



Clients often ask search firms how they differ from each other. There are many angles from which to view a given firm's differentiation-geographic focus, industry specialization, and functional expertise, to name a few. However, one of the brightest comparisons may be the impact that a firm's size has on the level of service, quality, reach, and methodology deployed on behalf of its clients.

Advantages of working with a boutique executive search firm:

- » When working with a boutique firm, clients can be assured that the principal search partner engaged to conduct the search will be intimately involved in its execution, and will remain personally accountable for its successful completion. All too often with large firms, search execution is relegated to inexperienced junior members of the team, in what's referred to in the industry as "bait and switch". **Boutique search firm partners have spent their career as character assessors.** This ensures clients a search process which focuses the partner's expertise on the critical aspects of interviewing and assessing candidates.
- » Large firms often struggle with huge lists of 'off-limits' companies that they cannot recruit from, due to their massive client rosters. **Boutique firms typically have much more reasonable "hands-off" client limits, and few conflicting situations.**
- » Large global search firms have far greater overhead due to the need to support a worldwide infrastructure, which ultimately translates into a need to focus their efforts on clients generating the largest volume of fees. As a result, they often work less diligently on traditional client searches, and remain wary of clients where there may be a lower amount of potential searches or a reduced probability of repeat business in the near term. **Boutique firms are looking for long term relationships, not short term transactions.**
- » **Boutique firm search consultants take a more manageable search load.** This usually results in faster search completions. The average presentation of qualified candidates generally happens within four to seven weeks, with completion of a successful search typically 30 days faster than large firms.
- » **Many boutique firms have made investments to become members of domestic and/or international executive search alliances,** providing the ability to leverage a firm's geographic specialization or expertise. As a result, the perceived "reach" of mega firms into specific geographic regions has been neutralized.
- » The cost of client abandonment for boutique firms is much higher than for large firms. **Boutiques don't have a big marketing engine, and rely more heavily on referrals.** Thus, if a boutique doesn't successfully finish a search, the negative ripple effect is much larger than for global firms.
- » **Boutique firms typically conduct more original research to supplement their proprietary database.** Large firms often rely heavily on out-of-date legacy internal databases for candidate targeting, reducing their sourcing effectiveness.
- » Large global firms, particularly those that are publicly traded, have hundreds of partners to support, creating significant revenue and profit pressures. Boutique firms don't have the same economic constraints, and thus are not afraid to decline a search or refer it to another firm rather than accepting an assignment which they are not well suited to conduct. **Honesty and client satisfaction are more important than dollars in these circumstances.**
- » **Boutique firms have a singular focus on executive search.** Large global firms have committed to the strategy of diversification into ancillary service offerings, such as management assessment, onboarding, coaching, leadership development, succession planning, etc. Often times these services represent as much as one-third of a mega firm's revenues, and create inherent internal client conflicts.
- » Large firms claim experience in nearly every function and industry sector, but this claim only has validity if the consultant who will actually execute the search has that experience personally. **Boutique firm partner-on-point involvement ensures the critical experience needed is actually brought to bear on a client's search.**