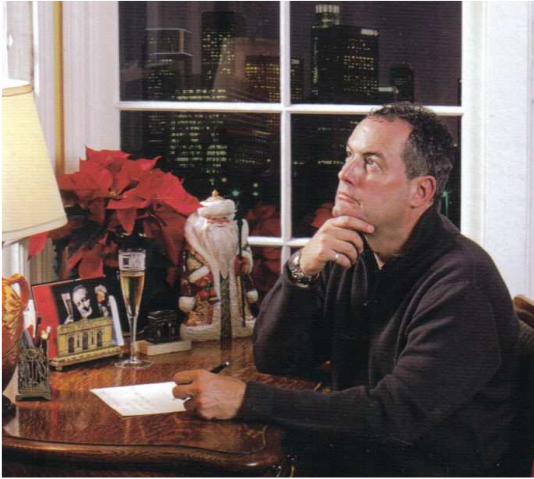


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Creative Recruiting: Interview with a Headhunter Gina Cariño



Michael Masterson, an Oklahoman, lives in the interesting Silver Lake neighborhood of Los Angeles. Every year he sends out Christmas cards with himself on the picture. Here's one. A kind of talent scout, he works for an employment agency of sorts.

GC: Michael, tell us about work.

MM: I work for an executive search firm called Janou Pakter. Our headquarters are in New York and we have offices in Paris and Milan in addition to the Los Angeles office which I run. My title is Director of West Coast Operations.

GC: And you hunt for executives.

MM: We work on jobs that are mid-level to what we call C-level (Chief Creative Officer, Chief Executive Officer, etc.), with salaries ranging from \$50,000 to hundreds of thousands of dollars per year. The positions we do are fashion or graphic designers of all types, creative directors, marketing directors, public relations roles, Web or interactive designers, even architects. We don't work on financial, administrative, or technical positions.

GC: You call yourself a creative recruiter, not a headhunter. Why?

MM: We are headhunters sometimes, but that term really refers to the act of contacting someone who is not necessarily looking for another position. That is only about 30% of our job.

GC: And how do you recruit and hunt?

MM: When we get in a new search, we look for possible candidates in our own database first, then start calling our network of contacts for referrals, which is the best way to find new prospects. We usually ask our clients which companies they'd like to see candidates from, usually competitors, and then we headhunt into them—unless they're another client of course! Another major resource is the Web. We use a variety of professional networking sites to find both junior and senior candidates.

GC: Who are your clients?

MM: We specialize in recruiting talent for creative lifestyle brands and design-driven companies. That means that we are hired by fashion companies, design firms, advertising agencies, and luxury brands to find candidates or prospective employees for creative and marketing openings in those companies. Our client list ranges from Chanel and Louis Vuitton to Coca-Cola, Starbucks, and Nike. Our European offices focus primarily on fashion and design companies.

GC: What do you charge?

MM: We work under two types of contracts: retained and contingency. In a retained search, we are paid a percentage of our fee in advance to find talent. After we present three qualified candidates, we invoice the client an additional amount. In a contingency search, we are paid nothing upfront and only receive our fee if the client hires one of our candidates. Our fees range from 20-35% of the new employee's first year's salary. The fee is paid by the client, not the employee.

GC: Tell me more about the actual recruiting.

MM: Each recruiter in our company has an area of expertise such as fashion design, marketing, interactive (Web) design, PR, etc. I was brought in to open the office here in L.A. and also to create a division focusing on jobs related to the photography industry. That's where my previous experience was. However, because we have a smaller office here, I work on a wider range of jobs. Some of the positions I'm currently working on are an online business development director for a Hollywood studio, a director of photography for a French photo agency, and Website designers for an advertising agency that works on the new videogames.

GC: What's a typical work day like for you?

MM: Much of my day is spent online or on the phone looking for new candidates and reviewing the resumés and portfolios of those we are interested in. I usually have six or seven people come in for face-to-face interviews each week. If it's a mid-level candidate, I spend about 20-30 minutes with them. Senior candidates get at least an hour for the first interview. If their experience is right and they seem like a good fit for the client, we present them for consideration.

GC: What does it take to be a recruiter?

MM: Recruiting is very hard work. You have to really like people and be able to assess them critically in order to be successful. We often work very late hours because the best time to talk and meet with candidates is usually after normal working hours.

GC: What do you like most about your job?

MM: The ultimate satisfaction is in connecting the right person with the perfect job. When that happens, everyone is happy and the client is glad to pay our bill!

GC: Were you recruited?

MM: I was actually recruited to work for Janou Pakter. I was looking for a new job and went to talk to Janou and her husband in New York. Instead of helping me find a job, they offered me one! They wanted to open an office here in L.A. and create a photography division and I was the perfect person to do both.