



Emerging Markets Survey in the MENA Region
Conducted September, 2011

Vision Executive Search, based in Dubai, UAE, recently conducted Market Research among top multinational firms doing business in the MENA region. Respondents were asked about their criteria for hiring executives in the MENA region as well as how executive search firms play a role in this.

1. Key Traits for Talent in the MENA Region.

Only a small minority of respondents felt it was critically important for an executive working in the MENA region to have prior experience in the region. About half felt it was very important but experience elsewhere could be considered and the other half thought multi-country experience elsewhere would suffice. (See Graph 1 below).

(Graph 2). Not surprisingly, most companies feel fluency in English is critical for an executive hire in the MENA region. Nearly 80% feel fluency in Arabic is an advantage but not necessary while about half feel that French is an advantage.










(From Graph 3), International experience and quality of management experience are the most important traits in a MENA executive with industry specific experience nearly as important. Regional experience or experience with the local culture were also considered important by about half of respondents.

1. How important is it for a candidate to have prior experience in the MENA region?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Not important at all; industry experience is more important		0.0%	0
Somewhat important, but multi country experience elsewhere would be acceptable, too		47.5%	19
Very important, but would consider similar experience		45.0%	18
Critically important and wouldn't consider hiring without it		7.5%	3

2. Rate how important fluency in another language is for candidates you hire in the MENA region.

	Doesn't Matter	An Advantage but Would Hire Without It	Must Have to be Hired	Response Count
Fluent in English	2.5% (1)	5.0% (2)	92.5% (37)	40
Fluent in Arabic	0.0% (0)	79.5% (31)	20.5% (8)	39
Fluent in French	51.4% (19)	45.9% (17)	2.7% (1)	37
Fluent in another language	71.1% (27)	28.9% (11)	0.0% (0)	38

3. What traits are most important in an executive level employee in the MENA region?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Experience in the local culture		47.5%	19
Language skills		15.0%	6
Industry specific experience		65.0%	26
Quality of management experience		67.5%	27
Regional experience		50.0%	20
Education		20.0%	8
International experience		67.5%	27
Length of management experience		37.5%	15
Other (please specify)		15.0%	6

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Q. 4. What is the most challenging thing in finding executive talent in the MENA region?

One of the hiring challenges is being able to find an executive with international experience, knowledge of the local culture and needs, and the desire to stay in the region rather than use it as a stepping stone. For those who require a candidate who is bilingual in English and Arabic, the pool of talent becomes significantly smaller. Many candidates are brought in from other regions as the local pool of qualified candidates is not deep enough. It is a challenge to find capable individuals who have solid local and regional experience, but are also capable of working in a western multinational environment. Lastly, one respondent noted that even with these talent shortages, there are still not enough executive search firms in the region.

2. Managing Human Resources In The MENA Region

(Graph 5 & 6): Perhaps not surprisingly, local hires are mostly expected to stay in the region with the company for 3-10 years while talent brought in from other regions are expected to remain only 2-5 years. This would seem to support the challenge of constantly needing to find new executive talent for the region.

5. For a local hire in the MENA region, how long do you expect that hire to stay IN THE REGION with the company?






		Response Percent	Response Count
Up to 2 years		2.5%	1
2-3 years		10.0%	4
3-5 years		47.5%	19
5-10 years		32.5%	13
More than 10 years		7.5%	3

6. For an expat hire in the MENA region, how long do you expect the person to stay in the MENA region?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Up to 2 years		5.0%	2
2-3 years		37.5%	15
3-5 years		47.5%	19
5-10 years		10.0%	4
More than 10 years		0.0%	0

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90% of respondents felt that cultural training is an important part of hiring a new executive, but only 40% require it as part of their on boarding process. (See below Graph 7).

7. What do you consider the value of cultural training in the MENA region?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Not necessary; they learn on the job		10.0%	4
Would be helpful but not budgeted for		17.5%	7
Would be helpful but not part of our training		37.5%	15
Part of our regular onboarding process		40.0%	16
Other (please specify) Show Responses		2.5%	1

3. Defining Executive Search.

Q. 8. How would you describe the difference between a recruiter and an executive search consultant?

While a handful of respondents did not see a difference between a recruitment agency and an executive search firm, the vast majority felt that search firms provided a service to find the most qualified candidate available to fill a position while recruiters provide a database to forward CVs. One person remarked, "The executive search consultant is typically working exclusively on the search and is expected to evaluate all candidates being considered for the position needed by the company. However, the recruiter usually does not have an exclusive assignment, but instead is in a race against other sources to present a winning candidate for the company."

Q.9. What is the difference between a retained executive search firm and one that works on contingency, besides the payment terms?

Some respondents pointed out that, for some search firms, it is difficult to see the difference between a contingency and a retained executive search firm. Most stated that a true retained search firm becomes a part of the client organization understanding its strategic direction, culture, environment and heritage. This, in turn, results in a hire who is a better long-term fit than a hire who is recommended just to close the project and be paid. One respondent commented that a retained search firm can help persuade an executive to leave a desirable position for a better opportunity, and to help negotiate the terms of the move. Several indicated that a retained executive search firm should never present a candidate to more than one client at a time whereas a contingency recruiter often presents attractive candidates to as many clients as possible at the same time. Lastly, one respondent said, "Contingency recruiters tend to be more specialized by industry and function. Retained search consultants also specialize but, because they are driven by original research for each engagement, and are willing and able to apply that process

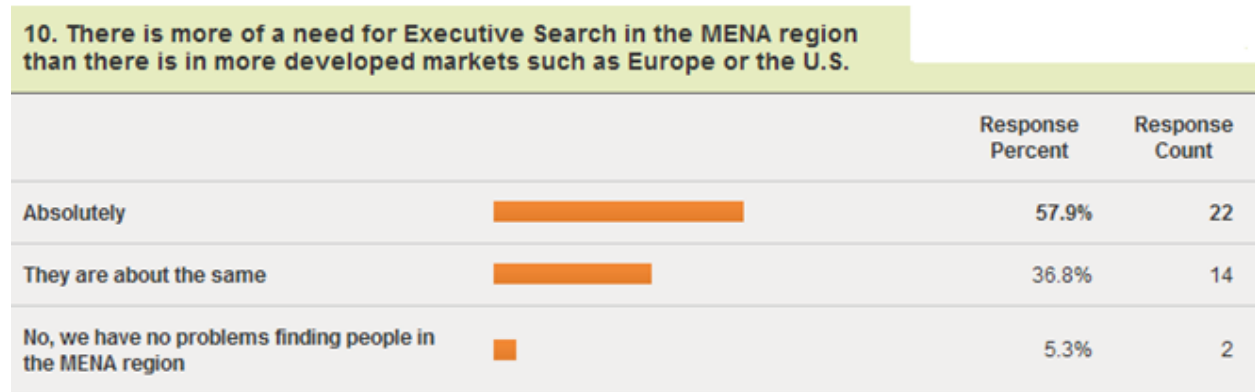
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across industries and functions – especially when circumstances indicate the possibility of recruiting from outside the client's industry."

(Graph 10) 60% of respondents indicated that there is more of a need for Executive Search in the MENA region than in more developed markets such as the U.S. and Europe, with the other 40% feeling the need was just as high in MENA as in other markets.



Vision Executive Search is an executive search firm founded in Canada in 1997 and based in Dubai since 2005. We bring inside knowledge of the local and regional culture to the global search process. Our CEO, Dr. Nairouz Bader, serves as the only firm representing the Middle East on the Board of ASEC. Please visit www.visionexec.com.