

## **A Conversation with Kevin Bijas on June 3, 2014**

### **Participants:**

- Kevin Bijas, Director, New York Practice, Riviera Partners
- Elie Hassenfeld, Co-Executive Director, GiveWell

**Note:** This set of notes was compiled by GiveWell and gives an overview of the major points made by Mr. Bijas.

### **Summary**

GiveWell spoke with Kevin Bijas as part of its analysis of GiveDirectly's decision to start a new for-profit venture. Mr. Bijas, a Director at the recruiting firm Riviera Partners, discussed the challenges GiveDirectly faced when it tried to recruit software engineers as a non-profit.

### **The challenges of recruiting in the non-profit sector**

Mr. Bijas said that when GiveDirectly attempted to recruit accomplished executives in the technology sector, it (a) took significantly more effort to get prospects to take an initial meeting than it normally does when he has assisted for-profit companies in their recruiting efforts; (b) when candidates took a meeting, they often did so with an interest in playing a part-time, advisory role rather than a full-time role; and (c) a high proportion of candidates dropped out after the first meeting.

Mr. Bijas offered the following explanations for these difficulties:

- Being an early employee of a new venture is hard work. In general, people are willing to take such a job because it offers equity and thus significant financial upside if the new venture is successful. Since GiveDirectly is a non-profit, it didn't offer recruits this upside.
- Because GiveDirectly couldn't offer equity compensation, it offered higher salaries. Some recruits did research and found articles criticizing high executive compensation in the non-profit sector. They felt that taking the job and receiving a high salary might reflect poorly on themselves and on GiveDirectly.

GiveDirectly started with a list of 150 candidates of which it engaged 12. Of these, it was able to close 1. He was a unique case: he had spent time in Africa and was personally very interested in GiveDirectly's work.

The initial hire would need to build his/her own team and she/he would face the same challenges in recruiting engineers that GiveDirectly had faced. Most people that GiveDirectly would have wanted to hire only pursue jobs that have all of the following: an organization doing exciting work, a team of talented people, and financial upside. Because of the lack of financial upside, most engineers would not even consider working at a non-profit.

Mr. Bijas said that recruiting for GiveDirectly was similar to his experience at a previous job recruiting software engineers for another not for profit.

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