



Careers+Leadership

Case Study:

Trilogy Partners With inVentiv Health To Transform Executive Team

Summary

inVentiv Health, a managed services organization that supports the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries, was growing rapidly—organically and through strategic acquisitions—and needed to fill several high-profile, senior-level positions with differing core competencies across the enterprise. Trilogy Search, a boutique search firm specializing in building executive management teams, was selected to transform the inVentiv team.

As might be expected in an extremely fast-moving organization, the process unfolded in a non-linear fashion, requiring a flexible, hands-on approach.

Over a 16-month period, Trilogy recruited executives for the following positions: Senior Vice President, Selling Solutions; General Counsel; President, Global Staffing; Executive Vice President, Commercial & Consulting; Chief Human Resources Officer; Senior Vice President of Human Resources, Clinical; and Senior Vice President of Human Resources, Commercial.

Client Profile:

inVentiv Health is a leading global provider of best-in-class clinical, commercial, and consulting services to companies seeking to accelerate performance. The company's client roster includes more than 550 pharmaceutical, biotech, and life sciences companies. With 13,000 employees in 40 countries, inVentiv rapidly transforms promising ideas into commercial reality.

As a contract research organization (CRO), inVentiv manages and supports every aspect of the clinical trial process in any therapeutic area; supports all phases of the product development life cycle from early compounds to patented blockbusters; and offers a full range of business consulting services.

Candidate Profile:

In addition to specific technical or industry expertise, key candidate criteria were:

1. Creative thinkers who also had the ability to inspire colleagues and direct lieutenants to transform inVentiv Health into a leader in all areas.
2. Fearless leaders with a finely honed ability to craft best practices and sound processes. Building a company via acquisition almost always requires outside executives to quickly move into leadership positions, assess and evaluate current programs, and re-engineer strategies to move the new entity forward.

Key Client Challenges

Fast-moving company in the process of more than doubling in size, from \$1B - \$2.5B in revenues.

Significant growth through acquisition; acquired personnel may or may not fit with overall corporate focus and strategy.

Direct competitors had bulletproof non-compete clauses, significantly shrinking the candidate pool.

Hiring strategy evolved over time and the sequence of searches was continually evaluated to ensure search work was carried out in the correct order and that incoming candidates were successfully on-boarded.

Trilogy Differentiators/Benefits

Unencumbered by “off limits” agreements

Creativity in terms of candidate outreach

Agile and responsive

High-touch, personal service

Candidate Chronicles

As we investigated a variety of industry segments, we began to focus on sectors with services components and an entrepreneurial culture that would match the meritocracy at inVentiv. Two candidates were identified and hired as a result of moving in this creative direction. Steve Roycroft, now EVP, Commercial & Consulting, came from Thompson Reuters, a leading provider of intelligent information for business and professionals. His broad background in building successful companies and his desire to apply his entrepreneurial focus to inVentiv was a perfect match. Additionally, he fully understands content development and service delivery and has the kind of global experience that’s a game changer for our client.

In placing Duncan Harwood as Chief Human Resources Officer, the client needed someone who really understood how to grow an effective HR organization quickly as well as knowledge and experience in the managed services business. This led us to consulting companies such as PWC where we found Duncan. He has one of the most strategic minds in his field along with deep experience in building global human resource departments for Fortune 1000 companies. This combination made him an extremely desirable hire.

Both gentlemen have proved to be extremely helpful in building best-in-class services models for inVentiv Health.

3. Agile hirers who were able to rapidly and aggressively acquire the right talent to support the organization’s objectives.
4. Strategic builders who wanted to invest in the development or rebuilding of a company/product. Rebuilding a company is challenging work and very different than selling and marketing products and services, for example.

Additionally, culture fit was a critical consideration. inVentiv Health demanded individuals who could be successful in a culture crafted for high-level performance.

“InVentiv Health is an excellent model of a meritocracy. With regard to the kind of person at the helm, they don’t seem to have any bias as long as the person can do the work well,” said Trilogy Managing Partner Chuck Pappalardo,

Dynamic Growth Called for Proactivity, Communication

In delivering the executive talent acquisition assignments, Trilogy brought the following strategic initiatives and benefits to the partnership and process:

inVentiv’s dynamic growth and evolving corporate strategy required quick yet careful communication with the marketplace to ensure potential candidates were informed of inVentiv’s ongoing plans and progress. It was imperative to recruiting success that Trilogy defined inVentiv before its competitors did.

“We were able to launch an awareness campaign through Trilogy’s innovative use of technology and communicate the evolving corporate strategy at inVentiv with a broad audience,” explained Pappalardo.

The fluid situation also required Trilogy to move quickly in identifying and securing candidates, some of whom were critical to further defining corporate strategy and the parameters of impending hires.

As a boutique search firm, Trilogy was unencumbered by the numerous “off limits” agreements (meaning that one cannot contact or recruit candidates from identified, competing organizations) that hinder many of the larger search firms’ recruiting efforts.

“An efficient, transparent search process provides a range of highly qualified candidates that fit company culture. The result of a successful search process is the client’s ability to make an informed choice; selecting the best possible candidate for the opportunity—the one with the right blend of skills and connection to company culture.” - Chuck Pappalardo

An Expanding Network

The assignment required significant creativity in terms of candidate outreach and candidate universe. A critical element of Trilogy’s approach involved looking beyond direct competitors and identifying complementary industries that understood the rhythm of the CRO sector and shared fundamental similarities.

Trilogy's executive and research teams came together to frame how candidates in parallel market segments could meet domain requirements, without the cumbersome and prohibitive non-competes. The result was a candidate pool with a minimal learning curve and the ability to immediately join the client team.

Scale and Success:

Executing a significant amount of search work on behalf of a single company or management team provided Trilogy with important insights that contributed to the assignment's global success. Over time and with each successful hire, inVentiv became more comfortable with the creativity Trilogy brought to the process. "The ongoing partnership also engendered a level of trust that allowed us to perform in a consultative role, in addition to a transactional one," noted Pappalardo.

"It's important to have a good and motivated team on the client side—to ensure that the executive search and client teams are on the same page, want the same thing and are committed to the same timeline. When clients are interviewing us with regard to a search, we are also interviewing them—not in an arrogant way, but to make sure we have similar visions for the search so that we can be successful on behalf of our clients." - Chuck Pappalardo

Additionally, completing a large body of work in a relatively short period of time resulted in the following benefits, all applicable across multiple clients and assignments:

- Informed Trilogy's ability to be more effective in managing overall operational spend regarding talent acquisition on a global basis.
- Helped determine patterns and streamline processes, particularly applicable to organizational growth through acquisition and assimilation.
- Honed interview questions and techniques.
- Improved Trilogy's knowledge regarding how corporate culture is developed and disseminated, and how certain individuals across the talent spectrum can support specific cultures and environments.
- Developed ability to execute cost-saving models across the client enterprise. When partnering with a client on multiple assignments, Trilogy is able to leverage economies of scale benefitting both parties.
- Enabled Trilogy to better judge key candidate subtleties in terms of behaviors, ethics and integrity.

"After a significant recruiting effort, clients often need time to assess and refocus on other management issues and then move forward with hiring again. However, even when a client isn't actively recruiting for a position, our client's hiring needs are always top of mind and we are available to provide ongoing counsel and insight," concluded Pappalardo.

Success Metrics

Most of the popular measures of search success are not necessarily meaningful. For example, how long a search takes is not always telling. If all searches took a very long time—6 months+—that would be significant, but in some instances it just takes time to find the right candidate.

More meaningful metrics for assessing your search firm include:

Did the firm suggest to you the right types of candidates? How quickly did this happen? How creative was the firm in identifying candidates? Was the firm able to generate interest from the candidates? Were you comfortable with the firm acting as an ambassador on your behalf? Did the firm accurately communicate the position and the company? Did the firm provide insight into the market (what is the best possible candidate the client can hire under the parameters of the spec) so the client could make a well-educated decision? How well did the firm deliver what was promised?

Most importantly, just as you would reference a candidate, you should complete references on the search firm you're considering hiring. The above questions, asked of the firm's past clients, will lead to a confident decision.