

## **BERKHEMER CLAYTON: Tips on Recruiting Executives:**

### **Landing that Out-of-Town Executive Candidate in a Competitive Hiring Market**

Los Angeles—Berkhemer Clayton Inc., a senior-level retained executive search firm based in Los Angeles, hears a common complaint among corporate hiring managers: Relocation has made it increasingly difficult to attract the best executives to their companies, particularly in California.

“The challenge of convincing professionals to relocate is always severe when the job market favors job seekers, as the market does today,” explains Fred Clayton, chief executive officer of Berkhemer Clayton. “But when companies are competing to attract the top-tier executives, competition for those individuals is fierce and relocation is often a deal-breaker.

“One of the greatest challenges companies face today is to attract high performance management candidates from other parts of the country,” adds Clayton. “The problem is even more acute in Southern California, where high real estate prices, a higher cost of living, and misperceptions about what it is like to live here all add up.”

Looking for pivotal factors to help companies help candidates say yes to that tough relocation decision, Berkhemer Clayton surveyed executives they successfully relocated to join client corporations.

As a result, Berkhemer Clayton recommends four actions corporations can take to dramatically increase their odds of landing that out-of-town executive candidate:

1. **Engage a “destination” relocation consultant early in the recruitment process.** This single, low-cost step can make the difference to successfully land your first-choice candidate. “Destination” relocation consultants play a crucial role up-front by partnering with the hiring executive to recruit the targeted candidate (pre-hire), even before the candidate is invited for initial in-person interviews.

By contrast, traditional relocation firms are customarily engaged post-hire to help a candidate sell the current home, purchase a new one and coordinate all logistics including shipment of household belongings, but haven’t been part of the pre-convincing process.

Often by phone, a destination relocation consultant can quickly assess the candidate's lifestyle, neighborhood preferences, family needs, and financial situation for home purchase/rental purposes, and take inventory of her or his impressions of the proposed destination location, and address any potential concerns about living there. Armed with this information, the destination consultant can advise the corporate hiring manager on the executive candidate's viability for recruitment, and highlight potential issues that should be proactively addressed during the pre-hire recruitment process in order to land that person.

Candidates are typically relieved to be offered the benefit of professional, unbiased counsel when taking those first crucial steps toward exploring a potential career opportunity that involves relocation. They are further comforted to learn that if they do decide to make the move, the destination relocation consultant will stay involved through the entire process, providing assistance with all issues, from home finding, community and school selection, to family lifestyle activities. A smooth family transition is a vital component to a successful hire and its importance must not be overlooked. Often the natural tendency is to focus solely on the candidate, rather than his or her family.

2. **Sharpen your storytelling skills.** Be able to clearly articulate the vision for the company and the division or department in order to "paint a picture" for the candidate of what his/her role will be in fulfilling that vision. Storytelling is not "spinning." To the contrary, it is articulating an accurate and compelling picture for the candidate to visualize himself or herself in the role, transcending the standard job description, and seeing how important that role is to the company.

Leaders are attracted by the challenge to grow, build or fix something on a large scale, so they can make a meaningful contribution to the enterprise. Although essential, standard position descriptions and recruitment marketing materials that describe mission, vision, values and culture are not enough to entice, or "set the hook" with the most sought-after executive candidates. Thoughtful storytelling, with substance, will provide your competitive edge. Some executives are natural storytellers, others are not—your company or department's "story" can be developed and practiced with a corporate communications executive as advisor and coach. This potentially decision-changing technique can be learned by all interviewers to successfully engage an executive's interest in joining the team, especially one who must be inspired enough not only to leave her or his current employer but also move lock, stock and barrel to another city or state.

3. **Enlist recently relocated executives as ambassadors.** No one can be more helpful to a potential candidate faced with relocation than a company executive who has recently been through the same experience. Arranging for a confidential discussion between the potential candidate and the relocated executive can go a long way toward easing those very real concerns the candidate may have about moving.
  
4. **Finally, consider a mortgage subsidy in your strategy to close the deal with the candidate.** Many large companies have standard relocation programs, based on a lump-sum payment, to help ease the transition for a candidate into what may be a more expensive housing market. In addition to the standard relo, a mortgage subsidy provided by the hiring company can arm the candidate with more purchasing power—up to four times more—than a lump sum payment. A mortgage subsidy may also be more cost-effective for the company and income tax-friendly for the candidate.

*Berkhemer Clayton, Inc., is a senior-level retained executive search firm specializing in corporate communications/public relations, marketing, finance and accounting, human resources, higher education, and other executive management positions. Berkhemer Clayton is based in Los Angeles. For more information please visit [www.berkhemerclayton.com](http://www.berkhemerclayton.com).*