

Three important factors to consider when sharing your resume with a recruitment agency

Recruitment is, unfortunately, one of those industry sectors that few people trust. Most candidates I speak with have, at some point, had a poor recruitment experience. In fact, some reported that every experience was negative, even when they got the role.

For many, proactively looking for work can come with a sense of uncertainty, even vulnerability. Will I be suitable for the role? Will my resume be shared without my consent? Does the person I'm sharing my profile with understand my background and appreciate what am right for?

These dynamics are particularly relevant for women candidates. Women in general are more risk-averse than their male counterparts. A typical expression of this is women's tendency to disqualify themselves from a role when believing they don't meet around a third of the role's advertised criteria. Men, on the other hand, will apply for a position to which they meet only a third of the criteria ('may as well have a crack, what's the worst that can happen?').

The good news is that there are good recruiters out there. Drawing on some of the principles outlined below, candidates will be able to tell from an initial conversation what they are likely to experience in working with the recruitment firm.

Typical examples of sub-par recruitment include:

- A thin or misleading description of the destination organisation or role (often indicative of an inadequate level of engagement between the recruiter and their client)
- No face-to-face meetings between the candidate and recruiter, before the employer interview
- Little to no pre-interview recruiter/candidate coaching before meeting the employer
- No follow-up calls from the recruiter as the recruitment process progresses, and the worst -
- Not being notified as to whether the interview was successful, even after attending multiple face-to-face interviews (strikingly common!).

So how can a candidate exercise choice in engaging an agency?

Here are three simple considerations:

1. Does the agency work in your targeted industry?

This is a simple but important first consideration. Agencies are usually industry-focused, e.g. Technology or Financial Services. Check the agency's website or keep an eye out for their advertisements, and you will quickly know whether their industry focus aligns with your career aspirations.

2. Values of the organisation

Recruitment is one of those industries which like to take shortcuts, particularly if a firm prefers to focus more on the recruitment *outcome* rather than the recruitment *journey*. Did you not get a call back after your interview? That can indicate the recruiter is more concerned with placements and revenue than your experience with starting your new life in a new job.

Did you find yourself feeling misrepresented or hurriedly forwarded to a potential job? That again can indicate the consultant is driven by quarterly targets with little time to give you the experience you deserve.

Pre-determined key performance indicators usually drive consultant activity. These KPIs are in turn driven by the mission, values and objectives of the agency. So, when reading an agency's website (particularly the "About Us" page), see how much emphasis they have put onto the following attributes:

- The size and scale of the organisation
- Its growth trajectory and market dominance
- Its value and annual revenue achievements
- Years of operation

Organisations that like to emphasise these attributes tend to come from a sales and revenue-driven culture. The ensuing sales-focused management style subsequently drives consultant behaviour away from supporting the candidate to merely seeking to maximise sales.

Alternatively, an agency operating with a positive sense of purpose towards achieving an excellent experience for both the candidate and client seems often to be the rarer, yet more successful, organisation.

3. Consider the quality of your consultant

Even a reputable agency can hire a poor performing consultant. Recruitment may seem uncomplicated on the surface; however, expert recruitment is a sensitive and nuanced skill set. It takes many different capabilities to be a first-class recruitment consultant.

Consider these factors as you work with your consultant :

- How well do they listen? are they curious? Do they ask good questions?
- How consistent are they with follow up – do they call back when they said they would? Are you left wondering what is happening next?
- How would you rate their presentation, both verbally and visually? Are they articulate? Do they dress like someone you would want to have represent you (even if that means dressing casually)?
- How well do they know the industry associated with your role? Do they have a good handle on the role and how it fits into the organisation?
- How well do they know their client? A shallow understanding of the client environment often speaks of a transactional engagement. Mediocre consultants struggle to create trusted advisor relationships with their clients and therefore, only have a superficial understanding of the environment they are introducing you to.

As a woman candidate, there may be other important questions to consider:

- Does the consultant understand the value of having a diverse workforce, and can they educate their client accordingly?
- Do they understand the dynamics of the environment they are recruiting you in to?
- Does the consultant understand the potential differences between recruiting men and women?
- Do they highlight any wording in your resume that might disadvantage you?
- Do they support you in a salary negotiation?
- Are they sensitive to possible bias you might encounter in the recruitment process?
- Do they have an overview of the gender data in their client organisation?
- Will you be the only woman in the team you are to join?
- Is the agent cognisant of the employer's gender balance at the executive level?
- Does your recruitment consultant even care about these aspects?

There is a lot to consider, I know.

In summary, find the agencies that work in your sector. Review their website to see if they are the sort of firm that values people and purpose over revenue and outcomes. Listen carefully in your engagement with a consultant for the attributes detailed above. Test them, ask them difficult questions, make sure you are comfortable that your interests are being appropriately represented. Lastly, network with several agencies you like and sooner or later, opportunities will come knocking.

Kacha is committed to amplifying the voice of women in key sectors of Australian business. Our recruitment experience is people and values-driven. [Get in touch.](#)