BUSINESS MANAGERS MANAGEMENT

Should you recruit your business managers from competitors... or train them yourself?

Frédéric Le Pennec · 28 May 2025

Hiring an experienced business manager or training a junior guarantees nothing without a real integration and development strategy. The real issue is not the chosen profile, but how to build their progression over time.

It is a recurring dilemma in consulting firms, particularly in ESNs: to develop its business or restart the commercial engine, is it better to recruit an experienced Business Manager, often from the competition, or bet on a junior profile to be trained in-house?

Behind this question lies a much deeper issue: do we want to buy immediate results, or build a sustainable culture?

The Mirage of the Experienced Profile

Recruiting a Business Manager already working at a competing company seems reassuring: they know the business, the codes, the typical objections, and often proudly display a well-filled address book. But is this address book really transferable? Not so sure.

A client does not follow a salesperson like a fan follows an influencer. The business relationship is based on a context, an offer, a structure, a way of functioning. What worked elsewhere does not always translate, even with the best will in the world. The client may be attached to a brand, a methodology, a mode of operation, or simply not want to start all over again with a new provider. Result: the experienced Business Manager arrives with a network... that no longer responds.

And the trial period doesn't help. Many hesitate to reach out to their former contacts too early for fear of "burning their cartridges" without the guarantee of staying in the company. This caution, understandable, sometimes turns into stress. Especially as they feel the pressure mounting: a high salary to justify, strong expectations from the first month, and an impression that the tolerance for failure is close to zero.

Caught between the urgency to prove their value and the uncertainty of their future in the company, some take shortcuts: massive sending of poorly targeted profiles, overselling consultants without real suitability, short-term promises made to clients… Practices that may yield immediate results, but rarely sustainable ones. And that damage, little by little, the company's positioning in its market.

Betting on Juniors: The Other Extreme

Faced with these pitfalls, many turn to beginner profiles. The idea is enticing: raw talent, to be trained according to their own methods, without bad habits to unlearn. You shape, you model, you convey a vision. And often, it works: the junior progresses, gains confidence, secures their first missions… and discovers a winning spirit.

But again, beware of the side effects. Success, especially when rapid, can go to the head. The young Business Manager who signs three deals in three months may persuade themselves that they have fully understood the business. They become demanding, claim their autonomy, and see themselves as indispensable. Some managers, for fear of losing them, accelerate the rewards: early raises, anticipated promotions, and sometimes even the management of other juniors... without ever having validated their ability to convey, frame, or represent the company.

The consequence? A Business Manager who is still in the learning phase finds themselves overseeing peers, without a clear vision or real legitimacy. And the team dynamics are disrupted: those who needed a solid reference are now led by a colleague in a full ego boost. As for the company, it is building on sand.

Training or Hunting: What if the Real Question Was Elsewhere?

Opposing the two approaches would be a mistake. It is not about choosing between hunting or training, but about knowing what we do afterward. A senior can be an asset, provided they are given the time to immerse, understand the company's codes, and not be judged solely by the results of the first six weeks. A junior can become a pillar, provided that we do not confuse one-off performance with professional maturity. What is most often lacking is not the recruitment strategy, but the integration and development strategy. Too many companies confuse "autonomy" and "laissez-faire." Too many Business Managers, regardless of their level of experience, are thrown into the deep end with a CRM, a phone, and a deadline.

But one does not become a Business Manager by decree. One becomes one through construction. And this construction is not improvised.

frederic.lepennec@coact.fr · +33 6 03 06 05 02 · coact.fr