

Eleven tips for choosing the right outplacement firm

To shop around or not to shop around... that is the question. Indeed, who chooses the outplacement firm? The human resources director of the company offering the outplacement programme, or the beneficiary? Both options are possible. If the human resources director has an informed opinion concerning a specific firm, nothing prevents you from asking him or her about the reasons for their choice, forming your own opinion when you visit, and making a counter-proposal if you see fit. If the HR director leaves the beneficiary the freedom to find the right firm, it is best to proceed with method and discernment. **Below are eleven recommendations for making the right choice.**

1. Making your choice

The first outplacement firm you find may be the right one if it was recommended by a human resources specialist or someone close to you who has tested its limits. You can also make your own choice. It is therefore better to limit yourself to two or three service providers to avoid an impossible final choice. In any case, you should pay them a visit.

2. A question of "feeling"

Other than the objective criteria likely to guide you in choosing a service provider, you should remember that an outplacement process is above all the result of interaction between the beneficiary and the consultant. It is therefore indispensable that the firm be presented by the person likely to support you in your search for employment. However, if you do not establish a rapport during the process, it should also be possible to change consultants within the same firm.

3. Anecdotal evidence

It is best to choose an outplacement firm that regularly deals with outplacement, and has been in the profession for a certain amount of time. This indicates a proven and regularly updated methodology. The date the firm was created, how its business has developed, the results obtained, its main customer companies and the profile of the population support is provided for are all elements to take into account when you make your selection.

4. Profession: consultant

Selecting a service provider is above all an opportunity to get to know a consultant. For an outplacement process, the consultant will also want to get to know you better. So, do not hesitate to get him or her to talk about their profession, their career path, the way they see their function, what they enjoy about it and the difficulties they encounter.

5. A discourse on method

Do not hesitate to ask questions to clarify the methodology used by the service provider. How long has the methodology existed? Who designed it? Is it regularly updated and how? What are the different steps proposed and the types of tools implemented? Bear in mind that a good method guarantees a progressive and systematic approach, but you should make sure that the consultant is able to adapt it to the profile, needs and sensitivities of each candidate. Finally, for a business start-up project, it is best to choose a service provider with a team of consultants and logistics dedicated to this specific field of expertise.

6. Commitments and follow-up

Make sure that the consultant is committed to supporting you until your employment search is successful. And beyond. Some outplacement programmes may include support for the beneficiary, usually for a year, in their new position. It may also be possible, within a year, once again, to restart the outplacement programme if the beneficiary is not satisfied with his or her new responsibilities. Finally, those starting businesses must also make sure they are aware of the methods and duration of the follow-up carried out by the consultant once they have started the business.

7. Information and logistics

An outplacement programme is based to a large degree on searching for information. Any firm worth its salt should offer beneficiaries access to a specialised documentation centre. This type of structure is co-ordinated by a team of professionals, and its vocation is to provide all the support material necessary for the successful conclusion of a professional project (newspapers, directories, databases, etc.). Its role is also to enhance this information via internal newsletters, for example, and to enhance the network of each beneficiary using tools such as directories of former candidates and liaison booklets for current beneficiaries. Each beneficiary should also have access to a work space equipped with all modern means of communication (telephone, fax, Internet, etc.). Watch out for the "cosmetic" effect, however. Even if the welcome, the friendliness of the staff, the layout of the premises and the atmosphere attract you, a prestigious address and a thick high-quality carpet are no guarantees of professionalism.

8. Team skills

An outplacement programme is based on face-to-face meetings between the beneficiary and the consultant, but a firm operates based on a team of consultants. Whether for stage reviews, to validate a project or simulate a recruitment interview, each beneficiary should be able to call upon this network of specialists to get an outside opinion.

9. Let's start tomorrow...

Work schedule, frequency, duration and content of individual interviews, scheduling of group seminars.... To test the consultant's responsiveness, there's nothing like putting yourself in the situation of someone who has chosen his or her firm and wants to start the programme as soon as possible.

10. Beyond the borders

An employment search may lead you to prospect all across the country and even beyond national borders. So it is a good idea to give priority to a firm that has both national coverage and an international network.

11. Two heads are better than one

At the end of your survey, you are still unsure of which firm to choose. Do not hesitate to ask your HR director for advice and let him or her have the results of your investigation. As an HR specialist, he or she will be able to sort the relevant data from the secondary information. In addition, his or her knowledge of your career path will help narrow the criteria according to your profile and personality.