

Case Study

Placing a VP of Business Development at a Manufacturing Intelligence Company Using Decision Science

Client Overview

A high-growth **manufacturing intelligence company** operating at the intersection of advanced manufacturing, AI, and industrial analytics engaged us to hire a **Vice President of Business Development**.

The company provided data-driven optimization, inspection, and intelligence solutions to next-generation battery manufacturers—serving a rapidly scaling EV and energy storage ecosystem.

The mandate was strategic:

- Move from early commercial traction to scaled enterprise revenue
- Expand into global OEM and gigafactory accounts
- Navigate long, technical sales cycles
- Build strategic partnerships across the battery supply chain
- Position the company as a category leader in manufacturing intelligence

This was not a transactional sales role.

It required a **hybrid operator**—technical fluency, enterprise sales credibility, strategic deal-making, and global relationship depth.

The Core Challenge

The board initially leaned toward hiring someone directly from:

- Battery manufacturing
- EV OEM sales leadership
- Energy storage incumbents

However, deeper analysis revealed a broader truth:

Success would depend less on battery chemistry expertise and more on:

- Scaling frontier technologies into conservative industrial markets

- Navigating multi-stakeholder enterprise deals
- Building trust in complex manufacturing environments
- Structuring partnerships across hardware, software, and automation ecosystems

This insight opened the aperture.

Our Approach: Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA)

We built a **custom decision model** aligned to the company's scale phase and commercial strategy.

Rather than over-weighting industry pedigree, we defined and weighted the actual drivers of success.

Step 1: Define the Weighted Selection Criteria

1 Frontier Technology Commercialization (High Weight)

- Experience scaling deep-tech or robotics into enterprise markets
- Ability to sell complex, non-obvious value propositions
- Comfort explaining AI, automation, or manufacturing intelligence

2 Enterprise Industrial Sales Expertise

- Proven success closing large, multi-year, technical enterprise deals
- Experience selling into manufacturing or OEM environments
- Navigating procurement, engineering, operations, and C-suite stakeholders

3 Strategic Partnership Development

- OEM alliances, channel partnerships, ecosystem relationships
- Structuring win-win commercial agreements
- Ability to create leverage beyond direct sales

4 Global Market Expansion

- Experience operating internationally
- Cross-border deal-making and relationship management

5 Technical Depth with Commercial Translation

- Engineering fluency
- Ability to translate product capabilities into business value

6 Leadership & Organizational Build

- Scaling sales/business development teams
- Building structure from early traction to repeatability

7 Capital Efficiency & Growth Stage Fit

- Experience in venture-backed or scaling environments
- Operating without large enterprise budgets

Each criterion was weighted based on near-term strategic importance to the company's growth trajectory.

Step 2: Expanding Beyond Industry Bias

Rather than confining the search to battery incumbents, we evaluated adjacent sectors including:

- Robotics & warehouse automation
- Industrial AI
- Advanced manufacturing software
- OEM alliance leaders
- Semiconductor and hardware BD executives

This broadened view surfaced a candidate from the **robotics and automation sector** whose experience strongly mapped to the weighted criteria.

The Candidate Profile

The selected executive had built a career at the intersection of:

- Robotics
- AI-driven manufacturing intelligence
- Enterprise software alliances
- Strategic OEM business development

- Product marketing and engineering leadership

His career arc included:

- VP-level commercial leadership roles
- Director-level enterprise BD in robotics
- Strategic alliances in hardware/software ecosystems
- Early technical foundation as a software engineer

On paper, he was not a “battery industry insider.”
Under the model, however, he scored exceptionally high.

◆ **Frontier Tech Commercialization – Exceptional**

Scaled robotics and AI systems into conservative enterprise environments. Deep familiarity with selling advanced automation to skeptical operators.

◆ **Enterprise Deal Structuring – Strong**

Closed complex, multi-stakeholder industrial deals across hardware + software ecosystems.

◆ **Strategic Partnerships – Exceptional**

OEM alliances, enterprise collaborations, cross-functional negotiation experience.

◆ **Technical Translation – Exceptional**

Engineering background with product marketing experience—able to bridge R&D and C-suite buyers.

◆ **Growth Stage Fit – Strong**

Experience operating in scaling, innovation-driven environments without legacy enterprise infrastructure.

Why Robotics Was the Right Bet

Battery gigafactories share critical characteristics with robotics customers:

- Capital-intensive manufacturing

- Operational risk sensitivity
- Long sales cycles
- Deep engineering decision-making
- Demand for ROI clarity and reliability

The candidate's robotics and automation background provided:

- Pattern recognition across industrial transformation
- Credibility with operations leaders
- Experience introducing emerging technologies into conservative sectors

The decision model made this clear—while traditional industry filters would have rejected the profile prematurely.

The Outcome

The executive was placed as **VP of Business Development**.

Impact included:

- Strengthened enterprise credibility
- Accelerated strategic account engagement
- Improved cross-functional alignment between product and commercial teams
- Elevated strategic partnership pipeline
- Positioned the company for scaled industrial adoption

He later progressed into broader commercial leadership (VP Sales & Marketing), validating the original transformation thesis.

Why This Case Matters

This placement demonstrates a critical decision-science principle:

The industry you come from matters less than the problem you've solved repeatedly.

By focusing on **capability over category**, we:

- Reduced industry bias
- Identified transferable transformation patterns
- De-risked executive hiring

- Accelerated commercial maturity
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Strategic Insight

In frontier sectors like battery intelligence, robotics, AI, and advanced manufacturing:

The winners are often those who understand how to **commercialize complexity**, not just those who understand the chemistry.

Decision modelling makes that visible.