

WCA CASE STUDIES

The following case studies represent a sampling of assignments, personally conducted by WCA's Principal, that presented interesting challenges, resulted in some unique outcomes, and demonstrated our approach to search and business in general.

**CLIENT: Pharmaceutical Research & Development Organization
Global Pharmaceutical/Healthcare Firm**

SEARCH: Vice President Global Communications

SITUATION: This was a newly established position. Our client CEO had reached a point where he felt he needed a dedicated communications effort for the global R&D function (as opposed to support from corporate communications staff) and sought an individual to develop cohesive programs to communicate management goals with internal R&D audiences; strategically enhance positioning of the facility within the corporate organization; and highlight its operational capabilities among such external audiences as the scientific community, shareholders, and the business press.

CHALLENGE: It was highly desirable that prospective candidates possess relevant educational credentials (degree in life sciences required, advanced degree preferred) that would enhance their ability to interact on a peer level with drug discovery, research, and development professionals. It was essential that they possess the demonstrated strategic communications skills to work within the scientific organization, and the diplomacy to interface with counterparts in the corporate and product communications groups. And since the R&D function encompassed nine campuses around the world, it was also critical that prospective candidates possess experience in global markets.

APPROACH: Met and worked with R&D, corporate communications, and product communications senior management to define expectations and priorities for the role and develop a detailed position description. Outreach targets included senior executives in research-based pharmaceutical companies, biotechnology firms, contract pharmaceutical research companies, research-driven educational institutions, scientific journals,

medical schools, government bodies and NGOs, and public relations firms serving pharmaceutical clients. More than 140 contacts were identified.

RESULT: After an intensive national research and profiling effort, we presented three benchmark candidates with the desired educational backgrounds, communications experience, and world view—less than six weeks from the beginning of the engagement. The successful candidate came from this benchmark group and hailed from one of the world’s foremost biomedical research institutes that was central to the Genome Mapping Project.

CLIENT: Leading Global Science and Technology Consulting Firm

POSITION: Vice President Marketing and Communications

SITUATION: This was a new position. The firm’s main practice areas were energy, pharmaceutical/health care, national security, and contract research & development. The firm was highly regarded by current and past clients but lesser known outside this circle than some of its peers (McKinsey, Boston Consulting Group, etc.). The past communications effort had been led by competent professionals but they lacked experience in the business-to-business sector and had no grounding in science and/or technology. Finally, there was no formal communications plan in place. A new CEO had been named who wanted to create an “integrated” communications function that would leverage the corporate brand in the marketplace, highlight the successes of the individual practices, and be led by a professional with a relevant background and experience.

CHALLENGE: Identify and recruit a business-to-business marketing and communications professional with a grounding in science and technology who, working with an extremely bright management team, would create and implement a cohesive integrated communications plan to support the corporate brand and the individual practices. The successful candidate would report to the CEO.

APPROACH: Spent a full day at the firm's campus meeting with the CEO and "C-Suite" officers, members of the communications staff, and leaders of the individual practices. Objectives: gain an understanding of the firm's culture, marketplace positioning, current perception of the communications function, and future expectations for the position. Also determine where on the marketing – communications spectrum the position would fall, identify key "deliverables," and define candidate success criteria.

Based on these discussions we developed a detailed Position Description. Using the PD as a guide we initiated contact with more than 115 B2B marketing and/or corporate communications professionals in professional services firms and corporations (as well as their consulting firms) whose practices and businesses paralleled those of the client. Presented benchmark candidates 30 days of beginning the search.

RESULT: The successful candidate was part of the "benchmark" group. He headed an integrated communications program for the global technology arm of a FORTUNE 100 corporation whose technology portfolio included molecular imaging and diagnostics, energy conversion, diagnostic and biomedical technologies, electric technologies and systems, and manufacturing and materials technologies. He has been since promoted to SVP and serves on the firm's senior leadership team.

CLIENT: Fortune 50 corporation

ENGAGEMENT: Peer Group Best Practices Staffing and Organizational Assessment

SITUATION: The Chief Executive Officer of a FORTUNE 50 corporation wanted to determine how corporate communications departments in peer group corporations and other companies of interest were organized. Knowing the principal's background, his human resources leader contacted WCA to conduct the assignment. Areas to be covered included reporting relationships; staff size; functional coverages; business

planning/communications planning linkages; internal and external communications challenges; use of outside agencies; and business unit communications support.

CHALLENGES: We faced several challenges: Protect the identity of the corporate client, ensure the anonymity of the participants, get past the “gatekeepers,” and generate high participation from a small universe during a particularly challenging economic period.

APPROACH: We decided that our best data-gathering vehicle would be a 30-minute “stopwatch-timed” telephone interview with the most senior communications professional in each firm (CCO) by the principal of WCA, during which participants would be asked a battery of questions, developed in concert with a professional pollster, covering the above areas of interest.

Working with the client, we identified a hybrid group of 45 CCOs from FORTUNE Magazine’s 50 “largest” companies, its “Most Admired,” and select other firms. We then sent, by FedEx Overnight, an attention-grabbing package to the targeted CCOs that outlined the project, included an incentive to insure that the package would be noticed, opened, and forwarded to the recipient (“The Book of General Ignorance: Everything You Think You Know Is Wrong”), and offered a Summary of Results of the survey to those who chose to participate.

RESULT: An impressive 61 percent of the Chief Communications Officers who received the mailing agreed to participate in the survey. The client “deliverable” was a 100-plus page document, plus spread sheets, that identified several key trends of interest to the client. In follow-up conversations, our HR contact indicated that the survey would have a “profound impact” on future communications planning. In the process, WCA obtained an unmatched perspective of the communications organizations of some of the largest and most dynamic firms in the country.

CLIENT: Multinational Hardware, Software, and Services Firm

SEARCH: Strategic Business Unit (SBU) Communications Leader

SITUATION: This was a new position. It was created to support the evolution of a multi-billion dollar, 4,000-employee "printing solutions" SBU into a new growth phase of its business life. Externally, the successful candidate would be required to leverage a strong *corporate* brand identity to competitively position the SBU in a business segment already populated by other well-recognized brands. Internally, this individual would be required to develop programs to more strongly position the SBU within the corporate organization. The opportunity was located in Boulder, Colorado.

CHALLENGE: While geography was not an overriding factor, it was highly desirable because of cost-of-living parity issues that the successful candidate come from the Boulder/Denver area and possess applicable business-specific and/or technology-specific experience. Further, the successful candidate would have "matrixed" reporting relationships at the corporate and SBU levels.

APPROACH: Working with client human resources and communications management, we developed the position description and initiated a "dual axis" search. One axis was devoted to identifying prospective candidates in the Boulder/Denver area who possessed relevant experience. The other axis was *national* in scope, focusing on direct peer group competitor SBUs from a global assortment of companies (American, Japanese, Dutch, and German) and their public relations firms. Nearly 200 individual contacts were made.

RESULT: WCA presented the client with eight benchmark candidates. Of these, four hailed from the Boulder/Denver area and two were employed with two of the client's top three peer group competitors. The others were located in San Francisco, Atlanta, Houston, and Phoenix. The successful candidate was part of this benchmark group and lived in Denver.

CLIENT: “Top Five” Global Investment Bank

SEARCH: Co-Director Corporate Communications

SITUATION: Client was an extremely high profile firm and this position was one of two “co-directorships,” both reporting to a Managing Director in London and a CEO in New York. There was a timing issue, since the client-side contact (the person being replaced) was leaving the firm to relocate with a spouse in two months. The other Co-Director was taking maternity leave in *three* months. If the engagement was not completed within this timeframe, the London-based hiring manager would be required to relocate to New York City.

CHALLENGE: Complete the engagement within the required time parameter, filling the position with an individual who would be a cultural fit, feel comfortable in a co-directorship environment, and who would be successful in a situation in which he/she would be required to quickly assimilate and become productive. To further complicate matters, travel-related issues on the client side required us to present candidates *within two weeks*.

APPROACH: Met with the management team in New York to review and refine the position profile. Understanding that time was of the essence, adopted an A list/B list research strategy. On the “A List” were individuals we knew directly and who we thought would be strong candidates and potentially interested in the opportunity. Concurrently, we developed a “B List” through sourcing and original research to identify other communications leaders in the investment banking community (corporate and agency-service side) who might have potential interest in this assignment.

RESULT: Presented “benchmark” (A list) candidates within two weeks and a second round (B list) two weeks thereafter to compare with the “best” of the A List. One of the individuals in the first group was hired as the successful candidate within two months from the beginning of the engagement. She was successful through several acquisitions, two CEOs, and helped her firm weather some of the highest-profile issues in investment banking history.

CLIENT: A 100 year-old Athletic Shoe Manufacturer

SEARCH: Director Marketing and Communications

SITUATION: A venerable New England-based athletic shoe “icon” sought an individual to help it position itself against higher profile and higher tech rivals such as Nike and Reebok.

CHALLENGE: Recruit an individual who would be excited by the challenge posed by the opportunity to represent an underdog and who would succeed in a very unique client culture.

APPROACH: Met with client management team in Boston to review parameters of the position and developed a baseline position description. After analyzing the culture of the organization and the nature of the job, determined that the successful candidate would likely be, at the core, a high-energy “risk taker,” with sports somewhere in her/his background. Conducted a national round of highly targeted research and identified a Chicago-based candidate who, after week four, clearly stood out from the rest of the candidates under consideration.

She was a “ranked” women’s amateur tennis player, had recently left a small venture capital firm where she had been a partner, and had held a similar post with a world-famous sporting goods firm.

After several in-depth phone screens, suggested that the CEO of the client company meet with her to provide a recruiting “benchmark” that we could use as the search moved forward.

RESULT: The CEO met the candidate and, to the surprise of all participants, made her an offer on the spot. The search was subsequently closed. And the firm successfully re-branded itself as an athletic *and* fashion shoe company.

CLIENT: Major Urban Medical Complex

SEARCH: Vice President Public Affairs

SITUATION: Client sought an individual to build a marketing and communications program to positively position the organization against better known regional rivals and, secondarily, among such global institutions as Johns Hopkins, Mayo Clinic, etc. Several people had been recently unsuccessful in this post. As a result, the position was poorly regarded in the client organization and the organization was known in the communications community as being difficult to succeed in.

CHALLENGE: Determine why the failure rate in the position had been so high, obtain an understanding of organizational culture and the mindsets of the internal clients (“Centers of Excellence” leaders, senior management, and staff), educate management on what they might expect from the function, and reposition the opportunity to attract talented prospective candidates who would succeed.

APPROACH: Conducted two days (18 hours) of in-depth 360- degree meetings with management and others in the organization with whom the successful candidate would interface.

Developed detailed position description. Augmenting internal research, conducted an extensive national outreach to marketing and communications professionals at medical schools, health care providers, health care-related government agencies and NGOs, pharmaceutical firms, and consulting firms serving these organizations.

RESULT: One month from the beginning of the engagement presented a slate of benchmark candidates from Los Angeles, Boston, Chicago, and Washington, DC. One of these benchmarks was hired. She subsequently developed and implemented a successful “outcomes - based” communications program and was promoted several times. The organization was subsequently ranked as one of the nation’s “Best Hospitals” by U.S. News and World Reports.

CLIENT: International Public Relations Consultancy

POSITION: Washington, DC Office President/General Manager

SITUATION: A global public relations organization that had been built by a series of mergers and acquisitions sought to create a high profile in the Washington DC market. The firm it acquired in the nation's capital was highly respected but had a consumer-focused client base (rather than public affairs driven) and, as a partial result, low DC visibility.

CHALLENGE: The client desired that this hire "make a statement" in the DC marketplace. By definition, this person would have to be a Washington "insider." Because of the size of the market, the search would need to be conducted with absolute confidentiality. Finally it was necessary that this person be more than a political operative—but rather a manager of people, builder of business, and developer of talent.

APPROACH: Relying almost entirely on original research, developed and implemented a laser-targeted and highly-confidential research strategy targeting second tier Washington DC public relations agency leaders, members of the DC broadcast and print media, congressional and White House staff, and not-for-profits.

RESULT: Identified an initial slate of five prospective candidates at public relations firms throughout Washington, DC. The successful candidate held a number two spot in a DC-based public affairs firm managed by a former Democratic White House press secretary. She was also a former press secretary to a Republican First Lady, was a former member of the Washington press corps, and in her pre-Washington days was an accomplished corporate communications professional.

CLIENT: Global Pharmaceutical Firm

SEARCH: Pharmaceutical Product Public Relations

SITUATION: The client company was the high-profile result of a merger of a well-known consumer healthcare company and one of the world's best known research-based pharmaceutical manufacturers. A new Vice President Public Affairs was appointed and, as a partial result of the post-merger reorganization, a new product communications capability was established. This resulted, over time, in the need for multiple hires. The competitiveness of the marketplace infused a particular sense of urgency.

APPROACH: In each assignment, the search strategy was to focus on pharmaceutical public relations agency personnel with therapy-specific experience (HIV/AIDS, CNS, cardiovascular, oncology, etc.) who had a strategic focus; possessed superb "client management" skills; and the demonstrated maturity to transition into to a corporate setting. Because of the client service focus, back-up candidates were corporate executives with agency experience. Since geographic coverage was also a factor, these searches eventually took on a global perspective that included Europe, Asia, and South America.

RESULT: All of the candidates who joined added demonstrable value to the firm's product communications effort across a variety of therapies and geographies. The organization became a multi-search client in a relationship that lasted several years and our involvement moved from product communications to corporate communications and global public affairs.