



EXECUTIVES UNLIMITED, INC.  
*Connecting Companies with Leaders*

## Clique Magazine:

### Interview with Walter Halatek

*Managing Director, Executives Unlimited, Inc.*

Walter W. Halatek is Managing Director of Executives Unlimited Inc., Chicago. EUI specializes in both interim and conventional senior executive search utilizing proven concepts that assist its clients in managing growth, change and transition successfully. Halatek, an Executive Committee member of the Chicago chapter, recently sat down with clique to discuss his firm's hands-on approach to performing executive searches.

**clique:** *Walt, can you tell our readers a little about Executives Unlimited and the firm's mission?*

**Walt Halatek:** Executives Unlimited, Inc. is a national provider of traditional executive search services across all industries and functions. We also provide interim executives for short-term and project needs. EUI has international affiliates which can be accessed as necessary.

One of the fastest-growing boutique search firms in the United States, Executives Unlimited brings a new approach: in true partnership, we are a liaison to leadership, delivering customized search solutions to secure the most qualified, culturally compatible executives.

**clique:** *When and how was the firm founded?*

**Walt:** Executives Unlimited was founded in 2001 on a premise providing a new model for the search industry: nimble, modest, savvy, and stalwart. All of us are senior executives from other industries, coming into executive search because we were interested in it, liked the model, and as a result, were able to bring all of our experience running companies and P&Ls into play for our clients.

Our searches are for senior executives, particularly general management in a variety of businesses including manufacturing and industrial distribution, some of the service sectors, and not-for-profits. We specialize in CEO/COO/GM searches, operations, sales/marketing, finance/accounting and other C-level positions.

**clique:** *What is the scope of your business?*

**Walt:** We're coast-to-coast. We have offices in Connecticut, New Jersey, Chicago, Dallas, and our headquarters in Long Beach, California. That lets us take on assignments anywhere in the United States.

**clique:** *What size companies do you work with?*

**Walt:** Our specialty is the mid-market and we have always had a heavy presence with private equity. Executives Unlimited serves over 400 clients in the United States and abroad, including public and privately held companies from start-up to middle market to billion-dollar multinationals.

**clique:** *What sets Executives Unlimited apart from your competition and makes your firm unique?*

**Walt:** It's a couple of things: our backgrounds as individuals and our closure rate. We have completed 100% of our search assignments five years running. Ninety percent of the executives we place are in those positions or better ones at the hiring company after two years. This is twice the industry average. And finally, 50% of interim executives placed eventually convert to permanent positions, a clear demonstration of our ability to source superbly suited candidates.

**clique:** *To what do you attribute such an amazing closing rate?*

**Walt:** There are really two things that differentiate us from the competition. Number one, the managing director runs the search, working with the client directly. We have our own in-house research staff that we've worked with for over 10 years. There are no middle-men. There's no junior associate in between the client and us and research. We do an iterative round of research and discussion with candidates. We are old-fashioned in that the semi-finalist candidates that we like, we meet with live, one-on-one. This way, we can really gauge the individual, as well as the company that we're matching them up with.

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*(Continued from front side)*

In keeping with our consultative approach, our role as liaison continues even beyond the new hire's transition. We track the candidate's successful employment for up to 18 months, obtaining input regarding progress from both parties, and continue to mediate, collaborate, and consult as needed.

**clique:** What is the number one challenge you face on a day-to-day basis in the executive search industry?

**Walt:** Well, it's really about our value proposition. We can find top-notch people who can make a difference in building up the client. With our focused process we find the right qualified candidates who know they can do the job and who want to do it for our client.

**clique:** How do you begin a search? Do you focus on one given area, or is it a widespread search?

**Walt:** Our internal data base is state-of-the art. Once we have a go-ahead from the client our researchers are looking at potential fits right away. That gives us something to sink our teeth into while we are pursuing all the other routes we use.

**clique:** Walt, you've been in executive search for 10 years now. How has the industry changed from when you first started?

**Walt:** Well, it's changed a little bit. Employment in retained search took a hit post-9/11 and a number of competitors closed their doors. EUI did OK during those times and we have been expanding ever since. Technology has vastly improved and is very helpful.

**clique:** After the candidates have met with you, are there several that you will present to the company?

**Walt:** That's exactly right. And that is another thing that differentiates us from the competition. We will find two, three or four candidates who fully meet every aspect of the assignment specifications, who we are convinced have done the job and can do the job for our new client. They are met personally by the managing director and then introduced to the client. The client then goes through an interview round. And what I love to hear is, "Walt, all three candidates could do the job."

The cultural issues of the company, and of the client, are critical. One of our principal jobs is finding a candidate who has the right qualifications and experience and who will also fit the work environment. That is one of the purposes of the live meeting.

**clique:** How has technology affected the search industry?

**Walt:** We have the ability to contact people via e-mail, but it's still all by reaching out and touching people, and making them aware of our search process and becoming familiar to them. Technology speeds up the process, it makes it easier, but the personal touch is critical to our line of work.

**clique:** Finally, how would you summarize the type of referrals and opportunities you are interested in?

**Walt:** We're looking for introductions to CEOs and private equity principals, and to people that can make a decision and are responsible for the strategic direction of the company.