

PROFESSIONAL / RESUME
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How to Execute Your Recruiter - Headhunter Campaign

First – Is There a Difference Between a “Recruiter” and a “Headhunter”?

The simple answer, for our purposes here is “no.” But let’s start out by defining what we mean by the term “recruiter” or “headhunter.” Just to be precise, you can think of this type of person or organization as an “Employer-Paid Recruiter or Headhunter.” In this case we mean an individual or an organization which gets paid by a company (could be a non-profit, but 98% of the users of “headhunting” services are private sector organizations – companies, corporations, etc.) to find and refer candidates for employment. The companies/corporations pay the recruiter/headhunter after a hire is made.

Strictly speaking, when many people in the hiring world use the term “recruiter” they are often speaking of an individual who works for a company in their Human Resources department within the hiring or “recruiting” function. The term “headhunter” was commonly used to identify an agency who helps organizations find top executives, working from a detailed specification description (thus “headhunter”).

For our purposes within this campaign, the terms are interchangeable. What is important for your purposes is that no individual or organization on this list will ever ask you for money. Their fee is paid by the company.

What are the “Levels” of Employer-Paid Recruiters – Headhunters?

Yes – you can think of this group as having a scale which starts on the low end with “temp agencies”, then the next run is “permanent placement contingency recruiters”, and then “permanent retained recruiters.”

On the “low end” of the scale of this type of an organization is a temp agency. Company X needs to replace an Administrative Assistant, or a Receptionist, or a Warehouse Worker for a day, a week, or more. They contact the temp agency. The temp agency supplies the worker. The worker is paid x amount (say, \$15 / hour just as an example). The company pays the agency a higher amount (say, \$25

/ hour), and the difference (\$10/hour) is the agency's fee. Many of the temp agencies have a feature known as "temp to perm" placement, in which they will provide a candidate to a company, who will then give the person a "tryout" of a certain period of time. If the company then wants to hire the person as a full-time employee, they have an existing arrangement under which they will pay the agency a placement fee.

The next rung on the ladder is "contingency recruiters". These are organizations which are paid to find and place individuals for permanent positions. They do it under a "contingency" arrangement, in which their payment by the hiring company is "contingent" upon the selection and hire of their candidate. Under this scenario, a company who, for example, is seeking a Senior Financial Analyst, might contact the three to five agencies which they have worked with in the past who can produce such an individual. The companies are, in effect, competing against each other. If a position pays between \$35,000 and \$75,000 then it is highly likely that it will be given to contingency recruiters.

It is important for you to know that if a contingency recruiter contacts you for an interview, it means that he/she believes you are either THE best candidate for the position they have or one of maybe two or at most three. It also means that he/she will advocate for you, as they will get paid if you win the job. Finally, contingency recruiters can sometimes be a bit pushy and difficult to deal with because of the "feast or famine" nature of their compensation plan. They have a lot on the line every time a candidate goes for an interview, and sometimes can be a bit abrasive, or seem that way to clients.

Finally, the "retained" recruiters. These are "top of the line" agencies – which typically have a long and established relationship with the organizations they work for. The organizations have so much trust in them that they "retain" them for the search – which means that the agency is NOT competing with other recruiters or headhunters for the fee. The approach of a retained recruiter reflects this. He or she is, in effect, an outsourced executive recruiter for that company. They usually are given the responsibility of finding three to five "vetted" candidates, who they then present to the company. Retained recruiters often are handling jobs at 100K and above.

Getting Started

You have a long MS Word file which has personalized mail-merged letters to employer paid recruiters (also known as ‘headhunters’, ‘placement agencies’ or ‘employment agencies’). These are all employer-paid services. None of them will charge you for what they do, even if they help you find a job. The purpose of this memo is to explain what the ‘campaign’ actually is, how to implement it, how to follow up on it, and what kind of results to expect.

What the Campaign Actually Is

This is one of the most potentially powerful tools you will have in job search. However, it does not guarantee a result, and it may take some time for results to appear.

Here is how the file was created. We wrote a standardized letter to go out to recruiters. We then went to a commercial database of employer paid recruiters, which has 14,400 agencies listed nationwide. Agencies can be accessed by geography (state, area code), the industries they serve (i.e. aerospace, banking, manufacturing, etc.), functional areas of employment (accounting, sales, management) and compensation level (many have a ‘minimum salary’ they handle – some of which are \$100,000 and above).

This specific database was selected based on the specifics of your search. Let’s use an example: Imagine that Jason is a sales professional who lives in West Hartford and earns \$80,000 a year. He wants to stay in the area, and he is flexible as far as what industry he works in. We would select geography by area codes – 860 and the contiguous area codes 413 and 203. This is because that although there are some recruiting agencies which are narrow in their scope (for example, focusing on the construction industry only) and work nationwide, the reality is that the majority of positions which an agency will have will be within an hour’s drive of where they are located. This is because, if they are a multiple industry, multiple function agency (the majority of them), they will have most of their open positions as a result of contacts within the local and regional business communities. Next, we would indicate “sales” as the function, the industry we would leave open, and we would probably put an upper limit on compensation – eliminating, for example, any agencies which only work with a

\$100,000 or above minimum salary. (These are true 'executive' search firms and wouldn't have interest in his background).

Okay, so then what happens? The database is very powerful. It has not only the normal 'contact information' for each agency (address, phone number), but it also has the personal e-mail addresses of the primary contact in the agency and in some cases additional contacts as well. This is huge.

Why? The reason is that there are other services you can find on the internet which will claim to send your resume out to recruiters. These might be called "Resume Zappers" or "Resume Blasters." They claim that for a fixed amount of money – say \$59.95, they will immediately send your resume out to literally thousands of recruiters – as many as 3,000 or even 5,000.

We have had a number of clients use these services – only to find they get absolutely no calls from recruiters. Why? Two possible reasons. One is that the service they used was possibly fraudulent – and didn't send the resumes out. Possible, not necessarily likely. Second is to look at this from the recruiting agency's perspective. Imagine if every day your agency got another 35 resumes sent to you from good old 'resumezapper.com.' How much attention would you pay to any of these resumes, knowing full well that the same resume is in the hands of 3,000 or 5,000 other recruiters? I can just picture the agency viewing anything like this as "spam" and hitting the 'delete key' – and your resume is never heard from again.

Our database has the recruiters' actual personal email address, and it is listed as part of the address in each letter. The letter itself is mail merged, and it uses the recruiter's name and the agency's name a couple of times in the letter. Now you have a personalized letter. And while the recruiter may suspect that others are getting your resume, they don't really know – and it is a very good personalized approach.

How to Implement the Campaign

This is a very simple ‘cut and paste’ operation. Here is how to implement the campaign:

1. Have the recruiter campaign file open in MS Word. Have another window open with access to the internet, and your email account open, ready to send an email. And have the resume you are going send saved on your hard drive – either in “My Documents” or else in a sub-directory you have created just for the search.
2. Go to the first letter. The vast majority of them will have an e-mail address as the bottom line of the inside address. If the first letter, by coincidence, does NOT have an email address it means that the agency has not provided one – and you should skip that letter and go to the next. For the sake of this example, we will imagine that it does have an email address in it.
3. Put the cursor at the top left of the page and roll the cursor down to the bottom of the page, so that the entire letter, is highlighted, including the P.S. Hit “Control-C” (Copy). (Basically, copy everything from the letter)
4. Next, open up your window with your email account in it and move the cursor to the top left of the open window in which you would normally write an e-mail (the body of the email). Now hit “Control V” (Paste). The letter will appear in the e-mail window.
5. Now you need to put the recruiter’s e-mail address in the proper place. You could read the address and type it in. But a better way is to block and copy the address from the letter – removing any chance of typing error. Move your cursor to the front of the email address and highlight the e-mail address only. Hit Control-C. Then move the cursor to the rectangular window which has “To or recipient” in it. Hit Control-V. The address will now be in the correct window.

6. Now move the cursor to the “Subject” section, directly beneath the “to” or “recipient” section. Type in “Candidate for Placement.”
7. Now move your cursor back into the body of the e-mail where your letter is. Use your e-mail’s ‘attach’ function (which may also be labeled ‘insert’). Each e-mail type will be a little different, but when you select it you will usually have another pop-up screen which will show “My Computer” – usually set to “My Documents” subdirectory. This is why it is easiest if you have your resume in this subdirectory.
8. Assuming it is in “My Documents,” type in the first several letters of the resume and put a star (*), then hit “Return”. Your resume will be one of the files highlighted. Click on it. Go through whatever procedure you need to in order to attach that file. My recommendation is that you send BOTH MS Word and PDF versions. Most agencies have a database which they “word search” and will want the MS Word for that purpose. But if you include the pdf file, they can send that off to potential hiring companies – it looks better visually. In some cases, such as Yahoo.com, you will have to click a couple of more times to do an anti-virus scan. Once you have the hang of this, this will all become automatic.
9. Once you are back at the screen with the letter, and showing the resume which is attached you are ready to “Send”. Do so.
10. Now go back to the letter file. Move your cursor down to the next letter. Repeat the process.
11. If you are working on a ‘dial-up’ connection this will take some time. On a broadband (DSL, cable modem) it will go pretty quickly. We have done this on behalf of clients and find that, once a good rhythm is established, you should be able to get out 30-40 of these an hour on a broadband connection.
12. It is a good idea to do the entire project, or as much as possible, at one sitting. If your file is too long, you might find it easier to break the file up into two or more segments,

rename those segments, and do it one segment at a time. For example, if you have 120 recruiting agencies and you can only get an hour at a time, you would break it up into four sections.

13. You can “edit” your lists by not making certain send-outs. You may well have certain agencies which are highly unlikely to be able to work with you. For example, “Adecco” appears on many lists – often with multiple offices. This is because Adecco lists MANY functional areas and types of businesses. However, a large portion of their work is of the “temp to perm” type, and you may want to eliminate them as a way of shortening your list. Similarly, if you see an agency with a name which indicates that they are not in your area of interest (such as “Hospitality Search Associates” if you are in the financial services industry), you can skip them as well.

What Happens Next – And How to Follow Up

There are some predictable things which will happen. One is that a percentage of these will kick back to you by return e-mail, indicating that there is no such e-mail address. This is to be expected with any such database. There may be up to 20% kickback – as e-mail addresses may have changed, or possibly been given incorrectly, or the agency may have gone out of business. Do not worry about those kickbacks. With a large enough send-out you will get your effect. So, when you get the kickbacks, just wipe them out and move on.

The next thing that will happen is that you will get some ‘automated’ responses. Some recruiters will set up an automated response system. It might be a little ‘jump through the hoop’ exercise – asking you to fill out certain information for them. By and large, we recommend that you go ahead and jump through these hoops. All this is costing you is time. The agencies will not sell you anything. If you are getting a response, we recommend you follow up. An exception to this might be – and you will have this on some occasions – if the amount or type of information is just ridiculous. An agency that wants you, for example, to write several essays about your career goals and provide you with letters of reference, etc. before they will talk with you.

The third thing that will happen is that you will be contacted by recruiters – either by e-mail or by phone. For this reason, we recommend that you check your email fairly regularly after you have done a campaign. If they call by phone, they may be very helpful, or you may find yourself in a “what is the least amount of money you will accept” discussion. Do not be offended by this type of discussion, or discouraged if at first the recruiter seems almost negative on the phone. Some of them will be – and it is fundamentally a type of negotiating tactic. This is covered in detail in another file on working with recruiters. Remember – these people have access to jobs – many of which are not being advertised. A recruiter may give you the break of your career. Treat them with respect – until and unless they demonstrate that they are not deserving of that respect.

It is worth mentioning that, unless there are reasons not to do so, we recommend you go out on at least one interview if a recruiter asks you to. If you turn down an interview opportunity, that recruiter may well conclude that you are simply not serious about your search and may be reluctant to give you a

second opportunity. We recommend, in fact, that you go out of your way not only to go to the interview, but to do well in it. The recruiter WILL get feedback on the interview. And if you have been enthusiastic, passionate, prepared, etc., it will reflect well on that recruiter and on you as well. Even if you don't get the position, the recruiter will realize you are a 'live' interview – and will sometimes go out of his or her way to get you another one. You represent a possible 'meal ticket'.

What Type of Results to Expect

This will vary enormously from search to search. Two examples. Earlier in 2004 we did a campaign of approximately 110 recruiters (contiguous area codes) for a woman in retail management. We told her not to expect much – or any – response for a week or two. She got six calls within the first 48 hours. In another search, we sent out over 800 resumes on behalf of a \$150,000+ executive – who was doing a multi-regional, national type of search. After sifting through all of the automated responses, and so forth, he ended up with 6 recruiting agencies which were real candidates to assist him. A couple of months later he took a job at \$175,000 a year – provided by one of those agencies. It is worth mentioning that the initial contact the recruiter made with our client was NOT for the position which he eventually accepted. It was another position, which turned out not to be the right fit. But our client was very enthusiastic and properly aggressive working with this recruiter, getting in touch with him regularly and giving him examples of the kind of position he would fit best in. When one came along, he was the first one contacted.

So by those examples, we had a low of 1% (but a great actual outcome) to a high of 6%. You may be surprised at the relatively small response rate. Don't be – we're looking for quality responses, while not focusing on the quantity of responses. These numbers are very typical – in fact good – for this type of direct marketing campaign. Here is a little more detail on how it works. Let's go back to the salesperson from West Hartford. We just checked – there are 118 firms in the three area codes (860, 203, 413) which indicate the firm handles 'sales' – with a minimum salary of \$100,000 or less. Sounds like a large number.

However, this does not mean that there are 118 firms dedicated solely – or even mostly – to sales recruiting. There are probably actually only 8-12 firms which do that. The other 100+ are firms which handle sales, but also handle other types of searches. When the database company contacts the agency, the agency is asked to list all of the functions and industries they handle – and most of them list multiple functions and multiple industries. There really are only two ways to find out which agencies are the ones who might work with you – call every one of them or do this type of campaign.

Why the variance and what should you expect? The variance is based on a couple of factors. The most important of them is how specific your skill set is and how closely you are seeking a job that is a logical one based on your background. For example, if you are a public school teacher who wants to sell pharmaceuticals, you may end up someday making a very good pharmaceutical sales rep (we have just such an example), but the chances are basically zero that a recruiter will work with you and submit you as his or her candidate for that position. He or she is looking for someone who has already sold pharmaceuticals, or perhaps medical supplies at the least.

So, if your search is a traditional ‘career continuation’ your chances are greatly improved that you will be contacted by one or more recruiters. If you are doing a ‘career transition’ it is far less likely – but by no means impossible – that you will be contacted and helped by a recruiter. What it really turns on is if your background has one or more specific things which a recruiter is looking for in a specific position which they have in their in-box. And have no idea what those things might be. Maybe you worked for a ball bearing manufacturer early in your career – and in another position was involved with logistics. You just may be the ‘solution’ to a problem a recruiter has. By sending out a campaign in such a large number, you are letting the ‘law of averages’ work for you.

Another factor is the compensation range you are seeking. As a rule of thumb, the higher the level of compensation you seek – at a point - the lower percentage response you will get on a campaign. Let’s use two extremes. On one side is an administrative assistant seeking a \$40,000 salary.

On the other side is a \$250,000 a year C-level technical executive. Well, the agencies which handled administrative assistants will be very likely to have one or more open positions when you contact them. But the ‘high end’ retained recruiting firm is far less likely to be looking for a person with exactly your credentials. And the higher the job and salary, the more true this is. We find that the highest percentage results will be for clients seeking \$40,000 to \$80,000.

However, there is another side to this. That is that although the ‘high end’ search firms (called ‘retained’) will have a much slower and far lower percentage response, the quality of the positions they will talk with you about are quite high. In the early 1990’s we started using this type of recruiter campaign. One of our first clients was a technical executive with a nuclear engineering degree who was doing a national search and was seeking \$150,000 or more (probably \$200,000 or more in today’s dollars). He purchased from a database company the mailing labels to all retained recruiting firms in

the country – more than 1,000 in number. And he sent – through the mail (‘snail mail’) his four page resume to every single agency.

Not understanding the system, at the time we expected his phone to be ringing off the hook. First week – no response. Second week – no response. A month went by – no response. Another month went by – no response. Black hole of the universe. He was so distraught that he started actually calling sample agencies to see if in fact they had received the documents. They had. So he waited.

In month five, he got his first call. In the next six weeks, he got two other calls – a total of three, from which he got two offers – which averaged \$225,000 in compensation. Why? Because he had a great background, but these high end agencies work on a small number of searches at any one time. But his resume was there when a position came up for which he was qualified.

Another example from the early 1990’s was a very small mailer we did for a woman client with an accounting background. We had six firms listed and sent the resume and a cover letter to all of them. The candidate never heard a thing. For three years. Then, astonishingly, in year three she got calls from two of those six firms – within a space of a couple of weeks. So, she came to us to get her resume updated.

This makes one of the very best points about the value of doing this kind of campaign. You are, in a very short period of time, putting your excellent material in the hands of people who might be able to get you to an interview. And for many, if not most, of the recruiters, they will put you in their database and cross reference the key points of your background. And if and when a position comes along, they will call you – whether that is a week from now or a year from now.

Conclusion

Doing this recruiter campaign is one of the best investments of a couple of hours of your time you can do. The upside is very high – both in the short-term and the long-term. The job search process is an emotional roller coaster – and it is not over until it is over. Do this campaign, but do not in any way assume your work is done. This is only one component of a good search. Feel good about getting the campaign out. Follow up appropriately. And then concentrate on your other techniques.