

Introduction

Like every industry, recruitment is full of jargon – headhunters, search, selection, agencies and so on

If you are looking for a new role, you are likely to use recruiters as one source of possible opportunities. But first, it is really important to make sure that you **target the right recruiters** – the ones who operate at your salary level, and for your industry and/or functional specialism. Contacting the wrong recruiters is something you should try to avoid.

However, the terminology used in the industry may be confusing if you are unfamiliar with recruitment, so let's examine the market segments of this sector. This should help you to confidently look at literature or websites and identify whether a recruiter is appropriate to your circumstances.

Executive (Retained) Search

This is the top level of recruitment, the companies often referred to as “headhunters”. They work mainly at salary levels exceeding £80,000 per year and are retained by their clients – mainly blue chip companies – to find suitable individuals through their networks and research. The individuals they are searching for are not usually active job seekers. Executive search firms are paid in stages by their clients. Fees are usually calculated as a percentage of salary (often 33%). The search market is made up of the big, global firms – such as Heidrick & Struggles, Korn/Ferry, Spencer Stuart, Egon Zehnder, Whitehead Mann et al – plus specialist “boutique” companies who specialise in a specific industry or functional area.

Contingency Search

These recruiters operate mainly at the lower to middle salary ranges and are only paid by their client once a candidate has been appointed. Therefore companies may use several contingency recruiters when looking to fill a role. These recruiters rely on their in-house databases of candidates, and on new job seekers registering with them or responding to an advert on their website.

Selection

Selection companies advertise roles on behalf of their clients in the national, regional or specialist press. Sometimes the advert will not mention the name of the actual client. This approach is commonly used for roles in the salary range of £40,000 up to £100,000, although you will see roles below and above this range. Adverts are also used for certain sectors such as the public sector where posts are required to be advertised. Adverts are good method of attracting a larger number of applicants from a wide range of backgrounds (where search may be difficult), but usually the adverts are only seen by active job seekers. When you reply to an advert placed by a selection company they will review all the applications and meet a number of candidates before forwarding a shortlist to their client.

Many retained and contingency recruiters work in both the search and selection markets. They will work in the selection market on a retained or contingency basis.

Employment Agencies

Like contingency firms, employment agencies are paid on the successful placement of a candidate. The employment agency sector is made up of the large national and international chains, such as Reed and Adecco, plus many other local specialists. Employment agencies handle mainly roles at the lower salary ranges, and are particularly focused on administrative, secretarial, industrial, hospitality and technical jobs. Often they handle temporary positions as well as permanent jobs. They maintain databases of candidates, and if you are looking for temporary work, they may offer training and development activities free of charge.

Further information and identifying recruiters

Career Workshop provides listings of recruiters by industry and functional specialism, plus lists of the major employment agency chains and the global headhunters.

See our Research Store for more details at www.careerworkshop.co.uk/documents

The copyright of this document is held by Career Workshop Limited. This document must not be copied, reproduced, sold, transmitted or distributed by any means without prior written agreement from Career Workshop Limited. Please see the website for more information about using our content for business purposes.