

WWD THURSDAY

Talent Contest

Ten of the most influential executive recruitment firms for retail, ranked in descending order based on number of recruiters dedicated to retail placement and poll of decision makers and peers.

1



HERBERT MINES ASSOCIATES

The only executive search firm exclusively devoted to finding retail and fashion executives for the highest-level positions. Mines has eight partners and seven principals. Mines and Hal Reiter, the company's president and ceo, are among the most respected in the industry.

2



KORN/FERRY INTERNATIONAL

Robert Kerson, a managing partner at Korn/Ferry, is the firm's point person for retail and fashion. He's spent the last 35 years in the business and competes with Herbert Mines Associates on many top assignments.

3



RUSSELL REYNOLDS ASSOCIATES

Bobbie Lenga-Gutman, who heads the retail practice at Russell Reynolds from Chicago, gets high marks from the industry for running an enviable business in the Windy City.

4



HEIDRICK & STRUGGLES INC.

Heidrick & Struggles is the nation's second-largest executive search firm. The company, along with Mines, worked to find Mickey Drexler's successor at Gap when Drexler was forced out last year. Heidrick has also been retained by Chanel, which wants to have a succession plan in place for the eventual retirement of Arie Kopelman, president and chief operating officer.

5



SPENCER STUART

Spencer Stuart works on the retail, fashion and manufacturing sides of the business. LVMH has been a client, and Spencer Stuart was hired to identify candidates for the reorganized board of Warnaco.

6



TMP WORLDWIDE

TMP, which owns monster.com, went on a buying spree, acquiring executive search firms several years ago. At one time, the company reportedly had 12 recruiters in its New York retail practice. Now, the practice is run out of Atlanta. TMP placed George Jones as president and ceo of Saks Fifth Avenue.

7



EGON ZEHNDER INTERNATIONAL

Much of the international firm's business is done overseas. The firm doesn't conduct as many high-level retail searches as Mines or Korn/Ferry, but it's name is on the radar screen of industry decision makers.

8



DHR INTERNATIONAL

Frank Spencer, who heads the retail practice at DHR, has strong ties with Disney. His firm has also conducted confidential searches for Gap and placed Mindy Grossman as head of apparel at Nike.

9



KIRK PALMER ASSOCIATES

Kirk Palmer runs a boutique shop known for placements in specialty chains. Palmer placed Trudy Sullivan as group president at Liz Claiborne, Lorna Nagler as president of Catherine Stores and Mike Devine as chief financial officer of Coach.

10



KENZER CORP.

Kenzer Corp. is known for working with discounters and filling mid- to high-level positions for retailers and manufacturers, such as Wal-Mart and St. John Knits.