

Difference Between Executive Search and Contingent Recruiters

Before getting in touch with, or continuing a conversation with a recruiter, you should ask if they're working for this particular company with this specific opening, or is the recruiter from an outside company. If they're from an outside firm, it's important to find out whether or not they're from an executive search firm or a contingent recruiting firm. If they are from a contingent recruiting firm, then you should query the relationship between their firm and the client organization.

If the client does not work with the firm on an exclusive basis, then they may well have requested candidates from several other firms and you risk your resume/CV being blasted out to third parties. This kind of speculative process is a volume game and could place you in a compromised position, wasting your time and perhaps even harming your reputation.

As a candidate, you should only connect with legitimate search consultants from executive search firms. This will ensure that your career information will be held in the strictest confidence and will only be disclosed to a client organization with your agreement. It means that when interested in a position, you will be treated as a candidate, not as an applicant. The search consultant will put substantial time and effort into getting to know and evaluate you and your background.

| Executive Search Firms | Contingent Search Firms |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledgeable about the organization • Retained on an exclusive basis by clients • Limited number of assignments at once • Seek candidates who are not actively looking for a new position • Engage in all aspects of the hiring process • Develop long-term relationships with clients and candidates • Hired to fill senior-level executive positions and board director roles • Treat all aspects of the search with a high degree of confidentiality • Most guarantee placement will remain for at least a year • Will not present a candidate to more than one client simultaneously unless agreed to by all parties • Does not accept fees from executives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works the front-end of the process, leaving the assessment and selection work to the client • Seek to place as many candidates as possible in the shortest possible time • Work with many assignments simultaneously • Seek candidates who are actively looking • Most often used for mid-level positions or positions where there are a large number of qualified candidates • May or may not have an exclusive on this position for a period of time • Some guarantee placement, but usually for short time frames, such as three months • May not be very knowledgeable about the organization beyond the job description • Confidentiality is not as much of a guarantee as a candidate's resume is sent out to multiple employers |

This article was provided by BlueSteps. BlueSteps is the executive career management service of the Association of Executive Search Consultants (AESC). Boyden is a member of AESC. AESC's [BlueSteps](#) helps 100,000+ executives manage their careers, track their goals and elevate their visibility to the right search firms. [Get started >](#)

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