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# **Consultant: BBA CEO search may last until January 2011**

**Premium content from Birmingham Business Journal by Ben Piper, Staff**

Date: Sunday, August 29, 2010, 11:00pm CDT

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The search for a new president and CEO for the Birmingham Business Alliance could carry over until early 2011.

Joan Jorgenson, executive director of Jorgenson Consulting, said the BBA contracted with her company to produce a list of candidates for the job. She said the search process will officially begin next week and could last until January 2011.

Interviews with local business owners, BBA stakeholders and leadership will be conducted by Jorgenson employees to accurately describe the CEO qualities wanted. Jorgenson said it will take six to eight weeks to produce a list of candidates for the search committee

"This will be a national search," she said. "We're going to be doing a very targeted search; we're looking for professionals with experience."

Jorgenson said the list of candidates produced will be "strong and diverse." The greatest obstacle in the search will be finding someone willing to move, she said.

"We're going to expand that net," she said. "This is a very big and important job. People interested in job opportunities want to go to communities where there are opportunities for growth."

Neal Berte, member of the BBA executive committee and president emeritus of Birmingham-Southern College, has seen chamber presidents come and go over decades of living in Birmingham. He said communication skills rank high on his list.

"Certainly, inter-personal skills are extremely important in a position like this, being able to draw people in, build bridges across central Alabama enabling us to get outside of our thinking," he said.

Kelly Schuck, licensed organizational psychologist and managing director of TalentQuest's Birmingham office, provides consulting for companies looking for CEOs. TalentQuest recently surveyed more than 300 chamber of commerce CEOs to find what characteristics are most common.

Schuck said a search committee should have set characteristics in mind, such as intelligence or conscientiousness.

"It's important for the selection committee to think about competency-based selection," she said. "For a position as high as this, it deserves competencies defined on the front end."

Personality traits can also boost performance or inhibit growth for a company or organization, Schuck said.

"You can learn to be a better decision maker or communicator or to look at the big picture," she said. "Competencies can be trained while personality traits are learned and harder to change."

Berte said he wants a continual focus on the best qualities for a CEO throughout the search – when candidates are produced, interviewed and finally selected.

"It needs to be a strong national search, because our potential merits that," he said.