



Search Support Group

Yorktown Heights

Search Group Offers a Unique Business Model

By Anna Lillian Moser

Nestled away behind Chase Bank and Cablevision on Crompond Road is the office of Search Support Group, a small search firm doing big national and international business.

Search Support Group is an executive search firm. The firm is hired by professional companies across the country to help them research and find the best and the brightest for high-end professional positions.

"It's a unique business in the sense that we can work anywhere. Most of our clients we've never met," said Marc Roberts, one of the firm's principals and a Yorktown resident.

The business was started 16 years ago by Andrea Portnoy, who had an extensive background in human relations. Portnoy was quickly joined by Roberts. Until joining Search Support, Roberts had been making a living working in finance in corporate America.

"I got caught up in a couple of downsizings and then joined [Andrea]," Roberts said. "It was like, 'Let's see what we can do and try to build this into something,' and 16 years later we've survived numerous downturns in the economy and we're still standing."

The business had humble beginnings, with Roberts and Portnoy working out of a spare bedroom in Roberts' house, but as the business expanded, the home office became inadequate. There were phone lines everywhere and employees were working out of Roberts' kitchen. The firm finally set up offices at 2013 Crompond



PHOTO COURTESY OF PRIMAVERA PUBLIC RELATIONS

Marc Roberts (pictured) and partner Andrea Portnoy started their search firm, Search Support Group, 16 years ago out of a spare bedroom in his Yorktown home.

Road, where they've been ever since.

What makes Search Support different from the majority of search firms boils down to how the firm charges its clients. Traditionally, the search business has two models: The retained model and the contingency model. Firms that work under the retainer model require at least partial payment upfront, before any business is done. Under a contingency model, a firm will not be paid until a project is finished and a potential employee or employees have been found. With both models, the clients get what they pay for. Retainer firms have the money upfront in order to complete a project thoroughly, but they're

very expensive. Contingency firms, on the other hand, cost less, but because they depend on their own money to finance a project, their services are dramatically limited.

"They have no investment capital to do anything on the search other than to get it concluded quickly," Roberts said, adding that businesses tend to hire more than one contingency firm at a time because it's a matter of who gets to the finish line first. "Retained is very expensive, because you have to pay up front. Contingency is chaotic, and then there's us."

Search Support charges its clients an hourly fee, and it's up to the firm's clients to decide how many hours they would like the firm to work on a particular project.

"At the end of the day they're saving a

ton of money," Roberts said. "Right now, some of the work we're doing in healthcare, we're averaging savings of just about 60 percent when benchmarked against the traditional retained and contingency models; that's very compelling."

It's compelling, but Roberts admits that some companies are so familiar with the traditional search models, they're skeptical of the Search Support model.

"We're constantly educating," Roberts said.

Roberts would not disclose the firm's rates, and said he and Portnoy are looking at the firm's entire payment structure.

The bulk of Search Support's work is research and the firm has garnered such a reputation for its thorough research skills that other executive search firms have outsourced to Search Support.

The firm works with a number of different companies, ranging from technology-based companies to companies within the hospitality, manufacturing and healthcare industries. Within the last two years, however, Search Support has been focusing its services on the healthcare industry because it's largely recession-proof. Everyone, no matter what the financial climate, needs healthcare. Earlier this year, Support Search was designated as a preferred vendor by the Tenet Healthcare Corporation, one of the country's largest healthcare systems.

Roberts said that search firms tend to be a leading indicator of where the economy is. For many companies, it's the first service to be cut from a budget and it's the first to be brought back as well.

"I think we've come through the bottom of the trough," Roberts said. "I think the worst is over."

For more information about Search Support Group, visit www.searchsupportgroup.com, or call (800) 861-1453 or (914) 243-0386.

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Local Restaurateurs Honored As Chamber's 'Business Persons of the Year'



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE YORKTOWN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Colonial Terrace owners Alan and Shelia Drogy were named the Yorktown Chamber of Commerce's "Business Persons of the Year" and honored during the organization's annual dinner dance, which was held on Friday, Feb. 5 at Colonial Terrace. More than 300 individuals attended the event and the chamber raised approximately \$45,000, which will go towards funding projects throughout the year. A portion will also be allocated to the organization's scholarship fund.