



NGS GLOBAL

SPECIAL REPORT

The Importance of Partner-Led Search Execution

David Nosal, *Managing Partner at NGS Global Americas, LLC*

When competing for a new piece of business, executive search partners typically walk into a prospective client's office, dressed to the nines, and try to sell board members, CEOs and/or heads of human resources on their capabilities and knowledge of specific industries, functions, and companies. They then pledge to take sole responsibility for any and all search assignments awarded to them. If the pitch is convincing, management teams will likely choose to hire those executive search professionals to execute senior-level search assignments for the company. Unfortunately, this is the point at which the vast majority of search partners disengage from the search process.

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One of the things that many businesses—whether small, medium or large, public or private—do not understand is that the executive search partners who sell the work are rarely the ones who conduct outbound recruiting or sell opportunities to candidates. They customarily hand assignments over to more junior associates who do the actual work.

When compared with senior partners, associates tend to have less knowledge of industries, sectors, functions, geographies, or more importantly, the companies they are looking into for search work. If organizations were interested in hiring associates to carry out the search process, senior partners would let the associates convince potential clients that they should do the dialing instead of the partners.

The most important part of the search process is executing the assignment, not selling the work to the client: Who is picking up the phone? Who is representing the client in the marketplace? Who is talking to candidates about the company culture and the business, strategic, operating, or financial issues that matter most to potential candidates? Only in very rare situations are associates exposed to the nuances of a client's strategy, internal dynamics and culture—the very information that is of most interest to potential candidates and which is of the most use to a search consultant in evaluating those potential candidates. As a result, associates typically aren't in the most advantageous position to attract and evaluate the right talent or to act as a true consultant to clients.

Companies should demand that the partners who sell the work, do the work. At NGS Global, the partners who go into an organization to talk about their experience in a specific sector and/or function are the same individuals who pick up the phone and reach out to candidates.

It is really important for clients to understand that senior-level executives have the ability to sniff out the competency of search professionals very quickly. Many executives will disengage from conversations if it becomes clear to them that the recruiter doesn't have the knowledge or authority to answer the most basic of questions around a company. Even though they might have been perfect for the role,

many executives will dismiss opportunities if they find that the search professional doesn't possess a certain level of credibility or experience.

There is also an art to getting past a company's main switchboard or executive assistant and to the candidate. Senior executives may not feel compelled to engage in the search process if an associate doesn't ask the right questions or position the opportunity in the right way, whereas a senior partner knows which questions and data points will pique executives' interest. When associates (as opposed to senior search professionals) call on potential candidates,

clients may lose out on a large portion of the executive-level talent pool they may have otherwise had access to if a partner-level search professional was doing the dialing.

We feel it is important for client organizations to hold search professionals responsible for calling every executive in the candidate pipeline. In speaking with CEOs and other C-level executives about their experiences with search firms, I have learned that one of their biggest

frustrations is when the partners who come in and sell their capabilities don't know the candidates. Clients will often hear other voices on the line during review calls and find out that junior associates are not only sitting in on the calls, but that they are actually calling and interviewing candidates. The litmus test for clients to assess whether or not partners are taking responsibility for the search is to ask every candidate who interviews with the organization for the name of the first person who reached out to him or her. If the person who called the candidate is not identified as a partner on the engagement, I think the client organization should ask for its money back. When the partners who sell the work are not involved in the search, the client is only getting a small sliver of the pie they paid for. Senior-level search assignments are too important to allow partners at traditional bulge-bracket search firms to leverage junior associates to conduct work that is so nuanced and high-touch. Clients should demand, as the NGS Global model suggests, that partner-level search professionals own the responsibility for executing each and every search engagement.

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ABOUT DAVID NOSAL

David Nosal is Managing Partner at NGS Global Americas, LLC.

Mr. Nosal has conducted numerous executive search assignments across multiple industries throughout North and South America, Europe, and Asia on behalf of FORTUNE 1000 companies, as well as small- to mid-sized organizations.

The majority of Mr. Nosal's executive search assignments over the past 25 years have focused on recruiting CEOs/Presidents, board members and other C-level executives into a wide range of global companies - from early-stage private to multi-billion-dollar public firms.

Mr. Nosal was formerly with Korn/Ferry International, where he was Head of the firm's CEO Practice. He also led Korn/Ferry's West Coast Board Practice. In addition, Mr. Nosal was Managing Director for Korn/Ferry's Central and Northwest Regions, overseeing the firm's San Francisco, Silicon Valley, Seattle, Denver, Chicago, and Minneapolis offices. Prior to joining Korn/Ferry in 1996, Mr. Nosal was with another international executive search firm as a senior partner.

Mr. Nosal graduated with a BS degree from the University of Wisconsin Whitewater.

ABOUT NGS GLOBAL

With 17 offices across the Americas, Europe and Asia, NGS Global provides the extensive resources of major global executive search firms along with high-touch service, accelerated completion cycles and superior candidate access made possible by a mid-sized platform without external shareholders. Through our commitment to industry expertise, cultural knowledge and partner-led search execution, we deliver exceptional value to our clients.

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