



TALENT HUNTER: Sonya Meloff in the firm's Richmond St. West offices.

MEETING THE DEMAND FOR SALES TALENT

Toronto-Vancouver recruiter building its brand in the niche sales placement category

KING WEST CENTRAL, TORONTO / – An uncertain economy with a rising unemployment rate is not normally the fertile ground that will see a professional placement firm grow. But the Sales Talent Agency, on Richmond Street West (with another office in Vancouver), is not your garden variety recruitment agency.

Focused almost exclusively on recognizing and placing sales talent for top companies, this modest firm, which found its start two years ago as an outsourced recruitment resource for a major online media company, has added over 50 new clients to its roster in the last year while placing close to 300 sales people in positions across Canada.

"In a tenuous economy, large companies often look to gain market share so they want the best sales people available," says partner Jamie Scarborough, explaining that unstaffed sales positions represent lost revenue potential.

Also, many top sales people are let go for reasons other than performance, particularly in an industry that's suffering cut backs, so it's a good time for companies to upgrade their sales team.

The combination of demand for talent along with a supply of qualified candidates means Scarborough, and Toronto partner Sonya Meloff, have been busy. But finding a good sales person is not easy.

Both former Monster.ca executives, Scarborough and Meloff knew the recruiting market well before starting their firm in 2007. They also recognized a need for a firm specializing in finding sales talent.

"There's no barrier to entry in sales. It's not a professional designation, so you can be a sales person whether you've been doing it for one month or 20 years. And

experience doesn't necessarily mean you're good at it," says Meloff.

The Sales Talent Agency team is made of former sales people who are able to recognize sales proficiency, based in part on the firm's candidate assessment process which looks at the person's performance. A big personality is not necessarily indicative of future success, says Scarborough of the popular myth that good sellers are primarily people-persons.

"We look for someone who, at every stage in their career, has put into place very methodical practices to be successful," he explains, adding that good sales people know that sales is not about what you are selling but rather about what the prospect is buying.

And right now, much of what the recruiting market wants is talented sales people. Poised to continue growing in the next year, Sales Talent Agency is leery of expanding too fast. Boutique firms often outgrow their niche markets just to become another player in a crowded marketplace, Scarborough explains.

"But our goal is to do what we've been doing on a micro scale. Then make it big." ■

TOP INTERVIEW BLUNDERS

When employers were asked about the most common interview blunders, more than half said dressing inappropriately was the biggest mistake a candidate could make. Talking negatively about a current or previous employer came in second at 49% and third on the list, at 48%, was appearing disinterested. Other mistakes included appearing arrogant, not providing specific answers, and not asking good questions.

Source: Reuters.com