



Recruitment Model Comparison Guide

AI Talent Partner vs Executive / Retained Search vs Fractional Recruitment vs Traditional Agency

Choosing the right recruitment model matters. Whether you're scaling fast, hiring on and off, filling a senior role discreetly, or handling a niche project, this guide matches your challenge to the best-fit hiring model.

The four models

■ AI Talent Partner

Uses technology to speed up sourcing and shortlisting at scale: automation, intelligent candidate matching, and ongoing engagement, with a recruiter still reviewing every shortlist. Built for speed and precision.

■ Executive / Retained Search

A retained, research-led search for senior or business-critical roles. Discreet and milestone-based, built for hires where getting it wrong would be expensive.

■ Fractional Recruiter

A dedicated recruiter, or small team, on a part-time or flexible basis. Personal, consistent support without the cost of a full-time internal hire.

■ Traditional Agency

Still widely used, but transactional: a fee per successful hire, typically with minimal engagement until a candidate is submitted.

Client challenge, and the right model to solve it

Challenge	Best model	Why it works
High turnover	■ AI Talent Partner	Smarter matching leads to longer-lasting hires
A senior or business-critical hire	■ Executive / Retained Search	Milestone-based, research-led search where getting it wrong is expensive
Budget constraints	■ Fractional Recruiter	Pay only for the expertise you need, when you need it
No internal hiring team	■ Fractional Recruiter	Consistency without the cost of a full-time hire; Traditional Agency suits a one-off instead
Need to scale hiring quickly	■ AI Talent Partner	Automation removes bottlenecks and speeds up the process
Confidential or sensitive hiring	■ Executive / Retained Search	A discreet, direct approach protects your plans
Inconsistent hiring cycles	■ Fractional Recruiter	A flexible model that scales up and down with demand
Processes take too long	■ AI Talent Partner	Automates sourcing, shortlisting and interview scheduling
Too much time filtering CVs	■ AI Talent Partner	A ranked shortlist from both active and passive talent

Challenge	Best model	Why it works
One-off urgent role	 Traditional Agency	Quick access to a vetted pool, with no ongoing commitment
Niche or hard-to-fill specialists	 Fractional Recruiter	Deep expertise and targeted sourcing
Stale candidate pipeline	 AI Talent Partner	Keeps talent warm with automated, ongoing engagement
Low offer acceptance rates	 AI Talent Partner	Flags disengaged candidates before it's too late
Hiring managers need coaching	 Fractional Recruiter	Human-led support improves the process and the pitch

Which model solves the most?

 AI Talent Partner	High turnover, Need to scale quickly, Stale pipeline, Time-consuming processes, Manual CV filtering, Poor offer acceptance rate
 Executive / Retained Search	A senior or business-critical hire, Confidential or sensitive hiring
 Fractional Recruiter	Niche hiring, Coaching hiring managers, On/off hiring cycles, Budget constraints, No internal TA team
 Traditional Agency	One-off urgent roles, No internal hiring bandwidth

In summary

- Speed, scale and smarter shortlisting: AI Talent Partner
- A senior or business-critical hire, handled discreetly: Executive / Retained Search
- Flexibility and trust: Fractional Recruiter
- A quick one-off: Traditional Agency

Wish to explore which model fits your business?

Email: elkie@prospectus.co.uk or book a call: <https://calendly.com/elkie>