

A headhunter's new home

In his more than two decades as a Wall Street headhunter, **Russ Gerson** has recruited some notable rainmakers. For instance, he lured Bear Stearns global banking chief Jeff Urwin from Lehman Brothers in 1996. And it was Gerson who persuaded now-infamous technology banker Frank Quattrone to leave Deutsche Morgan Grenfell and join Credit Suisse First Boston in 1998.

Now Gerson, 45, and a group of his colleagues from executive search giant A.T. Kearney are venturing out on their own. They've formed a New York-based recruiting boutique called Gerson Group that will seek to broaden its scope beyond searches by providing strategic advice and other services.

While working at Kearney, for example, Gerson helped arrange Nomura Securities' 2001 equity investment in Thomas Weisel Partners, a search client at the time. He and the 11 other professionals at Gerson Group want to work on similar deals. A.T. Kearney,

Gerson says, wasn't keen on having its recruiters offer services that far afield from its core business.

"We're trying to be more than just headhunters," says Gerson. "Being independent allows us to be more strategic and advisory-driven."

Among the new firm's senior professionals is David Hart, who headed A.T. Kearney's financial services search practice, and Maureen Brille, another accomplished veteran from Kearney, who is the sister of Banc of America Securities health care über-banker Brian Brille.

Gerson Group should have plenty to keep it busy. "Right now reminds me a lot of 2000 in terms of the level of deal making activity," says Gerson. "The firms are doing well,

so they're all hiring selectively, and some are really looking to expand aggressively. We think the timing for us is very fortunate."



Dan Briznac

Gerson: Leaving the nest