

# Digging pays dividends

With unemployment at its highest level since 1994 and job vacancies on the decline who in their right mind would want to be in the recruitment business? JMA Network founders Clive Jefferys and Patrick Judges are bucking the trend and remain very happy with life in the channel.



The JMA consulting team

It's an old channel cliché but 'knowledge' is power and after 20 years in the ICT recruitment business and eight years of operating in the comms channel, Jefferys and Judges have got it in spades and, most importantly, a database of 90,000 people in the comms industry to back it up.

"The key thing about us today is that we've kept records of every candidate we've spoken to since 2003," says Jefferys.

"Our database is constantly being updated from all of our web engines and other resources. We're downloading about 8,000 candidates a month on to our system which is all fully automated. We can then fine pick the ones that are properly in telecoms, either working in a telecoms company or have got telecoms key words against them, be they sales, marketing or technical. We clean the database regularly and remove thousands of unsuitable candidates, so we've got quite a high

rate of elimination."

Crucially the duo, who have recently moved their growing team of consultants and resourcers into expansive new offices just along the road from Greenwich's famous maritime museum, have something very much in common with their illustrious neighbour; historical records.

"Some of our directories are very old but we've found in recent years that this is a key advantage for us. As well as finding people, digging deep is actually verification of those people's histories. Because we get a CV today and there's a good chance we had their CV three or even five years ago, we can look on screen and check that everything matches up.

"History is what clients are looking for, particularly with sales people. Are they telling the whole story about their background? Are there any hidden issues, skeletons or whatever? We quite often point this out in a nice way and say to them 'it's a bit strange: your CV today

doesn't include your years with xyz company, you'd better tell us about that'."

JMA's understanding of the telecoms industry enables them to recommend candidates 'across the board' covering sales, marketing, back office, provisioning, management and technical sectors and from junior postings to board level appointments.

"We are completely focused on the telecoms industry. We won't touch banking, or accountancy, we won't touch any other sector. Our knowledge of telecoms means we can beat the generic job agencies hands down. They just haven't got the depth of understanding we've got."

Also, as Jefferys adds, maturity as well as experience counts for a lot.

"In this game we are veterans. The average recruiter in the UK has probably only been in the job two years because the value of recruitment

has been devalued by the 'stack them' high agencies over the last decade."

Judges maintains that experience and empathy with clients helps when tackling a recruitment project.

"Both Clive and I have held jobs of great seniority in big companies before. We know what it's like to be a manager and we also know how to drive sales, cut costs, bill and chase money. We're not fooled by some of the things that people say. We're not frightened to ask tricky questions when they're required and the key thing is we don't particularly work to CV KPIs (Key Performance Indicators)."

Another differentiator that JMA maintains is vital to client relationships is that they openly discuss the job and the client with the candidate before he or she is asked to put their CV forward

"In this game planning is paramount. A lot of agencies don't do this," says Jefferys. "They just say

'I've got a telecoms reseller looking for somebody in Basildon' and that is a device to enable for them to fire out CVs. Sometimes our approach is abused because information is passed on to other agents but in the long term we've found it means that the client's always tell us that our candidate was properly prepared.

"We expect our candidates to do their research. That way before the interview the candidate really thinks about x, y and z and says 'Yes I want to work for that company'. They're so much more committed than just being told to go somewhere at 8 o'clock in the morning. We tell them to find out who the directors are, to look at Linked-in and Facebook and learn as much as possible about them. Find out about their background, their history. It's key."

JMA are looking to carrying on recruiting themselves in 2012. Channel people looking for light in the economic gloom should hope their success continues. ■

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