

Frey & Associates

strategic talent acquisition



[click on
picture to meet
me](#)

The Talent Report

April 2010

A monthly update for executives who hire top talent

Go fish: How to catch big-time talent from hidden talent pools

When I was growing up, we used to go camping almost every weekend. I loved to fish, so as soon as camp was set up, it was time to wet my line. Others would plop their lines in the fishing hole closest to camp. Not me. I would head upstream, downstream, or wherever I could find that was wonderfully inaccessible. To the envy of my family and friends, I would come back to camp with more fish - and bigger fish - than anyone else.

"Where did you go and how did you do it?" they'd ask me. Sure enough, the next day they'd head for the same spot I'd been the day before... but not me. I was off to a new fishing hole. Again, I'd catch the biggest and most fish, and although the others' fishing had improved, there was still no comparison.

Why recruiting is like fishing

With fishing, there are two basic techniques. You can bait your hook and sit and wait for the fish to come to you, or you can actively cast your line in unique patterns. When you wait for the fish to come to you, it's like posting an ad for talent. It's an unpredictable way to attract and try to catch big fish.

What you're doing is dangling something out there - but only to those who happen to pass by. Your bait is only attractive if the right talent happens to see the ad and it's written in a way that attracts their interest. While it's possible to get lucky and catch a big fish, luck will only take you so far.

Instead, be proactive and focus your efforts on finding top candidates **before** they begin thinking about looking at new opportunities or **as soon** as they're open to the idea of a career change. The key is to have existing relationships with them, so you're their company of choice.

How to find great talent when they're not even looking

So, how do you find great talent **before** they even know they're looking?

- **Cast aside any assumptions** that you know all the talent that's out there. One of the greatest barriers to finding top talent is the mis-conception that "Our city is a small

Building Pipelines

There are "critical" and "difficult to fill" positions in every

community, and we know all the 'A' players." Your top candidates may not be at your competitors. They may be in different and lesser known industries, niches, or organizations that have similar challenges.

- **Research and target companies** that have the talent you're looking for. Read the newspaper and trade journals (such as the [Business Journal](#) for your city, Inc. [Magazine on-line](#), etc.) to look for companies that have similar issues and challenges to yours. For example, if your company is strained by rapid growth, seek out other companies or industries that have dealt with this challenge. In addition, be a good networker, and attend events inside - and outside - your industry or profession.
- **Identify the key players** who really make an impact on your target companies. How? Reach out and talk to employees within that company. If you hear a name come up time after time, that person is likely a key influencer. That's how you know you have a big fish.
- **Build trust** To build a trust-based relationship, resist the temptation to talk about what you need and want. Instead, ask and explore what's important to them, so you can begin to determine if they're a good fit for your organization.
- **Be a good listener.** Pay attention to their words... but also listen to what they choose to share with you. This will give you clues on what's most important to them, such as what they need to be successful, what they value and what they find challenging.
- **Keep in touch.** Building relationship is about trust and longevity. Establish systems that allow you to connect with top talent on a regular basis.

makes good business sense to have quality candidates who are familiar with and interested in your company in your pipeline. It's also a trait of best-in-class companies.

Even with a tough economy and varying degrees of competitive pressures, studies show that best-in-class organizations are constant in their talent acquisition efforts. In fact, they're 39% more likely than other companies to focus their efforts on actively building and nurturing their candidate pipelines.*

**Source: Aberdeen Group. "Talent Acquisitions Strategy 2009: Cutting through the Clutter and Proactively Managing Quality Candidates." August 2009.*

It's about building relationships

There's a certain touch when it comes to recruiting, just as there is to fishing. Two people can be fishing at the same hole, and the fish may nibble on both lines, but only one reels it in. Attracting and catching big fish is a learned skill. It's a unique touch that is honed over time. Likewise, the right professional "touch" will ensure you catch the talent you're courting.

Be pro-active. Reach out and build relationships. Yes, it's time consuming. But if you only look for key talent when strategic positions are open, you will only find those who happen to catch your ad because they were surfing the Internet at that moment. When you aren't proactive, you're hiring someone else's leftovers or the ones your competitors' threw back.

Find the hidden talent pools. They're just waiting to be fished.

© Frey & Associates, LLC, 2010. All Rights Reserved.

Karen Frey is the president of Frey & Associates, a boutique executive search firm that has been delivering strategic talent within Human Resources and Corporate Counsel since 1999. Contact Karen at (303) 400-6271 or visit www.freyassociates.com.



(303) 400-6271

karen@freyassociates.com