

CREATING A HEALTHY PIPELINE OF SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY, DRUG DEVELOPMENT – AND PEOPLE

Ionis Pharmaceuticals, a leader in drug discovery and development for rare diseases, has over 450 employees worldwide. When executives at Ionis need to fill crucial roles in various areas, they count on The Chase Group to deliver the best process, performance and people.

“The Chase Group always represents us professionally. They’re hands-on, intuitive and very well connected in the pharmaceutical and biotechnology field. We give them our hardest retained search projects. And they always come through for us.”



– Shannon Devers
Vice President, Human Resources



Shannon Devers speaks with precision, clarity and quickness, honed by 16 years of practice, in a company culture that expects nothing less.

There is one point she makes clear, several times: Ionis Pharmaceuticals is an intense and rewarding place to work.

Devers is the Vice President of Human Resources at Ionis Pharmaceuticals, and it’s her job to find – and retain – people who can flourish in this environment. She approaches this role as both a business partner and internal consultant, creating and maintaining a strong company culture and a positive environment in which significant scientific discovery is made. Prior to joining the demanding world of pharmaceuticals, Devers worked in both retail trade and consumer goods. With this prior experience, Devers has honed her ability to understand and appreciate different corporate cultures. She also prepared herself well for the business world with an undergraduate degree in marketing and an MBA.

The Ionis culture is a proprietary blend of open debate, cross-examination, scientific intensity and urgency. Ionis leaders cultivate their culture with intensity, because it’s a constant reminder of the company’s number one reason for being: “sick people depend on us.” Finding remedies for disease can never happen fast enough.

Devers leads a team of six human resources generalists who support approximately 450 employees. Cultural buy-in is high, and turnover is low, averaging just 6 to 10 percent annually.

While Devers has a bias for action, she also has a discerning eye for talent, both inside and outside the company.

That’s why she uses The Chase Group to find and recruit senior industry talent to Ionis.

“When we work with The Chase Group, we get speed, productivity and quality,” says Devers. “They focus on pharma, they listen carefully the first time, and they communicate very well. We don’t waste time, and we get the best people for our culture.”

More Than Talent Acquisition – Finding Cultural Fit

What started in 2007 as a simple one-off project has grown into a productive long-term relationship built on trust and communication.

“The team at The Chase Group is persistent, yet always professional, no matter how difficult the assignment,” says Devers. “They keep their promises and do what they say they’ll do. They communicate proactively, frequently and candidly. I always know where we stand with them.”

Like all aspects of working at Ionis, performance is key.

“The Chase Group knows our environment. They understand our executive team, their personalities and what’s important to them,” says Devers. “Chase has a good grasp of who we’re looking for, and they can develop a short list of candidates who can make a big impact for us.”

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Titles, credentials and experience are easy to search for and find. The intangibles of attitude and grit are more difficult to identify.

“And we’re always on the lookout for talent who may be ready to step onto a bigger stage,” says Devers. “The Chase Group has helped us attract seasoned professionals who have grown into more senior roles. That kind of insight is important to us.”

Expert behavioral interview techniques are a must, and being able to interpret the answers

The Pains and Gains in Brief

- > Ionis Pharmaceuticals must attract and hire mid- to senior-level executives in the highly competitive field of pharmaceuticals and biotechnology.
- > The Chase Group gets results fast by finding candidates who, in addition to having the right educational degrees and experience, have the right temperament and drive for the fast pace, scientific intensity and rewarding culture at Ionis.
- > The partnership between Ionis and The Chase Group has thrived for nearly 10 years. With the support of The Chase Group, Ionis has made key hires at all levels across the organization, securing the talent needed to sustain growth and drive innovation.

is even more essential. For example, having a strong work ethic is a big predictor of success for executives at Ionis.

“We want to find out if a person is able to rise to the occasion and go above and beyond when necessary,” says Devers. “We ask a lot of our people. And we need to make sure they can handle it, so we can keep productivity high and turnover low.”

Overall, Devers says the relationship with The Chase Group is characterized by trust and consistency.

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