

# **THE LEGACY OF HOSPITALITY RECRUITMENT FROM WRITING ON BLACKBOARDS BY ALFRED MARKS TO DIGITAL JOB BOARDS**

**DO WE NOW HIRE RESUMES BY AUTO BOT, NO LONGER PEOPLE?**



The recruitment industry has changed drastically as every other industry over the years. But, we have to know our past to understand our future. The concept of recruitment dates back to 55 B.C. with the Roman Army. In that year, Julius Caesar signed a decree that stated that any soldier who brought another soldier into the Roman Army would earn a reward. Thus, the first employee referral program was born.

## **EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES**

One of the oldest references to employment agencies was in 1650 in England when Henry Robinson proposed an office of addresses and encounters that would link employers to workers. The British Parliament rejected the proposal, but he himself, opened such a business which unfortunately was short

lived. The first labor exchange was established by Alger A. Hill in 1871 in England. This was later augmented by officially sanctioned candidate exchange created by the Labor Bureau Act of 1902 which subsequently went nationwide. The present provider of search jobs in the U.K. is called Job Centre Plus.

The idea to create employment agencies as a way to fight unemployment, was eventually adopted in every developed country by the beginning of the 20th Century. In the United States, a federal program of employment services was rolled out for the new deal by the then President Franklin Roosevelt. The initial legislature was called the Wagner Picer Act of 1933, and more recently recruitment happens through centers established called “Work Force Investment of 1998”. In Australia the first employment service was set up in 1946 called “Commonwealth Employment Services” **here individuals enter these centers to arrange personal interviews with employees registered with this government agency.**



The first private employment agency was founded by John Gabatist in 1875 in England. He recruited school masters for public schools. In the United States, the first private employment agency was owned by Fred Winslow, who started an engineering agency in 1893. Another of the oldest agencies on record was started by Katherine Felton as a response to the problems brought on by the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire. For most of the 20th century, private employment agencies were considered quasi-illegal entities under International Law. This was to prevent the abusive practices of then “Private Organizations”. Then as now in most countries private agencies are tightly regulated. Most reputable executive search companies can only accept payments from Client’s; not Candidates. This is called an A license. There are still some other licenses allowed where payment can be accepted from candidates to the recruitment company, but they are very few and mostly in developing countries.

Before the industrial revolution, large businesses and hotels for Recruitment focused on local workers, the management positions being generally reserved for the owners, the noble or distinguished gentlemen.

From the second half of the nineteenth century, the industrial revolution fostered economic development. With the larger size of company’s and growing needs for mass hiring, the complexity of internal processes increased considerably, and the hiring process started to get more specific with

business development and Hotel management. Therefore companies had to find large amounts of educated people to handle very specific jobs and these people were not necessarily from their nearest village. It was therefore necessary to reach them in a new and efficient way. **Generally this was accomplished by sending people from town to town where they would go to the town centre or town market and would yell at the top of their lungs asking those whom did not have a job to follow them back to their town for a job.**

## WHO STARTED THE FIRST EXCLUSIVE HOSPITALITY AGENCY?

In 1919, Alfred Marks decided to enter the hospitality recruitment business. His company successfully operated from 1919 until 1956 in the United Kingdom Alfred Marks had himself, been a trainee hotel manager before launching an agency for catering staff from a small office on Firth Street Soho in London. In 1919, he carved out a lucrative niche supplying waiters for west end banqueting trade at 5 shillings for luncheon and 7 and 6 pence for dinner out of which he took commissions of 6 pence and 9 pence respectively. His business grew to be the largest in the World supplying catering staff in 70 countries.

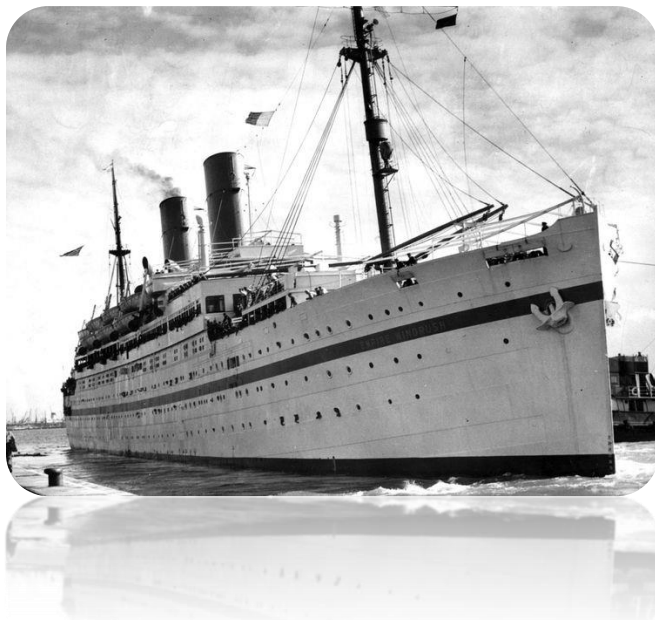


Alfred liked to joke “as long as a candidate was breathing, they could find them a job.” At this point, the staffing industry was in its infancy stage. Alfred Marks was the leading figure for many years for recruitment and employment services and helped establish the legal framework which agencies are still operated. Alfred Marks was killed in an explosion in Richmond Park, United Kingdom in 1942 while serving as a catering officer in the home guard.

People whom were placed by Alfred Marks share the story of how the process occurred. They entered a large office on Firth Street in London. There were approximately 50 chairs and a massive blackboard, some say it was 15 feet or longer. On it were listed hospitality opportunities in the U.K., Europe and globally. Many in the British Colonies of India, Canada, Bermuda, the Caribbean, Australia, etc. After you entered, you took a number and waited for your turn. You then spoke with one of the members of the company in a small cubicle on the side of the room. No resumes were asked for or offered; it was not until the late 1940's that people were creating curriculum vitae's depicting their current personal

profiles and skills personally. In the early 20th Century, your resume was only the written references your employer gave you when you left their employment. During your interview with an Alfred Mark's Consultant, you chose what position you wanted; there was a 5 minute interview; no special interview questions; no reference checking; no Talent Plus, etc. Once it was decided on which role you would accept, if it was in the U.K. they would try to reach the employer by phone (there weren't that many phones at that time). If they could, there was a 5 minute conversation between you and the employer and if all was agreed upon, you would start work immediately.

On the other hand, if the role was offshore or where there was no phone communication, they would have to send a letter outlining your background to the client. The letter could take up to 2 weeks or longer to get there and the reply of course would take as long. Therefore, a month later, you might find that you had an offer to work in Bermuda or India, etc. The client would either advise you to buy a boat passage or train ticket or they would provide you with a Transportation Voucher. Most overseas positions required you travel by boat since there were no regular airplane service and you would usually have to take a train and then a boat. Your trip to commence employment could also take weeks! Alfred Marks did a great deal of recruitment in the cruise line business. Surprisingly, even with less than what we would consider professional human resource interview techniques, the Alfred Marks Bureau's success rate was astronomical!



In some roles, such as on cruise lines, you were responsible for your own work dress. I remember many years ago doing a lengthy speech on the staffing situation on the Titanic for a cruise industry conference in Miami. I shared the story of how the staff would have to provide their own tuxedos or black suits which they were charged for cleaning. The term "hot bed" was named at this time, since your tour of duty as a Waiter or Restaurant Manager, etc. was 12 hours. Therefore you would sleep 12 hours and work 12 hours and your bed was occupied while you were working by someone else whom was doing the next shift.

With all this in mind, Mark's Agency was very prosperous and did not change their process drastically even into the 1950's other than using telex and telephones. Candidates could now fly to their job destination in days not weeks. After 47 years of exclusive hospitality recruitment, Alfred Marks became

a general agency. They were purchased by Adacco and now are not really on the hospitality recruitment radar.

Bernard Marks, headed the employment agency founded by his father Alfred and grew it into a publicly listed company. He ran the business until 1983. The Marks Agency was later immortalized in Paul McCartney's song Temporary Secretary, "Mr. Marks can you find for me someone strong and sweet fitting on my knee" continuing "Mr. Marks can you send her quick cause my regular has been getting sick" and "Mr. Marks I can pay her well if she comes along and can stay a spell". Bernard, after his father Alfred's death in 1942 gave up his studies to enlist and was commissioned into the Royal West African Forest Frontier. In 1974, Bernard was co-author with Shirley Flack of "Once Upon a Typewriter", the story and movie of 12 successful women who began their career in a typing pool. In retirement, he served two years on equal opportunities commission and was an active proponent for equal rights of women in business.

Alfred Marks was proud to acknowledge that they had helped individuals find jobs in 70 countries. Renard International, in our history, has far surpassed that number and in countries which didn't exist, both when Alfred Marks was in business and even when we at Renard started the company in 1970. Alfred Marks was successful almost 100% at the time and he did not send countless resumes but sent people that he felt were qualified. Now on any search, resumes rain down like a thunderstorm in the jungle.



When Renard International began business you could hear the clickety-clack of horse hoofs in our office as resumes were sent by telex or by snail mail. Now, resumes travel by e-mails at the speed of light.

Until the early 1990's the best way to hire people that were not from your family was to post an announcement in the newspaper. Almost all the newspapers had a job section, or "job board". At the time, companies had to pay for each word in their announcement. So everyone kept their ads simple and straight forward. There was no Google search engines to help you know more about the position or the company.

**When Internet became globally** accessible many recruitment firms and job board engines made their appearance. Some of them still exist today, like Monster.com created in 1999. In 2012 monster generated over a billion US dollars turnover. During the last two years hundreds of online recruitment websites and recruitment firms were born as it has now become very inexpensive to start this type of business and so this has made it a very competitive and aggressive business model.

**In the 1990's, online** recruitment was the exact same as newspaper announcements except that they were on the web. When you looked for a job, you were shown a list of jobs, written in the same newspaper style. When a new generation of entrepreneurs decided to address the market and leverage the new technologies; so job boards became



much more detailed. Some recruitment firms (dating sites as well) started to consider **connecting** candidates and companies looking for one another. Social network made this evolution possible i.e. LinkedIn where you can check the profile of anyone, and even connect with her/him). People and companies then started accepting that online recruitment could be more than job boards so it has become actual professionals matching websites. Innovation come in leaps so current websites are rapidly evolving to become smarter and closer to the actual needs and expectations of both companies and candidates. There are now innovative robotic recruitment websites hosted by major hotel groups, where you talk and your interview is recorded by a robotic interviewer. This generation is called "affinity matching". A sort of smart realm for recruitment. Hospitality Recruitment has now no speed limits **and a reduced amount of person to person contact**. Today you may work for Fairmont or St. Regis – tomorrow you work for Accor or Marriott.....

During Alfred Marks' time, candidates would wait at their office anxiously to see what new opportunities were written in chalk on their blackboard. Now, individuals excitedly look at their

cellphones to see what Renard International will post, on our electronic job board. What the future will bring for the hospitality recruitment industry is unpredictable! In the beginning you hired people as resumes were not common until the early 50's. Now we hire resumes not people as the vastness of the industry insures that if you advertise an outstanding career opportunity such as on LinkedIn job boards easily a few hundred resumes will arrive in a day or so. Did you know that 40% of all resumes online are incorrect, out of date or missing jobs etc., intentionally or un-intentionally so you need to have a history in our industry to differentiate the good from not so good candidates who apply.

**Fast forward to 2021.** Now what? The industry started with no resumes, just letters of reference, then resumes came along, then we corresponded by mail then telex, then fax, then email, social networking, then Zoom and now live reality Holograms... Renard is the first to use Holograms which are digital versions of people that are viewed through your smartphone or computer, using augmented reality. This presents as a virtual person who stands and talks to you in your own space in real time. Holograms became extremely well known after being featured in movies such as Star Wars and Iron Man!

**We at Renard International use all resources that help us surface the superlative candidates for our client firms in the "hospitality segment".** Hospitality has specific requirements associated with it and so can never be totally replaced by computerization or Autobots. As of 2021, Renard International has been exclusively serving the hospitality search industry for 51 years. Every member of our team has tried to continue the high standards displayed by Alfred Marks almost a century ago. In 2018, Renard International surpassed the record of Alfred Mark's Bureau of 47 years in exclusive hospitality recruitment and have we seen the changes!! We are proud of our accomplishments and hope that our legacy will be as great as that of Alfred Mark's.

Yet are we really in the same business as Alfred Mark's? Does Hospitality now value a great resume more than it does a "great person... with passion, character and personality? Has digital automation and overwhelming choice of job boards and company websites which receive thousands of resumes daily force the whole world to filter applicants by brand name or buzz words? Has the digital age detached the personal interaction of recruitment and will it ever return?

**Stephen J. Renard**

**President**

**RENARD INTERNATIONAL HOSPITALITY SEARCH CONSULTANTS**

121 Richmond Street West, Suite 500

Toronto, ON. Canada, M5H 2K1

Tel: (1) 416 364 8325 ext. 228 Fax: (1) 416 364 4924

Email: [steve@renardinternational.com](mailto:steve@renardinternational.com)

Websites:

[www.renardinternational.com](http://www.renardinternational.com) [www.renardnewsletter.com](http://www.renardnewsletter.com) [www.renardglobalmanagement.com](http://www.renardglobalmanagement.com)

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