

Q&A with Rona Borre, Founder and CEO of Instant Alliance a Full-Service Human Capital Consulting Firm for Technology and Finance Companies in Chicago from Project-based opportunities to Full-time C-Suit Executives



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Interview conducted by:
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CEOCFO: Ms. Borre, would you tell us the concept behind Instant Alliance?

Ms. Borre: Instant Alliance is a full-service human capital consulting firm. We specialize in technology and finance and help identify talent from senior executives all the way to contract execution resources. We have a contract division focused primarily on consulting and project-based opportunities, a full-time division focused entirely on placing talent in permanent roles, and an executive search division that focuses on Directors, VP's, and C-Suit executives for our partners.

As the CEO of Instant Alliance, I recognize that it is more important than ever that this city's talent is well-matched to the ever-evolving demands of Chicago's corporate landscape. I work tirelessly to ensure that Instant Alliance is the most effective bridge for corporations to partner with the incredible talent our city has to offer.

CEOCFO: Do many people take advantage of that consultative part of your business or is that a service you provide to the clients you work with routinely?

Ms. Borre: I would say that it is a little of both. Whenever we are hired to conduct a search for a client, a critical part of the task is to share information on the talent market with our client to make the best possible match. We offer this type of information on each and every one of our searches; it's not just about submitting resumes and waiting for interview feedback. We've also done assessments that didn't have to do with hiring any new talent, but rather interviewing every member of the technology organization and making recommendations to executive leadership regarding what roles were best to retain onshore, which roles would be best suited for consultants, and how they could best invest in technology moving forward.

CEOCFO: What do you understand as a company on a very basic level about jobs, employment, macro world situation, that comes into play when working with a client?

Mr. Borre: I believe that this is one of the things that truly sets our organization apart. My leadership team has an incredibly diversified background and has come from a wide variety of industries. This gives my team the ability to consult with leadership from any type of company and effectively discuss how their company can effectively attract talent from the marketplace. Every job is more about the story than it is about the technical skillsets. Most agencies get so caught up on keywords and technologies that they completely overlook what really gets individuals excited about a job: what they'll be

working on. If you can effectively partner with a leadership team to understand why they're all passionate about the project they're hiring for going to market for talent is that much easier.

CEOCFO: *What might be a typical engagement?*

Ms. Borre: There are many different types of engagements; I don't know if I've ever had one that I'd call "typical." The most straightforward searches are typically contractors. A client needs an engineer to work on a particular project with a particular goal over a set period of time. Those are much more common in our Fortune 100 clients that have large development teams and occasionally augment to meet a particular deadline. Other than those, each and every engagement we have with our clients is custom-tailored to best meet their needs. We often partner directly with a company's internal Talent Acquisition teams in order to fully integrate through a process called RPO (Recruitment Process Outsourcing). We've utilized this model to rapidly build out digital organizations throughout Chicagoland from VP-level talent all the way to developers and quality assurance professionals. We placed more than 90 individuals on that particular engagement, but we have used a similar model to find success over several years for mid-sized and small companies as well.

CEOCFO: *Is it getting more difficult?*

Mr. Borre: Absolutely! Especially in tech. As recently as a few years ago, technology was viewed as a cost center. Now it's one of the key drivers of the business and a key piece of most company's revenue generation strategies. It doesn't matter if you're an insurance firm, a healthcare company, or an educational institution, business today means that technology, analytics, and digital customer engagement is part of your plans moving forward. There simply aren't enough resources to meet this kind of unprecedented demand. That's why a team like mine is so successful, partnering with a team that spends their time in market and knows how to identify and engage talent effectively is the best way to hire the team you need to get the job done. We believe people are always a company's key differentiator. You can have the best idea in the world but, without a great team behind it, you can't be successful.

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CEOCFO: *How do you help companies understand what they need to offer to bring in talent today and how do you stay on top of what the labor force wants?*

Ms. Borre: This is a constant part of the job. The market wants innovation and new projects. They see each and every innovation they're a part of as yet another 'merit badge' on their resume. We've been fortunate to work with incredibly forward-thinking companies that have allowed us to be part of their key initiatives. By becoming part of the early discussions, we've helped companies keep their go-to-market strategy in the forefront of planning, which made identifying and attracting talent much easier when the time finally came to hire.

CEOCFO: *How do you know when someone is right for Instant Alliance, what do you look for in your people and can you tell right away if someone is the right fit for the company?*

Ms. Borre: I was just talking about that this morning. I think every company has its own culture and ours definitely values intuition. We are a team of highly self-motivated people who know the importance of listening. We're a consultative company and it is always important to listen first. We have to learn everything we can about our client before we can advise them on how to hire the best talent for their company. Hiring is a very personal process and it takes time to understand companies, their cultures, and how best to match a skilled professional with a business' needs

CEOCFO: *Would you tell us a bit about the financial industry?*

Ms. Borre: There is an abundance of people with strong accounting backgrounds, with good educations. What is hard is to discern who among them is the right match for your particular client. Is the person you're speaking to able to go outside the numbers and see the bigger business implications of the trends they're analyzing? Much like the technology industry, companies expect their financial professionals to do more than just the function outlined in their job title. There's also a technical element in finance that is more prevalent today than in years past. Analytics and the ability to translate those trends to the executive team is a key part of the job.

CEOCFO: *What is next?*

Ms. Borre: We actually just relocated the whole company after 13 years in the same location. We've been doing a surprising amount of work helping companies build their own talent acquisition and human resources organizations. We

know how to train and develop recruiters, and we are starting to share that information with our premier clients to help them be more successful in their searches. We're a relationship company, so continuing to do good work and standing behind the results we have will be key for our future. I think there are more great things ahead for us.

CEOCFO: *How do you spend your time as CEO?*

Ms. Borre: I spend the bulk of my time meeting with candidates and clients alike to better understand the challenges that are facing them and help them solve their business challenges. That is what I love most about my job and where I spend the majority of my time. As any CEO of a boutique organization, my days can vary wildly from looking over financials to working alongside my staff. I'm a hands-on CEO, so I really enjoy getting involved and understanding what's happening at all levels of my business day-to-day. At the end of the day the buck stops with me, so I like to ensure that our quality is always at the highest possible caliber.

