

## OPINION

**Be the First to Know**

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I attended a wedding in Hiroshima recently and one of the guests asked me about my line of business in Tokyo. "Executive search for the pharmaceutical industry", I replied.

"So basically you steal people from one company and place them in another," he said very smugly.

I smiled and thought: "if it were only that easy!" the European start-up I was helping would have had its pharmacovigilance director months ago. However, my new friend's comment made me wonder. Only 5% of the candidates we meet are actually placed immediately. What are the benefits for the other 95%?

In most developed countries, such as Japan, there is an abundance of 'job information' in any given industry. The Internet, weekend newspapers and trade journals are full of listings for manager-level-and-above positions.

One of the key services we provide is updated information, which candidates cannot find through mainstream media. The case of the oncology product manager is a good example.

From January 2004 up until this year, we presented this woman with five senior-level marketing manager positions. She was interviewed four times and each time, she gained valuable experience. However, she did not feel that the positions matched her goals. Our candidate recently accepted a role at a leading US pharmaceutical company with a 10% increase in salary and expanded responsibilities.

At our initial meeting we could see this candidate was ready to move to a new company and was interested in better opportunities. Indeed this was true,

but, it took three years for the 'right' position to be presented and accepted.

Time became the key for our candidate's career advancement. When we first met, we were able to clearly understand her goals and the time frame in which she wanted to achieve them. Over the coming years we introduced new options and allowed her to make the final decision. Time was not wasted. Through face-to-face interviews with her industry peers, she gained valuable

market insight, which enabled her to understand her true value and finally make the right choice.

If a candidate is solely relying on the Internet or a personal network then they will miss out on vital information, especially in the pharmaceutical industry. One of Japan's leading job-boards illustrates my point. Only recently more than 1,500 IT positions were advertised compared with only 65 matches for the pharmaceutical industry. Many of the best pharma positions are not advertised.

What does this mean for our clients and candidates? For the client, it is important to work with an agent who has experience in the market and has built strong contacts and relationships. For the candidate, finding a better position always takes time. And some find their dream job faster than others.

My 10 years of experience in this industry has told me that people who achieve better career opportunities closely link themselves with a recruitment agent. In our information age, it is better to be the first to know.

If you are not connected, you will hear about that dream job when it is too late.