

A transformative force for rapid clinical staffing rising to the challenge in China during the COVID-19 pandemic

A Fortrea functional service provider (FSP®) case study

As the drug development market has continued to expand in China, we understand the pressures that pharmaceutical companies have faced with staffing to rapidly scale their workforce and keep pace with changing business demands. This case study shares how a large global pharmaceutical company partnered with the Fortrea Functional Service Provider team (FSP) to augment their clinical operations and quickly hire 53 clinical research associates (CRAs) during the world's first known COVID-19 outbreak.

Understanding the challenges of rapid hiring

The drug development sponsor had around 80 FSP staff from four FSP vendors with approximately 40 from Fortrea FSP and 40 managed by different global and local CROs. The sponsor needed to add 60 CRAs to support their study in China, but they estimated that the recruitment, interviewing and hiring process would require at least a year if sourced internally. The sponsor decided to accelerate the hiring process by outsourcing and splitting the task, working in parallel with Fortrea FSP and another global CRO. Both teams were first asked to present a bid defense for hiring 30 CRAs each.

Fortrea shared how its team could help the sponsor better manage their clinical trial portfolio with quality CRAs and standardized processes that efficiently supported their trial. After reviewing the bid defense that outlined the Fortrea FSP strategy, the sponsor was very impressed by the proposal. They adjusted the contract, asking Fortrea FSP to hire 45 CRAs through their FSP model; the remaining 15 CRAs were to be hired by the other FSP provider.

Developing a multi-channel, candidate-focused recruitment plan

Knowing that the sponsor needed to fill the 45 positions as soon as possible, the Fortrea FSP team leveraged multiple channels, including placing media advertisements and searching its existing candidate database. The recruitment team also asked Fortrea employees to share these FSP opportunities with any qualified colleagues, as the referral culture is strong at Fortrea; nearly 50% of the existing FSP CRAs in China started as referrals who had learned about the benefits of the FSP team from current employees through their social and professional networks.

After generating awareness about the FSP opportunity for CRAs, the recruitment team had collected more than 3,500 resumes in the candidate pool. Working through their database and applying stringent screening criteria, they narrowed the list down to 1,300 candidates with the specific qualifications that the sponsor needed to support their study.

Next, the Fortrea FSP Line Managers, who were already working directly for the sponsor—and had an understanding of the sponsor’s business requirements and culture—were then tasked to perform first line interviews with 470 qualified candidates. After these interviews, 370 candidates were selected to move to the next round of interviews with the sponsor hiring managers, who could then choose 45 CRAs per the original contract.

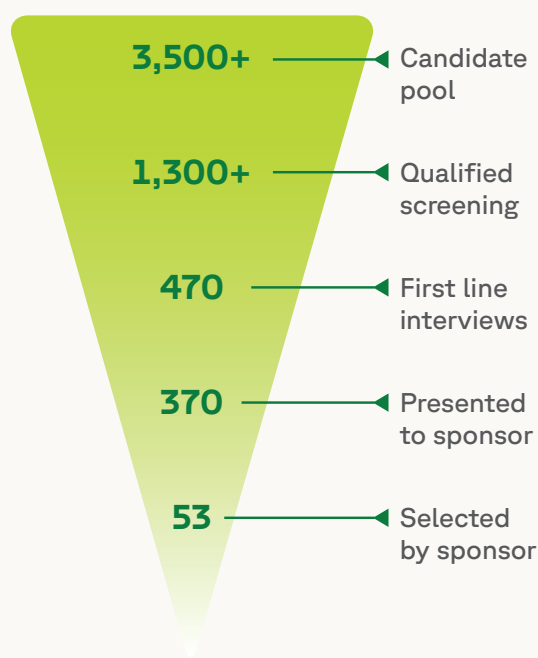
Serving as a trusted partner and exceeding the sponsor’s expectations

During this process, the COVID-19 outbreak started to impact business operations in China. Even though employees had to suddenly adjust to working remotely, the Fortrea FSP recruitment team continued to press on—even working on weekends—to address the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak and ensure they could still fulfill the sponsor’s staffing needs.

Meanwhile, the other global CRO was struggling and unable to fulfill its commitment to find 15 qualified CRAs. Therefore, the sponsor turned to Fortrea FSP and ended up hiring 53 CRAs from Fortrea, filling only 7 roles from the other FSP company. The entire process was completed 13 weeks ahead of the timeline.

In the face of what was just the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the sponsor was pleased that Fortrea FSP could flexibly handle adversity and implement a strategic approach to finding, selecting and providing qualified CRAs. The combination of direct advertising outreach to potential candidates with the use of social networks proved to be a wise approach to rapidly identify qualified candidates. These new hires now serve as an integral part of the sponsor’s study in China, helping deliver answers to advance their drug development decisions.

Finding the best candidates for the sponsor



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