

When Opportunity Knocks: Dealing With Recruiters

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Anchin Executive Network Relationship Senior Manager Steve Mandell spoke with *CFO Magazine* about how to make the most of these career connections:

Whether you're actively looking for a position or locked in where you are, it's likely that executive recruiters (also called "head hunters") will contact you. They say that it's a numbers game as they search for the right fit, both culturally and skill-wise, for open C-suite and board of director jobs. "It's the fit that's the most important part of this process," says Steve Mandell, executive relationship leader at Anchin Executive Network.

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If you're looking for a change, you already know that it's wise to begin the conversation with recruiters, even if the specific position being floated isn't the one you covet. But what if you're not looking for a new role? Most agree there are good reasons to talk to a qualified recruiter anyway. It's about long-term relationship-building...That willingness to talk when there's no opportunity on the table applies to recruiters, too. "What differentiates a great recruiter is the time they invest when they don't have an opportunity open," says Mandell.

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Be thoughtful about the reasons for career transitions, too. Recruiters want to know about professional challenges or why you are leaving a current position. However, "never get too personal about the reasons for leaving. Job opportunities should be about business decisions," counsels Mandell of the Anchin Executive Network. For example, Mandell would prefer to hear, "From a cultural standpoint, it's not where I envision myself in the future," over complaints about a CEO's difficult personality.

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Relationship building takes time. “Be interested in a long-term relationship, not a transactional one. Any time I call someone out of the blue, I expect them to be guarded. They have to trust that they can be transparent with me about certain things, which comes in time. I understand that. Transparency and open dialogue can develop over time.”

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“The most important part of this whole process is the transparency,” says Mandell. In a recent conversation Mandell had with a finance chief, the candidate said it bothered him when he didn’t hear back after an initial discussion with a recruiter. Mandell advises recruiter colleagues, “Just be honest and say it’s not going to work out and why.”

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Most experts encourage executives to take the time to build relationships with recruiters, whether or not they expect to work with them. “God forbid something happens, you have that fail-safe who knows you, your personality, what you’re looking for, and the types of companies you would and wouldn’t want to work for,” says Mandell.

[Read the complete article from CFO Magazine.](#)