

Executive Interview

Chadick Ellig (CE) sees executive search as more than understanding a client's culture and presenting candidates – CE is a true business partner that pledges to deliver on its client's objectives. For over 30 years, CE has staffed Fortune 500, mid-cap and startup companies. It offers strong research capabilities, knowledge of the market and a network of high quality executives. More importantly, its clients value its ability to assess the best talent efficiently and conclude successful searches resulting in a win-win situation for both client and candidate. We caught up with CE executives, Susan Chadick and Janice Reals Ellig, who explained the CE approach.

HRM. Why is it so important to get the right talent into your business?

CE. The only true competitive advantage a company has is the people it hires. People create the strategy, execute the business plans and lead others, fueling the growth and success of the company. The right executives attract top talent by their reputation, vision and leadership and build a team that drives business results. Having the right talent – at the right time – in the right place – makes the difference between average versus truly excellent enterprises.

HRM. Why is it increasingly difficult to get the right people?

CE. Today candidates can pick and choose from the best of potential employers. The post baby boom generation candidate pool is small. And the more defined a search is, the more dramatically the candidate pool decreases. Everyone is looking for the same competencies of vision, drive, leadership, interpersonal, financial, and global business acumen. Enticing candidates only with generous pay packages is a thing of the past – candidates are looking for opportunities where they can make a significant impact and be valued. Lifestyle concerns such as location and work-life balance are increasingly important. Companies that can fulfill candidates' 'wish lists' will win them. Those that can't will lose out to the competition.

HRM. When talking to candidates at the interview, how can companies make an effort to sell themselves to the prospective employees? Why is this so important?

CE. Marketing to candidates is a courtship. If companies want to hire the best and the brightest, they need to pay attention to the details of the candidate selection process. From scheduling, to having those who meet with prospective candidates know the do's and don'ts of interviewing. It is about having a positive conversation and making the candidate feel comfortable and welcome while still getting the necessary information to make a valid assessment. Companies cannot treat candidates carelessly; they must strive to make candidates major fans of the company. Interviewers must convey a clear vision of the company. They must demonstrate how the particular position for which they are recruiting will have an impact, and present examples of how people have moved, grown and driven results in the company. Even in cases where someone isn't right for the position, candidates should leave an interview feeling positive and impressed with the company's vision and management team.

HRM. What are the advantages of quickly identifying a prime candidate and focusing efforts on them? What are the risks?

CE. Having an immediate solution doesn't always allow the process to fully unfold. Often going through the interview process and meeting several candidates helps a company refine what characteristics are critical in filling a position. Looking at a slate of candidates helps to hone in on the key competencies that are required. Companies are hiring, not just for today, but for the future. On the other hand, if a process is too protracted, candidates presented early may lose interest or begin to doubt the company's commitment to the role. Search professionals can help companies achieve that balance of expediting without compromising the search process.

HRM. How can the company be creative and flexible in minimizing disruption for a new hire?

CE. The on-boarding process is critical to ensure success for both the employer and the new hire. It's important to communicate to new hires what constitutes success at the company. In addition, companies need to pave the way by appropriately introducing the successful candidate to the organization with regard to not just their titles, but their mandate; what they are going to bring to the company, changes they will make, and how that will effect other parts of the organization. It helps to assign mentors for the new hire – perhaps long-service employees who know the 'influencers' within the organization and understand how things happen outside the formal organizational structure. Mentors can orient the new hire and help clarify the real priorities of the organization.

HRM. Overall what are the most important issues in making sure you get a 'yes' from the right executive candidate?

CE. Getting to 'yes' is different for each individual. There isn't a universal formula so it is important to understand what the drivers are for each person. It is important to actively listen to and understand the candidate's aspirations. Most of our candidates are gainfully employed. As executive search professionals, we work hard to learn the motivator for the individual and to press, during the course of our interactions with that person, to become really clear about what they want. With this intelligence, when the offer is presented and if the candidate's criteria have been met, there is little for them to consider. In addition, employers need to show that they are interested in the individual from the beginning. The candidate must be clear that they are considered to be a critical resource and can make a difference in the organization. Candidates should feel that the opportunity is so compelling, they can't turn it down. The goal is to have candidates feel that they are entering a relationship with a wonderful organization whose values they admire and share, and where they will have a significant impact and the latitude to execute great work.

At Chadick Ellig, we match great clients with great candidates. Everyone on our staff makes it a priority to be our clients' best ambassadors. We handle both clients and candidates with tremendous attention and concern. For our clients, bringing in outstanding talent is the successful end result, but the process along the way is an ideal opportunity for a company to solidify their profile in the marketplace as an 'employer of choice'. ■

Chadick Ellig is the new name for Gould McCoy Chadick Ellig. For more information about Chadick Ellig Inc, contact Christina Gratz, Marketing Manager on 212-688-8671 or cgratz@chadickellig.com.