

The Works Search

# How to secure an industry-best Head of Communications



# CONTENTS

Introduction	03
Chapter One	
Stop being cheap!	04
Chapter Two	
Hiring from your network isn't the answer	05
Chapter Three	
Decide what looks good to you	06
Chapter Four	
Stop talking and start listening	07
Chapter Five	
Make sure they are as good as they are	08
Chapter Six	
Understand what they value	09
Chapter Seven	
Final words	10
Apply for a bespoke consultation call with me	11
About The Author	12

# INTRODUCTION

If you're a CEO or Global Head of Marketing reading this ebook, you will know how an exceptional Head of Comms can promote a business like a superstar and protect it like a parent. Doubtless you will know someone who does just this – someone you hold in high regard.

**This ebook is intended to give you an insight into how to identify a Head of Comms who is an industry-best, a top 5% performer – not just someone in your own network who you rate highly.**

For 13 years, I have interviewed Heads of Comms – plenty of them. In fact, I would say that I have met someone new most weeks – and I have encountered some brilliance over the years.

However, I have always struggled if the top job, the most important role when it comes to external comms, is given to an average, or just good, performer. Why? 'What were they thinking?!' I often exclaim! I could find them someone far better.

And that's what has prompted me to write this ebook.

After running a business and hiring numerous people myself, I know how hard it is to get it right. So I studied, I consulted experts, I used psychometrics and testing methods. I have made some mistakes, some corkers in fact, but my process is now watertight and only the best will get through. When I undertake an executive search campaign for a CEO or Head of Marketing, I run a similar

process and the results are excellent. I have never failed to fill a retained executive search with an industry-best and they have all passed their probation with flying colours, and hit the ground running.

Thanks to my years of experience in the field, I am the expert when it comes to corporate and financial PR. I know what exceptional looks like. So it makes perfect sense to share the knowledge I have gained with you in this ebook.

A Head of Comms can make or break a business – it's such an important hire that settling for second best or for someone 'good' in your network is the wrong option!

# CHAPTER ONE

## STOP BEING CHEAP!

Asking around and getting your HR team to advertise on LinkedIn and your website is not going to find you an exceptional Head of Comms. You only touch 20% of the market and I can pretty much guarantee that your industry-best won't be sitting looking at job adverts all day.

You're fishing in a small pool. It's important to understand that the highest performers are waiting to be headhunted – expect it in fact, and although advertising seems like a great idea that's good value, it's a short-term fix for a long-term headache.

So what about the other 80%? Well, 20% of that pool are not looking and won't be moving roles anytime soon. The other 60% is the gem pool, the highest performers, the ones where exceptional sits quietly... waiting. They also don't have the time to look at adverts. So how do you gain access to these gems? You hire an executive search consultant who knows what exceptional looks like. OK, an executive search isn't cheap, but it's a wise and worthwhile investment when that gem works their magic on your business.

**“It really is worth your weight in gold to invest time in creating a clear understanding of what's important to you, rather than meeting lots of people and seeing if you like them.”**

# CHAPTER TWO

## HIRING FROM YOUR NETWORK ISN'T THE ANSWER

Perhaps you know a Head of Comms who worked in a previous company and they were pretty impressive or your PR agency knows someone good.

However, this doesn't mean that they are the best person for the job. The world of comms is changing rapidly and their skills could already be out of date, so unless you compare them with an industry search, you will never know.

My network of exceptional comms professionals is vast.

An executive search gives you the opportunity to open up your network, not narrow it.

# CHAPTER THREE

## DECIDE WHAT LOOKS GOOD TO YOU

Naturally this will depend on what you're hiring for, but a great Head of Comms will have media contacts as good as an editor, know how to position your business as a thought-leader and be able to stop a crisis in its tracks. They will be adept at managing a team and agencies, have budget mastery, and be able to leverage social media with success.

They offer trusted counsel and have strong business acumen; they are able to hold their own at the board table. With regards to experience, it's likely they can manage internal communications, have a hand in Government relations, understand the P&L and can look after branding too.

A top 5% performer is no jack-of-all-trades; he is a master of many.

It's important to understand what you really need from them before you hire. Take the time to set out your expectations as this will shape what great looks like for you. It's then easy to shape questions around what you need as part of the interviewing process.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# STOP TALKING AND START LISTENING

The amount of times I hear feedback from a candidate saying, 'It was a nice chat', it makes me want to cry! They come away liking each other, but not really knowing much about the role as that wasn't discussed in detail and they didn't really have a chance to talk about what they have achieved. It's important to shut up and listen. This is about your company's reputation – this person can make or break it.

So here's the deal. The 80:20 rule applies here. You speak only 20% of the time and that's using good questions which you have prepared specifically, and it's important for you to listen.

If at the end of the meeting you like what you've heard, go for your life. Talk. Sell. Do your best to get them excited about the company, its values and the role.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## MAKE SURE THEY AS ARE GOOD AS THEY ARE

**“Keep digging until you have enough information – and decide if they fit with your criteria.”**

For an executive search, I will only shortlist the crème de la crème so it makes your life much easier. However, it's all about evidence and recent evidence. Don't hire a has-been.

Ask evidence-based questions – and you need to be truly impressed by the answers.

Why is this important? PR people are relationship people, they are easy to like and they enjoy having a 'great chat'. Look past this and get examples of greatness.

Your stakeholders will not be impressed if you fall for their charm and they do not deliver.

Be ruthless with your assessment, you will soon start to see the difference and have a preference. Again, it comes down to having prepared questions and grading the answers in an objective way, not a subjective way. Use the same questions for each candidate.



# CHAPTER SIX

## UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY VALUE

I have heard on many occasions that a Head of Marketing or CEO has put out an offer to a Head of Comms from their network or an advert and it was turned down. What a huge waste of time for everyone. It begs the question, why? What was missing in the process?

It's important to understand the basics of what a Head of Comms actually wants and values in their career, a company, their boss and the team. When you understand their values, you can manage expectations and sell back effectively.

The majority of Heads of Comms value a company which values communications, where they have access to C-suite, and PR is integrated with marketing so they can achieve more. High performers look for a challenge and like to be a part of the strategy creation in order to feel valued.

So how do you secure the best? You ask them what's important to them in their career, what they want from the company, from their boss, and of course from the team. If you're on the same page regarding values from the start then the process won't fall down at the end. Being thorough in your hiring process ensures you secure the best and ultimately keep those you hire happy.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

## FINAL WORDS

**By now, I hope that you can see how implementing these steps will ensure you make the right decisions when you need a Head of Comms, and bring an end to hiring average performers. I trust that you will now be feeling optimistic about securing that Head of Comms who will support you as you build your empire.**

### **About me**

#### **Sarah Leembruggen**

I partner with a select number of CEOs and Global Heads of Marketing in London and have done so for over 15 years. I have built high performing teams for them and am proud to have found some absolute stars.

What sets me apart from other executive search consultants is my knowledge – I know where the top performers are and when they will consider a move as I spend my time keeping in touch with them. Many are signed up with me exclusively as we have ‘grown up’ together. I don’t think many CEOs realise that 60% of industry Heads of Comms don’t have the time to look for a role and that they will wait for my call. When I partner with my clients, they get peace of mind that the communications counsel they seek will be sound.



# APPLY FOR A BESPOKE CONSULTATION CALL WITH ME

Would you like tailored advice on your hiring strategy? I am offering 30-minute consultations to businesses which are designed to get effective results from senior hiring processes.

To give you an idea, here are just a few samples of areas I will review during the consultation –

Your recent hiring successes and mistakes

Whether your interview questions are really getting to the nitty-gritty of the information that you need from your senior candidates

How to maximise your business sell – are you attracting the best talent?

These 30-minute phone-based sessions are usually worth £200 but I am offering these for free – only for the next six weeks. There are just five sessions available so I would recommend booking yours early to avoid disappointment.

Email me at [sarah@the-works.co.uk](mailto:sarah@the-works.co.uk) with the subject 'Book Bespoke Consultation' – or just give me a call on 020 7903 9290 – I would love to hear from you.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I work with a select number of CEOs of corporate and financial agencies in London and have done so for over 15 years. I have built teams for them and am proud to have found some absolute stars for them. What sets me apart from other executive search consultants is my knowledge – I know where the rainmakers are and when they will consider a move as I spend my time keeping in touch with them. Many are signed up with me exclusively as we have ‘grown up’ together. I don’t think many CEOs realise that 60% of industry Partners don’t have the time to look for a role and that they will wait for my call. When I partner with my clients, they get £2m on their bottom line.

My clients would frequently come to me, complain about having to meet 20 Directors and Partners and still not secure the star they wanted. My CEOs’ lives changed when I brought in their star revenue generators who helped build their business significantly – and that was without having to meet many people at all.

In most cases, they would meet just one or two Partners before hiring. The ‘a-ha moment’ for me was seeing that I could really help CEOs get it right, save them an extraordinary amount of time as numerous meetings became a thing of the past, and work at a pace that suited us both. My success can be seen in the number of grey hairs I have, although I’m told I should attribute my achievements to my unrivalled network, expert knowledge and a very thorough approach.

**“When I partner with my clients, they get £2m on their bottom line.”**



## Contact

Sarah Leembruggen  
Managing Director

020 7903 9290  
sarah@the-works.co.uk