

A COMPREHENSIVE CASE STUDY

Empathy & Strategic Talent Acquisition: Navigating Hiring During Ongoing Reduction in Force (RIF)

Client Demographics

Nonprofit HR Practice Area: Search

Location: New York, NY

Sector: Nonprofit

Mission Type: Education

Staff Size: 76-150 employees

Annual Budget: \$20 million - \$50 million

Type of Engagement: Executive Search & Recruitment Outsourcing

Search Duration: Three months for Director of Talent Acquisition & six months for other staffing hires

Engagement Scenario

A national education nonprofit engaged Nonprofit HR's Search team to identify and place a new Director of Talent Acquisition and recruit instructors for its expanding Aspiring Principal Fellowship Program. This need arose following a significant reduction in force (RIF). This case study illustrates how a strategic recruiting partnership enabled the organization to secure a pivotal leadership role and staff a critical program amid a period of organizational transformation.

Engagement Details

Organizations navigating financial uncertainty and workforce reductions often face a delicate balance — rebuilding their teams with intention while preserving trust and morale among remaining staff. The Director's role was essential to restoring culture and stabilizing recruitment efforts post-RIF, requiring both an agile hiring strategy and a compassionate approach to leadership during a time of transition.

Considerations

- 1 Fragile Workplace Morale:** With many employees still processing the impact of the RIF and some facing future terminations, several affected individuals sought new roles within the organization.
- 2 Complex Hiring Needs:** The adjunct faculty hiring process required efficiency and rigor to provide strong support for the large program.
- 3 Leadership Void:** The departure of the Senior Director of Talent Acquisition created a leadership gap, necessitating a replacement capable of stabilizing the organization and fostering a positive work culture.

Solutions

During a period of organizational restructuring, our team implemented a recruitment strategy focused on empathy and efficiency to address key challenges:

- **Empathetic Communication:** Many employees applied for new roles in hopes of staying with the organization. We ensured transparent, compassionate communication to maintain trust and fairness in the hiring process, which included thoughtful feedback to internal candidates not selected, reinforcing their value.
- **Balancing Internal & External Candidates:** We prioritized organizational needs by clearly communicating selection criteria to internal candidates, ensuring they felt respected throughout the process.
- **Mitigating Uncertainty & Maintaining Morale:** For employees facing termination, we provided clear updates and career transition support to alleviate uncertainty and preserve engagement.
- **Cultural Rebuilding through Leadership Selection:** The Director of Talent Acquisition role was essential for restoring stability, improving perceptions of the hiring process, and fostering a positive culture post-RIF. Our recruitment strategy was focused accordingly, with a targeted approach on those with experience post-RIF hiring and change management.

Search Placements

This organization partnered with Nonprofit HR's Search team to stabilize and rebuild their workforce following a significant reduction in force (RIF). Our team successfully filled 50 adjunct faculty positions and placed a new Director of Talent Acquisition, whose leadership restored trust and supported a positive, forward-looking culture. This partnership addressed immediate hiring needs while laying the foundation for long-term staffing stability through a replicable recruitment framework.

These hiring outcomes helped the client staff a revenue-generating principal course, ensuring skilled adjunct faculty were in place to deliver content effectively. The new Director of Talent Acquisition implemented retention strategies to enhance workplace culture and drive a positive recruitment process. Additionally, career transition support was provided to affected employees, offering them alternative employment opportunities, including with other organizations. We also tracked hiring effectiveness using structured metrics, such as recruitment timelines and candidate retention rates, to ensure continuous improvement.

By offering strategic solutions and compassionate engagement, Nonprofit HR guided this organization through a challenging period, enabling them to rebuild and strengthen their workforce for future success.

