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# IN NEW YORK

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## Aggancio—Global Reach with Local Expertise

### *Disrupting the Executive Search Business*

*Aggancio is SACC New York's newest gold member; the international search firm, founded in Stockholm in 2004, has made its mark on the industry by putting a modern spin on traditional headhunting. Aggancio offers executive search services with a global scope, focusing on quality, speed, transparency and cost effectiveness. The company maintains offices in Stockholm, Gothenburg, Oslo, London, and New York, with another planned in Hong Kong. While the firm completes assignments around the world and has been doing business in the United States for the past seven or eight years, their New York office was established two years ago. Since then their U.S. network has further expanded to include a number of high-profile clients. In New York visited their Midtown office to chat with founder André Haug.*

Haug began his career working at top-tier search firm Heidrick & Struggles, as did two of the company's other founding partners. After he left the search industry to work elsewhere, he started the business that would become Aggancio. This happened, as he describes it, "almost by accident," when former colleagues called and asked if he could help them research candidates. From there Aggancio developed into the firm they are today, working primarily with corporate clients.

"What we offer is the traditional executive search or headhunting process in a cost- and time-effective way. That said we have the same focus on quality, discretion, and professionalism as the big search firms."

Aggancio prides itself on the ability to find anyone anywhere in the world and to bring them forward as an interesting candidate. Haug says he had global ambitions for his company from day one. Such a global scope presents challenges; it necessitates staying tuned in to both global and local markets as well as to nuances in culture. One way in which Aggancio manages this is by employing people from all over the world who have local know-how and language skills.

"It's important for us to combine the global perspective and scope with local expertise, but that doesn't necessarily mean that you have to be physically present in each location. In Sweden we have a Brit who



André Haug

works primarily on U.K. and international assignments, but for family reasons he is based in Sweden rather than in our London office. We have had Turkish employees working on international assignments as well as assignments within Turkey although we don't have an office in Turkey."

Nonetheless opening an office in New York has enabled the company to further build business connections with key clients on the ground here. Peter Gustafsson, a long-standing board member of SACC New York was appointed Managing Partner, Nordic for Aggancio. Haug credits the relationship with the Chamber with helping smooth the entry onto the scene in New York.

Gustafsson is a former global partner at Deloitte and as such is playing a vital part in both continuing the growth that Aggancio is experiencing in the Nordics as well as helping structure the company as it expands globally.

"Being able to apply some of the knowledge that I have gained from working globally in one of the leading professional firms to a company that is clearly disrupting a traditional industry is very satisfying," Gustafsson said.

The ability to work remotely and stay in close touch with clients around the globe is just one way in which new technology has significantly changed the way the search business operates.



Aggancio has used these changes to its advantage. In the late 1990s and early 2000s a search firm's key asset was their database. Internet and social media have changed the candidate market in such a way that companies are more prone to hiring recruiters themselves and doing more of the work formerly outsourced to search firms.

"With technology we can have a totally different kind of interaction with our clients: Our clients can follow the search in real time by logging in to our database, which makes our process much more transparent. We are one of few firms to use technology in this way."

Haug describes this transparency as key to Aggancio's approach. "Our industry has a history of keeping what we do very secret. Our work is not rocket science, but it is a thorough process; it is an art of actually researching, finding, mapping the market, and being close to and reaching out to the candidate; that is our strength and our specialty."

Aggancio offers that process to the client; stripping away some of the aspects that a company would typically pay a search firm for, but may not really need, presenting the core service in a sleeker, more modern package. This means a faster, leaner process, facilitated in part by working more closely with the client and providing transparency from the start, inviting clients into Aggancio's database and giving them access.

"We don't write a five-page appraisal on each candidate, because the clients don't read it. They are looking at the candidates' resumes. So what we do when we present our candidates is that we have a visual overview of all the candidates and their ranking in relation to all the key criteria."

This same leanness applies to the way the company operates in general. Haug describes Aggancio as being global, but still small enough

that they are able to quickly adapt to changing environments and shifts in the market. This has been a recipe for success; Aggancio counts American Express Global Business Travel and Bombardier among its clients, as well as some of the biggest private equity firms and growth equity firms, such as General Atlantic and EQT.

"We have been able to develop our client base from being a supplier to search firms over to the big corporate world and today more than 65 percent of what we do is actually business studies, initiated by private equity and venture capital firms. Which is a natural development since they are driving much of the change agenda in businesses today."

As Haug points out, at the end of the day no matter what kind of technology is available, the search business is fundamentally about connecting people. Aggancio sees itself as being in the business of talking to people and building relations first and foremost, using technology to work smarter and speed up the process.

Aggancio prides itself on a focus on quality in delivering projects and the reputation and continuity this builds. Many original clients from the big search firms remain, even as the company has been able to add a new client base, serving mostly corporate clients and private equity firms. Haug is

proud of his company's new and dynamic position.

"Having been able to disrupt an industry, or at least start to disrupt an industry that has been extremely traditional and being

able to grow that globally is an accomplishment. And I will say that we're just at the start of it, but able to build it brick by brick. Besides continued growth in the United States, we have our sights set on Asia and Latin America."



Peter Gustafson

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