



AESC Interviews... Linda Bialecki

Linda Bialecki is President of Bialecki Inc., a Manhattan-based search firm that specializes in senior-level searches for investment banks. Ms. Bialecki founded Bialecki Inc. in 1986. In the second of our series, AESC Interviews..., Ms. Bialecki discusses her strong sense of professionalism and drive to succeed that has characterized this successful, boutique firm.

Q How would you describe your approach to executive search?

I understand my clients' business and what they want; I don't waste their time. My clients want to do something bold, as do I—attract A players to A clients. I hate the word "compromise." There's great nuance in how you attract a candidate who's spectacular. I like the statement of it and especially the challenge of it.

For us it's about the "art" of

search: you can't recruit stars with process. It's about "getting it" and hitting the homerun. Tracking down individuals' reputations is front-loaded here; most of our time is spent figuring out whom *not* to call. The focus is on doing a few searches incredibly well. When all those things come together it's enormously thrilling.

Q At what compensation levels do you work?

For the last five years, 86% of our candidates had compensation above US \$750M. Today, it's well above US \$1MM.

Q Have you ever been tempted to sell Bialecki Inc. to a large, global firm?

No. Our business model doesn't work in a large firm. The time we devote to clients and candidates, and our low volume would be unacceptable regardless of fee revenue. Also, we would lose the competitive advantage of our short off-limits list (just two or three clients) and our policy of not accepting competing assignments.

Q How do you keep clients against competition from large global firms?

Do great work. If someone's had a great experience with you, they will keep using you and refer you to others. I think our quality of information and depth of understanding sets us apart. Our clients love the extensive *qualitative* information we have on potential

candidates, all instantly retrievable. People always comment on our high level of service—we consider it ordinary and necessary.

Q How do you manage to implement such a focused and personalized approach within Bialecki?

Our mantra is "make a difference." We have the time to devote to a client's success because, with 89% repeat business, we spend virtually no time marketing, and have "perfect" memory with our amazing database. We spend endless hours analyzing the psychology around a candidate being the right fit or accepting the job. That's the norm here.

Q How is Bialecki prepared for executive search at the brink of the 21st century?

We are capitalizing on four trends: 1) With the value proposition in search moving to judgment and assessment, we are increasing our Internet research on our

“For us it's about the 'art' of search: you can't recruit stars with process.”

clients' business and our candidates; 2) In this 24/7 world, we are giving our clients and candidates web-enabled information; 3) Given the shift in bargaining power toward scarce talent, we are resolving the issues around representing individuals as Agent; 4) So that we can be "on the ground" for our clients internationally, Bialecki Inc. is opening an office in London.

We like raising the bar and setting the standard our competitors have to meet. ■