



## Retail Suppliers Get Stout in Searches

By J.R. Ledford - 5/21

Stout Executive Search opened its doors in November. Dealing strictly with vendors to Wal-Mart Stores Inc., owner Marvelyn Stout has tapped into a growing niche, as well as her own strong suit. She has an "over-experienced" team of four, but said she will soon add more staff to keep up with business. And to accommodate the growing demand, will absorb adjacent office space.

"The supplier community has been very affirming to us being here," she said. Stout is in tune with suppliers because she used to be one, spending 18 years in the consumer product community. She worked at Kimberly-Clark for 10 years and another eight years with Doane's Pet Care, manufacturer of Wal-Mart's Ol' Roy dog food.

In her tenure as a Wal-Mart supplier, Stout said she was constantly contacted by recruiters, and also used recruiters to build her own team. Her contact with recruiters gave her experience in the client and candidate perspectives, but she believed it was missing something — a personal touch.

"We get to know our client," she said. "We sit down with each of them face-to-face to really understand what kind of opening they're trying to fill." Stout said being a local business gives her company a competitive edge because only a few Wal-Mart recruiters are in Northwest Arkansas.

Don Marr, president of HR Factor, said being close to the vendor community is important and can make it easier to sell candidates on positions. "Where the local advantage becomes beneficial is when you have that premier candidate that you want to bring and attract to that area," he said.

Marr said competition in the supplier segment is always positive and that there is room for new faces like Stout. The vendor community is growing, and many companies are expanding their Wal-Mart teams. Teams often started with one or two people now have multiple accountants and analysts.

Stout said she has received hundreds of referrals and met with more than 100 candidates. And while she was unable to share individual names, she said she has several client companies, including some "big hitters" on her list.

With her database of candidates, a couple of keyword searches can narrow down the field of candidates for a company. She has helped supplier teams find those with the needed skills and qualifications, but through the relationships she has developed, can also match based on a corporate culture.

"The biggest thing that we've found that helps us in sitting down with our clients is understanding the culture needs," she said. When the placement is made with the client company, the client pays Stout a percentage of the candidate's first year salary. Client and candidate referrals have traveled quickly through the supplier community, and business has snowballed.

The firm's office is tucked away in Springdale's Har-Ber Meadows. Stout specifically chose the out-of-the-way location as it provides more discretion for candidates. "You don't ever want a candidate's current employer to see their car at a recruiter's office," she said.

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