

An Innovative Vice President for oneworld

Pearson Partners Case Study

When **oneworld**, an alliance of some of the world's leading airlines, set a vision for the future that included a significant change in strategic direction, it was time to augment the leadership team with new thinking and capabilities.

The company is the world's most highly awarded airline alliance, bringing together 14 of the world's leading airlines that generate over \$130 billion in annual revenue. Its new vision includes a stream of digitally enabled initiatives and calls for creative use of technology to reduce delivery complexity for member airlines.

To lead these high-tech efforts, **oneworld** created a new role for a Vice President of Innovation and Digital. This new executive would need to have both technology expertise and a unique set of leadership skills to cultivate digital strategies and solutions, enable new tools and technology platforms, develop and implement a technology vision and roadmap, and build and nurture the innovation and digital team. Because this new VP also needed to instill an innovative and disruptive mindset and bring in out-of-the-box thinking to challenge the status quo, the board decided to expand the search beyond the airline industry to find the ideal candidate.

"We were looking for a thought leader deeply immersed in the contemporary digital world who also understands the challenges of driving innovation across legacy businesses and breaking that inertia," says Rob Gurney, **oneworld's** chief executive officer. "We wanted someone who would be an agitator and a catalyst for change."

Seeking to tap into a global talent pool, **oneworld** chose Pearson Partners International to help fill this groundbreaking new role. Pearson Partners' vice president Frank Morogiello, who has intensive, first-hand knowledge from his career in the airline industry, was tapped to lead the search.

"Frank was terrific," Gurney says. "I was absolutely convinced from the outset that Frank truly wanted to create a successful outcome for all parties. He invested a lot of highly productive time and understood the business challenges we were trying to meet. He had a real, genuine stake in this, and I think that's probably the key differentiator that made this search a success."

After casting a global net for potential candidates and thoroughly pre-screening them, Morogiello narrowed the field to 12 top contenders and presented detailed assessments for **oneworld** interviews. "We road-tested the candidates against how they would deal with the challenges, and then we assessed them based on the original criteria that we had set," Gurney says. "I was happy with the process because it resulted in what we felt were 10 very solid candidates after the first round of interviews." From the final slate of candidates, the hiring team created a short list of four and then narrowed the field further to two stellar choices.

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In Gurney's eyes, each of the final candidates would have been a good fit for the role. However, one brought the greatest creative capability and capacity to drive and energize change: Johnny Dranchak, who accepted the challenge and joined the **oneworld** team in October 2017. Previously, Dranchak was CTO of GE's CoreTech App Studio (a digital innovation and incubation group within GE Digital), where he was responsible for the technical and cultural elements of GE's Industry 4.0 digital transformation.

"We ended up with a terrific candidate," Gurney says. "Johnny has very quickly gotten to the heart of the issues, and has quickly connected and engaged. He's already adding value, and it seems to be working extremely well."

From Dranchak's perspective, the job is the perfect next step on his career path, and his experience with Pearson Partners was excellent.

"I have been able to bring an outsider's view and experience into an organization, and ultimately an industry, that is ready for a digital awakening," he says. "This role draws upon virtually every experience I have ever had, yet is radically different. This provides me with both the challenges I need to grow, as well as the opportunities to have a broad and deep impact. My experience with Pearson stands out because each interaction was not only professional, but human. While in hindsight I learned that the initial candidate pool was large, I never felt like 'just another candidate.'"

Gurney says that for this search, Pearson Partners' Frank Morogiello was a perfect solution and that working with the firm was a great experience.

"The scope has been met, Frank and his team's preparation was excellent, the judgment was good and we got the right candidate for the job," says Gurney. "When we started this process, that was my definition of a successful outcome for this search, and Pearson Partners hit every one of those targets. I am delighted."

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