Case Study: Transforming Recruitment Through an RPO Engagement

Situation

A global financial technology firm with $750M in revenue and 600 employees across the U.S., U.K., and Hong Kong had steadily grown over two decades, offering a unique platform of software, data & analytics, and consulting services for the investment banking industry.

Initially, I was engaged by the Head of Sales to recruit two senior sales executives, both of whom proved to be highly successful hires. Following his resignation, I was brought back to find his replacement. Under the new Head of Sales, the company secured several major clients during an investment banking boom, significantly exceeding growth expectations. However, this rapid expansion strained the firm's resources, creating hiring bottlenecks and putting revenue at risk. Leadership faced an urgent challenge: how to scale hiring efficiently without disrupting operations.

Challenges

Although hiring was approved by senior management and HR, execution was left to individual hiring managers without a centralized strategy, leading to:

- **Inconsistent Employer Messaging** – Different hiring managers pitched the company, culture, and roles differently, confusing candidates and diluting the employer brand.

- **Fragmented Recruitment Efforts** – Managers worked with multiple contingency search firms, prioritizing volume over quality, resulting in inefficient searches.

- **Candidate Conflicts & Internal Competition**
  - Multiple search firms presented the same candidates to different hiring managers, causing bidding wars for talent.
  - Search firms disputed candidate ownership, leading to conflicts with HR and strained vendor relationships.

- **Lack of Hiring Visibility** – Without centralized reporting, hiring managers struggled to provide accurate recruitment updates to senior leadership, leading to misaligned expectations.

- **Cultural Deterioration** – The hiring chaos disrupted collaboration and transparency, turning an innovative, forward-thinking culture into one plagued by political tension and miscommunication.

- **Lack of Hiring Process & Structur**e –
  - Many managers lacked structured interview training, leading to inconsistent candidate evaluation.
  - Some candidates underwent two interviews, while others faced ten, with no clear framework for assessment.

- **Leadership Transitions & Organizational Re-structuring** – The firm was merging its software and data business units, causing senior managers to leave while new leadership roles were created.

Solution: Building a Scalable Hiring Strategy

To sustain the business, the firm needed to hire 120+ people in six months across multiple business units, including sales, client services, product, marketing, research, and IT—spanning both leadership roles and individual contributors.

After failed attempts with contingency firms and disappointing results from global retained search firms, leadership sought a new approach. I was asked to propose a comprehensive hiring solution that could make or break the company's next growth phase.

The Approach: Centralized Recruitment Strategy

To achieve these aggressive hiring goals, my team and I developed and executed a structured recruitment model:

1. Deep-Dive Consulting & Organizational Understanding
We immersed ourselves in the firm's culture, challenges, and hiring needs, spending three weeks onsite in New York and London to:
• Interview executives, hiring managers, and top performers to define success metrics for each role.
• Train hiring managers in behavioral interviewing techniques.
• Conduct psychometric testing on leadership to align hiring decisions with cultural and cognitive benchmarks.

2. Employer Branding & Go-To-Market Strategy
• Developed unified messaging around the firm's mission, culture, and growth prospects.
• Created custom marketing materials for candidate outreach.
• Rewrote job descriptions to clearly define expectations and attract the right talent.
• Built a targeted sourcing strategy, identifying candidates from investment banks, consultancies, think tanks, and FinTech firms.

3. Process Design & Infrastructure Development
• Standardized Interview & Evaluation Framework
• Implemented a structured hiring process with clear assessment criteria.
• Trained managers on a consistent interview approach to improve decision-making.
• Applicant Tracking System (ATS) Implementation
• Built an ATS for real-time visibility into hiring progress.
• Enabled tracking of candidate pipeline, feedback, and recruitment metrics.
• Executive Hiring & Market Insights Reporting
• Developed a weekly hiring report for senior leadership.
• Provided insights on talent market trends, compensation benchmarks, and employer brand perception.
• Led weekly strategy meetings with HR and leadership.

4. Search Execution & Talent Acquisition
• Deployed a dedicated recruitment team, each aligned to a specific business unit.
• Managed the entire hiring process, from candidate sourcing to offer negotiation.

Results

The firm successfully hired 122 professionals in six months, securing the talent necessary to sustain and grow revenue.

- Placements Made:
    - Senior Management Placements - 4
        - Global Head of Investment Banking Strategy
        - Global Head of Equity Capital Markets
        - Global Head of Mergers & Acquisitions
        - Global Head of Debt Capital Markets
    - Mid-Level Management Placements - 12
        - Head of Marketing, Europe
        - Head of Sales, Americas
        - Head of Technical Support
        - 3 Senior Product Managers
        - 4 Relationship Team Managers
        - 2 Research Managers
    - Individual Contributor Commercial Roles Placed – 78
    - Individual Contributor Technical Roles Placed – 28

- The centralized hiring approach became institutionalized, allowing the company to scale effectively until its acquisition.
- The influx of new employees infused the company with fresh energy and ideas, driving innovation and expanding its services and solutions.

Conclusion

By transitioning from fragmented, reactive hiring to a centralized, structured recruitment strategy, the firm not only solved its immediate hiring crisis but also built a scalable system for long-term growth. This transformation reinforced its competitive position in the market, ultimately leading to a high-value acquisition.