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# ATTRACT AND RETAIN

Obviously, many of us involved in the process of searching for the right people for our own teams or our clients, deal with the issue of brain drain. We strive to get our people either back to the home regions after finishing their studies elsewhere or to attract the thousands of Slovaks working abroad. To achieve this goal, we use the portfolio of our skills but it also often requires a surprising amount of creativity.

## IT ALL STARTS WITH EDUCATION...

Almost all young people leave their hometown after getting their high school diplomas. They are convinced that the quality of universities either in district cities, specifically the capital city of Bratislava, or abroad, is much higher and hence, they will obtain a better education which will build a stronger foundation for their career start. Looking out beyond the Slovak borders, universities in Czech Republic are the logical youngsters' choice for almost no language barrier, cultural similarities, and relatively short distance from their homes.

There are many students also in the United Kingdom, Germany and I discovered a large group of Slovak students in Copenhagen, Denmark during my recent visit. Improving the language skills adds even more value to the high-quality education in those countries.

Not all the graduates plan or can afford to study abroad but use the network of universities in Slovakia and hope to get a decent education. If they decide to study at a Slovak university, Košice, Žilina, Banská Bystrica and mainly Bratislava are the preferred locations.



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As they advance with their studies, there comes a day when they all meet on the same labor market in the same country. Graduates of Slovak universities who seek a better job abroad will join their peers who finished their studies locally. There is a similar situation in Bratislava which welcomes students and fresh graduates from

all the Slovak regions. From this moment on, they all have very similar incentives – work hard, get experienced, live a fair life without having to worry about returning home.

## WELCOME BACK HOME...

And we – Slovak-based companies, employers, brain hunters, or others wish to identify them, find them, and pay for a business class ticket just to get them home. Some of these people are looking to start a family and wish to do so exclusively at home. Others make it easier for us because they come back after having lived abroad and having accomplished what they wanted, as they decide to close this life chapter and move on. Importing this kind of experience and skills is much appreciated in Slovak regions outside of the capital city. For those who still indulge in their higher life standard abroad, a return to Slovakia is not attractive enough even if we try to come up with new motivation factors. And if the Bratislava region is not attractive enough, how tough is it for other regions to persuade these people that they are the right destination? Very difficult, but not impossible.

There is one motivation factor common to many of those who return - the family. The power of family and feeling "at home" may play the crucial role of a magnet which attracts young people back home.

The general lack of qualified people all over the country is a simple and well-known fact. We experience it in all regions, although the lack is more visible in areas of higher demand for qualified and skilled people.

Educated, experienced and well-skilled people return to their home regions or at least to their home country with an aim to utilize everything they acquired. They lower their salary expectations, maybe also their living standards, but not the level of professionalism, certain cultural progress they experienced, and an amount of self-respect based on what they offer to their team and the society.



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And here comes the tough part: the disappointment moment. Even if we have done everything right, we have been honest to the professionals who came back, we have provided them with an attractive job and compensation package and ensured their well-being in the workplace, there is still

something missing. There are not many differences in struggles they have either whether it's in Rožňava, Považská Bystrica, Lučenec or Bratislava. We can name very similar regional insufficiencies such as the capacity or availability of kindergartens, jobs for mothers who primarily look after their kids, decent education, infrastructural issues, etc.

There are several little pieces to the puzzle of disappointment. Those who have only lived in our town or city often do not understand this, because we constantly try to improve our living-space and we are sure we do it successfully. Yes, we do, all credit to those who do not give up. But once you taste something better, you wish to keep it.

Despite many regional disparities in Slovakia, there are sector or segment differences which prevail in case of employment issues. Corporations, small businesses, local shops, individuals create the environment we want to live in. Of course, we desperately need governmental support, a stable legislation setting, a national and regional program that is not changed after every single election cycle and efficient local governance. Once all the above mentioned conditions are met, we can really start to rethink and modify our environment to meet our needs and desires.