

Focused on the right candidate



Economic crisis, layoffs, and a high unemployment rate. These terms, frequently used in recent years, may imply that companies have enough available candidates on the labor market. But is it really so? Are there enough candidates on the market? If so, do companies actually need support of recruitment agencies? In which cases do companies use Executive Search or Headhunting Services?

HR departments are increasingly linked to the core business and the needs of the corporation. Therefore, they must deal with a broad range of issues. "Currently, the hardest thing and at the same time, the most important thing for our company to do is to prepare total workforce management, for example, a detailed analysis of current positions and employee's must-have skills. Furthermore, it is important to set the appropriate skill-set mix in accordance with the company's five year strategy," says Petra Berecová, Executive Director of Human Resources at Slovak Telekom. Similarly, a hotly debated issue is selecting qualified candidates who meet strict criteria. "Nowadays, it is not easy to fill even junior positions. When we advertise a job offer, we receive dozens or even hundreds of responses, but the rate of really suitable candidates is very low," emphasizes Silvia Slušná, Head of Group HR at A.S.A. SLOVENSKO. Thus, the problem is not only the selection of senior managers, but also the selection of junior specialist positions. "In the case of sales positions, the number of available candidates on the market is quite high. But in general, it is still very difficult to find a qualified candidate," says Petra Berecová. Beside the proper qualifications and adequate work experience, the importance of the candidate's personality comes to the fore. Many HR managers admit that they prefer candidates who have qualitatively stronger

soft skills to candidates who meet the professional criteria, but do not fit the team personally.

It is very difficult to reconcile the needs for expertise, know-how, and personality. In such cases, many companies use the possibility of cooperation with HR consulting companies. "We use Executive Search services for senior management positions as well as in the case of positions that require some sort of specific knowledge rarely found on the market. In certain types of positions, potential candidates are not actively looking for a new job," says Sylvia Okyne from the HR department of Kuhne+Nagel. Demand for certain types of positions is related to the strong industrial orientation of the Slovak market. "It is clearly the most difficult task to find professionals – managers with valuable experience in the technical sector. As for our company, I am talking about employees with experience in the area of design, construction, production, management and also in management of large projects," indicates Stanislav Králik, Chairman of the Board at STM Power. In such cases, advertising the position is not sufficient. It is necessary to combine different methods and tools of direct approach of the candidates.

As another added value of cooperation with HR consulting companies, clients require reliable processing of the candidate's

profile, obtaining references about the candidates, or providing an overview of the labor market. This ultimately saves the client's time. "And all the while maintaining confidentiality, which is necessary for filling certain positions," adds Stanislav Králik. Mutual professionalism, trust, and building long-term relationships are very important. "If an HR consulting company knows the client and the people who work there very well, then it is capable of finding a suitable candidate much faster," says Silvia Slušná.

In acute shortages of candidates in the Slovak market, many companies also look for candidates from abroad, e.g. from Czech Republic or Hungary. If it is not necessary to speak Slovak, companies will practically employ people from anywhere. For example, Balkan countries are increasingly becoming a center of interest for Slovak employers. Cross-border selection of candidates may become a significant extension of the selection process. Nevertheless, if the position is crucial for the company, many companies are willing to wait for the right candidate.

Investing in the right candidate will produce savings in the long run. "If a candidate is not the right one, it's an investment in loss. And I do not think any of us can afford that luxury," says Slušná. The difficult times of recent years have forced

companies to think more about the costs and effectiveness of their spent resources. This also greatly affected HR departments. Companies reduced their budgets for education and collaboration with external partners – these needs have been satisfied using their internal sources. However, many companies have realized that an investment in the right candidate is worthwhile. HR departments sometimes have their "hands tied" by their headquarters abroad. Headquarters may impose certain rules of cooperation with external companies because they may not be well acquainted with the local conditions. It all comes down to good communication and acquiring the trust of local management.

For many companies, Slovakia is a small area in relation to the availability of quality human capital. The situation is further complicated by weak links between education and the practical needs of the employers, the outflow of skilled workforce abroad, and lack of labor mobility within Slovakia. Many companies are aware of this situation. Hence there is no question for companies as to whether they should hire HR consulting companies. The question is, under what circumstances is it possible to establish effective cooperation and achieve synergy. The reward for the company will be loyal and satisfied employees.



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