

October 2004

[Letter from the Editor]

Dear Friends:

It's exciting that the employment market has picked up so much. Have you felt it? All aspects of the recruiting industry are booming, from retained executive search firms, to contract recruiters, to increased hiring of Directors of Talent Acquisitions, to contingency placement agencies. I predict a US shortage of experienced recruiters, because so many of the bad ones were deservedly unemployed and left town during the last few years, or went back to selling advertising for radio stations, and the good ones seem to now be fully occupied (we're trying to pull a few remaining good ones out of retirement: you know who you are!) We are bringing back staffers who have worked for us before, and are also hiring new ones. Please see the internal job listing section below.

The people problem for companies now is three fold: 1) It will be difficult to find competent recruiters to fill your jobs; 2) It will be increasingly difficult to find and hire the executives you want; and 3) You may start experiencing a severe retention problem, if you haven't already. I'll address #2 directly, and the others in the Ask Valerie section.

Many C-level Baby Boomers are self-selecting out of the job game because the compensation rules have changed and they would frankly rather golf, angel invest, or develop real estate. They've worked hard for many years, earned enough money, and unless it's going to be a "major capital gains situation," in the words of one candidate, they'd rather not participate. Since stock options have dropped quite a bit and base salaries are not increasing much, executives who take jobs are primarily working for the management bonuses, where the goals are often set by the board and hard to achieve, and for the retention bonuses, which means you have to stay around and hit those hard to reach goals for perhaps five years. Lots of qualified candidates just don't need to work that hard for, again I quote, "so little," especially when they disagree with the board on the corporate strategy. Of the available pool, the good ones are in multiple offers yet "not looking," the bad ones make you cringe, and the Gen Xers may be good possibilities if you get them into your succession plan soon enough. So, the phone is ringing again with retained searches, and thank you all.

This month we'd like to thank Gayle Holmlund for her friendship and client referrals over the years.

Take care,
Valerie

ASK VALERIE:

Dear Valerie:

We need to fill a bunch of positions and I just got approval to bring in some contract recruiters. Any advice?

-Staffing Manager

Dear Staffing:

This is one of those ready, aim, fire situations where first you have to carefully chose your weapons. Many contract recruiters have fabulous reputations and do great work. Many others don't. Thoroughly check their unofficial references; make sure that you have enough of the right kind of reqs; solve your internal staffing problems in advance; assign someone cheap to do recruiting coordination so you're not paying \$90 an hour to have someone pull resumes and set up interviews; and get ready to actively supervise and judge results. But first you'll have to roll out the red carpet, because the good ones go quickly.

Dear Valerie:

Whoa. We just lost a SVP and a VP in a two-week period. This is really going to kill us. Any advice?
-Stunned

Dear Stunned:

First, you need to find out why people are leaving, and see what you can do to fix it. Then, identify whoever's still there and valuable, and proactively go talk to them and find out how they're feeling. Treat each valuable person as a critical individual and do whatever you need to do overcome any problems they're having that may make them want to leave, including offering telecommuting, part-time, or attempting to tackle head on the 'real issues' affecting the organization.

Dear Valerie:

I'm feeling guilty that I've stopped caring about climbing the corporate ladder, and just don't care if I ever get more respect professionally, or another promotion, or make more money. I seem to have changed my priorities, and want to focus on my health, finding a wife, maybe learning how to cook, and my life. I'm not rich by Silicon Valley standards, but to the rest of the world I'm rich and crazy, because I've sacrificed everything for a J-O-B. I'm sorely tempted to just hang it all up and go spend time in a jungle. Will I regret it?
-Lost but Found

Dear Lost But Found:

I have never had a career counseling client or even an acquaintance that has given up a day job to do something else, and who has said that they regretted it. I have also never met anyone who has moved to a new area for the lifestyle and regretted it. As long as this isn't capricious or mood disorder-based, I say "Go For It"!

SPECIAL EVENTS:

International Career Development Conference
October 27-31, 2004, Sacramento, CA

Valerie Frederickson and Senior OD/HR Consultant, Rich Stiller, will be the featured speakers at *The Role of Merlin to King Arthur: Counseling and Coaching at ICDC*, the world's largest conference for career development professionals.

2004 Corporate Venture Capital Summit
New York, New York

Presented by young Startup Ventures, featuring a Who's Who list of over 20 corporate VC speakers, showcases of emerging companies, and high intensity networking.

Rules of the Road: What the Board Expects from the CFO
December 1, 2004, Washington, DC

In this environment of increased scrutiny on financial operations, what does the board expect from the Chief Financial Officer? This conference will address challenges facing the CFO as she or he navigates a new, more in-depth relationship with the audit committee. The faculty will feature seasoned CFOs, audit committee chairs and other corporate directors who will share best practices in defining their roles and walking that fine line between their respective responsibilities.

CURRENT CONSULTING PROJECTS:

Studies show that Chief Executives spend up to 60% of their time dealing with People Problems. This section gives you a feel for current critical HR and management issues.

- Building plants in China
- Outsourcing to Asia
- Global expansion
- Executive team communications
- Management training
- Organizational assessment of field sales teams
- Board of Directors development
- Cultural assessment and recommendations
- Executive coaching
- Succession planning
- Outplacement

SEARCH PRACTICE:

We accept resumes from all C-level executives, from Board members, and from all HR professionals. Email your resume in MS Word format to recruiting@vfandco.com.

CURRENT SEARCHES:

Vice President, Professional Services (lower Peninsula)
Vice President, Sales (Asia-Pacific)
General Manager/Senior Director Enterprise Solutions (two positions, upper Peninsula)
Vice President, Human Resources food and beverage industry (South San Francisco)
Vice President, Human Resources software (Redwood City)
Product Marketing Director (upper Peninsula)
Supply Chain Logistics Director (upper Peninsula)
Customer Service Manager (mid Peninsula)
Patent Attorney (upper SF Peninsula)
Patent Agent (upper SF Peninsula)

VF&CO IS HIRING:

We are expanding our team! Email your resume in MS Word format to recruiting@vfandco.com.

Experienced Retained Executive Search Consultants
Executive Search Researchers and Candidate Developers

Contract Recruiters
Business Development Executive
Experienced, Business Development-oriented HR Consultants

RECENTLY CLOSED SEARCHES:

Director, Business Development and Channel Sales (EMEA)
Strategic Account Manager (Germany)
Senior Director, Human Resources (Santa Clara)
Director, Compensation/Benefits/HRIS (Mountain View)
Executive, Human Resources (Auburn, CA)