

HR Officer Recruiting and Staffing



Jason Hanold
Co-CEO & Managing Partner

CEOCFO: Mr. Hanold, what is the vision for Hanold Associates today?

Mr. Hanold: As an organization, it is about our reputation, our brand and about how our clients perceive us as a boutique firm focused on their HR officer needs that crush the searches that we take on from a recruiting execution standpoint. Our firm is known by the clients that support us and being incredibly authentic and transparent where our colleagues provide them great, unfiltered counsel. That is why many of the very organizations that we support keep coming back to us.

CEOCFO: How do you achieve all of the good things that you have just mentioned?

Mr. Hanold: Part of how we achieve the success we have had today which we never assume is coming tomorrow because we have now just done every search that we know about. Who knows who is coming tomorrow but a big part of how we have this kind of following is people keep coming back to us is because we are very thoughtful about serving clients' interests but we do so by first serving the candidate interest. That means that it is being incredibly transparent with the candidate, getting to know them, listing well, understanding what kind of environment they will thrive in and ensuring that the client that we happen to be representing offers that kind of opportunity, both the specific role and as an organizational culture. When we put people into roles or put a small role of bettering their situation in life and watch them thrive, it is through word of mouth that it comes around and people find us.

CEOCFO: How do you get to the essence of a candidate to understand not only their skills but the mindset of what is going to fit with someone's corporate culture?

Mr. Hanold: You get to it by first building a relationship with the candidate or prospect that you are talking to. You need to take them away from the notion of giving the answers they think they want to hear. Frankly, as candidates become more seasoned, they get that and tend to more naturally reveal their true selves. For folks that are coming up through the ranks that have not been in interviewing situations for decades, it is oftentimes just asking about their background, what life was like in their younger years, and trades they may carry forward from family members who were influential in their early years. When you get people talking about the early beginnings, they truly start to reveal key elements about themselves. It is a conversation that they are not necessarily expecting in an interview but it disarms the candidate. Any part of your dialogue or just even in your approach in your own behavior as an interviewer, if you disarm the individual you are talking to, often it becomes a conversation and less of a give and take with a question and answer scenario. That is when you tend to see the authenticity of the individual.

CEOCFO: What types of companies are turning to Hanold for services? Is there a common thread?

Mr. Hanold: Although they are across industries, the common thread is these are all companies going through a type of transformation, whether it be a transformation involving their significant scale and growth and they need to ramp up and hire the kinds of people who can drive sustainable change, or they could also be an organization that is suffering financially or from a results perspective, and they need to hire differently. They need to upgrade the caliber of talent and it might be standing up a business that was once a division of another company. The common theme is transformation, even though they may be defining transformation differently. The kinds of companies coming to us include those such as Patagonia, Nike, eBay, and Vail Resorts. We just started the chief HR officer search for the UFC, Ultimate Fighting Championship on the same week that we started the search for the chief HR Officer for Riddell, and Riddell is about making helmets for heads and the UFC is about taking your head off and that was just one week. We have a wide range of clients coming to us but transformation is the key. Of course, they are coming to us because they have particular needs for a human resource officer.

CEOCFO: *How do you reach out to potential candidates? What might you do differently than others?*

Mr. Hanold: When it comes to effective recruiting and executive recruiting, it is not necessarily about an innovative approach or process but it is about an artful approach to the execution and doing it well. When we reach out, it is very fundamental. In this day and age, there is a stronger preference for initial email communication. I am reaching out with a position description of exactly why I am reaching out to them. Those would include who I am representing, where the role is based, where it is located and if I think they themselves could be a viable candidate. Often the case is I am reaching out to pretty influential HR officers who may of know of others who I should be talking to and I am getting their ideas and reaction. With that, it might be the initial outreach by asking for a phone conversation. That has changed over the last ten years. Ten to twenty years ago, there was a strong preference where the outreach was a phone call and a voicemail and another phone call. Today people like to manage their own time more effectively. They like the email, and then they can respond or react whether they have an interest in helping out or not and then we could get it scheduled. That is typically our first outreach need.

CEOCFO: *What are some of the specific challenges when you are recruiting for HR type positions?*

Mr. Hanold: Our most significant challenge of recruiting for the HR officer is the very position you are recruiting for, this person will be the culture champion of the respective organization they are joining. Part of your challenge as a recruiter is to understand a new client's situation and getting a tack on their organizational culture, not only what their culture looks like today but their aspirational culture, what attributes of their aspirational culture you need to then identify in the candidate that you are accessing, developing and presenting to a particular client. That becomes part of the challenge because oftentimes with our clients going through a transformation, there is a great likelihood that someone who is a fit for their company today is not necessarily the fit for where they want their company to go. It is understanding their direction, their readiness for change, and then super imposing those attributes on a candidate that you may just be meeting for the first time and insuring that it is an accurate read through a rigorous assessment process. That becomes a little more of the burden of culture fit for that HR officer who not only needs to fit into the organization as an individual but then is leading that cultural identity and shaping it for the company.

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CEOCFO: *Are there an increasing number of categories in HR that you might fill?*

Mr. Hanold: What we are seeing is that it is something that as time as going on, it is a very different kind of executive. It is someone with broader business documents, someone who will have perspective on the business well beyond people. What we are seeing more of is the emergence of this senior chief learning officer who is really focused on taking the talent you have fundamentally and making that existing talent more capable. It is helping them align their strengths and skill sets to the strategic agenda of the organization and it is helping to drive engagement in the organization. Engagement is the discretionary effort that one brings to work every day and bringing more out of them so companies can do more and better with your people. There is more sophistication in understanding of the power of what a great HR talent leader can do for and organization by the C-suite and by the board. They are investing much more on the talent side of the house and insuring that they are keeping high levels of engagement.

CEOCFO: *Do you need to keep up with the compliance issues? Is it becoming more important that candidates understand the various regulations that seem to change every day as to what is acceptable and what is not?*

Mr. Hanold: Now only do you have to keep up on compliance, but depending on the kind of client you are serving for those that are government, contractors have a different reporting requirement that you have to help them comply with and support. There is a lot that goes into the compliance nature but they are for the candidates. The very people that we are putting forward, today's HR officer needs to be fully aware of a variety of compliance issues and in some cases, they have responsibility for complaints for an organization if it is not carved out separately. It is not only what compliance issues impact them today but also as it pertains to healthcare benefits and what triggers exist for a company all the way to diversity compliance issues. The technical aspects are not going away; they are just becoming more complex.

CEOCFO: *Do you outreach much for new potential companies to use your services or are you so well known these days that people are just coming to you?*

Mr. Hanold: We are not so well known, not compared to the clients we have served like Nike. What we do have because we have a small firm, is a pretty consistent stream of clients coming to us. We are busy and we have stayed busy. We have been incredibly fortunate but are working everyday to make sure that we were absolutely delighting the clients and

that we are people with a great deal of respect and dignity and that whether you are a successful candidate with us or unsuccessful, you feel as though it was a great experience and connection to other people. Fundamentally, that is what we want people walking away feeling better from having interacted with our team.

CEOFCO: *How do applicants and employers find you?*

Mr. Hanold: If someone has not heard about us or they do not know of us, oftentimes until they find us by looking for HR executive recruiters or HR recruiting and that is how they will typically come across our firm. They may read some of the releases or new stories that are out about whether we were doing the chief HR officer search for Outward Bound or USC; they may hear about us that way, but if they are proactively looking, it is typically that search for HR recruiters.

CEOFCO: *What is your geographic range today?*

Mr. Hanold: 90 percent of our work is US based. We are doing searches outside of the borders but it typically originates with a client who we have a relationship with in the states. For example, for Pure Circle that is the leading producers of stevia, we did their search for their chief HR officer that was based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and they were looking for local candidates to Kuala Lumpur, so we conducted that search from here. Most of our searches are throughout the US. Every week we show a heat map of where we have the most active searches. Two weeks ago it was in Tampa, FL. I think now it is in California and three weeks ago it was probably Chicago. It ranges and is well distributed throughout the US.

CEOFCO: *What is next?*

Mr. Hanold: One is it is always a challenge. It is amazing how we get out for finding great talent for our client organizations but it always remains hard to find the right talent for your own organization because our culture is important to us. It is meeting great people who will be the right fit to serve the clients the way we would expect them to be treated. It is being there for our clients as they need us and doing our very best to reciprocate the honor they have given us by retaining us to do that search. It is doing what we are doing and always getting better at it.

CEOFCO: *Why choose Hanold Associates?*

Mr. Hanold: For me it is always a difficult thing to talk about ourselves and this is where I will always encourage someone who does not know us to first talk to our long list of references that are made up of some of the most influential chief HR officers, people who have been unsuccessful candidates, successful candidates and people who have been both successful and unsuccessful, and then clients. What they are likely to tell you is that we bring a human, transparent, authentic and genuine approach. With both the client and candidate, they feel our genuine concern for their situation and life. The way I always approach this is that it is our search, it is a client's open role, but it is a candidate's livelihood in their life and you have to give that proper waiting in terms of who you are serving. This is a profession where you can never be self serving; you have to be in it for the good of bettering someone else's situation in life. That is why I feel like I have the best job in the world, why I love doing what I do and I know that our candidates, prospects and clients that get to know us feel that is why they keep coming back to us.

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOFCO Magazine



**For more information visit:
www.hanoldassociates.com**

**Contact:
Jason Hanold
312-316-3066
Jason@hanoldassociates.com**