



## Fort Healthcare Aligns an Expedited Timeline, a Streamlined Process, and the Right Search Firm to Find the Ideal Director of Human Resources

*Fort Healthcare needed to fill a Director of Human Resources position quickly, but the Wisconsin provider also required a search firm that could offer a non-traditional executive search process with a speedy presentation of candidates, and at a lower cost.*

### The Challenge

When Fort Healthcare of Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin had an unexpected human resources executive vacancy and no successor identified, the responsibility fell on President and Chief Executive Officer, Mike Wallace, to find a replacement. It was critical the position be occupied by a seasoned human resources leader, and quickly. Wallace determined the position should be filled by an external candidate through a qualified search firm.

### The Solution

A positive experience and established trust through his own placement led Wallace to select MSA Executive Search, an executive- and director-level search firm for the healthcare industry. *"MSA Executive Search placed me in my current position as President and CEO of Fort Healthcare, so it was an obvious choice based on my own experience as a candidate - I didn't even consider other search firms,"* said Wallace. *"Plus, since we were doing the search externally, we needed a firm with access to a large network of healthcare human resources leaders – and I knew MSA Executive Search had that access. I was particularly drawn to the personal approach MSA Executive Search gives to every interaction, much different than what I was used to with some of the larger firms."* Wallace continued, *"They bring both a scientific and objective approach to the search work they do, which is what I needed. I knew we would benefit from a professional who works in the search space everyday. I was pleased when the consultant, Kim Kueser, visited Fort Atkinson to learn about our organization and get a sense of what we needed in an HR leader. I could tell that Kim was doing the necessary 360 degree review of the hospital and the opportunity, so I knew she would represent us accurately."*

Because Wallace was looking for a streamlined, more cost-effective solution compared to a full retained executive search,

MSA Executive Search suggested Fort Healthcare utilize the MSA SearchDIRECT services for this engagement. MSA SearchDIRECT is a specialized division of the search firm dedicated to director-level placement. The MSA SearchDIRECT process utilizes the same precise methodology MSA Executive Search has been using for the past 30 years, yet with a streamlined process and pricing, and an average close rate of less than 90 days.

When asked how the SearchDIRECT experience differed from that of the full executive search process, Wallace said, *"It was streamlined but still very thorough; I always knew what was going on and that there would be no surprises. It was clear that Kim did her homework on the front-end; every candidate was carefully screened to our criteria."*

Following her assessment, the consultant determined that the HR staff members at Fort Healthcare needed a clearly defined structure and direction, and individual growth opportunities. It was apparent that Fort Healthcare were bright, knowledgeable, and talented, yet recognized that they needed a more defined structure, better direction, and individual growth opportunities. It was clear that Fort Healthcare needed a seasoned, dynamic, engaging, and experienced human resources leader to support this team. In addition, it was a key requirement that the new director fit with the culture of the hospital, the department, and the community.

Ms. Kueser developed a comprehensive profile of the position, and a thorough communication and networking plan to quickly identify qualified candidates. Following an initial screening, candidates underwent an assessment to identify key characteristics. Candidates were then interviewed using behavioral interviewing techniques through a face-to-face video interview.

When asked about the process from a candidate's perspective, the successful candidate, Nancy Alstad, Director of Human Resources, stated, *"What was particularly nice about working with Kim was that she seemed to really know the organization. I believe she represented the hospital genuinely and accurately. I felt a cultural fit with the organization while speaking with her and after visiting Fort Atkinson, as well. This was my first experience with a video interview, and Kim made it very easy for me. A video/web camera interview can be a cost-effective and efficient alternative to conducting an interview in person, while still*

Continues on next page

*allowing you to feel comfortable and make a good connection.” Ms. Alstad continued, “Kim worked with Mike Wallace to ensure the first year goals were incorporated into the position profile, and we were able to discuss them during our interview.*

*The position profile clearly detailed the objectives and the most important first year areas of emphasis; it was extremely helpful.”*

With the holidays fast approaching, Mr. Wallace expressed a desire to expedite the candidate presentation in order to interview, select, and hire a Director of Human Resources before the holiday season. Ms. Kueser pre-scheduled first round interview dates for the week following the presentation of candidates to avoid any scheduling conflicts which may have extended the process further than desired. Candidates were interviewed by Mr. Wallace, members of the senior executive team and the Human Resources department, and a cross-section of other department directors. Within 56 days of the start of the search, Ms. Alstad was hired.

## **The Result**

*“We placed a Director of Human Resources with great industry experience who speaks our language and that understands our healthcare system. Nancy is great and we couldn’t be happier; she was an outstanding candidate from the beginning,” says Mr. Wallace. “Kim has kept in touch regularly, which I have appreciated. The streamlined MSA SearchDIRECT process offered a reduced fee and turned out to be a great fit for us, without compromising the quality of the search. Two years later, it’s clear the process worked for us.”*

*Ms. Alstad reflected, “The greatest takeaway for me is the cultural match. Having someone like Kim represent the culture so accurately made the process, and my two years with the organization, much better. Also, regular follow-up communication goes a long way; it was great to have continuous dialogue with Kim during the search and over the two years since I’ve accepted the position with Fort Healthcare. I feel that Kim has partnered with me and that our relationship will last long-term.”*

For a successful placement to occur, there must be an adequate amount of planning spent early in the process to fully understand

the culture of the hospital, the department hiring the candidate, and the community served by the provider. A true partnership with the healthcare organization and regular communication throughout the process is also critical to success.

In this situation, flexibility and an accelerated candidate presentation were critical factors to an expedited placement and client satisfaction. Clear communication, commitment to the process by all parties, and express service from the search firm all led to the successful hire of the best fit for the position. In the two years that Ms. Alstad has been with the organization, she has made significant improvements to the Human Resources department and is a valued member of the hospital leadership team. As demonstrated by the results, SearchDIRECT was an excellent option for Fort Healthcare.

## **About Integrated Healthcare Strategies**

*Integrated Healthcare Strategies provides healthcare organizations with direct access to a comprehensive array of healthcare-specific services, delivered by professionals from the industry who understand the rigors of running a healthcare organization – from the lunchroom to the Board Room. Its client list is a “who’s who” of healthcare organizations including over 1,200 major healthcare providers, 1,800 hospitals and 700 independent and affiliated medical groups. Integrated Healthcare Strategies specializes in the areas of physician strategy and compensation, employee compensation, executive compensation, human resource solutions, labor relations, leadership transition planning, executive search, compensation and employee engagement surveys, performance management, board governance solutions, and M&A transition issues.*



**INTEGRATED HEALTHCARE  
STRATEGIES™**

*Exclusive to Healthcare. Dedicated to People.™*

[www.IHStrategies.com](http://www.IHStrategies.com)