



Media Contact: John Mooney, Over The Moon PR, (908) 720-6057, john@overthemoonpr.com

ZRG Acquires Turnkey Search

ZRG Brings Its Data-Driven “Moneyball” Approach To Sports & Entertainment

ROCHELLE PARK, NJ, January 25, 2021 – [ZRG](#), the world’s fastest-growing executive search/talent recruitment firm since 2018, today announced a major move into sports, entertainment & media with the blockbuster acquisition of Turnkey Search, the sports industry’s top executive search/talent recruitment firm. All Turnkey staff and assets merge into ZRG, (renamed “TurnkeyZRG”) and will continue to be led by **Len Perna**, the founder, chairman, and CEO of Turnkey. Turnkey will now adopt ZRG’s tech-enabled, data-driven approach to search.

“We landed the best sports executive search firm, and the No. 1 talent recruiter in Len Perna,” said **Larry Hartmann**, CEO of ZRG Partners. “Len started Turnkey 25 years ago, and consistently won gold-standard clients from billion-dollar competitors. Along the way, Turnkey cemented a reputation for integrity, accountability, and prioritizing diversity long before others.”

In 2020, the firm handled 56 searches in sports, entertainment and media, a record, including:

- NFL clubs including the Falcons, Dolphins, Panthers, Rams, Texans and 49ers.
- NBA clubs including the Bulls, Magic, Pistons and Trail Blazers.
- MLS clubs including the Atlanta United, FC Cincinnati, St. Louis City SC, Charlotte FC, and others.
- NHL clubs including the Flyers, Penguins and expansion Seattle Kraken.
- Multiple executive placements at the USA Olympic program (USOPC).
- Chief Commercial Officer at Chip Ganassi Racing, one of the sport’s winningest teams.
- In December, the placement of Jim Phillips as Commissioner of the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC).

Hunt Scanlon Ventures facilitated the introduction between ZRG and Turnkey, both perennial leaders in Hunt Scanlon’s rankings of executive search firms. “Len Perna built Turnkey into the most formidable sports recruiting brand in the nation,” said CEO **Scott Scanlon**. “This combination allows ZRG to deliver its ‘Moneyball’ approach to sports and entertainment, using a proprietary Z Score ‘scorecard’ to leverage data and analytics into better hiring decisions. Unlocking hidden value in talent and skills makes this the ultimate Moneyball team. This is a game-changer in sports, media & entertainment recruiting,” said Mr. Scanlon.



Steve Ross, owner of the Miami Dolphins, chairman of the Related Companies, and founder of the Ross Initiative in Sports for Equality (RISE): “Turnkey is the best search firm in sports, media & entertainment. Len and his team helped me turn around the Miami Dolphins’ business by assembling the best front office in sports. At Michigan, my other true love, Turnkey brought us Warde Manual and Juwan Howard. And at RISE, from the start, Turnkey has been 100% committed to our mission of using sports to advance racial equality.”



Grant Hill, Vice Chairman and part owner of the NBA Atlanta Hawks commented, “Turnkey helped us on several important searches at the Hawks. On the basketball GM search, I worked closely with them and they did a terrific job of understanding our organization and ownership, quickly assessing the NBA landscape for talent in basketball operations, and then ran a well-organized, well-researched and appropriately-paced search process to help us land Travis Schlenk from the Golden State Warriors.”



Christopher Ilitch, President & CEO of Ilitch Holdings, Inc., which represents leading brands in the food, sports and entertainment industries, including the Detroit Tigers, Detroit Red Wings, Little Caesars Pizza, Olympia Development, MotorCity Casino Hotel and a joint venture interest in 313 Presents said, “I’ve worked closely and successfully with Len Perna and Turnkey for many years.

When we need high-quality, world-class talent that aligns with our brands, culture and growth strategy, Turnkey has been our go-to partner.”



Don Garber, Commissioner of MLS since 1999, knows Turnkey has been instrumental in helping his MLS clubs find the right talent: “Turnkey has been a key MLS partner for as long as I’ve been Commissioner,” said Garber. “In 2020 alone, Turnkey helped Atlanta, Charlotte, Cincinnati, St. Louis and other clubs build their talent.”



Kent Syverud, Chairman of the Board of the ACC: “The ACC chose Turnkey to find our next Commissioner because we trusted their breadth of experience across the entire landscape of college, pro, media and entertainment. Turnkey was tremendous, giving the ACC Board the options and intelligence we needed. I’ve worked with many search firms, but Turnkey stands out for their high quality, integrity, and extreme effectiveness.”



Kevin Warren, Commissioner of the Big Ten: ““I have known Turnkey for many years in a variety of capacities. In 2016, I served as a member of the University of Minnesota Search Committee for a new Athletic Director in which Turnkey helped us manage a complex search committee process with a well-researched, well-organized search. I again worked closely with Turnkey to find my successor at

the Minnesota Vikings, and they delivered. Turnkey spans the full breadth across college & professional sports, entertainment, media and higher education.”



Chip Ganassi, Owner, Chairman & CEO of Chip Ganassi Racing: “Turnkey immediately impacted our company. Immediately. Turnkey knows the business. They know the trends. They run a professional process. And they deliver game-changing talent. Turnkey is championship caliber.”



Sandy Barbour, the Director of Athletics at Penn State, said, “Chad Chatlos and Katy Young Staudt have been tremendous partners over the past few years. I’ve had the pleasure of working with their team across several key searches and experienced firsthand their ability to lead an inclusive process that ends in a highly successful outcome.”



Tod Leiweke, CEO and part owner of the expansion Seattle Kraken, started speaking with Turnkey on his first day on the job in Seattle. “Turnkey has been a unique player in search in that Len was actually a great practitioner before he started his firm. Thus you get a true understanding of candidates and competency which is unquestionably unique and it is why they are a leader in the

space. We have used their services at the Kraken and rate their work a ten on a scale of ten,” said Leiweke.



Diahann Billings-Burford, CEO of RISE: “Since RISE launched in 2015, Turnkey donated significant time, all pro bono, to help find the best talent to make this bold idea an effective effort. In the five years since, Turnkey has been an amazing partner to RISE, most recently helping us recruit a fantastic VP of Strategic Partnerships. Turnkey has supported multiple members of the RISE coalition

including our Board Co-Chairman, Paul Tagliabue, (at the time the Board Chairman of Georgetown) to place their Athletic Director – another person of color (Lee Reed). Turnkey has shown in word and deed that they are committed to our mission to eliminate racial discrimination, champion social justice and improve race relations.”



Chris Del Conte, Director of Athletics at the University of Texas: “I have known and worked with Chad, Katy and Gene for years, and have tremendous respect for how they work with their clients and always conduct themselves with high integrity. They are the best in the business.”

TurnkeyZRG also announced the hire of **Tammy Castadot** as Vice President. Castadot recently served as the Global Talent Recruitment Director at Legends, the agency co-owned by the New York Yankees and the Dallas Cowboys. Previously, she recruited top talent for Starwood Hotels & Resorts and Korn Ferry International.

In December 2020, TurnkeyZRG acquired the sports practice of Ventura Partners, including **Chad Chatlos** and **Katy Young Staudt**, adding them to current Managing Director **Gene DeFilippo**, who built Turnkey’s college sports practice and previously served not only as Director of Athletics for 20 years at Villanova and Boston College, but also President of NACDA. Chatlos now leads the TurnkeyZRG work in college sports, football coaches and basketball coaches, including, in the last 30 days, assisting on new head football coaching hires at the University of Arizona, the University of South Carolina, the University of Texas and the Atlanta Falcons. In the past three years, Chatlos & Young Staudt have placed more than 50 head coaches and other coaches in college and professional sports.

About ZRG

Over the past four years, [ZRG](#) has been the leader in top line growth and increasing market share through its talented workforce and its investments in industry leading innovations and talent acquisition tools supporting its clients in making better informed and timely talent decisions. The proprietary collaborative Zi platform with its integrated Z Score, Compensation Tools, Interview Insights, and Culture Fit Score have accelerated the hiring process in excess of thirty percent with better decision making. Since 1999, ZRG’s data-driven approach to executive and professional search has been changing the way its clients think about acquiring top talent. For over 20 years, clients have trusted ZRG to recruit top talent around the world. Today, ZRG is recognized as the fastest-growing global search firm and provides a full suite of retained executive management and customized talent solutions through its locations in North America, South America, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia.

About Turnkey Search (now “TurnkeyZRG”)

Turnkey is a subsidiary of Turnkey Sports & Entertainment. Founded in 1996, Turnkey is a highly specialized talent recruitment/executive search firm filling C-level, senior-level and mid-management level positions throughout sports, entertainment and media. Over the past 25 years, Turnkey Search has filled more than 1,400 positions throughout sports, entertainment and media. Turnkey Search helps teams, leagues, stadiums, arenas, theaters, college athletic departments, events, sponsors, agencies, media companies, private equity companies and other clients identify, recruit and hire the very best management talent. Turnkey now benefits from ZRG’s global footprint, full array of industry practice groups, data-driven, analytical search tools, and technology investment in changing the way executive search/talent recruiting is done. TurnkeyZRG becomes a tech-enabled disrupter of the prior executive search model. For more information about Turnkey Search, visit www.turnkeysearch.com.

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