

Case Study

The finance hire that **changes everything**



EmberSearch

X



Chief Financial Officer Placement | 2026

About *Fishwife*



Fishwife is one of the most exciting food brands in America right now.

Founded in 2020 by Becca Millstein and Caroline Goldfarb, Fishwife set out to do something simple and radical at the same time: make premium, ethically sourced tinned seafood a staple of the American kitchen. Inspired by the rich conservas culture of Spain and Portugal, they built a brand that is as beautiful as it is delicious.

Five years in, Fishwife has been featured in Vogue, the New York Times, Vanity Fair and Food & Wine.

They have over a million customers. They source from six world-class canneries across Washington State, Spain, Denmark and Scotland. And they are growing fast.

By the time they came to Ember, Fishwife was already winning. The brand was working. The product was working. What they needed next was the financial leadership to match their ambition.

That hire would define the next chapter.



The challenge



A hire they couldn't afford to get wrong.

By late 2024, Fishwife was at an inflection point. **The business was ready to scale.** But to get there, they needed financial leadership that could match the pace of the business, give the board confidence, and help Becca and her team make the right decisions at the right time.

The problem was they had been here before.

Earlier that year, Fishwife had hired a Director-level finance leader. The role soon needed someone more senior, with more experience of scaling a consumer brand through a period of rapid growth. They had lost time and momentum, and they couldn't afford to do it again.

What they were looking for.

Fishwife needed a CFO or senior VP of Finance with a specific profile: someone from a consumer or food and beverage background, comfortable operating in a high-growth startup, with the inter-personal skills to work closely with a founder-led leadership team, and the financial instincts to drive growth rather than just manage it.

They weren't looking for a maintainer. They were looking for a builder.

Location preference was Los Angeles, though not a hard requirement. The brief was urgent, the bar was high, and the stakes were real.

When Becca came to Ember, she had interviewed 43 candidates over 11 months. She needed a partner who could tell her the truth about what she had, and find her what she was missing.

How we work



Exec-search quality. Startup speed. The founders, on every search.

When Becca came to Ember, she was already mid-process with seven candidates. Most firms would have started from scratch. Daniel and Theo did something different.

In their first conversation, they worked through every candidate on her list, giving frank, expert assessments based on years of knowing this market. Who had the growth mindset Fishwife needed. Who was a maintainer. Who had inflated titles. Who was genuinely elite. By the end of the call, Becca knew exactly where she stood.

That is how Ember works. Not a process that starts when you sign. A partnership that adds value from the first conversation.

The contained model.

Ember operates on what they call a contained model. A \$10k upfront retainer, deducted from the final fee of 25% of base salary.

If the search is unsuccessful, you pay nothing beyond the retainer. No handoffs. Daniel and Theo do every candidate conversation themselves.

For Fishwife, that meant working with a team who genuinely understood the CPG finance market, who had relationships with the best candidates before the search began, and who moved at the speed the business needed.

Why it works

Ember works on no more than five searches at any one time. That focus is structural, not a selling point. It means every client gets the full weight of 28 years of combined experience, applied directly to their brief. Not delegated. Not managed. Done.

Market mapped fast. First introduction in 8 days. Placement in 45.

Not because they cut corners. Because they already knew the market.

The search in numbers



What it took to find the right person.

Finding the right CFO for a fast-growing consumer brand isn't a database exercise; it's a market intelligence exercise. Every number below represents a deliberate decision about who deserved Fishwife's time, and who didn't.

116 — Candidates mapped and approached

83 — Candidates engaged in conversation

45 — Ember screens conducted

8 — Candidates shortlisted for client interview

8 days — From search start to first candidate introduction

45 days — From search start to signed offer

Most executive search firms quote timelines in months. Ember quoted weeks, and delivered.

Not because the search was easy. Because Daniel and Theo already knew who they were looking for before the brief was written. That depth of market knowledge isn't built in a search. It's built over **28 years** and **250+ placements**.



The result



The right person. In seat. Building for the next phase.

Fishwife hired their CFO within 45 days of engaging Ember Search.

The placement was a senior finance leader with deep experience in high-growth consumer brands, the operational capability to match Fishwife's ambition, and the interpersonal qualities to thrive in a founder-led, values-driven business.

This wasn't a hire made in haste. It was made with conviction. Ember's market mapping gave Fishwife a complete picture of the available talent, an honest assessment of every candidate already in their process, and a shortlist of people they would not have found on their own.

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What it means

The right CFO doesn't just manage numbers. They give a founder room to lead. They give a board confidence to back the business. They create the financial infrastructure that makes growth possible and sustainable.

For Fishwife, this hire was about more than filling a role. It was about having the right person in the room for every major decision ahead: the next funding round, the path to profitability, the possibility of a transaction. **That is what they hired Ember Search for.**



Ben Walker
CFO, Fishwife

Ben Walker brings over a decade of F&B finance leadership, including dual CFO/COO roles at Hu and Enjoy Life Foods alongside ten years at Beam Suntory spanning FP&A, costing and financial controls, making him a strong fit for scaling Fishwife's finance function through its next growth stage.

In their words



“ What Ember Search offers is incredibly rare among recruiters (in my experience, at least). They have true domain expertise in consumer finance. Because they are laser-focused on this incredibly important, nuanced vertical, they can provide true advisory support, not just recruiter execution. They don't just identify strong candidates broadly; they serve as deeply knowledgeable and trusted sounding boards regarding which candidates will truly be the right fit for your organization. I felt incredibly confident throughout my search, knowing that they would be honest with me about who would truly be the best fit for the role, and would work with me to find that perfect candidate. Highly recommend. ”



Becca Millstein
CEO and Co-Founder, Fishwife

Work with Ember



The finance hire that **changes everything**

Done fast. By the people who already know them.

Ember Search places Heads of Finance and CFOs into VC and PE-backed startups across the US. One discipline. No handoffs. Daniel and Theo, on every search, until it's done.

If you're a founder making your first serious finance hire, this is who you call.



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Ember Search. 28+ years combined experience.
250+ searches completed. \$4B+ raised by placed candidates.