

Article S1: Using your Executive Recruiter – Part 1

(This article is for senior executives)

What do you do when you get a call from a headhunter?

Used to be, you panicked. In those “good ole days”, you don’t often get calls from headhunters. And when they call, they usually have something very exciting.

Nowadays you yawned. You’ve received calls from recruiters when you haven’t even figure out how to operate the photocopier in your first job. OK, maybe this is a little bit of an exaggeration. Point is, nowadays everyone is headhunted, a CEO is headhunted, so is an accountant, a copywriter, a technician etc.

So, when you get a call from a “headhunter”, you need to quickly assess if the caller is a genuine “Executive Recruiter” or a so called headhunter. It is actually quite easy. An Executive Recruiter will come across as professional, knowledgeable and courteous. Ignore those who are impatient and just want your resume.

Now that you have a call from a genuine Executive Recruiter, what do you do?

Firstly, you’ve to stay calm and reciprocate - be professional and courteous. Listen to the opportunity. Don’t be impatient or arrogant, even if you’re not interested or the job is less than what you’re currently doing. Keep your options open and most importantly, keep your communication open. While most successful assignments are closed in a few months, some assignments may drag on for various reasons.

We have candidates who were not ready to change jobs when we first contacted them, but a few years later, when suitable opportunities arose, we successfully placed them. We also have candidates whom we have known for 10-20 years and successfully placed them in 2-3 different companies, each time only after they have left the companies in which we had placed them. (No, we don’t ever poach candidates we’ve placed with our clients.)

A good Executive Recruiter may give you pointers on your resume, your mannerisms and the way you carry yourself. If you are selected to meet the client, the Executive Recruiter will prep you. Among the areas he or she may cover are:

- Your strengths and weaknesses for the role
- Re-emphasize key challenges
- Highlight preferences (or biasness) of the client
- How you should position yourself (but never be someone you’re not)

You can obviously ask questions to understand the role. Often, at this senior level, the identity of the client may not be revealed to you in the initial call or meeting with the Executive Recruiter. You can also request that your name and current employer not be revealed to the client at this stage. If you have interest in the opportunity, say so. Don’t be coy with the Executive Recruiter, you not negotiating with him or her. And please be prompt in your response to any queries. Delays may imply you are not interested.

Next: Using your Executive Recruiter – Part 2