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## Shoreline firm shoulders task of headhunting

Luther Turmelle, Register Business Editor

November 30, 2002

### Hiring new executives is critical for any company, but especially so for small and mid-sized businesses, according to a pair of Shoreline men who run their own executive search firm.

Bruce Clinton of Madison and Haddam resident Barry Foster founded their executive recruiting business, ASearch, with the idea that smaller businesses don't always have the necessary in-house expertise to do a thorough executive search.

The duo are joined by a third man, Anthony Townley.

"A lot of times, when a small business brings in a critical hire, there's often a lot of mistakes made," Clinton said. "There's a lot of difficulty matching the right person with the right chemistry for the right organization. Many times people hire based on what they see on resumes, but resumes don't tell the whole story."

Failure to hire the right person can prove costly.

If a company needs to terminate and replace a top-level executive who is earning \$100,000 a year, the firm can expect to lose two to three times that amount, according to the Saratoga Institute, a human resources benchmarking firm.

A good recruiter can help keep smaller business from making hiring mistakes, said Bonnie Stewart, a vice president with the Connecticut Business and Industry Association. "One of the reasons employers go to a recruiter is because of the in-depth screening that the business may not have the time or resources to do," she said.

Westport-based ASearch, which was founded in February 2001, works with clients both before the executive is hired and for months after the individual is on board, Clinton said.

The company seeks out executives for such top-level positions as chief executive officer, chief operating officer or chief financial officer.

"We really develop a position team for the client ... to help the clients understand themselves," he said. "We say if this job could talk, what would it say about the behaviors that are necessary to succeed? There's a tendency to hire too quickly without taking the time to understand what you really need in that new position."

The candidates are then presented to the business and once the position is

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filled, ASearch follows up at intervals of 30, 60 and 90 days and guarantees the placement for a year. The ASearch team mentors and coaches the client to make sure it moves to the next level.

"It's risk-free," said Foster, adding that the service costs no more than an average headhunter's fee, typically 30 percent of the hire's salary and benefits.

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