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-Allan Zander
Director, Product
Management
CML Emergency Solutions

Case Study

Position: Product Manager(s)

Industry: Emergency Services



Journalist Peter Clayton interviews Allan Zander Director of Product Management for CML Emergency Services on working with Perry-Martel International Inc.

Peter Clayton: *Alan Zander is the former Director of Product Management for CML Emergency Services based in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. I wanted to talk with Alan about his experiences with Perry-Martel International, an executive search firm based in Ottawa. Alan, thanks for joining us.*

Alan Zander: It is my pleasure, Peter. It is good to talk with you again.

Peter Clayton: *You have an interesting background with David Perry and Perry-Martel International because you have worked both as a candidate and as a client with them. Is that right?*

Alan: That is correct. The first time I came across David Perry and the Perry-Martel firm was when I was recruited into a public safety company. I met David and from there wound up using him for a number of projects which I had on the go, as well.

Peter Clayton: *Why did you decide to use David for your projects?*

Alan: David struck me as very different from the average “recruiter.” It was pretty clear to me that David was going above and beyond for this client. Actually, this made me that much more interested in the job.

Working with David, I think it kind of helped set the stage for preparing the organization for what was really going to be a very radical change which we were looking to do and looking to accomplish. I think having all of that line up and then having David there to kind of step us through really contributed to the success we had.

At the end of the day, the success of the company really comes down to the execution of the people there. If you have the ability for everyone to click and understand their place and understand

how it is going to happen and come together, it is a good, logical approach. It ended up getting 250-odd people in a canoe all paddling in the same direction.

Peter Clayton: *If I remember correctly, those 250 people really shared the same kind of vision and were compatible from a cultural standpoint. I think this is so important in these things.*

Alan: That is absolutely true. You can have an individual with an absolutely perfect resume and a fantastic experience and all of that kind of thing, but as I said, the real key to success is an execution factor which is there. That execution factor is certainly going to come down to experience and that kind of thing, but, to be honest, it is certainly a lot easier to execute with a bunch of people who are easy to work with. It is fun to wake up and go to work.

Peter Clayton: *I think so much of what I have learned in dealing with David and talking with him is that he really takes a team approach. It is not a transactional approach; it is not, “Oh, I have to go out and find a body that is a marketing director or this or that.” He really looks at it strategically rather than transitionally.*

Alan: I believe you are right. One of the challenges that I had at CML was to look at ways of rebuilding that product management organization there. I absolutely wanted David involved with me on creating that team. It was not my job to just get my team to the Super Bowl; it was to get the team to the Super Bowl and win. It meant figuring out what you need as you are doing it. I needed to make sure I had the right set of individuals with the right skill sets working with me as almost a group of super-peers, if you will, in a very ego-neutral environment to get it done. This called for some pretty specific individuals and characteristics. Roughly, what would

up happening is that within the 18 months there, we tripled the multiple of the organization creating a story that was required to ignite CML and to come out of the woodwork.

Peter Clayton: *Payday comes and CML gets purchased, 'ka-ching'. What happens often in these kinds of merger situations is that you are out looking for a new job, right?*

Alan: That's right. I and a number of others moved onto other opportunities shortly after that.

Peter Clayton: *Did those other opportunities involve David Perry?*

Alan: They did, actually. David placed me with the company I am at right now, a company called Solocom here in Vaughan. I joined them about three months ago as their Vice President of Business Development.

Peter Clayton: *What was David's relationship with Solocom? Did they bring him in and say, "We need to build this team," and he went and found you? How did that whole thing work?*

Alan: It was different. David had a bit of an idea about marketing me as an individual in a way like a talent agent in Hollywood would market an actor for an upcoming gig. David did have a prior relationship with the CEO here, a gentleman by the name of Franz Plangar. We put together the marketing campaign for me as the individual and approached Franz. We received a very favorable impact and the rest is history, as they say.

Peter Clayton: *That is so unusual, Alan. I do not know of any other retained executive recruiter who has done something like that. I have never heard of that before.*

Alan: I should say that I did not pay David anything to do this. David, obviously, was paid a placement fee from Solocom, but we look at it more as a way where he helped me, I helped him, and the next mutation of that was how to work together. David and I now share this vision of how it really is about

the right team, execution, and talents you bring into an organization as really key to how that organization will ultimately execute. We designed a campaign around getting noticed and we did that.

Peter Clayton: *It seems that David really gets into the nitty-gritty of the clients he works with and really gets an understanding of not only the culture, but what the business is and what the strategic goals of the business are. He really partners with his clients.*

Alan: He does. This is something, again, very different which I liked when I was involved with him at CML. The approach I have always taken and have been very successful with is to start with the personality traits and to start with that bowl of skills. Once I find the individual, then I write the job description of what I am looking for. This allows me to say, "Okay, now I have one of those." Then I just keep going until all of those bowls of skills are completely knocked off.

My point is that I think for new managers who might be out there listening to this who are looking for how they can get a lot more out of their recruiter, if the recruiter just turns around in that first meeting and says to you, "Give me a job description," I would say, "You know what? There's the door."

If they are not willing to help you write those skills and help you better articulate what you are trying to do; if they are not willing to help you refine those skills and determine what type of personality and what type of individual you are looking for, I think you are wasting your money. You may as well just take that job description, pass it off to HR, and let them put the job up on some job board out there. Let them get the 600 resumes, filter through what they want, and eventually you will get the person you need.

I do not think you will be happy nor will you hit the ground running as fast or get as quick a result as you would like to unless you take some word of advice here on a different type of approach.

Peter Clayton: *That is a really interesting approach. Most job descriptions you read on these job boards are absolutely ridiculous, anyway. They all basically say the same things, right?*

Alan: That is it exactly. I have now come to the conclusion that this is usually indicative of a hiring manager or an organization that does not necessarily know how to define what they are looking for. If you cannot define what you are looking for, how do you know that you need it? Hiring is an awful lot of fun. It is probably the thing I enjoy doing the most. It is great to bring a new team member on. However, I never look to do this idly or just because someone in finance has said, "Gee, here is an open requisition for you." I am very proud of the fact that I was part of a team that created a three-fold multiple in a company inside of 18 months. The reason we did that is that we executed properly; we executed properly because we had the right team; and we had the right team because we knew what we wanted to do and we knew how we were going to do it. We had all of that work done.

