

Words **George Thompson**

6

How do print's top managers measure up against those in **OTHER SECTORS?**

A combination of love for the work and invaluable experience means print execs can hold their heads high, says Harrison Scott MD George Thompson



Print's top management can hold their heads high against other sectors. I don't mean their ability to party at their industry's annual awards, for if this was the standard by which it is measured, the Printweek Awards would win them first place. I'm not sure if that's something to feel proud of or guilty about, but an industry that works as hard as the print sector needs to 'let its hair down' when celebrating the best in their class.

What I do mean, is how top management in print compares with those other sectors from an objective point of view, measuring track records of success in executive level



GEORGE THOMPSON
Managing director

recruitment. You will be pleased to hear that our experience strongly suggests print candidates can hold their own against even the most sophisticated sectors such as FMCG, automotive, pharmaceutical and others.

Harrison Scott handles a great variety of job vacancies of all types: from operator, to middle management, to director level. The executive-level roles are, however, what we have become particularly well known for over the past 10 years.

We are often asked 'how difficult is it going to be to fill this role?' when instructed on a high-level assignment. The assignment will always be challenging, but most definitely achievable.

Vacancy	Final shortlist sectors	Successful sector
Operations director	Print, publishing, pharma	Print
Commercial director	Print, engineering, automotive	Print
Operations director designate	Print, industrial laundry cleaning, food	Industrial laundry cleaning
Managing director	Print, packaging, textiles	Packaging
Production director	Kitchen manufacturing, print, aerosols	Print
Managing director	FMCG, packaging, print	Print
Operations director	Paper, children's toys, print	Print
Operations director	Medical supplies, print, FMCG	Print
Managing director	Plastics, print, healthcare & beauty	Plastics
Production director	Household goods, print, packaging	Print

Established proprietors and directors have many years' experience recruiting at various levels however as senior appointments are a 'once in a blue moon' event, it is not something one clocks up experience in. A direct mail printer looking for an account manager is mostly only going to be interested in an account manager with direct mail experience. No vacancy is easy to fill, but this type is certainly more straightforward.

If the same company wants to appoint an operations director or managing director, it opens up a whole world of recruitment possibilities. Sector experience becomes less important and the person's skillset and personality comes to the forefront. Headhunting from other sectors, if the client so desires, is very resource heavy. However, from our point of view, it demonstrates that we leave no stone unturned. An executive package also means the budget is available to attract candidates from other

“Print executives can prove that their personal attributes and business acumen are just as strong as those from the most well invested industries”

locations. Around 20% of all executive level vacancies we handle involve relocation, compared with less than 1% for an account manager.

So returning to the question of 'ever wondered how print's top management compare with their counterparts from other sectors?' Setting aside the fact that relevant industry experience will give candidates an immediate advantage, even though other sectors are better financed for ongoing training, there is a passion within printing that shines through.

We find that people are in this industry because they love print, not just because it's a job. The nature of the industry also means that its people are also more creatively minded, which leads to better scope for innovation. Successful candidates for executive level roles often attended courses through their own resources, and read lots of self-improvement books. They also document all improvements made within a business, showing an investment in their roles and a drive for success.


When we are given the scope to consider candidates from other sectors, there have to be commonalities in the services provided, of course. An example of a successful candidate from outwith the industry was an operations director designate we placed last year with a printing company in the South East. He was a senior-level director at an industrial laundry cleaning provider. There are par-

ticular parities between the two industries. Linen is delivered, processed through heavy capital intensive kit, folded then delivered. This particular industry required an extremely high level of motivation for the staff, a keen eye for detail and minimal room for error.

Some insightful questions we present to director-level candidates are as follows:

- 1 What is the most successful continuous improvement programme you have implemented in the last five years? Outline the thought process behind the methodology, the capex (if required), the changes to existing practices and the benefits this brought to the business.
- 2 Covid-19 has created challenges few alive today in business have ever experienced. Prior to the pandemic, what has been the biggest challenge faced in your career, and how did you overcome it?
- 3 Almost every client says its people are the most important resource, however this client has emphasised this more than any other. You will be joining a company where the workforce truly is the greatest resource. How do you describe your style in getting the best out of people, and dealing with different personality types?

At the top of this page is a table highlighting the success of candidates from people in print over those from outside the industry in our last 10 senior level placements where the client has wanted to consider all options:

The above evidence concludes that print's top management can outshine those from other sectors. Putting aside the fact their relevant industry knowledge gives them an immediate head start, print executives can prove that their personal attributes and business acumen are just as strong as those from the most well invested industries. 

HARRISON SCOTT ASSOCIATES PROFILE

Harrison Scott Associates is the largest recruitment company in the UK in print, packaging and paper. Our aim is to develop long-term alliances, whereby we act as an extension to clients' businesses by having an in-depth knowledge of their culture and commercial development.

We strive at all times to work in accord with our partners to develop and maintain close and harmonious working ties. We believe a strong working relationship to be of ultimate benefit to all.

Harrison Scott

For more information contact: **George Thompson, managing director, 0207 838 9695, george@harrison-scott.co.uk, harrison-scott.com**

