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Sports and Entertainment Expansion Elevating Search Business to New Heights



Over the last 25 years, sports has grown into a formidable global industry. Historically, professional sports teams operated on a relatively modest level, with league officials, team owners, managers, and coaches surrounding themselves with people they knew and trusted from their own small worlds. College sports teams relied on in-house search committees and word-of-mouth recommendations.

Familiarity, however, can also breed contempt. Teams with huge followings like the Dallas Cowboys, Real Madrid and Manchester United have seen their valuations soar into the billions of dollars. That's attracted search firms – big time. Seasoned recruiters now provide strategic planning advice, in addition to talent identification services, with the capability of applying their findings to speed along the process in the hunt for talent.

"When I started in 1995, there were virtually no HR directors in sports. HR was always handled by finance," said **RSR Partners** managing director and head of sports industry practice Joe Bailey, a former CEO of the NFL's Miami Dolphins organization. "The pipeline for talent has gone from C-level people to Bs and As. The quality of the person that has gotten interested in sports, from an administrative standpoint, has really risen."

Sports Meets Entertainment

Many C-suite focused recruiting firms are now active in the sector and some specialize only in the sports field itself. These include, in addition to **RSR Partners**: **Nolan Partners**, **SRiCheyenne**, **Turnkey**, **CarrSports Consulting**, **Korn Ferry**, **Harvard Group International**, **Prodigy Sports**, **Marquee Search**, **DHR International**, **Hartmann Mason**, **College Sports Solutions**, **Egon Zehnder**, **Heidrick & Struggles**, **Ascension Sports Partners**, **Russell Reynolds Associates**, **Diversified Search**, **Odgers Berndtson**, **Eastman & Beaudine**, **Alden Associates**, **Parker**

Executive Search, **Neinas Sports Services** and **Collegiate Sports Associates**, among others.

According to Mr. Bailey, the biggest change facing the executive search industry is finding enough top tier talent to keep pace as sports intersects with entertainment/media. "When you combine these sectors, it's probably closer to \$500 billion in revenue in the U.S.," said Mr. Bailey. "That's almost twice as large as the automobile industry."

Sports franchises and college teams now compete as global brands in a world of entertainment choices that is being revolutionized by new digital platforms and technologies. eSports, for example, is the fastest growing category within the sector (see 'By the Numbers' below). Managing this growing complexity requires leaders with wider ranging skills and more diverse industry and functional expertise. It's created a perfect storm for recruiters to step in and expand alongside.

Shifting their focus away from the playing field, dugout, sideline, front office and executive suite, specialized recruiters now focus on how sports consumers access their media content with an emphasis on targeting multi-faceted executives who can keep clients relevant - and in some cases, ahead of the pack - in a fast-changing marketplace.

BY THE NUMBERS

Fast-Growing World of eSports

The global eSports market
generated **\$325 million** of revenue in 2015
and **\$493 million** in 2016.

Total audience last year was **226 million** people.

For the first time, social media giant Facebook plans to live stream at least 20 Major League Baseball games this season that will be available to users in the U.S., the league announced. A few years ago, MLB embedded its video player directly into its Facebook page to live stream spring training games. Facebook also plans to offer an online version of fan interaction that takes place in the stands during games.

In another example of mixing sports and entertainment, Amazon paid \$50 million to live stream NFL Thursday night games this season. Amazon replaced Twitter, *(cont'd. to page 2)*

Solving Complex Problems

Joe Bailey – RSR Partners



Joe Bailey brings 30 years of client-side leadership, management, and operations and 20 years of advisory services to RSR Partners' clients. Mr. Bailey, who has extensive experience in the global sports industry as a leader and advisor, has been the CEO of the NFL Miami Dolphins Football Club, Dolphins Stadium, and Dolphins Enterprises, deputy commissioner of the National Thoroughbred Racing Association, chief operating officer of the World League/NFL, and vice president of administration of the Dallas Cowboys Football Club. Several years ago, he was asked to serve as the acting commissioner of the Big East Conference, an NCAA collegiate conference consisting of 21 universities. Additionally, as the founder and chief executive officer of Global Sport 360, he advised businesses in the global sport industry on strategies and tactics to maximize innovation and talent. Prior to joining RSR Partners, Mr. Bailey established a global sport leadership advisory group on behalf of an international leadership consulting firm. The group advises on effective leadership and solving complex problems that involve vision, strategic alignment, general management and execution, and talent management.

which live streamed Thursday night games last year. This year, Twitter will live stream MLB and NHL games.

"Everybody is producing or distributing content," said Diversified Search managing partner Tracy O'Such, whose responsibilities include running the firm's global digital media, entertainment & sports practices. "It's not just, 'we have to get this to our cable operator for broadcast distributors.' We have to deal with the whole mobile infrastructure and the whole competitive piece coming from players like Facebook, Google and Apple creating their own content. They're going after producers from the cable and broadcast world because they want to create Apple TV. Facebook is creating their own programming because look at what Netflix has done. There's a million channels, and there's always something on."

Ms. O'Such's longevity in the industry and unique perspective makes her uniquely qualified to recruit senior-level talent in the media/entertainment sector.

"It's been a fascinating ride from my early days. I came out of the cable television industry when that was kind of the new technology," said Ms. O'Such, who grew up in affiliate relations selling content to cable operators. "Having worked in programming (now called content) at USA Network, I was in marketing there and with another cable operator. I started at a small boutique that just served the cable operators community and magazine publishing. It was the mid-1990s when people started requesting talent."

Ms. O'Such said Yahoo was one of her first clients. "They wanted me to help them find ad sales people because they were trying to make money," she said. "They wanted people who came from cable because they were versed at selling to advertisers until it became established enough to become its own category that was called New Media. Now you fast forward, they don't consider themselves media companies anymore. They want to be considered a technology business."

(cont'd. to page 3)



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According to Ms. O'Such, the majority of multimedia companies have a "robust" executive search recruiting arm. "There are people like me who are executive recruiters who understand the art and science of executive recruiting," said Ms. O'Such. "We've become much more advisors and partners than we've ever been. We're only getting hired to identify talent for really tough searches when the in-house group can't solve it."

Constant Change

The sports industry is being constantly reshaped by the seismic forces of globalization and growth of digital media platforms that includes social media, live streaming and over-the-top broadcasting.

The England & Wales Cricket Board, a European organization with a loyal but aging fan base, was seeking a sports chief commercial officer to expand the appeal of the sport to a younger, digital savvy audience.

The search was conducted by SriCheyenne, a global sports and entertainment focused firm which has positioned itself to navigate new digital and data-driven business models and consumer platforms. SriCheyenne is a product of the merger of the Cheyenne Group, an executive search and consulting firm with a focus on media and SRi, formerly known as Sports Recruitment International, which specialized in sports, media, and entertainment. SRi had distinguished itself as a leader in sports recruitment; the Cheyenne Group had made its reputation doing top-of-the-house search and talent consulting for a range of broadcast, print and online content companies. Given the natural symbiosis of the sports and media industries, combining the two firms' capabilities made perfect strategic sense.

"The successful candidate (at England & Wales Cricket Board) had previously been a senior marketing executive for a global consumer packaged goods brand with a track record of building innovative online/offline customer engagement teams and packages," said SriCheyenne CEO Jay Hussey, who formerly led Odgers Berndtson's U.S. technology and digital transformation practices.

New Wave

Mr. Hussey's background is typical of new-wave recruiters joining the sports executive search industry. He boasts more than 15 years in executive search with leading global firms, including in addition to Odgers, Russell Reynolds Associates and Egon Zehnder. Prior to his role at Odgers Berndtson, he was founder and managing partner of **NineSeven Partners**, an executive search and talent consulting firm which he merged with Odgers in 2015. Before his career in search and assessment, Mr. Hussey served as president of Digitas West, the regional operating unit of Digitas, Inc., a publicly traded technology and marketing services company.

"Jay's experience in digital and technology, both as a business leader and as an executive search professional, gives us even stronger capabilities with which to help our clients," said SriCheyenne chairman and vice chairman Pat Mastandrea.

Like many of his peers, Korn Ferry vice chairman Jed Hughes utilizes his extensive list of contacts to secure an impressive list of clients encompassing a variety of sports.

(cont'd. to page 5)

Q&A

Jed Hughes' Rise in Executive Search Linked to Sports Background

Simply put, Jed Hughes is *the* best known recruiter in the sports executive search industry. Not only did he gain practical experience coaching under several Hall of Fame football coaches, his academic credentials are top-flight with a masters degree from Stanford and a Ph.D from Michigan.

Mr. Hughes has elevated Korn Ferry's sports practice to elite status with prominent hires in the professional and college ranks. Here, he discusses his rise in executive search and how his sports background gives him a decided edge over competitors.

Jed, what led you to sports?

I was at Spencer Stuart, doing well, but there came a time when all of my searches were winding down and Korn Ferry and another firm were aggressively recruiting me. Spencer Stuart was really good to me. But their emphasis wasn't on sports. Korn Ferry came to me and said we want to give you the resources to build a sports franchise on a global basis.

You coached under Hall of Fame coaches Bo Schembechler (Michigan), Chuck Noll (Pittsburgh Steelers), Bud Grant (Minnesota Vikings) and Tony Dungy (Steelers). You also coached under Terry Donahue at UCLA, who also coached in the NFL.

How has that helped you in executive search?

That background clearly gave me legitimacy in being able to build relationships – not only in football, but across the entire sports sector. What I found is that the experience from the coaching side gives you credibility after you've worked with these legendary people. During my UCLA days, I was named the top recruiter five out of six years and recruited three that were drafted into the Top 10.

You weren't always in sports executive search. How did your previous experience at Spencer Stuart shape your progression forward into the sports recruiting sphere?

I was trained at Spencer Stuart in the search business for 13 years as a partner under the firm's CEO and board practice. I learned how to conduct a search at the highest-level of sophistication. That experience was multi-faceted, especially in how we executed searches. The proprietary instruments that we used were helpful in terms of defining what to look for in talent and then be able to measure candidates against that.

Talk about your ability to place big-name candidates.

We've placed some pretty special people: the chief baseball officer of the Minnesota Twins (Derek Falvey) who came from Cleveland. That resulted in one of the largest turnarounds in MLB History – going from losing 103 games to making the MLB Playoffs. We placed Doug Marrone, the head coach of the Jacksonville Jaguars, who instilled a winning culture and took the Jaguars from three wins, to 10 wins (in 2017) with an AFC Championship appearance in New England. A few years back, we placed Tom Thibodeau who in two years has taken the T'Wolves from a 29 win club in 2015 to a playoff appearance this spring. We also placed Arthur Blank's CEO of all of his businesses, Steve Cannon.



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Mr. Hughes' background and level of respect developed as a college and pro football coach has led to numerous high-profile hires such as Michigan football coach Jim Harbaugh, Seattle Seahawks general manager John Schneider, SEC commissioner Greg Sankey, Oregon basketball coach Dana Altman, Toronto Raptors general manager Masai Ujiri, Cleveland Browns head coach Hue Jackson, and Major League Baseball commissioner Rob Manfred.

Mr. Harbaugh, who was recruited from the NFL's San Francisco 49ers, is a Michigan alumnus and considered among the top coaches in college or pro football. Recruiting him to Michigan was a major coup and a perfect example why Mr. Hughes is so successful. Mr. Harbaugh's father, Jack Harbaugh, was a defensive backs coach at Michigan when Mr. Hughes was a linebackers coach there. Jim Hackett, Michigan's interim athletic director when the school hired Mr. Harbaugh in 2014, played football at Michigan when Mr. Hughes and the elder Mr. Harbaugh coached together at the Big Ten Conference school.

"It is important that a candidate has the opportunity to interview the organization as much as they are interviewing them.

The more the candidate is aware of the opportunities, as well as the challenges, the better equipped they will be to be effective in their new role."

Building Relationships

"It all goes back to relationships," said Mr. Hughes, who also served as defensive coordinator at UCLA and was an assistant coach with the Minnesota Vikings, Pittsburgh Steelers and Cleveland Browns. "You won't find anyone out there that's close to matching what we've done and the impact we've had in sports, whether it be collegiate or professional, abroad or in the United States. The reason we continue to get searches, especially in professional sports, is that owners call their friends and tell them we know what we're doing. Whether it's ownership or college presidents, it's very critical who you're building relationships with. Those are the people making the decisions.

"If they don't trust you, they wouldn't talk to you," said Mr. Hughes. Even the most skeptical of clients trust Mr. Hughes when faced with a challenging hire. After firing three head coaches in four seasons, Cleveland Browns owner Jimmy Haslem reached out to Mr. Hughes before hiring Mr. Jackson in 2015.

"We've used Korn Ferry a lot in our other lives and had gotten to know Jed," Mr. Haslem, CEO of Pilot Flying J, told Cleveland reporters. "Actually, when we first bought the team (in 2012), he approached us. He's around at NFL

(cont'd. to page 6)

meetings, and we've talked to him a lot. I just think it will help us run a better process than we have in the past."

It was the first time the Browns organization made public it was using a search firm since returning to the NFL in 1999.

"Jed has a tremendous amount of contacts," said Mr. Haslem, whose net worth is valued at \$3.7 billion. "He's been involved in both college and pro football for literally his entire life."

White Glove Treatment

Asked about Cleveland's selection of Mr. Jackson, Mr. Hughes said this: "The way we're able to sit down with the owner is key. Nobody does that. The training that I had in how to conduct searches and how to provide the 'white glove treatment' – we do it better than anyone."

Mr. Hughes teamed with Korn Ferry senior client partner Liz Moulton, whom he recruited from Russell Reynolds Associates, on several searches, including former Georgetown University basketball standout Patrick Ewing becoming head coach at his alma mater.

"Jed and I know Georgetown very well - I worked behind the scenes; Jed really led that search," said Ms. Moulton, who indicated that Mr. Hughes is preparing her for big things in the firm. "He specializes in top of class doing coach and general manager searches and very big Power 5 athletic director searches. I have a whole set of clients around diversity work." Essentially, each has maintained their own practice, but they are clear partners. Mr. Hughes helped groom Ms. Moulton with the expectation that she will be leading all of it when Mr. Hughes decides to step down.

The explosive growth and demand for talent and people in the sports industry can, to a great extent, be attributed to an increased interest in collegiate and professional sports. "An increase in revenue increases the need for a higher level of professionalism," said DHR International director of global marketing and public relations Lauren Finch. "While a source of entertainment, sports organizations must function as Fortune 500 businesses, and this need for professionalism showcases the need for an executive recruiter who can assist in their searches for highly sought-after candidates."

That's where executive search firms can add a lot of value - not just in identifying and recruiting talent, but also in helping sports industry executives gain practical insight into how other organizations and other industries have navigated similar disruptive changes.

In addition to the SRiCheyenne pairing, there have been several mergers among executive search firms since the start of the year as companies better position themselves in a competitive recruiting market. Some provide national expansion opportunities, others more global reach, while still others allow for additional solutions offerings for clients requesting a full suite of talent management services.

Wurster Partners merged with **On Partners**, a boutique leadership advisory firm. The partnership enhances ON Partners expertise in global consumer brand recruiting. Founder and managing partner of Wurster Partners, Michael Wurster, joined ON Partners as a partner.

Globalization

The proliferation of search firms serving the sports sector is creating a business international in scope. U.K.-based sports specialist Nolan Partners, working primarily with sports-related clients from Europe, Asia and the Middle East, last year introduced a North American operation with offices in Los Angeles and New York.

Chad Biagini, the firm's U.S. managing partner, has expansive executive search experience representing American clients, including the NFL, NHL, Major League Baseball, Major League Soccer, WWE, and Ultimate Fighting Championship.

One of Nolan Partners' more notable assignments involved filling 40 positions in coaching and scouting for the prestigious U.K.-based Manchester United soccer club of the Premier League. The firm also serves sports clients in Hong Kong, Japan, and West Africa.

Top Digital Media, Entertainment & Sports Specialist

Tracy M. O'Such – Diversified Search



Tracy M. O'Such is a managing partner in the New York office of Diversified Search. Her responsibilities include management of the firm's New York office and its global digital, media, entertainment, and sports practices.

She has extensive experience in executive search as well as direct industry experience in large media conglomerates. The convergence of the media, technology, and sports industries has broadened her client base to include Comcast, ESPN, WWE, Charter Communications, IMG, and Competitor Group, among many others.

"I've always admired Nolan Partners' reputation and success around the world in the industries of sports and entertainment," said Mr. Biagini, who has placed over 200 senior executives in a variety of industries, including media/entertainment and technology and previously served as managing director at Harvard Group International. "It's not a generalist firm where sports is just a small, flashy badge on the lapel, and whose consultants split their time across several other industries. That was important to me. Sports and entertainment is what we do all day, every day."

Executive search firms provide an invaluable service to clients by conducting its searches in relative privacy. Typically, one candidate will be hired from a deep pool, resulting in a search firm impressing heavily on candidates and clients the concept of confidentiality to avoid putting those candidates in a position that might negatively affect their current roles. Good search firms will reach into less obvious talent pools to find outside-the-box candidates.

Matthew J. Schwartz, president of **MJS Executive Search**, said the recruitment process must be a two-way street. It's critical for employers to give candidates the freedom to ask questions and to learn as much as they need as they move through the recruitment process.

"It is important that a candidate has the opportunity to interview the organization as much as they are interviewing them," said Mr. Schwartz. "The more the candidate

(cont'd. to page 7)

is aware of the opportunities, as well as the challenges, the better equipped they will be to be effective in their new role.”

Full Circle

Mr. Hughes, who handles some of the toughest searches – those requiring A-list candidates who can improve the reputation of a losing organization, or transform a good program into a championship team – acknowledged that it isn’t always as easy as he makes it look.

“In 1987 my Dad died, I got divorced, and I ended up getting fired twice that year in Pittsburgh and Cleveland. I was blackballed from the NFL. I had 187 interviews and ended up working for a

small assessment company. Being able to get back in the NFL after being fired twice in a year makes you feel like you can do anything. When somebody calls me, I return the call. I remember what it was like getting fired and people thinking you’re poison and you’re contagious.”

He said he started his career in sports, and he’s going to end it in sports. “It’s come full circle,” said Mr. Hughes. “We’ve done work with all the leagues, in all sports, and so I know they respect us. But, it’s like anything else, you have to continue to do good work, you have to continue to be trusted. If you’re not trusted, you’re not going to get called. In this business, we’re all only as good as our last completed search.”

Hunt Scanlon Top 40 Sports, Media & Entertainment Search Firms

AC Lion/Lionseye Group

[Michael Adler](#) (Sports and Media/Entertainment)

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[Warren Wasp](#) and [Tom Truitt](#) (Media/Entertainment)

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Collegiate Sports Associates

[Todd Turner](#) (Sports)

DHR International

[Sean Scanlon](#) and [Glenn Sugiyama](#) (Sports and Media/Entertainment)

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Fogler Consulting

[Eddie Fogler](#) (Sports)

Grace Blue

[Jay Haines](#) (Sports and Media/Entertainment)

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Harvard Group International

[Jeff McMahon](#) and [Chuck Cains](#) (Sports and Media/Entertainment)

Heidrick & Struggles

[Mike Speck](#) (Sports and Media/Entertainment)

Korn Ferry

[Jed Hughes](#), [Liz Moulton](#) and [William Simon](#) (Sports and Media/Entertainment)

Legacy Search

[Chad Collins](#) (Sports)

Marquee Search

[Jeff Yocom](#) (Sports and Media/Entertainment)

Millman Search Group

[Mark Millman](#) (Media/Entertainment)

Nolan Partners

[Paul Nolan](#) and [Chad Biagini](#) (Sports and Media/Entertainment)

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ON Partners

[Michael Wurster](#) (Media/Entertainment)

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Prodigy Sports

[Scott Carmichael](#) and [Dan Rossetti](#) (Sports)

Reaction Search International

[Chris Dowdy](#) and [Robert Boroff](#) (Media/Entertainment)

RISE Talent Acquisition

[Rey Corpuz](#) (Sports)

RSR Partners

[Joseph Bailey](#) and [Dany Berghoff](#) (Sports)

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[Rhys Grossman](#) and [Nada Usina](#) (Sports and Media/Entertainment)

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[Erik Sorenson](#) (Sports and Media/Entertainment)

Turnkey Sports & Entertainment

[Len Perna](#) (Sports and Media/Entertainment)

Ventura Partners

[Chad Chatlos](#) and [Robert Damon](#) (Sports and Media/Entertainment)

eSports Recruiting Expanding Fast

eSports is a relatively new form of entertainment best known for its use of organized video game competitions between professional players. Taking the executive search industry by storm, eSports has recruiters scrambling to identify senior-level talent to meet the rising demand.

A number of non-traditional sports sponsors and executives have entered the eSports industry, which is projected to reach a value of \$1 billion by 2019. Buoyed by an ever-growing young audience of fans and participants, a number of global companies are showing interest.

Open for Business

"As we assessed the industry and looked to find ways to stay relevant, the explosion and major advancement of eSports prompted us to really step out aggressively," said **Prodigy Sports** founder and CEO Scott Carmichael, whose firm unveiled its dedicated eSports division recently. "We wanted to be one of the first out of the gates and proclaim as a boutique firm that we're engaged on the eSports side and open for business."

Prodigy recently led the search for a director of eSports business and team operations for Monumental Sports and Entertainment, which owns NBA, NHL, WNBA and AFL franchises in Washington, D.C., and also owns Team Liquid, an eSports franchise. Prodigy's clients include 29 teams among the four major sports leagues.

Growth in U.S. and Europe

Odgers Berndtson also created an eSports recruiting practice by combining its sports and gaming businesses. The firm recently hired Scott Dodkins, believed to be the first senior hire into European executive search from the interactive gaming industry to help drive growth through digital channels and new technologies such as augmented and virtual reality.

"eSports is growing in the U.S. and Europe. Teams in the NBA are buying into eSports teams," said London-based Odgers Berndtson associate Caroline Lacey, who announced the firm recently completed one of its first searches in eSports. "Businesses don't necessarily just want people with eSports knowledge. They need a business expert that has a ton of experience growing an industry."

Talent Hard to Find

However, companies are discovering that senior-level talent is hard to find. "We're actually talking to two people right now who actively recruit in eSports, trying to convince them to join us," said **Harvard Group International** managing director Chuck Cain. "All the traditional firms in sports and multi-industry firms like us are trying to find the way there."

Added Mr. Carmichael: "Somebody joked in one of our conversations over the last six months that there seems to be, metaphorically speaking, a bunch of 12 year olds running the eSports business. That's not literal, but there are a lot of young professionals and everybody agrees there needs to be experienced business professionals to put some structure behind it from a revenue, management and growth perspective, and that includes people who have a passion for gaming as well."



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Partner
Healthcare Practice



Jake Vander Zanden
Principal Consultant
Life Sciences Practice

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*- Biff Comte
CEO of Dynamic Dental Partners Group
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Recruiting Top Athletic Leadership Talent

The success of college athletics is a priority on campuses across the country. Head coaches and athletic directors are critical hires for programs that generate hundreds of millions of dollars annually. To ensure that success, colleges and universities are turning to executive search firms to secure top athletic leadership.

The big money that has come into big-time college athletics draws a lot of attention - not to mention competition among search firms vying for business. The University of Texas paid \$267,000 to **Korn Ferry** when it hired head football coach Charlie Strong. Among 28 colleges and universities with openings for a head football coach entering the 2016 season, 16 reported using a search firm with an average fee ranging around \$70,000 based on information from 11 schools.

Reducing Risk

"The margin for error in these searches is razor thin and the need to make successful hires is paramount," said **DHR International** managing partner and global sports practice leader Glenn Sugiyama, whose firm led the search for the University of Pittsburgh's new athletic director and also handled athletic searches at Colorado State, Fresno State, San Jose State, Kansas and Syracuse. "Search firms mitigate the risk involved and allow institutions to make the very best hire with as much information as possible."

The relationship between college athletics and executive search firms is rapidly expanding and now extends beyond merely recruiting. Seasoned recruiters are providing strategic planning advice with the capability of applying their findings to speed along the process in the hunt for talent.

"We advise on organizational design and strategy and top team performance in addition to just executive search. We have a lot of capabilities that go well beyond recruiting," said **RSR Partners** managing director Joe Bailey.

Schools Cashing In

Some search firms have the capability to reach beyond the recruitment of coaches and athletic directors and help schools cash in with lucrative multimedia deals.

A recent example of the big money available in college athletics occurred when Auburn University signed a 10-year, \$120 million exclusive partnership deal with Fox Sports for multimedia rights and sponsorship sales. The University of Utah signed a 10-year multimedia rights agreement with Learfield, potentially tripling the school's previous multimedia arrangement. **College Sports Solutions**, an Atlanta-based search firm specializing in college athletics, helped broker both deals.

"Multimedia rights in college athletic departments can be multi-million dollar revenue sources for these schools," said College Sports Solutions founder and president Jeff Schemmel. Auburn's initial request that Mr. Schemmel's firm perform an operational review of its athletic department "blossomed into additional service-related multimedia rights," he said.

SPOTLIGHT

Help Wanted: Senior Executives Who Can Stimulate Innovation

The sports industry is changing, and the need for talented senior-level executives who can stimulate innovation is in heavy demand. It is a fairly new recruiting concept for some search firms. For others, the transition has been seamless.

One of these go-to search consultants is **Sucherman Group** CEO Erik Sorenson. He is well-versed in media strategy, business trends and - so important in an ever-changing sports landscape - future developments.

Mr. Sorenson started out in radio, but moved to television and became executive producer of "CBS This Morning" and "CBS Evening News with Dan Rather." He received more than 20 Emmys and capitalized on his extensive contacts and impressive resume to make a smooth conversion to executive search.

He said that a limited amount of experienced candidates who realize that sports is almost as popular for what occurs away from the field has increased the demand for search firms who fully understand how to serve that sector. The best recruiters, he said, know where to look and who to target for prime assignments.

"Sports is entertainment on the professional level, and, increasingly, because of social media and video, it is almost impossible to separate a professional sports team from media," said Mr. Sorenson. "We have a lot of business in the marketing area, in video production, media strategy."

Because of its commitment to entertainment, Sucherman Group does not conduct searches for coaches and executives on the player personnel side.

"We're helping teams on the business side of the operation with marketing and social media," said Mr. Sorenson. "We're a boutique, so we're very specialized and focused on media and entertainment and sports. It's been fortuitous for us that since (the rise in popularity in sports executive search) coincided with us putting our toe in the water, things have really taken off in the last decade."

Sucherman Group has a longstanding business relationship with MLB's New York Mets through SNY, the official television home of the Mets, NFL's New York Jets and University of Connecticut athletics. Sucherman Group chairman Stuart Sucherman sits on the board of SNY and he's been advising SNY since before its inception, said Mr. Sorenson. "He's also working with the leadership of the (Mets) to help them craft their media strategy."

NFL Media (which owns NFL Network) is another major sports client for Sucherman Group, according to Mr. Sorenson, who said teams are trying to effect a message and benefit from their engaged fans who not only follow their favorite teams and players on the field, but also follow them through various forms of media.

"Over the last two years, it's been a series of placements that we've done for them that's been productive for both sides," said Mr. Sorenson. "The Mets and NFL Media are two really good examples of professional sports operations that are taking ownership of media

Q&A

Mixing Sports and Entertainment



Erik Sorenson has emerged as a leader in the converging sports, media and entertainment recruiting space. His extensive background and contacts as a longtime professional has complemented a shift in the sports industry that intersects the games on the field with entertainment. Here, he describes the balancing act between the traditional and non-traditional side of sports.

What led Sucherman Group to focus on sports and entertainment?

For us, it's our expertise in media. You can hire one of the large search firms, and they very well can have a sports practice. But that sports practice may focus more on general managers and coaches. Everybody in our firm has prior experience in media. There is a large network of candidates we can pull out of the media space in television over into sports. Look at the work we did for NFL Media, pulling people from media into the NFL and giving them the experience to be competitive in the future.

How will that background serve you now?

We've been actively in sports for well over a decade. Before that, the first 17 years was all television and film. During that last dozen or so years that we've gotten into sports we've also been dabbling in technology. All digital media is important to what we do.

What are some of the changes you're seeing?

The biggest change is that up until 10 years ago, it was all television. There were radio versions of games, but everything was on television. Then there was this explosion of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube that started these other communication channels. If you're an Amazon Prime customer, you can watch NFL games. That's been the biggest change. That people will watch a game on a four-inch screen on their telephone is a profound technological change that has really disrupted and affected everything.

with (pay) channels and also mobile and digital distribution of their content."

However, Mr. Sorenson cautioned the tide could turn in the sports industry.

"I think it's going to be survival of the fittest," said Mr. Sorenson. "It's not money growing on trees, that's for sure. All the sports leagues are going to be challenged in the next decade as millennials grow older and don't watch the games as much because of the expanding choices they'll have through technology."

Mr. Sorenson said there are no such worries at Sucherman Group.

"We're fully engaged. We've got a full slate of searches going on," he said. "From digital companies on the West Coast, to traditional television companies in New York, to sports franchises. It's not good for everybody, but it's good for us."

Four Hot Searches in the Sports World

Turnkey Sports Lands CTO for the Philadelphia Phillies



Specialist recruiters **Turnkey Sports and Entertainment** has placed former Tampa Bay Lightning executive Sean Walker as the Philadelphia Phillies' new vice president and chief technology officer. "Sean has a proven ability to successfully restructure IT

departments from the ground up," said Dave Buck Phillies' executive vice president. "We are fortunate to have him on board to take the Phillies to the next level as it pertains to technology enhancements."

DHR International Recruits Head Football Coaches for Arkansas and Oregon State

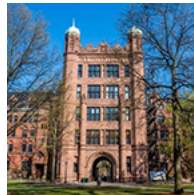
Glenn Sugiyama, managing partner and global sports practice leader at **DHR International**, has assisted in the head coaching placements of Chad Morris at Arkansas and Jonathan Smith at Oregon State University (OSU). Described by Forbes magazine as "one of the most influential



men in college athletics," Mr. Sugiyama places talent for professional sports organizations and for top academic institutions around the world, including senior sports executives and head coaches.

Witt/Kieffer Finds New AD for Yale University

Witt/Kieffer placed Victoria Chun as the AD of Yale University. Greg Santore, practice leader of the sports leadership practice, led the search along with Katy Young. Recognized by Street & Smith's Sports Business Journal as a "Game Changer," Ms. Chun has earned a stellar



reputation as one of the most innovative and well-respected leaders in college athletics. Witt/Kieffer's sports practice recruits leaders for colleges and universities, sports foundations, alumni associations, governing bodies and sports federations, professional leagues and teams, and other non-profit charitable organizations.

Korn Ferry Lands New GM for Houston Texans



Korn Ferry placed Brian Gaine as general manager of the Houston Texans. Jed Hughes, a Korn Ferry vice chairman and global sports sector leader, headed the search. Korn Ferry is no stranger to the Texans having assisted the team in hiring coach Bill O'Brien. Korn

Ferry's other work in the NFL includes placing Kansas City Chiefs coach Andy Reid, former New York Jets GM John Idzik, Green Bay Packers team president Mark Murphy, Seattle Seahawks coach Pete Carroll and GM John Schneider.



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Four Hot Searches in Media & Entertainment

Arts Consulting Group Finds New CEO for Cape Arts & Entertainment



Theatrical, film and music organizations have been turning to executive search firms in recent months to find new leaders. **Arts Consulting Group** (ACG) placed Jonathan Kaledin as president and CEO of Cape Arts & Entertainment (CA&E). ACG president Bruce

D. Thibodeau led the search. A professionally trained cellist and musicologist, Mr. Kaledin has played in the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra and the Boston-based Copley String Quartet.

Catherine French Group Finds Leader for New Spire Arts

Following an extensive national search, Daniel Phoenix Singh, a dancer and arts leader, has been selected to lead New Spire Arts in Frederick, MD. The search was led by

Catherine French Group, a specialist in the performing arts sector located in Washington, D.C. Mr. Singh was previously the artistic director and president of Dakshina/Daniel Phoenix Singh Dance Company. Formed in 1998, the Catherine French Group works with symphony orchestras, opera companies, music presenters, festivals, schools of music and other not-for-profit music organizations



Buffkin / Baker Lands PR Executive for the New York Knicks

Executive search firm **Buffkin / Baker** placed Dan Sabreen as vice president of public relations of the New York Knicks. Partner Warren Wasp led the search. In his new role, Mr. Sabreen will serve as the Knicks' chief communications strategist with oversight of all public relations activities for the team. Mr. Sabreen joined the Knicks after 12 years at CBS Sports, most recently serving as VP of communications.



Alford Executive Search Finds New Leader for International Music Foundation



Alford Executive Search placed Mark Riggelman as executive director of the International Music Foundation in Chicago. Mr. Riggelman has over 30 years of non-profit leadership experience at several formidable music institutions and is himself

an accomplished pianist who has performed across the country and served on the faculty at the Julliard School. Most recently, Mr. Riggelman served as the director of education at Lyric Opera of Chicago, where he led education initiatives, reaching more than 100,000 Chicago-area children and adults annually.

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SPOTLIGHT

Sports Recruiting Enters Prime Time



An industry veteran with nearly 40 years of experience in the sports business, Scott Carmichael founded Prodigy Sports in 2007. Now entering his 10th year leading the search firm, Mr. Carmichael has established Prodigy Sports into one of the nation's premier boutique

executive search firms, working with a roster of clients that reads like a Who's Who in the sports world, including five of the most valuable sports franchises in the world.

In the following interview, Mr. Carmichael discusses current trends taking place in the sports sector and reveals how he believes his own experience differentiates himself from the rest of the field.

Tell us about Prodigy Sports and the specific areas you most focus in on?

Prodigy Sports is a boutique, niche search firm with a focus on senior executives at the VP and above levels. Our core competency is on the revenue generating areas of the business – CRO, sponsorship, partnerships – but we've recruited for most disciplines from sales, finance, facility operations, technology, digital and HR. Launched in 2007, we are celebrating our 10th anniversary this year with a staff of 10.

Your background before entering search was in professional hockey organizations, including the LA Kings and the NHL. What led you away from sports itself to recruiting?

I really morphed into search more by coincidence than by a master, life-long plan. Following 25 years on the team (LA Kings, LA Clippers, LA Lakers) and league (NHL) side of the sports business, I had a short stint with ANC Sports, but began building the foundation of Prodigy which was clearly predicated on the hundreds of deeply-rooted relationships I had built in the industry. I was extremely fortunate to gain the trust of the Dallas Cowboys and long-time friend, Greg McElroy, for our very first search, which led to four other search projects with arguably the biggest sports brand in the world. Those projects were immediately followed by three others from the New York Yankees, thus cementing our launch – and legitimacy – with two of the globe's largest brands.

We know that recruiters have been seeking senior leaders for decades in traditional industries such as finance, consumer products and others. But when did the search industry begin to push into the sports sector to find top talent?

I can tell you, that, to my recollection, it became evident that companies like Korn Ferry, Russell Reynolds Associates and Heidrick & Struggles began a foray into sports in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Turnkey Sports launched their practice shortly before us and since then, there have been a few other boutique pop-ups that have come and gone. Clearly, there is an advantage to having a sports-specific practice given the nuances of the industry and

specialization of the industry. What clearly separates Prodigy Sports from all the others – whether global or boutique firm – is that our agency brings experience of having performed many of the exact roles we're asked to search for. Sports is an industry that has continued to evolve into a more complex, revenue-first, sophisticated industry that is constantly in need of professionals with a core experience level. With valuations of teams now topping out, in some cases, at over \$3 billion, maximizing revenue while adapting to the needs to understand analytics, customer segmentation, etc., there is a lot more pressure on organizations to find top talent with a specific set of skill sets.



It's been surprising that more sports teams have turned to search firms to identify and recruit coaches. Recently, Patrick Ewing was tapped by a search firm to become head basketball coach at his alma mater, Georgetown. Couldn't the college have handled this directly? After all they knew him well.

This is a topic that personally troubles me. I don't want to sound like a hypocrite given our clear desire to continue our 30 percent year-over-year growth, but does Georgetown (Patrick Ewing) or Michigan (Jim Harbaugh) or other such examples of no-brainer hires really need to utilize a search firm to find those eventual hires? With no disrespect intended whatsoever, but I find it almost laughable that a firm would blast a news release around the world that they were retained by such and such school / organization to land a coach that anyone remotely following the sports business – including the 100,000s of alums – could have done. Don't get me wrong, there is tremendous value in having a university or professional sports team to engage in a quick, national search for coaching talent – if nothing else, to validate what their own set of executives have networked and uncovered – but to stand on a soap box and proclaim their exhaustive national search landed a former Hall of Fame quarterback or center is laughable.

Recruiting athletic directors at major colleges and universities has also become big business for search firms. Is this because the AD, and even those that report to the AD, are so critical to that institution?

Colleges and universities – not unlike professional sports organizations, but little later in coming to the realization – are extremely challenged in maximizing revenue streams. Thus, it has come much more important to find sophisticated business leaders with a long history of business acumen that wasn't necessarily a key factor say 20 years ago. You look at big school athletic programs now and there is a long list of associate ADs with specialization in ticket sales, sponsorship sales, fundraising, and so on. So, in addition to the core attributes needed by an AD, having those additional skills while also surrounding yourself with an experienced staff with specific skill sets – often coming from executives who have come from professional sports organizations – is key.