

Case Study

Placing a Marketing Transformation Leader at a Global Advisory Firm Using Decision Science

Client Overview

A **global marketing advisory and consulting firm** engaged us to hire a **senior Marketing Transformation Leader** (Director level) to support C-suite clients at some of the world's largest brands.

The firm operates at the intersection of **strategy, media, technology, and execution**, advising CMOs, CEOs, and private equity firms on how to modernize marketing organizations. Unlike traditional management consultancies, the firm both **defines strategy and operationalizes it alongside clients**.

At the time of the search, the firm faced several constraints:

- Highly competitive market for senior consulting and marketing talent
- **Unrealistic compensation expectations** relative to top-tier consulting and agency firms
- Difficulty attracting candidates from elite consultancies and holding companies
- Need for a leader who could **bridge consulting rigor with hands-on marketing execution**
- Desire for candidates energized by transformation, not theory

Leadership initially believed the ideal profile would come strictly from **top management consultancies or major agencies**.

The Challenge

This was not a traditional consulting hire.

The role required someone who could:

- Lead **marketing transformation engagements** for Fortune 500 brands
- Work directly with multiple CMOs across industries
- Translate strategy into **operational reality**
- Manage and mentor teams across simultaneous client engagements
- Thrive in ambiguity and high client exposure

At the same time:

- Compensation ceilings ruled out many conventional consulting profiles
- Agency candidates often lacked structured problem-solving depth
- Brand-side operators were often dismissed as “not consulting enough”

The core challenge:

How do you objectively identify a transformation leader who doesn’t fit the obvious mold—but will outperform those who do?

Our Approach: Decision Science–Led Talent Identification

Rather than relying on resumes or pedigree, we applied a **multi-criteria decision analysis (MCDA)** framework tailored to the firm’s transformation mandate.

The goal was to **force clarity**, surface **non-obvious talent**, and challenge assumptions—while remaining grounded in evidence.

Step 1: Defining the Transformation Criteria

Using insights from kickoff and calibration sessions with firm leadership , we translated success into a **MCDA model**.

Core Evaluation Dimensions

1 Marketing Transformation Experience

- Direct experience leading digital, media, or marketing transformation initiatives
- Exposure to enterprise-scale brand environments

2 Strategic Rigor + Execution

- Ability to develop strategy and operationalize it with clients
- Comfort moving from hypothesis to execution

3 Client-Facing Leadership

- Credibility with senior executives
- Comfortable presenting, challenging assumptions, and influencing outcomes

4 Consulting Mindset

- Structured problem-solving

- Ability to manage multiple workstreams and client priorities

5 Industry Fluency

- Deep understanding of marketing, media, technology, and agency ecosystems

6 People & Team Leadership

- Experience managing and mentoring teams across engagements
- Ability to coach junior talent

7 Intellectual Curiosity & Passion

- Genuine excitement for the future of marketing
- Energy for variety and complexity

Each dimension was weighted based on its importance to success in the role.

Step 2: Expanding the Talent Pool

Rather than limiting the search to “safe” profiles, we deliberately expanded the candidate universe to include:

- Management consultants with **real marketing exposure**
- Senior agency strategists and planners
- Brand-side marketing leaders with transformation experience
- Operators who had worked inside complex, global organizations

This approach required guiding the client to **question initial assumptions** and consider **adjacent, higher-potential profiles**—a critical part of our role as advisors.

Step 3: The Non-Obvious Candidate Emerges

One candidate surfaced who **initially triggered skepticism**.

At first glance, the profile did not match expectations:

- Background primarily on the **brand side**, not career consulting
- Senior marketing leadership experience at a **global consumer brand**
- Previously part of a highly selective **Chief of Staff program**
- MBA, highly strategic, but not “classic consultant”

The initial reaction from leadership:

“Are you sure? He doesn’t look like a fit.”

Step 4: Using the Model to Push Back

Rather than defending the candidate subjectively, we used the **decision model** to demonstrate why he scored exceptionally high:

- **Strategic Depth:** Chief of Staff program at a global brand known for producing world-class marketers
- **Transformation Experience:** Direct exposure to enterprise-scale brand, media, and organizational change
- **Executive Communication:** Exceptional clarity, presence, and influence
- **Consulting Foundations:** Early career in strategy consulting
- **Cultural Fit:** High curiosity, passion for marketing, and comfort with ambiguity

Importantly, this candidate was identified **while working on an entirely different search**, reinforcing the value of broad, connected talent intelligence.

The Outcome

Once the client met the candidate:

- He **outperformed all other interviewees immediately**
- Demonstrated rare ability to bridge strategy, execution, and executive communication
- Clearly aligned with the firm’s transformation ethos

The firm moved quickly:

- Strong offer extended
 - Candidate accepted
 - Search closed rapidly
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Impact

The placement delivered immediate value:

- Elevated credibility with senior client executives

- Strengthened the firm’s marketing transformation capability
- Brought real-world brand experience into consulting engagements
- Set a new benchmark for future Director-level hires

More importantly, the process itself reshaped how the firm thought about talent.

Why This Case Matters

This search succeeded not because we found a “perfect resume,” but because we used **decision science to override pattern bias**.

By:

- Structuring what success actually required
- Scoring candidates objectively
- Challenging assumptions with data
- Expanding beyond obvious talent pools

We identified a leader who **looked unconventional on paper—but proved exceptional in practice**.

The Broader Insight

Transformation roles demand **hybrid leaders**.

Decision modelling makes it possible to find them.