

EXECUTIVE SEARCH · LEADERSHIP INTELLIGENCE

# The Top 7 Things an Executive Recruiter Can Get Out of Dakota Marketplace

*Finding the right CEO isn't a needle-in-a-haystack problem.  
It's a data problem. Here's how Dakota gives executive recruiters  
the deepest leadership database in private markets.*

**150K+**

PORTFOLIO  
COMPANIES

**120K+**

CEO PROFILES

**600K+**

PRIVATE  
COMPANIES

**4-Level**

INDUSTRY  
TAXONOMY

**E**xecutive search for private-equity-backed companies is one of the most demanding and highest-stakes recruiting disciplines in the business. The CEO you place isn't just filling a role — they are the primary driver of value creation for the next five years. If the placement is wrong, you don't just lose the relationship. The portfolio company misses its plan, the fund suffers, and sometimes a deal that should have returned three times capital returns one. The downside of a bad executive placement at a PE-backed company is catastrophic in a way that has no equivalent in public company recruiting.

Which means the most important thing an executive recruiter can do — before crafting the narrative, before running references, before structuring the offer — is build the most complete and accurate candidate universe possible. The right person for a CEO role at a \$200M EBITDA industrial distribution company with a buy-and-build mandate is a very specific human being. They have run a business of comparable scale, in a comparable sector, under PE ownership, with a track record of executing acquisitions. There might be two hundred of them in the country. Dakota knows who they are.

Here are the seven ways Dakota Marketplace transforms how executive recruiters find, evaluate, and reach the leaders their clients need.

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## THE SEVEN USE CASES

### 01 **Candidate Universe Construction**

#### 120,000 CEO PROFILES — THE MOST COMPLETE LEADERSHIP DATABASE IN PRIVATE MARKETS

The starting point for any executive search is defining the universe of credible candidates. For a PE-backed CEO role, that universe is specific: operators who have run businesses of comparable scale and complexity, under financial sponsor ownership, in a relevant sector. It is not a large universe. And finding its edges — the candidates who fit on every dimension but aren't in the obvious networks — is where most searches either win or lose.

Dakota's database contains deep, detailed profiles on over 120,000 CEOs across 150,000+ sponsor-backed portfolio companies. These are not scraped LinkedIn summaries. They are curated profiles that include prior work history, current and past company affiliations, role tenure, and direct contact information. The database is built for exactly the kind of search that PE-backed company recruiting requires: finding the operators who have been in the chair before, under PE ownership, in a relevant business context.

No executive search database in the market has this depth of private-markets-specific CEO coverage. The difference between 120,000 curated profiles with PE context and a generic executive database is the difference between a long list that actually makes sense and one you spend two weeks culling down to something useful.

» [120K+ CEO Profiles](#) · [PE-Backed Company Context](#) · [Direct Contact Info](#)



*The right CEO for a PE-backed company is a very specific person. Dakota knows who they are.*

## 02 Precision Filtering

### FOUR LEVELS OF INDUSTRY TAXONOMY — FINDING TRUE SECTOR EXPERTS, NOT APPROXIMATE MATCHES

The most common failure mode in executive search isn't finding no one — it's finding people who look right on the surface but aren't actually right in the role. A CEO who ran a healthcare services business is not automatically the right candidate for a healthcare technology company. A leader who excelled in distribution is not necessarily the right fit for a last-mile logistics platform. The distinctions matter enormously, and most databases don't make them.

Dakota's four-level industry taxonomy — sector, industry, sub-industry, and industry segment — is built to support exactly this kind of precision filtering. A recruiter placing a CEO at a PE-backed dental services organization can filter by healthcare services, then by dental specifically, rather than casting across all of healthcare. A search for a CEO of an industrial safety equipment distribution business can be scoped to industrial distribution, then to safety products, rather than surfacing every executive who has ever run anything industrial.

That specificity does two things. It dramatically reduces the time spent reviewing candidates who are adjacent but not actually right. And it increases the odds that the final short list contains people who have genuinely done the job before — not people who've done something similar enough that it's hard to explain why they're not quite right.

» [Sector](#) · [Industry](#) · [Sub-Industry](#) · [Industry Segment Filtering](#)

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## 03 Career History Intelligence

### PRIOR WORK HISTORY THAT REVEALS THE PATTERN BEHIND THE RESUME

A CEO's current role tells you where they landed. Their prior work history tells you how they got there — and whether the trajectory is one that maps to what your client needs. Did they build their career inside PE-backed companies, developing the operational intensity and accountability structures that financial sponsors expect? Did they come from a larger corporate environment and successfully make the transition to the faster, leaner world of sponsored businesses? Or does their history suggest a pattern that looks impressive on paper but wouldn't survive the first budget cycle under a demanding board?

Dakota's CEO profiles include detailed prior work history — not just a list of previous employers, but the chronological career arc that lets a recruiter understand the context behind each role. This changes how you build a long list. Instead of searching for people currently in a title at a company of a certain size, you can search for people whose career trajectory has included the specific experiences that predict success in the role you're filling.

The most valuable candidates for a PE-backed CEO role often aren't currently sitting in a corner office. They're one level down in a larger organization, waiting for the right opportunity — and their career history shows they're ready. Dakota's work history data helps you find them before the obvious names are exhausted.

» [Detailed Career Chronology](#) · [Role Tenure](#) · [Company Context](#)

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## 04 Direct Outreach

### CONTACT INFORMATION THAT GETS YOU TO THE CANDIDATE — NOT THEIR ASSISTANT

Identifying the right candidates is only half the search. The other half is reaching them — specifically, reaching them in a way that creates a real conversation rather than a LinkedIn message that gets read and ignored. Senior executives are inundated with recruiter outreach. The ones who respond are the ones who feel the approach was personal, relevant, and came through a channel they pay attention to.

Dakota's CEO profiles include direct contact information — not just the company's main line or a generic email format, but the kind of direct access that allows a recruiter to make initial contact in a way that stands out. When you reach someone directly, with a message that demonstrates you understand their background and why this specific role is relevant to them, the response rate is categorically different from a cold InMail.

In executive search, the quality of the first contact determines whether a candidate engages or doesn't. Dakota's direct contact data gives recruiters the ability to make that first contact the right way — personally, directly, and with context that signals you've actually done your homework.

» [Direct CEO Contact Information](#) · [Current & Prior Company Affiliations](#)

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## 05 Sponsor-Backed Context

### UNDERSTANDING WHETHER A CANDIDATE HAS ACTUALLY SURVIVED PE OWNERSHIP

The single most important screening criterion for a CEO role at a PE-backed company is often the one that's hardest to assess from a resume: has this person operated successfully under financial sponsor ownership before? Running a business with a PE board is genuinely different from running a division of a public company or a privately held family business. The pace, the accountability, the cadence of reporting, the relentless focus on EBITDA and EBITDA alone — these are things that some operators thrive under and others struggle with significantly, regardless of their operating credentials.

Because Dakota's CEO profiles are built around sponsor-backed portfolio companies, the PE context is embedded in the data. You can filter specifically for executives who have led PE-backed businesses — not just businesses of comparable size, but businesses operating under the specific ownership structure your client is working within. You can identify who has done it once, who has done it multiple times across multiple sponsors, and who has the track record of value creation — exits, EBITDA growth, successful add-on integrations — that PE-backed CEO roles demand.

That filtering capability eliminates an entire category of interview process wasted on candidates who look right on paper but have never operated in the environment they'd be walking into.

» [PE Ownership History](#) · [Sponsor Affiliation](#) · [Portfolio Company Context](#)

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## 06 Expanded Universe

### 600,000+ PRIVATE COMPANY CEOs — BEYOND THE SPONSOR-BACKED WORLD

Not every great CEO for a PE-backed company comes from another PE-backed company. Some of the best placements in private equity come from executives who've run privately held businesses of comparable scale — founders who have built something meaningful, divisional leaders at private companies who've never had the platform visibility that comes with sponsor ownership, or operators in adjacent sectors who bring a perspective and capability set the PE-backed world hasn't yet discovered.

Dakota's database extends well beyond sponsor-backed companies to cover 600,000+ private companies — each with the same depth of CEO profile data, prior work history, and direct contact information as the PE-backed universe. This is not a small extension. It more than quadruples the searchable candidate universe for any given search.

The best executive search isn't just fishing in the obvious pond. It's knowing where every pond is, and having the intelligence to identify which candidates from the less-obvious ones have exactly the profile your client needs. Dakota's private company coverage makes that possible systematically, rather than relying on a recruiter's personal network to surface non-traditional candidates.

» [600K+ Private Company CEOs · Same Depth of Profile & Contact Data](#)

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## 07 Competitive Intelligence

### UNDERSTANDING THE TALENT LANDSCAPE YOUR CLIENT IS OPERATING IN

The best executive recruiters don't just fill the open role — they help their clients understand the full talent landscape around it. Who is running the portfolio company's three most direct competitors? What is the tenure profile of CEOs at comparable PE-backed businesses in the sector — and what does that suggest about retention risk and market compensation dynamics? Are the most experienced operators in this sector currently available, recently placed, or locked up in long-term situations?

Dakota's database gives executive recruiters the intelligence to answer those questions with data rather than anecdote. By mapping the CEO profiles across an entire sector within the PE-backed and private company universe, you can build a real picture of the leadership talent landscape — who the top operators are, where they are, how long they've been there, and who among them might be open to the right conversation.

That landscape intelligence makes the recruiter a genuine strategic advisor to their client — not just a sourcing function — and changes the nature of the engagement from a transactional placement to a partnership built on information the client couldn't get anywhere else.

» [Sector CEO Mapping](#) · [Tenure Data](#) · [Competitive Talent Landscape](#)

## AI IN DAKOTA MARKETPLACE

## Upload a Job Description. Get a Ranked Candidate List in Seconds.

This is where Dakota changes the executive search workflow at its core. The new AI-powered app for Dakota Marketplace doesn't just give you a better database — it gives you an AI analyst that reads a job description and surfaces the most relevant candidates from 120,000+ CEO profiles and 600,000+ private company executives, ranked by fit, before you've made a single call.

## HOW IT WORKS

- 1 Upload the Job Description**

Drop in the full CEO job description — role requirements, sector context, company scale, PE sponsor expectations, and any specific operating experience required.
- 2 THE AI SYSTEM Reads the Role, Searches the Database**

The AI parses the requirements, maps them against Dakota's 120,000+ CEO profiles and 600,000+ private company executives, applies sector and sub-industry filters, and ranks candidates by the specificity of their fit — not just keyword match.
- 3 Receive a Ranked Candidate List With Context**

You get a structured list of candidates with their relevant background highlighted, prior PE experience surfaced, and direct contact information included — ready to move from the database to the phone in minutes, not days.

## EXAMPLE QUERY

*"Here is a job description for a CEO role at a \$180M revenue industrial safety equipment distribution company in the Southeast, PE-backed, with a buy-and-build mandate and a planned exit in 4–5 years. Please identify the top 15 candidates from Dakota's database with directly relevant experience."*

## WHAT YOU GET BACK

A ranked list of 15 CEO profiles — each with their current and prior company history, specific PE-backed operating experience, sector match, role tenure, and direct contact information — organized by strength of fit against the job description requirements. Sourced entirely from Dakota's proprietary data.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

## The Search That Used to Take Two Weeks Now Takes Two Hours

Executive search has always been a relationship business, and that won't change. The judgment required to assess a candidate's character, cultural fit, and leadership capability under pressure is irreducibly human. No database replaces the reference conversation, the second-round interview, or the instinct that comes from decades of placing leaders in high-stakes situations.

But the part of executive search that is a data problem — building the most complete and accurate candidate universe, filtering it to the candidates who are genuinely relevant, and reaching those candidates through the right channel with the right context — has always been harder and slower than it needs to be. Dakota solves that part completely.

With 120,000+ curated CEO profiles across 150,000+ PE-backed portfolio companies, 600,000+ private company executives, deep industry taxonomy filtering, and a AI-powered AI that takes a job description and returns a ranked candidate list, Dakota gives executive recruiters a capability that has no equivalent in the market. The search that used to require two weeks of database mining, network calls, and association list scraping now starts with a complete, data-grounded long list — built in hours, not days.

What you do with that time is up to you. Dakota gives you the time back.

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**See how Dakota Marketplace works for executive search.**

[Request an Executive Search-Specific Demo](#)

» [REQUEST A DEMO](#)