



# **Top 10 Rules to Follow When Working With a Headhunter**

EXECUTIVE WHITE PAPER



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GROWING GREAT COMPANIES

## Top 10 rules to follow when working with a Headhunter.



### 1) Don't overreact when Headhunters don't return your prospecting calls or respond to your emails.

Headhunters don't work for you - since you don't pay for their fees. They are paid by corporate clients - so their #1 priority is to satisfy the demands and time constraints of their clients. If you don't quite fit the laser focused qualifications of what the Headhunters are looking for right now - they simply may not have the time to take your call or respond to your email. So, don't put all your eggs in your Headhunter's basket. Headhunters are just one tool of many that you should be using when making a career transition.

### 2) Keep a detailed and dated log of the Headhunters you speak to and about what.

If a Headhunter speaks to you about a job that another Headhunter has already introduced you to - you are obligated to stick with the first one. Tell the second one thanks, but I'm already aware of that opportunity through another Headhunter. Same thing goes if you have recently submitted your resume for that exact job to the company directly. Working with Headhunters is all about relationships. The better the relationship that you have with

them the more help you are going to get from them over the span of your career. So, check out their Website, look at their bios and ask yourself - "Does it look like this relationship will be a good fit based on their personality and the type of positions and companies that the Headhunter says they mostly work with?" If the answer is "Yes," be a friend and grow that relationship continuously throughout your career.

### 3) Be honest, forthright and ethical with all Headhunters you work with.

Never take info from one headhunter and give it to another. Don't misrepresent your salary and bonus numbers, if a headhunter senses exaggerated or phony numbers all he has to do is ask you for a W2. If you won't supply it, he won't trust you and the relationship is over. Don't offer to do an interview if there is no way you'd take that job or relocate. Going on interviews "just to get in the door" should only be done with the Headhunter's knowledge and direction. The Headhunter needs to explain to his client that this interview is an exploratory interview for other opportunities. And never take info from a Headhunter and then contact the client directly in order to try to save the client the fee. This will definitely backfire on you with both the Headhunter and the company, and it will be viewed as dishonest on every level.

### 4) Be real about past skills, experiences and knowledge.

Headhunters get paid only to find people who are the right fit - those who can hit the ground running, people with very specific skill sets and experiences who will be ideally suited to their client's company and open position. They don't get paid to try out this person or test the waters with that person - experiments aren't tolerated. So if you don't have the exact experience that the Headhunter is looking for - don't take it personal and never misrepresent that you do. It will become obvious very quickly to the client and you will never hear from that Headhunter again. A Headhunter's fees are substantial because he is expected to scour the



globe to find and develop a slate of highly qualified, very well screened candidates. From the vetted candidates, the client can clearly see which candidates have the specific experience they are looking for, fit the compensation range, are open to the location, and are motivated for the opportunity for the right reasons. Any recruiter can source candidates off of the Internet – but there’s a huge difference between sourcing... and SMART Search, which consists of the sourcing, marketing, assessing, recruiting, and training that Headhunters provide their clients.

**5) Be open to exploratory interviews, listen carefully and follow your headhunter’s guidance.**

If the Headhunter says, “Listen, you’re not a perfect fit for this job, but we know the client is open to people with your background,” – follow his lead. Don’t be difficult. When your Headhunter asks for additional info in the form of a cover letter or application – respond as fast as possible. This makes his job easier and shows that you’re a professional -and it will be noted. When he offers to help you with interview prep – listen carefully, ask questions and heed his advice. Always do your own homework too - on the company, the hiring manager, location, etc... Find out from your Headhunter about the full interview process - are there multiple phone and/or face-to-face interviews, and/or presentations required? What defines success? What are the expectations, outcomes, or goals for this role? – the more details you can get the better equipped you are for the interview. Remember to always call immediately after the interview to debrief and to discuss the next steps – even if you no longer have an interest in the opportunity. Make your Headhunter a partner in the process and you’ll gain much more insight and will improve your odds of success.

**6) Supply all the information needed to support your claims.**

Your recruiter will go to bat for you with the client, but he needs to present enough solid info about you to make the client want to learn more. This means that the more specific

information the Headhunter has to work with, the better you can be made to look. By researching the company, you can choose the information that will make you look like the ideal candidate for their open position. Make sure you also provide all computer database info your Headhunter will need to easily recall you when he gets new clients. He will need keywords that spell out all your skills, abilities and experiences, product’s markets, industries, roles, titles, languages, etc... Also make sure you let him know where you will and where you won’t relocate. And don’t forget, if a Headhunter helps you with a career change, be sure to send him a testimonial letter saying what you liked and why you would work with him again.

**7) Always be friendly, never rude, and always help your Headhunter as much as you can with networking.**

The more you help them the more they will remember you, which means they will keep you on the top of their contact list. Provide Headhunters with directories you pick up from tradeshow, updates on who’s been promoted, what companies you know are looking to hire, and good people you know who want help with their career – as long as they fit into your headhunter’s areas of specialization. specific information the Headhunter has to work with,

**8) Focus on the Right Fit. Job satisfaction is much more important than long term compensation.**

Always make sure you convey to your Headhunters that you are most interested in the right fit and that job satisfaction and career development are more important than anything else. This mature approach will garner respect and make the Headhunter want to help you more. Keep your Headhunter up to date all the time. Anytime you improve your resume, get new experiences or skills to promote, change your address or contact information, have friends or job leads or can help with, always keep the lines of communication open and intact. Never burn a bridge with a good headhunter over one missed job prospect. Be proactive about your career - not reactive.



### **9) Be flexible about total compensation and compare money to overall potential of the opportunity.**

Your current or past compensation, benefits and relocation experience may have no relevancy on the current opportunity. Let all those current and past details simply be a benchmark and not a requirement for replacement or increase. When you can get a match or an improvement – more power to you. Where you can't, be sure to consider the whole package – the value of the role, the relationships, the location and other non-compensation issues. I often see many people who will take less money just to get into better circumstances. Make the focus the Right Fit first and then the total compensation will take care of itself. It's more important to be happy than a few dollars richer - it will be seen in your attitude and likely will result in promotion and more opportunity.

### **10) Help your Headhunter negotiate by providing very clear expectations.**

After you are satisfied this position is the right fit for you, tell your Headhunter 3) what salary level you would definitely walk away from, 2) what salary level would be seriously considered, and 1) what salary level he can accept on your behalf. Don't try to control the negotiations between the Headhunter and his client – your potential employer - because your Headhunter knows things about the employer's compensation/benefits flexibility and the breaking point, as well as other candidate statuses that you do not. If you really want the opportunity, partner with your Headhunter - but let them drive the car.

When a Headhunter presents you to a company, you are much more likely to be noticed. When the HR Manager or Hiring Manager says "I'm not sure I see the perfect fit here," your Headhunter is going to address their questions, overcome any objections and sell you – to get you an interview. If you were on your own, however, you wouldn't even know why you weren't considered.

A company that is willing to pay for a Headhunter is a company that takes hiring seriously, and they understand the need to make the right hire and find the right fit. Using the services of a Headhunter requires a significant financial commitment for an organization, and it lets you know they are financially strong and committed to making this hire last. They are making an investment in your success.

Oftentimes, the job roles that Headhunters are involved in, are ones that are confidential and/or high priority. This usually means that they cannot be found on job boards and are not being marketed through other recruiting venues.

Headhunters are also very valuable at guiding you through the resume and information presentation process, interview preparation, and the offer and negotiation process. They do this over and over. As a result they have become experts at improving the odds of your success.

If you specialize in a specific industry or in a specific role – find the Headhunters who specialize in this area. Then ask them what companies and what positions have they recently filled in this area. The more they can show and tell you that's in line with your goals and career aspirations, the more effort you want to put into developing a long term relationship with them.

### **Disadvantages of working with a headhunter:**

Like in any service industry (life insurance, realtors, mortgage services, stock brokers, consulting), 80% of the people in the business are apprentices – in development, learning and growing through the school of hard knocks. 20% are Masters and have time tested systems of excellence in place, and as a result they do 80% of the business - leaving 20% for the apprentices. It's true in the executive search business too. Generally, retained Headhunters are more polished and respected than contingency recruiters, and industry or functional specialists are more preferred than generalists.



Tenure is huge – so ask how long have the headhunters been in the business of executive search - anything less than 5 years can be a real gamble. Anything more the 10 years and you're most likely working with a professional. The rare few that have 25 years, or more, of experience – will definitely stand out from the crowd. Their expertise will be clearly noticeable when you check out their Website, speak to them over the phone or meet them face to face. Also, be sure to ask for a list of references - of both candidates and clients – and if they don't have them you should see it as red flag.

When working with a recruiter you can end up dealing with a whole lot of direct rejection when you reach out to them. But when they reach out to you and qualify you – there's no better way to land a job you really want.

When you start working with a Headhunter, you will need to take considerable time with them to make sure they understand your successes, your talents, and your qualities. The time spent in the process may seem like time wasted – especially if you do not get the job you wanted. This may make you wonder if it was time well spent. The truth is, however, that you probably would never have gotten this job anyway. Good Headhunters will take time with you to help you sharpen your technique for winning the job. Use the tools they give you for better results the next time you go for an interview.

**The Ropella Group has been providing Executive Search services for over 25 years. In that time, we have helped many of the world's largest organizations satisfactorily fill their Executive level positions– and we continue to work with many of them. We invite you to contact us today and find out what makes us different – and why the Ropella Group continues to be the top Executive Search company in many high technology fields.**

## Glossary of Terms:

Candidate – the person who is looking for a job.

Client – the organization who is hiring the Headhunter because they need to fill an open position.

Headhunter – the individual or company who is hired to find highly qualified candidates for the client to fill their open position. Usually recognized as working only on a retained basis with its clients

Recruiter – is usually an internal HR person, a contingency recruiter, or a military recruiter. There is a significant difference in experience, search processes used, and perceived value between Headhunters and recruiters.

Contingency – a recruiter who is asked to fill a position on a straight commission basis. This means no fee is earned until the new hire starts in the placed position.

Retainer – a Headhunter is hired and paid a partial fee in advance, and as well during the process for delivering professional search services – to ensure high quality and full availability.

W2 – an official tax form an employer gives to employees at the end of the year stating the amount of total annual salary paid and taxes withheld.



# SEARCH INDUSTRY OVERVIEW



## Career Builder - Monster.com

Post your resume and get zero assistance with your career search efforts - It's all up to you.



## Employment Agency

Candidate pays for resume writing, interview coaching, and a few leads to jobs - most often *not* directly related to candidate's experience - very hit and miss approach and historically ripe with consumer fraud complaints.



## Contract Placement

Company pays a percentage of employee's wages to C.P. firm. Candidates have generalized skills in engineering, nursing, or admin. roles and are placed in short term to year-long contracts where their experience relates closely enough that, with training, they can do the job.



## Contingency Placement Generalists

Focus is on placing candidates in client jobs - fast, and often with no real focus by industry or niche. More likely focused on functions like sales, R&D or manufacturing in a local or regional area. Only get paid when a placement is made. Very low service and typically pretty inexperienced recruiters.



## Contingency Placement Specialists

Focus is on placing candidates in client jobs - fast, and focusing primarily on a specific industry niche or two. Will sometimes get cash up front or during the search. Mid-level service quality.



## Boutique Retained Search Firm

Focusing on being the best brand in their respective industry niches. Typically very active in associations, PR efforts, and marketing themselves as the niche leader. Process improvements and satisfied clients are the key to their success. Fees are typically paid 1/3 up front, 1/3 in 30 days, and 1/3 on completion.



## Major Retained Search Firm

Typically a large number of offices located around the country or globe. Staffed heavily with ex-industry experts who focus on rainmaking through relationships. Staffs of junior consultants do most of the search work behind the scenes. Typically the marketed leaders have 3 to 5 industries they focus on, and primarily at the top levels of management.



## Placement - Search Firm Network

There are many such networks all over the globe. Most will group together firms who are working in the same "service level" for software, purchasing power, news services, training, and internally-focused networking opportunities. Some of the better groups do externally-focused marketing to corporate clients - to show their combined size and partnership as a global services provider. Offers much broader capabilities and reach, therefore the boutique firms are able to compete directly with the major retained search firms.



## Outplacement Firm

When a company goes through reorganization or downsizing and has to let employees go, often they will ask outplacement firms to meet with the departing employees to assist them in exit interviews, career counseling, resume writing, interview preparation, and job hunting efforts. Fees are paid principally by the company - extra services often being paid for by the departing employees.

# ABOUT PATRICK ROPELLA



**Chairman & CEO,  
The Ropella Group**  
**Phone: 850-983-4997**  
**Email: ropella@ropella.com**  
**Website: www.ropella.com**



Ropella, with 25 years experience, is the leading executive search and consulting firm specializing in the chemical, consumer products, technology and energy industries.

We help many of the world's largest companies find, hire, develop and retain their most important people. We recruit globally in sales, marketing, R&D, and manufacturing, from middle management to the most senior executive levels. At Ropella, not only do we find great leaders, we can also help you build a stronger, more competitive, and more innovative team with our Leadership and Organizational Improvement consulting services.

Nothing is more important to your company's ability to create value than the right blend of talent. Call us today and put our people and our process to work for you.

Having dedicated his career to helping companies across the globe in sourcing, marketing to, assessing, recruiting, on-boarding, retaining, training and transforming top talent, Patrick Ropella has a global perspective on Executive Search and Talent Management.

He has worked across all roles and functions, cascading from the top levels of management to also placing apprentices coming straight out of college. Over the past 20+ years he has seen many individuals he's personally assisted make career transitions, become well trained leaders, join the C-suite at many of the world's largest corporations.

His experience within the global chemical industry as a dominant talent management leader allowed his firm, Ropella Group, to grow to the leading position it now holds with a wide variety of corporate clients with the chemical industry, transition to serving major consumer product companies, energy companies, Nano, Bio and other high technology companies.

Patrick has traveled extensively, meeting with middle level to C-level executives at the top 100 largest chemical and consumer product companies in the world, branding the "Ropella" name globally. He has successfully placed hundreds of senior level executives with top name companies, including but not limited to: DOW, DuPont, Exxon, Georgia Pacific, SONY, Anderson Windows, GE-Silicone, P&G, Clorox, Pfizer, BASF, PPG, Monsanto, Revlon, Baxter Labs, Sealy Mattress, Ciba Geigy, Johnson & Johnson, Shell, Sherwin Williams Paints, New Balance Tennis Shoes, and many more.

Patrick has written for a wide variety of trade publications, newspapers and business journals on subjects related to the topics covered in The Right Hire. His writings have also been published in Germany, Italy, Latin America and Asia.

Patrick and Robbie reside in Milton, FL. with sons Richard and Robert nearby.

## AUTHOR OF

- ▶ The Right Hire
- ▶ The Right Fit
- ▶ The Right Team
- ▶ Over 50 published articles



Patrick Ropella's **SMART Talent Management System** focuses on training Human Resource leaders and Hiring Managers based on the core Talent Management topics of:

**S**ourcing, **M**arketing, **A**ssessing, **R**ecruiting, **R**etention, **T**raining, and **T**ransformation.