OVERVIEW OF EXECUTIVE SEARCH

Executive Search Generally

Executive search has grown over the past century to become a $12 billion industry and has evolved to include consultation in related areas such as succession planning, executive coaching, organizational culture shaping, and associated issues concerning the deployment of human assets.

At its core, executive search is the codification, rationalization, and systematization of what in former days executives sought from informal peer groups when asking for recommendations regarding whom to hire for senior positions. Put another way, the Rolodex has evolved into a disciplined, information-based process of recruiting key executives that is led by professional search consultants.

Search in Seven Steps

Broadly speaking, the process can be viewed as seven distinct, yet interrelated, steps ranging from the identification of the qualities sought in the new executive to the appointment and onboarding of the successful candidate:

1 Strategy Development Identify and articulate the client's acknowledged and underlying needs, any unstated agendas, and the cultural/values elements as well as leadership characteristics sought in candidates that will result in a successful search.

2 Candidate Identification Proactive Search: Use of proprietary files, soliciting recommendations from trusted sources, research exploiting on-line databases and social media, and probing other resources to identify prospective candidates beyond solely those who apply for a position.

3 Candidate Evaluation Including in-depth, face-to-face interviews by the consultant, public information review, and preliminary references, and then presenting a shortlist of candidates to the client.

4 Candidate/Client Interviews Consultant facilitates interviews between candidates and client to assure that each party will learn as much as possible about the other and thereby ensure a productive visit.

5 References and Vetting Proactive reference checks including people not provided by a candidate, public record investigations of civil and criminal histories, and social media reviews.

6 Negotiations Serving as an "honest broker" to provide objective intermediation of negotiations regarding compensation, benefits, relocation and related issues.

7 Transition/Onboarding Monitoring and otherwise facilitating the individual's move to the new organization and continuing to act as a third-party facilitator.

Unique Aspects of Searches for Not-for-Profit Organizations

Not-for-profit organizations are value-bearing institutions for which mission delivery rather than financial outcomes per se is the ultimate bottom line. Such searches typically follow the standard protocol but with particular emphasis on certain salient points:

Cultural Alignment: Are the values, personal temperament, career aspirations, and management and leadership qualities ("running and leading the enterprise") of the candidates congruent with the values and mission orientation of the hiring organization?

Search Committees, especially in the education field, are typically populated not only by trustees/directors (as is the case in the for-profit world), but also with other stakeholders (such as faculty, staff, alumni, and students) who are deemed to be representative of the organization's culture and institutional aspirations.

In most cases, there is an emphasis on the composition of the search committee reflecting the organization's values regarding **diversity, equity, and inclusion**.

Closed and Open. Whereas corporate searches for chief executives are almost always closed and entirely confidential, not-for-profit engagements typically begin with a high degree of public input from stakeholders before becoming closed and confidential during the candidate development stage, and eventually returning to an open format including meetings of finalists with stakeholders — with the latter often invited to provide their comments to the board as it considers its hiring decision.