



WERTE EXECUTIVE SEARCH

FACTORS OF SUCCESS

Universal factors of proceeding
through interview rounds to the job
offer

Annual market insight report 2024



What is the pass rate from one interview round to the next round?

Does experience or candidates' personality prevail?

What are the universal passing factors for different positions, companies and industries?

Since our establishment, we have been publishing our Annual market insight report and covering relevant topics in Serbian industrial surrounding. The data is collected from our implemented executive search projects and detailly analyzed, so that each of our Annual market insight reports represents a result of a compact empirical research.

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Introduction

What is the pass rate from one interview round to the next round? Does experience or candidates` personality prevail? What are the universal passing factors for different positions, companies and industries?

This is our third annual market insight report and, while previous two provided insights for companies and employers, now we want to share best practices to prospective candidates. The report is created in October 2024, based on analysis of data from our implemented executive search projects during previous period. Our analyzed pool includes more than 1000 processed and almost 200 assessed candidates for a number of projects for our clients in Serbia, North Macedonia and Romania. Candidates have been processed and assessed for local top management roles (57%), mid management roles (31%) and high-ranking expert roles (12%). Companies for which the candidates have been processed are automotive suppliers (50%), manufacturing companies within a technical industry other than automotive (37%) and technical service providers (13%).

In context on analyzing results and making conclusions, it is important to note that presented below refers to selection projects performed by us as consultants on the projects, so the conclusions are not and cannot be valid for selection projects that some other companies directly implement, or projects performed by some other consultants.

In all analyzed projects, selection flow has been structured as: 1st interview round performed by us as consultant on the project, 2nd interview round performed by client (i.e. company/employer) and 3rd interview round performed by client as their second check. To improve readability, we use terminology "interview round", but this include both "typical job interview" as well as other forms of selection (Case Studies prepared and presented by candidates, personality assessments/test etc.)

Pass rate from one round to next round

Having in mind our methodology which implies market research, identification of prospective candidates for our projects and direct approach to them, our starting point is *identification*. Number of identified prospective candidates varies from project to project, based on project`s complexity, however the median of all projects included in the analysis is 61, which implies that, if we have identified/reached you for a job opportunity, you have 1.6% chance of getting a job offer. Of course, this is not a percentage, but the bottom line is that, due to the methodology itself, slightly less than 20% of *identified* enter the 1st interview round. This indicator should not be equated with the response rate, which is higher than 90%, but the two stages should be distinguished. Further, if you are in 1st interview round, your chances of getting a job offer grow to 8.7% and if you are in 2nd interview round, your chances grow to 25%. To achieve this, you need to be within 31% of best evaluated who pass from 1st to 2nd round. Passing from 2nd to 3rd round varies greatly from client to client, ranging from 30% to 100%, and the median is 50%, which means that after the first meeting with our client, you have 50% chance of entering the final round and if you are in the final round, you have 50% chance to get a job offer.

So, the question is how to proceed through the rounds? How to be among 31% who will pass from 1st to 2nd, and how to be among 50% who will pass from 2nd to 3rd interview round. Some things cannot be influenced, but it is important to understand that motivation, good preparation and commitment make a very big difference.

Let`s start with the selection requirements.

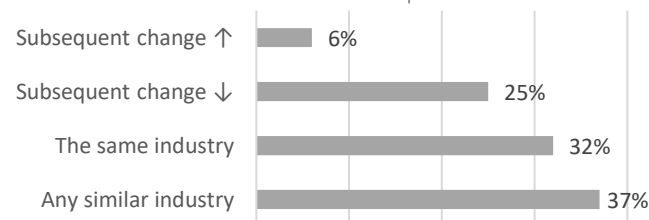


Chart 1, Pass rate related to industry background © Werte Executive Search

Factors of proceeding

In initial stage of any selection, factors of proceeding are closely related to the set requirements of a selection process, while in the following stages some other aspects take precedence. As this analysis included different clients, projects, roles, seniorities and industries, different factors are generalized into four layers: *industry, role, key point* and *what goes without saying*.

Industry

At the beginning, the need is defined as to whether the position requires a person with previous experience in the same industry or it is sufficient for the candidate to have a background within a similar industry and based on this, candidates can go through process` stages or not. In our analyzed pool, there were four options, and it's presented in Chart 1 at previous page. 32% of candidates proceeded through interview rounds only if they came from the same industry. The same industry does not only mean the same category of industry (e.g. automotive industry) but also implies experience on the same processes/materials (e.g. metal processing, injection molding, ...), experience in an equally automated or labor intensive set up or similar. 37% of candidates proceeded without the strict criteria and a background within a similar industry was enough for moving forward. These were the cases when initially set industry requirements were active through the whole processes. On the other side, there were situations where initial requirements were changed through the process (31%). Among them, 25% started with strict industry requirement but they softened during the process and pass rate was increased; and 6% started with flexibility but over time became stricter.

Role

As presented in Chart 2, initial requirements related to experience on a specific role, as well as the pass rate are moderately distributed.

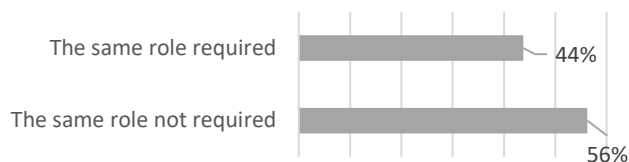


Chart 2, Pass rate related to experience on a specific role © Werte Executive Search

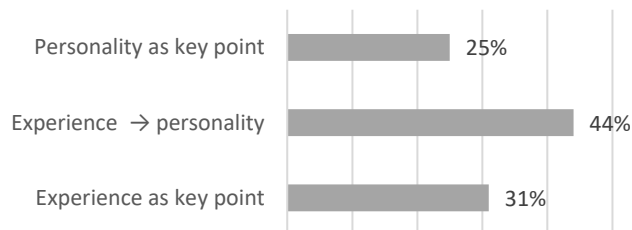


Chart 3 Pass rate related to key point © Werte Executive Search

Initial requirements related to experience on a specific role sometimes imply necessity of having a candidate who already has been on the same role (level), and sometimes there is a flexibility to appoint a person who is a level below and is ready for a level up. However, this doesn't mean too much of flexibility neither. For example, this would include openness to get a Plant Manager profile for Managing Director role. Maximal flexibility would include for example openness to get a Production Manager profile for Plant Manager role. Lateral upward movements are very rare, while excessive hierarchical differences are not possible.

Key point

Key point (or "what makes the difference") relates to experience vs personality, but it does not include "or". There is no passage to the next round unless there is both, a professional and personal match with the required profile so, we are talking about which of these two prevails in specific circumstances.

Within our analyzed pool, 25% of candidates had requested experience, but this was not the basis of their proceeding through the rounds, but they proceeded because of their personalities. In this case, key point was personal match and fitting into the company's corporate culture/ability to further build the culture, and this is something which was initially set at the very beginning of

the selection process. 31% of candidates proceeded primarily based on some specific professional aspect (specific experience, specific skill, specific expertise, etc.), however this was not at the expense of desired personal profile. As presented in Chart 3, there is a third category as well, and this one, which takes 44%, is similar to first, but the difference is the fact that personal profile was not set as key point at the beginning of selection process, but it prevailed during the selection stages i.e. upon interviewing short-listed candidates. So, in this case, initial requirements were rather related to experience (industry, role and similar), but the thing that made the difference in proceeding is candidate`s personal profile.

As candidate`s personal profile is deal-breaker in almost 70% of the cases, it is important to understand it better. Of course, it is not possible to define one universal personality that goes through all the different stages and selection processes for different roles, companies, industries, etc. but there is one universal characteristic visible in all the personalities and we can call it *“professional enthusiasm”*. Professional enthusiasm should not be equated with motivation for a specific workplace. It is a characteristic that someone either has or does not have (to a certain extent) in relation to the profession (s)he is engaged in, although the motivation of a person to do a certain job in a certain company can further encourage professional enthusiasm. We could define professional enthusiasm as genuine interest and proactivity of a person to do the work (s)he is doing; capability of being readily roused into action within the work/field; passion, initiative, self-discipline and self-perseverance to perform the work itself and deal with the field of the work.

In our analyzed pool of final candidates, the ones that got and accepted job offers, there were very different profiles, candidates from different industries, different seniorities and professional orientations, younger and older, males and females, energetic and calm persons, but they all have had one common characteristic – the professional enthusiasm.

What goes without saying

In order for a person to progress through the rounds of interviews, needless to say, motivation for the given job is necessary, professional appearance and communication during selection stages, commitment and preparation for every next round, and last but not the least, when we have a senior or mid management role, match of leadership styles and corporate cultures.

Another thing that goes without saying is the fact that this is a “two-way street” and that all of the above applies to both the candidate and the employer. Without professionalism of the company, feedback, appreciation and respect of the candidates who are in a selection process for their role, it is not possible to expect the reverse either. We continue from the fact that this is fulfilled, because our clients are companies that behave very professionally in the selection processes, and we return to the candidates` perspective.



Chart 4. © Werte Executive Search

Motivation can always be seen in two levels – what is it that repels a person from the current company, i.e. why is (s)he considering changing of the current employment, and secondly, what is it that attracts a person to a vacant position/company. Instead of attitude “I’m here just to hear what you have to offer”, transparent approach to both levels, which certainly needs to be expressed and explained in a professional manner, is the right approach.

Commitment and preparation for interview stages play significant role. How much do I know about the employer? How do I understand the position/company need? How much I can identify with the given need and all related tasks? How can I best present my approach in fulfilling the need? Especially in the later stages, and especially for higher positions, successful interviews rarely end with the presentation of candidates` previous experience, but from this

perspective very quickly move to the perspective of answering the above-mentioned questions, so if you want this job, you need to be prepared.

If we are talking about companies that have been operating in one market for several years, they have surely already laid the foundations of their corporate culture and leadership style within the company. Matching of the leadership style you believe in with their, is very important because, if there is no true match, neither side will be satisfied on the long run.

Conclusion

Summarizing all previously stated related to factors of proceeding through interview rounds, we have hard and soft aspects of proceeding to a job offer. Hard ones are important for initial stages of a selection process and are closely related to the set requirements of a selection process. As per our classification, this would be *industry* and *role*, and these are prerequisites for a candidate to enter a selection process. Some selection processes are more rigorous related to hard aspects, other are more flexible. If we have identified and reached you for a certain job opportunity, hard aspect is almost already done, as we have identified you based on your industry and your current role.

As the initial phase of a selection process passes, soft aspects take precedence in the following stages. From one to another interview round, and finally to the job offer, proceed those candidates who are motivated for the given opportunity, who talk about their motives transparently and professionally, who have a strong professional enthusiasm related to the field, who are committed to the given opportunity – who really understood what the need entails and who have identified themselves with the given need, those who presented it well to the employer and mutually found the right match.

While hard aspects are relevant at the beginning of a search and selection project and represent a prerequisite (without them it is not possible to continue, but there is still a long way ahead of us), soft aspects are deal breakers for both parties, candidate and employer, on their ways of professional success.