

The F&F Job Market: Status Update

For recent candidates, it's about more than just the paycheck

Deep summer is typically a slow time for flavor and fragrance industry recruiters, notes Richard Panzarasa, owner and president of executive search and consulting firm Panzarasa Group. Yet, a relatively strong job market in the industry has kept Panzarasa busy, driven by company reorganizations and candidates' sense that a career move is necessary. Yet, he notes, the job search and candidate selection processes are changing.

Interview Process Growing Longer

Many candidates are finding that the interview process is dragging on for a longer period of time—even months—notes Panzarasa, highlighting a lack of urgency on both the part of the company and the candidate. Postponements and even cancellations of appointments extend time lines, sometimes even for senior management candidates.

"I'm seeing a subtle change in the attitudes and behavior of both the interviewer and interviewee," Panzarasa says. "There's always something that comes up, someone's traveling, but then the candidate is out of town, then there's a holiday. When you let things drift, the interest is lost. You can lose good people this way."

In some instances, Panzarasa says, companies might even change the qualifications of a position mid-search, adding further delays. Ultimately, companies want to be able to pull the trigger on a candidate at the moment of their choosing. Meanwhile, he says, candidates might find themselves eligible for new positions within their current company, either through normal attrition or drastic reorganizations. If something seems likely to change within the current organization, candidates might want to delay an external interview process to have more time to assess options.

"It's almost a process of both sides hedging bets," Panzarasa says. "There's still a lot of nervousness about the economy and fear of job security."

Sometimes these delays can lead to relationships that begin on the wrong foot. "Neither party wants to begin the partnership with a feeling that the other party has taken advantage," says Panzarasa. "This is where the term 'right fit' becomes so important. Sometimes it is better, for instance, to hire the candidate that might be a bit more junior or less qualified but is also more excited, enthusiastic and proud to be given the opportunity to join the organization."

More Than Just Money

Quality of life considerations are increasingly important to job candidates, says Panzarasa. "As the competition in our industry intensifies and the stress reaches the red zone, the candidate is looking for a company that at least seems to be run in a focused and strategic manner rather than from the seat of its pants, or



that the culture of the company expects 12- and 14-hour days," he explains. While candidates are of course looking for a pay increase, a position of greater responsibility or to depart an unpleasant situation in their current position, recruiters are likely to see that the intensity of competition within the flavor and fragrance industry and its attendant stress has reordered candidates' priorities.

Among frequently asked questions, Panzarasa says, are: How far will I have to travel to get to work, how much travel is involved and what comprises a typical day? "We have people at some companies who don't leave until 8 PM," he says. "[Candidates] are trying to get an idea of what is expected of them more specifically than in years past and what they have to give up. There are a lot of things that are changing to attract qualified candidates. Companies are more sensitive to certain concerns of the chosen candidate and can sometimes relieve the doubt by simply showing the interest to address these concerns after phone calls or meetings. I recently completed a placement simply because I became aware of a concern on the part of the candidate, explained it away as best I could and then reported it to my HR partner at the company. The HR partner called the candidate one evening and by the end of their conversation the partner had obviously shared with the candidate things that were not mine to say. Going that extra mile secured for my client ... at no extra cost in dollars, [adding] tons in mutual trust.

Finally, Panzarasa says, "The importance to candidates that they will make a difference in their new position is crucial."

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