



WHY SMARTDEPT.

It's in the name.

smart

We're not recruiters. We're creatives placing creatives, so we know what good looks like. Most of our competitors match keywords to a job description. We look at the portfolios and understand the strategies. Just like you.

When you meet our candidate, it feels like a second interview, because we already did the first one for you.

dept.

We're not a big box doing a transaction. We want to become an extension of your team. Same people every time, no account handoffs, nobody new every six months.

We learn your culture, your goals, and the difference between the work you'll approve and the work you'll quietly redo yourself.

WHAT YOU GET

Three people. Not thirty resumes.

Tell us the role that's hurting most and in 72 hours or less you'll have three candidates who can actually do it, with their work, and an honest opinion about which one we'd hire.

HOW SURE WE ARE

Freelance and contract: the first 10 hours are on us. If it isn't right you don't pay for them, and we'll have someone else starting inside 48 hours.

Direct hire: 90 day guarantee. No exclusivity. No retainer. And our searches are free until you decide to hire someone.

You're risking ten hours. We're risking the relationship.

THE PROOF

25 years. Same industry, every day of it. Client relationships going on 20+ years. Certified Women's Business Enterprise.

LET'S START A CONVERSATION

Whether you're hiring today, planning for tomorrow, or just want another perspective, tell us the role that's hurting most.

Eric Pairitz

Principal

Michelle Pairitz

Principal and Strategic Talent Partner

We Know What Good Looks Like.

smartdept. is a nationwide creative, digital, and marketing talent resource with roots in Chicago, Seattle, and Grand Rapids. We are a WBENC certified Women's Business Enterprise. We place freelance, contract, contract-to-hire, and direct hire talent into on-site, remote, and hybrid roles.

We serve companies of every size, and you get the same people every time. No account handoffs, nobody new every six months. That is how the relationships we value get built, and it is why so many of them have lasted decades.

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HOW WE HELP

- ✓ **Freelance & Contract**
- ✓ **Direct Hire**
- ✓ **Contract-to-Hire**
- ✓ **Project Teams & SOW**
- ✓ **Agency Extension**
- ✓ **Payrolling**

We employ your freelancer as our W-2, so you skip the compliance, the benefits administration, and the risk. Payroll taxes, healthcare, paid sick leave, onboarding, background checks, time tracking, and 401k are all handled on our side.

WHAT YOU GET

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Tell us the role that is hurting most and in 72 hours or less you will have three candidates who can actually do it, with their work, and an honest opinion about which one we would hire.

"To be able to have the pleasure of working for 17 years with the same owners that founded the company is to say the very least, not just an anomaly."

Kathy, Chicago

Ten Reasons People Pick Us.

Nobody switches staffing partners because of a capabilities list. They switch because something is wearing on them. Here are the ten we hear most, in the words we usually hear them in.

- 1 You want your nights back.**
 Nobody got into marketing to read 500 resumes. We read them so you can go do the job you were actually hired for.
- 2 You're scared of making the wrong hire in front of your boss.**
 A bad hire is your name on it, not ours. Twenty five years of doing this means we've already made the mistakes you're worried about making.
- 3 You don't have anyone to think out loud with.**
 Most creative leaders are the only person in the building who does what they do. We're the second opinion you don't have on staff.
- 4 You're hiring for a skill you don't personally have.**
 Judging a motion designer's reel when you came up in brand strategy is a guess. We take the guessing out of it.
- 5 You're tired of being sold to.**
 We're not going to pitch you. We'd rather know what you're dealing with and be useful later.
- 6 You've been burned by the vendor who disappeared after the invoice cleared.**
 You'll know our names. You'll be able to reach us. That sounds small until you've had the opposite.
- 7 Your team is underwater and you feel bad about it.**
 Watching good people burn out is its own kind of stress. Bringing in help is faster than watching someone quit.
- 8 You want it to still be right in month three.**
 Onboarding hiccups, fit issues, the awkward stuff. We stay in it after the start date. Most don't.
- 9 You have a supplier diversity goal and you don't want to compromise to hit it.**
 We're WBENC certified. You get the box checked and the better hire. Not one or the other.
- 10 You want to stop starting over.**
 Learning your business once means the next role takes a fraction of the effort. That compounding is the whole point of a relationship.

THE SHORT VERSION

Read those again and notice what is missing. Not one of them is about finding a candidate. They are about workload, exposure, and being alone in it. That is the job we actually do.

We Already Did the First Interview.

Anyone can read a resume and a portfolio. Both tell you what someone has done. Neither tells you how they will behave on your team when the brief changes at four o'clock. We use structured behavioral interviewing to get at that, asking about specific past situations rather than hypotheticals. In the most recent re-analysis of hiring predictors, structured interviews came out as the single best predictor of job performance, ahead of cognitive ability tests and work samples.

How They Think

PROBLEM SOLVING

How someone breaks down a problem they have not seen before. What they did when the deadline moved. Whether they can describe a project that went badly and what they took from it.

Temperament

FIT FOR YOUR ROOM

Not whether we like them. Whether how they work fits the room they are walking into. Some teams need someone who will push back in a review. Others need someone who can absorb ten rounds of revisions without losing the thread.

Motivation

WHY THIS ROLE

Someone who wants the work is a different hire from someone who wants out of their current job. On paper the two look identical. In a behavioral interview they do not.

REASON 4

You're hiring for a skill you don't personally have.

Judging a motion designer's reel when you came up in brand strategy is a guess. We came up in this industry, so we look at portfolios and understand the strategy behind them. Twenty five years in creative, digital, and marketing means we know what good looks like, and we know who is good.

REASON 2

You're scared of making the wrong hire in front of your boss.

A bad hire is your name on it, not ours. You are buying the mistakes somebody else already made. And we do not recruit outside creative, marketing, and digital, which is exactly why the pool is deep and why we do not have to make promises we cannot keep.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU

When you meet our candidate, it feels like a second interview, because we already did the first one for you.

There's Nobody to Escalate To.

The clicking. The recordings. The hold music. You finally reach a person and it is never the person you need, so they pass you to someone, who passes you to someone else. Two hours later you have the same problem you started with. Plenty of staffing firms are built exactly that way. Here is what the other kind looks like.

1 You get listened to.

Not everyone needs the same thing. A smaller team can afford to ask what actually works for you and build around the answer, because it is not running a process designed to serve ten thousand accounts identically.

REASON 3 • REASON 5

2 The process bends.

Large operations are rigid by design, because exceptions do not scale. We will work around your intake, your approval chain, and your timeline, and we will build something with you when the standard version does not fit.

3 There is nobody to escalate to.

You will know our names and you will be able to reach us, because the people who own the answer are the people on the account. That sounds small until you have had the opposite.

REASON 6

4 We have to be quicker.

Keeping pace with much larger competitors means moving faster than they can, and that pressure works in your favor. It shows up as faster submittals and a willingness to try something that is not already in a playbook.

5 We stay in it after the start date.

Onboarding hiccups, fit issues, the awkward stuff. We check in whether there is a problem or not, because the placement is rarely why a client stays. It is the relationship around it.

REASON 8

6 We would rather be useful than sold to.

We would rather tell you a role is not worth filling right now than fill it badly and keep the fee. That is the whole trade, and it is why the relationships last.

REASON 5

THE SHORT VERSION

Same people every time. No account handoffs, nobody new every six months. That is the half of the name most firms cannot say out loud.

You Want Your Nights Back.

The creative hiring market changed again. Budgets are approved later, teams are leaner, and the best people are off the market before most companies finish scheduling a second round. Here is what we are seeing right now, and what to do about it.

1 Speed is the whole game.

Strong creatives are gone in days, not weeks. If your process runs six weeks, you are not choosing the best candidate, you are choosing whoever is left. Three vetted people in 72 hours (or less) beats thirty resumes in two weeks.

2 Contract first is the new normal.

Teams are committing in smaller pieces and scaling as the work proves out. Contract and contract-to-hire let you add real capacity this quarter without betting on headcount you may not get next quarter.

3 Niche beats volume.

A generalist firm matches keywords to a job description. We came up in this industry, so we look at portfolios and understand the strategy behind them.

4 Location is a policy question, not a talent question.

Most teams have settled somewhere in the middle on hybrid. The mistake is letting an office policy quietly shrink your search to one zip code. Decide the policy first, then hire the best person who can meet it.

5 Your team is underwater and you feel bad about it.

Watching good people burn out is its own kind of stress, and it is expensive twice: once in the work that slips and again in the person who leaves. Bringing in help is faster than watching someone quit.

REASON 7

72 hours

Or less. From the conversation to three named, screened, available people.

3, not 30

You stop being the filter. That is what you are paying us for.

10 hours

On us, on freelance and contract. Replacement starts inside 48 hours.

THE SHORT VERSION

Nobody got into marketing to read 500 resumes. We read them so you can go do the job you were actually hired for.

Partners We Have Supported.

Client relationships going on 20+ years, across every industry and vertical. Nobody keeps a vendor that long for pricing.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT OUR SUCCESS WITH THESE PARTNERS



"smartdept. has always worked hand-in-hand with us to vet and test candidates targeted to meet our unique talent requirements. We continue to recommend smartdept. inc. as one of the best talent resources not only in Chicago, but throughout the U.S."

Jeannette, Chicago

The Box Checked and the Better Hire.

WBENC certification is the most widely recognized national standard for women owned businesses in the U.S. Plenty of companies list it in a footer. Fewer explain what it actually does for the buyer on the other side of the invoice. You have a supplier diversity goal and you do not want to compromise to hit it. You should not have to.

1 It counts where it counts.

Federal primes carry subcontracting goals for women owned businesses, and most large buyers run their own diverse spend targets. Work routed through a certified WBE counts toward them. The benefit shows up in your supplier diversity numbers, not on your tax return.

2 Profitability and lower costs.

The Hackett Group benchmarks mature supplier diversity programs at 133% greater procurement ROI, with up to 20% savings on buying operations. Those returns follow programs that get run, not certifications that sit in a file.

3 Smaller means faster.

Small companies have to think differently to stand out. Our size lets us move quickly, submit faster, and build around your team instead of a playbook.

4 A wider network than ours.

Working with a certified WBE signals a commitment your customers and your own people notice. It also plugs you into a network of other certified alliances, which has a way of opening doors you were not already looking at.

5 Hiring wider is the other half.

Most teams that say they cannot find anyone have a process problem, not a talent problem. Widen the front of the process: the job description, the referral loop, and the same short list of schools and agencies. Then judge the work at the end.



THE SHORT VERSION

You get the box checked and the better hire. Not one or the other.

You Want to Stop Starting Over.

Twenty five years in one industry teaches you something. The placement is rarely why a client stays. It is the relationship around it, the person who picks up the phone, knows your team, and tells you the truth. Learning your business once means the next role takes a fraction of the effort. That compounding is the whole point.

1 Relationships over metrics.

Most firms optimize for placements made this quarter. We optimize for the next ten years. Roughly 80% of companies that deliver personalized service beat their goals, because people who are actually invested in you do better work for you.

2 Time is money.

It can cost up to five times more to win a new customer than to keep one. The same math runs on your team. Every search you start from zero is time you are not shipping work.

3 Stability at the top.

Same leadership for 25 years. Same people on your account. That is why some of our client relationships are past twenty years.

4 Give and receive.

61% of customers leave because of bad service, not a bad product. We would rather tell you a role is not worth filling right now than fill it badly and keep the fee. That is the whole trade.

5 A second opinion you do not have on staff.

Most creative leaders are the only person in the building who does what they do. An honest read on the market, real help on how the team is structured, and someone to think out loud with.

REASON 3

THE SHORT VERSION

Hire the partner who will still know your team in five years, not the one with the biggest database.

Six Ways In, One Point of Contact.

- ✓ **Freelance & Contract**
- ✓ **Direct Hire**
- ✓ **Contract-to-Hire**
- ✓ **Project Teams & SOW**
- ✓ **Agency Extension**
- ✓ **Payrolling**

At smartdept., we help you build high performing creative teams by finding the right talent at the right time. As industry insiders, we act as talent advisors, not just recruiters, helping you move faster, hire smarter, and stay aligned with market trends in pay, flexibility, and growth.

We take time to understand your team's structure and culture to ensure the best fit, especially for specialized roles.

NATIONWIDE, ON YOUR TERMS

Remote, hybrid, or on site. Roles offering flexibility are roughly 20% of LinkedIn listings but attract about 60% of applications. Nothing else you can change about a posting moves volume like that.

PAYROLLING

The paperwork got easier. The risk did not.

Employment is complicated, slow, and expensive. Payrolling hands the whole thing to us: your freelancer becomes our W-2 employee, and the compliance goes with them.

A filing threshold does not decide whether someone is an employee. The work does. Get it wrong and you face back taxes, unpaid overtime, benefits, and penalties. Making the person our W-2 takes that exposure off your side of the table.

WHAT WE COVER SO YOU DO NOT

- ✓ **Payroll taxes**
- ✓ **Healthcare coverage**
- ✓ **Paid sick leave**
- ✓ **Onboarding**
- ✓ **Record keeping**
- ✓ **Background checks**
- ✓ **HR / Employment**
- ✓ **Time tracking**
- ✓ **401k**

THE SHORT VERSION

Your talent gets paid on time and receives full benefits, while you get a trusted partner focused on building teams that last.

Three People. Not Thirty Resumes.

You are not buying candidates. You are buying relief from being the filter, and cover from being wrong. So here is the offer, with the risk on our side of the table.

WHAT YOU GET

- ✓ **One conversation, not an intake form**
- ✓ **Three people in 72 hours or less**
- ✓ **Their work, reviewed by someone who can judge it**
- ✓ **An honest opinion on which one we'd hire**
- ✓ **Someone who can start Monday**

Tell us the role that is hurting most. Not a spec, just tell us about it. One conversation, one person, and that person does not change.

WHAT YOU RISK

Freelance and contract: the first 10 hours are on us. If it is not right you do not pay for them, and we will have someone else starting inside 48 hours.

Direct hire: 90 day guarantee.

No exclusivity. No retainer. Nothing to sign to try it. Keep whoever else you are using.

Our searches are free until you decide to hire someone.

We check in after the start date whether there is a problem or not.

You're risking ten hours. We're risking the relationship.

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