

HSP Success Story

Erlanger Needed to Find A CHRO, Stat! HealthSearch Partners Delivered the Ideal Candidate

The search: Chief Human Resources Officer

The organization: Erlanger, Chattanooga, TN

Primary organization contact: Jim Coleman, President,
Chief Executive Officer

Candidate selected: Wendy Fournet

Challenge

In 2023, Erlanger in Chattanooga, TN, faced an immediate need to recruit a Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO). The integrated delivery system includes five acute care hospitals, a behavioral health hospital, a children's hospital, and 28 primary care locations. Like all healthcare organizations, Erlanger faced multiple workforce challenges that needed the strategic insight of a seasoned HR professional. Jim Coleman, Erlanger's President, CEO, knew he needed to partner with an executive search firm that could quickly understand the organization's culture and challenges. The firm would need to quickly source a pool of CHRO candidates that met Erlanger's unique expectations as well as its current and future HR needs. He was familiar with Dallas-based HealthSearch Partners (HSP) from a previous search experience.

Solution

The CHRO position was the first senior executive level opening Coleman had available since he assumed his role with Erlanger. "I immediately called Ed Fry, a founding partner of HSP, whom I had known through a previous search," Coleman explains. "I asked for a proposal from HSP and we ultimately selected them to conduct the CHRO search."

Coleman says the biggest challenge facing HSP was Erlanger's compressed timeline to interview and select a CHRO. "We had some big items in the HR area that were coming at us, and we knew we needed someone with the right experience and expertise to help us address them. We also wanted someone who would look at the opportunity through a strategic lens, not just approach it with a traditional operational and transactional view."

HSP quickly developed a fast-paced timeline for the search and began sourcing a candidate pool that matched Erlanger's requirements.



Erlanger

Chattanooga, TN

Erlanger is a multi-hospital health system anchored by a leading academic medical center. With five-acute care hospitals, a children's hospital, a behavioral health hospital, and 28 primary care locations, Erlanger treats more than 1,000,000 people annually. It is the tri-state region's only Level 1 Trauma Center.

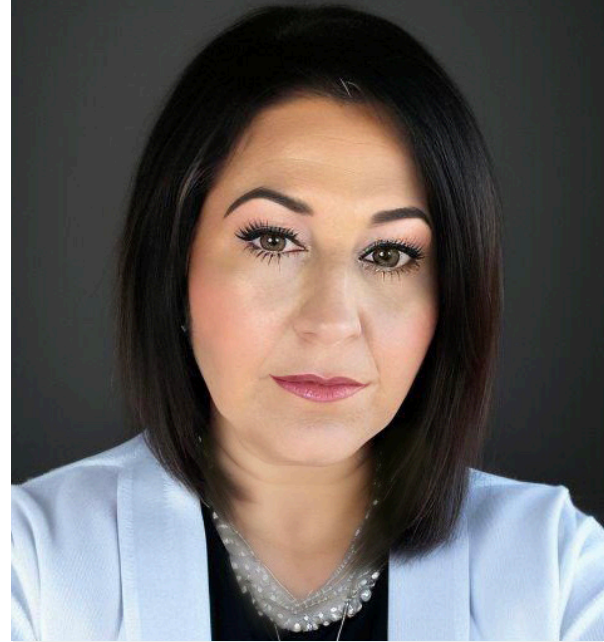
Results

Within a matter of weeks, the Erlanger search committee was able to screen, interview and select the final CHRO candidate from the pool HSP had presented. Ivan Bartolome, HSP's President and CEO, and Neill Marshall, HSP's Chairman, were the two key consultants who worked closely with Erlanger and the candidates on the search. "Erlanger's compressed timeframe to source candidates for the CHRO position challenged us," Marshall says. "Because our access to the pool of potential candidates is wider than many search firms, we were able to present a slate of highly qualified candidates that met Erlanger's requirements. Bottom line, our process of candidate selection proved itself once again and the outcome was a win-win for the organization and for the candidate."

Erlanger's choice for CHRO was Wendy Fournet, MS, HRLD. With more than 20 years of HR experience, eight of which were in an executive-level role, Fournet brought healthcare and non-healthcare insight to the table, helping to inform her strategic view of HR, just what Erlanger was looking for. She joined Erlanger from Logan Health System in Montana. Her prior experience also included leadership roles at several health systems and healthcare companies across Louisiana and Texas. She holds a Doctoral degree in education focused on organizational learning and change from Baylor University, and a master's degree in human resources and leadership development from Louisiana State University. Since Fournet joined Erlanger, the organization has restructured its leadership team. Fournet has been promoted to Executive Vice President, Chief Administrative Officer.

Fournet knew about HSP because Fry had tried to interest her in a CHRO position at a hospital in her hometown of Beaumont, TX, a few years earlier. "I didn't pursue that opportunity, but I remember being impressed with Ed's approach and HSP's personalized model for executive search," she says. "After moving my parents from their home in Montana back to Texas, I began looking for my next opportunity. A CEO I had worked for in a previous position alerted me to the Erlanger posting from HSP and I reached out." Fry contacted Marshall who immediately reached out to Fournet. After a couple of phone conversations, Marshall sent Fournet the details about the Erlanger position. A follow-up call with Bartolome resulted in a few interviews with Erlanger and ultimately a site visit in Chattanooga.

Fournet says she appreciated HSP's individualized approach to the search, especially the personal connection she developed with Marshall and Bartolome. "That was very important to me," she says. "Almost from the initial contact with HSP, I felt that I had known Ed, Neill, and Ivan for a very long time. That personal touch I felt from HSP is exactly how I want my recruiters to be with candidates who have approached us about a position."



Successful Searches, Satisfied Clients

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Wendy Fournet, MS, HRLD
Executive Vice President
Chief Administrative Officer

Results/Continued

HSP saw the primary criteria it established for the search – the fit between Erlanger and the CHRO candidate – was more than met with Fournet. “I like being in community health systems. It’s a passion of mine to work with an organization that serves the community,” Fournet explains. “The community benefit of employment, the financial impact on the community, the mission to compassionately care for people, Erlanger has that. I knew it would be a good place for me to be, plus I liked Jim the CEO, and I liked the board. The community is extremely supportive of Erlanger. They want the organization to be here and it’s always nice to be wanted.”

“From start to finish, I was very pleased with HSP and the search experience,” Coleman says. “I was most pleased with how HSP kept us in the loop about the progress of the search, how they met the shortened timeframe for the search, and the highly qualified slate of candidates they brought to us. They worked in the background with the two finalists very effectively and they helped us make the right decision. Wendy has hit the ground running and I know she is going to be a real boost to our management team. Her strategic thinking is exactly what we wanted in a CHRO.”

Coleman says working with HSP was different than working with other larger executive search firms for a couple of reasons. “The HSP approach and experience is more client-driven. They made sure they understood what we wanted and when we wanted it. Also, I appreciated the flexibility they brought to the table in terms of the candidates they were able to source. If I were speaking to other CEOs considering launching an executive search, I would tell them if they want a search firm that is going to listen to what they are looking for and provide highly personalized attention to deliver a more focused experience, then they should consider engaging HealthSearch Partners. If I have additional future executive searches, I will definitely consider engaging HSP again.”



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