

# Case Study

A major company undertaking a \$20 billion capital project had tapped all sources in the effort to bring in a specialized senior level executive and key support personnel.

*CriticalKnowledge focuses on the most difficult challenges in sourcing critical talent in the energy sector.*

*We operate as a radically amplified search firm.*

- *We do not use recruiters. Our operations personnel have deep backgrounds in strategic intelligence.*
- *We pioneered the application of advanced strategic intelligence methodology to human capital sourcing.*
- *We leverage the knowledge and industry relationships of a global intelligence network of 5000 specialized sector experts on five continents.*

*The result is our ability to deliver when no one else can.*

## Challenge

The project the client was engaged in involved a number of major global companies as partners and the issues around the estimating process were substantial. Ultimately, hundreds of millions of dollars were at stake.

A key issue was that the client – as one of the partners in the venture - needed an individual with enough credibility for his or her work to earn respect at the highest executive and board levels of the various other partners. Furthermore, the situation required an individual who had had significant owner operator experience as well as substantial EPC experience with major projects worldwide. Credibility was dependent both on this kind of deep experience, but also on a highly specialized technical competence.

Successful interaction and negotiation with the other partners depended not simply on technical understanding of the key issues at par with other senior personnel, but a technical capability that exceeded anyone else on the project. Anything less, and the client knew they would be unsuccessful in getting the changes they needed over time that would result in massive cost differences – ultimately translating into a huge impact to their projected bottom line.



*"We had very specific and demanding requirements for the specialized talent we were seeking and had extensive discussions with CK's key operations personnel to ensure they were fully understood. In our experience, CK's process is uniquely intensive. As a result, the senior talent proposed had an ideal combination of expertise and experience. We will certainly come to them in the future whenever we need specialized talent.*

*Vice President, Engineering*

In addition, the client was also looking to CK to bring in a specialized technical team to support this estimation executive.

They had been seeking an individual to take on this role for a long period of time, and as with many of our clients, had tried a range of solutions including top search firms without success. Time had become a serious concern. They only had specific window in which they could act successfully for the first phase of the work.

The difficulty of the situation for the client was compounded by the fact the industry was at a cyclical peak and the labor market, particularly at the most experienced and/or specialized levels was as tight as it had ever been.

The client came to CriticalKnowledge because of our focus on the most difficult situations in sourcing human capital.

## Process

- CK went through problem definition in depth with the client's operations personnel.

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- The CK operations team built a detailed operational model of the executive role and supporting technical roles in the context of the relevant value streams.
- CK gathered comprehensive intelligence in the specific technical areas and a deep understanding of all the relevant players in this specific market sub-segment.
- The CK operations team engaged in substantive discussions with 36 specialized experts worldwide with specific expertise in technical estimation for major projects in order to a) expand our understanding of the operational model for the role, and; b) funnel us to the few people who are the top of their game with respect to this specific need.
- An example of just one of the many issues that came up in the context of the operational modeling and verification with sector experts from the CK intelligence network related to the capability of understanding at a deep level where organizations looked to reduce risk in terms of the estimation process and consequently tended to try incorporate excessive contingency. These kinds of issues were often buried and difficult to uncover, but had a significant influence on outcomes.
- The CK intelligence gathering process rapidly allowed the identification of the few people who were capable of undertaking this work.
- CK evaluated individuals against the detailed operational model created for the role in order to determine appropriate for the specific demands of the role.
- CK gathered in-depth intelligence on specific individuals through external third parties from our intelligence network and referred to us by our network.

expertise to communicate the details of variance at the senior most levels.

- Furthermore, he leveraged technology that allowed him and his team to undertake complex estimation work and modeling in far shorter time periods than others with relevant estimation experience.
- He ultimately gained the utmost respect from the highest levels of the partner organizations who were in some senses competing with the client on the basis of the issues around estimation.
- This client continues to come back to CK to address new specialized needs.

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## Results

- Ultimately we brought in an individual who was an expert in major capital project estimation. This individual had formerly headed global estimation with a major EPC organization at a relatively young age and then developed a firm that focused on delivering best practices estimation based on proprietary processes and technology for owner operators.
- Because of his experience on both sides of major project estimation at a senior level, and his experience with myriad major capital projects both within and outside of the sector, he had the capability to identify specific areas where estimates were problematic and the technical