



A Guide to Choosing Executive Search Services

Focus on Results

The Challenge of Choosing an Executive Search Firm

Selecting the right executive search firm can be challenging. Many firms present similar offerings, experienced consultants, sector knowledge, advanced technology and global reach. They often have a long-standing presence and claim to possess extensive candidate data and impressive reputations. When you search for “executive search firms” online or speak to different firms’ consultants, the choices can seem interchangeable. So, how do you choose the right firm for your needs?

Making a Distinction

Most companies find executive search firms through personal referrals – 51% rely on recommendations from their network, while 25% use search engines. To make a distinction between those you meet, focus on this key question: **What is the likelihood that the leader they find will be successful in your organisation?**

Evaluating Executive Search Firms

To ensure you hire a leader who will deliver the results you need, consider these four criteria when evaluating potential executive search firms:

- ✓ **Success Rate Evidence:** Request data on the outcomes of recent recruitments. Understand how many leaders hired in the past years met or exceeded expectations. This information, often detailed in a validation study, serves as the strongest indicator of the firm’s effectiveness. Expect the partner you choose to go beyond anecdotes of placements in your sector and present a data-based analysis of their success rate.
- ✓ **Precise Tailoring Capability:** Ask how the firm develops and manages its executive search methodology to ensure work will be precisely tailored to meet your specific needs. How will they ensure they understand your unique context and deliver a quality-controlled solution suited to your exact requirement? The effectiveness of their tailoring approach will significantly impact the speed and accuracy of the recruitment. Do not settle for one-size-fits-all leadership capabilities, generic frameworks or automated models – accurate appointment and fast time to performance requires a precisely tailored approach.



✓ **Expert Consultants:** Effective search and selection of your new leader requires much more from a consultant than having a good network or diplomatic skills. A suitable Expert will understand your industry and its dynamics and will ask the right questions to gain a deep understanding of your precise situation and need. They will be specialists in leader performance and assessment, with the ability to focus on what is key and what is not relevant for success. Today's highest performing consultants are trained and certified subject matter experts in leadership advisory and decision making – they are able to correctly utilise analytical and assessment tools in their work. They will know how to reduce subjectivity, stereotyping and shortcutting errors in leader appointment through track record and personality evaluation in relation to a specific performance prediction: How will a leader perform in a role they have not had before?

✓ **Quality Assured Method:** Inquire about the firm's quality standards and whether they have independent verification. Look for adherence to recognised standards like ISO 10667, which confirms that the firm provides a fair and reliable recruitment service. Strong training and quality assurance practices indicate a commitment to treating candidates well and maintaining high standards. Without defined quality standards, certification and audited standards for fairness and validity, how can you know what result you might get?

While executive search firms may appear alike, methods, quality, and success rates vary greatly. Choose a firm that demonstrates a strong track record of achieving high success rates in recruiting effective leaders. And one who understands your market, your business and what results you want to achieve. After all, the more effective your leaders, the more your results will improve.



ISO 10667 is an international quality standard that provides guidelines for the assessment of individuals and groups in work and organizational settings, ensuring validity, fairness, and transparency. The standard is a certified by DNV as a quality management system demonstrating commitment to quality, consistency, and customer satisfaction.

For further information on our Validation Report or on the ISO 10667, please visit:

<https://www.mercuriurval.com/global/mercuri-urval-research-institute/>

<https://www.iso.org/standard/74717.html>



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