



## 7 Reasons Why Companies Hire Search Firms

In times of change, a crucial executive-level appointment can mean the difference between success and catastrophe. Last time, your company may have kept this critical search in-house, leveraged its own network or hired a contingency recruiter. But mistakes were made, and you now know that a bad hire to a crucial position can have detrimental consequences that can take much time and expense to recover from.

That's why companies often choose a retained executive search firm for their executive-level appointments. "In contrast to a contingency recruitment, where an employment agency is hired to collect CVs and send applicants to the client company, an executive search firm is retained in an advisory capacity and is engaged in all aspects of the talent acquisition and hiring process, from defining the search through candidate onboarding and integration"

Here are the foremost reasons he offered as to why a company retains an executive search firm to help do the groundwork required for game-changing hires at the senior level:

### 1. It is critical to hire not just a qualified person, but the most qualified person.

Only a retained executive search firm will locate and persuade executives who are not actively looking for a new job, delivering only candidates with the right mix of experience, skills and knowledge, along with the requisite cultural fit. A contingency firm presents only candidates who are likely in their database or who have responded to an ad, with little chance of finding the best, most successful executives.

### 2. You are seeking a candidate with a rare mix of skills.

In this case, very few people are likely to be qualified for the position, a needle in the haystack. "A retained executive search firm directly approaches potential senior candidates who are currently employed and successful at target companies. As contingency firms usually represent only candidates who are actively looking, the one person with this rare mix of skills is likely not to found be among them.

### 3. When discretion is an issue.

An executive hiring decision is sensitive on many levels. It is prudent to keep this information from the client's competition, while being careful not to alienate customers and shareholders. Furthermore, the executive to be replaced should not feel prematurely concerned. "While contingency firms often talk to a large number of people about the search and rely on advertising the position online or in print media, retained search firms talk only to carefully selected people and reveal the client's identity at the latest possible stage in the process. This confidentiality is appreciated by candidates and clients alike."

### 4. You are searching for an executive position that has just been created.

When an executive search falls outside your area of expertise, it is important to plug the knowledge gap with a leader rich in domain know-how. A retained search consultant will invest significant time and effort to get to know your organization, its culture, the responsibilities and requirements of the position, all before initiating the search. They work with you on the needed skill set and advise on the right candidate profile to ensure the long-term success of the new hire"

## 5. You are looking to broaden the senior leadership team's diversity.

Not all backgrounds are well-represented at the senior executive levels. An executive search firm can help level the playing field by conducting proprietary research to ensure equal opportunity. The available pool of candidates seeking a given position is often rather homogeneous. A retained search consultant will work hard to broaden that pool by identifying, approaching and persuading candidates who are normally gainfully employed, but fit the required skills and bring the desired diversity to your leadership team."

## 6. You do not have the time or resources to take on an executive search yourself.

If you already have too much to do and too little time, taking on an executive search can quickly seem like its own full-time job. A contingency firm leaves much of the recruiting process entirely to the HR department or general management of the client, while a retained search firm engages in the entire due diligence process. Beyond identifying and presentation of candidates, a retained firm takes great care in assessing the candidates, often through highly sophisticated methodologies, including referencing, psychometric testing and broader assessments. They support the integration and on-boarding of the candidate, and work to ensure the long-term success of the hire. All this greatly reduces the time required for you and your team's commitment in this process allowing you to focus on more strategic initiatives."

## 7. You want to give your company a strategic advantage through better hires.

Retained search firms are in the business of delivering top performers — the 20 percent that are so effective they are responsible for 80 percent of the results. Retained executive search consulting firms operate on an exclusive, client-centered basis and work only on a limited number of assignments at one time often with deep expertise in a client's industry. They are therefore best positioned to help clients trade up to a top performer who drives results.



"If you want to catch a trophy fish, you hire a guide," said Walter Baker, managing partner and founder at [Pitcairn Partners](#).

"The same holds true with finding tier one executive talent. Nobody knows the employment marketplace better than professional recruiters. They serve as talent guides with the ability to identify, engage and attract game changing talent: those executives typically not looking for a change," he said.

"Retained search professionals have the experience and capability to access hidden talent sources that will never be accessed by LinkedIn postings, applicant databases, or other familiar sources."