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The Future of Healthcare Leadership: Navigating AI, Innovation, and Talent Demands



The healthcare and life sciences industries are undergoing a major transformation, driven by advancements in AI, machine learning, and digital innovation. These technologies are reshaping drug discovery, patient care, and operational efficiency, requiring leaders who can harness innovation while optimizing complex systems.

As competition for top talent intensifies, organizations are prioritizing executives with strong business acumen, digital fluency, and cross-functional expertise. With evolving workforce models and rising demand for technological proficiency, companies seek leaders who can drive innovation, foster collaboration, and balance financial sustainability with long-term growth.

“Over the next five years, we expect that emerging technology will continue to transform the healthcare and life sciences industry,” said **JM Search’s** healthcare and life sciences practice co-leaders, Andrew Henry, managing partner, and Chuck Egoville, managing partner. “First and foremost, artificial intelligence and machine learning will bring tremendous change, from revolutionizing drug discovery to predicting patient care needs and driving efficiency. In addition, advanced analytics will improve access to care, enabling providers to predict demand, accelerate drug and device development, and increase innovation.

“To align leadership around taking advantage of these emerging technologies, we expect that businesses will build cross-functional teams that drive innovation and enable technology implementation at the enterprise level,” they said. “When it comes to hiring, technologically proficient leaders will be a hot commodity, playing a critical role in helping organizations augment their internal capabilities.”

In the life sciences and healthcare sectors, the current trend in recruiting senior leaders is focused on finding disciplined operators

who can enhance operational rigor, cost efficiency, and optimal organizational structures, according to Greg Button, president of global healthcare services at **Korn Ferry**. “This trend is driven by the high cost of capital, necessitating leaders who can ensure that operations run at an optimal level,” he said. “While strategic acumen obviously remains important at the CEO level, the emphasis has shifted more towards operational expertise rather than strategy. This focus on operational efficiency is expected to continue for the next six to 12 months, until the industry can shift back to growth mode.”

“The underlying demographics, such as an aging population and increasing healthcare needs, support the long-term growth potential of the sector,” Mr. Button continued. “Therefore, while cost-cutting and operational efficiency are currently prioritized, there will eventually be a renewed focus on growth and innovation.”

BY THE NUMBERS

Growth Accelerator

43.6% of executive search consultants cite the healthcare/life sciences sectors as a top growth industry for 2025.

Source: Hunt Scanlon Media

“AI is poised to have the most significant impact on the life sciences and healthcare sectors over the next five years,” Mr. Button said. “It is already influencing drug development and clinical decision-making, providing more consistent treatment protocols across different healthcare settings. To align leadership with these emerging trends, it is crucial to bring in leaders from other industries that are more advanced in technology and innovation. This cross-industry approach can help address the technological lag in healthcare. Companies are increasingly open to hiring leaders with non-traditional backgrounds, such as those from tech giants like Google and Amazon, to drive innovation. This trend is evident in examples like Ascension hiring a CIO from Motorola.”

Assessing candidates involves evaluating their learning agility and self-awareness, Mr. Button noted. “Learning agility is essential as the industry is constantly evolving, requiring leaders who can quickly adapt and learn,” he said. “Self-awareness is equally important, as it allows leaders to recognize their strengths and weaknesses and surround themselves with complementary team members. Additionally, candidates must possess the basic attributes of drive, discipline, and the ability to deliver results.” *(cont'd. to page 2)*

IN THE NEWS

Coulter Partners Assists NeoPhore with CEO Search



Life sciences recruiting specialist **Coulter Partners** has assisted in the recruitment of Michael Shih as the new CEO of NeoPhore in London. Leading the assignment were Chris Palatucci, Clare Evans-Argent, Gabrielle Banzon, and Kay Wardle. The appointment follows the close of the company's oversubscribed series B financing. The financing and new appointment of the CEO strengthen NeoPhore's position to drive its growth strategy and maximize the potential of its pipeline. "Michael joins at an exciting stage in NeoPhore's development having raised a significant series B financing round which was supported by Bristol Myers Squibb," said Robert James, chairman of the board at NeoPhore. "As we move closer to being a clinical company, Michael's experience as a corporate development leader in pharma and biotech will be instrumental in driving NeoPhore's next phase of growth."

These foundational qualities are necessary to even be considered for leadership roles. Beyond these basics, the focus is on identifying candidates who can perform and transform the organization, balancing operational efficiency with strategic growth."

"Building and maintaining relationships with top talent in the life sciences and healthcare sectors involves a multi-pronged approach," said Mr. Button. "Being visible at key industry events, participating in speaking engagements, and sitting on panels are effective ways to interact with and build credibility among industry leaders. Additionally, engaging in sourcing activities, where trusted individuals provide insights on the industry and potential candidates, helps build a strong network."

"Due to various challenges, the healthcare and life sciences sectors are experiencing a significant shift in leadership demands," said Jason Burritt, vice president of **Furst Group**. "Financial acumen has become a critical priority. Successful organizations consistently focus on identifying new revenue streams and evaluating operational efficiency strategies. This pursuit of financial sustainability has become a vital aspect of executive searches in these sectors. Equally important is technological expertise, particularly in AI implementation and cybersecurity."

Mr. Burritt highlights that the increasing complexity of technology requires leaders to keep pace with digital transformation while safeguarding data security. "This technological evolution unfolds alongside unprecedented workforce challenges," he said.

Deanna Banks, principal of Furst Group and **NuBrick Partners**, emphasizes the urgent need for healthcare and life science leaders to develop talent and enhance organizational culture in an environment where many roles have shifted to remote or hybrid formats. "This transition presents specific challenges as healthcare systems are already under pressure from increased demand and a shrinking workforce," she said.

"Consequently, the profile of successful healthcare and life sciences executives has evolved," said Jessica Homann, vice president of Furst Group. She articulates that executives must integrate business

acumen with leadership and interpersonal skills. "This multifaceted skill set empowers leaders to successfully traverse increasingly complex challenges while forging robust and resilient organizations. Overall, as the landscapes of these sectors shift, leaders must adapt to these evolving demands by embracing a wider range of skills. This will ensure they can effectively guide their organizations toward sustainable growth and excellence in patient care."

Targeting the Right Talent

"We look for candidates with experience in healthcare with proven success metrics. They're understand best practices of successful organizations," said Tim Tolan, founder and managing partner of **The Tolan Group**. "We target candidates with deep analytical skills and a willingness to learn. These individuals can often adapt quickly to new regulations and processes. We use personality assessments to gauge how they are wired and probe to understanding their knowledge and understanding of regulations and their ability to apply them to real-world scenarios."

Mr. Tolan also points to cultural fit. "This one is huge," he said. "Companies need talented people that will complement the existing team since speed to scale is always a consideration. Often, our clients do the majority of assessing cultural fit since they understand the makeup of the existing team."

"We also continually make investments in data to ensure we have the right candidate profile in our database," Mr. Tolan said. "We tag this data by role and skill set to be able to quickly procure a list of the ideal candidates for any given role and continually do candidate outreach to stay in touch with candidates, so we always have a strong pool of highly qualified candidates."

"Healthcare leaders are expected to know more about the big picture beyond just their position, department, or organization, including understanding the social determinants of health, the effects of sweeping federal mandates, the implications of macroeconomics, and potential opportunities and challenges of AI," said Sally Bryant, president and CEO of **Bryant Group**. "And we are seeing that many organizations are beginning to understand that leadership 'hard skills' are more necessary than ever. Leadership skills are learned through intentional education, real-life experience, and one-to-one coaching."

"Even though some people may have natural leadership talents, it is just like with a professional athlete—natural talent will only take you so far," Ms. Bryant explained. "When interviewing candidates for leadership skills, I ask questions around how a person has learned to be a good leader—and listen for the intentionality of study, engagement in coaching, and the life lessons learned from daily experience. It is the focus on, and awareness of, growing as a leader that makes for the best leaders. If a candidate cannot show this kind of focused intentional work and the "a-ha moments" that arise from that work, then inevitably that candidate is not ready for the highest levels of leadership. At the C-suite, leadership skills trump technical skills every time."

Recruiting is a relationship business, according to Ms. Bryant.

"Understanding and caring about

(cont'd. to page 3)

candidates is every bit as important as understanding and caring about clients—and many times people end up being both at various times in their careers,” she said. “At Bryant Group, we work to keep up on industry trends as well as national and local events that might affect the leaders at our client institutions. We also connect with industry leaders so we can serve as thought partners, or interview them for an article, invite them to speak as part of a panel, brainstorm ideas, congratulate them on a success, or support them through a hard time. We want to know them, care for them, and connect with them as human beings first and foremost.”

Technology Needs

In a continuously volatile and ever-changing environment, it has become increasingly important to be able to understand and articulate the changing organizational needs and their reflection in terms of critical skill sets and key competencies required in senior leaders given the current market phase, followed by a robust candidate assessment methodology to ensure best fit, according to Kathryn Ullrich, managing partner, technology and diversity at **DHR Global**. “Beside excellent knowledge of industry and markets, leaders’ capacity for self-reflection, organizational fit with personal values and motives, as well as personal drive and resilience have moved to the forefront,” she said. “Even though the relevant markets for specific leadership talent continue to be tight, the need to build, attract and retain diverse talent pipelines for critical senior roles remains a key recruitment imperative as the need for dynamic and divergent thinking in complex and unpredictable market environments increases.”

“The healthcare and life science industry will be subject to an increase in digital transformation and AI application – both from a product development point of view as well as advances into personalized medicine,” Ms. Ullrich noted. “There will be more investment into advanced digital/AI technologies requiring more tech savvy business leaders. This trend will help optimize existing operating models and will likely create more internal savings opportunities by employing leaner and/or cheaper supply chains, more self-service options and therefore necessitate lower staff levels.”

“If done well, it will also lead to additional revenue opportunities by expanding digital service offerings, faster and cheaper R&D with shorter go-to-market cycles – all driven as a result of AI solutions,” she continued. “The digital transformation may lead to improved customer and employee experiences, which in turn will help to become a competitive differentiator. There will also be more pressure to engage in select M&A activities due to incoming patent cliffs. All those aspects will require leadership to be more competent in managing interdisciplinary requirements, feel more comfortable in managing collaboratively, across disciplines and become faster in response and in learning new skills.”

In her experience, Ms. Ullrich said that building and maintaining relationships with top talent in the life sciences and healthcare sectors is about more than just connecting over professional interests. “It’s crucial to deeply understand their personal aspirations and career goals,” she said. “This involves (cont’d. to page 4)

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regular, trust-based communication through industry events, personal conversations, as well as other means of staying in touch with top talent and treating this as a top priority. It's about aligning their strengths with organizational needs and creating a robust talent pool for executive roles. I find it's like matching a leader with the right house: some prefer a stable environment, while others thrive in transformative settings. Of course, understanding the company's goals is equally important, which also requires a personal touch. This consistent engagement ensures I always have access to a strong candidate pool for executive roles."

Today's Biotech Market

"In today's biotech market, both candidates and companies are approaching executive hiring with increased caution and scrutiny," said Jonathan Beer, managing partner at **Stevenson Search Partners**. "Economic uncertainty, funding challenges, and the competitive landscape have significantly influenced how senior leaders evaluate new opportunities and how companies assess potential hires. For senior leaders, there is a heightened focus on a company's financial runway relative to key clinical catalysts and readouts. Executives are conducting deeper due diligence, ensuring that a prospective employer has the necessary funding to reach critical milestones. They are asking more pointed questions about capital allocation, investor commitment, and contingency planning."

"Given the volatility in the biotech sector, candidates are less willing to take on risk without a clear understanding of a company's financial health and long-term viability," he said.

"On the company side, the challenging market has led to a stronger preference for leaders who "have been there, done that." In the past, companies may have been more open to taking a chance on first-time executives—whether a first-time CEO, CFO, or other C-suite leader. Now, there is a noticeable shift toward hiring individuals with direct, prior experience in the role. Employers are prioritizing pattern recognition, looking for executives who have successfully navigated similar challenges before. This over-rotation toward proven leadership reflects the broader market's need for stability and de-risking, especially as many biotech firms face critical inflection points."

Successfully identifying the right executive for a life sciences or healthcare company requires more than just evaluating technical expertise, according to Mr. Beer. "Given the highly regulated and complex nature of this industry, assessing leadership skills and cultural fit is just as critical to ensuring long-term success," he said. "The foundation of this assessment starts with a deep understanding of our client's culture—not only as it exists today but also where the company aspires to be in the future. As recruiters, we invest significant time with our clients to define their cultural identity and leadership expectations. Only by gaining clarity on these elements can we effectively evaluate candidates for alignment."

When assessing cultural fit, Stevenson Search Partners examines the environments in which candidates have previously worked, their contributions to those cultures, and whether they genuinely

embraced and shaped them. "This involves probing for specific examples of how they integrated into past organizations, how they navigated cultural shifts, and whether they were passive participants or active drivers of culture," Mr. Beer said. "Leadership assessment follows a similar principle: it is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Even within the same company, different roles may require distinct leadership styles. Some positions demand a bold, transformational leader, while others require a steady, operationally focused executive. To ensure alignment, we collaborate with our clients to define the leadership profile that best fits the role."

"The life sciences and healthcare industries are undergoing significant transformation, driven by scientific advancements, digital innovation, and a stronger focus on patient-centric care."

"Our clients are seeking leaders that have a strong financial acumen, the ability to influence and collaborate with multi-disciplinary leaders across the organization or enterprise and experience in operationalizing strategic initiatives more efficiently," said Mike Hartz, president and CEO of **HARTZ Search**. "Clearly AI is a constant discussion, but I think the bigger emerging trend will be maximizing and creating stronger interoperability with the Electronic Medical Record system, the biggest tool they already have in place."

Mr. Hartz noted that his firm utilizes an evidence-based vetting process; no longer can you simply rely on the resume or an interview, but instead we are using several tools, that they have created to understand the ability to integrate quickly, hit the ground running and be the long-term fit which allows stability in the organization. "In addition, we utilize personality assessments," he said. "Our in person interviews are a combination of behavioral and emotional intelligence based."

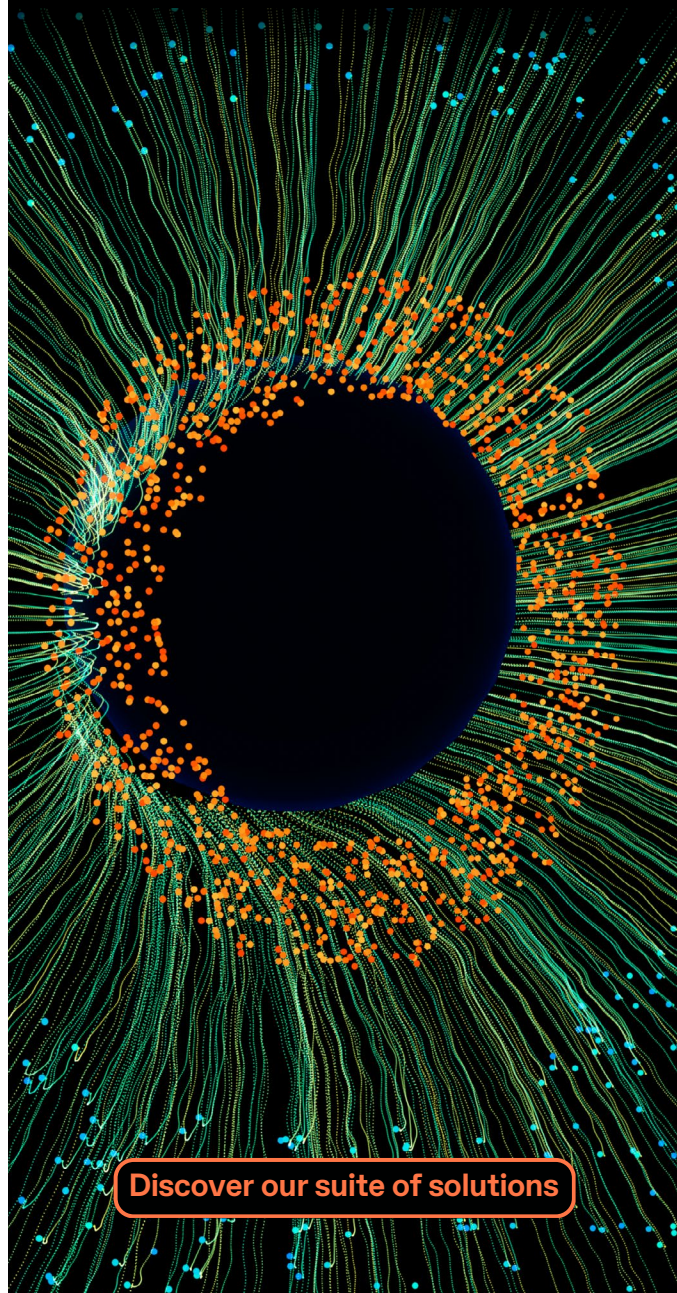
When building and maintains relationships with top talent in the life sciences/healthcare Mr. Hartz said that they "have constant touch points. I am a firm believer that you always have to add value to your network, partnerships, clients and candidates to ensure that relationship is strong and not just one-sided, when you need them for a search," he said. "In creating value in that relationship and advocating for our candidates, they want to stay close to us, and they value the relationship."

"The life sciences and healthcare industries are undergoing significant transformation, driven by scientific advancements, digital innovation, and a stronger focus on patient-centric care," said Greg Rokos, managing partner of **Rokos Group**. "We are seeing a growing demand for leaders who can bridge the gap between science, commercialization, and operational excellence. Companies are prioritizing executives who not only understand scientific breakthroughs but also possess the strategic mindset to drive market access, regulatory navigation, and financial sustainability. This is particularly relevant

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as organizations seek leaders capable of scaling innovation into real-world impact. Another major trend is the continued emphasis on DEI. Organizations recognize that diverse leadership teams foster innovation, expand market reach, and drive better decision-making. Additionally, cross-functional leadership is in high demand. AI-driven drug discovery, precision medicine, and digital therapeutics are reshaping the industry, requiring executives who can adapt to new technologies, lead cross-disciplinary teams, and drive change management.”

“The life sciences and healthcare industries are on the cusp of a technological revolution,” said Andrea Richter, executive search consultant with Rokos Group. “Over the next five years, AI, precision medicine, and real-world data integration will fundamentally change how organizations operate. AI and machine learning are transforming drug discovery, diagnostics, and personalized medicine, requiring leaders who can interpret data, drive digital transformation, and maximize AI-driven efficiencies. Similarly, cell and gene therapies require executives with expertise in scaling production, navigating regulatory complexities, and securing investment.”

Another key trend is the integration of real-world data into clinical and commercial strategies, according to Mr. Rokos. “Organizations are leveraging patient insights, digital health records, and predictive analytics to improve outcomes,” he said. “This requires leaders with strong data acumen and regulatory fluency. At Rokos Group, we stay ahead of these industry shifts by leveraging video-enabled search technology to assess leadership style and cultural fit early in the process, ensuring stronger, longer-lasting placements. Our shared-risk fee structure aligns success with results, while our partner-led approach ensures each search is tailored to the evolving demands of the life sciences and healthcare sectors. As organizations navigate transformation, we remain committed to delivering diverse, forward-thinking leaders who drive innovation, commercialization, and long-term impact.”

“Beyond technical expertise, life sciences and healthcare leaders must foster innovation, lead cross-functional teams, and align with organizational culture and strategy,” Ms. Richter said. “At Rokos Group, we’ve redefined executive assessment with our innovative video technology and comprehensive evaluation approach. Our video-enabled search process gives hiring managers early insights into a candidate’s leadership presence, communication style, and strategic thinking, well before formal interviews begin.”

“Hospitals and healthcare systems face a rapidly evolving landscape, leading to significant shifts in senior leadership recruitment,” said Neill Marshall, **HealthSearch Partners** board chair. “One of the prominent trends over the last 10 years is the emphasis on DEI in executive hiring. Organizations recognize that diverse leadership teams improve patient outcomes and operational performance, prompting boards to set measurable DEI goals. We are unsure how today’s political environment will impact DEI in healthcare. Another ongoing trend is increasing physician and clinical leadership integration into executive roles. Hospitals seek physician executives, such as chief

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medical officers and chief quality officers, who can bridge clinical and administrative functions, ensuring high-quality care while managing system-wide operations. Digital transformation is driving demand for leaders with experience in artificial intelligence and data-driven decision-making. Executives skilled in implementing electronic health records and leveraging data analytics to enhance care delivery are particularly valuable.”

Selecting the Right Candidate

“We always start searches with the basics of a strongly structured interview with questions that are tailored for each executive role and organization we assist,” said Ivan Bartolome, president and CEO of HealthSearch Partners. “So many times, the right questions highlight the strengths of the best candidates with the correct leadership skills and appropriate cultural alignment. Conversely, those questions can also highlight when the candidate does not rise to what is needed to elevate the hiring organization. Next, it is important to resist the urge to take shortcuts when it comes to checking references and doing background checks. They must be conducted. In some instances, we will do ‘next level’ references with the candidate’s permission. Finally, we are increasingly using internal and external consultants to bring finalist candidates through leadership assessments that help the hiring organization understand where the candidate may need additional coaching or mentoring. This also helps eliminate surprises when the final candidate begins their service to the organization.”

“One major trend is the increasing demand for leaders who not only understand the core scientific and clinical aspects of healthcare but also possess a strong digital acumen.”

“In my experience, recruiting senior leaders in the life sciences and healthcare sectors has evolved significantly over recent years,” said Kyle Samuels, founder and CEO of executive search and HR advisory firm **Creative Talent Endeavors**. “One major trend is the increasing demand for leaders who not only understand the core scientific and clinical aspects of healthcare but also possess a strong digital acumen,” he said. “Today’s executives must be comfortable navigating a rapidly evolving technological landscape—be it through digital transformation initiatives, big data analytics, or telemedicine platforms. This blend of clinical insight and tech savviness has become a critical differentiator in candidate profiles.”

“Another trend is the shift toward a more consultative and relationship-based approach to recruiting,” Mr. Samuels said. “With the talent pool for senior roles being both niche and competitive, I invest time in building genuine relationships with potential candidates, often long before a specific role becomes available. This proactive networking strategy helps ensure that I’m connected with top-tier talent who are both actively and passively engaged

in the market. Finally, regulatory acumen remains indispensable. Given the high-stakes environment of healthcare, I prioritize leaders who have a robust understanding of the regulatory frameworks and can balance innovation with compliance. Overall, the evolving mix of technical expertise, digital fluency, regulatory knowledge, and cultural leadership is shaping the current landscape of recruiting in our field.”

Looking ahead, Mr. Samuels firmly believes that the convergence of digital technology and traditional healthcare practices will be one of the most transformative trends in the next five years. “Technologies like AI, machine learning, and advanced data analytics are rapidly changing how we approach everything from drug discovery to patient care,” he said. “AI-driven diagnostics, for instance, are already beginning to augment clinical decision-making, while personalized medicine—powered by genomics and big data—promises to tailor treatments to individual patient profiles in ways we’ve never seen before.”

In addition, the adoption of telemedicine and remote monitoring tools is reshaping patient engagement and care delivery models, Mr. Samuels explained. “This shift not only improves access to healthcare but also opens up new channels for data collection and patient feedback, enabling more agile and responsive care solutions,” he said. “With cybersecurity remaining a top concern, the integration of these technologies also emphasizes the need for leaders who can champion both innovation and robust data protection measures. To align my leadership with these emerging trends, I focus on cultivating a forward-thinking mindset within my teams. I actively encourage continuous learning and digital literacy, ensuring that our leadership development programs incorporate training on new technologies and their implications for healthcare. I also advocate for strategic investments in technology infrastructure that can support these advancements while ensuring regulatory compliance. By fostering a culture of innovation, I aim to create an environment where experimentation is encouraged, and failures are viewed as learning opportunities—a critical mindset for navigating the uncertainties of emerging tech.”

“Furthermore, I make it a priority to stay connected with industry experts and thought leaders through conferences, professional networks, and strategic partnerships,” Mr. Samuels said. “This not only helps me stay abreast of the latest developments but also positions me to anticipate future shifts and proactively adjust our recruitment and leadership strategies. In essence, my approach is to lead by example—embracing technology, championing continuous improvement, and ensuring that our strategic vision remains aligned with the dynamic landscape of healthcare.”

“Demand is definitely up within the life sciences/healthcare sectors, and competition for top talent remains fierce, particularly in clin dev, reg affairs, and roles requiring expertise in oncology, immunology, and neurology,” said Jason Hersh, managing director and CEO of **Klein Hersh**. “In 2025, companies are thinking more proactively about their talent strategy and setting a higher bar for what ‘good’ looks like. We’re seeing a more deliberate approach, with greater focus on due diligence and

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succession planning, and companies taking extra time to evaluate fit, culture alignment, and potential for long-term impact.”

“AI will continue to have a transformative impact over the next five years,” Mr. Hersh said. “Identifying leaders who not only understand and appreciate AI’s potential but have a track record of successfully implementing AI solutions will be critical. Look for candidates who show a deep understanding of how AI can accelerate R&D processes and have strategies for fostering collaboration between data scientists and traditional R&D teams. They should also articulate a vision for leveraging AI in personalized medicine development.”

“AI will continue to have a transformative impact over the next five years. Identifying leaders who not only understand and appreciate AI’s potential but have a track record of successfully implementing AI solutions will be critical.”

Skills and experience are important, but cultural fit is crucial for success, according to Mr. Hersh. “We spend a great deal of time with clients understanding the requirements of each specific role, their values and vision, what makes their culture unique, and what leadership characteristics they look for,” he said. “We have lifelong relationships with candidates and because of our frequency of contact, we know their personalities, preferences, and style too. We only put forth candidates who check every box.”

Klein Hersh uses a systematic process called “scorecarding” to stay in touch with its client and candidate communities at defined intervals throughout the year. “Over years of communication we’ve gathered intimate details about their evolving personal, professional, and financial interests, so that we always have real time view of their needs and motivations,” Mr. Hersh said. “The depth of these relationships enables us to identify and present qualified candidates faster and with greater precision.”

“Many talented folks are open to hearing about opportunities and potentially making moves; not too many leaders in my network are completely committed to their current situations,” said Mike Silverstein, managing partner and executive search leader of **DRiWaterstone Human Capital’s** healthcare IT division & life sciences practice. “Many are stuck in situations where their boards are comprised of multiple investors with different timelines and have conflicting priorities. It is also becoming a more favorable time to explore opportunities as there is more capital being deployed in the market, which is generating interesting opportunities.

“I think we are finally at the point where the AI buzz is real, and it is going to significantly change the landscape,” Mr. Silverstein said. “There continues to be margin pressure across the payer, provider, employer, and life sciences landscape, and when it is deployed properly, AI can reduce administrative labor costs. If I were a leader in the space, I would be looking to figure out ways to take advantage of the efficiencies (both time and financial) that AI can provide to my workforce and consistently be thinking about how I could utilize technology to keep my most talented people working

at top of license. I would have every one of my key folks do a time study on where they are spending their time and would get serious about giving people time back to do the activities that are what make them special and critical to the business by utilizing some of the amazing workflow technology that is coming to market.”

“We have really been indexing heavily towards talent that threads the needle of having domain expertise and soft skills but is also data-driven and process-oriented,” said Mr. Silverstein. “The pandemic ushered in an era where so much more is being done over video (remotely) versus in person, and the folks who don’t have the wherewithal to utilize the tools have really struggled. The virtual workforce is real, and leaders who are not working to both drive a sticky culture while simultaneously implementing repeatable and scalable process are struggling to drive results with a distributed workforce. It is a very challenging time to be a leader and the best ones are thinking both about how to keep their people bought in and motivated while also driving them hard.”

“Unprecedented growth across the life sciences/healthcare sector has made the race for talent fiercer than ever.”

“We have worked hard over the last couple years to create a networking group of several hundred folks that is representative of our entire ecosystem – investors, clients, and the clients of our clients,” Mr. Silverstein said. “We have worked diligently to create content and pull together speakers that keep folks coming back to our monthly virtual meeting, and we have hosted happy hours at our industry trade shows. More than ever, the leaders in my network have embraced the idea of being involved in a community of their peers type setting, and it has been a wonderful relationship builder across our constituents.”

“Unprecedented growth across the life sciences/healthcare sector has made the race for talent fiercer than ever,” said Richard Stein, founder and co-head of GMIQ, **Mattson and Company**. “Top tier candidates that Mattson and Company interviews regularly, especially in healthcare, pharmaceutical and research and development are highly sought after and are being locked in contractually for longer periods. For many companies in 2025 this also means a longer recruitment process to fill jobs, particularly in highly specialized niche areas. As life sciences and technology converge, there is an increased focus on recruiting professionals with the expertise to deliver tech-enabled solutions. Roles in biotech, bioinformatician, data analysis and digital product management will continue to rise this year as companies compete to stay at the forefront of a rapidly evolving sector.”

“CEO’s must have very strong CFOs ideally with investment banking expertise in 2025 to bring deal expertise,” Mr. Stein said. “There has also been a growing number of leadership moves where investment bankers are now joining early-stage companies and ultimately becoming CEOs. Equally, the practice of having a scientist always appointed as the CEO is becoming outdated in favor of a new generation of business leaders.”

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SPOTLIGHT

Navigating Executive Recruitment in Healthcare: Challenges, Strategies, and Solutions



*Cody Futch is a principal at **AGB Search**. He has more than 20 years of experience in higher education and healthcare executive search. Mr. Futch partners with major academic medical centers and regional campuses on leadership searches at all levels. He has particular expertise in clinical leadership roles and has extensive*

experience recruiting inaugural leaders to new medical schools. His search experience has included clinical division chiefs and department chairs, associate chairs, clinical and basic science research program leaders, dean's office positions, and clinical health system leaders. Clients have included medical schools, dental schools, children's hospitals, student health programs and academic cancer centers.

*Mr. Futch recently sat down with **Hunt Scanlon Media** to discuss the challenges healthcare organizations face in recruiting executives and how executive search firms can help navigate these complexities.*

Cody, what unique challenges do healthcare organizations face when recruiting executives, and how can an executive search firm address these challenges effectively?

One of the more recent challenges healthcare organizations are facing in recruiting executives is related to the trend of consolidating roles. Many health systems are combining leadership roles traditionally held by more than one leader. Finding someone with the experience to be both an effective chief operating officer and chief financial officer, for example, can be more challenging than finding someone with experience in just one or the other role. Executive search firms can help organizations prioritize the skills that are key to the position being recruited and develop an evaluation process to ensure the candidates who are considered have the experience necessary to be effective in the full scope of the role. Within academic medicine, another challenge is increasing competition for small and shrinking candidate pools. Many academic medical centers (AMCs) are expanding and opening new campuses and seeking leaders with AMC experience. This is causing more competition for a candidate pool that is already shrinking from retirements.

What key qualifications and competencies should healthcare organizations prioritize when selecting candidates for executive roles, such as CEOs or CMOs?

There are several traditional competencies that healthcare executives have always needed, such as financial acumen and knowledge of state and federal healthcare laws. In recent years, the ability to attract, recruit, and retain healthcare providers in a cost-effective manner has become a critical competency for healthcare executives. Healthcare organizations today should select leaders who embrace emerging technology and AI. With the rapid changes happening in technology, healthcare laws, and healthcare

systems, it is also more important than ever for executives to be skilled at quickly adapting to change themselves, communicating vision, and managing organizational change. As many AMCs are entering into partnerships with non-academic healthcare organizations and hospitals, it is important for these AMCs to prioritize candidates with a strong understanding of the differences between academic and non-academic healthcare organizations.

Can you elaborate?

AMCs should also focus on leaders who have strengths that will be relevant to the most significant challenges they are facing. For example, if research revenues are up, but clinical volumes are down, then the candidate with the best track record for clinical operations may be the best candidate for the position.

How does the process of identifying and vetting healthcare executives differ from other industries, given the highly regulated and patient-focused nature of the field?

There are many different types of healthcare organizations aside from just being designated as for-profit and not-for-profit. Healthcare executives may have gained most of their experience in private medical groups, telemedicine companies, health tech, or traditional hospitals. Within the hospital arena, some are faith-based, some are specialized such as cancer centers or heart hospitals, and some are major regional trauma centers. Some facilities serve mainly private insurance patients while others serve mostly Medicare and Medicaid patients. Executives who have gained their experience in different settings bring different skill sets to the table, which creates an extra layer for recruiters and hiring leaders to consider. Someone who has served as a chief medical officer at a community hospital will have a learning curve if they take on the same role at a major trauma center. Hiring leaders have to decide how important it is that candidates come from similar organizations. For clinical leaders, there is an extra layer of vetting related to their clinical background. Search firms must perform extra due diligence on physician candidates to explore whether they have been subjected to malpractice claims, state licensure sanctions, or if they have had disciplinary issues with hospitals.

What strategies can healthcare organizations use to attract top executive talent in a competitive and evolving market?

In addition to the ever-present consideration of compensation and benefits, there are several other strategies healthcare organizations can use to attract top talent in today's market. Having witnessed economic pressures in healthcare that have caused several systems to downsize, conduct layoffs, or close altogether, executives are more attentive to the financial and strategic stability of a potential employer. It is important for organizations to articulate their financial situation and how they plan to deal with any challenges they are facing. If the incoming executive will be tasked with developing plans to deal with financial challenges, then sharing information about the level of autonomy and resources they will

(cont'd. to page 11)

have at their disposal will help them to evaluate their ability to meet the needs of the role. It is important to develop strong interview itineraries for candidates and always remember the employees of the organization must sell the organization and its culture to the candidate. It is also important to move through the process at a reasonable pace to ensure the top candidate is still on the market when a hiring decision is made.

How do executive search firms assess a candidate's ability to lead during healthcare crises, such as public health emergencies or financial challenges?

The past is the best predictor of the future. Most seasoned healthcare executives have led through the pandemic, natural disasters, or other local public health emergencies at some point in their careers, and virtually all healthcare executives have led through financial challenges. Asking candidates to describe situations when they had to lead through such challenges, what actions they took, and what the results of their decisions were typically provides good insight into someone's style and effectiveness in times of crisis. It is also insightful to ask what they learned from those experiences and what they would do differently if faced with a similar situation in the future. It is also good practice to corroborate their leadership style by asking the candidate's references to describe times the candidate led through such challenges. Finally, a number of personality assessments, such as the Hogan Assessments, can provide insight into the candidate's personality and tendencies when they are under such pressure.

What role does diversity, equity, and inclusion play in the executive recruitment process for healthcare, and how can organizations ensure they build a leadership team that reflects these values?

Diversity, equity, and inclusion play a significant role in healthcare executive recruitment. As in any organization, hiring, developing, retaining, and supporting employees from all backgrounds strengthens healthcare organizations. What makes DEI even more critical in healthcare is the nature of the patient relationship. Healthcare is deeply personal, and how someone approaches their personal medical decisions is often informed by their religious beliefs, information they have received through political outlets, cultural views, and how the information is communicated to them. While many patients have better reported outcomes when seeing providers who they can identify with on a personal level, at a minimum it is important that the physicians, nurses, and other providers who treat the organization's patients have cultural competencies that allow them to respect patients from all backgrounds. Supporting a diverse and inclusive culture in a healthcare organization affects not only employee satisfaction and patient reviews, but it also affects patient compliance and outcomes. That being said, the importance of recruiting healthcare executives who are fully committed to DEI in the broadest sense across the organization cannot be overstated. In order to attract diverse leaders or leaders who prioritize DEI, organizations must be intentional about articulating their policies and programs that focus on employee DEI and health equity for their patients and their families.

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Slone Partners Recruits CEO for the Personalized Medicine Coalition



Life sciences-focused search firm **Slone Partners** has assisted in the recruitment of Amy Nicole Nayar as the new president and CEO of the Personalized Medicine Coalition (PMC) in South Riding, VA. She

will begin her tenure on January 1, 2025. "We are excited about this placement as part of our long term partnership with the talented PMC team," said Leslie Loveless, managing partner and CEO of Slone Partners. "I cannot overstate the critical nature of PMC's work educating patients and decisionmakers on how personalized medicine can make healthcare far more efficient and effective, and we are honored to partner with them to achieve even greater success in the coming years."

Furst Group Recruits COO for Medical Associates Health Plans

Furst Group, which serves the healthcare and insurance industries, has assisted in the recruitment of Nicole Oishi as COO of Medical Associates Health Plan in Dubuque, IA. "We are excited to welcome Nicole to our team,"



said Zach Keeling, CEO of Medical Associates. "Her leadership and experience will help us build on the strong foundation we've created and continue delivering the excellent service our Health Plans is known for." Ms. Oishi brings more than 30 years of diverse healthcare experience, including over 15 years in executive leadership roles. Her background includes managing large multi-site physician groups, holding key positions at Regence/Cambia (a Blue Cross Blue Shield Health Plan operating in WA, UT, OR, and ID), and overseeing healthcare purchasing for the state of Washington.

Rudish Health Places CFO at MedStar Washington, D.C. Hospital Center and MedStar Health Research Institute



Rudish Health recently assisted in the recruitment of Amanda Barash as CFO of MedStar Washington (D.C.) Hospital Center and Columbia, MD-based MedStar Health Research Institute. With nearly

two decades of experience in financial leadership within complex healthcare systems, she brings expertise in strategic planning, revenue optimization, operational transformation, and research administration. Before joining MedStar Health, Ms. Barash held several positions, including director of finance at the Indiana University School of Medicine and Indiana University Health, vice president of medical group finance at Valley Health, and CFO for Sentara Norfolk General Hospital and Sentara Enterprise Pharmacy. Her diverse experience across these roles has equipped her with a comprehensive understanding of financial operations in both academic and clinical healthcare settings.

...More Searches Making News

Kirby Bates Associates Retained by Island Health for Chief Nursing Officer Search



Orlando, FL-headquartered healthcare-focused search firm **Kirby Bates Associates** was recently selected by Island Health to lead in its search for a chief nursing officer. Leading the assignment are Livonne Engebrecht, senior executive recruiter, and Peggy Loughery, senior vice president – executive search. As a member of the senior leadership team, the CNO will oversee all hospital-based clinical departments, ensure high-quality patient care and optimal patient outcomes, as well as the achievement of strategic goals. The CNO, in collaboration with the team, will participate in the development of the organization's strategic plan, ensure regulatory compliance, professional development of staff/leaders, monitor clinical performance, lead quality improvement initiatives, and act as a community leader and representative of Island Health.

Campbell & Company Recruits Executive Director for the American Nurses Foundation

Campbell & Company has placed Graig R. Eastin as the new executive director of the American Nurses Foundation. Senior consultant Joey Scheiber and managing director Kris McFeely led the assignment.



"Graig is an advancement executive with over 35 years of extensive experience spearheading fundraising strategies that generated over \$1.5 billion in contributions to date for leading academic institutions and nationally recognized healthcare organizations and hospitals," said Angela Beddoe, American Nurses Enterprise CEO. "As a member of the American Nurses Enterprise executive committee, his expertise will complement that of the executive team of the American Nurses Enterprise and accelerate further our bold pursuit of philanthropic goals for the American Nurses Foundation."

N2Growth Recruits CFO for Medtronic



N2Growth has placed Thierry Piéton as the new CFO of NYSE-traded Medtronic in Galway, Ireland. Brian Greer led the assignment. He will report to Medtronic chairman and chief executive officer Geoff

Martha and will join the Medtronic executive committee. "Thierry is a strategic, creative, operationally focused, experienced CFO with a proven track record of delivering innovation-driven growth, margin improvement, and earnings power through strong financial leadership, which is directly aligned with our financial objectives," said Mr. Martha. "We are confident he is the right choice at this important time for Medtronic and can't wait to benefit from his expertise and leadership." Mr. Piéton joins Medtronic from Renault Group, where he has served as CFO since March 2022.

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