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Hiring a V.P. of Global Procurement?

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One of the most important responsibilities of a CEO is to build an executive team with the best qualified professionals they can find. The key assignment of each team member is to understand the company vision and to execute strategies that will deliver the company goals.

Hiring the right Vice President of Global Procurement or Supply Chain Management is paramount to balancing the bottom line and delivery of a quality product. Much thought should go into framing the position for success.

Questions to ponder organizationally:

- Is this a newly created position or is it a backfill? If it is a backfill, why was it vacated?
 - one of the main reasons employees leave this post is a high level of frustration or,
 - they were the wrong person (candidate) for the position/organization
- Can the Vision be articulated with substance behind it?
 - *tactical vs. strategic*
 - *presence in low cost regions*
 - *cost reductions – or low cost provider vs. high quality*
 - *technology play*
- Are we willing to support and reinforce the goal (procurement) to keep it alive?
 - *what resources are needed? investments, etc.*
 - *monthly/quarterly communications to entire team*
- Have we organizationally structured this position for optimum effectiveness?
 - *each company is unique dependent on size, business, growth, etc.*

Questions to ask your candidates:

- Present a sourcing strategy that you implemented in the past with key elements, i.e. building blocks in strategy.
Check to see if they took time to probe and understand the environment they were operating. Is it Industry specific? Were they prepared to listen to what the company is all about, what their needs are? (many candidates miss that point)
- How did you sell your strategy to the company (other functions?) What were your major wins? the objections/ road blocks and how did you overcome them?
Here you can hone in on the candidates presentation skills, consensus building, ability to influence, self confidence, team interaction skills, etc.,

- What methods do you use in getting your Procurement leadership to buy into the strategies and actually execute?
This one can be tricky – not just “making them feel part of the process.” Should include communications, understanding the goal and how to get there, follow-up, measureables, etc.
- How is the company going to measure your success?
They should include cost to make changes and year to year savings.
- Give me examples of the need to be “culturally sensitive” to accomplish your goal.
U.S. way of doing business vs. German., French, Chinese, Italian, etc. As a global expert, knowing the differences and importance, this should be relatively easy to answer.
- There are times when you have to “choose your battles” – give me an example of a situation where you had to be more collaborative, and where you had to stand your ground on conflicting objectives with your executive team.
Here you can see if the person tends to buckle with type A team members, or if they are diplomatically savvy to win the main objective and respect of the team. (how they will fit in with the current culture/team)

It is also important to take into consideration the candidate’s career progression. Did they come up strictly through Procurement/Materials, or did they have experience in other functional roles, i.e. Operations, Finance, Quality, etc. or maybe even different industries. What we are trying to accomplish is to go beyond the Procurement scope and get an idea of how they view the business in it’s entirety and what they bring to the table.

Obviously, there are many more questions and attributes to evaluate, but these probing questions will point you in the right direction.