

S. M. Wilson & Co.



Challenge

Find a new president for S. M. Wilson & Co.

Solution

Partnered with Kaye/Bassman International Corporation to execute a thoughtful, strategic, and efficient search for the company's new leader.

Results

Conducted a comprehensive search and secured a dynamic leader and owner with the ideal mix of experience, values, and influence to drive the company into its next phase of growth and innovation.

“We needed to be deliberate to pick the right outside partner to guide us through this. I can't think of a way it could have gone better.”

Mike Mangiore

Chief Financial Officer & Board of Directors Member, S. M. Wilson & Co.

Company

S. M. Wilson & Co. is a full-service construction management, design/build, and general contracting firm with offices in St. Louis, MO, and Edwardsville, IL.

Founded in 1921, S. M. Wilson & Co. is dedicated to exceeding clients' expectations by putting people first. The 100% employee-owned company is one of the leading construction management firms in the Midwest and includes Cambridge Wilson & Co. (CWC) roofing company, a wholly owned subsidiary with a proven track record of more than 20 years.

Challenge

S. M. Wilson & Co. faced a critical juncture in its leadership journey: after their president left without a succession plan, the company recognized the need for a deliberate and thorough approach to finding its next president.

The stakes were high. As an employee-owned company, S. M. Wilson & Co. needed the new leader to bring valuable skills and experience and align with the company's culture and values. The Board of Directors created an intentional hiring committee to find a candidate who could add value to the executive team, bring fresh leadership perspectives, and drive business growth.



Mike Yazbec
President
S. M. Wilson Co.

How Kaye/Bassman Found S. M. Wilson & Co.'s New President

ABOUT KAYE/BASSMAN

Kaye/Bassman was founded in 1981 with the mission to positively impact companies and enhance careers by providing the finest in professional, executive, technical & scientific search.



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Solution

Recognizing the complexity of the task at hand, S. M. Wilson & Co. wanted a formalized process, and recognized they needed a recruitment partner to find this high-level role. S. M. Wilson & Co. CHRO Rebecca Cornatzer said, "We wanted to do it the right way to find the right person." The Board of Directors made the strategic decision to partner with an executive search firm. After a rigorous selection process involving interviews with six firms, they chose Kaye/Bassman International as their recruiting partner. Kaye/Bassman stood out for their construction industry expertise, collaborative approach and extensive network.

Describing their process in selecting a recruiting partner, Cornatzer said, "We had a matrix of things we were looking for: Kaye/Bassman hit all the buckets, plus they fit our personality and style. We noticed how they communicated and talked to each other. They were collaborative and even flew up and got to know us, and our people."

As an employee-owned company with a collaborative culture, the leadership team wanted a diverse search committee that included leaders outside the company. Kaye/Bassman went above and beyond the search itself to connect the team with two business-minded individuals from the construction industry. Their outside perspectives proved invaluable in asking hard questions and maintaining focus on the search.

Throughout the process, Kaye/Bassman maintained open lines of communication with both S. M. Wilson & Co. and potential candidates through weekly updates.

Results

Kaye/Bassman exceeded expectations by finding the ideal candidate in Michael Yazbec. Yazbec most recently served as Executive Managing Director of Project and Development Services, for Chicago-based commercial real estate and property investment firm Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL). He is known to be a relationship builder and man of his word, characterized by integrity, confidence and open-mindedness. He is known for setting and managing team expectations with a direct communication style.

Michael had a virtual interview, then flew to St. Louis to meet the committee in person. After the interview dinner, Michael's wife said, "You would be lucky to work with that group of people." Yazbec knew this job and company seemed like the right fit: "It's about the people and the environment." Yazbec was hired as president of the company in July 2024. Reflecting on the interview process through Kaye/Bassman, Yazbec said, "Nothing surprised me. There was nothing out of line. The process was very thorough, and we had good conversations. This role is really aligned with what was described."

CHRO Rebecca Cornatzer reflected, "Kaye/Bassman is a good firm. They did a great job for us. They listened to me. I never felt pressured. They were helpful, responsive and efficient. No complaints. I recommend them."

Yazbec will guide the 110-person firm through its 2028 Strategic Plan and beyond, which is focused on providing Amazing Client Experiences (ACE), profitability, growth and sustainability. The Kaye/Bassman team continues to be a trusted resource, sharing intelligence on the construction market, and has been retained for additional searches for the company.