

Building Capacity, Strengthening the Bench

AT A GLANCE

- Conducted research to clearly identify the issues and propose the best solution for supporting the executive director.
- Successfully prepared the board and executive director for changes in their roles and responsibilities with the advent of a new senior executive.
- Executed all aspects of the search for the new position.

THE CLIENT



Bainbridge Island Museum of Art (BIMA) is a vibrant and bustling place that celebrates Northwest island life and art – from its architecture to its exhibitions to its ‘feel’ when you walk in the doors. Opening in 2013, BIMA quickly established itself as an institution with the mission to engage a diverse population with the contemporary arts and crafts of the region. Supporters often refer to BIMA as a community living room for art, where beauty and educational opportunities coexist. Recognized by CNN, Fodor’s and Travel+Leisure as one of America’s best small-town museums,



BIMA operates seven days a week with free admission and welcomes 80,000 visitors annually.

BIMA is home to a growing permanent art collection with a focus on artists and collection from the Puget Sound region. In addition to its galleries, the LEED-certified building also features an auditorium, bistro, store and plaza.

THE SITUATION

BIMA was at a crossroads. The museum had achieved tremendous success from the moment its doors opened. Rapid growth and the national acclaim that followed left founding executive director Greg Robinson juggling too many responsibilities. The board knew they needed to address the situation and find the best possible senior level support system. Then, Greg could gracefully transition away from operations while properly channeling his creativity and passion for the arts. With the right people in the right roles, BIMA could expand upon the founder’s vision to reach its ultimate potential.

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THE CHALLENGE

“BIMA is doing its job and doing it swimmingly...yet we’re teetering on the brink of disaster in a way because we don’t have the structure we need. The way we’re operating now is not sustainable.

– BIMA Representative,
Initial research interview

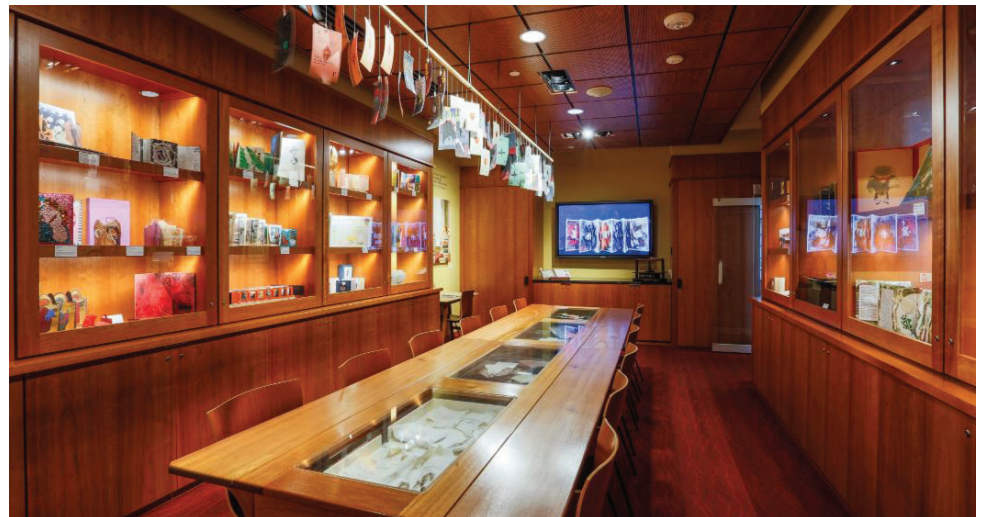
The Board of Directors retained **Roam Consulting LLC** to advise them on how to best reconfigure Greg’s role into two, possibly more, leadership positions and then conduct a search for the person(s) who would step into that role. Roam Consulting interviewed twenty-seven internal and external constituents, including founders, board members, managers, and community supporters, to identify:

- Organizational strengths and areas of improvement.
- Challenges and opportunities.
- Core competencies and attributes most needed in the new position(s).

BIMA needed to re-think how it allocated its staff resources. As the number of exhibitions and complexity of business operations mushroomed, Greg took on more and more responsibilities. He was executive director and chief curator. It was clear the museum needed a lot more help on the business side.

Nearly all interview participants acknowledged that BIMA was at a pivot point – that time in its **life cycle** where it must transition from an emerging organization to laying down a solid foundation for growth. To move forward, BIMA needed to build upon the strength of its powerful **Found and Frame Phase** and **move into the Ground and Grow Phase** by tending to the following areas:

- Lack of sufficient and effective business systems and accountability
- Responsible growth within financial means
- Mission discipline
- Financial diversification and sustainability
- Leadership development and succession planning
- Founder separations and delegation



The Sherry Grover Gallery is home to more than 1,300 artists’ book collections and the collection keeps growing. It is the largest collection of its kind in North America.

THE SOLUTION

“What Amanda did very well was test our problem statement. She didn’t just jump in with an assignment of starting on what we instructed her to do. She went through a process where she really analyzed to see if our idea of what to do was indeed the correct course of action. She proposed some revisions and once we all agreed on what we needed to pursue, she charted the course.”

– Greg Robinson
BIMA Chief Curator

“At the time, we had a situation where the leader filled many roles. We needed two, maybe three leaders in separate roles,” said board member Debbi Brainerd. “We had an executive director who was the CEO, COO, and Chief Curator. As we began to spend time with Amanda, it became really apparent how we could separate out the CEO position into two roles.”

Greg agreed. “We were a young organization that had finished a capital campaign and completed a building. We needed to really grow our staff resources,” he said. “I’d been the first executive director and also curator. After we opened, it was clear that we needed a lot more help on the business side of the operation.”

Initially, the board thought that a COO might be the best solution to support Greg and take on the responsibilities of managing daily operations, staff, and facilities. But after Amanda completed initial interviews and looked deep into operations, culture, and opportunity, she suggested a deputy director might be a more effective solution and a more fitting role for a non-profit.

Both roles required an intersection of shared leadership, which meant whoever stepped into the new position couldn’t be ‘just the numbers and facts, please’ person. The role needed to be filled by someone with a deep and broad understanding of executive-level responsibilities including strategic planning, donor relations, and board management, along with the acumen for art as a business. This person also needed to work well with Greg and support his leadership.



Greg in one of BIMA’s many galleries.

THE SOLUTION

“The quality of candidates Amanda and her executive search partner brought to us was just exceptional. Amanda understands how a non-profit works. She knows how important it is to have leadership that has great interpersonal skills and can fundraise.

The position profile Roam Consulting produced for us did a beautiful job of setting us up to attract high quality candidates. That profile combined really thoughtful and informative text. It was written in a way that was quite inviting. I thought the photos they selected to showcase the museum and programs created visual excitement for whoever looked at the profile.”

– Debbi Brainerd
BIMA Board Member

BIMA leadership decided to turn to a **leadership consultant** and **executive transitions** coach like Amanda, instead of a more traditional executive search firm. The board, managers, and staff needed to work together in new ways to ensure the successful recruitment, on-boarding, and integration of the new Deputy Director. Amanda led that mind and process shift, while also finding quality candidates.

“The quality of candidates Amanda and her executive search partner brought to us was just exceptional,” Debbi commented. “Amanda understands how a non-profit works. She knows how important it is to have leadership that has great interpersonal skills and can fundraise.”

To best ensure a successful transition, Amanda sought input and buy-in at all levels of the organization throughout the process. “A lot of times boards work with consultants and they work at this level where they don’t engage the staff. This position was really critical to the success of the staff,” said Greg. “Amanda included the staff at many levels in the discussions and interviews, just to make sure everybody knew what was going on and to get input along the way too. By the end of the project not only was the board satisfied, but the staff felt that they had been personally involved and listened to and had been part of it. “

As the recruitment process got underway, Amanda worked to develop a clear, thoughtful, and organizationally-aligned onboarding plan for the incoming Deputy Director. She helped the board and Greg understand where Greg and the Deputy Director would need to work closely together, sharing responsibilities. She also clarified where their responsibilities diverged. She encouraged the appointment of a transition team that would meet regularly during the first six months of the Deputy Director’s tenure to ensure the greatest possibility of success.

The final candidates and the board also got to know each other outside of the stuffy traditional interview setting. The day’s activities included a one-on-one breakfast with Greg, a private conversation with founder Cynthia Sears, a staff lunch, and a meet n’ greet where BIMA staff and board could spend time informally with each candidate.

Shared Leadership Diagram for BIMA

Executive Director	Deputy Director
Shared Leadership	
Visioning and Strategic Leadership Board of Directors: Relationship, Management and Support Financial Sustainability People Leadership and Management Internal communications with staff	
Artistic and Educational Leadership	Operational Leadership
Fundraising Leadership	Business Development
Community Relations and Outreach	Financial and Budget Management

EARLY RESULTS

Every Leadership Transition is an Organizational Transition

We help leaders effectively steward the complexity of change. We bring clarity, focus and confidence to transitions with our expertise in:

- Assessing leadership and organizational capacities
- Transition readiness factors
- Opportunities / conversations uniquely triggered by an executive transition
- Common risks / pitfalls
- Long term / emergency succession plans
- Defining new leader success
- Coaching founders through transition
- Board's partnership with new executive and governance implications
- Interim leaders / internal candidates
- Successful recruiting / selection
- Appropriate staff roles
- Effective onboarding
- Stakeholder perception and engagement

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The selected candidate brought a tremendous amount of talent, passion and applicable experience to the role. **Sheila Hughes** had previously worked at the Bumbershoot Festival, Teatro ZinZanni, and other area arts organizations. Not long after she stepped into her position, Greg found the confidence to focus on what he truly loved the most. “As it turned out, Sheila was so good that we made another change afterwards and appointed her executive director. And then I was just able to be totally free and clear to work on curatorial side of the art museum.” Today, Greg thrives as BIMA’s founding Chief Curator. He enjoys greater work/life balance and can now focus his energies on creating signature exhibits for the museum.

As BIMA strides into this new era, the founders and board are grateful for the expertise Amanda brought to the table. “I find Amanda to be very engaging and driven. I enjoy seeing people in action that take a project on very seriously and really want to be clear about the deliverables,” said Greg. “I enjoyed watching her reinforce things over and over again, just to make sure everyone was on the same page. I liked the fact that the project timeline was adhered to so that we didn’t draw this out. We needed this critical staff position filled and I think some people were worried that a search process would take forever. And it didn’t. On the other hand, we didn’t skip steps. It was very positive experience.”

