

About Talon

Talon is a retained search firm specializing in senior management positions within the homebuilding and real estate development industries.

Our team is led by three partners, each with more than 20 years experience with Talon:

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Why Talon

Selecting an executive search firm seems simple enough. After all, they “fish from the same pond” and use the same process, don’t they? Well, yes... and no.

While all search firms boast about their universe of potential candidates, that doesn’t ensure they will succeed in attracting the right ones. Gaining access to top decision makers and well-connected leaders doesn’t happen overnight; it can take years, even decades, to build and foster such relationships. We’ve spent the majority of our professional lives nurturing these relationships. It is the depth of these relationships that sets us apart; just ask anyone who has worked with us... clients and candidates alike.

Another point: virtually every search firm has a pitch concerning their exhaustive process or methodology, but frankly they are all similar. While finding candidates with the right credentials can be challenging, determining “fit” is a far greater challenge. No search firm is foolproof in this area. Therefore, we utilize a few tools to improve our odds of finding the right match: a Success Profile and a position specific Q&A.

Most importantly, let’s not forget impressions and reputations. As you know, they count and are lasting. To candidates, the search firm you select will be the face and voice of your company. Choose wisely.

The Search Process... and a few things we do differently

Defining the Position: Our first responsibility is to understand you, your organization and culture. Sounds simple enough, but each organization has it's own unique DNA– shared values, behaviors, expectations and nuances. The better we understand you, the more likely we'll recognize candidates who have potential to prosper in your organization long term.

Success Profile: The next step is figuring out what success looks like in the job. What needs to be accomplished and by when? What challenges will the new person face and what experience or traits are required? These are just a few of the discussions we'll have in order to develop a Success Profile– essentially, a blueprint that serves as a benchmark for assessing candidates.

Client Story: Before we launch into recruiting mode, we'll develop a brief Client Story to share with candidates. You approve what can and can't be shared, but ideally this will include a brief bio on your company, the position and key objectives desired from the new hire. Providing candidates a clear and consistent picture of the opportunity greatly reduces the risk of mismatch later on.

Position Specific Q&A: As we surface candidates, we'll ask them to complete (in writing) a set of questions specifically related to the position. No two-stepping of information... you'll see their completed Q&A in its unfiltered state... typos and grammatical errors included.

Screening: For each candidate presented, you will receive a resume, completed Q&A and our interview observations relevant to the Success Profile. Our goal is to arm you with as much information as possible prior to entering the interview arena with candidates.

Interviews: We coordinate face-to-face meetings with those you choose to meet. By the way, we recommend multiple interviews by you and your team. (We have some specific recommendations on that note which we'll discuss later.)

Turndowns: No one enjoys turning down candidates. Candidates not making the cut will be personally turned down in a timely and professional manner. Far too often the ball gets dropped here, leaving an unfavorable impression with candidates. We'll make sure that doesn't happen.

What Our Clients Will Tell You

The majority of our business comes through repeat customers and referrals. We are honored to have worked with so many outstanding firms.

"Over the last few years, The Talon Group has become a preferred provider and strategic partner with Newland Communities. They have taken the time to listen to our needs, recommend solutions, and provide value beyond the "search." They understand our company, our culture, and our industry. The Talon Group always demonstrates integrity and ethics that reflect the values our company wants to express." Tim Durie, Sr. VP Human Resources, Newland Communities

"I have known and worked with the professionals at the Talon Group since 1994. I have used them to help identify and recruit senior managers in finance, sales, marketing as well as division management. I've found that their industry knowledge and professionalism are exceptional. Their insight into the state of the industry and the trends that are shaping the future of the industry set them apart." George Casey, Jr., CEO, The Orleans Company

"The Talon Group is the #1 executive search company in the real estate industry... Talon is responsive & thorough... knowledgeable of industry best practices...I have worked with Talon for 15+ years... they have completed 10-15 senior level searches..." Dennis Bailey, Region President, M/I Homes

"I just wanted to write to say thanks for your company's efforts in finding our new COO. I have worked with many search firms over the years, and your group is, by far, the best! You listened to our needs, understood our culture, and always represented our best interests throughout the process. Most importantly, however, was the strong sense of integrity that I observed from you and your associates." Tom Lewis, CEO, T.W. Lewis Company

"I have worked with the Talon Group for more than ten years. During that time, they've performed numerous successful searches for The Drees Company. As good as they are at recruiting top-level candidates, they are even better at understanding their client's corporate history, culture and goals. The vetting process they use enables them to identify the best applicants. Their expertise during the interview process is invaluable. They provide a packet of information on each candidate, including their no holds barred opinions and suggested questions to ensure that both personality and experience are explored. They facilitate the search at every step... their instincts are always spot on. To find a leader, you need a leader. The Talon Group has my strongest endorsement." Dan Jones, President- Premier Region, The Drees Company

"In my opinion there is no better search firm in the home building industry... they are simply the best." Gary Tadian, CEO, Tadian Homes

"Working with the Talon Group ensures we are going to receive candidates that meet our highest criteria, while still allowing an expeditious process. They are entrenched in the marketplace and know how to attract and obtain "A" talent from the industry." Dean Hilderhoff, VP of Human Resources, Ashton Woods Homes

"Talon had a highly personalized approach focused on finding the right candidate. They learned our company's culture and the personalities of the leadership team, because they were focused on finding the right fit – not just someone with the necessary skills and experiences. Throughout the process, they were helpful not only in sourcing and screening candidates, but also in actively expressing their opinions as to the strengths, weaknesses, and overall qualifications of each candidate they presented. I will gladly work with Talon on future searches."

Chad Ogden, Regional President, Fieldstone Communities

"Talon listened to what we were trying to accomplish... learned our culture before committing to finding us a new President. Their depth really comes through in the comprehensive interview process and reference checks. The vast majority of recruiting firms do not have the concern that Talon has to make the best match. Talon not only solved that challenge but also provided a powerful new member for our Board of Directors." Tom Hoyt, CEO, McStain Communities

"I have worked with the Talon Group for over 15 years and find them extremely knowledgeable about the industry and our personnel needs. I have found their service to be honest, professional, and confidential. They're a great business partner; their interest lies in developing long term business relations instead of short term gains." Rick Shaver, The Rohit Group

"Over the years we have shared ideas and strategies that have further enhanced our company... and would recommend them highly as a conscientious search firm and partner in your company's future." Bryan Cohen, President, Touchstone Homes

"I have had the privilege of working with the Talon Group for a great many years. They take the time to understand all the aspects and particulars- not only what we are looking for in an individual but also what our company can provide in return to the new hire. This isn't about just "filling a slot" but rather finding the best match that is a win-win for both the individual and us. It is with a great deal of enthusiasm that I recommend the Talon Group." Richard J. Bell, CEO, Turnberry Homes.

Additional references can be obtained from the following individuals at NVR/Ryan Homes, a client for whom we've completed numerous searches over the last 26 years.

- Joe Madigan, Sr. VP Human Resources, NVR
- Jim Brandt, Director of Recruiting
- Jim Repole, Regional HR Manager

Helpful Suggestions For Your Search

The front-line contact with a candidate must function as an ambassador for your company rather than a gatekeeper or judge. The first visit should be a “get to know you” visit. The goal is to determine if a candidate meets basic criteria, provide additional insights into the position and set the stage for future visits.

We are proponents of involving multiple employees in the interview process. This provides more than “one set of eyes & ears” and allows the candidate to learn more about the company. Each visit should be conducted separately, not as a group meeting.

Start at the top and work down. As early as possible, bring the most senior manager into the interview process. Practically speaking, this individual should be able to quickly discern if the candidate is a potential fit, thereby saving everyone a lot of time. Also, he/she is most likely the best person to share the company’s vision for the future and how the position plays into it.

Avoid the “Gotcha” interview. Many companies pride themselves on using trick questions to test candidates’ mental abilities and adaptability. However, putting candidates through this type of stress test does little to promote an understanding of who they really are. A better option is to give candidates a general outline of the topics to be discussed (in advance) so they are prepared to discuss them in greater detail. That still leaves plenty of room to drill down further during the interview. We believe this produces the greatest understanding of the candidate.

Turning down candidates. Many companies fail to do this well or in some cases, leave candidates “hanging in the wind”. This is a sure-fire way to negatively impact future relationships and your reputation. Handled correctly, former candidates become disciples of your organization, even when they don’t make the cut. We’ll show you how.

Fundamental Truths We Learned Over The Years

- Know your hot buttons... they skew objectivity.
- The best indicator of future behavior is past and present behavior.
- Direct observations are better than inferred observations.
- Rarely is anyone as good or bad as they are made out to be.
- Never make a hire/no hire decision based on just one thing, whether an endorsement or criticism, accomplishment or failure, good or bad reference.
- If ample time was allowed for both parties to get to know one another, a candidate should be able to render a decision on an offer within 24 hours. If the candidate needs more time to decide, then something may be amiss. It’s to the benefit of both parties to then take a step back and reassess the relationship.