

Case study: Barclays

Barclays can bank on Purcon people

understand

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When Barclays appointed Jon Kirby as its Chief Procurement Officer in October 2005, he knew there was room to improve the quality of candidates for positions at the global bank - and he approached Purcon.

"Purcon had a good understanding of what we were trying to achieve both in terms of vision and in terms of the capabilities and characteristics of the individuals we were trying to recruit," says Jon Kirby, who is responsible for more than £4.5 billion annual spend headquartered at London's Canary Wharf.

He adds: "The reason we chose Purcon was a combination of both the experiences that I and others had had with the agency and the credibility of the team we met at our initial discussion. They had a much greater understanding than other companies and that translated into a screening process which was more thorough and comprehensive."

In just 15 months Purcon has provided Barclays with outstanding professionals for roles ranging from strategic procurement to systems specialists, recruiting executives to no fewer than 16 permanent management positions and five senior interim roles - and the relationship is still flourishing, says Lucy Harding, Purcon's Head of Permanent Recruitment.

"We've placed a number of the senior team who report directly to the CPO and then those individuals have had gaps in their teams that have needed filling," says Lucy Harding. "We're still working with Barclays on an ongoing basis to fill gaps."

Another level

Lucy Harding says Purcon's success in meeting Barclays' requirements comes down to their willingness to take the search for outstanding professionals to another level.

"Jon Kirby was looking for the best people and just not finding them," she recalls. "We knew the CVs of those active in the marketplace had already been sent by other agencies so we decided to take the search to another level."

She goes on: "We began an extensive search based on cultural fit and ability rather than availability. With our extensive networking capabilities and knowledge of the market, we spoke to professionals who we knew had the qualities Barclays was looking for, candidates who were very strong on results and delivery and had strong interpersonal and influencing skills."

Purcon succeeded even though many of these candidates were not actively searching for new roles at the time and were not registered with other

agencies. But Purcon did not limit its search to the banking sector, scouring the pharmaceuticals, automotive and retail markets, among others, for the executives who eventually filled the openings at Barclays.

Lead agency status

Purcon so impressed Jon Kirby that within weeks he had given them lead agency status. "The calibre of candidates coming through convinced us that they [Purcon] had listened to what we said we wanted and were able to apply it. The ratio of candidates who were a good fit was much higher with Purcon than with the other agencies, and that was what we wanted."

He adds: "The service has been very impressive. Purcon has done a superb job of understanding our requirements regarding candidate capabilities and cultural fit."

Preparation

According to Lucy Harding, candidate preparation has been crucial in meeting Barclays' requirements: "In such a competitive market it is important that Barclays brand and opportunities are represented to the right people in the right way to get them interested."

She says Purcon makes sure that all candidates are encouraged to look beyond any preconceptions about the global bank, and to gain an understanding of what the bank is now trying to achieve. "Our ability to explain the Barclays recruitment process, the key challenges and the process they must go through has meant that our candidates are always well-briefed before an interview."

Feedback suggests that Purcon has developed a reputation for getting it right first time, occasionally even 'second guessing' the bank's needs, she adds.

Of course, the success of the process also depends on the satisfaction of the candidates themselves. David Bruce, appointed Head of FM and Cash Management at Barclays, says Purcon's professional service mean that "candidates are made to feel that the recruiter is working on his or her behalf rather than shoehorning candidates into roles."

Total solution

With access to first-rate permanent and interim resources in the procurement market, Purcon are able to provide a total solution to Barclays' requirements. Jon Kirby is confident that - whatever the nature of the position - Purcon will deliver.

"Of course, it's more convenient when one agency can deliver interim and permanent professionals, but the overriding factor is that we know that when we go to Purcon and say we have a vacancy - whatever the length of contract - they know the kind of individuals we are looking for. We don't need to cast our net any wider because we know that the quality of the candidates who come through are a good fit with us."

"Purcon are dedicated to providing an excellent service to the client, and a big part of this is their willingness to listen, to understand and interpret what the client is looking for," says Jon Kirby. "They have a great combination of the right people, the right client skills and an understanding of the marketplace."

ABOUT PURCON

For nearly 30 years Purcon has led the way in permanent recruitment and interim management for Procurement and Supply Chain, with offices in the UK, Belgium, Poland and operations across Europe.

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