



## Nicola James

Nicola James is Managing Partner of Thomas Brooke International, the executive search firm she helped found in 1993. Her practice is predominantly in coatings, allied products and specialty chemicals, with a secondary emphasis in family-owned and investment-backed businesses. Projects include individual search assignments; multiple-hire projects such as sales force development; consulting in organization planning; and early-stage position definition for new business initiatives, frequently extremely confidential work. She focuses on creating alignment between job responsibilities and critical business objectives for long-term, successful hires.

Recent assignments include working with the new CEO at a small, closely-held industrial coatings manufacturer, to define and recruit key technical leadership as part of the company's first-ever strategic plan; global leadership recruitment for a rapidly expanding mid-sized division of a public company; corporate intelligence research for a global coatings manufacturer seeking insight before making a strategic hire; targeted networking for a high-growth, private company looking to build globally on an existing platform business; realignment of an R&D department in need of stronger global innovation practices; development & implementation of the recruitment plan for a nationwide field service network; and C, VP and Director level searches for clients ranging from a \$10M family-owned distribution business to a \$1B division of a Fortune 500 company. Nicola has created succession plans for family businesses, including recruitment of succession candidates. She has also partnered with client companies to improve margins by troubleshooting chronic hiring & organizational effectiveness problems and building high-potential talent acquisition pipelines for junior roles.

Nicola has developed a strong global network of senior executives and resource groups. This network also extends to private equity and investment capital sources; Nicola has worked with smaller corporate clients and individual CEOs to find investment backing for growth and acquisitions. She maintains long-term, strategic relationships with many clients in the industry, and made more than 50 placements over a 13-year period with one Fortune client, across multiple divisions and functions; she has multi-year relationships with many others.

Nicola has brought many of the principles applied by her manufacturing clients into the executive search and consulting arena, emphasizing the impact of strong process and creative thinking on end results: "Especially in the new economy, risk and cash management are critical issues and a key hire is a big investment. It had better be a good one! Deming said that if you put enough into the first 15% of any project, you will guarantee at least 85% of your desired outcome. I've found that holds equally true in hiring for a key role. And, root cause analysis and prioritization of issues are essential in complex hiring situations, where a role may be mission critical and have a large matrix of requirements. You need to ask questions early, and understand the factors that influence the particular need, to inform decision points that come up later."

As an expert contributor to Netshare, the leading executive job and career networking organization with over 300,000 subscribers to its monthly newsletter, Nicola provides advice to senior executives on the topics of career development and compensation negotiation. She is a regular host of Netshare's "Ask the Coach" phone-in program, and coaches individual executives on career and job transition strategies and skills.

Prior to moving to the US in 1992, Nicola majored in inorganic and theoretical chemistry at Cambridge University, and after an early career as a published cartoonist and artist, later went on to become a winemaker in England. Wickham Vineyards' award-winning wines were served in the House of Commons, and on board Royal Navy ships entertaining on affairs of state around the world.

Outside work, Nicola enjoys trail running, snowshoeing, bicycling, fencing, oil painting, photography, and gardening.

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