

Focused Leadership Takes Good to Great

Creating a winning culture requires discipline, intuition and tenacity. Achieving the right mix is both an art and a science, and beautifully demonstrated in Acumen's selection of Oregon Bioscience Association's new Executive Director.

About Oregon Bioscience

Oregon Bioscience Association (Oregon Bio), a member trade association, was formally established as a 501(c)(6) non-profit in 1989 by a consortium of universities, public officials, educators, and bioscience executives to cultivate a regionally synergistic climate in which to build a bioscience/life science community. Today, Oregon Bio supports the regional bioscience community through networking, workforce development, educational programs, enterprise support, advocacy, and the promotion of research collaborations. As the collective voice for the bioscience community, Oregon Bio is responsible for communicating the industry's economic impact, issues, and challenges to the public sector, educators, and the general public.

About Acumen

Acumen has been the premiere boutique, woman-owned Executive Search firm in Oregon with global clientele since 2007. The agency works holistically and strategically with its clients to understand their business and culture to facilitate talent who can help solve meaningful problems.

The Challenge

Since its inception in 1989, Oregon Bio has had a consistent track record of local growth and success. With a solid foundation and reputation intact, the organization was poised to capitalize on an evolving multi-state economic ecosystem that represented significant opportunity. There was a substantial need for fresh perspective to help refocus the strategic vision and fine-tune executional methodologies.

The Solution

Turning to Professionals

Recognizing they lacked executive search strategy and execution expertise as well as necessary resources, the Oregon Bio Board outsourced this critical task to experts, Portland-based Acumen Executive & Talent Search (Acumen), who several board members had partnered with previously with through their own organizations.

Acumen partnered with the Board and immediately initiated their proven nine-step methodology for attracting and acquiring top talent. They began with a comprehensive needs assessment from the perspective of each individual stakeholder including the Board, association members, and staff. Next, the job description was crafted based on the collective feedback. At this point, Acumen leveraged their deep network to identify 20 qualified candidates, of which eight were selected to advance. Acumen ensured that each candidate was thoroughly interviewed on three different occasions by different team members, a bio created for each, and then presented the rich pool of options to Oregon Bio. The front-end efforts paid-off during the interview and selection phase. A natural match rose to the top and Oregon Bio was confident its new Executive Director, Denise McCarty possessed the right mix of skills to elevate the organization to the next level.

Needs Assessment

A listen, value, and respect leadership style immediately resonated with staff. Because the transparent recruitment process had included employees, synergy was instantaneous. Open dialogue revealed fundamental tools and organizational processes that were amiss, leading to funding for infrastructure becoming a top priority. Within six months, Denise's fundraising efforts resulted in an \$800,000 grant award to help facilitate capital investment, which included equipment, a new CRM system and a website refresh.

While internal systems were restructured, a look at external processes focused on their mission; Oregon Bio's Advocacy, Cultivation and Education "ACE" mission that they effectively rebranded and actively promoted with existing and new relationships, key public and private sector partners including: education, workforce and economic development, industry, trade organizations incubators and special interest groups.

Best practices from this holistic system approach became the outreach benchmark and new partnerships were evaluated based on their merit, regardless of size, location, or level of bureaucracy. A long-standing goal was to expand and improve the organization's reach with more focus, specifically in Southern Willamette and Central Oregon. With infrastructure, processes, and leadership fully aligned, the organization was well-positioned to broaden its impact.

The Results

Within the first 18 months, Oregon Bio had a respectable list of accolades. Highlights are:

- Membership has grown by 30% to 300 biotech and digital health companies
- State and Federal grants awarded
- New key partners added in Bend & Eugene
- A significant dollar investment from Pharma
- High school stem presentation awards

Even more impressive is the revitalized corporate culture. A sense of excitement and anticipation are palpable at Oregon Bio. The Board represents a well-rounded industry voice; partners feel heard and are engaged; new members approach the organization wanting to get involved; and the staff is empowered. A revitalized energy is fueled by a shared desire to positively impact job growth and economic change.

When asked what accomplishment makes her most proud, Oregon Bio's Executive Director, Denise McCarty credits her team:

"They already possessed the skills and passion which are harder assets to find. I couldn't have asked for a better team."

Plenty of challenges lie ahead. Oregon Bio is gratefully aware that their partners and members have all played a part in creating this inspiring and dynamic culture of "together we can." Enthusiasm and excitement for positive impact in saving and bettering people's lives is unmistakable. Gratitude is shared with the myriad of people and partners that have contributed and benefited from the organization's efforts, including Acumen.