

HUDSON HIGHLAND GROUP INC
Form 424B3
February 16, 2005

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Registration Statement No. 333-119563

Prospectus

Hudson Highland Group

1,350,000 Shares of Common Stock

By this prospectus, we may offer up to 1,350,000 shares of our common stock from time to time in connection with acquisitions of businesses, assets or securities of other companies whether by purchase, merger or any other form of acquisition or business combination.

The amount and type of consideration we will offer and the other specific terms of each acquisition will be determined by negotiations with the owners or the persons who control the businesses, assets or securities we may acquire. We may structure business acquisitions in a variety of ways, including acquiring stock, other equity interests or assets of the acquired business, merging the acquired business with us or one of our subsidiaries or acquiring the acquired business through one of our subsidiaries. We expect that the price of the shares we issue will be related to their market price, either when we tentatively or finally agree to the particular terms of the acquisition, when we issue the shares, when the acquisition is completed or during some other negotiated period, and may be based on average market prices or otherwise. We may issue shares at fixed offering prices, which may be changed, or at other negotiated prices. We may be required to provide further information by means of a post-effective amendment to the registration statement or a supplement to this prospectus once we know the actual information concerning a specific acquisition.

We will pay all expenses of this offering. We do not expect to pay any underwriting discounts or commissions in connection with issuing these shares, although we may pay finder's fees in connection with certain acquisitions. Any person receiving a finder's fee may be deemed an underwriter within the meaning of the Securities Act of 1933.

We may also permit individuals or entities who have received or will receive shares of our common stock in connection with the acquisitions described above to use this prospectus to cover resales of those shares. See "Resales of Shares" for information relating to resales of our common stock pursuant to this prospectus.

Our common stock is listed on The Nasdaq National Market under the symbol HHGP. We will apply to list the shares offered by this prospectus on The Nasdaq National Market. On February 14, 2005, the closing sale price of our common stock was \$34.32 per share.

On February 2, 2005, our board of directors declared two-for-one stock split in the form of a 100% stock dividend of shares of our common stock effective for stockholders of record on February 14, 2005 and payable on February 25, 2005. The 1,350,000 shares of our common stock that we may offer from time to time under this prospectus reflects the two-for-one stock split.

Neither the Securities and Exchange Commission nor any state securities commission has approved or disapproved of these securities or determined if this prospectus is truthful or complete. Any representation to the contrary is a criminal offense.

The date of this prospectus is February 16, 2005.

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ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS

Unless otherwise indicated or unless the context requires otherwise, all references in this prospectus to our company, we, our, us or similar references mean Hudson Highland Group, Inc.

This prospectus is part of a registration statement that we filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission, or SEC, utilizing a shelf registration process. Under this shelf process, we may, from time to time, sell up to 1,350,000 shares of our common stock in connection with the acquisition of various businesses in one or more offerings. This prospectus provides you with a general description of our common stock that we may offer. When we offer common stock under this prospectus, we may provide a prospectus supplement that will contain specific information about the terms of that offering. The prospectus supplement may also add, update or change information contained in this prospectus. You should read this prospectus and any applicable prospectus supplement together with additional information described under the heading Where You Can Find More Information.

You should rely only on the information contained or incorporated by reference in this prospectus and in any supplement. We have not authorized any other person to provide you with different information. If anyone provides you with different or inconsistent information, you should not rely on it. You should assume that the information appearing in this prospectus and any applicable prospectus supplement is accurate as of the date on their respective covers, regardless of time of delivery of this prospectus or any supplement or any sale of securities. Our business, financial condition, results of operations and prospects may have changed since those dates.

No action is being taken in any jurisdiction outside the United States to permit a public offering of the securities or possession or distribution of this prospectus or any supplement to this prospectus in that jurisdiction. Persons who come into possession of this prospectus or any supplement to this prospectus in jurisdictions outside the United States are required to inform themselves about and to observe any restrictions as to this offering and the distribution of this prospectus or any supplement to this prospectus applicable to that jurisdiction.

This prospectus incorporates important business and financial information about us that is not included in or delivered with this prospectus. We will provide you without charge upon your request, a copy of any documents that we incorporate by reference, other than exhibits to those documents that are not specifically incorporated by reference into those documents. You may request a copy of a document by writing to Hudson Highland Group, Inc., 622 Third Avenue, New York, New York 10017, Attention: Corporate Secretary, or by calling the Corporate Secretary at (212) 351-7300. To ensure timely delivery, you must request the information no later than five business days before you make your investment decision.

HUDSON HIGHLAND GROUP, INC.

We provide professional staffing services on a permanent, contract and temporary basis, as well as executive search and a range of human capital services to businesses operating in a wide variety of industries. We are organized into two business segments, Hudson businesses (Hudson) and Highland Partners (Highland), which constituted approximately 85% and 15% of our gross margin, respectively, for the year ended December 31, 2003.

Hudson. Hudson primarily provides temporary and contract personnel and permanent recruitment services to a wide range of clients. With respect to temporary and contract personnel, Hudson focuses on providing candidates with professional qualifications, including accounting and finance, legal and technology. The length of temporary assignment can vary widely, but assignments in the professional sectors tend to be longer than those in the general clerical or industrial sectors. With respect to permanent recruitment, Hudson focuses on mid-level professionals typically earning between \$50,000 and \$150,000 annually and possessing the professional skills and/or profile required by clients. Hudson provides permanent recruitment services on both a retained and contingent basis. In larger markets, Hudson's sales strategy focuses on both clients operating in particular business segments, such as financial services, healthcare, or technology, and candidates possessing particular

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professional qualifications, such as accounting and finance, information technology and communications, legal and healthcare. Hudson uses both traditional and interactive methods to select potential candidates for its clients, employing a suite of products that assesses talent and helps predict whether a candidate will be successful in a given role.

Hudson also provides a variety of other services through its Human Capital Solutions and Hudson Inclusion Solutions units that encompass services including, among others, customized interactive recruiting and human resource solutions, executive assessment and coaching, diversity assessment and consulting, organizational effectiveness, and career transition. Through the Hudson Highland Center for High Performance, Hudson also offers leadership solutions designed to assist senior management in enhancing the operating performance of large organizations. These services enable Hudson to offer clients a comprehensive set of human capital management services, ranging from providing temporary workers, to assessment or coaching of permanent staff, to recruitment or search for permanent executives and professionals, to outplacement.

Hudson operates on a global basis in 21 countries and over 100 offices with its revenue generated approximately evenly among North America, Europe (including the United Kingdom), and the Asia Pacific region (primarily Australia and New Zealand).

Highland. Highland offers a comprehensive range of executive search services on a retained basis aimed at recruiting senior level executives or professionals. Highland also has an active practice in assisting clients desiring to augment their boards of directors.

Highland approaches the market through industry sectors, such as financial services, life sciences, retail and consumer products, industrial and technology. This industry sector sales approach is designed to enable Highland to better understand the market conditions and strategic management issues faced by clients within their specific business sectors. Highland also recruits candidates through functional specialist groups, including board of directors, chief financial officer, chief information officer, human resources and legal. These functional expertise groups are comprised of consultants who have extensive backgrounds in placing executives in certain specialist positions within a business.

Highland operates as a global boutique with 15 practice offices in five countries. For the year ended December 31, 2003, approximately 68% of revenues in the Highland business were derived in North America.

Hudson Highland Group, Inc. was historically the combination of 67 acquisitions made between 1999 and 2002, which became the eResourcing and Executive Search divisions (HH Group) of Monster Worldwide, Inc. (Monster), formerly TMP Worldwide, Inc. Some of our constituent businesses have operated for more than 20 years. On March 31, 2003, Monster distributed all of the outstanding shares of the newly named HH Group to its stockholders of record on March 14, 2003. Since the spin-off from Monster, we have operated as an independent, publicly held company, have added two small acquisitions, and reorganized a number of smaller business units after determining that those businesses were not viable profit centers.

Our principal executive offices are located at 622 Third Avenue, New York, New York, 10017. Our telephone number is (212) 351-7300.

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USE OF PROCEEDS

This prospectus relates to common stock that we may offer from time to time in connection with the acquisition of various assets, businesses or securities. We will not receive any proceeds from these offerings other than the assets, businesses or securities acquired. When a selling shareholder uses this prospectus in a public reoffering or resale of shares of common stock acquired pursuant to this prospectus, we will not receive any proceeds from any such sale by a selling shareholder.

DESCRIPTION OF CAPITAL STOCK

The following description of our capital stock summarizes general terms and provisions that apply to the capital stock. Since this is only a summary it does not contain all of the information that may be important to you. The summary is subject to and qualified in its entirety by reference to our certificate of incorporation and our rights agreement, which are filed as exhibits to the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part and incorporated by reference into this prospectus. See [Where You Can Find More Information](#).

General

Our certificate of incorporation provides us with the authority to issue 100,000,000 shares of common stock, \$.001 par value per share, and 10,000,000 shares of preferred stock, \$.001 par value per share. We will disclose in an applicable prospectus supplement the number of shares of our common stock then outstanding. As of the date of this prospectus, no shares of our preferred stock were outstanding.

Our Common Stock

Dividends. Each share of our common stock is entitled to dividends if, as and when dividends are declared by our board of directors and paid. Under Delaware corporate law, we may declare and pay dividends only out of our surplus, or in case there is no such surplus, out of our net profits for the fiscal year in which the dividend is declared and/or the preceding year. We may not declare dividends, however, if our capital has been diminished by depreciation, losses or otherwise to an amount less than the aggregate amount of capital represented by any issued and outstanding stock having a preference on distribution. We will pay any dividend so declared and payable in cash, capital stock or other property equally, share for share, on our common stock.

Voting Rights. Each share of our common stock is entitled to one vote on all matters.

Liquidation Rights. In the event of our liquidation, dissolution or winding up, holders of the shares of our common stock are entitled to share equally, share for share, in the assets available for distribution, subject to any liquidation preference on any outstanding shares of our preferred stock.

Other. No stockholder of our common stock has preemptive or other rights to subscribe for additional shares of our common stock.

Our Preferred Stock

We will issue our preferred stock from time to time in one or more series as determined by our board of directors. Our board of directors is authorized to issue the shares of our preferred stock in one or more series and to fix the rights, preferences, privileges and restrictions thereof, including dividend rights, dividend rates, conversion rights, voting rights, terms of redemption, redemption prices, liquidation preferences and the number of shares constituting any series or the designation of such series, without further vote or action by the stockholders. The issuance of our preferred stock may have the effect of delaying, deferring or preventing a change in control of Hudson without further action by the stockholders and may adversely affect the voting and other rights of the holders of our common stock, including the loss of voting control to others.

Our board of directors has designated 1,000,000 shares of our preferred stock as Series A Junior Participating Preferred Stock in connection with the adoption of our stockholder rights plan, as described below. Each holder of Series A preferred shares will be entitled to a minimum preferential quarterly dividend payment of \$1.00 per share, but will be entitled to an aggregate dividend of 100 times the dividend declared per share of our common stock. In the event of liquidation, the holders of the Series A preferred shares will be entitled to a minimum preferential liquidation payment of \$100 per share, but will be entitled to an aggregate payment of 100 times the payment made per share of our common stock. Each Series A preferred share will have 100 votes, voting together with shares of our common stock. In the event of any merger, consolidation or other transaction in which shares of our common stock are exchanged, each Series A preferred share will be entitled to receive 100 times the amount received per share of our common stock.

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Preferred Share Purchase Rights

We have entered into a rights agreement pursuant to which each share of our common stock outstanding on February 28, 2005 will receive a dividend of a right to purchase from us one one-hundredth of a share of our Series A Junior Participating Preferred Stock. Each share of our common stock subsequently issued by us prior to the expiration of the rights agreement will likewise have attached one right. Unless the context requires otherwise, all references in this prospectus to our common stock include the accompanying rights.

Currently, the rights are not exercisable and trade with our common stock. If the rights become exercisable, then each full right, unless held by a person or group that beneficially owns more than 15% of our outstanding common stock, will initially entitle the holder to purchase one one-hundredth of a Series A preferred share at a purchase price of \$60 per one one-hundredth of a Series A preferred share, subject to adjustment. The rights will become exercisable only if a person or group has acquired, or announced an intention to acquire, 15% or more of our

outstanding common stock. Under some circumstances, including the existence of a 15% acquiring party, each holder of a right, other than the acquiring party, will be entitled to purchase at the right's then-current exercise price, shares of our common stock having a market value of two times the exercise price. If another corporation acquires our company after a party acquires 15% or more of our common stock, then each holder of a right will be entitled to receive the acquiring corporation's common shares having a market value of two times the exercise price.

The rights may be redeemed at a price of \$.001 until a party acquires 15% or more of our common stock and, after that time, may be exchanged until a party acquires 50% or more of our common stock at a ratio of one share of common stock, or one one-hundredth of a Series A preferred share, per right, subject to adjustment. Series A preferred shares purchased upon the exercise of rights will not be redeemable. The rights expire on February 23, 2015, subject to extension. Under the rights agreement, our board of directors may reduce the thresholds applicable to the rights from 15% to not less than 10%. The rights do not have voting or dividend rights and, until they become exercisable, have no dilutive effect on our earnings.

The rights have certain anti-takeover effects, in that they could have the effect of delaying, deferring or preventing a change of control of our company by causing substantial dilution to a person or group that attempts to acquire a significant interest in our company on terms not approved by our board of directors.

We describe the rights more completely in the rights agreement itself, which is contained in Exhibit 4.1 to our Registration Statement on Form 8-A filed with the SEC on February 3, 2005. This summary of the provisions of the rights agreement is qualified in its entirety by reference to that agreement.

Delaware Anti-Takeover Law

We are subject to the provisions of Section 203 of the Delaware General Corporation Law. In general, the statute prohibits a publicly held Delaware corporation from engaging in a business combination with an interested stockholder for a period of three years after the date of the transaction in which the person became an interested stockholder, unless the business combination or the transaction by which the person became an interested stockholder is approved by the corporation's board of directors and/or stockholders in a prescribed manner or the person owns at least 85% of the corporation's outstanding voting stock after giving effect to the transaction in which the person became an interested stockholder. The term business combination includes mergers, asset sales and other transactions resulting in a financial benefit to the interested stockholder. Subject to certain exceptions, an interested stockholder is a person who, together with affiliates and associates, owns, or within three years did own, 15% or more of the corporation's voting stock. A Delaware corporation may opt out from the application of Section 203 through a provision in its certificate of incorporation or by-laws. We have not opted out from the application of Section 203. The foregoing provisions of Section 203 of the Delaware General Corporation Law could have the effect of delaying, deferring or preventing a change of control of our company.

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PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION

This prospectus covers shares of common stock that we may issue from time to time in connection with acquisitions of businesses, assets or securities of other companies. In addition to the shares of common stock offered by this prospectus, we may offer other consideration, including stock options, cash, notes or other evidences of debt, assumption of liabilities or a combination of these types of consideration. In addition, we may lease property from, and enter into management agreements and consulting and noncompetition agreements with, the former owners and key executive personnel of the businesses to be acquired.

We expect the terms of acquisitions involving the issuance of the shares of common stock covered by this prospectus to be determined by direct negotiations between our representatives and the owners or controlling persons of the businesses, assets or securities to be acquired. Factors taken into account in acquisitions may include, among other factors, the quality and reputation of the business to be acquired and its management, the strategic market position of the business to be acquired, its proprietary assets, earning power, cash flow and growth potential, and the market value of its common stock when pertinent. The value of our shares of common stock issued in any such acquisition will be offered at prices based upon or reasonably related to the current market value of the common stock. The value will be determined either when the terms of the acquisition are tentatively or finally agreed to, when the acquisition is completed, when we issue the shares or during some other negotiated period. We do not expect to pay underwriting discounts or commissions, although we may pay finders' fees from time to time in connection with certain acquisitions. Any person receiving finders' fees may be deemed to be an underwriter within the meaning of the Securities Act of 1933, and any profit on the resale of securities purchased by them may be considered underwriting commissions or discounts under the Securities Act.

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In an effort to maintain an orderly market in our securities or for other reasons, we may negotiate agreements with persons receiving common stock covered by this prospectus that will limit the number of shares that they may sell at specified intervals. These agreements may be more or less restrictive than restrictions on sales made under the exemption from registration requirements of the Securities Act, including the requirements under Rule 144 or Rule 145(d), and the persons party to these agreements may not otherwise be subject to the Securities Act requirements. We anticipate that, in general, negotiated agreements will be of limited duration and will permit the recipients of securities issued in connection with acquisitions to sell up to a specified number of shares per week or business day or days. We may also determine to waive any such agreements without public notice.

RESALES OF SHARES

In general, the persons to whom we issue common stock under this prospectus will be able to resell our common stock in the public market without further registration and without being required to deliver a prospectus. However, certain persons who receive our common stock may want to resell those shares in distributions that would require the delivery of a prospectus. With our consent, this prospectus may be used by selling shareholders who may wish to sell shares of common stock. As used in this prospectus, selling shareholders may include donees and pledgees selling securities received from a named selling shareholder. We may limit our consent to a specified time period and subject our consent to certain limitations and conditions, which may vary by agreement.

We will receive none of the proceeds from any sales by selling shareholders. Any commissions paid or concessions allowed to any broker-dealer, and, if any broker-dealer purchases such shares as principal, any profits received on the resale of such shares, may be deemed to be underwriting discounts and commissions under the Securities Act. We will pay printing, certain legal, filing and other similar expenses of this offering. Selling shareholders will bear all other expenses of this offering, including any brokerage fees, underwriting discounts or commissions and their own legal expenses.

Selling shareholders may sell the shares of common stock offered by this prospectus:

through The Nasdaq National Market or any other securities exchange or quotation service that lists or quotes our common stock for trading;

in the over-the-counter market;

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in special offerings;

in privately negotiated transactions;

by or through brokers or dealers, in ordinary brokerage transactions or transactions in which the brokers solicits purchases;

in transactions in which a broker or dealer will attempt to sell shares as an agent but may position and resell a portion of the shares as principal;

in transactions in which a broker or dealer purchases as principal for resale for its own account;

through underwriters or agents; or

in an combination of these methods.

Selling shareholders may sell their shares at market prices prevailing at the time of sale, at prices related to such prevailing market prices, at negotiated prices or at fixed prices. The transactions above may include block transactions.

Resales by selling shareholders may be made directly to investors or through securities firms acting as underwriters, brokers or dealers. When resales are to be made through a securities firm, the securities firm may be engaged to act as the selling shareholders agent in the resale of the shares by the selling shareholders, or the securities firm may purchase securities from the selling shareholders as principal and thereafter

resell the securities from time to time. The fees earned by or paid to the securities firm may be the normal stock exchange commission or negotiated commissions or underwriting discounts to the extent permissible. The securities firm may resell the securities through other securities dealers, and commissions or concessions to those other dealers may be allowed. We and the selling shareholders may indemnify any securities firm participating in such transactions against certain liabilities, including liabilities under the Securities Act, and to reimburse them for any expenses in connection with an offering or sale of securities. We may also agree to indemnify the selling shareholders against any such liabilities or reimburse them for expenses. Profits, commissions and discounts on sales by persons who may be deemed to be underwriters within the meaning of the Securities Act may be deemed underwriting compensation under the Securities Act.

Selling shareholders may also offer shares of common stock covered by this prospectus by means of prospectuses under other registration statements or pursuant to exemptions from the registration requirements of the Securities Act, including sales that meet the requirements of Rule 144 or Rule 145(d) under the Securities Act. Selling shareholders should seek the advice of their own counsel about the legal requirements for such sales.

This prospectus will be amended or supplemented, if required by the Securities Act and the rules of the SEC, to disclose the name of the selling shareholder, the participating securities firm, if any, the number of shares of common stock involved and other information concerning the resale, including the terms of any distribution, including the names of any underwriters, brokers, dealers or agents and any discounts, commissions, concessions or other items constituting compensation. We may agree to keep the registration statement relating to the offering and sale by the selling shareholders of our securities continuously effective until a fixed date or the date on which the shares may be resold without registration under the Securities Act.

WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION

We file annual, quarterly and current reports, proxy statements and other information with the SEC. We also filed a registration statement on Form S-4, including exhibits, under the Securities Act of 1933 with respect to the common stock offered by this prospectus. This prospectus is a part of the registration statement, but does not contain all of the information included in the registration statement or the exhibits. You may read and copy the registration statement and any other document that we file at the SEC's public reference room at 450 Fifth Street, N.W., Washington D.C. Please call the SEC at 1-800-SEC-0330 for further information on the operation of the public reference room. You can also find our public filings with the SEC on the internet at a web site maintained by the SEC located at <http://www.sec.gov>.

We are incorporating by reference specified documents that we file with the SEC, which means:

incorporated documents are considered part of this prospectus;

we are disclosing important information to you by referring you to those documents; and

information we file with the SEC will automatically update and supersede information contained in this prospectus.

We incorporate by reference the documents listed below and any future filings we make with the SEC under Sections 13(a), 13(c), 14 or 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 after the date of this prospectus and before the end of the offering of the securities pursuant to this prospectus:

our Annual Report on Form 1-K for the year ended December 31, 2003;

our Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q for the quarters ended March 31, 2004, June 30, 2004 and September 30, 2004;

our Current Reports on Form 8-K, dated March 18, 2004, January 17, 2005, February 2, 2005;

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the description of our common stock contained in our Registration Statement on Form 10, dated March 14, 2003, and any amendment or report updating that description; and

the description of or preferred share purchase rights contained in our Registration Statement on Form 8-A, dated February 3, 2005, and any amendment or report updating that description.

You may request a copy of any of these filings, at no cost, by request directed to us at the following address or telephone number:

Hudson Highland Group, Inc.
622 Third Avenue
New York, New York 10017
(212) 351-7300
Attention: Corporate Secretary

LEGAL MATTERS

The validity of the shares of common stock offered by this prospectus will be passed upon for us by Foley & Lardner LLP.

EXPERTS

Our consolidated financial statements and the related financial statement schedules incorporated in this registration statement by reference to our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2003 have been audited by BDO Seidman, LLP, independent certified public accountants, to the extent and for the periods set forth in their reports, and have been so incorporated in reliance upon the reports of such firm given upon their authority as experts in accounting and auditing.