



What To Look For From Your Agency:

It is not difficult to find a Recruitment Agency (now often known as a Recruitment Consultancy). There are literally thousands of Agencies throughout the UK and, at last estimate, there are over 600 Agencies specialising in the IT and Telecommunications field. So how on earth do you select one or a number to work with in finding that important next job or assignment? Naturally you may be drawn towards one that is advertising a job that you are interested in. But how do you know that the Agency advertising the job is best placed to turn your application into a successful offer?

There are a couple of things that will easily help you start to filter the good from the ordinary from the bad. First up, look for the REC logo. The Recruitment and Employment Confederation – REC – is the trade association that Agencies who value their reputation will join. The REC provides very useful information about the market and lobbies UK Government and Europe regarding employment legislation that they wish to introduce. From your point of view, however, every Agency that joins the REC commits to follow a code of practice when dealing with clients, contractors and candidates and you will have the ability to lodge a complaint against an Agency if you do not feel that it has treated you fairly if they are a member of the REC. This is a powerful watchdog within the industry and ensures that standards are achieved and maintained.

If the Agency that you are talking to is both a member of the REC and a member of the REC's specialist sector division – REC IT and Comms – even better. This means that they gather key intelligence on what is happening in your market sector through seminars and conferences and are therefore much more knowledgeable and experienced in your field – just what you need. See the REC website – www.rec.uk.com for further information.

Okay, so that's reduced the pack to (about) 300 – what next? There are a number of pointers that will take you forward:

How did the Agency respond to your 'phone call, e-mail or letter/CV?

Did they seem interested and prepared to take time to explain the role and discuss your experience with them? Did they respond to your e-mail or CV (many don't). In short what was your first impression?

Do they really understand the job on offer?

In order to establish whether a role is right for you, you need information – does the Agency really understand the role, the Company and are they able to properly match your skills with the opportunity?

Is the Agency a specialist in your field?

Many Agencies dabble in the IT and Comms arena. Most High Street Agencies will be asked to look for IT and Comms skills from time to time and they'll take the details and advertise them – but that doesn't make them a specialist. Look for an Agency that deals in your field day after day.

Are they open and candid with you?

Agencies deal with hundreds, perhaps thousands of jobseekers per week – they need to be succinct and straight with people. You should not be offended if an Agency tells you that they don't think you are right for a particular role – they are looking to save your time, their customer's time and their time.

Do they give advice?

A good Agency will talk through your experience and suggest ways ahead for your career – don't be afraid to ask them what they think you should do next.

Do they keep you well informed?

Do they keep you informed once your CV has been forwarded to a Client? This can be very hard for the Agency to do. Clients are notorious for asking for applications for jobs that “go away”. They might be filled internally or by somebody the client knows. Sometimes the Agent struggles to get feedback on the role from the Client. However you should expect informed feedback from time to time as requested.

Do they prepare you for the interview?

You've been invited for an interview do you get good information on the interview process? Do they know exactly where the interview will take place? How long it will last? Who will you meet? What form will it take? You should expect good preparation from your Agency - ask for it.

Do they assist you through the offer process?

Once you know that you are going to be offered a role customers will often take a long time to make their decisions and generate offers. You should expect your Agency to keep you very well informed during this process and be chasing the customer hard to get things resolved.

All of these pointers will help you select an Agency that will represent you well and give you the best possible chance to get your next role. Naturally in a crowded field standards will vary - which is why you will probably lodge your CV/details with several Agents and that is appropriate. Don't hesitate, though, to ask an Agency to remove your details from their Database – Agencies will leave your CV on their Database and may 'phone you in the future with job opportunities. If you don't want to deal with a particular Agency again you will need to tell them.

As with many things in life you can only speak as you find from personal experience. Be selective and don't be afraid to ask for help – a good Agency will be pleased to provide it.

Good Luck.....

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