

Consulting firm recruiters: underestimated pillars of success

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In consulting firms and ESNs, recruiters play a strategic role that is often undervalued. This article highlights the lack of recognition, the pressure of KPIs, and the need for better collaboration with business managers.

In consulting firms and ESNs, business managers are often in the spotlight, with revenue goals and commercial responsibilities clearly highlighted. Yet a key player remains in the shadows: the recruiter. In charge of finding and evaluating the talents that will enable the company to meet its clients' expectations, the recruiter plays an essential role. But this role is often undervalued, both in terms of human recognition and salary. Despite their strategic importance, recruiters often find themselves juggling imposed KPIs, with little training or support to help them succeed in their mission.

The crucial role of the recruiter: the first and sometimes only point of contact

The recruiter is often the first point of contact a candidate will have with the company. It is they who will embody the company's image and give the first impression of what a career within it could be like. This moment of contact is crucial. For the candidate, it can durably influence their perception of the company, whether in their current application or during a future opportunity. Worse still, a bad recruitment, or a poorly conducted interview, can not only result in losing a good profile but also tarnish the company's reputation in the long term.

Concrete example: A candidate poorly received by a recruiter or poorly informed about the proposed position may, years later, become a potential client. The initial bad impression will persist in their mind, possibly influencing their future decisions. Similarly, a well-treated candidate can be an ambassador, even if they were not selected on their first application.

Human and salary recognition: a real disparity

Despite their essential role, recruiters are rarely recognized for their true worth. In many ESNs or consulting firms, their pay is significantly lower than that of business managers, even though their work is just as strategic. Business managers are often paid based on signed contracts and generated margins, which can create an unequal dynamic where recruiters, though indispensable to the value chain, are relegated to the background.

It is not uncommon to see recruiters manage dozens of open positions simultaneously, under constant pressure to meet clients' demands, but without receiving the same recognition as their business manager colleagues. Yet, without their upstream work, business managers simply could not achieve their targets.

Lack of training and support: recruiters left to fend for themselves

Most recruiters in consulting firms also suffer from a glaring lack of training and support. While business managers often benefit from training in sales, negotiation, or communication, recruiters are rarely equipped to improve their skills. They must train on the job, sometimes without real support from their management, which can lead them to adopt less effective methods or to focus solely on achieving KPIs to the detriment of recruitment quality.

This lack of training contributes to creating a situation where recruiters feel isolated and where their professional development is neglected. Yet, investing in the skills development of recruiters could have a direct impact on the quality of talents integrated into the company, and therefore on the success of the projects carried out.

Management by numbers: a culture that undervalues expertise

In many consulting firms, the management of recruiters is essentially based on numbers. Number of calls made, interviews conducted, CVs sent... These KPIs are used to judge their performance. But this use of KPIs, out of touch with the realities of the job, pushes some recruiters to focus on quantity at the expense of quality.

Management by numbers, disconnected from the real skills required in recruitment, such as profile assessment, understanding client needs, and creating a positive candidate experience, undervalues the work of recruiters and compromises the quality of recruitment. In the long run, this approach harms the company's reputation and limits its attractiveness to talents.

Recruiters, scapegoats for the poor performance of business managers

Beyond undervaluation and the pitfalls of KPIs, recruiters can sometimes be used as scapegoats to mask the real reasons for the poor performance of sales teams. When a business manager fails to meet

their targets, the responsibility is often shifted to the recruiter, accused of not providing the right profiles or lacking responsiveness. However, this dynamic hides a deeper problem: a lack of communication and collaboration between business managers and recruiters.

Business managers, being in direct interface with the clients, are better placed to understand the specific needs in terms of skills and profiles. Yet, many of these managers neglect to convey clear and detailed information to recruiters, leaving them uncertain about the profiles actually being sought. This lack of communication leads to recruitments poorly aligned with client expectations, directly impacting the performance of business managers.

This dynamic creates a vicious circle where recruiters are blamed for failures that are actually due to a lack of support and clarity from business managers, leading to their demotivation. To remedy this, it is imperative to promote transparent and regular communication between business managers and recruiters to ensure that client needs are correctly understood and translated into precise and relevant recruitment criteria.

Conclusion: The recruiter, a strategic player to be revalued

Recruiters in consulting firms play a central role, but they are often underestimated, both in terms of human and salary recognition. Their work, however essential, is not sufficiently valued, and the misuse of KPIs risks aggravating the situation. Furthermore, being scapegoats for the poor performance of business managers, they unjustly find themselves in the crosshairs, which harms internal collaboration and the quality of recruitments. It is time for many consulting firms and ESNs to rethink their approach to recruitment by offering recruiters real recognition, appropriate training, and implementing KPIs that measure quality as much as quantity. Better communication between business managers and recruiters is also essential to ensure recruitments aligned with the real needs of clients and to ensure the overall success of the company.