

# Seven Questions

You need to ask before  
partnering with a  
headhunter



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# Question 1

## What research methods do you use to identify candidates?

A knowledgeable in-house research team that identifies candidates through proactive, fresh research via multiple routes to market is essential.

Our dedicated in-house research team is solely focused on identifying the best talent within the transport and infrastructure sector. We search across:

- Referrals from our network.
- Searching across our database of over 40,000 contacts.
- Telephone research to map out the management teams in target companies.
- LinkedIn research.
- Boolean searches across various search engines.
- Professional groups and networks.
- Industry news and magazines.
- Conferences and forums.

No stone is left unturned to find the best talent for your business.



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## Question 2

### How do you assess candidates?

A thorough assessment and honest appraisal of a candidate's capabilities, cultural fit, and motivations are essential to the success of any search assignment.

We meet with you to develop and agree a person specification as well as a target list of companies that we will focus our research upon. This person specification is the basis for our competency-based interview.

The competency interviews cover leadership competencies, interpersonal skills, technical knowledge and career motivations. It also includes a further briefing on the role to sell the opportunity to the prospective candidate and qualify their interest.

We then meet with you to present and agree a shortlist of candidates, discussing and answering queries on the recommended candidates for interview. In our shortlist report, we provide an assignment summary, market feedback, search statistics, CVs, a two-page candidate report and a personality profile report (if applicable).

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We will undertake verbal referencing of preferred candidates and can also provide personality profiling, reasoning tests, and scenario tests on request.

The shortlisted candidates will be a strong fit for the role, personally and technically. This means you won't waste your time interviewing unsuitable candidates.



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## Question 3

### Can you provide evidence of Market Knowledge?

Relevant market knowledge ensures that your chosen partner can provide valuable advice on salary benchmarking and possible talent pools, as well as reduces the time to shortlist.

Ask the headhunter for a list of relevant assignments they have previously completed in your sector to establish their ability to successful recruit and advise you on the role.

Ask them what salary and package you should be offering for the role; a good search firm will be able to provide current benchmarks from within your sector.

Also ask how they would sell the opportunity to prospective candidates.

With over 26 years of executive search experience in the transport and infrastructure sectors, we can answer these questions.

Having filled over 600 leadership roles, we have extensive market knowledge and can provide you with a wealth of information.

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## Question 4

### How would you ensure a diverse longlist and shortlist of candidates?

Ensuring diversity in candidate selection is crucial for fostering innovation, enhancing decision-making, and reflecting the diverse markets and communities your organisation serves.

Our research team uses various sources to identify potential candidates, including industry databases, professional networks, and associations dedicated to underrepresented groups.

Our consultants are trained to ensure fair and objective candidate evaluation with standardised criteria. We foster an inclusive culture within our team, where 50% are women and 17% are ethnically diverse.

We analyse our diversity data throughout the recruitment process to identify gaps and adjust our strategies. This helps us deliver diverse longlists and shortlists effectively.

On average, 33% of our recent executive searches have been filled with female candidates. We understand that delivering diversity is a continuous process of improvement, and work with our clients to build inclusive teams that drive success.

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## Question 5

### Can you provide evidence of success?

Ask to see client testimonials or even speak to previous clients. This will confirm that the search firm and its consultants have an established reputation.

Ask what the firm's assignment completion rate is. The industry average is just under 70%. Our assignment completion rate is 96%.

81% of the candidates we place are still employed by our client after 3 years and 24% are promoted within 18 months of commencing employment.



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## Question 6

### How do you structure your search fee?

While most search firms charge their fee in three stages based on a percentage of the candidate remuneration, the conditions for the payment differ significantly. Some firms charge based on success, others charge after a set period of days (e.g. 0, 30 or 60 days) without any direct link to results.

Some search firms also charge a flat “office expenses fee” for each month they work on a search in addition to the search fee. In some cases, this can be a further 20% of the search fee on top.

At Newsom Consulting, we structure our fee into three equal stages: on instruction, acceptable shortlist, and successful completion. You decide what an acceptable shortlist is.

We do not charge an additional fee for office expenses. We only charge for specific out of pocket expenses where we need to travel to meet candidates outside London, and we pre-agree any expenses over £100.

If the headhunter is confident in their firm's search process, they should provide a candidate guarantee that reflects this confidence.

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We guarantee the candidate for the first six months of their employment with you. If they leave your company within six months, you can ask us to find you a replacement for free or a rebate of a proportion of the search fee if you prefer.

In the last five years, this has only happened to us on one occasion due to unexpected ill-health. We found a replacement candidate for the client, within two months, free of charge.





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## Question 7

### What is your off-limits policy?

Reputable search firms should comply with the accepted code of ethics for the search industry and have a clear off-limits policy not to approach employees of their clients.

This is a double-edge sword; while it offers protection for the client company, it also means other clients of the search firm are off-limits to the new client.

Reputable search firms should be clear to prospective clients which of their existing clients are off-limits and they should highlight if they feel they are conflicted from working with that client.

Clients are off-limits to us for 12 months after a search.



## Get in Touch

Newsom Consulting is an executive search firm that focuses on critical infrastructure and the built environment including, Rail, Aviation & Maritime, Highways, Utilities, Energy, Defence and Buildings sectors. Since we were founded in 2010, our team has successfully placed over 600 experienced industry executives – from executive leadership to senior management and leading technical experts.

Our clients include many of the leading infrastructure asset owners and major projects, contractors, public sector bodies, manufacturers, consultancies, and technology suppliers.

We are dedicated to fostering diversity within the industry and continually strive to enhance diversity in the senior teams of our clients. In the past two years, 33% of our placements have been either gender or ethnically diverse, and we remain committed to increasing the diversity of the industries we operate in.



For additional ideas on how to secure your next senior leaders get in touch. I look forward to talking with you soon.



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