

# THE SEARCH BEGINS AND ENDS HERE

Having established and grown one of Northern Ireland's most successful recruitment groups over the past 25 years, Gary Irvine will be well-known to CEOs, managing directors and HR directors alike right across the province, associated with the appointment of thousands of full-time, part-time and agency staff every year. He talks to Ulster Business about his natural progression into a new role in Diamond Recruitment Group and the launch of his new venture, 4C Executive Search.

“Good people can be extremely hard to find at any level, be it administrative staff, middle management or director-level roles,” says Gary Irvine. “But successful recruitment – especially in the more senior, business-critical roles – isn't just about finding good people, it's about finding the *best* people, and getting it wrong can be hugely damaging for an organisation.

“It is imperative, therefore, that an organisation makes the right choices about how to recruit the individual it is seeking. Placing an advert in the newspaper or on a job board will work in some instances and going down the traditional agency recruitment route could provide the best solution. In certain cases, however, a much more specialised, research-driven service is required, and that's where search and selection – often referred to as ‘real recruitment’ – comes in.”

With an increasing market for this type of specialist recruitment in Northern Ireland, Irvine has established 4C Executive Search – a search and selection firm which will officially launch on 1st October this year.

“4C Executive will arguably be the only true search and selection firm in Northern Ireland,” he says. “We won't be dabbling in the contingency type recruitment offered by a traditional recruitment agency as is often the case with similar firms. 4C is only interested in obtaining what Irvine describes as genuine class A search assignments, roles that require a full-scale recruitment effort. If we can't help at 4C or believe search is not what the client truly needs or wants, we will be upfront and honest about that and instead refer potential clients to Diamond Recruitment if we believe it can cater better for their needs, rather than diluting our service by trying to be ‘all things to all men.’”

He explains how search and selection differs

from the traditional agency form of recruitment offered by Diamond: “When we talk about search and selection, people automatically think of head hunting and presume that it's all about a little black book of who's who and a discreet phone call here and there. But, in reality, executive search and selection is a very in-depth, methodical and strategic process. We are effectively doing what the client can't do for themselves, in contrast to other forms of recruitment.

“Whilst agency recruitment is often associated with speed and efficiency – offering a very fast, affordable solution for companies seeking to recruit across all levels of their organisation – search and selection is about taking a very strategic, research-driven approach to finding the best person for what tends to be a very senior role within an organisation.”

Over the past 25 years Irvine has grown Diamond Recruitment Group to a turnover of over £35 million, employing over 2,000 temporary workers across Northern Ireland every day and placing hundreds of full-time workers each year. Diamond is now Northern Ireland's largest recruitment organisation and features as one of the top 20 largest employers here. He says that the move towards 4C Executive is a natural progression for him.

“I have gained invaluable industry experience over the years at Diamond, working alongside most of the Top 200 companies at one stage or another, as well as hundreds of Northern Ireland's SMEs. Just because I will now be focusing my attention on 4C Executive going forward doesn't mean I am leaving Diamond behind me by any means.

“I have assumed the role of Chairman of Diamond Recruitment Group and will always be involved to some degree. However, having recruited Rick Butterworth as group managing

director in 2010, I know that the organisation is in very capable hands and will continue to grow and prosper under his leadership, ably assisted by regional managers Donna Parker and Eunice Campbell, both of whom have been at Diamond for almost 20 years now.”

Irvine held the Chairmanship for two years of the official trade body for the £25bn recruitment industry in the UK, the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC) – an organisation with which he has been involved with for over 20 years, holding the positions of NI Director and UK board member before becoming Chairman in 2006. He remains a director of the REC today.

“In my various roles with REC I have gained an excellent insight into the recruitment industry, working with hundreds of recruitment agencies and search firms of all sizes right across the UK. I am confident that this unrivalled experience, when combined with the knowledge and skill I have gained at Diamond puts me in a very strong position as principal search consultant at 4C Executive.

“However, I also recognise the importance of underpinning any new venture with depth and breadth of skills and experience, and have recently appointed Emma Kieran as Business Support Executive – formerly a senior service advisor to Ferrari, Maserati and Bentley before moving into recruitment as a senior consultant last year.

“In addition to Emma, I have also appointed one of the UK's most senior, experienced recruitment veterans, David Winterburn, as a senior search consultant who will be based in London.”

With 23 years' experience in the recruitment industry, Winterburn is also a former Chairman of the REC, a former Chair of the Association of Executive Recruiters (AER) and a past >>>