

Innovation in Education
Case Study & Testimonial

Chief Learning Innovation Officer
IMD

Context Overview

With Swiss roots and global reach, the International Institute for Management Development (IMD) develops leaders and transforms organizations to create ongoing impact. IMD is ranked “Top 3” worldwide for executive education (Financial Times Executive Education Rankings), “Europe’s Best MBA” (Forbes, Bloomberg), and is in the “Global Top 10 EMBA” (The Economist). It also stands out as one of fewer than 100 business schools globally to hold the coveted “triple crown” of accreditations from AACSB, EFMD EQUIS, and AMBA. With over 75 years of excellence in executive learning, IMD strives to stay an inch ahead of a diverse and fast-moving world by constantly innovating and investing in research, technology, pedagogy, and organizational development activities.

The Global Executive Search Mandate

As part of IMD's commitment to innovative pedagogy, the school fully embraced technology-mediated learning to enhance program delivery, create new experiential learning opportunities, and establish genuine differentiation in a competitive marketplace. To continue their evolution of digital and emerging technology innovation, they partnered with Spencer Group's specialist Innovation in Education practice to lead a search for their Head of Disruptive Learning Technologies. The new role was envisaged as a pivotal appointment to accelerate IMD's development and adoption of innovative and emerging technologies and tools to drive "Real Learning. Real Impact."

At Spencer Group, we strive to deeply understand our clients' needs, institutional culture, goals, and what lies behind each role. Unlike generalist executive search firms in the Higher Education space, Spencer Group's commercial background, 20+ years of experience in the EdTech and Commercial Education landscape, and sector knowledge of its Head, Dr Micah Coston, enable the Innovation in Education team to approach our searches with commercial agility, cross-sector capability, and robust understanding of institutional drivers. Our fresh approach, knowledge, and capabilities ensure that our clients are presented with varying models of candidate at Shortlist. We also understand what good looks like in the emerging technology and innovation space and add genuine value as consultative partners, who know how to test against a digital and technical brief.

We brought IMD a strong shortlist of highly relevant candidates with diversity in all its forms, including capability, background, sector, ethnicity, gender, and expertise. IMD took through all our recommended candidates to interview, and our final candidates' calibre was far beyond IMD's expectations for the role of Head, prompting them to restructure and create a role several tiers above the original brief to secure the appointee. We carefully guided them through this journey, and now they are truly positioned to be world-leading in learning innovation and emerging technology.

Appointment

Sarah Toms, formerly Co-Founder & Executive Director, Wharton Interactive, The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania

Client Testimonial

“We are thrilled with the appointment of Sarah as our Chief Learning Innovation Officer, and this appointment is yet another confirmation of Spencer Group’s understanding of our needs and in particular the engagement of Micah.

Working with Micah and the Spencer Group team was an experience that we will renew. From the outset, Micah demonstrated a deep understanding of our needs and of our unique culture and the innovation needs at IMD. He provided invaluable advice and regular guidance throughout the search process, and his partnership approach ensured that we felt fully involved and informed at every stage. The candidates that he brought forward made the final choice difficult which is a witness to the quality network the Spencer Group has.

In addition to finding the right profile in terms of competence and personality, we were also impressed by Spencer Group’s commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion, which was evident in every aspect of their communications and work. Candidate and client care were also exceptional, with regular check-ins, including post hire, and a willingness to go above and beyond to ensure our satisfaction. The value we received from Spencer Group through the appointment of Sarah leads us to believe that we will increase the strategic impact we will have on the global stage of learning innovation.”

Joint feedback from:

- David Bach, Professor of Strategy and Political Economy & Dean of Innovation and Programs
- Louis Leclézio, Chief Digital and Customer Experience Officer

Candidate Testimonial

“Dr Micah Coston, Head of Practice, Innovation in Education of the Spencer Group, is the epitome of an executive recruiter. He masterfully negotiates the complex dance between the recruiting organization and candidate, never once losing sight of the goals and needs of both sides of the equation. But his brilliance goes well beyond these abilities. He is an innovator in this space, challenging those he works with to imagine new mindsets and possibilities. Micah was instrumental in evolving and crafting my dream position at IMD as Chief Learning Innovation Officer, where I will be imagining and developing the next state-of-the art in education.”

- Sarah Toms, Chief Learning Innovation Officer, IMD

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