

Strategic hiring in lean times...

During the economic downturn, now is the time for consumers to purchase items to upgrade their household appliances, or purchase more fuel-efficient automobiles. The same holds true for companies -- now is the time to critically assess your in-house human resources, and reach out to the talent pool to strengthen those areas that may be weak. But why use a professional search consultant if so much talent is just walking the streets? The short answer -- because the best talent is still employed, and a seasoned search consultant knows where they are and how to attract them.

There are several benefits to working with an executive recruitment specialist. Sourcing candidates in any employment market is only a small fraction of what a search consultant offers their client. More important is finding the right fit for the position, validating the candidate's true integrity, and crafting and then negotiating an offer that is both competitive and compelling. Just because more people are filling your inboxes with resumes does not make the selection process any easier, and it certainly does not ensure the quality of those candidates.

CEOs who are facing the dreaded task of a layoff are going to do everything in their power to keep their "A" players. The number of A players in any given talent pool has not changed, and it is unlikely that the As are on the streets. However, getting them to look at your opportunity will take a seriously talented search professional.

The passive and inactive A candidates may be even more reluctant to make a move in this environment, particularly to a venture-backed company. Security, or perceived security, will keep these candidates glued to their task at hand, not looking at opportunities in the job market. A true search professional can get the A candidate to listen and look at your opportunity.

In the competitive landscape for talent, it is the counter-intuitive who will win. Now is the time to cherry pick the competition, with the luxury of time to strategically make a move on the talent you need for the

recovery. When the market returns to a more normal level, you will wish you had plucked the tree of your competitors. Carpe diem, seize the day!

The value that an executive contributes to his/her team and the shareholders far exceeds the professional fee paid to attract them. If you believe your company has a long-term plan for a profitable future, now is the time to bolster the team. Partner with a search consultant that is talent-vertical or specialized in your industry.