Gem ✕ GROWTH BY DESIGN TALENT

Growth by Design Talent increases team capacity by 66% with Gem

Location
San Diego, CA

Website
https://www.gbdtalent.com/

ATS
Gem

Gem Product
All-in-one recruiting platform

Pain Points

- **Limited recruiter capacity constraining revenue growth:** Recruiters could only handle 3 searches at a time, limiting their ability to take on more clients. "If we can run more searches, we bring in more revenue."

- **Manual processes slowing down searches:** Without systematic ways to leverage past relationships, every search started from scratch. "We used to do a bunch of questions and intakes... then a week later, sometimes two, we'd bring in some profiles."

- **6+ years of valuable data trapped in silos:** Despite rich CRM data across tags, projects, and relationships, GBD couldn't connect candidate information to actual hiring outcomes or track funnel progression.

- **No unified view of recruiting performance:** Extracting basic metrics like time-to-fill or conversion rates required manual work across disconnected systems. "How long does an average search take? What's our onsite-to-offer average? A lot of that data just doesn't exist."

- **Rising pressure to invest in specialized tools:** The team evaluated expensive sourcing tools that would have added 50% to their tech costs without any meaningful improvement over existing capabilities.

Results with Gem

- **66% increase in recruiter capacity:** Each recruiter can now handle 5 searches simultaneously instead of 3, directly increasing revenue potential and allowing GBD to take on more clients.

- **25% faster time-to-fill through strategic candidate leverage:** By instantly accessing past search data & bringing qualified profiles to kickoff meetings, GBD eliminated the week-long intake phase. "We're getting out of the gate faster."

- **Unified platform transformed siloed data into strategic insights:** Connecting 6+ years of CRM data to hiring outcomes revealed actionable patterns. "People who've seen the next stage of growth... are much more likely to get hired."

- **Real-time visibility across the entire funnel:** GBD now has automated dashboards tracking metrics from first touch to offer acceptance. "We can actually see and start to correlate... people from these types of attributes fall through the funnel faster."

- **$20K annual cost avoidance:** By using Gem's AI-first all-in-one platform, GBD avoided adding specialized tools. "That would have added 50% to our budget."

About the company

Growth by Design Talent (GBD) delivers recruiting solutions for high-growth technology companies, including Notion, Discord, Anthropic, OpenAI, Roblox, Figma, Decagon, Cursor, Ambience, Sierra, and Vercel. The firm helps companies design talent strategies to scale quickly without sacrificing quality through four core practices: Advisory, Executive Search, Augmented Search, and Training.

Founded by industry veterans, including Adam Ward, Mike Joyner, and Jill Macri, GBD specializes in placing visionary talent leaders. The firm has used Gem CRM since its inception, building one of the most comprehensive databases of talent leaders over 6+ years — carefully tagged by company stage, seniority, and other key attributes.

For a firm dedicated to thoughtful talent strategies, their own recruiting infrastructure had become a bottleneck: rich in data but poor in actionable insights.

The challenge: Data-rich but insight-poor

Despite having one of the most comprehensive databases of talent leaders in Gem CRM, GBD faced a fundamental challenge: **they couldn't connect candidate relationships to actual hiring outcomes.**

> "We had six years or more of really important information on candidates in the market, but we couldn't answer basic questions, like how long does an average search take? What's our onsite-to-offer average?"
>
> **Adam Ward**
> Founding Partner at Growth by Design Talent
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The team had found creative workarounds, but these manual processes were unsustainable. Starting every executive search meant lengthy intakes followed by a week of initial sourcing — even though they likely already knew perfect candidates from previous searches.

> "We used to do a bunch of questions and intakes, and then a week later, we'd bring in some profiles."
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Most frustrating was the inability to leverage their carefully curated data strategically. With extensive tagging (company stage, seniority, relocation preferences) and projects organizing top talent, they had market intelligence that should have accelerated every search.

The team also faced pressure to invest in specialized executive search tools that promised better sourcing capabilities. But after evaluation, **these platforms would have added 50% to their tech costs without meaningful improvement.** As Adam explains, "switching costs are real. We already had all this information in Gem. We would've had to pull our own data and create our visualizations anyway."

From fragmented data to unified intelligence

When Gem announced its AI-first all-in-one platform, the decision was clear for GBD. All their historical CRM data — 6+ years of relationships, tags, and projects — would instantly enrich every candidate in the ATS.

> "We realized we have a lot of data within Gem that we could be leveraging. Pulling it into the ATS pulled it all together for us in one place."
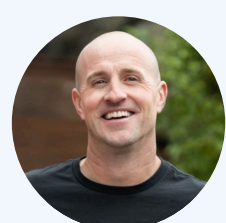>
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The transformation was immediate. Now, when GBD signs a new executive search, they don't start from zero. They pull from relevant projects like "Head of Tech Recruiting" or "Top 1%", identify candidates who reached the final stages in similar searches, and use AI sourcing agents to expand the pool.

> "Why would you start from zero versus asking, 'what candidates matriculated the furthest? What candidates got to the onsite interview from these past searches?' Boom, pull them over."
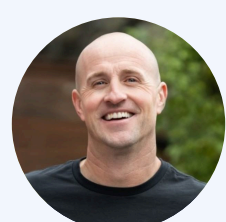>
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This unified approach revealed powerful insights. **By connecting market mapping and tagging to actual hiring outcomes**, GBD discovered that candidates who had experienced the next stage of company growth were significantly more likely to succeed.

> "People who've seen the next stage of growth for the company they're interviewing for are much more likely to get hired. We wouldn't know that if we didn't have that data."
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Speed and relationships at scale

The impact on search velocity was dramatic. Instead of spending a week on intake and initial sourcing, GBD now brings qualified profiles to the kickoff meeting.

> "Before we used to do a bunch of questions and intakes, and then a week later, we'd bring in some profiles. Now we can bring profiles to that kickoff meeting. And they're not throwaway candidates."
>
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This **25% reduction in time-to-fill** comes from combining AI sourcing with curated projects. When searching for a Head of Recruiting for a Series B company, they instantly surface candidates from relevant projects, people tagged as open to relocation, and past finalists from similar searches — all before the first client meeting. But speed isn't just about the initial search. By working with Gem, GBD transformed the candidate experience. With full relationship history at their fingertips, every outreach that GBD's team sends acknowledges any past interactions with the candidate.

> "If I reach out to a candidate but another recruiter on my team has talked to them before, I can reference that. The candidate says, 'wow, they care about me.' The more you can show that you care by recognizing past interactions, that's huge."

Adam Ward
Founding Partner at Growth by Design Talent

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This personal touch, enabled by unified data, helps GBD maintain their boutique feel even as they scale. Candidates feel valued, response rates improve, and the firm's reputation for thoughtful, relationship-driven recruiting continues to grow.

Operational excellence through end-to-end automation

The unified platform didn't just improve individual searches — it transformed GBD's entire operation. **Each recruiter increased their capacity from 3 to 5 concurrent searches, a 66% improvement that directly impacts revenue.**

> "If we can run more searches, we can bring in more revenue. And Gem's been a big part of that."
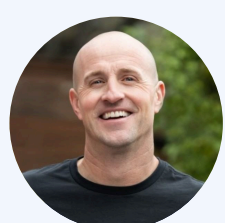
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This efficiency gain came from multiple improvements aligning in Gem. The team reduced sourcing needs by 50%, going from a full-time to a half-time sourcer. Real-time dashboards replaced manual reporting. Most importantly, recruiters could now "work in the ATS without always being in the ATS."

> "The ability to progress people in the ATS through the extension... in LinkedIn, in email... that's huge. Our team works a ton more in the extension than in the actual ATS."

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The financial impact was equally significant. By leveraging Gem's end-to-end capabilities, GBD avoided investing in specialized executive search tools that would have added $20,000 annually — a 50% increase to their tech budget — without delivering meaningful improvements. With better tools, richer insights, and streamlined workflows, **GBD achieved what every professional services firm dreams of: doing more high-quality work with the same team.**

> "We actually didn't find any marginal improvement by adding more sourcing tools. That would have added 50 percent to our tech costs with little to no impact."

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Looking ahead

For GBD, Gem's AI-native architecture represents more than current capabilities — it's about staying ahead in an evolving market.

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> "I think that Gem AI is just going to get so much better because the platform is AI native. It's building blocks, not going back and retrofitting."
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The continuous improvements in UI and functionality give the team confidence that they've chosen the right long-term partner. As Adam notes, the platform has evolved from feeling like "blocks" to "working in much smaller mosaic pixels" — a more intuitive, refined experience.

For firms that value relationships, data-driven insights, and the ability to scale without sacrificing quality, Adam sees a clear answer:

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> "Gem could and should be the answer if a company is thinking forward and has a point of view on how to recruit."
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In an industry where switching costs are real and technology choices directly impact revenue, GBD found a platform that not only consolidated their past but accelerated their future — turning 6+ years of relationships into a sustainable competitive advantage.

Thank you.

Gem is the only AI-first all-in-one recruiting platform. It brings together your ATS, CRM, sourcing, scheduling, and analytics — plus 650+ million profiles to source from — with AI built into every workflow. With an industry-leading 4.8/5 rating on G2, Gem is the platform recruiters actually love to use.

To learn more and see a demo, visit

www.gem.com