

Special Edition - November 2016

Boardreport

Magazine for Executive & Supervisory Boards

A professional portrait of Alexander Graf Matuschka, a middle-aged man with short, light-colored hair and blue eyes. He is wearing a dark grey suit jacket, a white dress shirt, and a red and black striped tie. The background is a plain, light color.

Alexander Graf Matuschka
Career Counseling for
Senior Executives

„A wealth of opportunities
for Top Managers“

ACTIVE PLACEMENT AND CAREER SUPPORT FOR BUSINESS LEADERS

Career Counseling for Senior Executives

FOR YEARS WE HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING THE “OUTPLACEMENT” MARKET AND THE CHANGES TAKING PLACE AMONG THE LARGE NUMBER OF SERVICE PROVIDERS. THAT’S WHY WE RECENTLY SPOKE WITH ALEXANDER GRAF MATUSCHKA AND ASKED HIM FOR HIS ASSESSMENT AND PERSPECTIVE. AS THERE HAS BEEN INCREASING OVERLAP BETWEEN WP AND THIS MARKET, THIS FIRST INTERVIEW WITH THE BOARDREPORT WILL BE FOLLOWED BY OTHER RELATED ARTICLES IN UPCOMING ISSUES OF OUR MAGAZINE.

Boardreport talks with Alexander Graf Matuschka



Alexander Graf Matuschka

The Executive Agent offers career counseling for ‘upper management’

Graf Matuschka, you have been in contact with our organization for years. What led to the initial contact and interaction?

In 2007 I initiated a new business line “SMC – Senior Management Counseling” at a renowned personnel consultancy. I had been connected with this market leading consultancy ever since 1998 and officially joined the company in 2005 – after nearly 20 years in investment banking and industrial companies in which I held roles such as CFO and Sole Managing Director. In 2007 I accepted a mandate to consult a divisional board member at VW

who was at the start of a professional reorientation process. That was the beginning – and I’m still in touch with this gentleman. I soon realized that standard outplacement tools & methods were unable to provide the necessary value-add to members of top management. That’s why I spoke with the founder and chief executive of the consultancy I was working for at that time and proposed the SMC concept. Upon gaining his buy-in, I proceeded with the implementation. Ever since I’ve been counseling only managers representing this segment – with few exceptions – in their efforts to plan and take the next career step. The term “Executive Agent” was created in America to describe this premium level service. So it was in this context and period that my relationship with WP Human Capital Group started.

How do you distinguish your work as “Executive Agent” from normal Outplacement services?

To start with, I never appreciated the “out” aspect of Outplacement. I mean who has any interest in being “out”? As such, my whole approach is not about figuring out the best way to deal with a deficiency or shortcoming. And it’s not about boring psychological testing or friendly coaching. And it’s certainly not just about helping professionals help themselves.

So what is your work all about then?

To support the top ranking leaders of the business world, it is necessary to multiply their contact network and serve as a sparring partner to managers who bring loads of valuable experience to the table. That’s the heart of what I do.

What does this look like in concrete terms?

Outplacement offers coaching sessions with psychologists, conducts various tests (e.g. BIP) and concentrates on enabling the clients to help themselves. The counseling package also typically includes some market research, the redevelopment of the CV and a compiled list of target firms. Now and then a mass mailing campaign might be performed as well, for example sending the CV to contacts sourced in the 'Hoppenstedt' database. All this has a certain value to be sure but fulfills the very individualized interests and needs of leading senior executives only to a limited extent.

What is your approach?

Career counseling, as I understand it, begins with several personal talks to acquire a full understanding of the candidate, including his competencies and interests. The focus also covers professional objectives, a particularly relevant concern in view of this special market segment. Building upon this knowledge, it's my goal to introduce the candidate to my personal contact network – to the right people at the right time. This type of "private placement" is a unique and dominant aspect of my work. And by applying this method it's possible to access the hidden job market adequately. The FAZ (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung) and several New Media, such as internet job boards, can be used to supplement this approach in certain cases.

Could you give us some more specifics about what you offer?

Sure. I'd like to highlight our "baby": the 'InBetween' section of the Boardreport. For more than two years we've joined hands in publishing the profiles of select senior executives. These are individuals with a track record of immense competency and experience – people the market is looking for. The difficulty for many of these executives is their relatively low level of market visibility – a problem that develops when someone has had a long-time career path within a single company or group or has spent extensive time abroad. One statement that candidates make again and again is "while moving up the career ladder over the years I did a grand job of neglecting my contact network." The need to access and expand the personal network as well as to engage relevant counterparts and decision makers in eye-to-eye talks are wonderful and highly personal requirements that I take great pleasure in fulfilling.

So it's all about contacts?

It's exclusively a matter of being active in a highly individual, personal and trustworthy manner, keeping in mind the fact that "private placement" within my own contact network is not something that can be leveraged and multiplied at will. So in short, it's all about people. In contrast, who desires to be treated, categorized or even stigmatized as an outplacement candidate? My candidates and mandates view themselves as attractive competence

suppliers at C-level and not as job seekers, as some outplacement candidates are called.

What role do executive search firms play in this placement process?

Starting at a certain salary level, the hidden and published job vacancies are filled almost exclusively by major search firms or specialized boutiques. I attribute a great level of significance to these firms and their networks. However, the success of such contacts is rooted in long-term relationships and the ability to match the candidate's profile to the competency of the search consultant. In this context it makes no sense, in my opinion, to attempt mass mailings.

What about the future of career counseling?

Career counseling has been around in Germany since the beginning of the '90s and in the meantime has become well established in the market. After some difficult first years which were dominated by three major players, the counseling market has become more diverse and complex – at least in terms of the variety and scope of available services. I believe its future will develop in similar fashion to the executive search market, meaning increasing professionalism and the formation of boutique counseling. These specialized providers will never cover the entire mass market but will distinguish themselves by being highly individual, well networked and particularly person-focused in delivery.

And it was exactly with this development in mind that WP and I started our partnership. In fact, just recently one of my candidates, who had been portrayed in your magazine, was selected as an expert for a supervisory board. The section 'InBetween', in the following pages, provides more insight about the direction our joint path is leading us.

We express our thanks to you, Graf Matuschka, for your comments and viewpoints and will deal with other aspects of this topic in the upcoming issues of Boardreport.

CONTACT

Alexander Graf Matuschka
Executive Agent - Career support for business leaders
Wall 6
32756 Detmold
phone: +49 (0) 178 8070 642
E-Mail: alexander@grafmatuschka.de



Contact:

Alexander Graf Matuschka

+49 (0) 178 80 70 642

E-Mail: alexander@grafmatuschka.de