

Ardent

Search Company

Consultants for Leadership Selection

What You as a Candidate Should Know

By Bruce Dingman

You have indicated an interest in discussing a position we are seeking to fill for a client firm. That makes you a "candidate" in the lexicon of the search consultant. Let's clarify what this process entails and what you can expect from us (and from all ethical recruiters). This explanation is intended to provide information of our responsibility to both you and our client.

First, we are retained by the client firm, never paid by a candidate, on only a retained-fee basis versus a contingent-fee arrangement. We will be paid whether or not you or the other candidates are hired. Consequently, even though you are a candidate we are not primarily serving your interests. Even if we may believe you are "perfect" for the position we are discussing, we have a responsibility to our client to present a panel of well-qualified candidates. So you will have a built-in competition from our efforts.

Overwhelmingly, our search assignments are successfully completed, so there are minimal financial reasons for us to pressure you or the client to make a match. Our fees are usually based on a flat fee. If the client requests it, we will serve as an intermediary in salary negotiations, but our function is only to help reduce communication problems.

If we request references from you, there are things you should know about what will ensue. We do not want references that are likely to let the word out that you are being considered for a position and then have this complicate your current work situation. The worst professional blunder we can make is to be indiscreet and compromise your employment. We take this responsibility very seriously, so please give us names of people who will be discreet if there is a need for confidentiality.

Why do we check references? The knowledge we gain is essential if both your interests and those of the client are to be well served, and reference checking is a tool for gathering that information. No one has the ability on the basis of an interview alone to know fully the strengths and limitations of an executive.

Ideally, we like to get views of a candidate from superiors, peers and subordinates. If we continue our discussions to the point where you will be presented to the client, we may at some point want to discreetly contact references other than the ones you named. To further document your achievements. It is professionally embarrassing for us to have a client encounter a candidate misstatement, whether it involves compensation, professional achievements, reason for termination, educational degrees or employment dates. Material misrepresentations make it impossible for us to present such a candidate because of a concern about veracity.

A last comment on referencing: you will never hear from us what your references said about you. The data we collect is sacrosanct and is shared only with the client, if we present you. Naturally, as a finalist, your references must have, on balance, been supportive of you. Conversely, if you are not presented it would be unwise to assume that it was due to poor references because so many other factors are involved.

We will be as candid with you in our dealings as the situation allows. If our candor is sometimes at the expense of being sensitive and tactful, please forgive us. We will not string you along if things are not going to move forward. You have honored us with your time and interest, so honesty is the

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very least we should do. When the search is completed, we will let you know who was selected. If the client met you and you were not selected, we will feed back to you any information that we are free to share that might be useful to you in future interviews.

Our careers are important and a mistake in changing jobs can prove disruptive and harmful. We covenant with you that if we get to the negotiation stage with a client, we will tell you all the negatives we know about the client organization and personnel, as well as the positive things that recruiters always point out. We take seriously the responsibility of possibly shaping the future direction of your career.

If any of these comments raise questions for you, or is not acceptable in some way, let's discuss it. If this sounds formidable, it really isn't when taken one step at a time. It is important to us that every candidate to be fully informed.

You may be certain that everyone in our firm is committed to these principles and practices.

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