

A COMPREHENSIVE CASE STUDY

Keeping a Professional Search on Track With Persistence and Creativity

Client Demographics

Nonprofit HR Practice Area: Impact Search Advisors by Nonprofit HR

Location: Washington, D.C.

Sector: Nonprofit

Mission Type: Human Rights — Promoting Peace, Democracy and Justice

Staff Size: Less than 25 employees

Annual Budget: Less than \$5 million

Type of Engagement: Professional Search

Search Duration: Five months

Engagement Scenario

Due to recent events in their country, a small NGO nonprofit received significant global attention and substantial funding. To keep pace with the growth, the human rights organization engaged Impact Search Advisors by Nonprofit HR for a confidential, exclusive search to identify and refer candidates for a Director of Operations role. The confidentiality level required that Impact Search Advisors by Nonprofit HR did not share the client's sensitive name, nature of work and location until the final round of interviews. This confidentiality arrangement is typical for sensitive roles within the sector. Impact Search Advisors by Nonprofit HR has seasoned experience recruiting these sensitive positions and specializes in handling such cases.

Engagement Details

The Director of Operations would be accountable for providing financial, accounting and grants management infrastructure for the nonprofit's grant portfolio. They would draft budgets for each response, and track spending and program delivery with periodic financial analyses and reporting — to donors, the Executive Director and the Board of Directors. In addition, the Director of Operations would provide administrative and HR support to advance the nonprofit's vital mission.

Considerations

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The professional search stalled within the first few weeks, as the organization's Executive Director (and point of contact) was not as responsive initially. In addition, as a result of extensive travel abroad and internal activities that required attention, Impact Search Advisors by Nonprofit HR needed to be flexible and adjust regular check-in sessions, and follow up on candidate assessments and finalize interview sessions.

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As the position evolved through the addition of position responsibilities added by the client, a misalignment between salary and role expectations at a below-market rate of \$75,000 (versus \$113,700-\$146,500) surfaced. The initial recruitment strategy from the client to “sell” the mission or culture of an organization to offset the lower salary became a barrier due to the confidentiality requirements – disclosure of the organization was not an option.

Placements

Impact Search Advisors by Nonprofit HR’s team expedited the process and, after a month, presented the candidates. Through a consultative approach, the Search Consultant provided candidate feedback on salary expectations and utilized our Market Rate Sheet to reassess the salary range. After discussion and consideration, the Executive Director became receptive to course correct the salary and the Board of Directors approved.

As a result of the recommendations provided and approved, the candidate pipeline quality improved significantly. Impact Search Advisors by Nonprofit HR recommended a rolling presentation style to accelerate the search process. Skill set expectations evolved as the professional search continued. To keep the search moving forward, Impact Search Advisors by Nonprofit HR, with the help of the Board, advised the Executive Director to refrain from adding new job requirements at this stage in the process.

After interviewing the initial candidates, Impact Search Advisors by Nonprofit HR experienced delays in receiving candidate assessments from the clients, impacting the timeline and status of candidates in this engagement as it was a competitive market at the time. To further partner with the client and move the project forward, the Search Consultant sprang to action and brought in an Impact Search Advisors by Nonprofit HR Team Leader and the Managing Director to facilitate a realignment session, outline new steps and update the timeline. We graciously offered to meet with the client to level set expectations and get the project back on track. The nonprofit’s Executive Director included a Board Member who became Impact Search Advisors by Nonprofit HR’s biggest ally and a fantastic partner in:

- Streamlining their skill set needs
- Committing to interviews
- Examining the presented candidates
- Reviewing previously rejected candidates

Despite the obstacles and impact on the timeline, Impact Search Advisors by Nonprofit HR’s team forged ahead. To meet the client’s needs, the Search Consultant conferred with the Board Member and received approval to offer a candidate a part-time role for \$75,000. The role would focus solely on central issues of grants management, accounting, general operational duties and financial administration. As a result, the client remained within their intended salary range with a budget to hire another team member to focus on HR and general administration duties. We were thrilled to have arrived at a solution that the client supported through our consultative approach.