

What Does the Client Want?

As a result of discussions with many senior executives, we believe that at a senior level, the following are attributes of the most highly valued executives.

Proven track record. Everyone nowadays, from shareholders, financial analysts to boards, are looking for proven track records. At senior levels, companies are less willing to hire on potential, if they can find someone with a demonstrable track record.

Integrity. Post Enron and similar failures of corporate governance, together with the recent banking failures, public confidence in business leaders is at a low point. This can only be overcome by working with integrity and leading by example.

Leadership. Talented employees are in great demand, particularly those who have a track record of inspiring others to achieve challenging goals. Effective leaders spread a passion throughout the organisation.

Sales and sales management skills. All senior executives, including the CEO, are an enterprise's salesforce at a time when businesses are competing more aggressively than ever against stiff competition.

General management / P and L experience. Executives who have experience of developing cost and revenue statements, with an understanding of how they combine to drive bottom line growth, are most valuable. Irrespective of the particular role that a person is in, they must be viewed as a "complete" business person who has a holistic view of the company.

Cost reduction/turnaround skills. As many organisations have failed to deliver, companies need leaders who can identify opportunities to restructure, reducing overheads, and rooting out inefficiencies in business systems in order to make them cost competitive.

Execution skills. Whilst developing strategies is of paramount importance, a key quality is the ability to translate those strategies into demonstrable results. People who meet their commitments and execute with excellence are more highly valued than ever.

Output not input. This speaks for itself; companies need people that genuinely deliver, not those who are busy yet ineffective.

Partnership and alliance expertise. The current and growing trend is for organisations to play to their unique strengths in order to leverage competitive advantage. In an era of outsourcing, a business leader's

ability to forge strategic alliances and partnerships will be increasingly important.

Merger, acquisition and integration experience. In addition to the increasingly important alliance and partnership skills, business leaders and companies need to display a core competence in acquiring and integrating companies. Many companies have grown through acquisition, however, not all have acquired and integrated companies effectively to secure talent, customer relationships, and new product lines.

Familiarity with technology and the internet. The best companies recognise that a key to success is the ability to utilise technology and web-based business tools in order to leverage business growth and operational efficiency. Business executives must ensure that it is woven into all aspects of a company's external and internal operations.

International experience. The economy is becoming increasingly global. It will therefore become more important for business leaders to recognise and be sensitive to the linguistic, ethnic and cultural differences that have lagged far behind the development of international trade. This is frankly more of an issue with British companies than those in mainland Europe.