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Smaller Search Firms Praised for Expertise and Better Results

Smaller, boutique search firms have a higher level of expertise and yield greater results, according to research findings published by [Hunt Scanlon Media](#) and reported by Wilmington Biz and London-based Executive Grapevine. More than 1,000 human resource professionals and executive search consultants took part in Hunt Scanlon Media's Executive Search State of the Industry report examining how the talent management sector operates from both the buy and sell side. The study says that "independent recruiters, those boutique specialists concentrating on just a small number of business sectors, are truly redefining a field once dominated by a handful of large, generalist search firms."

Big firms certainly have their benefits, the Hunt Scanlon report says, including brand name recognition. But one of their biggest drawbacks is their recruiting restrictions.

According to the report social media technology has worked in favor of smaller search firms, giving them the upper hand to take on their larger rivals. "Promising more attention to the client's needs they tout themselves as more nimble, flexible and high-touch," the report says. These smaller niche firms are often staffed by recruiters who learned their trade at the big firms or from a successful career in corporate America. Heads of talent acquisition are becoming more accepting and reliant of these specialists running their mission critical search assignments, reports Hunt Scanlon. The report indicates, in fact, they are driving the trend.

Christopher Hunt, co-founder and president of Hunt Scanlon, said: "Specialization is a big part of the appeal of the boutique search provider. As big firms have expanded, with several now publicly traded, feeding the bottom line has naturally become a paramount business concern. The boutiques, meanwhile, have more leeway to concentrate on getting to know the ins and outs of any given sector, giving them perhaps a leg up on better understanding the culture of their client companies."

Fit, these recruiters say, has become the new mantra, with cultural sensitivity trumping a candidate's skill set. "These search specialists say they are uniquely qualified to be more responsive to these new requirements," said Mr. Hunt.