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GROWTH STRATEGIES



BOB FLEISCHHAUER / BUSINESS JOURNAL

Joe Peters has helped bring Scientific Search growth. Now his new office is being built-out in Cherry Hill.

Searching to get it right

ADAM STONE
SPECIAL TO THE BUSINESS JOURNAL

MOUNTLAUREL, N.J. — Good news for the fallible: Joe Peters did it wrong the first time and still managed to get it right.

In 2001, Peters and David Trexler bought a recruiting firm whose owner was retiring after 18 years in the business. The company had poured all its efforts into IT recruiting at the time and with the end of the dot-com boom, Peters needed to steer Scientific Search in a new direction.

He had one good idea: To add temporary

staffing to the mix of services, in addition to recruiting. But he also had one bad idea. He figured on targeting the engineering field, and he channeled all his efforts in that direction. That meant tons of phone calls, direct-mail efforts, chamber of commerce meetings and so forth, trying to build a rapport with the engineering industry.

Unfortunately, that industry had little interest in staffing services at the time. "It wasn't a good feeling. It was a very rough first few months," Peters recalled.

Setting aside his angst, Peters re-grouped and tried again. Listening to what the market

was telling him, he redirected his efforts toward the health-care and pharmaceutical industries, and this time he hit the mark.

He'd found a market where demand was high, and he moved quickly to fill the void. That meant re-educating his science-savvy employees in the language of medicine and pharmaceuticals. "We started with the training of the staff in some new areas," he explained. "I did a lot of that training myself, and I also had candidates with whom I had worked previously come in and talk to the staff."

That early training has been crucial to

Scientific: If at first you don't succeed, try, try again

the firm's growth thus far. As the company's name might suggest, specificity of scientific knowledge is a major selling point here. "We have technical expertise within our staff. That is how we present ourselves. We understand these positions, and we are comfortable talking with technical folks," Peters said.

That expertise has helped Scientific Search win the confidence of people like Pat Angelastro, the vice president of marketing and client services at ImpactRx, a data services company serving the pharmaceutical industry.

"We are looking for a pretty distinct profile, and these candidates are not that easily found. So you really have to work with a recruiter who knows the space pretty well, who really knows what we are looking for," said

Angelastro, who has turned to Scientific Search for help in finding managers and analysts in recent years. "Some other recruiters will just throw you everything that comes their way."

Scott Schell experienced some of that as he searched for a job earlier this year.

Having been laid off from his job as plant auditor at a pharmaceutical firm in central Pennsylvania, Schell approached a number of recruiters in search of similar work. But it seemed to him that a lot of them didn't exactly understand what it was he did for a living.

"I had somebody send me to a biotech company, working with proteins. I had never done that, and it wasn't a fit at all," Schell said.

Others looked to Schell's background in manufacturing as a selling point, but they failed to understand that he now wished to go into the field of quality assurance. The recruiters at Scientific Search got it, "and it was a level of detail that no recruiter had given me," said Schell, now the quality assurance manager at Cardinal Health, a Philadelphia pharmaceutical company.

This ability to deliver has helped drive the growth of Scientific Search from its 2001 revenue of \$920,000 to almost \$2 million this year.

At this pace, a little more elbow room is called for, and so the firm plans to move next month into a Cherry Hill house that has been converted into office space. That will give Peters room to hire another recruiter this year, and he plans to take on three or four more next year.

After that, Peters said, the firm will begin to expand its recruiting activities from its current regional reach onto the national stage.

At the same time, Peters continues to develop his staff, in order to make sure that Scientific Search can deliver the

'We have technical expertise within our staff.'

Joe Peters
Scientific Search

THE SHORT OF IT

Company: Scientific Search
Location: 560 Fellowship Road, Suite 309, Mount Laurel, N.J. 08054
Owners: Joe Peters and David Trexler
Type of company: Technology recruiting and staffing specialists
Number of employees: 9
2001 revenue: \$920,000
2002 revenue: \$1.29 million
2003 revenue: \$1.9 million

Source: Company

degree of specific career knowledge that has become its hallmark. To that end, he makes training a big part of the program, with weekly videotape and Web presentations to his recruiting staff, as well as talks from industry insiders and courses sponsored by relevant associations.

Peters also has invested in new technologies, creating an internal database to track candidates and paying for the licenses to access various Internet databases.

"These guys were being successful even without using all the tools that were available in the industry, so I knew that if I gave them the tools, we would only do that much better," he said. "Everybody works real hard here, and a big part of my role is to help them to be as productive and as efficient as possible."

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