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Secrets of a catering equipment headhunter

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May 10, 2013



Catering equipment sales people are having to contend with greater competition, longer replacement cycles and changing customer profiles, but individuals who are making a name in the industry remain highly prized, writes **Kevin Robson** of London-based **Capable Consultants**.



"As an organisation that assists catering equipment companies in identifying and placing personnel for all types of roles from national account managers and sales directors to members of the main board, we have a pretty comprehensive overview of the key salary and job trends that currently characterise the market.

Let's start with general recruitment protocol. The sales effort in catering equipment companies is normally actively headed up by the founder or directors, and these tend to be the individuals that conduct the interviewing and recruitment process rather than involving their own HR department or specialists.

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Their selection of new staff tends to be from a small pool of individuals. The more highly-prized individuals are usually those making their name in the industry rather than the established and more experienced managers focused on retention rather than growth.

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Our work suggests the higher end of the leisure, municipal and licensed sectors are peopled by sophisticated buyers, many of them from FMCG disciplines. This calls for strong salespeople with catering equipment knowledge and classically-trained FMCG sales skills who can talk the same language as the buyers, and present USPs and KPIs.

Candidates with a good catering equipment culture and background are in high demand right now. Experience here is most essential, especially with the catering equipment majors, where technical knowledge of specifications and understanding machine performance capability is of great importance.

We continue to see a north-south divide in terms of remuneration within the catering equipment sector, with salaries being at least 5% higher for those around the capital and M25. Salaries have remained static over the past 36 months, with successful sales people in demand through achieving or exceeding target.

When they do move it is generally to join more stable companies with bigger or better client credibility and they tend to become involved with higher value clients. This yields more commission in most cases and makes the move worthwhile.

Familiarity with systems such as CaterQuotes, ACT or bespoke designed CRM can enhance the salary and lead to quicker immersion. It might not seem obvious to those within the market, but there are actually less entrants from other industries as companies tend to place more emphasis on capital equipment sales, rather than transferable skill sets.

Sales teams in the catering equipment market are now smaller, but more highly skilled, with individuals not only selling standalone units of equipment but getting actively involved in kitchen refurbishment concepts, projects, account management and even project management.

This shift has been heavily influenced by changes in the end-user dynamic. There are less doors for the salesperson to hammer on as clients have matured in their requirements and there is a lack of 'built-in obsolescence' as equipment is lasting longer. And when it does fail or break down, it tends to be serviced under better, longer or more inclusive extended warranties.

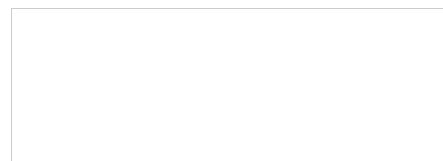
Sales of second-hand equipment have been particularly high in the last 18 months. We estimate they accounted for 16% of the market last year, with much of the equipment being purchased or rented out for the Olympics and Paralympics.

However, to make matters even more challenging for catering equipment sales executives, this used equipment has flooded the market place in early 2013 and depressed prices and margins. No wonder individuals with a solid background in catering equipment sales and a commercial head on their shoulders are so highly sought after!

Catering Equipment Salary Survey 2013

CAD Kitchen Design Technician

Min basic: £18,000



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