

RECRUITMENT

Quality, not quantity

Tony Smith of Courtney Smith Group tells Jennie Ward why the company is ideally placed to help the industry.

Tony Smith has been involved in recruitment for 15 years, and in that time has gathered together a wealth of knowledge about the building industry. Unlike some other consultants, Courtney Smith Group focuses exclusively on sales and management vacancies in the building industry, and Mr Smith firmly believes that this "niche market" approach can only be a benefit to the company's clients.

An exclusive business

"I think it's important to stress that we are exclusive to the building industry, whereas a lot of other consultants or agencies would get involved with everything from FMCG to building products.

"People take you a bit more seriously, because the credibility is there when you focus on one particular industry instead of various different product sectors – you're not stretched so thin and you can really focus on the issues at hand."

Those issues include the current difficulty in finding good quality candidates for job vacancies, he continues: "It's important to make the point that in today's market, with unemployment so low, there is such a demand and such a shortage of good sales and management people out there, so it's important that we're steering our candidates to the right positions."

This focus on quality rather than quantity is key to every stage of the recruitment process with Courtney

Smith. "Every candidate is screened and interviewed, and we do a personal profile and assessment based on the interview as well, so that when a client does phone us we can take the pain and time element away from them, by only giving them people that they need. Basically, we're matching their requirements," Mr Smith explains.

It is not just by spending time with the candidates that Courtney Smith Group offers a comprehensive service to the industry. When-ever the company takes on a new client, Courtney Smith visits them at their premises.

This is vital, Mr Smith believes, so that Courtney Smith can "take a fully comprehensive brief on the company, its style and culture, and the kind of person they are looking for. We don't just play a numbers game – it's more about the quality of the candidate we can provide.

After the meeting, Courtney Smith group then puts forward a short list of candidates that the company feels would be suitable for that position, both in terms of qualifications and the way in which the candidate, as a person, would fit into the ethos of the client's company.

Courtney Smith Group's involvement in the recruitment process does not end there, however. "Because in today's market company's are so busy, a lot of our clients haven't got the time, so they ask us to arrange all the interviews, the venue – whether it be a hotel or our

offices, whatever suits them.

"No client is exactly the same, and they all work in many different ways, so we try to tailor the process to suit the needs of each individual company, making it painless for them."

A record success

This approach certainly seems to be paying off, with Courtney Smith Group having compiled a database of 5000 candidates and 4000 clients since it began. Of these, a large percentage repeatedly come back to the company when its services are required, and many new clients hear of Courtney Smith through referrals.

The company has recently had two record months back-to-back, which Mr Smith attributes solely to "the quality of candidates that are coming through and our name in the marketplace. We're finding that there are lots and lots of positions available at the moment, and a major shortage of good quality people".

Expanding the service

Partly as a result of this success, the company has recently expanded its business, now offering a UK-wide service to anyone in the building industry, from major blue chip multinational manufacturers through to independent builders' merchants.

"We were finding that our clients were asking for a UK-wide service," Mr Smith explains. "Previously we only covered London and the South East, and would find that a manufacturer would approach us with vacancies in both the South and the North, but because we only dealt with the South East, we would have to walk away from the contract. Now we can provide a service for the whole of England."

Courtney Smith has also recently substantially invested in its website, which now displays the company's latest vacancies, so that clients can browse the listed jobs themselves before making the decision to contact the company direct. When a candidate sees a suitable vacancy, they can then apply directly through the website.

The company is also very active within the industry itself, working with both the BMF and NMBS and running seminars on interviewing techniques and the recruitment process. For more information, visit www.courtneysmithgroup.co.uk



Courtney Smith Group's director, Tony Smith.