

Being Nimble in Your Interview Process: A Recruiting Caselet

While every executive search is unique, our recruiting caselets series describes several common scenarios that crop up during the search process.

A \$30 million affiliate-based organization needed a chief financial officer (CFO). For the position, the organization sought candidates who had specific experience with nonprofit accounting rules. In addition, the CFO would have to be fluent in Spanish and familiar with the Spanish-speaking constituency served by the agency. The search was launched in June, with the goal of having a new CFO in place by the start of the audit process in October.

Several candidates were lined up—including one who had particularly strong qualifications—and first-round interviews were scheduled for two weeks later. But the lead candidate quickly notified the search team that he was in the running for another job and that he felt an offer from that organization was imminent. The team faced a tough decision: should they completely disrupt the schedules of all the organization's top managers and move up the interviews or should they keep to the current timeline and risk losing their top candidate? Despite the logistical challenges, the managers cleared their schedules and interviews began within two days. "They made the search a priority," said Karen DeMay, Bridgestar's regional director of talent and recruiting, who oversaw the search.

DeMay said the decision to move quickly made a big difference later in the hiring process. After several interviews, the top candidate decided to accept a job back home in Latin America. But the organization's leaders had gained an important benchmark for their search. "Because they were nimble, they saw what a fully qualified candidate looked like," DeMay said. As a result, when an impressive new candidate surfaced later in the search, the organization immediately recognized everything that she brought to the table.

"Part of the hiring process is seeing what's out there," DeMay said. "If they hadn't already seen that other candidate, they might have thought, 'She's good, but maybe there's somebody else out there.'" The candidate was hired and the new CFO started work right on schedule on October 1.

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