

that the industry is open and accessible to individuals from all backgrounds. Our members and chapters have the experience, resources and opportunities available—continued education and outreach are critical to connecting the next generation with rewarding careers in specialty contracting.



Mark Jones,
Executive Vice
President/National
Sales Manager,
Kimmel & Associates

Talk a bit about your company, the niche you occupy and how you differentiate from your competition.

Kimmel & Associates has been in the executive search business for more than four decades, with a primary focus on the construction industry. Over that time, we've built a reputation not just as a search firm, but as a true industry specialist—one of the few nationally recognized firms dedicated to construction.

Where we differentiate ourselves is in how we approach the work. While much of the industry has shifted toward a more transactional model, we've remained deeply relational. Our success is built on long-term partnerships with both clients and candidates. We don't take a "resume forwarding" approach; we invest significant time and resources into every search, whether it's for an assistant project manager or a CEO.

At our core, I think about it this way: after faith and family, the next most important decisions people make in their lives are often career decisions. We take that seriously. Our purpose isn't to fill a role; it's to improve lives. The lives of our candidates and their families. The lives of our clients and the organizations they're building. That ripple effect is real, and it's what drives the level of care, diligence and follow-through we bring to every search.

What are the biggest challenges you/the industry face?

One of the biggest challenges on the client side is navigating the variability in quality across the search industry. There are many firms operating today that are highly transactional, relying heavily on automated tools or surface-level sourcing without meaningful candidate engagement. That creates noise in the market and can make it more difficult for firms like ours to demonstrate the value of a thorough, relationship-driven approach.

On the candidate side, the challenge is engagement. Today's professionals, especially at the executive level, are inundated with outreach. As a result, many view all search firms through the same lens and often disengage before a real conversation begins. Breaking through that requires leading with genuine insight, not a pitch.

We use tools like social media and digital outreach, but only as a starting point. The real differentiation happens in direct, human-to-human conversations. Once we're able to engage, it becomes clear how our approach differs and why a thoughtful, well-run search process is worth their time.

What opportunities are you excited about?

What continues to be exciting is the opportunity to partner with new clients and expand the scope of relationships we've built over time. Earning the trust to work on complex, high-impact searches, particularly those that require finding candidates who aren't actively in the market, is where we thrive.

There's also a strong sense of momentum in building long-term partnerships rather than one-off engagements. When clients come back repeatedly, it's a reflection of doing the work the right way, taking the time upfront, understanding the business and consistently delivering.

From our perspective, the oppor-

tunity isn't about following broader industry trends; it's about continuing to execute at a high level in a way that sets us apart. That's what drives growth and keeps the work meaningful.

Where do you see your company/the industry in five years? How are you preparing?

Over the next five years, we expect to see a continued rebalancing in how companies approach recruiting. Many organizations built out internal recruiting functions over the past decade, but there's a growing recognition that those teams can't fully replace the role of a specialized search partner, particularly for critical or hard-to-fill positions.

The most effective approach is a combination: internal efforts for known networks and pipelines, complemented by external partners who can access talent that isn't readily visible. We see Kimmel continuing to play a key role in that ecosystem.

As a firm, we've long been known for our strength in mid-management search, and we're increasingly being recognized for our work at the senior executive and C-level, including highly specialized and complex roles. It's an area we expect to continue expanding.

Additionally, the rise of private equity in construction is reshaping leadership needs across the industry. These environments require a different type of executive—leaders who can operate within platform structures, drive transformation and align with investment strategies. We've been active in that space and understand the nuances, which position us well as that trend continues.

Preparation, for us, is less about changing who we are and more about staying disciplined in how we operate, continuing to invest in relationships, maintaining high standards in execution and ensuring we're aligned with where the industry is heading. ♦

A Different Approach to Executive Search in Construction

By **Charlie Kimmel**, CEO, Kimmel & Associates

The construction industry is evolving fast. Private equity consolidation is reshaping leadership structures. Companies that once relied solely on internal recruiting are rediscovering the value of a specialized search partner. The bar for senior executive talent has never been higher. And the most impactful candidates are often not actively looking. Reaching them requires credibility, consistency and a genuine understanding of what drives their decisions.

Kimmel & Associates has been ahead of these shifts not because we chase trends, but because we've spent more than 45 years building relationships and industry knowledge that make complex searches possible. Our Career-Directed Approach™ means we invest real time in every search. We understand our clients' organizations from their culture and priorities to the

kind of leader who will succeed there. We understand our candidates, not just their resumes, but their motivations, their goals and what a career move actually means for their lives. That's how we've achieved an 80% repeat business rate and completed more than 5,000 successful placements over the past decade. This isn't a recruiting model built for speed; it's built for results that last.

From critical management hires to C-suite leadership influenced by private equity investment in construction, Kimmel brings the industry expertise, experience and discipline these searches demand. Because while the market evolves, one thing remains constant: the right hire changes everything. Visit kimmel.com to experience a more thoughtful approach to executive search. ♦

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A New Gateway to Conservation at the Jacksonville Zoo

The Jacksonville Zoo and Botanical Gardens has unveiled a transformative new entrance alongside the J. Wayne and Delores Barr Weaver Manatee River Habitat, marking a major milestone in its \$120-million Rezoovenation. Opened March 6, 2026, this \$52-million project blends immersive design with a powerful conservation mission.

Guests are now welcomed beneath a striking 50-ft canopy featuring digital displays, a performance stage and modern ticketing and lounge spaces. The dynamic entrance leads directly to the new Manatee River habitat, a 330,000-gallon critical care facility designed to rescue, rehabilitate and release up to 20 manatees at a time. With adaptable pools and viewing areas, the space offers a rare look at rehabilitation while fostering awareness about protecting Florida's waterways.



Jacksonville Zoo's manatee exhibit 65-ft video wall.

Beyond the habitat, the development includes event and retail spaces, a two-story building with meeting areas and a technology-driven stage for programming and community engagement. Together, these elements create a vibrant destination that connects visitors to wildlife in meaningful ways.

Miller Electric played a key role by delivering complete electrical systems, audiovisual infrastructure, lighting and immersive technologies, including a 65-ft curved DVLED video wall, programmable canopy lighting and all systems supporting life-sustaining equipment for the manatee habitat. To learn more, visit www.mecojax.com ♦

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