

# How Head-Hunters “Hunt”

January is the time of year when firms eagerly start making their plans. Personnel departments are no exception to this rule, and the New Year is generally a signal for head-hunters to start their “hunt” for new managers.

In order to be able to deal properly with a head-hunter, it helps to know how head-hunters work.

The approach used by the standard executive search consultant involves active search activities. In his efforts, the consultant is supported by a researcher who analyzes the target market, and identifies potential candidates. Subsequently, the researcher uses the contact database containing contact information on every person the head-hunter has ever approached. Search activities are mainly focused

on Slovakia. However, for some jobs, it is also necessary to approach candidates from other countries.

At this point it becomes clear what skills the head-hunter should be looking for. The qualifications that the vacancy requires must be precisely defined in advance, so that the search is not doomed to failure from the outset.

After the profile is defined, the researcher gets to work. Through market analysis and filtering databases, the researcher produces a list of dozens of people who could be considered. Several potential candidates are then identified based on the position and the specialisation required, and are contacted discreetly.

Candidates are invited for interviews, the first of which is held in the head-hunter's office or on some neutral ground. At the first meeting, the client's name is mentioned only with the client's consent, so if the head-hunter doesn't mention the company he is working for, you shouldn't be concerned.

After detailed interviews have been held with all candidates and their references have been checked out, head-hunters present the three or four best candidates to the company. The representatives of the company decide which individuals to invite for a personal interview. The meeting is usually attended by the head-hunter as well, in order to mediate the discussion between the two parties. Sometimes, several rounds of interviews are organised (these are not attended by the head-hunter). Of course, the final decision in the search process is taken by the client.

What should you do if you don't get a call from a head-hunter? Should you take the initiative? You might, but on the other hand in doing so you could spoil your chances. Fifty per cent of people who contact a head-hunter themselves have the attitude that the head-hunter is obliged to find a job for them. This is a mistake, as head-hunters work for the companies that hire them.

Before contacting a head-hunter, you should do your own research. It is particularly important that you find out whether the company is in your field. It's enough to send your documents to a few well known companies. Contact them in person and send your CV in German and English together with an up-to-date picture and a cover letter. Outline your goals briefly. Try to keep it as simple as possible and send all documents by e-mail. Wait for two or three days, and afterwards call the secretary to verify whether they received all the materials. References are increasingly important.

Head-hunters are not job mediators; they do not have job offers to hand out at all times. For that reason it is worth the effort to develop contacts while you are employed, and to foster them against the day when you may need to draw on them.

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