

International Staffing - Challenges and Opportunities



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Challenges and Opportunities

There is little doubt that in our increasingly interdependent world that companies will continue to look to take advantage of talent pools from different global regions. Innovative ideas, and the smart people to execute on those ideas, are no longer constrained by the talent in developed market cities and regions. Companies are increasingly looking to not only take advantage of some of the cost advantages of aggressively diversifying their employee population geographically, but are also measuring these decisions against a number of additional factors that have to do with the unique characteristics of each region's labor market.

There are various thoughts around what makes for a strong interconnected workforce. All people, wherever they are, want to do well and are motivated to be successful at their jobs. However, each region, country and city has unique characteristics and cultures that are somewhat different than their colleagues in different locations. These characteristics can be an advantage to an organization, bringing fresh ideas and perspectives to the table. They can also become a challenge from a number of perspectives, not the least of which being that the

culture and expectations of an organization, and candidate's expectations in considering a new opportunity, are not aligned appropriately.

Assessing for the Future

The pressure to get a talented individual into an open role, due to the ever pressing requirements of business deliverables, often times outweighs the longer term perspective of whether a potential candidate will be a well rounded contributor across a number of job factors, beyond their core competency. Companies are often faced with the challenge of having hired single focus contributors, only to find that when they need to expand their roles, or give them more opportunity, they are not the right people for these more expansive job situations.

These situations direct us backwards in time, to the interview process itself. The setup of the interview process is critical, and often given little attention in a rush to get the recruiting process started. This is critical to the success of future hires, and of utmost importance when considering a workforce that is regionally or internationally dispersed. Hiring managers and executive leaders that do not consider multiple skill factors into the candidate evaluation process

risk making ill advised hires, when considering the longer term prospects of a candidate's contribution to an organization. Factor such collaboration, innovation, or execution in previous roles are often glossed over or assumed in candidate's background. Without tangible examples from candidates of relevant situations, actions, and results in their work history (that align with a company's success attributes), companies and managers will find capability gaps opening up fairly quickly when new employees are pressed into situations that they are truly not experienced or capable of handling.

International Complexity and Advantages

With business opportunities available in so many regions, and companies looking to expand or start their operations in new locations, their requirements of managing and attracting top talent becomes critical to companies for maintaining their competitive edge. The interconnected nature of both regional and international companies now has lead to tremendous opportunities to hire exceptionally talented and motivated individuals in every region of the world. An exceptional multi-region-

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al workforce creates a multitude of advantages for companies, and is indeed a catalyst for continued growth and competitiveness.

However the complexity of managing and optimizing remote locations is often hindered by local management that may not be capable of managing broader company requirement, or driving broader company initiatives, while at the same time managing their core business deliverables.

In early stage growth situations, local management needs to be very involved building, driving and evangelizing a company culture, one that aligns with the overall corporate goals but allows for local and regional complexity and nuances. Senior and mid level managers in these situations play a pivotal role in the future success of expanding office locations, especially in emerging market cities. Often companies will work hard at recruiting for, and hiring quickly, open “functional” positions first. This is because management positions may not be as clearly defined, or management positions will obtain their appropriate scope at some target future date based upon office or regional growth. There is a tendency to “underhire” for management skills and experience, because the future growth visibility may be less than clear, or the functional requirements of the roles (and the deliverables of new management hires) may require very specific functional expertise or a more tangible goal achievement track re-

cord. The tradeoff for companies needing to make new management hires often comes down to management experience vs. functional expertise. Managers that can be both good functional leaders and have the depth of management experience to build and develop great teams is tough to find at the mid management level. Companies often underestimate the requirements of one side of the requirement or the other. As management skills tend to be considered “soft” skills, the emphasis and review of a candidate’s capabilities regarding team building, goal setting and motivational drive tends to not get as much attention in the interview process as more easily established functional capabilities.

However if we think about the longer term hiring impact that managers have with an organization, the primary focus of a management hire should be the deliverable of the “team” and the capabilities of managing a team (as in the old sports adage...there is no “I” in “TEAM”). This would generally point to their needing be a much greater emphasis on candidate’s team management capabilities during the interview process. This is especially true in expanding offices (and regions) and even more important where offices locations and time zone differences are significant.

Staffing for Success

The hiring of top talent is as important as any business issue a company faces in this increasingly competitive global marketplace. Companies need to build, at each

position level, very thorough job profile in order to ensure that the company is capturing all the necessary skills and capabilities required for a particular role. This is even more critical for companies hiring for management positions internationally.

Staffing departments, HR departments, business unit leaders and the external staffing partner companies are all teammates in the optimization of the talent delivery engine of an organization. The more critical the roles and the more geographically expansive the recruiting footprint, the more critical the requirement to formulate an approach to each role that takes into consideration both the external market dynamics (what is the market saying about the talent pool) as well as the optimal profile of the person required to excel at the open job being recruited for. Managers and recruiters need to have frank conversations about the talent pool, job requirements, and compensation framework at the start of the recruitment cycle in order to avoid misalignment in the execution of the search, and minimize the possibility of a poor hire.

Companies who are partnering with external recruiting companies also should be looking for organizations that can function as true partners in the assessment of the market, and the management of recruiters and recruitment initiatives. The ability to measure metrics appropriately (and see the story in the numbers), understand local and regional market nuances (and the dif-

ference between regions), manage and partner with “highly motivated” hiring managers (and set expectations accordingly) are all additional skills and capabilities that will drive towards successful near term hires and longer term talent acquisition goals. Staffing companies that have the experience of bringing a consultative “inside-out” view to their client engagement...understanding the requirements of a corporate culture and environment, coupled with experience in driving external recruiting results...should be considered as a valuable piece of an optimized talent delivery engine.

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