

# Q&A

## COMPASS EXECUTIVES

*Compass Executives director - corporate services, people & cultural practice, Abigail Bada, discusses recruiting senior talent in a recessionary environment, improving retention and a shift in candidate-driven demands.*

By Jennifer Forrest

### **What is the current market like for recruitment into PE firms? Are certain roles tougher to recruit for than others?**

With a recession upon us comes the inevitable challenges in sourcing the right talent available to you, and ensuring the right fit within the organisation. Notably, recession invariably means organisations will lock down their talent as tightly as possible.

Getting the balance right between the exacting process of executive search, market volatility and the need for greater diversity, is something we manage on a day-to-day basis. We acknowledge that this may take an extra level of commitment from both the search partner and the organisation, but when you consider the potential value upside, in contrast to the potential high cost of getting the recruitment process wrong, it is time well spent. Additionally, time spent in ensuring diversity and inclusivity plays a key part of the process, will allow you access to wider candidate pools, and with it wider capacity and skill-sets.

There are definitely certain roles which are tougher to recruit for given scarcity of supply generally. A candidate might be looking to move because of financial reward, or to seek an organisation that's more aligned with their personal beliefs.

The harder roles to recruit for are those where there's an element of ambiguity. It's great that firms are looking to hire people that speak to their wider ESG and D&I focus, but those hires need to be well thought through, sufficiently resourced and properly supported, in order for the candidate to make a long-term impact. Authenticity and a strong market offering are key factors to reducing the risk.

### **What are some best practices during the interview process to secure a better calibre of candidate? Does tech and turnaround times play a role here?**

Open and transparent communication lines between all parties is critical to the process. We advise clients that it's far beyond merely matching CVs or finding the



one person with a tick box perfect track record in the field - it's about checking which shareholders they'll have touchpoints with. Suggesting an informal conversation before setting up formal interviews with the stakeholders can be very effective. It's also important that we look at thorough market maps and non-traditional targets, where candidates have historically been overlooked.

We work hard in the initial phase of any project to arrive at a thorough brief of the role. This needs to extend beyond the scope and objectives, but to probe and understand the culture of the organisation and how the individual will develop, and ultimately thrive, over the long term. That means not just focusing on how their first year might play out, but to target the initial phases of their onboarding.

Delay kills deals, so it is essential that decision-making is fluid. In a competitive market, situations change as to the candidate's availability and desire almost daily, especially when you know they are

likely to be involved in other processes at the same time. Anything that adds value and stands you apart from your competition can have a significant impact. A noticeable trend that has benefits and pitfalls in the use of tech at C-suite level. Whilst it enables rapid connection, it equally requires negligible effort. It is still best to ensure that processes have the balance between e-meets and physical interactions where candidates are challenged to invest time into a process and as such, engagement levels can be gauged.

### **How do businesses adapt their hiring practices to accommodate candidate-driven demands? Do these demands play a significant role in talent retention?**

There's a real shift in people's expectations and what they are looking for in their next career. Ambitious individuals will always like to know what their contribution to a firm will look like, and in turn,

the influence they will have.

Flexible working, the team, working environment and leadership dynamics are definitely prominent features in what a candidate needs to know before committing to a role. Those candidate-driven demands are being baked into how we present an organisation to a potential recruit, and that's something that wouldn't have even been considered a few years ago.

### **With the current war on talent, how much harder is talent retention for GPs? What more can they be doing to improve their retention rates?**

Companies that can demonstrate that there is a great opportunity for someone to build a career will always shine, but they need to be doing more to show off what that career can look like.

There needs to be a widening and broadening of thought when it comes to candidate criterias. Not everyone will have the same career history and this should not always be seen as a disadvantage.

Technology is important for organisations to be able to demonstrate and communicate externally how rewarding careers are with their organisations, and how that is incorporated into employee rewards, mental health and wellbeing.

Companies are becoming a lot more comfortable with sharing the good things that they do, and private equity is becoming less private.

### **Company culture plays a big role in attracting prospective hires, and in keeping staff. How important is it for a GP to be authentic with promoting their company culture?**

Firms need to be authentic. They also need to be thinking more creatively, widening the goal posts, and providing that human touch to ensure the move is correctly aligned to the candidates aspirations and talents, and there is a long-term vision.

Firms also need to reflect on what their culture is, and whether it's fit for purpose. At the end of the day, people are your biggest asset and how you create an environment to enable them to thrive will have an immediate impact on your success. ●