



## **From Open Position to Open Mind: 3 Keys to Successful Executive Recruiting**

It seems that just about every business publication today is talking about the significant impact of our nation's growing talent shortage on both individual organizations and the overall economy. Research suggests that roughly 40% of employers are currently experiencing hiring difficulties, and in a recent Glassdoor report, 76% of hiring decision makers said that attracting quality candidates is their number one challenge. While many organizations are quick to blame their recruitment struggles on a lack of qualified applicants, however, our experience tells us that plenty of great talent exists in the marketplace, and it's businesses who are failing to properly assess the potential of available candidates.

With most successful companies today focused on continual innovation, it's not surprising that there would be a heightened demand for candidates with more specialized skillsets. However, before organizations begin feverishly adding new job requirements to their open positions, it's important to consider that with every new mandatory skill comes a new opportunity to screen out exceptional talent. Quite simply, the more restrictive you are in asserting what your ideal candidate must look like on paper, the more limited your talent pool becomes. This equation becomes especially dangerous when hiring at the c-suite level, as true leadership potential can never be fully assessed solely by the content of a resume.

To ensure that you aren't excluding any high-potential candidates in your executive searches, below are three tips for establishing an open-minded recruiting strategy:

### **Value Potential as Highly as Experience**

When seeking to fill high-profile, executive-level positions, it makes sense that most organizations would prefer to hire a candidate who has already proven successful within a similar role; the idea of less risk, less hand holding, and more immediate contributions is understandably attractive. However, when determining what skills and experiences should be treated as mandatory, it's important to consider that placing too much focus on a strict laundry list of requirements can almost guarantee that a number of high-potential

candidates will be overlooked for the role. In a perfect world, organizations would view a candidate's experience and potential as a package deal—ensuring non-negotiables are checked off, but also understanding that an individual who is an exceptional culture fit and who is passionate about the position might well outperform a candidate who is simply more experienced on paper.

### **Put a Premium on Soft Skills**

In *Harvard Business Review*, author Claudio Fernández-Aráoz outlines five soft skills that he deems the hallmarks of potential, suggesting that motivation, curiosity, insight, engagement, and determination comprise a person's ability to succeed in a given role. Although such soft skills have historically been undervalued during the hiring process, a new study by LinkedIn Learning reveals that the demand has risen sharply in recent years, making soft skills the number one priority for talent development leaders in 2018. Because of the speed at which both individual organizations and entire industries are innovating, it's now widely understood that positions may require different technical skills tomorrow than today. As a result, having strong executives in place with the soft skills required to continually adapt and lead companies through significant change and growth is no longer a "nice to have", but rather a critical requirement for sustainable success.

### **Think Outside the Industry**

When it comes to making executive hires, industry experience is almost always a given requirement. Despite organizations celebrating other types of diversity within their teams, diversity of industry background is not as commonly recognized for its potential advantages. However, especially at the executive level, many core competencies transcend industry—for example, leadership ability and expertise in driving process, efficiency, and margin are fairly universal amongst qualified candidates. But while a candidate with strong industry experience may come with preconceived ways of doing things, an outside hire has the potential to bring fresh perspective and best-in-class learnings that can be applied to drive an organization forward in new ways. When seeking out your next executive, it's important to keep an open mind when it comes to industry experience. At the end of the day, it's much easier to back train a strong business leader on a specific industry than it is to train an industry guru how to be a strong business leader.

### ***So what does this all mean?***

When hiring for executive level positions, there's a tendency for organizations to place a disproportionate amount of focus on quantifiable experience that can be pulled directly from a resume. While this is a less-than-ideal hiring strategy at any time, today's widespread recruiting challenges make it even more critical that organizations revisit their talent strategies to ensure that all untapped talent pools are being considered and exceptional talent is not being erroneously screened out. In difficult times, a more open-minded approach to hiring is not only a winning strategy, but a necessary survival skill.

***Does your organization have effective talent strategies in place to attract and secure high-potential candidates? At Robinson Resource Group, our seasoned search team is dedicated to providing our clients with strategic and proven solutions to their senior level talent needs. To learn more, give us a call today at 708.738.5040, or visit our website at [RRGExec.com](http://RRGExec.com)***