

## 1. Project Summary

Our international Talent Management/Acquisition project for Merck Serono entailed:

- an international roll out of an 11 country talent management project focused on allowing our client to interact/connect and create an ongoing dialogue with senior performers within the commercial operations sector of the global biopharma industry – specifically those working at (or capable of working at) Managing Director or Business Unit Director level;
- the submission of potential candidates to an International Talent Pool (created within a secure area of the client’s online candidate database).
- Additional target was to reinforce employer branding and to ensure that the target population was informed about the evolution of the client following a major M&A process (the takeover of Serono by German Pharma giant, Merck).

## 2. Details of Clients

Merck Serono client are actively committed to bringing therapeutic innovations to patients. They specialise in the treatment of cancer, neurodegenerative diseases, infertility, endocrine and metabolic disorders, cardiovascular diseases and other conditions with unmet medical needs.

Around the world, some 16,000 employees work to discover, develop, manufacture and commercialise our client’s prescription therapies, available in over 150 countries.

Internationally recognised, as a biotechnology leader, with innovative and successful products along with a well-stocked and promising development pipeline. Specialised know-how in research and production means that they are able to ensure absolutely high-quality manufacturing, a key success factor especially in the biopharmaceutical industry.

In 2006, sales of combined products generated € 3.9 billion. The organisation devotes a quarter of these earnings to the pursuit of innovative new therapies through their own research and development, strategic alliances and agreements.

## 3. Objectives

The client had highlighted a series of core requirements which can be summarised as follows:

- Create a new avenue for connecting with high performing individuals within the commercial operations sector
- Reinforce employer branding messages that Merck Serono was an innovator in all its areas of operation
- Ensure a direct line of communication to potential candidates for upcoming positions in the mid and long term
- Evolve the manner in which the company interfaced with key target populations in the labour market

#### 4. Solution implementation and why?

Following series meetings with the client we created a proposal which we felt would meet all of the set requirements.

The stages of this plan were as follows:

##### **Stage 1: Market Research**

- A systematic penetration into each geographical sector/community to source all relevant individuals who met the core requirements of the client
- A deeper level of networking through a commitment to referrals and referencing

##### **Stage 2: Creating Contact**

- Each individual candidate was then contacted by Aspirion Pharma in order to ascertain their suitability for the project.
- Each individual was assessed through a process involving informal proximity referencing, direct referencing and formal competency based interviewing.
- During this phase the nature and aims of the project were fully explained to the individual concerned.
- It was made very clear that this was not a standard recruitment process but rather an opportunity for the target population to connect directly to a company seeking to ensure and secure long term commercial advantage by the creation of a non-traditional interface for those that were open minded about considering future opportunities.
- Our rejection rate for candidates during this project was around 72% - thus highlighting the tightly focused nature of our assessments.

##### **Stage 3: Client Submission**

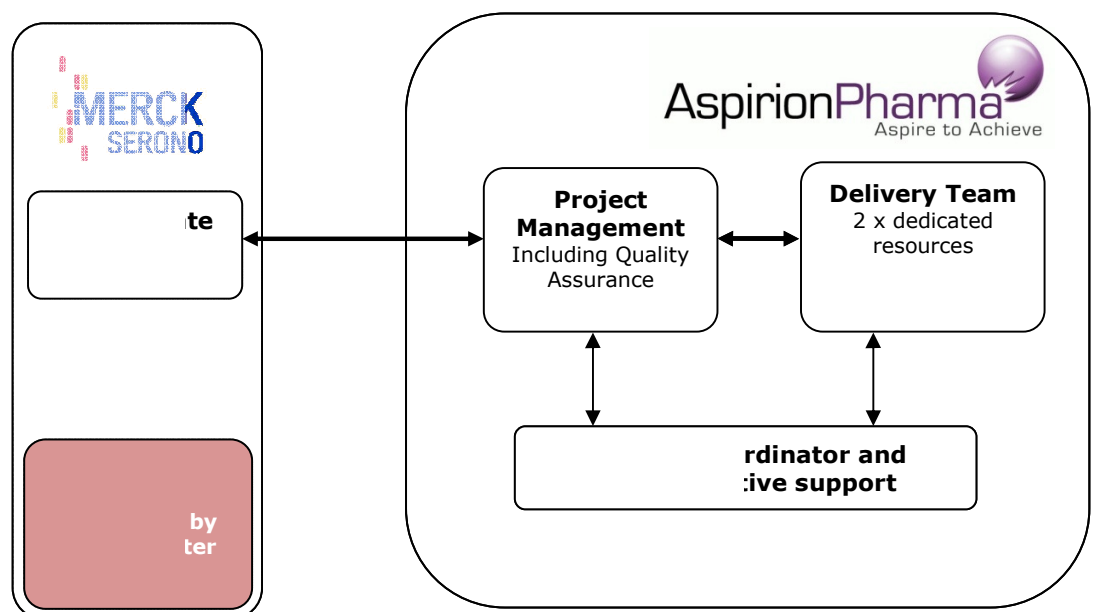
- All final shortlisted candidates were assessed one final time to ensure they understood the nature and reasoning behind the project prior to formal entry into the pool.
- Once each targeted individual assessed and cleared for entry into the talent pool they were then submitted via a secure entry point into the Taleo portal.
- Bespoke development had been undertaken to ensure that this part of the management system was separated from other areas.
- Successful entrants were provided with login details and passwords which allowed them to check their own details.
- It was through this that the connection between client and candidate was maintained.
- Those that were deemed "exceptional" were directly introduced (as well as entered onto Taleo) to senior members of the HR management team and from that point the relationship was picked up by the client.

## Operational Structure

The following is an outline of the operational structures created to deliver on the goals of the project:

1. Team Structure/Size/Resources allocated
  - a. Two resourcers operating as Merck Serono's offsite delivery team based at AspirionPharma's offices in London
  - b. Two dedicated resources trained and experienced in the AspirionSearch Methodology who will work solely for an initial period of 6 months on increasing Merck Serono's share of the commercial/global marketing labour force across the European region.
  - c. They will be specifically trained in Merck Serono's requirements across the commercial and global marketing areas
  - d. They will be led by Ash Butt (AB), Managing Director of AspirionPharma.
2. Engagement model (see figure1.1)
  - a. The primary point of contact will be AB
    - i. The resourcers will report directly into AB
    - ii. If a situation arises that additional retained searches are required then a dedicated ASM Retained Search team will be formed, utilising additional resourcers as required, along with a dedicated Project Coordinator as well as the support of our administration team. The exercise will be led by AB as Project Manager.
    - iii. The Merck Serono delivery team will remain operational as a dedicated team during the life cycle of the collaboration and will not work on any other projects during this period

Figure 1.1



## 5. Outcomes

The following table shows a total breakdown of:

- number of targeted candidates across all territories
- number of people contacted
- number of CVs received

Country	Number of Targeted Candidates	Number of candidates contacted	Number of CVs received
Belgium	133	35	11
Denmark	56	19	8
Finland	26	20	10
France*	186	54	43
Germany	171	24	34
Greece	49	5	2
Netherlands	73	25	8
Norway	31	9	5
Portugal	13	9	8
Sweden	129	119	53
Switzerland	187	145	43

### Candidate Feedback/Additional Information

During the course of this project we have tried where possible to question candidates on their views of a project of this type. The response has been overwhelmingly positive. Targeted candidates have described the concept of the external talent pool (constructed and formulated in this way) as ***“innovative”, “a fresh approach”, “pro-active”, “forward looking” and “strategically sound”***.

In fact several targeted senior level operators questioned us as to the feasibility of rolling out similar future projects for their respective organisations!

One of the greatest dangers highlighted at the outset of this project was the potential that candidates who do not move through to a relatively quick recruitment process following entry into the pool may become disillusioned and this could be counterproductive – as a result we made strenuous efforts to ensure that all candidates who moved forwards were fully briefed that:

- This was not a standard recruitment process
- This was an innovative new approach to creating a dialogue between Merck Serono and the target populations which MAY result in the entry of the candidates into a future discussion regarding potential positions IF there was a business need and IF the candidates skill set provided an effective solution to that need. We referred to the pool not as a recruitment process but as an “interface” or a “channel of communication”.

- This was a long term project which could allow the candidate to strategically assess potential opportunities arising within Merck Serono in line with their own career goals without being railroaded into a recruitment process.
- We effectively positioned the inherent nature of the pool (as a longer term project designed to disseminate information about the employer's brand/information about future growth/information about new future roles) as a positive. Hence targeted candidates were not surprised that our contact would not result in an immediate interview but were in fact often pleased that they could explore potential openings without the pressure of a defined timeline. This resulted in comments such as ***"it is highly refreshing to look at opportunities without having a headhunter or company trying to pin you down on first stage and final stage negotiations before you have even had a chance to look at the company's website!"***
- At all stages of our contact with them we re-iterated this and used various methods to ensure that this point was fully understood. For example:
  - **Stage 1:** During initial approaches it was made clear that our target population for this group was likely to be:
    - Successful in their current roles
    - Not actively seeking a move
    - Open minded about future opportunities with an organisation looking to grow

At this point it was reinforced that this project was ***"not a standard linear recruitment process"*** but rather ***"would be a way of interacting with an organisation that made innovation in all its operations (not just drug development) a hallmark of their business model"***. It was made clear that there was no standard "carrot" but rather the potential of a future carrot!

- **Stage 3:** At the final assessment before the decision was made as to whether to enter the candidates into the pool – we again made sure that everyone who was confirmed as an entrant was aware of the:
  - Structure
  - Goals
  - Aims
  - Underlying strategy
  - Operational mandate of the Merck Serono External Talent Pool.