

# How do Middle to Senior Level Executives make a career move in the current Irish job market?



by Robert Ferry & Laura Perry



RFC Executive is delighted to publish this survey which has been conducted and distributed by Robert Ferry and Laura Perry. It is part of our ongoing commitment to providing practical cutting edge information for leaders in Ireland.

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Robert Ferry  
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## Executive Summary

Executives in most sectors are bombarded by mixed messages about the best approach to take when looking for a new role or conversely when looking to hire mid to senior level managers. This confusion is fuelled largely by the rise of social media, the proliferation of job boards and the perceived lack of career opportunity, an offshoot of high unemployment. In this climate we wanted to discover what the best methods of understanding the job market are while simultaneously getting to grips with the best source of job opportunities and executive talent.

We approached 1800 executives to complete our survey and got 184 completed responses. The most surprising finding was the gap between the perception of what constitutes the best source of job opportunities versus the reality of actually achieving a job move. Our respondents who were currently looking for a career move believed that the most helpful sources of job opportunities were:

### **Source of Career Opportunities- Respondents Currently Looking**

Recruitment & Search firms - 71%

Friends and colleagues/networking - 52%,

Social media (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter) - 47%.

Job boards - 24%

However, when asked how they actually found their new position the reality was as follows:

### **Source of Career Opportunities- Respondents that Secured a Move**

Recruitment & Search firms - 36%

Friends and colleagues/networking - 31%,

Social media (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter) - 9%

Job boards - 6.2%

When the social media used was analysed we found that all 9% attained their role through LinkedIn while not one respondent obtained a job through either Facebook or Twitter.

We concluded that despite the onslaught of social media and increase in job boards, the best methods of both gleaning market information and sourcing a job/executive talent for middle to senior managers, for now, is still networking and recommendations from friends and colleagues followed closely by executive search firms and recruiters.

## **Introduction**

Over recent years high unemployment has meant limited career opportunity for most senior professionals and executives. There has also been an explosion in the methods available to source career opportunities/ executive talent. Traditional methods such as networking, executive search firms, recruitment agencies, newspapers/ trade magazines and job boards have been increased to now include a multitude of job boards as well as social media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, employer websites etc.... In this climate it was felt that it would be useful for jobseekers and employers to know, directly from those who have changed jobs, what the best ways are to achieve this given the changing landscape.

## **Research objectives**

The purpose of conducting the survey was twofold. Firstly, to ascertain what was perceived as useful tools in understanding the relevant jobs market and the best source of job opportunities as well as to uncover the gap, if any, between perceived best practice versus actual best practice

RFC Executive set out to get feedback from executives who were in the process of job hunting and those who had changed job anytime between January 2013 and January 2014. We wanted to ascertain the level of education and experience of the respondents as well as the size of organisation (employee numbers) and industry type. In addition we wanted to know what they found useful in understanding the market for their skill set and what was perceived to be the best sources of job opportunities versus actual best source. With regard to the process we were keen to know how long a current job process is and how many interviews are involved.

## **Data collection process**

The data was gathered from a sample of 184 executives from RFC Executive's database. This was the total of respondents from an email sent to 1800 executives using an online survey tool.

## Findings

Probably the most surprising finding was the gap between perception and reality when considering what is seen as a good source of job opportunities versus the reality of actually achieving a job move.

When asked to rate what avenues they found most useful when sourcing job opportunities the top three answers were;

Friends and colleagues	52%
Executive search firms	41%
LinkedIn	41%.

However, when asked what source was used to actually get a new job the top three were:

Friend or colleague / Networking	36%
Executive search firm/ Recruiter	32%
LinkedIn	9.3%

Employer websites were 12.5%. Interestingly, Facebook and Twitter accounted for almost no actual job moves.

The length of time to complete the process from initial application to an offer varied but 34.4% was under six weeks, 6.5% six to eight weeks and 11.4% over eight weeks.

The number of interviews (phone, online or face to face) was; two -32.6%, three - 36%. Notably, 8.1% had more than five interviews.

Respondents rated as helpful in the process tailoring their CV - 70% and interview preparation - 70%

The most frustrating part of a job search was shared equally between receiving no response to an application and the length of time to complete the process.

The respondents came from a range of company sizes, in employee numbers terms; 500+ -42%, 100-500 - 24.1%, > 100 - 33.2%. Given the size of the sample and the range of industries it was not possible to group into defined industry sectors in any meaningful way. The qualification level of respondents was degree - 80%+ with 52%+ at masters level.

## Recommendations-Employers

Given that networking, friends and colleagues scored highly, enhancing existing networks with the targeted talent pool in both a quantitative and qualitative way together with improved employer branding will yield better results.

As direct company applications account for 12.5% of new jobs secured, it follows that for a lot of companies there is room for improvement in their talent acquisition strategy and processes.

Measures to improve quality and quantity of networks include:

- company careers webpage or website that connects on an ongoing rather than an adhoc basis
- social media links to company careers page particularly LinkedIn
- employee referral schemes to increase network
- Open days, information evenings, webinars to remain connected to networks
- using the networks of relevant organisations such as universities, recruitment and search firms, industry bodies and institutes

Measures to improve employer branding or reputation

- Develop and maintain an employer branding strategy
- Addressing long process lead times and timely feedback to unsuccessful applicants as these are key in maintaining a good employer brand and so attracting future talent

## Recommendations-Executives

For those executives looking to make a career move the best source of job opportunities are friends, colleagues and networking closely followed by executive recruitment and search firms. Social media, in particular LinkedIn, is useful but more as a tool to connect and build your network.

A well thought out LinkedIn profile and a CV tailored to each application is a must. In-depth preparation for each interview is key and should include:

- researching the role and how to deal with your relevant pros and cons
- understanding the organisation, particularly its culture and how your modus operandi fits with this.
- understanding the background and personality of key organisation figures and of those conducting the interview is extremely useful.
- knowledge of the process and the content of each step in the process

Talking with your network or a recruitment and search firm or at least looking at LinkedIn profiles is an important step in ascertaining the organisation's culture and in understanding the process.

Cultural fit is vital, particularly for middle to senior management selection processes and might explain why networking, friends and colleagues as well as recruitment and search firms are the top two sources of securing a new job.

## Survey Results

### 1. How long are you in your current job?

	Response Ratio
1 year or less	31.1%
1-4 years	40.9%
4-6 years	8.1%
7 years or more	19.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 2. Educational Level

	Response Ratio
PhD	0.0%
MBA	16.3%
Masters	36.0%
Degree	36.0%
Diploma	8.1%
Cert	6.5%
Other	4.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 3. Rate the following based on how helpful you found them in understanding the market for your skill set

	Helpful	Moderately Helpful	Unhelpful
Networking (seminars, conferences)	22%	57%	21%
Friends and colleagues	57%	33%	10%
Recruiter	38%	43%	18%
Job Boards	24%	48%	28%
Social Media	19%	49%	32%
Universities and Institutes (IEI, IIPMM, CIPD etc)	7%	31%	61%

**4. Rate the following based on how helpful you found them in sourcing job opportunities**

	<b>Helpful</b>	<b>Moderately Helpful</b>	<b>Unhelpful</b>
Networking (seminars, conferences)	24%	41%	34%
Friends and colleagues	52%	42%	7%
Head-hunter/ Executive Search Firm	41%	39%	20%
Recruitment Agency	30%	50%	20%
Job Boards	24%	48%	28%
Company Websites	24%	47%	29%
LinkedIn	41%	53%	7%
Twitter	2%	22%	76%
Facebook	4%	13%	84%

**5. Rate the following based on how helpful they were in securing your job**

	<b>Helpful</b>	<b>Moderately Helpful</b>	<b>Unhelpful</b>
Tailoring CV	70%	23%	7%
Recruiter Support	32%	41%	27%
Career Coach	23%	43%	34%
Further Education	36%	43%	21%
Interview Prep	70%	22%	7%

## 6. What was/ is the most frustrating part of your job search?

	<b>Response Ratio</b>
No response	53.3%
Long process time	50.0%
Rejection	15.0%
Other	13.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

## 7. How did you get your new job?

	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Networking	15.6%
Head-hunter/ Executive Search Firm	15.6%
Recruitment Agency	15.6%
Job Board	6.2%
Referral by colleague or friend	21.8%
Applied directly to company website	12.5%
Temp to Perm	0.0%
Internal Promotion	3.1%
LinkedIn	9.3%
Twitter	0.0%
Facebook	0.0%
Other	9.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

## 8. How long were you looking for a job?

	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Less than 1 month	18.1%
1-3 months	30.3%
3-6 months	21.2%
6-9 months	12.1%
9-12 months	6.0%
Over a year	12.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

**9. Were you working when you got your new job?**

	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Yes	59.3%
No	40.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

**10. What size company are you currently working for?**

	<b>Response Ratio</b>
0-20	21.2%
21-50	3.0%
51-100	9.0%
101-300	15.1%
301-500	9.0%
500+	42.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

**11. What size company were you previously working for?**

	<b>Response Ratio</b>
0-20	9.0%
21-50	3.0%
51-100	18.1%
101-300	30.3%
301-500	9.0%
500+	27.2%
Not applicable	6.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

**12. My job is in the same or similar industry as my old job**

	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Yes	49.0%
No	51.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

**13. My new job is a lateral, upward or downward move from my old job**

	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Lateral	43.7%
Up	37.6%
Down	18.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

**14. Were you looking for a new position when you secured this job?**

	<b>Response Ratio</b>
Yes	93.7%
No	6.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

**15. How long did the interview process take from the first contact to the offer?**

	<b>Response Ratio</b>
3 weeks or less	13.1%
3- 6 weeks	21.3%
6-8 weeks	6.5%
More than 8 weeks	11.4%
No Responses	47.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

**16. How many interviews (phone, in person, on-line) did you complete before you received an offer?**

	<b>Response Ratio</b>
1 interview	4.9%
2 interviews	16.3%
3 interviews	18.0%
4 interviews	3.2%
More than 5 interviews	8.1%
Other	1.6%
No Responses	47.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Appendix

### Robert Ferry Profile



Robert has over 20 years experience in the recruitment and search business acting as a trusted advisor to a wide range of Irish and multinational clients. He holds a B.A. in HR and is a member of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

Many organisations use his expertise when they need to recruit leaders. He has the depth of experience to understand how to identify, attract and select the right leader with the requisite skills, motivational and cultural fit to deliver.

#### **Current role:**

Robert is the founding director of RFC Executive which was established in 1998. He is responsible for leading the team in delivering recruitment and search solutions for middle to senior level executives through to board directors. He represents the firm as the Irish branch of CFR Global Executive Search.

#### **Earlier Career:**

He began his career in NCB Stockbrokers as a private client advisor. He then moved to join a leading specialist firm, Professional Placement Group, as a recruitment consultant covering accounting and financial services professionals. He progressed to director level leading the technical team which specialised in engineering and supply chain supply chain professionals and managers, a role he held for over six years until 1998.

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We differentiate ourselves by delivering a more cost effective yet best in class service by combining our competence in traditional research methods with our expertise in leveraging web 3.0 technology and social media platforms. In addition we offer our clients a suite of services and pricing options tailored to meet their individual needs. Our expertise extends to the following sectors:

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