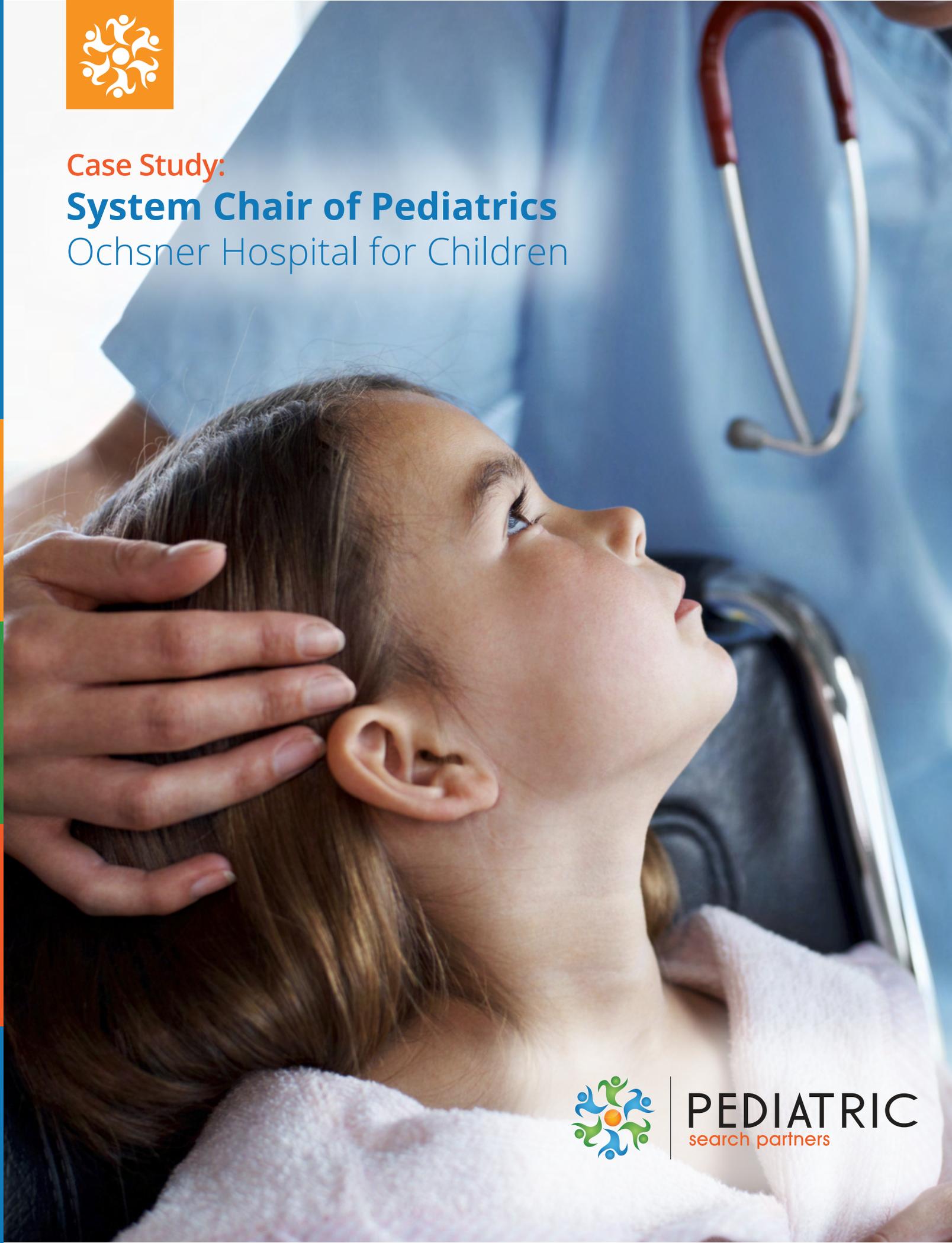




Case Study:

System Chair of Pediatrics

Ochsner Hospital for Children



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Challenge

Ochsner Hospital for Children was seeking to fill a key role, System Chair of Pediatrics. The successful candidate would be charged with expanding the organization's pediatric and pediatric subspecialty services within New Orleans and the greater Gulf Coast region.

The search wasn't easy because it was anything but typical. While there was an academic component to the search, the hospital was looking for someone who also possessed strong recruiting skills and a desire to build and participate in Ochsner's philanthropic outreach efforts. Adding to those challenges was the fact that time was of the essence. The hospital's passionate, committed search committee felt that they had a window of opportunity to fill the role, and get it right.

At the time, the hospital had a highly respected Interim Chair in place who did not wish to become the permanent System Chair. Prior to his appointment, the two previous Chairs immediately prior had neither proved to be a good fit for the role due to characteristics that weren't discovered until after their respective hires. One was well-liked and outgoing with a big personality, but, ironically, struggled to build relationships and retain recruits. The next Chair was highly intelligent and detailed with the operational aspects of the role, but suffered from the same challenges of her predecessor, finding it difficult to both recruit and retain physicians.

Consequently, Ochsner had developed a bit of "analysis paralysis," reluctant to make another hiring decision that wouldn't work. It was time to seek some assistance. To fulfill the hospital's ambitious objective, Ochsner set out to hire a recruiting firm that specialized in pediatric subspecialty search as well as filling leadership roles within children's hospitals. They chose Pediatric Search Partners.

Given the dynamics of the search – including its history with the two prior Chairs – "it was very clear to me that, in order to find the right fit, Caliper would be an essential piece of the puzzle," said Glenda Smith, Pediatric Search Partners' Principal and Co-Founder.

The PSP-led search was well under way when Thomas Harris, Vice President of Pediatrics, came on board at the hospital in September 2015. By that time, the search for a System Chair had been whittled down to three candidates, all of whom Harris would have the opportunity to interview. He'd ultimately be working with the appointed System Chair closely, so Harris' perspective and involvement in the selection process was vital.



Solution

This search was Ochsner's first introduction to Pediatric Search Partners. The differences were apparent right away, says Ochsner Regional Medical Director Robert Hart, M.D.: "Glenda visited our hospital and spent time talking with several of us. That gave her a better sense of what we were looking for, and it completely changed the type of candidates we received. It made a huge difference. The candidates we'd located previously weren't the same caliber as Glenda's candidates."

Selecting the top candidate among three strong contenders is an extraordinary challenge. The stakes are high. Appointing the wrong individual for such a high-level position is a costly mistake that's easy to make. After all, a candidate may come with an impeccable resume and have impressive interview skills, but the day-to-day dynamics of a working environment can reveal something else – for example, behavioral issues and personality differences with colleagues that are difficult to reconcile. In fact, personalities are perhaps the single most important factor in determining the success of any new hire. When a candidate's personality characteristics and resulting behaviors don't mesh with his or her working environment, the individual often doesn't stay in the position long. It's very expensive, both in terms of time and money, to start a new search. You've got to get it right the first time – and that's why Pediatric Search Partners incorporates the Caliper assessment for leadership searches. "This is the first time I'd used Caliper," Dr. Hart adds. "It's very helpful – it delivered more information about candidates than we've gotten from phone and in-person interviews."

In this case, given the high stakes involved, Smith took it a step further and asked Harris to take the profile. While Harris says he'd taken other behavioral and personality assessments during his career, this was the first occasion on which he'd taken Caliper, and the first time he'd been asked to take an assessment in this context – to determine how his personality characteristics as an employer would interact with those of potential hires. "Glenda wanted to see how I'd work with each of these three candidates," he says. "Then she and I had a lengthy conversation to discuss my results in relation to the results of the candidates, which helped me determine the best individual for the job." Further, "She was always available," says Dr. Hart. "The best time for me to talk is often during my drive home at night, and although that's an inconvenient time for a lot of people, we would often have calls to check in during the evening hours."



The Results

For an executive recruiter, a significant part of the job is leveraging expectations on both sides. “Glenda walked us through each candidate, helping us determine if they could do the things we needed them to do. We ended up with two really good candidates, and her conversations and facilitation with both of them were helpful, too,” Dr. Hart adds. The candidate ultimately chosen by the selection committee agreed that it was an excellent fit: He accepted the offer and assumed his role at Ochsner in May 2016.

Long before the newly appointed System Chair of Pediatrics stepped into his new role, “He and I hit it off,” Harris says. “I honestly believe that, even if for some reason he hadn’t taken the position, we would continue to associate with each other and maintain a friendship outside of the four walls of this hospital.”

“In all honesty, every interaction with Glenda has been a sheer pleasure,” Harris continues. “She’s top-notch – always responsive, always willing to help, always asking if there’s anything more she can do to help meet our needs.”

“She’s been incredibly helpful and educational all along the way,” adds Dr. Hart. “It’s been a really first-rate experience.”

Due to the success of this search, Ochsner ultimately hired Pediatric Search Partners to partner in their recruitment for all pediatric and pediatric subspecialty searches.



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About Pediatric Search Partners

Glenda Church Smith is a Principal of Pediatric Search Partners, a boutique search firm which focuses exclusively on recruitment for the pediatricians, pediatric subspecialists and leaders who are dedicated to providing children's healthcare.

An expert recruiter who has spent her career studying negotiation and the psychology of the recruitment process, Glenda's strength is finding the right "fit" between physicians and hospitals and facilitating bringing them together.

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