

# Strategic Decision Making in a Complex Ecosystem

## A Case Study

### Situation

In 2005, leaders in the nonprofit sector asked, “What are the toughest talent challenges facing the sector?” They learned that organizations didn’t have the capacity or expertise to conduct effective talent searches. To address the challenge, they formed a company dedicated to candidate recruitment and placement in the social impact sector.

Ten years later, the company was successful. However, leaders wanted to ensure that they were keeping up with the evolving needs of the sector. What was the next big problem to solve? What products and services should the company add to its portfolio in order to meet the evolving needs of the sector?

### Response

The company embarked on a strategy process designed to help the company set direction. One important goal was to help team members see the sector in a new way. Leaders wanted to find overlooked opportunities and needs within the complex social sector ecosystem. Another critical goal was to maximize stakeholder and employee commitment to the new strategy by engaging them in smart ways during the process.

The process involved four activities:

*Current State Exploration.* The team gathered information about the current state through interviews and research. They learned about challenges facing the social impact sector and their clients.

*Ecosystem Mapping.* The team used an innovative ecosystem mapping technique to visualize the state of talent in the social impact sector and expose patterns, challenges, and underserved needs.

*Future State Exploration.* The team gathered information about trends and possible sector disruptions in order to anticipate future needs.

*Strategy Exploration.* The team explored and experimented with potential strategies. Through a due diligence process, they carefully examined the organizational, financial, market, and programmatic implications of the frontrunners.

### Results

As a result of the six month process, the company added four areas of strategic focus to their existing portfolio of services. Leaders were confident in their choices and in the financial and organizational implications of those choices. The entire staff was excited and motivated to move forward. Most importantly, the response from outside stakeholders was enthusiastic and supportive. Multiple people remarked that the company was now addressing critical problems facing the sector and that they were hopeful for the future of the company and the sector.

### Client Profile

#### Industry

Business services

#### Staffing Level

<20 employees

#### Key Responsibilities

- Provide streamlined search services designed to help social impact sector organizations find the talent they need
- Build a strong recruitment function to strengthen the talent pipeline

#### Goal

Set direction and strategy for the coming years while maximizing employee and client commitment

#### Solution

- Current state exploration to gather information about the state of the sector and client needs
- Ecosystem mapping to identify hidden opportunities amidst macro patterns
- Future state exploration to anticipate likely sector disruptions and trends
- Strategy exploration to identify and test potential strategies