

Meet Eric Barger, Managing Director at Bolton Talent

Jim Ries: Hello, and welcome to Java with Jim. I'm Jim Ries, director of business development at Offit Kurman. Joined here today with Eric Barger, managing director at Bolton Talent. Eric, how are you?

Eric Barger: I'm doing great, Jim. Thank you so much for having me on.

Jim Ries: Yeah, sure. Very much looking forward to this.

So Eric, tell us about Bolton Talent. What do you do there? What makes your company different from other companies in your industry?

Eric Barger: All right. Let me just take it up a small level and just say at the Bolton consulting level Bolton Talent sits within Bolton, and Bolton is a midsize consulting firm that is unique in that with its six practices is able to cover all aspects of the human resources and talent spectrum for organizations.

So I'm proud to be the managing director of Bolton Talent. That really specializes in two arenas. One is leadership solutions, so, some executive coaching work, targeted team dynamics work, and then we also do [00:01:00] leadership and executive search for organizations.

Jim Ries: Awesome. One-stop shop for all your-

Eric Barger: That's right

Jim Ries: HR needs.

Eric Barger: Yes, sir.

Jim Ries: Thanks, Eric. When it comes to Bolton Talent, what are you most proud of?

Eric Barger: For me, Jim, it's the ability to build trust and have long-term relationships with clients. If I could bring that to life when I started Bolton Talent, it really was focused on the leadership solution side of things.

And in the course of building up this- tremendous relationship with a local Maryland nonprofit, I was actually asked by my client to do some leadership search to help complement their team. I've got a lot of background in the area, and I was happy to go and pick up some old colleagues of mine that I've worked with at McCormick and Company and some other shops, and we began to do that work.

And we then watched that work really blossom into some exciting spaces. So that trust piece feels incredible. We pride ourselves on all of the different relationships we've built. Everyone's become, [00:02:00] knock on wood, knock on wood, a repeat client, and that just feels like a real validation of our ability to build that trust and help to drive performance for companies.

Yeah. Organizations in general, rather.

Jim Ries: Sure. Anytime you get that repeat business, that's a feather in the cap.

Eric Barger: It is.

Jim Ries: Eric, what would you say the next six months look like for you and Bolton Talent? You got anything you can share with the listening audience?

Eric Barger: I would be glad to. I went to an event in downtown Baltimore just the other day, and the topic matter was midyear check-in, and it felt a little surreal.

I was like, "Wait a second, this is not midyear." And I'm like, "Yep, it- it's June." So it is, it's amazing to think that, to your question, when we think out six months, it's really closing out the year. And so what are we doing right now? Like most small to midsize businesses, we are continuing to deliver for clients while we're also finding new partnerships.

It's a big aspect of what we're doing. Right now it's a [00:03:00] really interesting labor market, so you have this situation where if you look at metrics like unemployment rates, it might say to you certain messages in terms of stability and what might be out there. But if you look, in more of a targeted way, and you might look at certain geographies, you might look at certain areas of work, it's a really challenged market out there.

So right now, on the search side of things, it's really pulling up with all of our existing relationships, making sure we're supporting them the right way, making sure we're poised to support them with whatever might be coming down the track. Within the leadership solution side, it is this time where there are some distinct challenges going on for leaders.

So people are very concerned about talent retention. It's not usually, this is just a fact that I've learned across decades of doing this work. Your top talent is the talent that's most prone to leave you quickest. The reasons are of no surprise for someone like you with your background.

They look really good [00:04:00] on paper. When they connect with people in interview, they come across as dynamic and bring an IQ and EQ to the table. So there's stress out there in the system. Just yesterday was hosting an all-day executive offsite down just outside of Washington, DC, and this was the topic matter.

What creates a performance culture? How do we make sure people are engaged with our organization? How do we keep this talent, not just top talent, but the talent that we need to get it done? So the next six months are gonna be intense. It's gonna be about delivering and supporting clients, continuing to build that trust, and then also looking to generate pipeline. Not boring.

Jim Ries: No, yeah. Listen the employment market is always moving. Always moving, always changing, and who knows what it'll be in six months from now. Excellent. Well, I appreciate the deep answer. All right, this is a fun one, Eric.

Eric Barger: All right.

Jim Ries: What do most people watching this video not know about you personally?

Eric Barger: All right. Family and friends know this one for [00:05:00] sure but I think most people watching this video wouldn't know. I'm a, you could either call me a baseball nerd or a baseball nut. I'm a huge Orioles fan. I was there last night. A crazy extra innings game. And I would say, I'll tell a, just a quick story about my devotion to the craziness of baseball.

A set of years ago, the All-Star Game was in Washington DC. When the day started, I didn't have a ticket, but it wore on me as my workday went on. At that time I was working down in Arlington, Virginia, and I was like how am I gonna have the All-Star Game in my backyard and not go to this game?

So late in the day, picked up a ticket ended up going to the All-Star Game. As soon as I sit in my seat, I look next to me, and it's two Orioles fans next to me. I was like, "This is gonna be a good night," 'cause who knows who I could've gotten in there with. Top of the seventh, two to one game uh, the then shortstop for the Colorado Rockies, a guy named Trevor Story ropes one out the left field where I'm sitting.

End up catching the ball.

Jim Ries: Wow.

Eric Barger: It's a game-tying All-Star Game home run. Turned out a few months later I was [00:06:00] going with a set of really good friends of mine out to Colorado, out to Denver specifically. I reached out to the Rockies PR team and said, "Hey, I've got Trevor Story's ball. Here's a picture of me.

Here's a little video clip," 'cause, a little TV time, and arranged to meet him, give him back the ball, and he gave me a hand-signed ball that actually says thank you. It's one Of my prized possessions. And it really touched him. It was his first time at the All-Star Game. Huge moment in his career.

He also gave me a signed bat, gave me and the guys a on-field tour. And it Was a really cool experience. You might remember a name Manny Machado, had been with the Orioles.

Jim Ries: Oh, yeah.

Eric Barger: He had just gone to the Dodgers.

Jim Ries: Yeah.

Eric Barger: So Manny's down there, we're all down there with our Orioles stuff. He's pointing at us, we're pointing at him. It was a really cool moment in my life.

Jim Ries: Wow. That's amazing. Not many people have stories like that, but that's terrific. Thanks so much for sharing your personal story, unmatched by anyone so far. Uh, And sharing so much about Bolton Talent. Really appreciate it. And I know I'll be seeing you soon. [00:07:00]

Eric Barger: I'll look forward to it, Jim. Take care.

Jim Ries: Thanks. Bye.