

March 5, 2001

Q&A

Elliot finds fulfillment in the search For right match of executive, company

By Dina Berta

Alice Elliot started her own company nearly 18 years ago by using the telephone at the foot of her bed to make a large number of calls. She always had known she would have her own business ever since she was a child, growing up in Queens, N.Y.

Today, the Elliot Group, based in Tarrytown, N.Y., is composed of Elliot Associates Inc., a leading executive search firm for the hospitality industry; ElliotSearch.com, an executive search service for Internet and technology companies; Elliot Solutions LLC, a consulting agency; and Elliot Executive Source, executive searches for manufacturers and suppliers.

The Annual, invitation-only Elliot Hospitality Conference has become a prominent forum for 100 to 200 industry leaders to share ideas and expertise on human resources issues.

The Women's Foodservice Foundation will name Elliot its Trailblazer of the Year for 2001 during its annual conference in Dallas later this month. Elliot recently shared her thoughts on her company's success and the industry.



Has the cooling down of the economy affected recruiters?

Our practice is consulting and searching has never been healthier. We've had double-digit growth every

year. I'd like to think all of that is because of us, but it's the industry and what the need is.

Eating out is not so much a habit as it is a destination. Food is fun. It's a form of entertainment, regardless of social level or income. People have so many options in their dining experience. I think they will always seek that.

It's the responsibility of the hospitality industry to make sure that experience is captured. There does have to be continual education as to why restaurants and the hospitality field should be a destination point for careers. It's a tremendous place to build a life.

How difficult is it to bring in top executives from outside the industry?

The hospitality industry uniformly and consistently does not pay on a par with other industries. I think in the past the reason was that the point of entry did not necessitate educational credentials. But I think the industry is making great strides. We recently helped place a chief financial officer in a restaurant company. He had been with a five-star retailer.

What are companies looking for in their executives?

There's no substitute for great leadership, particularly in this industry. People want to work with people who make them better at what they do.