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# Through the Looking Glass

One reads articles that recruitment consultants write about what they look for in a candidate, or what makes a good employer, but gazing through “the looking glass,” we wondered about careers in recruitment, and what it takes to be a good recruitment consultant? We asked **Tom White**, Director at The Oakland Partnership, who gave us an insightful and perceptive rundown of the structure of the recruitment industry, and the types of people who succeed in it

**F**irst of all, he says, it is very important to appreciate that there are widely differing kinds of recruiters, ranging from the low-touch High Street agency at one end, the specialist “match candidate to job” niche recruitment consultants in the middle, right up to the headhunter with their “meet me in Monaco” and fees to match approach at the high end.

It’s improbable that, as an employer, you will find your new leasing sales or credit expert either in the High Street, or in Monaco. Rather, you will find your asset finance person at a specialist recruitment consultancy who are experts in the niche of leasing and asset finance.

But what kind of person succeeds in a leasing recruitment consultancy? With the many redundancies in the leasing industry over recent years, could some of those who found themselves at the office of a recruitment consultancy have applied for a job on the other side of the interview desk?

Tom White firmly believes you don’t have to be an out and out salesman to be successful in a niche recruitment consultancy, saying, “What’s important to us is that you are an outgoing, articulate, service orientated person, credible to both candidate

and client. We look for people with personal integrity and the desire, and ability, to build long lasting relationships, who are also comfortable dealing with a very wide range of people on the telephone and face to face. It helps to know the asset finance industry and its nuances, because clients really do value speaking to someone who understands their business.

Does that mean that only ex-leasing people can fit the requirements? “Not at all,” replies Tom White. “Although it is harder to learn about the entire leasing industry than it is to acquire professional recruitment skills, we have examples on our staff of people from both ends of the spectrum, a highly experienced ex-leasing director from an IT leasing company who has taken very well to recruitment, and a bright graduate who we’ve trained in recruitment and leasing over the years.”

Leasing recruitment consultants need to fully understand the client’s requirements for a very wide range of roles and be able to ask pertinent questions. The strength of character to then make unsentimental, sometimes difficult or unpopular judgments about candidates’ suitability is also crucial when compiling the short list. So what do consultants find gives them the most satisfaction in their jobs?

We asked Adam Sommerville, who joined The Oakland Partnership as a new graduate five years ago, and has progressed to recently become associate director for the firm. “I started as a trainee, learning the business from scratch,” he recalls. “In due course I was introduced to a few clients, where I learned the importance of building up relationships and trust with clients, and candidates. Looking back, I was fortunate not to be thrown in the deep end as often happens in the High Street agencies.

“What I enjoy most about the position is managing the ongoing relationship with the client. At the same time, I must confess that I get a buzz from backing a good candidate, where I feel they are the right person for the job, and the employer eventually thinks so and offers them the role.”

Enter Jill Thomas, a highly experienced ex-leasing director with a major IT lessor, who after many years out of the industry, decided to return, and unexpectedly was attracted to a role in recruitment. “I arrived in recruitment by surprise,” she says. “It was not something I had considered at all until I met Tom. My



L-R Jennifer Dan, Denise Lawlor, Jill Thomas, Tom White and Adam Sommerville

initial take on the job was that because I understood leasing and asset finance, I could speak comfortably to the candidates and clients. They responded positively to someone who knew the leasing business. I love what I do and am very enthusiastic about the asset finance industry.

“What do I like most about the job? Well, I have to admit it is dealing with the people, it’s a great industry, and you build ongoing relationships with clients and the candidates.”

From a standing start six years ago, The Oakland Partnership has quickly become one of the most successful and respected niche consultancies in the market with a very settled, high calibre team – proof if any were needed that when it comes to recruitment they certainly know how to pick the winners! ■

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At The Oakland Partnership we pride ourselves on providing an unrivalled recruitment consultancy for all levels of staff within Leasing and Asset Finance companies in the UK.

By developing strong partnerships with clients and a real rapport with candidates we consistently deliver outstanding results through our informed, consultative and professional service.



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