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FASTEST

GROWING FIRMS

2020



SUMMIT LEADERSHIP PARTNERS

FASTEST

GROWING FIRMS 2020

By Chris Nesi

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5. Summit Leadership Partners

REVENUE GROWTH: 753%

HQ: Charlotte, N.C.

Summit advises boards, CEOs and management teams on accelerating growth and improving organization performance by providing leadership insights and practical solutions. The firm helps scale organizations through talent and organization assessment, coaching, executive team effectiveness, leadership development and organization performance improvement. The consulting team uses expert business acumen, advanced behavioral science and data driven tools to identify and solve leadership opportunities and challenges. We recently caught up with CEO Dan Hawkins to discuss the firm's growth.

Consulting: What were the main factors that contributed to your firm's exceptional growth?

Hawkins: At Summit's core, we operate as advisors and partners and not merely as service providers. Our firm was founded by operating executives from successful companies and have led organizations themselves. We are, therefore, focused on leadership impact, organization performance and business outcomes. Our team has a unique blend of exceptional behavioral science qualifications and real-world business experience. We tend to work more with mid-cap and mid-market companies that are experiencing growing pains yet need a hands-on advisor and partner. We are client centric and provide a fit-for-purpose approach to solving leadership and organization performance challenges. We found a great niche for high growth companies that need to scale their leadership, management teams and the broader organization.

Consulting: How is this year shaping up for your firm?

Hawkins: As soon as COVID-19 hit, we immediately had our team redeployed to shift our products and services to full digital and remote delivery. In the past, most of our consulting work was done in-person, therefore we had to adapt quickly. After the initial chaos caused by COVID had subsided with our clients, we were fully prepared with our digital capabilities. Our business has bounced back to pre-COVID levels despite being 100% virtual. I am happy to report that we did not have any layoffs or mandatory pay reductions. In fact, we have been hiring and increased our workforce over the summer. This year, we have launched new services, such as due diligence assessment, board effectiveness, CEO acceleration and have migrated our services completely to remote delivery. This fall we have added more new clients than ever as the market has regained confidence to hire consulting firms despite no in-person business development meetings. Our business is stronger now

than ever due to our increased focus on our products and targeted markets.

Consulting: How would you describe your firm's outlook for 2021? Where do you see the most opportunities?

Hawkins: We are extremely bullish on 2021. Summit's business model is very diversified and so are the markets we serve. We have a healthy balance of private (often private equity owned) clients and publicly traded ones. We work extensively in industries such as technology, healthcare, business services, healthtech, and industrials, which are doing well in this volatile economic environment. Our bookings are strong, and the increased interest in Summit has been exceptional. The velocity of deal making in the private equity world has been a great catalyst for the increased requests over the past couple months. We are expecting a record quarter in Q1.

Consulting: What would you say are your firm's biggest challenges in 2021?

Hawkins: Working remotely 100% of the time has been challenging for everyone. It looks as if there is no end in sight and I do not anticipate business travel or working in offices to be back for a long time. I often worry about our team's well being and ability to recharge when working in front of a computer all day. We really enjoy meeting with our clients and spending time with each other as a team! We have a 'work hard, play hard' culture at Summit and this is difficult to maintain when we are all remote. We have spent time developing and investing in our culture with yoga classes, wine tastings, happy hours and team learning events. It does not compare, however, to being together in person.

Consulting: What does being named a Fastest Growing Firm mean to your firm, employees and clients?

Hawkins: Most of our team left their corporate careers to focus on our vision to be 'the premier advisory firm for scaling leaders, management teams and organizations for accelerating growth and increasing enterprise value.' We saw a great need in the private and public mid-market and wanted to form a very different consulting firm – one that was grounded in collaboration, courage, agility, and exceptionally talented people. This helps us validate we are on the right path. It confirms our team's sacrifice, commitment and teamwork and demonstrates further proof that we have a special formula that not only works for our employees, but for our clients as well.

