In 1999, when Laura Moore established herself as president and CEO of her own company, Moore Associates, she had already established a long and productive career. Behind her were years of very hard work, first getting her PhD in biochemistry at the University of Texas in Austin and an MBA from the Kellogg School of Management, and then as a management consultant for Bees, Allen & Tamilton. Life as a management consultant had been challenging and at times almost unbearable: the long hours, dizzying travel requirements, and an unnerving lack of control over her schedule. When Bees Allen asked her to become the firm’s recruiting partner, she had welcomed not just the career opportunity but also the more sedate lifestyle. However, she eventually decided to leave consulting, despite having enjoyed the intellectual challenges and the growth environment of the firm. Over the last few years in consulting, Moore had started to feel that being a top-ranked female executive at the firm automatically made her part of a minority group, with few role models and few “comfortable” networking opportunities. A reason why she left the firm and set up her own business was to break through the glass ceiling she had found in consulting; she felt that as the recruiting partner, there was really very little chance she would ever be tapped to be CEO, her true ambition. Her success in founding Moore Associates represented the realization of a long-held dream.

Moore Associates is a very reputable boutique retained-search firm specializing in biotech and life sciences senior-executive hiring in the Midwest region of the United States. When Moore founded Moore Associates, with its depth of expertise in the field and superior contacts, the company’s approach to executive recruiting set it apart from the competition. However, the market research reports Moore has seen over the last year have made her worry that not only has the competition caught up, but that her current offering is downright undifferentiated. Moore Associates is a fairly close reflection of Moore’s personality: Everyone works really hard to catch up and win by being the smartest, most productive, most results-oriented person in the room. The firm’s approach to recruiting leverages Moore’s deep domain expertise and analytical and service-oriented attitude toward clients and candidates. But maybe Moore and her firm have reached a break point, a point of diminishing returns. Moore feels like there is not enough time in her day and not enough money in her budget to excel at everything and know everyone. As she looks at her budget for next year, she feels like it is time to make a few carefully chosen investments and move away from her doing-it-all-doing-it-all-well approach.