

**AUSTRALIAN**  
**CAREER INFORMATION** SERIES

**START**  
*smart*

***engaging  
recruiters in  
Australia***

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ISSN 1834-7959

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## Inside the industry

The recruitment industry in Australia is forever expanding and contracting, with companies establishing, merging and closing down. Knowing who the players are, how they work and the market they concentrate on will allow you to target appropriate recruiters and increase the probability of you building a successful alliance with them. For tips on networking and building relationships in general, refer to the Shortcuts document on networking.

### **The Big 5**

Global recruitment companies are generally publicly listed companies with a well-established brand and a 'High Street' presence. For clients, they offer an end-to-end, one-stop-shop service. They have fixed fees and operate on a high-volume low-margin basis. For job seekers, at any one time they tend to have a selection of positions across all industries and levels, available with multinational or large domestic companies. The small to medium-sized business sector tends not to use what are known as the 'Big 5' because their fees are rigid and their service can be seen as inconsistent when their focus shifts to the needs of a high-volume client.

In my opinion, the Big 5 recruitment companies in Australia are:

- Manpower
- Hudson/TMP
- Adecco
- Michael Page
- Hays

They are notorious for acquiring new companies and having numerous speciality brands. Depending on your industry

and level, it may suit you to get in touch with one of their sister companies or brands which specialise in engineering, accounting, executive placements or whatever your sector is.

## **Tier 2**

The second-tier agencies are generally privately, domestically owned companies with a presence across the country, or at least across the eastern states of Australia (Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne). These companies typically offer quite flexible terms and a good service to hiring companies regardless of size. Tier 2 companies typically have a mix of clients and, depending on the space they operate in, work on roles in the \$30,000-\$110,000 annual salary range.

Try to track down some good consultants in a few of the Tier 2 firms and build long-term relationships with them. To find Tier 2s, refer to the RSCA (Recruitment and Consulting Association) site at [www.rcsa.com.au](http://www.rcsa.com.au), the ITCRA (IT Contract Recruitment Association) site at [www.itcra.com.au](http://www.itcra.com.au) or the listing of recruitment companies on [Seek.com.au](http://Seek.com.au). Check if they have a presence in the area you are moving too.

## **Niche/boutique agencies**

The smaller niche and boutique agencies tend to concentrate on specific sectors such as IT, sales and marketing, PR, civil engineering, executives, etc. If they are good at making contacts, they will have the details of just about every good candidate in town in their database.

Here the client will get a high level of service, the job seeker may get to deal with a company director, and the relationships may develop into ones where candidates become clients. Operating typically in the \$100K and above space, these agencies are a good source of executive and senior roles within medium to large companies.

Find their details via the sites mentioned above or look at the recruiters who are advertising in your trade magazines. Feel free to approach niche agencies directly even if they have no roles advertised to suit you.

## **Suburbanites**

The suburbanites are made up of 2 groups. The first are the local Big 5 branches close to the temping markets in the suburbs of major cities or in the towns and smaller cities around them. The Big 5 pros and cons apply.

The second group of suburbanites are former top end of town recruiters who are running their own business from their home or suburban office. The number of recruiters bravely going it alone amazes me. It is a testimony to the conviction of the relationships they have built with their clients over the years.

For the average job seeker, this group can be a great alternative. They can share the 'warts and all' story with you, and they work on whatever they can get from their clients, so they will have a wide range of roles available. To find this sort of recruiter, look on freelancing websites such as [www.ozsmallbiz.net](http://www.ozsmallbiz.net) and [www.virtual-professionals.com](http://www.virtual-professionals.com), and look out for ads from largely unknown firms and make contact.

## **Headhunters**

The retained search business is much more exclusive than the contingency model operated by the general agencies. Retained recruiters, or headhunters, research the performers in a market segment and then target specific candidates for their clients. They generally charge clients up-front or retainer fees, and the total fee can be around 30 per cent of the starting salary or even more.

Headhunters spend a great deal of time researching their

clients' competitors, developing profiles of individual candidates and approaching candidates with opportunities. They determine the candidate's willingness and ability to do the job, how they would fit into the company's corporate culture and whether they would relocate for the job if necessary. The majority of C-level roles (chief executive, chief financial officer, chief information officer) in Australia are filled by headhunting exercises.

It's not easy for job seekers to get themselves on headhunters' databases; it's very much a 'don't find us, we will find you' business. Networking in headhunter circles is the best approach, such as at trade and industry seminars and conferences.

## **Company structures**

Each recruitment company is structured differently and it helps to be aware of the different processes that may occur. In Australia they are broadly structured in two ways. Some agencies prefer staff in teams which specialise in recruiting people to particular jobs, such as for Java jobs in IT, or management accountants in accounting and finance. Other agencies use an account management model. For example, IBM employs up to 40 new hires each month through a panel of agencies. To cope with this demand, agencies have dedicated IBM account management teams. So, for example, it would be wise for you to build a relationship with the senior account manager for the IBM account at Paxus if you wanted to secure an IT role at IBM.

## **Building relationships**

Building a relationship with a recruiter is easy if you have realistic expectations and know what their client's needs are. Word of mouth is often the best way to find a good recruiter.