



# The challenges of Executive Career Moves in the South West



"It's very hit and miss down in the South West. I was very cognisant of this when thinking about my next career move"

We asked a spectrum of professionals what challenges they encountered when searching for an Executive Career move in the South West



As the South West's leading search partner, we are always excited to lead the way with research and share the latest recruitment trends and news.

We were interested to find out about the challenges professionals face when looking to make a career move to the South West. We interviewed a selection of individuals based across the UK for their opinions and expert thoughts on their experience of searching for an executive career move in the South West.

Whilst there is a perception that the South West is a poor relation to other regions for C-Suite and executive roles, according to figures from the Department for Work and Pensions, the South West job market has continued to strengthen.






At 79% the South West continues to have the highest ratio of females workers in the country.

Higher salaries can be earned in some positions in London or the larger cities, but the cost of living is increased over the South West. Although the rising rate of inflation is making things challenging for employers, those businesses in the South West that are forward-thinking, innovative and put their employees at the forefront of their plans, do provide comparable salaries with the rest of the UK.

We have summarised the responses below, including in detail those that really stood out for us. It makes for interesting reading and if you have any questions or comments, please do let us know.





King Executive covers the whole South West region and was founded in January 2021 as the executive search and headhunting arm of King Recruit.

We provide a premium level of service across the board, from mid to senior level professionals, working with Owner-Managed Businesses, through to Private Equity backed growth firms and large PLC's. King Executive place business leaders into leading businesses.

In July 2021 King Recruit and King Executive joined forces with James Caan CBE and award-winning investment firm Recruitment Entrepreneur. Recruitment Entrepreneur is one of the most successful private equity investors in start-up to scale up recruitment businesses.

We were delighted to speak to so many professionals on their thoughts about opportunities across the region.

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**ALMOST 100% OF THOSE  
ASKED SAID IT WAS  
CHALLENGING TO FIND AN  
EXECUTIVE ROLE IN THE  
SOUTHWEST**

"Roles exist at the right level, but are spread out, attract attention from people looking to move to the South West, and come up sporadically"

"There feels to be more fluidity the further East you go"

"The salary ranges at an exec level (especially in marketing) aren't comparable to the rest of the country"



## THERE WAS A STRONG EMPHASIS ON COMPANY CULTURE

“Culture, breadth, challenge, opportunity to excel and grow and my ability to make a difference are the most important”

“The obvious factors are salary and role – the salary needs to be at the right level and the role needs to be progressive and challenging”

“Culture of organisation - where attendance is less important than delivery/outcomes”



The first question we asked our panel of professionals was -  
When you've moved positions in the past, what factors have been important when it comes to company selection?

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We found that many of the professionals we asked are looking for a company that prioritises culture, ethos and the work environment. A culture that encourages collaboration and helps to foster interactive relationships between staff. A company that invests in their employees and provides recognition and connection which can result in a strong culture and lead to more committed staff and help to increase loyalty.

The role itself and structure of the management team was also a major consideration. Many of the participants said trust was a big factor in deliberating a career move, that the job role and the structure of the company needed to provide the right mixture of progression and support, without micro-managing.

When you've moved positions in the past, what factors have been important when it comes to company selection?

"How I gel with the rest of the leadership team. Trust is high on the agenda. Size and feel of the business. Meaning, corporate is not for me. I prefer a smaller business feel where I can wrap my arms around the business. Entrepreneurial. Big – small business."

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"The obvious factors are salary and role – the salary needs to be at the right level and the role needs to be progressive and challenging – these are basic hygiene factors rather than differentiators. After that then it's mainly around the company culture and whether I believe the culture/environment is a good fit for my personality. A relatively flat structure around decision making is important to me as is knowing that the company has a clear strategy around growth/progression."

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"It's very hit or miss down in the South West. I was very cognisant of this when thinking about my next career move. There feels to be more fluidity the further East you go. In terms of contributing factors; package, culture and the position people hold within the business are key."

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"Culture, breadth, challenge, opportunity to excel and grow and my ability to make a difference are the most important, then salary and benefits etc and which offer are a good indicator of the former points."

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**Next, we asked the individuals -  
If you've previously searched for  
an Executive position in the Southwest,  
has it been: Easy, Hit and Miss, or Challenging?**

Almost everyone we asked commented on finding it challenging when looking to make a career move to the South West. It was a collective yes in struggling to find a senior role where the salary and benefits were as competitive as other regions in the country.

Whilst not every South West employer will be able to compete with organisations in London and the larger cities, there are many ambitious businesses that do rival those firms.

Companies that are progressive and pioneering are making head way in competing with similar companies across the UK. Factor in the cost of living being cheaper in the South West, along with everything else it has to offer and we are very firm believers that a professional looking for an Executive role in the South West can enjoy a rewarding career along with a salary and benefits package that matches.

## If you've previously searched for an Executive position in the Southwest, has it been: Easy, Hit and Miss, or Challenging?

"Challenging, I am a senior executive, but not with qualifications for specific professions (law, engineering etc) who has moved sectors. Roles exist at the right level, but are spread out, attract attention from people looking to move to the South West, and come up sporadically."

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"Limited quantity of roles, but this may be changing as the area develops with investment from overseas and more varied stakeholders (pe, private, funds, etc)."

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"Challenging, as the roles are few and far between at C Level. Need to stay patient, as if you have the skill set you will be at a great advantage."

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"Very challenging. Around 2 and a half years ago I was seeking an exec role in the South West and failed to find anything that was near the salary level I required or the autonomy I had progressed to. I ended up taking a role in Surrey where I commute to the office two days each week. I would ideally like to use my skills and experience in the South West as love the area and really appreciate the benefit of networking with like minded peers, however, the salary ranges at an exec level (especially in marketing) aren't comparable to the rest of the country. I look forward to a time when salary isn't such a high requirement on my list that I can reconsider a role in my local area."

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The last question we asked was -  
If you've been approached by a head-hunter regarding a new opportunity, what elements of the approach have made you engage?

The majority of participants said an honest, open and personal approach from a head-hunter was the best way to engage with them. Many had experienced conversations where research on their background hadn't been thoroughly performed.

With so many social media channels and access to almost anything on the internet readily available, research should be a relatively easy task to perform.

A large proportion of the individuals we spoke to had been head hunted and some had moved roles off the back of those conversations.

Building a professional relationship with a candidate is a key factor in making the process work, as well as nurturing the relationship and championing transparency.

If you've been approached by a head-hunter regarding a new opportunity, what elements of the approach have made you engage?

"When approached by a headhunter, a seemingly honest reason why they have approached me (ie not bland "you've been suggested" which I read as "you came up on LinkedIn broad search") makes me quickly engage."

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"The friendly open approach, not so much playing a cloak and dagger game but just telling what it is and answering my questions."

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"Personalised approach where it's clear you're not just one of many potential candidates receiving a standard message or phone call. Straightforward conversation about important factors for me up front (location, remuneration, size and scale of role and Company)."

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"I've been headhunted a few times in my career and have moved roles twice on the back of those conversations. Engagement has been around openness of the company for which the role has been for (I've found it very difficult to engage when the company has been 'confidential' in the first stages) and when the headhunter has taken some time to properly research me. LinkedIn provides lots of information about a person's background and therefore when the headhunter has done some research and can provide examples of why they feel you'd be well suited to the company, role and culture then that's when they hook my attention."

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**Thank you to all of the individuals who took part and contributed their thoughts, enabling us to put this article together.**



We hope you have found  
the information insightful.

If King Executive can help you to fill an  
executive position in your company, or if  
you are a candidate searching for your next  
career move, please give us a call.

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