

# Should You Partner with a Headhunter?

Sometimes you might want to work with a recruiter instead of going through your job search alone. Here's some advice on how to do that.

**E**xecutive recruiters, also known as “headhunters,” can be a great resource for finance and accounting networking today. Whether you are actively looking for a new job or are seeking some career advice, adding a specialized executive recruiter to your network is critical. They have a holistic view of the job market, its direction, and where future opportunities might lie. In a time when your network means everything, a relationship with a recruiter can be a crucial investment.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than 3.7 million people find jobs through employment services. While working with a recruiter clearly offers a number of advantages, it requires some work and patience on the part of the job seeker. Understanding how to navigate the do's and don'ts of working with recruiters can help you get the most out of your relationship with them and ultimately lead to the best outcome.

First, it's important to understand the goals of an executive recruiter, which are twofold:

- ◆ Help you land the right role for

your career, skills, and interests and

- ◆ Find the right person for their client's business needs.

## Hidden Opportunities

It's estimated that 70% of all job openings aren't formally advertised. These jobs are filled through employee referrals, personal networking, and recruiting firms. This is almost always the case for senior positions because executive search firms are often retained exclusively to fill these positions. This 70% number is expected to grow even larger as more companies outsource their recruitment processes. As internal hiring departments become leaner, companies are handing over their full recruitment models and processing to outside firms. It's critical for job seekers to be familiar with this



process because it adds a new element to building a professional network.

## Salary, Salary, Salary

Recruiters are the best resource for a straight answer on market compensation trends. If simply for comparison before your next performance review, tap into a recruiter because they know industry trends, salary levels for particular job titles, and which companies are growing and which ones are struggling. This is unique insight that has been garnered from years of working directly with companies and their executives.

## Determining Your Best Partner

The key for finance professionals is building a relationship with a specialized recruiter focused solely on the finance industry—someone who understands your market, the intricacies of your expertise, and your vision for your future personal development.

One of the best ways to determine a seasoned recruiter is by the size of their network. The best of the best have rolodexes envied by most. Another key indicator is their past relationships. Do they have clients who work with them

for all their workforce planning needs? Do their candidates return when they are ready for their next opportunity? You can also check their references from past clients and candidates.

### Retained vs. Contingent Firms

“Retained” executive search firms are hired to identify candidates for open positions. “Contingency” search firms are hired as partners in the search process, getting reimbursed by a client company only if and when a candidate is placed. Before entering into a full job search process with a recruiter, it’s important to understand the fees associated with your placement.

### The Changing Market

If you haven’t formally interviewed for a job in a while, a recruiter can coach you through changes in the interviewing process. In our business, we now see more group interviews or “speed interviews” akin to speed dating. It’s essential to participate in a mock interview session with a recruiter to navigate this new landscape. Speaking with a recruiter will also help seasoned professionals who may not be familiar with today’s networking practices. The recruiting industry is on the forefront of social and Web-based networking through the typical avenues of LinkedIn and LinkUp IMA as well as more-targeted group sites based on specialty.

### Avoid the Pitfalls

Recruiters aren’t mind readers. To avoid a protracted job search, as a candidate you must be honest about all aspects of your profes-



## Top 10 Questions to Ask a Recruiter

1. How long have you been recruiting?
2. Now that you know a little more about me, is there a specific job you have in mind for me?
3. What kinds of hiring trends are you currently seeing in my field?
4. Do you help candidates prepare for interviews?
5. After today, when can I expect to hear from you again?
6. On average, how quickly do those candidates you work with find a new position?
7. How many candidates are you usually working with at any one time?
8. Are there any companies you don’t work with that could still be a good fit for me?
9. What are some of the things your best candidates do to find new positions?
10. How long have you worked with some of your client companies?

sional background. You should be truthful about your skills and abilities, work habits, and desired salary. It’s also important to discuss your previous career experiences and reasons for leaving prior positions or wanting a new one. In addition, think about any

other information that would be helpful to your recruiter. Rather than having a potential employer or your recruiter find out about a past issue or mistake—legal, financial, or otherwise—through a background check or probing interview questions, it’s best to disclose it to the recruiter so they can help you manage the situation proactively rather than be surprised by it when you’re in advanced talks for important opportunities.

Additionally, you should identify companies you want to explore as well as the ones you don’t. A recruiter can help narrow or expand the list, but a frank discussion of desired targets can streamline the job hunt and make the entire process more efficient for you.

Finally, the workforce has become more mobile, and employees are staying in their positions for shorter time periods. It’s now common for people to change jobs multiple times throughout their careers. As such, developing a strong relationship with a recruiter can be an element of long-term career success. Although an employer may change, a recruiter can remain a constant throughout a job seeker’s career, helping to make strategic career decisions. This sort of dynamic enables recruiters to look for suitable opportunities for candidates rather than waiting for candidates to contact them. **SF**

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