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## The perfect match

**W**e recently celebrated our 10th birthday with a masquerade themed *soirée* for 400 of our nearest

and dearest in Melbourne.

Movers and shakers in the industry, clients and candidates came out to help us toast the last 10 years and bring in the next decade with style. Impressively, our first client – Rita Williams, Simplot – and candidate – Jennifer Clark, Kraft – were guests at the event, both of whom are still working with us.

Celebrating this significant milestone got me thinking about success in all its forms and, on reflection, there is no doubt that the core of our success can be attributed to the quality of the relationships we have built with both clients and candidates.

So, to toast this recent milestone, I thought we should take the opportunity to talk about relationships that create success, a vital ingredient for the marketing industry. But rather than rattling on further about our recent successes, I thought we would profile one of our previous candidates, John Phillips.

John's career is one that I have been watching with interest and so I thought I would share his journey in this most fascinating of industries.

Despite placing John in a role five years ago, we still catch up for lunch or drinks every six months or so. And it all began with an opportunity that I identified for him back in 2005.

### HOW THE RELATIONSHIP BEGAN

John Phillips has nearly 20 years' experience in media, marketing and advertising in

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both Australia and Asia. He has an extensive skillbase in integrated marketing communications, working with clients such as Sony BMG, Louis Vuitton, Foster's Group and Ford Australia.

John's came to us in 2005 after discovering that his passion was in the creative side of marketing communications. His qualifications were in marketing, but he had spent significant time client-side and also held positions in media and digital and, as a result, was looking for a new and exciting challenge.

By the time he came to us, he had spoken to numerous recruitment firms and he had a clear idea of what he was looking for.

We initially took the time to get to know John's: his ambitions, strengths and weaknesses, and had several meetings to throw around some ideas.

Not long after he came to me, I identified an opportunity for him at a design firm called FreeForm. I met with FreeForm's director, Andrew Price, who told me that his vision was to double the size of the business.

I saw a huge opportunity for John – he was intelligent, clever and commercially savvy and I could see that he could add significant value to FreeForm.

The skills were a fit, so I set up a meeting between Price and John. They liked each other and the relationship began.

An initial three- to six-month contract role was offered to John, working on business development. I convinced him that this was a unique opportunity to grow and develop a business from the ground up. I could see that he wanted a role that allowed him to make a difference, where he could use his entrepreneurial mind and where he would be given the autonomy to make a difference.

I believed that Price was this sort of manager and that he and John would work well together. Luckily I was right.

### STARTING OUT AT FREEFORM

John's initial focus was to grow and diversify the client base, as the firm was originally set up to specialise in the entertainment category, much like its parent company in London; however, this had proven too restrictive for the Australian market.

As the business grew, it needed to address its own brand and so it underwent a major rebrand, including an office move to South Melbourne.

Not long after the office move, Price offered John a permanent position. An offer that he was thrilled to accept.

### THE COMPANY EXPANDS

For the next two years, they built up a solid client base and started to do more communications-based work. They concentrated on hiring great people who both aligned with FreeForm's culture and had excellent experience.

## John Phillips' tips for working with a recruiter

Choose carefully. Choose a firm that truly understands your objectives and also where you want to take the business. Talk and plan with them on a regular basis. And make sure that they have a thorough understanding of your culture. Choose a smart firm with integrity and strong experience in your industry.

It was not long before John's was promoted to general manager and the business had grown to a team of six. John's role expanded into managing the direction and growth of the business and developing the culture.

### A NEW DAY

In 2008, John's reviewed the business' direction and it was decided that they would relaunch the company as a fully-fledged brand communications agency.

After thorough consideration, they decided that design would become just part of their offering and so FreeForm Advertising + Design was born.

At the beginning of 2010, Andrew Price decided to take a hiatus from the business, and appointed John as managing director.

John says that he now has a "wonderful, committed and exceptionally talented team of 10 full-time staff. We have had a sensational 2010, and are ready for a strong year of growth ahead".

The company has recently enjoyed a number of high-profile account wins, including Mountain Goat beer, Crust Pizza and Fletcher Jones.

### THE KEY TO SUCCEEDING IN A FAST PACED INDUSTRY

It is no secret that the marketing industry is a notoriously fast paced one, so I ask John what he thinks are the key things that have led to his, and FreeForm's, success.

"I love what I do. I am passionate about great creative. This is a good start, if you truly love what you do, it's not really work," he says. "It also comes down to your people – develop



an inspiring, great work environment and you will attract great people who will do great work. Success is born out of that."

### DEFINING SUCCESS WITH HIS RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS

I ask John how he personally defines success. "Success for me is working with great people and doing something you love. Success is creating an environment that allows our team to think differently and have fun."

He tells me of a colleague of his, who, when asked by clients what it is like to work at FreeForm, replies that he "still whistles on the way to work".

"Success is also developing a company that is a desired place to work, that promotes expansive thinking, does unique and exceptional work, and provides a flexible environment that allows us all to spend more time with family," says John.

### THE ALL-IMPORTANT RECRUITMENT PARTNER

When I inquire as to the key things that he has learned over the last couple of years, John immediately speaks of how our relationship has shown him the importance of working with a specialised recruitment partner.

"Your people are your business; they are your culture and they are the ones that help bring the business' vision to life. A great recruiter should be a critical partner in building your

team, working with your business plan and growth objectives, cultural objectives and business goals," he says.

"A recruiter should be one of your most valuable partners. With integrity, depth of industry knowledge and collaboration, they can be the most trusted advisers and the ultimate matchmakers," he says.

### WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM PHILLIPS

I wanted to tell John's story not only to motivate and inspire, as a true case study should, but also to highlight the importance of finding a recruitment partner that you truly trust and feel that is 100 percent supportive of your career and personal development.

A committed recruitment partner is someone who will look beyond that commission cheque on the first placement – they will truly get to know you to ensure the best possible placement and will keep in touch long after the ink has dried on that first contract of employment. And they will also be able to identify opportunities that you may not have seen.

So, as we enter this next decade, we would like to raise a glass to John's and all our other candidates and clients who have recently enjoyed successes of their own. Here's to the next 10 years. And for those wondering just what happened to their contact with their recruitment partner, remember, we are only a phone call away. **M**