

JEFFERSON GROUP CONSULTING

EMPOWERING ACCOMPLISHED SEARCH ENTREPRENEURS & SEARCH CONSULTANTS with VETTED BEST PRACTICES

8 QUESTIONS TO ASK ANY SEARCH CONSULTANT *BEFORE* you hire them

Having been a consultant to my clients for years, but working only a narrow IT search practice, many of my clients have asked me repeatedly how I would select and vet a search professional for them in other specialties. Below is the list of 8 questions I have been sharing with them for most of the nearly 25 years I have been in search. They might not be easy questions, but great search consultants share these questions with their clients and prospects because they have competitive answers for these questions and know their competition does not.

First, how long have they been doing search and, more critically how long have they been doing search / recruiting for your specific recruiting need? Ask them directly, how many professionals like this have they put to work? For accurate vetting, I suggest you ask for testimonials from past buyers, or candidates, who they have placed who do this or similar work, and ask to talk to a buyer and/or candidate to verify the recruiter's skill in finding the specific type of candidate you want them to find for you.

Second, ask them what their track record is for ALL those they have placed with their client companies. For example, in my niche here in Chicago I know that since 2002:

- we completed just over **94%** of the searches on which we were contractually engaged
- that **78%** of our hires are still employed with our clients 3 years later
- that **63%** of our placements are still employed with our clients 4 years later
- and that **66%** of our hires earned at LEAST one promotion

I would especially like to emphasize that last bullet point. Isn't this what makes any hire great? They get promoted beyond what they were initially hired to do? They grow with and become more valuable to your organization over time. If your search professional knows their track record here, you are working with a search professional who DOES understand how their work impacts your organizational success. Hire this search consultant. **Seriously, is there any better measure of how good a search professional is than do their searches have organizational longevity and get promoted?**

Third, what is their process and can they talk about it fluently and share it with you in writing. If they don't have a search process that they can share with you in writing, one that has harmony with how you will be conducting your internal recruiting and interviewing, are they really right for you? And if they don't have a process in writing, truth is, they are probably just going to go to the same job boards you are going to go to, and aren't worth the fee they are planning to charge you. See what their process is, and partner with them to make their process successful with you.

Forth, ask them where they get the candidates that they place. Specifically, where did they find those that they have placed? By recruiting them, from job boards, referrals, from networks (*social or otherwise*) that they have worked hard to build and maintain? You want access to candidates you can't find on through your own efforts, will they give you that? Does their answer convince you that they do indeed have "expertise" and "specialized" knowledge to find the candidate(s) you need? Or are they just a job board recruiter?

Fifth, I would inquire if they have earned their [CPC](#) credential if you are using them for a direct search, or their [CTS](#) or [CSP](#) credential if they are doing contract staffing or finding temporary staff for you. If they don't, you are not working with the elite of the profession, nor are you working with someone who has learned the laws that frame our profession and the work we do for our clients, nor are they committed to earning the continuing education that keeps them on top of those laws and the best practices of our profession. I am thrilled to learn that more and more, clients are asking their service providers if they have these designations BEFORE working with them, I hope it is a trend that will continue. Would you let your corporate taxes be done by someone who isn't a CPA?

Sixth, beyond the above credentialing, in Canada and the United States just over 50 of the nation's most elite search professionals have earned their [CERS](#) (*Certified Employee Retention Specialist*), and I think it should be self evident why working with a search professional who is also a [CERS](#) would be beneficial for an organization who is hiring a third party search professional. Are they [CERS](#) credentialed?

Seventh, how quickly can they do what needs to get done? Though I think this is often over emphasized by buyers who play the hurry up and wait game with those in our profession. Still, I think it is important for planning purposes to have an expectation of the time frame they think will be necessary to complete the search. For example, on average the last three years, it takes me 11.5 weeks to complete a search. But I also know I usually have my work done in 5.5-6 weeks. It is my clients who usually need the extra 5.5-6 weeks to complete their part of the process. With better planning, which I always carefully outline (*and which, unfortunately, is usually ignored*), most of my clients could cut out 2-4 weeks from the overall process if they worked with a more coordinated approach.

Eighth, do they have the bandwidth to do your search *right now*? Sometimes you can have the great search professional, but are they just too busy with other projects? Accomplished search professionals are often in high demand. Can they do the work for you now? If not now, when? Can you wait? Or, what would you have to do to entice them to make this a more urgent priority on their desks?



These 8 Questions developed, copyright © 1990-2010, and provided by:

Jeff Skrentny, [CERS*](#) & JEFFERSON GROUP CONSULTING,

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60606 - 773.463.1362 - AskJeff@JeffersonInc.com

*CERS...Certified Employee Retention Specialist...the most advanced NAPS (National Association of Personnel Services) credential for professionals in the search profession, a credential that *less than 50* elite senior search professionals in North America have earned.

