

‘Exec Hiring’ with Christina Pasanen

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Today's Guest Speaker

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Welcome to Christina!

We are excited to be welcoming [Christina Pasanen](#), VP Talent at [Notable Capital](#) (who are investors in leading companies such as Drata, AirBNB, Kong, Monte Carlo and Vercel)!

Christina is passionate about building high-performing leadership teams and supporting portfolio companies across the employee lifecycle.

Prior to joining Notable Capital, Christina was at Uber where she worked across a variety of talent acquisition functions, including executive talent and leading the sourcing team for EMEA.



Q: Describe the transition from Vendor to VC?

- Feels like her previous experience lined up to make the transition smooth and the right career choice.
- Started career in an Exec Search role – searches would take up to two years. A lot of market mapping and very methodical and thorough searches.
- Then joined Uber during a growth period (working in EMEA). Had to change to work at pace and to think outside the box. Worked on areas such as streamlining interview processes etc – liked seeing how her work impacted the larger organization.
- Now at her current role, the main part is consulting with the different companies to understand their pain points and how she can support them.
- Also works on end-to-end recruitment, but what she finds most interesting is supporting Founders in hiring a role for the first time – understanding why they are hiring, what problems they are looking to solve, are they looking to hire the correct person for where they are at in their journey.
- Slowing down the hire at times, to ensure they are hiring the correct profile for their business.

Q: How did you manage the different relationships moving from Uber to Notable?

- Wishes had pushed back more at Uber at times on what the Hiring Manager was looking for.
- When joined Notable, initial thoughts were that she was supporting Founders, so they must know more than her – but **they are not experts in hiring, she is** – they need her support and advice.
- **Empowering to know that her advice, perspective and experience can help a Founder build their business.**
- What is challenging is the constant perspective change of working with different companies and understanding the different needs of different businesses.
- Learnt these business / stakeholder skills from **learning and observing**. Have to really go deep to understand the business – what they do, how they do it, etc.
- Have to **build trust with the Founders** and understand their business.
- Also observing their Search Partners and how they manage a role / what questions they ask.

Q: What advice would you give yourself five years ago?

- Hiring is a skill. You have a unique skill which is valuable to the business.
- Speak up, push back, share your expertise.
- Wished had had the confidence to recognize her skillset and its value earlier.

Q: How do you know when the right time to make a Senior Hire is?

- No one answer!
- Sometimes there is an **immediate need** – eg perhaps a technical Founder is doing the selling and its not working, so you identify a Sales Leader is required.
- Other times, it's **seeing around the corner** – for example an early-stage Founder she works with is building pipeline, almost \$1m in revenue – but deals aren't closing fast enough, things aren't being tracked (no metrics etc). Suggested to Founder they should be running the company and instead bring in a Head of Sales to manage the sales process.
- **In later stage, sometimes there are clear and obvious gaps in a company structure**. E.g in a company, they had a VP of Finance, but there were gaps in his skillset around growth and moving to an IPO – they needed the next level.
- **Have honest conversations with the CEO / Founder** – what is working? What isn't working? Who can grow into a key role that is already in the business?

Q: How do you get people to agree on a Exec brief and what good looks like?

- Important to get really specific on what challenges the company are facing at the moment.
- How do you expect this person to solve this issue? And when by?
- Think about a candidate almost like a consultant coming into the business to resolve a problem within an agreed period – what are the skillsets and experience required in that person to make them successful?
- Focus more on the outputs and expectations rather than tick box experience checking.
- Really push the Founder to talk specifics / granular level – eg when speaking to a Founder about a CMO position they said they wanted someone smart, sociable etc. These aren't marketing skills, what specifically are they looking for in a marketer?

Q: How do you take an Exec role to market?

- Sometimes Christina will do the search herself, sometimes via a Search Partner and sometimes together.
- Use previous research experience to **map the market** – what are the relevant industries? What are the sub-sectors and therefore the relevant companies? Ask for advice from Investors, Peers, the Founders themselves.
- Then **be super exhaustive in terms of mapping these companies** – e.g., who is the sitting CRO? Who was the former? Who was before them?
- **Having a process and intentionality about how you are mapping saves you time in the future and gives you the confidence when presenting back to the Founder.**

Q: How do you interview at an Exec level? What typical timelines do you work to?

- Normally always a mix of selling and assessing. The best candidates are passive and need selling to. Why would they want to join?
- Go really deep on their metrics – e.g. the growth of their team / discussing growth in their revenue. Who did they hire, what was their churn, how much did they spend to solve the problem? What decisions did they make to solve the problem and would this approach work in your business. Did they prioritize the right thing at the right time.
- Right person, right place.
- Currently working on a role that has been on and off for a year.
- In general, if you set the right expectations and have the discipline, you should be able to hire someone in 3 – 4 months. This requires expectations being set clearly, a clear process, time blocks for interviews, real time feedback.

Q: What trends do you see shaping the future of Talent strategies? What are your thoughts on the outlook for 2025?

- **AI and automation tools** – more and more coming out. A lot more of the research, engagement and follow up emails are getting automated and taking the admin tasks away from the role. Allows Talent to spend more time on stakeholder management, nurture relationships and other higher value tasks.
- Excited for 2025!
- Hearing that the **IPO market is going to open up again** over the year. Companies are hiring CFOs to get themselves ready.
- A lot more **rigor around hiring** now – more thought going into why are we hiring, what are the outcomes etc. Excited to see this continue. Companies have also learnt to do more with less so every hire matters more.