

# How the Recruiting Team Adjusted Through COVID-19

It's hard to believe that Keystone's team has been working from home for ten months. The team is fortunate to work remotely and has been encouraged by their continued ability to develop solutions [figuratively] alongside clients.

Even with the ability to work from home, it's been necessary for Keystone to adjust normal business practices. One of the largest adjustments made was moving the entire recruiting process to be virtual. While each step of the transition was a bit different, a few specific adaptation strategies helped Keystone through it all.

**Used frequent, transparent communication.** With many changes to the recruiting process, the team focused on communicating frequently internally with team members and externally with candidates. Giving a clear picture of when decisions would be made, contact information, and what next steps would be was critical to the process.

**Planned for uncertainty.** The recruiting team experienced a high degree of uncertainty about how recruiting would be structured while planning. Rather than delay decision making, the team identified actions for numerous "what-if" scenarios and instituted decision points, ensuring the team was ultimately prepared for numerous possibilities.

**Adhered to our guiding principles.** COVID-19 brought many unfamiliar and uncomfortable decision points to Keystone's recruiting team. Focusing on Keystone's guiding principles to frame decisions helped ensure consistency in the team's behavior and built trust with employees. For example, although internship experiences looked different virtually, the team held to their guiding principle "Growing Skills Faster than Anywhere Else" to ensure Keystone's development-focused atmosphere was sustained.

*"Keystone prioritized learning and experience during our virtual internship by using a combination of training modules and real project work to simulate life at the firm." – Aaron Knopman, 2020 Summer Analyst & Incoming New Hire*

Read more about the challenges the recruiting team faced and how they adapted processes below:

## 1. Onboarding New Team Members

The first challenge the team encountered was to virtually onboard two team members hired pre-pandemic. Virtual onboarding sacrificed in-person interactions that quickly showcase Keystone's culture, so the team was focused on ensuring the new hires had the right tools for success and were given the opportunity to integrate into the firm. The team quickly adapted by incorporating one-on-one video "coffee chats" with all team members at Keystone and increased the frequency of coach and mentor touch points.

*"I was concerned about developing meaningful connections with my colleagues in a completely remote environment. Keystone's tight-knit culture, along with fun, virtual social events, ensured I was able to connect with my coworkers seamlessly." – Nihar Kandimalla, 2020 New Hire*

Reflecting today, Keystone onboarded more team members virtually, and they are an integral part of the team. It's easy to forget the whole team has never met in person.

## 2. Engaging Summer Interns

Soon after onboarding the new hires, the team turned their focus to planning Keystone's consultant development program and summer internship program. Many firms cancelled or shortened programs and internships and others moved the events to be virtual. Keystone needed to decide on a course of action. Ultimately, Keystone maintained their commitment to value people and foster growth, keeping both the consultant development program and all internships intact, while moving the programs to be virtual. This created the next challenge, specifically for interns, of how to virtually engage students with variable client work.

*"I had meaningful 1 on 1 conversations with every single Keystoner and felt like a part of the family despite the distance. I saw firsthand what makes the firm's culture so special, even from my desk at home." – James Squillante, 2020 Summer Analyst and Incoming New Hire*

The team leveraged the one-on-one "coffee chats" and coaching and

mentoring touchpoints introduced in the virtual onboarding process. Additionally, they planned more small group social events and maintained a "Videos On!" culture to help the interns feel connected and welcome. Lastly, interns were provided both client-facing and internal analytical experience to further foster their development. As a result, 100% of offers extended were accepted, and Keystone is excited to welcome them back as full-time hires next year!

## 3. Marketing Internship Roles

Before the summer internship program was over, the team was already planning how to market and recruit for internship roles the following summer. With target school campuses closed to recruiters, the team needed to decide how to conduct events with students and how best to demonstrate the firm's values and culture.

Ultimately, the team decided to conduct all events virtually. In the virtual process, the team focused on ensuring clear, consistent messaging for what roles were available and how the process would work. To increase engagement on video events, they utilized small group break-out rooms on video conferencing platforms and held more discussion-based events. An unexpected perk was the ability schedule recruiting events with more flexibility, allowing the team to engage more members of Keystone in the process across all seniority levels. The team interacted with great groups of students and were excited to see such a strong candidate pool.

*"I was impressed with each of my colleague's ability to adapt and learn what a virtual recruiting experience would look like for Keystone, and our candidates. Thanks to our recruiting team and the versatility of all the students, we were still able to make meaningful connections despite being virtual." – Jen Antolini, Lead Recruiter*

## 4. Conducting and Interview Process

The last challenge the recruiting team faced was physically conducting the interview process. The team wanted to ensure the Keystone team and candidates had the opportunity to determine whether the match was a good fit.

*"The firm's amazing community and work continuously drew me in, and I cannot wait to experience them first-hand." – William Bertaud, Incoming 2021 Summer Analyst*

The team worked hard to minimize confusion and technical problems. All expectations of time length, video conference links, and process steps were overcommunicated to candidates. Additionally, extra time for video and sound checks were built in before all interviews, and clear back-up plans were outlined. The team maintained all rounds of interviews previously conducted in person and were even able to maintain planned informal time to get to know candidates. The process went smoothly, and all offers extended were accepted. Keystone is so excited for them to join the team next summer!

Keystone is extremely proud of the flexibility and adaptations made by the recruiting team. The team was amazed at the ability to have consistent one-on-one interactions with candidates at all steps in the recruiting process. All in all, the firm is excited to continue growing their team and is grateful to continue serving their clients in an impactful way through the challenges of COVID-19.