



- Founded in 1983
- Ownership acquired by Sherilyn Shackell in 2001
- Executive search and talent management services on a global scale
- Based in the United Kingdom, with global reach through membership of IMD International Search Group
- AESC Member Firm
- Practice focus is on Consumer, Technology and Service Sectors



Sherilyn Shackell
CEO

www.highfielduk.co.uk

Invenias offers a Pathway to Reduced Costs and Higher Profits

Sherilyn Shackell hesitated when she first considered switching to a new search software provider. Now she sees reduced overheads, better productivity...and regrets not making the leap sooner.

When you're a long-standing, legacy client of an executive search software system, says Sherilyn Shackell, CEO of Highfield Human Solutions, you tend to be willing to pilot a large number of upgrades and development features aimed at better aligning technology with people.

Yet, over time, and over the course of multiple system changes, patches and technical work-arounds, she recalls, it's easy for a firm to amass a rather large number of candidate and client records and a sense of being beholden to the legacy system, even as using it becomes more burdensome to the researchers and consultants it's supposed to serve.

"We had our old system for so long that there was such a huge amount of legacy data on there," Shackell recalls. "It almost became too scary a proposition to make a change. We conjured a lot of reasons why we'd face lots of headaches from migrating it all to a new software platform."

So that's why Shackell hesitated when her Personal Assistant (PA) first approached her about Invenias, despite the fact that the firm's legacy software had become a real problem rather than a solution.

"Our previous software system was so over-engineered that it was causing us more problems because it had been adapted over and over and over again for decades," Shackell recalls.

Faced with the reality that her firm's software was becoming an obstacle, and pressed ever more diligently by her PA, who had begun using Invenias for Customer Relationship Management (CRM) with great effect to support Shackell's other business concern, The Marketing Academy, she at last relented.

"My PA, who is very heavily involved in our search firm, loved it. She was canvassing to move Highfield over to Invenias, and in the end, I just gave in," Shackell says with a grin.

The result? "It's been brilliant," Shackell says. "Invenias is transformational. Because of its ease of use, we were immediately able to redeploy our internal resources. The net outcome was that we were able to save one full-time head in research and one in administration and apply their skills to other tasks."

Shackell says she was surprised to learn that an executive search software platform could have such an impact – not only on the search process and how her team works – but also on her firm's bottom line.

"Invenias is money saving from an administration basis. The reporting is much more intuitive, much quicker. The integration with web applications is huge. The researchers would say the most transformational impact has been the ease of

pulling information from other sources," Shackell observes.

"Another benefit is that the time it takes us to execute an assignment has sped up by 20-25 percent," she adds. "That's not just measured in research time, but also in our search consultants' time because they can communicate more quickly and update our records to report on conversations more easily."

What's more, she adds: "We found Invenias so intuitive that the learning curve was really fast – the new way of doing things – we were able to use it within a day because of the intuitive nature of the system. My fear was that we'd have months of pain making the change. I can look back and with the marvellous clarity of hindsight recognize that I sat on the fence too long and that cost me a lot of money."

Looking back, Shackell says, she recalls making a really radical decision that, at the time, seemed daunting, but with the benefit of hindsight, was a natural extension of her commitment to sign with Invenias.

"We simply chose not to migrate our old data. That data had grown so old because our consultants weren't updating it with our previous software, so 95 percent of it was just dead," Shackell recalls. "So we kept the data on the legacy system's server for a year, but we learned it wasn't touched in about eight months, so we left it entirely."

"We do no manual input now because everything is just done automatically through the integration with Outlook, so there's no duplication of anything – that was not the case with our previous search software," Shackell says.

The Highfield CEO says she and her team have a much better view about the impact the right technology and user interface can have on team performance and business results.

"Invenias directly links to profitability. It has certainly improved the profitability of our firm. I hesitated for two and a half years. The only regret I have is not making that decision years sooner than I did. I'd have had two and a half years' of higher profits. Invenias pays for itself in spades."

Shackell adds: "The biggest competitor Invenias has is apathy. If Invenias is head to head with any other system, the product will speak for itself. But it's the inaction – that's where I was – that will cost search firm owners if they're not willing to try something new, something they'll quickly learn is much better."



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