



TATUM PARTNERS

Financial and Information Technology Leadership

EXECUTIVE PROFILE SERIES: TATUM CFO IN ACTION - NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM



Dr. Mick Hager (right), CEO of the San Diego Natural History Museum presents Tatum CFO Partner Irwin Hurn with a symbolic photo created by the museum staff.

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**Dr. Mick Hager, CEO
San Diego Natural History Museum**

The board members and management team of the not-for-profit San Diego Natural History Museum held a special party in June 2004. Its purpose was to symbolically put behind them four difficult years and to celebrate a new day. “We beat a piñata that represented past construction problems, and we wrote down our negative thoughts about the past budget difficulties, put them in a coffin, nailed it shut, and burned the coffin,” says Dr. Mick Hager, CEO of the Museum. “It’s a new day here. We are forward-focused. The transition began with the arrival of Tatum.”

The San Diego Society of Natural History, founded in 1874, is the second oldest scientific institution west of the Mississippi. Established to support the natural science of southern California, the Society opened its first museum in 1912. Over the years, the Museum focused its research and education on southern California and Baja California. In April 2001 it more than doubled the size of its 1933 vintage building in historic Balboa Park, with a \$40 million, 90,000 square foot addition. It was this recent expansion that drove the Museum to the edge.

Hager says the Museum was in a critical financial state, caused by a long construction project. “The project resulted in challenges and obligations that took time, money and energy. This diverted attention from operations, especially finance, and it pretty much put a stop to fund-raising as well,” he notes. The morale of the 23-member board and the staff plummeted. The Museum needed financial turnaround expertise.

Recommended by the Museum’s audit firm, Tatum was selected for its financial knowledge and because of the ease of bringing in high-level financial leadership quickly without making a long-term commitment. Tatum partner, Irwin Hurn, was engaged for a four-month, part-time assignment. Hurn’s financial expertise and leadership capabilities as well as his scientific background in biology and natural sciences made him the ideal executive for this transitional leadership position.

“Bringing in Tatum was the start of our turnaround,” says Hager. “Irwin is a person who engenders a lot of trust. Knowing we had the backing of the Tatum organization, our board and staff quickly regained their confidence in our ability to solve the issues, get the Museum back on track and move forward.” Hager adds that Hurn’s scientific back-