



Successfully Placing a Chief Human Resources Officer During An Executive Leadership Transition.

The search: Chief Human Resources Officer
The organization: Great River Health, West Burlington, Iowa
Primary organization contact: Dr. Michael McCoy, President/CEO
Senior HSP consultant: Neill Marshall, chairman, HSP
Selected candidate: Michael Yost

Challenge

How do you successfully navigate the uncertainty caused by a sudden transition of an organization’s chief executive out of the organization while trying to recruit a Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO)? That was the challenge facing HealthSearch Partners (HSP) when, in the middle of its search engagement with Great River Health, the president, HSP’s primary contact, left the organization. The health system quickly named Michael McCoy, MD, an Ob/Gyn and long-time member of the hospital’s medical staff, interim CEO. After 30 days, Dr. McCoy was named permanent CEO. As the organization’s operations started to stabilize, Dr. McCoy began working with Neill Marshall at HSP on the CHRO search.

“Even though I wasn’t involved in the original decision to engage HealthSearch Partners for the search, I’m certainly glad that decision was made,” says Dr. McCoy. “Getting involved in the middle of the search and trying to figure out what was going on was a challenge for me and for Neill. Neither one of us had ever encountered a situation similar to the one we faced. With HSP as our partner, we worked through the bumps together resulting in a win-win situation for the organization and the candidate we chose.”

Solution

HealthSearch Partners had already identified three potential candidates for Great River Health when Dr. McCoy became involved in the process. The first candidate recommended by HSP, Michael Yost, completed a phone interview and impressed the panel of interviewers. The two other candidates were seen as viable choices as well.

After the phone interview and hearing the CEO had left the organization, Yost saw some red flags and decided to stop the process. He held a senior HR executive position with a health system in Louisiana but was anxious to return to Iowa with his wife and children to be closer to their family.

“Michael was our choice for a number of reasons,” explains Dr. McCoy. “He was from the Midwest and wanted to get back closer to family. He had been in charge of a Total Rewards program at a large health system in Des Moines that achieved impressive results, and he articulated how his team could provide the value we were seeking from HR. His personality and

Great River Health

West Burlington, Iowa

Founded in 2018 with the partnership of Great River

Medical Center and Fort

Madison Community

Hospital, Great River

Health is southeast Iowa’s

regional hub for high-

quality primary and

specialty care. In 2021 the

two organizations became

one hospital – Southeast

Iowa Regional Medical

Center.

personal goals fit with our culture. When I heard he was hesitant to proceed with the interview process because of concerns about organizational instability, I asked Neill to reach out to him and ask him to speak with me. Fortunately, he agreed, and we were able to bring him to Great River Health as a member of our executive team.”

Results

“I had goals in mind about what I wanted to accomplish should the search with Great River Health work out,” explained Yost. “I wanted to keep an open mind, learn more about the organization and what they were looking for in terms of talent for this role. Then, I could determine if I was a good fit while also being able to fulfill my goals.”

Yost says several aspects of the search experience with HSP stood out to him. “I have been involved in two other executive searches before with other firms,” he explained. “With HSP, I had one executive consultant, Neill Marshall, I dealt with throughout the search. With the other firms I dealt with as many as three people. Only working with Neill was more streamlined, efficient, and satisfying. Having him as the one and only contact enabled a genuine and open discussion upfront that created transparency throughout, and that was helpful.”

Yost says he was also impressed with HSP’s focus on the right “fit.” “Neill got to know me and understand my goals. He advocated for me,” says Yost. Dr. McCoy agrees. “Neill was helpful, always addressing questions in a timely manner,” explains Dr. McCoy. “He was always accessible and helpful. There were times I would ask him how he thought things might go and he was honest and truthful with me, and I appreciated that.”

Dr. McCoy says he’s convinced that if Neill had not reached out to Yost when he was hesitant to pursue the opportunity, Great River wouldn’t have been successful in recruiting him. “We’re pleased Michael didn’t see the Great River CHRO position as just a steppingstone. He’s here for the long term and that’s good for us and for him.”



Pictured: Michael Yost

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