EAIAC | Executive AI Advisory Council

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Where Firms are using AI to create Value in Executive Search.

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INDUSTRY TRENDS

Search firms are turning their everyday work into data they can reuse.

The firms that are taking advantage of emerging technology are doing more than just “using AI.” We’ve observed three trends over the past year.

WORK PRODUCT

Documents built from firm data.

Candidate write-ups, scorecards and client decks produced in a consistent, templated format.

EVIDENCE

Leveraging details collected by recruiters.

Conversations, interviews and simulations are becoming structured, proprietary data with novel uses.

SERVICES

Creating new offerings for clients.

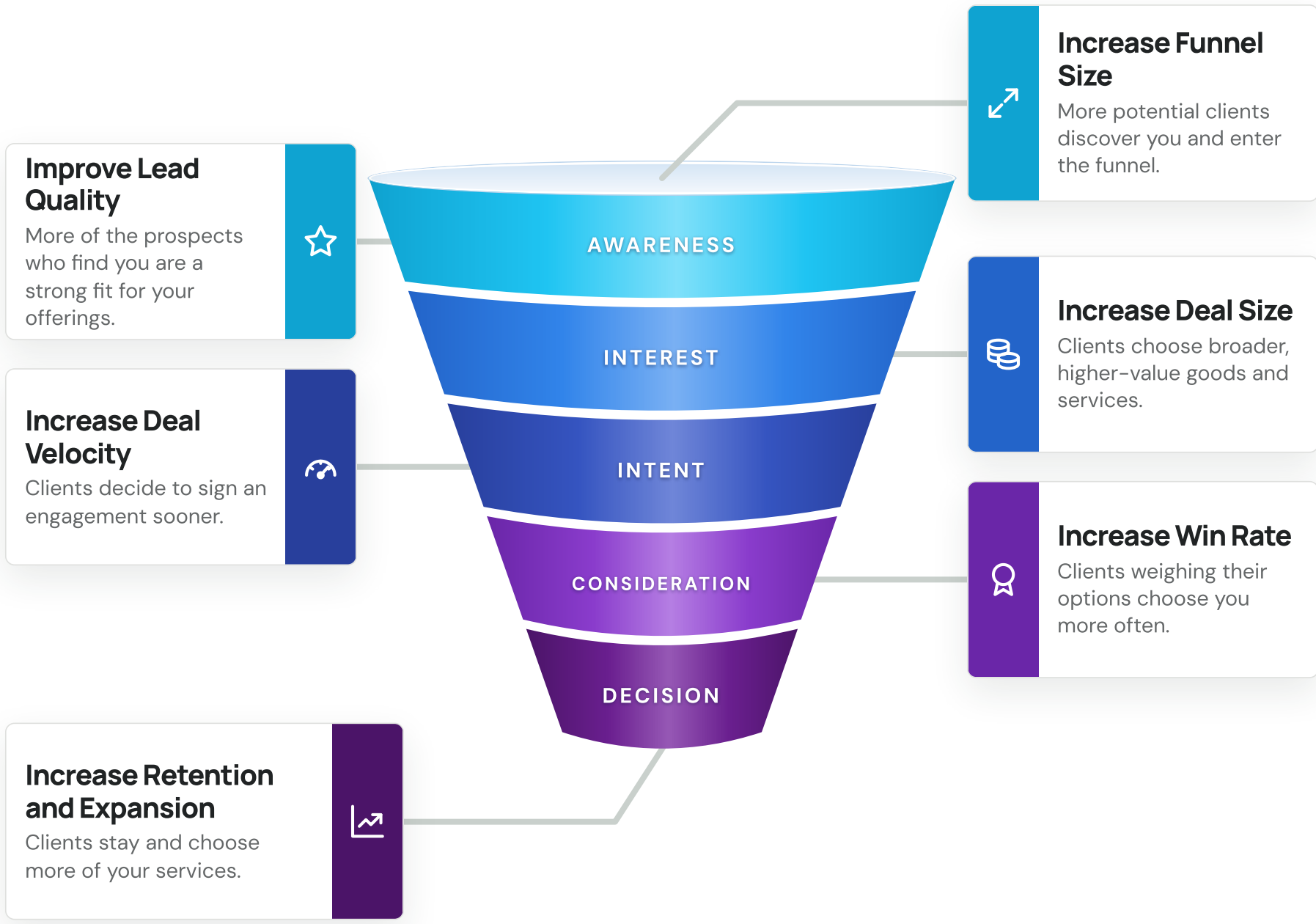
Client calibration, lighter engagements and bespoke software/subscription offerings widen what clients are buying.

The information created during delivery is becoming a marketable asset for building new lines of business.

SOURCES OF VALUE

Every experiment you run should tie to value creation.

We've mapped the examples in this report to six sources of value drawn from the sales funnel.



A NOTE ON CAPACITY

Many firms are still measuring time saved, which is capacity, not growth. It only becomes value when the firm uses it to move one of the six levers above.

CASE STUDIES · WORK PRODUCT

The power of starting small.

Hunt Club

10 users in the first group, with expansion to 50 planned

What they built. Recruiters send job descriptions or email text through **Slack**. The **Hunter** agent builds a standardized scorecard from internal data services and pushes it into **Atlas AI** (the firm's content system), so each run adds (re)usable data.

Why it matters. Delegating a bounded workflow is different from just asking a chatbot for information. Starting small, inside tools people already use, made it workable.

POTENTIAL VALUE LEVERS **Deal velocity** **Win rate**

McDermott + Bull

90% less time on candidate profiles, per CEO Rod McDermott (vendor-quoted)

What they built. MyCandidate.ai connects directly to the firm's applicant tracking system and turns existing candidate data into a write-up in the firm's proprietary structure and format in under a minute.

Why it matters. Useful outputs give recruiters a reason to keep better records, so AI adoption and data quality can be mutually reinforcing.

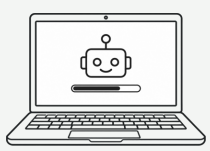
POTENTIAL VALUE LEVERS **Deal velocity** **Win rate** **Retention and expansion**

Egon Zehnder COUNTERAPPROACH

What they built. Worked with **Monstarlab** on data architecture and governance before building a conversational retrieval proof of concept on top of their internal data. After rollout, employees gained access to other AI-enabled tools.

Why it matters. A foundational investment rather than a small start, and an early example of an **AI operating system*** in executive search.

POTENTIAL VALUE LEVERS **Deal velocity** **Win rate** **Retention and expansion**



***AI Operating System:** A central system that connects AI to your company's information, tools, and workflows so it can coordinate and carry out work across them.

CASE STUDIES · EVIDENCE

Making evidence visible.

KeyHires

What they built. Signal turns recorded interviews into custom assessment scorecards that show relevant experience, competencies and interview insights, checked against the position requirements.

Why it matters. It extracts evidence for the consultant rather than producing a rating that might steer the consultant's attention (or introducing **legal risk***). Judgment stays with the person.

POTENTIAL VALUE LEVERS **Win rate** **Retention and expansion**

Heidrick & Struggles

What they built. One Search (2024) links AI-enabled candidate sourcing to leadership data. **Heidrick Immersive** (March 2026) uses AI-enabled business simulations to observe how leaders make decisions under pressure.

Why it matters. AI is generating new, proprietary assessment evidence, not only organizing what the firm already holds.

POTENTIAL VALUE LEVERS **Deal size** **Win rate** **Retention and expansion**

*A NOTE ON LEGAL RISK

In January 2026, job applicants sued AI hiring platform Eightfold in California state court, alleging that its undisclosed "likelihood of success" scores and applicant profiles are consumer reports under the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA), which requires disclosure, consent and a way to dispute errors (the case is pending). Tools that rate candidates, rather than surface evidence for a consultant, may carry similar exposure. *This is not legal advice.*

CASE STUDIES · SERVICES

Package expertise into new offerings.

True

What they built. SearchEssentials combines recruiters, proprietary executive data and software, delivered through the **Thrive TRM** platform. Clients can buy slates, pipelines or placements in a partially retained model.

Why it matters. Lower research and coordination costs can support roles that would not warrant a conventional retained search.

POTENTIAL VALUE LEVERS **Funnel size** **Deal velocity**

Spencer Stuart

What they built. A March 2024 partnership with **Yoodli** for executive interview practice. The AI asks contextual follow-up questions, and feedback reports draw on Spencer Stuart's proprietary method.

Why it matters. A targeted offering built on the firm's own method is harder to replace with a general-purpose AI tool.

POTENTIAL VALUE LEVERS **Win rate** **Retention and expansion**

Changing delivery economics can expand what you sell.
Expertise can reach clients in new formats.

Using data to drive outcomes.

Bespoke Partners

44% less time to build a 100-candidate pool; searches at least two weeks shorter

What they built. Calibrator (since June 2025) lets clients and consultants adjust scorecard criteria, such as prior roles, end-market experience and geography, and see the resulting talent pool. **Executive Index** suggests backchannel references.

Why it matters. Clients see how tightening requirements changes the available market before weeks of research begin.

POTENTIAL VALUE LEVERS **Deal velocity** **Win rate** **Retention and expansion**

Korn Ferry

What they built. Talent Suite unifies proprietary talent IP, data, analytics and AI across hiring, assessment, pay and development, delivered as subscription and licensed applications.

Why it matters. Accumulated expertise becomes a recurring software offering.

POTENTIAL VALUE LEVERS **Deal size** **Retention and expansion**

ECA Partners

30 meetings in three weeks (for one early adopter)

What they built. Ren monitors timely news across more than 30,000 ECA contacts, connected to CRM, calendar and contact data, to support research, meeting preparation and relevant outreach.

Why it matters. Instead of drafting more outreach, the data shows which relationships deserve attention now, and why.

POTENTIAL VALUE LEVERS **Funnel size** **Lead quality**

THE BOTTOM LINE

WORK PRODUCT

Start with bounded workflows inside tools people already use. Useful outputs give people a reason to improve the data behind them.

EVIDENCE

Use AI to surface new evidence for consultants rather than ratings that replace their judgment or add legal risk.

SERVICES

Firm data and expertise can become offerings clients buy in new ways, from lighter engagements to proprietary data-driven subscriptions.

FOR YOUR FIRM

Reduce the risk of big bets by running small experiments.

Choose a meaningful measure. Connect it to the lever you expect to move, and pair speed or volume with oversight on quality.

Establish a starting point. Use recent examples, historical data, or track the current process briefly.

Make tracking part of the work. Record the result where the work happens.

Set a review routine. To create accountability, name an owner and review results regularly with the people doing the work.

Agree on the next decision. Decide what evidence or timing would justify continuing, changing the approach or stopping.

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a community of Mahala Institute

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FCRA note. Eightfold AI complaint, Contra Costa County Superior Court, filed January 20, 2026; Epstein Becker Green summary

Results are as reported by the firms or their vendors and have not been independently verified. Lever mapping is the author's assessment. Adapted from a session at the Innova Mastermind Summit, Chicago.