

Help wanted

How to select a professional staffing firm to assist with the hiring process

INTERVIEWED BY ROGER VOZAR

A professional staffing company can find candidates who are a better fit for your company, and speed up your hiring process.

“The key is to select a staffing company that is a specialist in the area you’re recruiting. They need to understand your company and its culture,” says Heidi Hoyt, managing director at Skoda Minotti Professional Staffing.

Smart Business spoke with Hoyt about the benefits of using a professional staffing firm and how to find the right one.

Why use a professional staffing company for hiring?

A company’s HR person is likely to be a generalist. The greatest advantage in using professional staffing firms is the invaluable industry expertise they possess. A staffing firm will provide access to candidates that a company wouldn’t reach on its own. They are well-connected in their specific field, whether that’s financial or another industry and they are always talking to passive candidates, as well as those actively seeking employment. You want access to passive candidates, not just the people who are on the job boards.

Professional staffing firms also have a broad knowledge of what other companies in an industry are doing, which adds value. They’ll have technical experts in accounting and finance, for example, and will be able to identify candidates and look for intangibles that would go unnoticed without their accounting background.

Another advantage: professional staffing firms weed out lesser-qualified candidates which saves a company time and money. Instead of having to review 100 resumes,

a client receives a select few that have been pre-screened and are right for the position. That service drastically shortens the hiring process, sometimes by weeks. If the staffing firm is doing its job correctly, it’s only sending highly-qualified candidates for review, so that all the client has to do is pick the person who’s the best fit.

How does a staffing firm evaluate candidates?

Candidates might have similar education and experience, but a staffing professional will look for other items on their resumes that differentiate. For example, they might look at past employers-- they know what types of candidates those companies hire. They know that XYZ company is a demanding place to work; that they hire strong people who excel even within a tough environment. The staffing professional will also dig into work histories, and it will carry more weight if someone was promoted regularly at XYZ company, because it’s known to hold its employees to high standards and exceptional work performance.

What criteria should companies consider when selecting a professional staffing firm?

Pick a firm that specializes in your



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area of need; that goes back to having professionals on hand who understand the nuances of the industry within which you’re conducting the search. If they’re specialized, they will be even more connected to the specific pool of candidates that you are targeting. Also look at reputation and how well recognized the company is within the field from which you’re seeking a candidate, and within the staffing industry overall. That will help you select a firm that will consider your company’s culture and evaluate candidates from a behavioral standpoint in addition to their skills.

Most companies hire people with whom they have a connection, and who will be a good fit within a company’s culture, even if they lack some of the specific hard skills listed in the job description. It’s important to find a staffing firm that looks beyond education and job description specifics—one that sees the position from an all-encompassing perspective. You might have an accounting department comprised of ‘Type-A’ personalities and an HR department that’s a bit softer. It’s important that the firm you select understands the culture of the department and the company to ensure the right fit overall. ●