

Working with the Board to Find a New Leader for CPR

Pearson Partners Case Study

When a board of directors needs to replace an organization's top executive, it can be challenging to find the time, connections and consensus to locate and attract the right person for the job. So when the board of Cooperative Processing Resources (CPR) felt the organization needed a new president and chief executive officer, the group decided to enlist the help of an executive search firm.

CPR provides software solutions to cooperative member agencies offering credit and housing counseling services. Based in Dallas, CPR provides support services that are essential to the success of its member base of 53 non-profit agencies, some of whom have more than 100 members.

CPR's new president needed to have the right experience and leadership skills to meet challenges head-on and lead strategic technology planning and implementation that would more effectively meet member needs. Although CPR does not operate as a non-profit, its budgetary constraints are similar to those of the non-profits it serves, so the new president's salary expectations needed to fit the organization's budget.

After interviewing several executive search firms, the board decided to retain Pearson Partners International in September 2016, after meeting with Renee Arrington, senior vice president and director.

"Renee offered the best explanation of her role, as well as her connections in the community that we felt would be the best source of qualified candidates," says Scott Karol, CPR board member. "Pearson Partners stood out among the search firms we talked with. As a board, this was something we were doing outside our normal job responsibilities. Renee showed the most ability to understand our needs and seemed most dedicated to crafting her approach to our needs. I think she very much understood the position the board was in."

Renee began the search by carefully documenting exactly what the board was looking for in a new president.

"Renee took the time to listen and restate, and then documented that information into a chart that was a meaningful visual representation of things we were looking for and the priorities we had," says Karol. "She drew out from us all the things we needed to understand and were looking for that might not have been top-of-mind to us."

Next, Arrington began canvassing the marketplace to identify and recruit ideal candidates, creating formal matrices that provided feedback on each candidate. From the initial pool of identified individuals, several were chosen for in-person interviews, with Arrington coordinating the efforts for the five hiring committee members.

"It's hard to get a group of people to align around this kind of decision, but Renee really stood out in her ability to manage that," says Karol. "When we wanted to interview or review candidates, all of the materials were well organized and logistics were handled top to bottom. Every one of the candidates was well qualified."

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One candidate stood out: Rost Ginevich, who was offered the job and joined CPR in January 2017.

“Rost had clear technical experience, and an interest in our projects and in taking on a challenge,” says Karol. “He was extremely relatable and personable, and he had the design thinking we needed. It was a great combination.”

Arrington helped the board reach consensus on a salary offer that was a bit of a stretch for the organization, but was realistic and competitive for Ginevich’s qualifications and seniority level.

“Renee provided honest discourse through it all, and that was really helpful,” says Karol. “She was there to talk about her experience and give advice, and she was very genuine. She provided a nice balance of communication and independent action, and she really made sure that the resources of the organization were coordinated to our needs. It was a full-service experience, so we didn’t have to spend a lot of time and effort to find out what our role needed to be in the process. Renee provided all of that information to us in a timely and meaningful fashion.”

Overall, Karol says, working with Arrington and Pearson Partners was a positive and seamless experience for the board members.

“I don’t believe any of the other search firms would have done a better job,” says Karol. “Renee maximized the way Pearson Partners organized and handled information to minimize the effort required on our part. She understood the market and was able to deliver.”