



DESTINATION BOARDROOM

SECRETS OF A DISCRETE PROFESSION
- EXECUTIVE SEARCH UNVEILED



EELCO VAN EIJCK

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Secrets of a Discrete Profession –
Executive Search Unveiled

BY

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

*This book is dedicated to the clients, candidates and colleagues
who have placed their trust in me over the years.*

I continue to be educated and inspired by our collaboration.

Amsterdam, 2024

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Eelco van Eijck is a Managing Partner, Chairman of the Global Nomination and Governance Committee and Global Board Services Practice member of Amrop, a global executive search and leadership services firm. He is also a member of the Amrop Global Consumer and Retail and Life Sciences Practices.

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Family offices, private equity and industry-leading organizations in FMCG and Life Sciences seek his advice in their search for (international) executives and non-executives across a wide spectrum of roles. Since 2014, he has been a Guest Lecturer for Erasmus Governance Institute, Rotterdam, supporting its program for new board members.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book aims to make a meaningful contribution to the professionalization of executive search. Despite its unregulated status, the sector has considerable social importance. After all, headhunters are responsible for introducing professional managers, directors and board members to the higher echelons of the private and public sectors; they underpin the ways in which these key players are sought and found. Headhunters operate in a rapidly changing and increasingly complex world. And yet, this is a profession about which little is known because of the discretion and confidentiality the work demands.

This book is primarily based on a series of conversations with Bert Koopman, a seasoned business writer and researcher. His discerning questioning helped me to open the “black box” of my profession, shed light on its contents and distill my ideas about ways in which the sector can be improved and renewed.

A second pillar consists of interviews with prominent managers, directors, supervisory directors, professors at business schools, directors of governance institutes, board members of “supporting parties” and policy officers. Thanks go to Rients Abma, Inge Brakman, Wessel Ganzevoort, Kitty Koelemeijer, Paul Koster, Mel Kroon, Marie-Pauline Lauret, Johan Scheffe, Jan Stolker, Peter Verveen, Biense Visser and Jaap de Vries. Their cooperation enriched this book.

Literature study is indispensable in deepening our understanding of the positioning and context of executive search, and this forms the third pillar of *Destination Boardroom*. The transition to a digital, information economy and increasing socio-economic complexity are revolutionizing corporate governance. This has far-reaching consequences for the labor market and therefore for the executive search sector. Continuing education is becoming a pre-condition for headhunters to survive.

As a fourth pillar, two experts played a significant role in assuring a robust examination of our subject. Emeritus Professor of Social Sciences Hans Adriaansens outlined the significance of academic institutions for young talent, and Professor Hans Strikwerda skillfully connected insights in organizational theory and organizational change with the headhunting profession.

On an editorial note, I would like to thank illustrator René van Asselt for making elaborate executive search practice accessible to outsiders in an appealing visual language. He made a substantial contribution to the interpretation of some of the key messages of this book. Last but not least, thanks go to Steffi Gande for her expertise in translation, supplementary research and editing, and to the team at Emerald Publishing for their diligent support in bringing this work to fruition.

Amsterdam, 2024