A WATERSHED MOMENT FOR HIRING EXECUTIVE TALENT

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**Below is intended to share insights on how we are guiding our client base to adapt to these “uncharted waters” – and how to address the unique obstacles that the Covid-19 pandemic presents to traditional executive hiring practices.**

As the events of the COVID-19 pandemic unfold, the damage looks likely to be much deeper and longer-lasting than seemed possible even a month ago. One thing is becoming clear, unprecedented events require big, bold responses. The reality is that top CEO’s remain acutely focused on acquiring talent that will have a material impact on their company’s ability to thrive in a harsher economic climate. The bad news is, the traditional channels that those CEO's would have used to build a relationship with and assess executives (in-person strategy sessions, presentations, dinner’s, runs etc.) are no longer realistic or viable.

For the purpose of this communication, we are focusing on best practices for executing thorough executive hiring processes with great outcomes entirely over Zoom. We believe the idea that you must literally “sit across the table to effectively assess/bond with an executive” is obsolete. In the last 30 days we have placed 8 C-level Executives exclusively utilizing video as the decision-making platform. In all of these instances, a physical meeting never transpired.

Below is an overview of three CEO’s and one of the executive hires in which we take a look at the psychology of their processes/ frameworks for making a critical go-forward decision. This is certainly shaping how the future of work is changing in real-time and how you might learn from their processes to adapt your own hiring practices to this climate.
the importance of meeting someone before I hire them. At Thrive, I interview every candidate before we extend an offer — and I’ve committed to doing that at least for our first 500 employees. I’m Greek, after all, and we like to break bread and look people in the eye. Because hiring is not just a business transaction — it’s a personal connection and a moment of committing to each other. How you come together shapes everything that follows.”

“With all that’s happening in the world right now, of course, meeting in person is off the table. But at Thrive, we have to keep moving fast. Many of our partners, including Salesforce, Walmart, Accenture, and Bank of America, are doubling down on our offerings at a time when people are focused more than ever on strengthening their physical immunity and mental resilience. We know that having the right talent in place is always key, but now more important than ever as every project we’re working on is urgent.”

“Just before we closed our offices, we opened a search for a Head of Engineering to help scale our behavior-change technology platform to millions more users.”

“THERE’S NOTHING I LOVE MORE WHILE INTERVIEWING THAN …”

a lunch or dinner to really get to know what drives them as a person. But I had to learn to feel completely comfortable making the decision via video conference — no in-person meeting, no Greek meal! And while it was a stretch at first — and not without complications, like when the power in my house went out! — over the course of a few interviews I learned to love the experience. Every conversation starts on a uniquely human note – how are you and your family coping in this crisis which is affecting everyone? — and with each of us being in our homes, it allows for a more personal connection than if we were just Zooming from a conference room at our respective offices. In the end, it also made the hiring process much faster, as well. We quickly closed a candidate after several long video conversations, scheduled day-after-day, when finding the time to arrange the same number of in-person meetings would likely have taken weeks.”

“Right now, leaders need to adapt quickly. We must be willing to part ways with beliefs and processes that have served us well in the past. We need a new playbook for the uncommon times we’re living in. When it comes to hiring, I’m finding that Zoom meetings — or WebEx, or Google Hangouts, or whatever your preferred medium — can create a great space for authentic connection. You can look each other in the eye, even if you’re thousands of miles apart. As we embrace our new normal, we need to be on the lookout every day for opportunities disguised as challenges. And in times of deep uncertainty like this, in order for leaders to be able to see the icebergs ahead and recognize the hidden opportunities they need to find a way to get themselves into the metaphorical eye of the hurricane — that centered place of strength, wisdom and peace which we all have inside ourselves. Because only from that place can we come up with our most innovative and creative ideas – or hire the most critical senior executives – that the times demand.”
“APPLYING FRAMEWORKS WITH ANDY WILSON

WE WENT AHEAD AND APPLIED OUR FRAMEWORK FOR REMOTE RECRUITING TO THE EXECUTIVE LEVEL”

The first thing we do is create a detailed description of what the ideal candidate looks like and a counter candidate “anti” candidate profile. It is often easier to rule people out than it is to put them in. That’s #1.

We build a scorecard on that using 10 criteria that we think are super important for this person to have. Very skill-based, experience-driven. If you’re familiar with the Clayton Christensen Job Theory - we apply this to hiring.

We look at what is the #1 thing this person needs to do?

We then determine what are the 10 things we can evaluate on a qualitative and a quantitative level?

“YOU CAN ESTABLISH GREAT RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEOPLE OVER THE INTERNET”

“We have a distributed workforce and have been hiring employees remotely for years, so we have learned from trial and error. But we haven’t hired someone at this level (VP) before through a virtual process. We have an asynchronous survey that reveals a lot- we find people reveal themselves in their writing much more than in person. If you do that, it can become the basis for all of your future conversations. You get to explore the person’s life a lot more because you’re using a document they created for you. You can establish great relationships with people over the internet.”

“I have hired dozens and dozens of people this way and I would say that the experience has been just as good in person. One key advantage is Logistics! You don’t need to coordinate travel. You don’t have any awkward dinner moments and you don’t need to spend money at that dinner! There is a small cost savings there and when you are a startup, every dollar counts. With the new VP of Sales we hired virtually, we spent hours and hours with each other on calls and video.”

“I would continue to make key hires this way post-Covid-19. If a company has a really good remote system, where they can hire well, communicate, get the right outputs they want then who cares how they are hired. It’s about alignment to your mission, culture, strategy and ultimately the output. I do think this will be a new normal for a lot of companies- especially if you need to hire a key executive right away to accelerate growth.”

ANDY WILSON
CEO OF LOGIKCULL

Logikcull a cloud-based platform that makes it easy for companies of all sizes to upload, process, search and review files seamlessly. Andy provides insights on how he recently closed a C Level project, orchestrated 100% through Zoom video meetings and phone calls.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIMARY CRITERIA</th>
<th>Score (1 to 16 Scale)</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Weighted Score</th>
<th>Max Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Mission-driven: wants to be a part of the impact that Logikcull is having in the world</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>2. Experience growing a SaaS sales org from $10M to $50M</td>
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<td>3. Experience with land-and-expand sales motion</td>
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<td>4. Solid understanding of SaaS metrics: ARR, ARR, LTV, CAC, NDR, etc.</td>
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<td>5. Experience with Salesforce and SFDC related AE workflows</td>
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<td>6. Experience hiring 10+ AE’s (ideally outside of SFBA)</td>
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<td>7. Experience building a sales capacity plan using historical data</td>
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<td>8. Experience presenting to the board of directors</td>
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<td>9. Domain knowledge (not experience, just an understanding of the space)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Experience within our ACVs ($20k to $500k+)</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
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Score → 0.00%
"We made two virtual hires and in doing so it did require our team to add steps and deepen our process to ensure we were making the right calls."

"For me personally, using zoom for interviews is already a standard process. What was new to me was that at no point in time were there physical meetings. Having interviewed and hired someone completely remote is a new thing."

"WHAT MADE IT A COMFORTABLE DECISION IS THAT I TRUST MY PROCESS.

I realized that with a great process, tweaking that process and having very good decision-making criteria, it doesn’t matter if you make your hire remote, physical, or a combination of the two. I have made two virtual hires over the past three weeks and feel strongly they are the right executives for our company. I’m confident we are able to share our culture through this process as well. Seeing culture isn’t just walking through the office or having a cultural document printed over the wall. Over video, the candidates can still see the presentation skills and personality of our people and how we think and interact."

"For these two hires, we took our existing process and added to it. There are three elements we focused on with a keener sense of perspective and objectivity that we built into our process that will help us going forward for any future hiring we do beyond the stereo-typical interview process— in which you have the candidate meet a lot of people, then get feedback from various stakeholders."

1. THE INITIAL INTRODUCTION

- 30-minute interview/Zoom with myself and the candidate with the main objective of establishing a connection and presenting our story. Normally this would be longer, but we trimmed the initial conversations.
- Follow up consisted of 5 team executives all focused on different aspects of the candidate’s experiences.
- A keen sense of the candidate’s strengths and weaknesses emerged, and we became more acutely aware of fit and impact.

**Advantages/Advice:** One plus of meeting virtually is it takes less time and we were able to rapidly accelerate our process without being careless. People are more accessible when you are meeting them virtually. There is less interference from travel, etc. No longer being saddled with the wait time associated with candidates flying to meet us and have dinner was a “game changer”. I was able to meet more candidates and it was a lot less expensive for the business.

2. THE ASSESSMENT

- We run a series of role play elements that enable us to see executives “creativity and enthusiasm”
- Deploy him or herself with a subject matter and pitch me as a potential buyer. Put yourself in the shoes of a potential buyer as well. Here we are looking for how a candidate will gather and present information.
- Have the candidate develop a business plan. What would you do if you were selected in this role? Initiatives, goals, KPIs, etc.

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3. REFERENCE CHECKING

- This is another area where we added more into the mix because of the lack of physical contact. We look to run 10 reference calls with blind references. We absolutely spend a lot of time here so we can pick up anything we aren’t able to see over video.

**Advantages/Advice:** The back deeper and more compressive attention to back channels will complete the candidates picture and it gave me confidence that my virtual instincts were validated and reinforced my decision making. Not making a thoughtful yet swift decision is itself a decision.
“THE MOST IMPORTANT CRITERIA FOR ME (IN ANY CAREER SEARCH), WAS TO IDENTIFY SOMETHING THAT HAD “MISSION” BUILT INTO THE OPPORTUNITY”

1. Mission, Purpose & Impact
2. Strong Cultural fit
3. Consistent explanation of the business model
4. Deep Dive on “what success looks like”
5. Short & Long Term Alignment on the plan
6. Trust
7. Respect
8. Team Collaboration & Communication

“Overall, the virtual hiring process was seamless. The most important aspect was teasing out evidence of a strong culture fit. We had a series of one on one and group video conversations throughout the process. I found the group interviews to be very insightful. When you are on a video with four or five other people, you can get a sense of the team dynamics through their interactions. In this case, I could see that there was an incredible level of trust and respect amongst team members at all levels. Arianna trusted her team and they are an equal part of the conversation.”

“As a candidate you can learn a lot through these interactions- if someone interrupts the CEO, how do they respond? Does every person feel like they can be an equal part of the conversation? I also looked at how they allowed me to communicate. I could see that the entire team was excited and trusted each other.”

“I certainly didn’t expect that I would take a role without meeting people in person, and without seeing the office location and culture. But when you think about it, an office is just an office that can change locations. The people aspect was most important to me and I was able to get a very good sense of this in our conversations. We spent a lot of time talking about a plan and how we would drive success early on in the role. It was highly collaborative, and I was able to see how the team worked together. This gave me a high degree of comfort and excitement.”

I didn’t need to build in time for travel and coordination of busy schedules. I found all of this to be much easier and it moved the ball along much more quickly.

We didn’t have the issue with travel, and time zones - I could just look at my calendar and jump on a zoom.

I can’t imagine going back to a process that is so focused on in person meetings. It’s really great to meet people in person, but having now gone through this experience on the candidate side, I would be confident in my ability to hire a team virtually.

It’s all about your process and the questions you are asking. Video meetings are becoming less taboo and people are getting more comfortable with this form of interaction.

THE UNEXPECTED POSITIVES AND LEARNINGS FROM A CANDIDATE PERSPECTIVE WAS JUST HOW EASY IT WAS TO MAKE TIME FOR MEETINGS:

Timur Lesov provides perspective as an executive candidate who navigated through a virtual process, and the challenges and benefits of the decision-making process.

CANDIDATE PERSPECTIVE WITH TIMUR LESOV

Timur Lesov
VP ENGINEERING OF THRIVE GLOBAL

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