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### Oakwood Search finds talent for financial industry

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Contributing Writer

The Oakwood Search recruiting firm has grown in recent years partly because of the increased sophistication of the financial services industry it serves, but also because of relationships it has built.

The company's clients run the gamut from some of this country's largest banks to a top global insurer.

"There's been a mix of relationships with clients that have been great, as well as with vendors and our employees, who I can't say enough about," said Jake Norris, Oakwood managing partner. "Because of those relationships, we've had a kind of old-fashioned way of growth – taking what we have and making the most of it."

"In a word, our growth has been about partnerships," said Brian McIntyre, Oakwood managing partner. "Our growth has also been driven by our understanding that through our partnership, Jake and I are achieving what we couldn't achieve as individuals."

Denver-based Oakwood Search focuses on finding employees for financial services businesses such as banks, insurance companies and other institutional asset managers. It helps clients find people for sophisticated jobs from technology roles and analytics to specialized audits.

Clients work with Oakwood in three ways – retaining the Denver company for a search and paying for it upfront, employing it on a contingency basis and paying a fee only when a search succeeds, and finding consultants for fixed engagements. The Denver company, for example, has placed roughly 100 advisers at banks to report on their soundness because of the Dodd-Frank Act – a 2010 law enacted to reform Wall Street and protect consumers in the wake of the 2008 U.S. financial collapse.

Norris and McIntyre met in the early 2000s while they were in the internal recruiting department at Denver-based, publicly traded M.D.C. Holdings Inc. (NYSE: MDC), a Fortune 500 company and owner of national homebuilder Richmond American Homes. "It was there we learned about our ability to speak to and work with each other, and produce exceptional outcomes as a team," Norris said.

After leaving M.D.C., McIntyre headed talent acquisition for retirement provider TIAA, formerly TIAA-CREF, in metro Denver among other positions. The Detroit native, and University of Tennessee at Chattanooga alum, ultimately decided to go out on his own and formed Oakwood Search in 2012.

Norris – a native of Kansas City, Kansas – holds bachelor's degrees in business management and psychology from the University of Kansas. The exec, after leaving M.D.C., worked in recruiting with companies such as Johns Manville, Novo Group Inc. and SigmaTek Consulting LLC. He joined McIntyre at Oakwood Search in early 2014.

"I decided, at the end of 2013, that maybe Brian and



KATHLEEN LAVINE / DENVER BUSINESS JOURNAL

Brian McIntyre and Jake Norris, managing partners at Oakwood Search.

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## 5,284.1%

**Revenue growth:** From \$119,500 in 2013 to \$6.43 million in 2015

## OAKWOOD SEARCH

**Managing partners:** Jake Norris, Brian McIntyre

**Location:** Denver

**Industry:** Recruiting

**Website:** oakwoodsearch.com

**Phone:** 303-745-2504

**Twitter:** @Oakwoodsearch

**No. of employees:** about 25 total, 8 in Colorado

I should talk because I was thinking of going out on my own," Norris said. "With Oakwood Search, I brought the technical background, and Brian brought the financial services background."

Oakwood Search located its headquarters in downtown Denver and now employs roughly 25 people, including eight in Colorado and the rest in Texas and New York. Clients include a Big 3 strategy-consulting firm, one of this country's largest insurance companies, the

oldest and largest private U.S. bank, and technology-oriented companies. Revenues have ballooned from \$119,500 in 2013 to \$6.43 million last year.

The recruiter also has grown because it has the specialized talent to fulfill its specialized clients' needs, according to the company. Oakwood Search has benefited as well from combining best practices and recruiting tools to excel.

"To be successful in our market, you really have to have individuals – recruiters – who understand business as well as search," said McIntyre. "Our recruiters have large-corporation backgrounds, coupled with deep search expertise. That's a trait you don't see in other firms."



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