

# Outstanding results at Oakland

Tom White, Managing Director of leading Asset Finance recruitment specialist The Oakland Partnership talks about a record year



There's a look of pride on Tom White's face when he states that turnover at The Oakland Partnership ("Oakland") has increased by 43 percent, and pre-tax profits are up 52 percent in the past year, while the cost base has remained almost unchanged. It's partly due to the upturn in the market, he says, but there are a number of other factors that contributed to the superb set of results.

Reviewing the general market improvement, activity has been across the board in terms of job functions and asset types, but some of the demand has come from the new and ambitious entrants to the market who have contacted Oakland because of their strong reputation and contacts. Oakland has also refocused on the kind of clients it works with. White is quick to acknowledge that Oakland is not the cheapest in the market, but then it is not the most expensive either.

"Our rates are reasonable but not cheap," he says, "and we think we do a lot more for our money than some other recruiters. We interview every candidate in person before we make a recommendation to a client. We might interview twelve people for a role, but only put three forward, whereas we're not convinced some of the other agencies interview people at all." Their thorough approach means that an average of one in every 2.8 candidates interviewed by

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Oakland's clients is offered a role and that results in consistent repeat business.

What Oakland found in past years was that they encountered some employers, brokers for example, who wanted to pay low rates, and did not value the range of pre-screened candidates available from a top recruiter. They would see companies unwittingly taking on reasonable performers, but not excellent performers, and doing so to save a modest amount on a recruitment fee. So, rather than coming to a major recruiter with a really large pool of say, top sales people, they would often employ the best of a moderate bunch from a cheaper recruiter with fewer candidates, many of whom they had never even

met, just to save a few hundred pounds. That individual often then generated less business than a top candidate would have, thereby costing the company far more money than they ever hoped to save

"It's completely a false economy which a few people still do not see," declares Tom White, adding that the most expensive recruiter is the one who introduces a second rate candidate. "What we have done is to target our resources on those clients, new and old who really value our service." There is no doubt that some people will never have a positive attitude towards recruiters, even though getting access to the very best people is key to a business's success, so Oakland's approach is a sensible one.



On Oakland's own staffing front, Adam Somerville (above), who joined the business seven years ago as a graduate trainee, has now achieved the position of Director at the company, and it is obvious that his success fills White with a certain pride. Tom tells an amusing story when recently, coming out of the station on the way home he was handed a leaflet, which when he came to look at it was an advertisement for funeral planning! He jokes, "I used to get handed leaflets for nightclubs and gyms so perhaps it was that which made me think more closely about succession planning!"

Looking forward, White's goal is to ensure The Oakland Partnership maintains and strengthens its position as the 'go to' recruiter for companies who value access to the very best individuals on the market. He believes this is the key to their future success, and based on their latest results it is hard to argue with that. ■