

The Korea Business Interview Series:

“Korean Job Realities: Patterns of Success in Korea”

With Steven McKinney, president of McKinney Consulting, a leading executive search firm in Seoul.

Transcript of the interview held on May 14, 2010

Tom: Hi, and thanks for joining us today for the Korea Business Interview Series produced by KoreaBusinessCentral.com, the premier information and networking site for conducting business in Korea. My name is Tom Tucker, and I am the host of today’s interview.

Today’s topic is employment and recruitment. Joining us to talk about this important topic is Steve McKinney who is the Founder and President of McKinney Consulting, a leading executive search firm based on Seoul.

Steve is on the board for the Korea Foreign Schools Foundation. He’s also the co-chair of the Small to Midsize Enterprises Committee for the American Chamber of Commerce in Korea, and he’s also an honorary citizen of Seoul.

Steve has lived and worked in Korea for a total of 15 years. Steve, it’s great to have you with us today. Thanks for joining us.

Steve: Thank you. It’s good to be here.

Tom: Please tell us a little bit about yourself. Tell us briefly about your background and briefly about your experience in Korea.

Steve: Okay. Initially, I came over to Korea working in the athletic footwear business; working for Reebok and later with a global position for Adidas as head of product development for the world.

And then around 11 years ago, I got into the executive search business and have been doing that ever since working for multinational companies, placing mostly bilingual Korean executives and foreigners in multinational companies.

Tom: That sounds pretty neat and interesting. How did you get into the recruiting business? What pointed you in that direction?

Steve: Well, I decided to make a change from the athletic shoe business because after all of the travel, I was beginning to get a little tired. So, I decided to look around to some other

opportunities. I went and spoke to an executive recruiter, and he talked me into it. He said, “You ought to try this. I think you have all the background and the necessary skills. What do you think?” I said, “Ahh...okay.” So, I tried and loved it, and continue to love it.

Tom: And the rest is history, so they say. What areas does your company focus on right now, specifically?

Steve: The areas we focus on the most are probably the big five sectors in retaining executive search and that’s the financial, technology, life sciences and healthcare, consumer and industrial areas.

Tom: And what are your goals for the company right now? What are you guys working toward?

Steve: Well, what we’ve been doing, as you’re probably aware, the industry was down last year through all of the major upheaval we’ve had throughout the world. But, we didn’t lay off any people and we’ve continued to grow, and we’ve done pretty well.

Our continual goal has been just to grow our brand as a company. Our clients are Fortune 500 companies, and the mix between mid-level executive positions and senior level has continued to have been changing to where we’re having mostly senior level positions.

Our goals have been to continue to work that way, to increase our knowledge in industries and to continue to grow to have the percentage of seniors be increasing more than the midlevel positions.

Tom: I imagine probably, for you, as an executive recruiting firm, the senior level positions are more lucrative as well.

Steve: Yeah. They’re more lucrative and more rewarding. I’ll just give one quick example. One of my clients a few years ago mentioned that they had been able to increase their revenue one year by \$40 million US dollars. He gave me and my firm a lot of credit for that saying that we had placed their senior executives.

So, we were able to help him get the right people in the right places to come up with the ideas and strategies to have phenomenal growth. That’s more rewarding than if you place maybe mid-level positions where they don’t have the opportunity to have such an impact on the business. That’s fulfilling.

Tom: I bet it is. I’m told that the number of foreign executives in Korea is actually relatively small. How would you compare these numbers to other similar Asian markets? For example, maybe Japan?

Steve: Well, in Korea, the latest numbers show that over the past five years, the international population in Seoul has increased by 18.1%. So, it has been on the rise. The actual international residence in Seoul is only about 2.44% of the population.

And in that increase of 18.1% over the past five years, surprisingly 69% of that is based on the migrant workers and migrant spouses that have immigrated here.

So, while the overall numbers has been increasing significantly, the actual, in the business profession side of it, is not that large. It counts for about 4% of the total international population here.

Tom: What are the main reasons why the number of foreign executives there is so small?

Steve: Well, it is interesting. There's a couple things going on. One is the government – the Korean government, national government – has emphasized having more native English language speaking in the different middle school grades, for example. So, there's been the increase of hiring foreign teachers to come and teach.

However, on the business side, each company is really like an individual person. In other words, their maturity and their growth in the market has been such that the Korean market has grown to where there's been more of a push toward localization.

Even today, contrary to how it was, say, four or five years ago where a foreign company would come in and they would have maybe two, three, four, or five foreigners and then hire 10 or 15 Koreans to start out in organizations.

Well, that model is not really the way they're doing now, unless it's a large automotive company. Nowadays, it's more like maybe one foreigner and then the rest Koreans. I'm even seeing now – I have a couple of clients now where they've come in fresh from the very beginning, and they've got confidence in the Koreans that they're just hiring only Koreans to begin with. So, that's a continual shift.

And that goes to, I think, the strengths of the Korean executives; their experience, their knowledge. It's getting better and better.

Tom: So, are you saying there are fewer opportunities for non-native Koreans then in the multinational operations in Korea?

Steve: Yes, I think so – even though the numbers are going up. But, it's going to migrant workers, English teachers, and the others. But, like I said, in the past, it's gone by the maturity of the company. If they've had foreigners here for a long period of time, as soon as they've really gotten to the spirit and the corporate culture of the home office company into the Korean operations, and it got in the senior Korean executives really in tune and working the way they want them to work, then they back out and typically would pull the foreigners out and put them somewhere else; start a business.

Well, that whole process is happening much faster now. I think you're seeing less foreigners come and stay for probably lesser periods of time.

Tom: Interesting. What industries are now doing the most hiring when we take a look at trends?

Steve: Well now, maybe surprisingly, is the financial area has now kind of settled back down. All those people that lost their... it was not hit as much in Korea, but it still was hit.

A lot of the dust has settled. So, the financial and technology sectors are coming through stronger, and I actually have some numbers from our AESC Organization which is the Association of Executive Search Consultants which we're a member of and it's the largest body of retained search firms around the world.

They're showing that this first quarter, globally, we're having a 39.2% increase in the financial sector and around 37.3% in the technology which is greater than most people had expected.

Tom: Certainly good numbers.

Steve: Yes.

Tom: What are some of the other trends that you're expecting in the near future here as well?

Steve: Well, in the life science and healthcare area, that particular area, as you may know, has had a lot of mergers and acquisitions and re-shifting; kind of like the financial area where different banks are buying different competitors and things like that.

Well, there's a lot of that that has gone on the past few years. So, that area is now growing and beginning to get settled in, so that's one of the next areas that's pretty big.

The consumer market is up about 25%, and that's just coming mostly on demand. The past few years, people have been holding their money back, trying not to spend, but that's coming back. So, that's another area.

Tom: Let's talk for a second about the types of positions that most Korean firms and multinational corporations are looking to fill right now through executive search firms.

Steve: Okay. The types of positions?

Tom: Yeah. What types of positions are most Korean firms looking to fill right now, and some of the multinationals as well through executive search firms?

Steve: That's a good question. On the executive search firms, you have to remember these are usually mostly just senior positions because the more experience that you have, the more qualifications you have, the more challenging it is to attract them and there's more competition for the senior high-performing executives.

That's where the executive search firm does most of their business, because this is where the need is, compared to a fresh out of college graduate. They would not have much experience or

any at all. So, what do you have to compare with? It's not really necessary to use an executive search firm, so people won't. And we discourage that.

So, it's still the senior positions. The country manager roles, particularly in Korea, the financial positions within the companies because regardless of the size of the company, those are sensitive, technical, important positions.

And then marketing and sales are always a hot commodity. I believe as they become more professional in the way they execute, that becomes increasingly more important, especially in times like this.

Tom: Are you involved with placing Korean executives in overseas positions?

Steve: Yes. As a member of the ESC, we have partners all over the world. We do most of our business in Korea, but we've worked quite a few assignments throughout Asia; like in Hong Kong, China, Taiwan, Australia – other places within Asia; our firm particularly.

Tom: So, do you see particular trends regarding more Korean talent being put into senior managerial positions overseas?

Steve: This has been slowly and gradually coming. There are now more qualified senior Koreans that are capable of doing that, particularly like the type of candidates that we place which are usually educated in Korea and in the United States, or some other Western country, and they will have experience within Korea and, perhaps, with some other Asian country or America, for instance.

So, these types of people are becoming in demand, but it by industry sector. It's gradually beginning to take fold a lot more than it was ten years ago.

Tom: Which industry sectors in particular do you see this happening and in which countries are the Koreans being relocated to?

Steve: I think the biggest ones are, ironically I guess is those hottest markets. We'll see several financial folks. We'll see in the business services area, in the management consulting type companies, and then automotive sector because that moves around, and technology.

Those areas probably the biggest use for them. With financial, probably financial technology being the bigger of the two.

Tom: And where are these executives being sent to in terms of other countries?

Steve: Lots of times, what's happening is – the Koreans are well-known for their strong work ethics and everyone that's done business here knows they work very, very hard.

So, I see them going from local roles, say in financial to regional financial roles or a regional head of quality control or production in Singapore or China. Korea does a lot of business with China, so there's quite a few Koreans over there as well.

Tom: Okay. Let's talk about some of the myths and realities of working in Korea. A lot of people feel that the only kinds of jobs that foreigners can get in Korea is in the English teaching or maybe the editing professions or at the very top levels of the organization, C-level positions.

But, there are a few opportunities for mid-level foreigners as well to be able to work in Korea. Do you think that's a fair assessment?

Steve: That's pretty fair. I guess the question surrounding that also is why is it – or why is it happening that way? I guess what's happening is most of the C-level candidates will be coming from their home offices in most cases, being referred from there.

And then for the ones coming over in the English level or editing, once they're in that area, it's hard to get beyond it. It's like an actor in Hollywood. Once they get typecast, they're marked as that, so it's hard to get beyond that – not impossible, but it's difficult.

I think there are some opportunities for mid-level foreigners, but it's all about something we'll talk about later I believe.

Tom: We'll touch upon that in a moment. What are some of the biggest myths that foreigners have about working in Korea, especially when it comes to their career experience and what they feel they can actually do in Korea?

Steve: I think managing expectations as an executive search professional is one of the biggest challenges we have, and that is managing expectations of the hiring clients; of what they expect of the individual.

Too often, a non-Korean person may come over and think, just automatically, because they have a bachelors degree from some wonderful university or something that they're a hot commodity.

What they learn very quickly is that the Koreans are very well-educated and of all of the OECD countries, statistics show that Koreans spend more money per capita on education than any other country. They're highly educated, so that doesn't cut it.

So, I think proving their abilities and their background experience is what they have to come to a realization to come to reality with I guess.

Tom: And I imagine also the reality of doing business in a foreign country and a completely different culture most often.

Steve: That's right. When I was in America and was trying to hire some Koreans, for example, we had to prove to the US government the same thing as you have to prove to the Korean government here – why do we take a position from a Korean person and give it to a foreigner?

Now, one of the things is multiple languages. If they have multiple language skills, or especially technical skills or abilities, that's a must to be able to help to qualify and say, "Well, there's a reason for this person, why we need them here." That's true for, I think, about any country.

Tom: Of course. Is there, would you say a disconnect for people who might cut short their careers overseas to maybe teach English in Korea hoping to then return to their original career tracks once they're established in Korea?

Steve: I think it's very dangerous and I think it's risky. We do see this quite a bit. One of the first questions that always pops into the hiring people's minds are, "Why did you do it? Why did you come over on these circumstances? Why did you change your career?"

Now sometimes, people have some very good answers. For instance, people that work for the US State Department, maybe they used to use this terminology, which some people don't like, called a "trailing spouse." The trailing spouse can be male or female.

Suppose they came over. They're a professional, but they came over because their spouse had a particular job or contract. So, they come over here, then they have to do whatever they can do just to keep working.

Then, all of a sudden, they get off of their normal career track because of that family goal and family decision. So, that makes sense. But, unless there's some good sense reason like that, you have to be careful about getting out of your track, but it's hard to understand.

Tom: Is there a perception among executives in Korea that they would not consider seriously candidates who are teaching English, maybe for corporate level non-English teach or editing roles even if they had a very different career track back in their home countries?

Steve: Here, I think it comes down to selling yourself. If they do have previous experience and a background in a particular area then, no, it's not a stretch to be able to sell that I think and to say, "I can do this. I have a proven track record of doing this." That's very possible.

The challenge is where those people are trying to make a stretch and they said, "Well, I majored in business," or, "I majored in economics, but now I've gone and taught English. So, how am I going to get into the arena of the business world that I want to get into?" That's a harder thing to do.

Tom: That makes sense. Before we get away from some of the myths and realities here, I do want to go back to this issue of opportunities that are typical for mid-career foreign executives

wanting to work in Korea. Can you address that a little bit for us now before we move onto branding?

Steve: Like what are the opportunities?

Tom: Yeah. What are the types of opportunities? What are the types of jobs that are typical for mid-career foreign executives that want to work in Korea; mid-level non-C level types of positions?

Steve: Right. Well, I have seen it, and I know people have done it. But, usually what they will do – it's going to come down to a couple of things. One is networking, getting to know the people.

If you're just sending resumes out and just applying to job boards and those things, it's just not going to cut it, especially in Korea.

So, networking, getting to know who's who, who's the decision-maker, is a key part. Another key is knowing what their needs are because, face it, we, as candidates, are a commodity. We're a property. We're an item, let's say.

So, you must present yourself in such a way that is going to be attractive to that person, that you can deliver something to them. So, it takes a little bit more selling and repackaging.

You'll be surprised at how many people don't work on their resumes. They're not good at it, and they make lousy ones. They shoot themselves in the foot.

Tom: Yeah. That happens everywhere as well; other countries. And this kind of leads to the next topic of branding here – branding your career. And branding a career in Korea, this is obviously an important issue and one that people in job search certainly need to consider as well.

Many of our members at the site are foreigners looking to work in Korea or they're looking to make substantial shifts in their careers if they're already in Korea.

And we also have many Korean members who are looking to leave Korea to go abroad, and we also have Koreans that are already overseas who are looking at their own future career paths as well, and all these different groups of people are considering the issue of personal branding here.

Let's look at maybe some advice that you can give folks in these different positions. What should people do – by this, I mean both Koreans and foreigners – to be successful in their careers in general and to be successful within their home countries as well. I know that's kind of a broad open-ended question, but go ahead.

Steve: Well, first of all, I'd like to say first, "Be positive." There's the tendency when people begin to even think about this subject as they become negative, or they would think, "I can't do this," or, "I've never heard of it," or, "I don't know what to do."

That's normal. 99.9% of the people are not professional resume writers. They have never been trained on how to do a marketing campaign on themselves for their career. This is foreign to them.

So, I would first say be positive and to realize, and to accept this idea, that if you, yourself, are a product and you're wanting to sell yourself to a company, if you, yourself, don't know what values, specifications, or features that you have and are unable to explain them specifically, how in the world are they going to get it? How are they going to buy it?

As you know, we spend a lot of effort when we brand a product or a service, to really explain it. We've done a lot of work to get to the most simplest concept, where you can explain it quickly. People need to, first, accept that idea and then go to work on trying to brand themselves.

Tom: So, I think this concept, this point that you just made, would refer certainly to Koreans looking to work outside of Korea, maybe in the States or Europe, Australia and New Zealand, perhaps.

And this advice, I think, would certainly apply toward foreign nationals or, rather, foreigners looking to work and build careers in South Korea as well.

Steve: Absolutely. It makes no difference. It's for all of them.

Tom: It makes no difference. Explain what is a professional brand – why is it important for people to develop a brand and what impact, potentially, can a personal brand have on a person and their own career?

Steve: Okay. Let's take, for example, you take two people that have the same title in the same company. If you look at their resume – say they had similar careers; they graduated from the same universities and they've had basically an identical career track. If you set down their documents and they look identically the same, which we've seen sometimes, what's the problem?

Well, there's no individuality there. For instance, we'll receive sometimes information on someone who says, "Well, I'm the director of quality control from Samsung Electronics," for instance – and then they expect me to fill in the blanks.

Well, I don't know what all they did. I don't know how many staff they managed. I don't know what kind of budgets they managed. I don't know what their strengths are, their weaknesses, their communications style. There's so many things I don't know.

So, you're putting up to other people to guess and to try to figure you out, instead of you being able to market and brand yourself in a way to sell it to other people. That's why I say it's not easy.

But, there are some things that you can do, Koreans and foreigners, to be successful. I mentioned about knowing yourself. Maybe I could get into that just a little bit about how you can get to know yourself.

There's this thing that I like to do with people, and that is to get them to try to figure out what are their success factors. And their success factors are some key things that they have done throughout their life that have made them successful. There are some self-analysis and things that you can do to come up with that; maybe your five to ten most important accomplishments in your life.

And with those accomplishments, you can do what we call a three sentence narrative and identify, first, what it was – the achievement. Second, how you did it. And third, what were the results?

And as you begin to write those down and begin to identify them yourself, a pattern will begin to immerse. I wrote an article a little bit about this on my website called *Patterns of Success*. Each of us have this pattern, but we need to find it within ourselves to what it is because we are creatures of habit, to use that cliché, that, usually, if we were successful with one company and successful in another later, usually we probably use the same skill sets, the same success factors.

Maybe we're individualistic, we're practical or pragmatic or however the key buzz words that we use to describe it. We've done those things, so we will continue to do that throughout our lives. So, as we understand ourselves and figure those out, we can apply them to new opportunities.

Tom: In addition to understanding ourselves and knowing ourselves, what are some of the other things we can do to develop a professional brand?

Steve: Well, as you identify those key success factors and you write them down, then you can begin to pull out – and using your resume, for example, and then on your branding yourself, action-oriented words in your resumes and in your talks so that you can describe and explain yourself better.

I've written about the 60-second commercial. People use that – or the elevator speech. Learning how to, on the spur of the moment, be able to talk about yourself. And this is hard.

As you know, I mentioned or I talked earlier, promoting yourself, people have a feeling of bragging is hard and uncomfortable. I know very few people that are comfortable bragging about themselves.

But, if you switch it and you say, "They really want to know about me." Let's say that, for example, "I helped increase the sales by 20% in my company." If you turn that around and you explained it, "I was able to increase the sales by 20% in the company by adding three more

clients and expanding the business that I had with five others. The results were we also had an increase of \$1 million in profit,” for example.

When you state facts, and figures, and numbers, and what you did and how you did it, it doesn't come off as bragging; it comes off as just stating a fact.

Tom: Indeed.

Steve: That's a method, a way of describing it in verbal and in written communication of what you can do to help in building your brand to say, “This is me. This is what I do.”

Tom: Yeah. I like the way you described that. We're not bragging; we're simply stating facts.

Steve: Yeah.

Tom: In terms of promoting ourselves and in terms of this issue of professional branding, I would think these rules that you're talking about, these concepts, are universal. They would equally apply to a Korean executive wanting to work abroad and would certainly apply to foreigners wanting to work in Korea. Is that the case?

Steve: I think, generally speaking, yes; particularly if you're talking about multinational companies in Western mindsets whether it's here or abroad. I would say yes because they're all about performance like the Missouri 'Show Me' state. What can you do?

And the best predictor of future success is past performance, right? So, I think yes. The only exception could be in some traditional Korean companies, it's sometimes based more on age, title, connections, university that you went from. Sometimes, they're based on a different set of criteria.

But, I think the audience that we're talking to today and the people that we're trying to help, this does fit the mold.

One other thing I want to clear up too on the facts. I mentioned some facts and numbers. That's one thing that I see, continually, people leave out is they don't put the numbers when they're describing themselves or an example.

I think it's a big mistake that a lot of people make because it's not so important, the number itself, but it helps clarify; it helps paint a verbal, better picture.

For example, if you say, “Managed the staff and the budget.” Okay, that doesn't tell me much. If you say, “Managed a staff of five with a budget of \$1 million.” Big or small, it doesn't matter. At least I have a clearer picture of what you're saying.

And if it's company secrets you're trying to protect, which you should, you can say approximately or around. That's fine. Everybody expects that. You don't want to put company

secrets down, but you can approximate things. It's hard to argue that. "Well, he did manage a staff of five. He did manage a certain amount of budget."

It's not bragging. It's not an argument. That's a fact. If you don't have a number, it can be subjective. Maybe it's not truth.

Tom: Right. And I think numbers are especially important when it comes time to describing the results that we have achieved as professionals or quantifying results that we've produced. You've got to be able to have numbers to do those things.

Steve: Absolutely.

Tom: Let's talk about some of the biggest concerns that employers in Korea express about candidates who are talking with them about career opportunities. What are some of the biggest concerns for Korean employers in this regard?

Steve: Well, first of all, I would say that the candidates that are looking to interview with these employers need to think about for a minute and remember that there is pressure in this process. There's a lot of stress in this process as well.

Typically, the candidates think that the pressure is only on them, that, "If I go and I don't say the right things or if I have a mistake on my resume, then I'm just not going to get the job or there may be somebody better than me," which is normal.

But, they also need to think that there's pressure on the employer side. One of their biggest concerns on the employer side is seeking the truth, finding out really what makes the person tick. Are they the right person?

On the resume, you can see if they qualify on what we call "the haves." He has or she has this degree, or he or she has this amount of years of experience in the companies that I'm looking for. They have "the haves."

But now, what can they do? I'm betting, on hiring them, that they can deliver and do what I need them to do, also within the corporate culture that I have. And I'll give an example of the athletic footwear industry which I was in. I hired people from multiple companies when I was with Adidas, and we were going to take the company public which we did.

And so, just because, across the river, Nike's headquarters was there, the same person doing the same job in a similar industry – the same industry actually – could be an absolute success and a superstar in one company and an absolute failure in another.

So, this is one of the biggest concerns of employers is that even if, on paper, it looks acceptable, it still doesn't guarantee that they will perform and do what they have to do. They're concerned about getting a person that is capable, that can and that can fit in and deliver. That puts a lot of pressure on the candidates to convince them that.

Tom: I can certainly see how that's the case. When you review candidate's resumes and applications, what do you find are the most common mistakes that people are making?

Steve: The biggest makes are sometimes typographical mistakes, mistakes of making them too long, not putting enough numbers, not describing enough of the success factors and the achievements, leaving too many things up for guessing or leaving gaps in their employment.

Sometimes, things as simple as if you write the name of the company, sometimes it may not be obvious exactly what the company does, or it's so large and there are so many areas. So, sometimes you need to put in a little bit, "This was the chemical section of the company," or whatever.

Or if I'm the general manager of it, what were my responsibilities as a general manager? Did I have manufacturing or was it just a sales office?

So, I think facts, details, numbers, but also targeting the resume to highlight those attributes of you that are true and that are honest, and that are the most relevant to the position that you're going after.

Another common mistakes are titles are a sensitive thing regardless of what culture you're in, and if you're going for like a general manager job, it's best – and you know that's the title – that you use the title that you're going to interview for.

Sometimes, people will leave it and change it to their own title; like they'll say, "Well, I like the word branch president or country manager instead of general manager, so that's what I'll put up there."

Well, that could be a sticky issue inside their company that they're going to interview for, so that's a simple, stupid mistake I think you should just avoid. You just don't do that. They're not going to just change the title for you. The title is what it is, and so that's what you're going after. So, there are simple things like that that people make mistakes on.

And another big mistake, if you're not careful, is taking additional information to an interview can be troublesome.

Tom: What do you mean by that?

Steve: Years ago, we found out the hard way. We had a candidate, thought that he was quite smart and resourceful. He decided to bring some additional information, which we weren't aware of, to a client interview and he brought sensitive, confidential information that was the hiring company's information. He thought that it would show that he was smart and able to get the kind of information.

But, of course, the client was sitting there going ape because of wondering where the leak in their company was. How did this candidate get this information? If he has it, then he can assume his competitor has it. And who else has it?

That's just one example of a dire situation where it's best for you to show up with your resume and that's it, unless you've been asked to bring a presentation of what you would do in this role or something like that. It's best to come very lightweight.

Tom: Are you finding that resumes today are reflecting who people really are? And if not, how can people address this?

Steve: Good question. No, I think there are still problems. I've worked with very senior level government officials; people that if I mentioned, you would be surprised with. People of all levels, regardless of experience, have tremendous troubles with this.

I like to use the analogy of a color photograph. If we took a color photograph of anything, say you or a picture of something, and then you see all the true colors of what's there, and the shapes and sizes. That's it.

If you look at someone's resume and it is a true picture of them, if you were to share that resume with somebody else that knows them intimately and said, "Is this me?" and you looked at it and you said, "Yes," it's not bragging; it's not overstating, it's not understating that that's an accurate picture. That is that person.

That is a good resume because it's factual, it's the truth. Koreans, for example, they tend to underplay their credentials because it's their nature, and then the foreigners, Westerners, will tend to overplay, embellish too much.

So, the right answer is that it's a really accurate picture and, usually, candidates, once we work with them, they know it. When they get that point, they say, "This is the best I can do. This is me. That's it. If you like me, that's me. If you don't, then I'm sorry, but that's me." And you need to get to that point, then it becomes a non-issue.

Tom: I see. Let's talk about some of the self-assessment process that maybe candidates need to go through to evaluate their backgrounds, their career goals, and whether they have realistic expectations.

Steve: Yes. There's a number of psychometric tests that people can take that helps them to determine what kind of personality they are and where they best fit in, and I think all of those are good also if they're either using it in conjunction with other things.

The other part is talking with someone; talking with a professional person in the area about yourself and how you're being assessed to try to determine if it's realistic. It's hard for us to

judge ourselves. It's really, really, really hard – almost impossible. So, one way is to have someone else that you trust to assess and evaluate you.

Another one I described a little bit earlier, this concept of writing your achievements down and creating this list of five to ten and, from that, pull out those key things that you see a pattern of that's showing through your career.

This is a good way of self-assessment because if you can write them down like I described, with the three sentence narratives, that helps you to really get a picture of who you are and what you do. That's also a very good way.

Tom: Visiting with you here right now, one question that pops into my head is what are a few, maybe two or three books, that you would recommend to our listeners when it comes to career development, self-assessment, self-branding – these types of things?

One book that I think of that I think is a classic that I'm sure you're fully aware of is *What Color is Your Parachute?* I think that's a great resource.

Steve: Yes. That's probably one of the biggest ones there is out there. I like *Hiring With Your Head*. It's kind of geared more towards the recruiting person inside the company, but I don't see separation between the hiring person and the candidate being hired.

I think, and I've written on this actually a few times about how there are some myths or there are some common things that seems like the hiring companies tend to hide from the candidates, and that the candidates hide from the hiring companies.

I think things like that, like you mentioned in *Hiring With Your Head* I think is good because it helps to bring that out, to bring it. I want the truth. It's what they're really looking for.

Another book that's fairly new that's written by someone in the executive search field that you probably have not heard of; it's by Joseph Daniel McCool. It's *Deciding Who Leads*. This is kind of an eye-opener book. It talks about how executive recruiters drive, direct, and disrupt the global search for leadership talent.

It talks a little bit about some of the stuff that I've talked about today; things about how executive recruiters really work. What do they look for, why do they look for the things that they look for; things like that. So, that's one that's only about a year, year and a half old I guess. It's kind of interesting.

Tom: It sounds like a great resource. We just have a couple of minutes left here. Do you have any other perspectives that you feel would be useful to KBC's members and to other job seekers in the market today?

Steve: I guess something I said earlier about being positive and being realistic for what you really are, and what you're all about, and what you want to be. I think as you do that, you'll have many opportunities.

And do the unexpected. Don't expect just to send resumes in and that's just going to get you a job. I think it takes hard work and effort. Get to know yourself, figure it out, get some professional help.

Put a little effort in it. I think that, unfortunately, in education we teach a lot of people about a lot of things, but then it comes to about managing their own career, there's very little education; very little education, yet it's so important.

Take a husband, or a father of a family that's responsible for the finances of his family and things. How many people really get taught how to do that?

There's some basic things like that. I hope, nowadays, maybe that's changing and they're getting better at it. But, I think on the career side of it, read the books, as you mentioned, read some other good articles and work on it. I think you can make some achievements.

Tom: I think you're certainly right. Steve, thanks so much for the thoughts today and your input. We really appreciate it.

Steve: You're welcome. Thanks for having me.

Tom: You bet. Our guest today has been Steve McKinney. He is the Founder and President of McKinney Consulting – a leading executive search firm based in Seoul. I'm your host, Tom Tucker inviting you to improve your business results in Korea by joining KoreaBusinessCentral.com today. Thanks for listening and have a great day.