



**A Message from the CEO
Cook Associates Turns 50!
Q1'2011**

Greetings to you from the team at Cook Associates, where we are pleased to be celebrating a remarkable 50 years in the executive search business. An impressive milestone! And we know that we have clients and candidates like you to thank for helping us stand the test of time.

Think about 1961 ... when the business world was living the three-martini lunch, Mad Men life for real! When a youthful new First Couple in the White House influenced the thoughts and styles of the day. Audrey Hepburn delighted as Holly Golightly in Breakfast at Tiffany's. The Pony became a popular dance craze. A postage stamp was only 4 cents.

It was also in 1961 that Ruth Cook, a pioneer and visionary business leader, founded Cook Associates with offices at 230 N. Michigan Avenue in Chicago. Even from those early days under Ruth's leadership the company's strategy was paradigm shifting. While most executive search firms of the day organized around areas of functional expertise, Ruth chose a different path. To maximize alignment with clients and candidates, she implemented an industry-focused strategy. Ruth was adamant: if you could not talk shop with both candidates and clients, then you had no business in their business! And although we have grown tremendously since then, we continue to embody Ruth's original pioneering spirit and passion for executive search.

Cook Associates soon expanded beyond the Midwest region to conduct high-level searches nationally. We were early adopters of computerization. And, later, we knew it would be crucial to provide clients with global executive search capabilities. Today we partner with the international search network, InterSearch, to refer cross-border search activities.

Today you know Cook Associates as more than an executive search firm that advises on strategic human capital issues. As a complement to our existing business, in 1996 we formed Cook M&A, a buy-side mergers and acquisitions advisory services group that offers a portfolio of solutions tailored to private equity firms and executives. It is a distinct business from our Executive Search division but has helped establish us as a leading player in the private equity niche.

Recently we have also begun to partner with high-caliber leadership development consulting firms so that we can offer solutions to challenges facing senior executives in such areas as executive development, corporate board training, cultural assessment and HR consulting.

As we emerge from this recession, the ability to understand the changing profile of the successful industry executive, relationships, brand and a demonstrable track record of success will be even more important criteria for those looking to partner with a search firm.

We are always striving to bring the best to our clients and candidates. There is a famous quote from motivational speaker Carl Mays that I particularly like: "Individuals make the plays – teams win the championships." That is the prevailing attitude at Cook Associates. Working together, many great things can happen.

Executive search work across the industry is trending upward, and there is rejuvenated optimism among hiring professionals. Companies are looking to rebuild – with a renewed sense of purpose – and this means increased competition for the best talent.

With that in mind, please know that we will maintain our unwavering commitment to client and candidate satisfaction and our willingness to take chances and be different. That is what you have come to expect from us and we will continue to deliver, with a relentless pursuit of perfection, helping you to identify opportunities to maintain a competitive edge.

As always, we thank you for your support. Our success during the past 50 years – and the next 50! – is due to valued and trusted relationships. We do not take these for granted. What a great journey it has been, and we look forward to the journey ahead. Thank you!



Mary Kier is Chief Executive Officer of Cook Associates Executive Search. In addition to her role as CEO, Mary also leads the firms Consumer Markets, Diversity & Inclusion and International search practices. Founded in 1961, Cook Associates is a retained executive search and M&A advisory services firm.