

The Necessity of Culture Fit

An international partner of Daubenspeck and Associates recently surveyed executives on the most important aspects of being successful in a new position. They found that the overall majority of executives believe “culture fit” is the most important factor. These executives are absolutely correct, as culture fit is the most influential aspect in determining whether an individual is successful and stays with an employer long term. But what exactly is “culture fit,” and why is it so important when it comes to executive search?

Culture fit exists when a candidate is able to truly integrate into a company, and when a productive bond is created between the organization and the individual—a bond based on shared values, behaviors, goals, and people. The people within a company and the cohesive relationships between these individuals are what provide the basis for a company’s culture. Each new person adds to this critical mass, and has a fundamental effect on the culture and collective personality in place. Without culture fit, conflicts increase, misunderstanding becomes more commonplace, and most importantly, the overall mission becomes diffused. This in turn leads to a loss of productivity, and a negative experience for both candidate and client.

In recent years, culture has become more recognizable as an important aspect of work and career decisions. Individuals apply in droves to companies like Google and Facebook, who are lauded for having employee-friendly cultures. Corporate culture, however, is not based solely on the amount of sick days or unique perks that a company gives. Nor can it be summarized by a simple mission statement or even a more extensive list of agreed upon values. In fact, clients themselves often find difficulty in accurately defining culture, as there are often large differences between a company’s perceived and actual culture

Culture is created and influenced by an accumulation of factors—organizational design, how people interact, how things get done, the perceived purpose of any action or enterprise, the external and internal factors that affect a company, and group rituals (among many others). Culture describes the defining values, identities, behaviors, and traits of a group, and is what fundamentally differentiates one company from another.

A deep understanding of a company’s culture means an understanding of that place’s unique character. And when it comes to executive search, this level of understanding is imperative—not only because it has to do with the success of the candidate and the client in the here-and-now, but because it has everything to do with the growth, progress, and future success of the organization as a whole.