its culture, particularly within the first months following hiring. Within this context, the headhunter positions himself/herself, above all, as a true partner of the client's employer brand being ready to support the evolution of the organizations. Thus, paradoxically, the speed of exchange of information upstream is met with an extended time frame for completing the recruitment missions. Companies themselves, which have certainly become more cautious, prefer co-opting by organizing several internal meetings, thereby favouring a collegial hiring decision. Unfortunately, looking for clones is still a strong trend, at least regarding the sector of activity of the company, to the detriment of outsiders and other atypical profiles who nevertheless are very successful in the implementation of innovative systems while having a different way of thinking. Today, head-hunter specialists are still preferred for recruiting middle and top management, sometimes within succession or change management contexts, because their privileged relationship with the market and their expert vision are essential in providing answers to the decision makers while offering the necessary perspective when important decisions are to be made, not to mention the high level of confidentiality to be ensured in often highly competitive sectors... At European level, even though all countries are experiencing growing recruitment difficulties, certain geographical diversities are to be noted. Thus, the Anglo-Saxon search universe is globally more open to sectoral shifts or risk taking, when it comes to adjusting the skills to the mission content. The United Kingdom is still a consumer of international talent,

of the so-called “talent crunch”, and continues to offer training to engineers such as by “formatting” them in-house. In 2018, despite the Brexit, most sectors still recruited considerably, with local players giving most of the time less importance to long-term support once the deal was closed... In Switzerland, the luxury sector has a growing demand for multilingual professionals with knowledge of the local market. Digital projects are on the rise here, both in biotech/ medtechs such as OTC, food supplements and cosmetics, driving the demand for IT specialists, Web development and direct marketing. For their part, German SMEs are continuing their digitization and updating programs for their business models, thereby attracting web developers and e-commerce/Data Management experts in particular. Belgium has entered a period of expansion of the labour market and the Netherlands has also stepped up its recruitments for the Health and Nutrition market. Despite a more than dynamic executive recruitment market in recent years, correlated with a tension due to a severe shortage of certain profiles, companies are not always ready to meet the requests for a better balanced private/ professional life (particularly within the Z Generation), where the “home office” may be a part of the deal, but not only! However, the requirements level remains high, giving a certain advantage to high-potential candidates, who can thus benefit from great opportunities. Therefore, when was the last time you were contacted by a search professional? ■

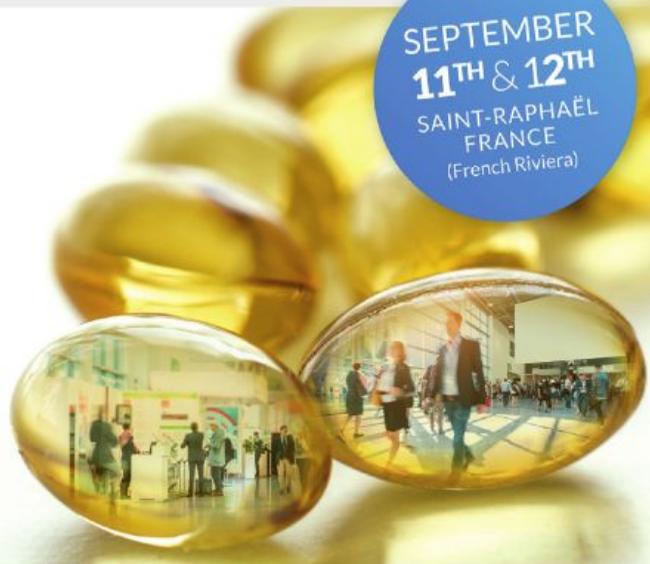
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