

SPOTLIGHT

Operational Experience as a Differentiator in Executive Search



Dan Veitkus is the CEO & managing partner of Corsica Partners, a global executive search, recruitment process outsourcing (RPO) and growth advisory firm, founded in 2006 on the premise that there is no substitute for actual operating experience when it comes to effectively serving clients. In this interview,

Mr. Veitkus shares the challenges in finding the best fit talent for their clients and discusses how firms should look at boutique firms vs. larger generalist firms.

Why is securing the best talent and best fit such a difficult challenge for companies and what can search clients do to tip the scale in their favor?

Fundamentally, every client should start with these questions: Who are we trusting with our story? And what is our process to ensure a superior and memorable Candidate Experience? Let me unpack this a bit further. We all know the best candidates are often passive and seldom looking for their next role. They are successful, proven professionals who time and again deliver qualitative and quantitative results for their shareholders. These discerning executives and sought-after individual contributors are, by default, very selective. They are not easily persuaded nor are they quick to respond to typical recruiting techniques. And in today's market, they find themselves inundated with inquiries from headhunters and staff recruiters all desperately trying to get their attention.

What I know to be true as a former tech executive and as an executive coach and recruiter is that exceptional talent relies on trusted advisors to help them navigate the field of opportunities. They expect these trusted sources to do the heavy lifting and homework required to rule out opportunities that simply don't move their career goals forward. This is the role a great executive search consultant should play. These career advisors have earned the credibility to get the attention of sought-after candidates and they have the business and relevant technology acumen to competently articulate the business and personal value of a new opportunity. Access to the best talent, with limited or no restrictions, remains one of the most compelling reasons for clients to engage professional, boutique search firms.

For these reasons, we coach our clients to select a firm and a professional recruiter that is truly capable of serving them as a trusted advisor and an exceptional representative of their corporate and cultural brand. Equally important, and it's worth repeating, "respect the recruiting process" and don't cut corners that eliminate important reference checks and points to validate, no matter how impressed you might be after your first interview. A great interview doesn't mean you've found the best candidate. And we consistently coach clients to appreciate that every candidate may be a potential source of referrals, a potential customer but increasingly a digital advocate or detractor of their brand. This is particularly important to understand and embrace – candidates are more likely to take to social media to share their experience with your brand than ever before.

How do boutique firms differentiate themselves from the big brands when trying to win a search?

Well managed boutiques offer clients and candidates the similarity of experience that comes with selecting luxury consumer products and services brands. The collective focus and shared value proposition of boutiques includes - a high touch, high quality, personalized and proactive service that by design is deliberately organized to serve the preferences of a sophisticated consumer of search services. The largest firms, in practice, represent a commodity style experience with partners and experts showing up for the sale or if a crisis is escalated but seldom do they own the client's search from start to success or personally vet all candidates presented.

Another core competency that matters to clients as well as candidates is the actual operating and practitioner experience of the executive headhunters they are working with. Certainly, that is the case behind our firm's success and the foundation of the Corsica Advantage™. Our partners are all former technology executives who spent decades in real world operating roles, and I believe this uniquely positions us to combine experience-based insights and an informed perspective to deliver an unparalleled experience for our clients – in both recruiting and coaching.

Finally, you should look at the quality of Candidates boutiques can source and close. As a global boutique, we offer our clients access to the best, most desirable candidates – the star athletes – in every region, with very few restrictions on candidates or target companies. Size does matter and we know from experience that nimble, agile, experienced recruiters with minimal restrictions to access A player candidates is the key requirement to pursue and deliver the best draft choices for clients.

What's the secret ingredient in what you have described as the Corsica Advantage™ and how does this translate into long term relationships with your clients?

Our client portfolio is global and extensive, ranging from Fortune 100 brands to private equity, venture and family office backed companies that require exceptional candidates and value "white glove" service from their talent acquisition partner. Whether the client is early stage, high growth, at the crossroads of a transformation or simply desires to experience a better professional search outcome, we make the delivery of successful candidates a personal pledge. We've been delivering transformational, exceptional candidates for our clients since 2006, with over 4K successful placements to date.

And I do believe it all comes back to this fundamental point: We speak the language of business. All our partners have been operators, business builders, have been on the buy and sell side of company transactions, before entering the field of executive search. This context is invaluable. Convincing the best candidates to come to the table and coaching executives to the next level of their professional game – this is personal for our team because we've been on the other side of the table, exactly where they are today.