



## QUALITY-DRIVEN EXECUTIVE SEARCH

The way a beautifully engineered car performs, the feel and fit of custom-tailored clothes, or the teamwork of a championship ball club: these are intrinsically understood as “quality.”

In business matters, particularly senior-level recruitment, quality is not always so clear or easily defined. Human foibles or life’s exigencies -- a spouse reluctant to move 1000 miles away from aging parents, for instance -- impact high quality results. In the final analysis, however, it is client-perceived performance that counts, and not the supplier’s process that matters. “How did the executive perform?” not “How was he or she recruited?”. “How well does the new executive’s style fit the organization?” not “How many offices does the recruiting firm operate?”.

When a candidate and organization are just right for each other, and fit together as two critical pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, that is “quality”. Search excellence is verified when the new executive applies vigor and vision exponentially above and beyond the job specifications.

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**“...Repeatedly shown an ability to locate effective candidates who are compatible with our corporate culture.”**

***- \$200 MM equipment manufacturer***

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Why do some search firms consistently achieve quality? How can this kind of quality be quantified? How can buyers maximize their recruitment investment? To examine these questions, we looked first at some current quality topics.

### **Benchmarking**

While we understand the specific comparative analysis implied by the term “benchmarking,” it is not possible for us to benchmark when others do not measure. As a result, for our survey, we interpreted this quality aspect somewhat more loosely, asking those of our clients who have worked with other executive search firms how we compare.

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**“You do not treat a search as a case number.”**

***- National consulting group***

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**Small-is-responsive**

As a mid size firm, Integr  Partners is obviously ready to embrace the new “smaller is better” quality mantra; we have argued this case for many years. Firms our size cannot afford to drift very far from what has been called “quality’s native state,” where teamwork, a horizontal organization, flexibility, and other quality hallmarks come naturally. A firm should be large and sophisticated enough to do the job, but small enough to care about delivering what the client expects.

Our survey backed this up. 88 percent of the clients who have worked with search firms our size or larger said our overall performance was better than the bigger firms. The remaining twelve percent said our results were equal to their results.

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**This is the perfect size executive search firm to stay in touch with the task at hand.**

*- Foreign-owned \$billion insurance group*

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**Speed-to-Market**

TQM has decided focus on “micro-time” and “speed-to-market,” reflecting its product orientation. While we know that a client with a management-resource problem wants it resolved as quickly as possible, we believe that an uni-dimensional “just-in-time” approach to finding a new executive is the kind of short-term perspective against which the Japanese have marketed so effectively.

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**You never tried to reduce the requirements during a difficult search.**

*- Credit card company operating in 50 countries*

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How productive is it to place an executive quickly, if he or she does not bond with the corporate culture, or fails to produce the desired results a year or two down the road? “Speed-to-completion,” while important, should be a secondary concern between client and executive search firm.

**Supplier/Buyer Co-destiny**

From noticing the smallest nuance during an interview to protecting a client’s market position, our destiny as a firm is intertwined with the destinies of our clients. While it may be news in some business sectors that the lines between supplier and buyer are blurring,



excellent executive search consultants have always perceived their role as that of a trusted advisor, the “outsider” on the inside.

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**Your consultant was professional and thorough; gave us more than we paid for with his diligent follow-up and helpfulness.**

*- National not-for-profit organization*

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## QUANTIFYING QUALITY

The client survey detailed in the following pages is the manifestation of our commitment to quantify the client satisfaction variables that contribute to excellence. If overall client satisfaction is one definition of quality, then we are pleased to learn that 98 percent of those responding to our survey say they would hire our firm again.

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**Excellent performance, excellent portfolio of candidates, excellent results...no comparison to others I've worked with.**

*- Leading manufacturer of electrical motors and drives*

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## Measuring Executive Search Quality

Traditional means of measuring the quality of executive search have focused on process benchmarks – such tallies as “days until hire,” or “number of candidates presented.” While a timely, organized and productive process certainly is desirable; we believe the only lasting measure of success is the search’s result – the effectiveness, productivity and contribution, over time, of those people placed as a result of the search effort.

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**Your consultant probed me and the line managers for information to do the job well...you kept on top.**

*- \$7 billion consumer electronics leader*

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To keep measurement simple, we focused on the three concerns our clients told us were most important:

- Productivity, or “Can the executive solve our immediate problem(s)?”
- Tenure, or “Will this person stay at our organization?”
- Potential, or “Will this be someone who will contribute substantially enough to earn promotion?”



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**Candidates hired through Integr  have been excellent additions to our team.**

*- \$Lead bank in a multi-state banking organization*

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Clients expect a certain degree of accountability from us. As their long-term partner, it is our responsibility to find effective people. While there are too many human variables inherent in each person, position and organization for us to be totally accountable for an executive’s performance, from the client’s prospective a good search delivers long-term, productive people who can innovate, manage, lead, and make a difference.

When we asked about performance, 54 percent of our placements were reported to have exceeded client expectations. One-quarter were judged to have made “unusually excellent” contributions.

When we asked clients to describe the executive’s tenure and promotability, we found that of all placements during our first ten years, 63 percent are still with the company. More than three-quarters (76 percent) placed from 1987-1991 are still there, and 43 percent placed from 1981-86 are still there.

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**This person has been everything we could ask for and maybe even more...**

*- \$U.S. division of European consumer products manufacturer*

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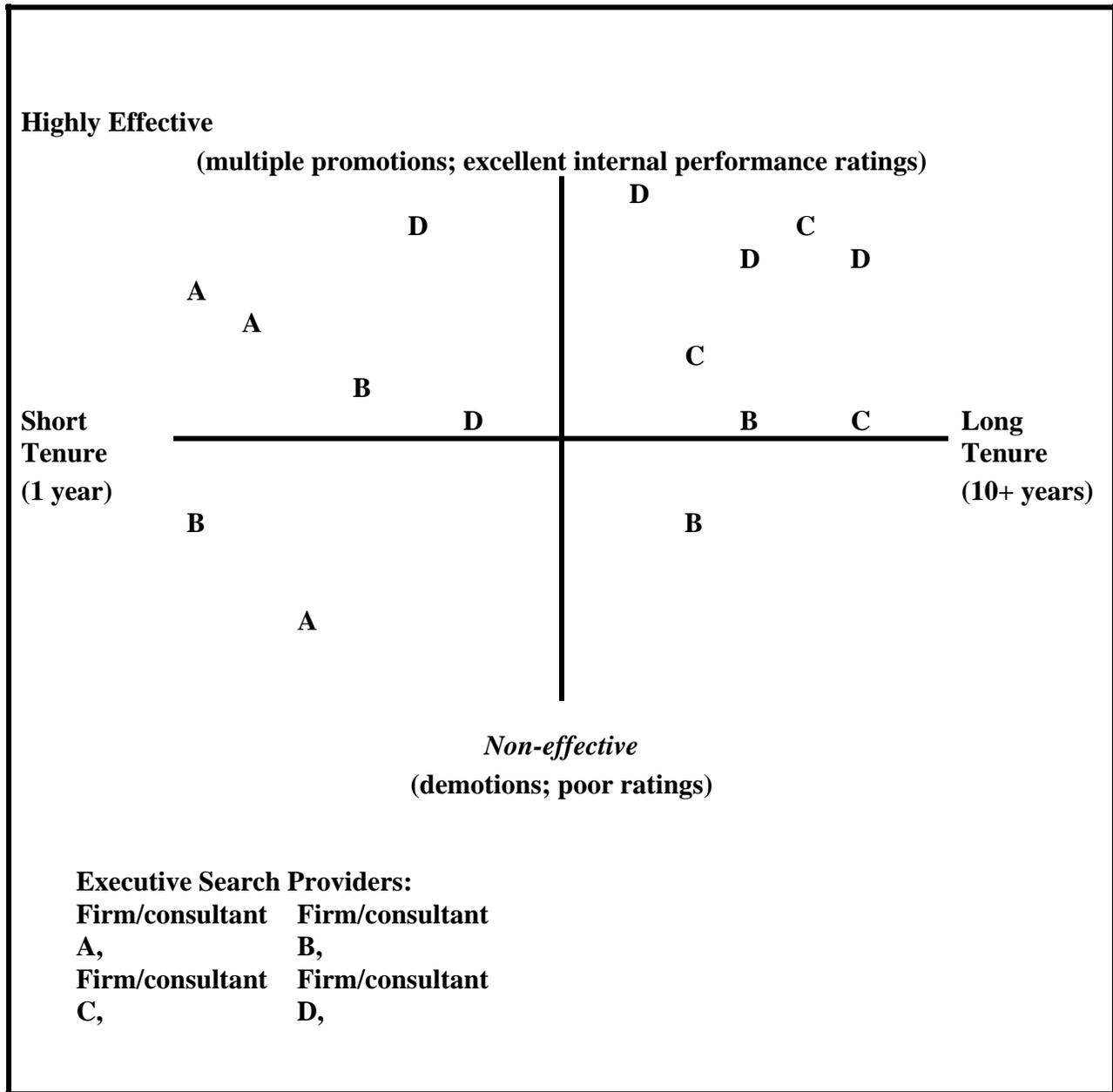
Of those still at their companies, 30 percent have received one or more promotions, 62 percent are in the same position recruited for, and eight percent are in a lateral position.

Over time, the majority of our placements receive promotions. Of executives placed between 1981–1986 who are still with the company, 66 percent have received at least one significant promotion.

### Measuring Executive Search Effectiveness

As a starting place for you to measure the value your organization receives from the executive search firm(s) you use, we suggest you track the career of each placement by the search firm or by the individual recruiter who placed the person.

A tool to use in this project might be a longitudinal effectiveness grid, as follows:



Another, more quantitative way, to measure the value of a search firm would be to spread the search's cost over the person's tenure, giving weight to promotions, to yield a comparative cost-effectiveness measure.

Either of these approaches asks the buyer of search services to focus on the long term-term, down-line performance of placements, rather than using the short-term, process-oriented turnaround yardsticks. As a consequence, executive search can be evaluated as a true investment, not just an expense.



**SPECIFIC SURVEY RESULTS**

**Survey Background and Methodology**

The reasons we undertook the survey described in the following pages are simple, our clients' satisfaction is important to our mutual prosperity and growth. We were also interested in finding ways through which we can improve our service by researching how well we have performed over time.

In May of 1992, we surveyed all of our 84 clients from 1981 – 1991 to ask about each of the 224 searches we undertook during that time period, whether successfully completed or not.

Responses equaled 56 percent of all companies surveyed those ten years, and 53 percent of all searches we have handled. In a real sense, our clients who participated in this survey are the co-authors of this publication; we thank them.

**Trust**

**Would you hire us again?**

<b>98%</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>0%</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>2%</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
<b>100%</b>	



When 98 percent of all responding firms we have worked with during our history say they would retain us again, that indicates that clients believe we can be trusted to help them. When we asked *why* they would retain us again, they gave us reasons such as:

- **“You do good work”**
- **“Professional, top-notch, great people”**
- **“Quality, thoroughness, follow-up”**
- **“I trust your firm”**

**Caliber of Placements**

**All placements, whether still in the employ of the client or not:**

<b>25%</b>	<b>Unusually excellent</b>
<b>29%</b>	<b>More productive than anticipated</b>
<b>34%</b>	<b>About what was anticipated</b>
<b>8%</b>	<b>Less productive than anticipated</b>
<b>4%</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
<b>100%</b>	

Although a company should expect solid performance from candidates found by search firms, 54 percent of our clients believed the person we identified -- whether at the company currently, or not -- either exceeded the organization's expectations or was clearly outstanding.

One-quarter of our placements during the last ten years have a performance record that their companies consider “unusually excellent” and nearly 30 percent are judged to have been “more productive than anticipated”.

Of those people rated “as expected,” one in three has nevertheless been awarded one or more promotions. Potential for promotion is, apparently, expected.



**Tenure of Placement**

<b>63%</b>	<b>Yes – Still at Company</b>	
	- In the same position as recruited for	<b>39%</b>
	- In a lateral position	<b>5%</b>
	- Had one or more promotions	<b>19%</b>
<b>37%</b>	<b>No – Left Company</b>	
	- Was recruited away	<b>9.5%</b>
	- Quit or was terminated	<b>9.5%</b>
	- Position was eliminated; corporate changes	<b>7%</b>
	- Deceased, retired, health, unknown	<b>11%</b>
<b>100%</b>		

Virtually two out of three placements from 1981 until 1991 are still working for the client organization or an affiliate.

**Key Contribution to the Specific Search**

<b>28%</b>	<b>Our knowledge of company (corporate culture, management style)</b>
<b>25%</b>	<b>Good selection of candidates (breadth &amp; depth)</b>
<b>16%</b>	<b>Our counsel/our advice</b>
<b>6%</b>	<b>Our ability to motivate the favored candidate</b>
<b>5%</b>	<b>Our knowledge of your industry</b>
<b>9%</b>	<b>Other (reference checking, confidentiality, follow-up, etc.)</b>
<b>100%</b>	

Without a doubt, the process factors – reference checking, motivation of candidates, and so on – are the components that build quality into a search’s results.

Yet companies told us that we made our biggest contribution to the search because we knew the company and, as a result, because we could offer a good selection of candidates within the company’s parameters and culture.



**Strongest Attribute, Compared to other Firms**

<b>29%</b>	<b>Assembling a top-notch group of candidates</b>
<b>27%</b>	<b>Communications; information processing</b>
<b>14%</b>	<b>Industry knowledge</b>
<b>9%</b>	<b>Execution within timeframe</b>
<b>9%</b>	<b>Dependability</b>
<b>8%</b>	<b>Thorough reference checking</b>
<b>4%</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>100%</b>	

Those respondents who had worked with other search firms reiterated that our ability to assemble a strong slate of candidates is a distinguishing attribute of our firm. The acid test, after all, of whether a search firm is effective, is whether the executives hired are people who will contribute in their new environment.

Many comments we received also emphasized this aspect of our work:

- **“You always found excellent candidates for us.”**
- **“Consistently high caliber candidates, which reflects your knowledge of our firm.”**
- **“You offer a better selection of candidates.”**
- **“Good sourcing, excellent candidates.”**

**Comparative Performance**

**Have you worked with other search firms?**

<b>16%</b>	<b>No</b>	
<b>84%</b>	<b>Yes</b>	
	<b>- With a smaller firm</b>	<b>12%</b>
	<b>- With a similar sized firms</b>	<b>10%</b>
	<b>- With a larger firm</b>	<b>21%</b>
	<b>- With a variety of firms</b>	<b>57%</b>
<b>100%</b>		



**Who at your organization selects search consultants?**

<b>56%</b>	<b>Respondent solely</b>
<b>43%</b>	<b>Varies (respondent and others)</b>
<b>1%</b>	<b>Unknown/other</b>
<b>100%</b>	

We wanted to hear how our overall approach and performance measured up against other search firms, even though some of the searches we were asking about were ten years old, and even though not every single search had a rosy outcome. Nevertheless, of those respondents who had worked with us *as well as other search firms*, four out of five rated us as “Superior” or “Excellent.”

**Our Overall Performance**

All respondents having worked with other search firms.

<b>38%</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>42%</b>	<b>Superior</b>
<b>20%</b>	<b>Average</b>
<b>0%</b>	<b>Below Average</b>
<b>0%</b>	<b>Variable; don’t know</b>
<b>100%</b>	

We have always been convinced that the only valid differential among executive search firms is the quality dimensions, and that this firm’s hallmark is quality. In everything we do, excellence is our goal.