

Business

Finding the right 'sandbox'

Preferred Research Group takes pains to match executives, businesses

By Greta Cuyler

Constance Bienfait wasn't unhappy in her job.

But she was facing an imminent job relocation to New Jersey, something the Northeast native wasn't too keen on after four years in Southern Florida.

So when Barbara Marchetti, president of Preferred Resource Group Inc. of Andover, called and asked her if she was interested in a new job opportunity, Bienfait listened.

Marchetti was working on behalf of Nabi Biopharmaceuticals to find candidates for an executive job opening. She unearthed several viable candidates from up and down the East Coast, but Bienfait turned out to be the perfect match, she said — and best of all, Nabi is only 10 minutes away from Bienfait's home.

Bienfait will begin her new role as vice president of investor relations on June 27.

Marchetti's firm matches candidates with jobs. But don't call her a recruiter. As she'll tell you, recruiting is a verb, not a noun.

"Most search firms are process-driven and have no form of quality assurance," she said.

"Horrified" by the way other recruiters have operated, Marchetti has set her own standard. She personally responds to every candidate and client inquiry her firm receives, a virtually unheard of practice today.

Marchetti is an Andover native who graduated from Andover High School and Colby College. Most of her family still lives in town and Marchetti, whose maiden name was Barbara Duncan, also lives in Andover with her husband Vito and son Nicholas.

The firm she founded, PRG, specializes in executive-search services for the emerging technology, life-sciences and professional services sectors. Her client companies range in revenue size from \$10 million to \$200 million. The average candidate she places earns a base salary in the low to mid



Barbara Marchetti, president of Preferred Resource Group, 2 Elm Square, says that after linking workers with new businesses, she stays in touch for up to nine months to ensure smooth transitions.

\$200,000 range, she said.

Marchetti began linking employees and employers in 1999. At that time, she scaled down her training consulting business, which required 90 percent travel, to allow for more time with her son. She devised a "five-year plan" to grow her business and require minimal travel. Today, Marchetti's executive search business is firmly established, and she also offers Web-based training and executive mentoring.

PRG manages up to 10 active searches simultaneously, she said. Marchetti is involved in each search, along with one of her five colleagues. The team assigned to the search performs up to 14 hours of research and analysis to create a job description based on action plans and concrete results, she said. Each search typically involves six or seven potential

candidates and PRG whittles the field down to three candidates before presenting them to the client.

One of the hallmarks of a PRG search is ensuring that the potential candidates will fit into the culture of the hiring organization, she said. "We want to make sure they can play in each other's sandbox," said Marchetti.

PRG assists her clients with employees' transitions into new companies, staying involved up to nine months after a candidate is hired. "This is all about driving corporate initiatives," said Marchetti, adding "It's not about closing the deal and walking away."

Marchetti said only five of the approximately 100 searches that PRG has performed have ended with a mismatch between candidate and company.

"I'm respectful that for candi-

dates and clients, these are life-altering decisions," she said.

She charges clients a flat fee instead of the percentage of a candidate's compensation package, as most executive search firms do.

Bienfait found Marchetti's business model unusual. "She asked me for 10 to 12 references. I've never given that many references in my life!" she said. But Bienfait said she appreciated Marchetti's tireless efforts to solidify an appropriate job match and describes Marchetti as "very responsive, proactive, diligent and organized."

According to Marchetti, PRG is one of the few privately owned, woman-run executive search firms. While she competes with larger firms, Marchetti said she isn't concerned about her firm's small size.

"I don't want high profile clients, I want a high profile process," she said.

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