

Chief Operations Officer – Digital Media Start-Up

Background

Our client was a digital media start-up organization funded by private equity and located in Australia. It had recently grown from eight to approximately 100 employees from the acquisition of a larger competitor. The business created digital screens with targeted content to over 3000 sites, reaching approximately 6.25 million people monthly. The content was tailored to specific audiences derived from detailed demographics.

The Need

With the appointment of an energetic and sales-focused Chief Executive Officer (CEO), as well as the investment of significant capital from several private equity groups, the business had a clear need for a competent Chief Operating Officer (COO). The organization was growing faster than the company's ability to deliver screens with appropriate content to new customers. There was also a need to build and broaden the capabilities of a small and very busy executive team. The COO would be tasked with building and implementing processes to assist with the speed of growth.

Our Search Process

Our client believed the COO needed to have a marketing or advertising background, be technology literate, and have strong operations and process implementation experience. They would have had an executive role within a start-up organization, a hands-on leader, had exposure to savvy, experienced and seasoned board members, and needed to be agile to keep up with the pace of growth expected in the following year. Within a three-week period, we provided the client with a diverse shortlist of individuals. These included an executive with experience as a COO for an online advertising start-up, a candidate from the management consulting industry, an operations head from a direct competitor, and a candidate who had developed and sold a telecommunications start-up. One further candidate was identified who did not meet the initial criteria but was from a large financial services firm in a technology operations transformation role. This candidate had never worked within a small organization but was attracted to the opportunity and ability to take ownership of the strategic direction for all operational processes. While not matching the profile the client had requested, our interactions with the client, and the understanding we had gained for type of personality that would work well in the environment, we encouraged the client to meet with the last candidate.

Following several rounds of interviews with the CEO, Chairman and various board members, the client hired the candidate referred to above. They saw someone who had a deep understanding of technology, had managed large process transformation programs, was highly intelligent, and was the proper cultural fit for the organization.

Our NGS Global Value-Add

- Extensive experience recruiting COOs for start-up organizations.
- Strong network of contacts in the technology, marketing and advertising fields whom we were able to source for recommendations regarding suitably credentialed executives.
- Ability to develop a deep understanding of the client's organizational culture and incorporating this into the search.