

Sourcing Logistics Professionals in the U.S. has Become a Tough Job

Sourcing firms engaged in labour recruitment and provision of qualified personnel for logistics firms and air freight companies doing business in the U.S. are in dire straits. “We are facing headwind as the market has gradually changed,” confirms industry veteran Helmut Berchtold. The 60-year-old former CIO of DB Schenker co-founded Escondido, CA-based sourcing firm ‘adi Consult USA’ back in 2001.

Q: Helmut, the sourcing market in logistics, including air freight used to boom some time ago. After the fat years are over are you now facing seven lean years?

A: I would not want to go as far as calling this a period of seven lean years. While the current job market is not as vibrant as it has been in the past, there are still opportunities out there.

One thing is certain – both employers AND candidates have become much more selective in their choices.

Q: How come a rough wind is blowing meanwhile, making your job more demanding? Which overall parameters have fundamentally changed?

A: Without the hectic growth we have seen in our industry in the past, great opportunities are not abundant – they are still there, but just not in vast numbers. Overall economic conditions along with mergers and acquisitions have contributed to a tighter job market. Employers are less willing to “take a chance” on candidates who seem to fit the profile.



Helmut Berchtold - photo: adi USA

Most hiring managers are looking for the “perfect” candidate, which often means their expectations are simply unrealistic. On the other hand, most candidate have realized that the grass is not necessarily greener on the other side of the fence. They are doing a much better job of determining their needs, desires, and aspirations and will only consider job openings, which are in line with those.

In other words, candidates (especially talented ones) are less willing to change employers.

Q: Amazon intends to integrate transports in an attempt to run their own cargo fleet and offer clients seamless deliveries. Has this upcoming step, alarming primarily traditional package delivery companies such as UPS or FedEx, had any influence on the overall sourcing situation in logistics and air freight in the U.S. market so far?

A: Barring some exceptions, recruiting is usually based on positions, which have been created and are open for immediate hire. Amazon’s intentions may have some impact in the future, however, at this time we have not felt much.

Q: What’s the overall reputation of the logistics business in the U.S. compared with other sectors such as trade, the automotive industry or IT services, to name but a few. Are there sufficient young professionals eager to start a logistics career and demanded by the market or does logistics only play the third or fourth fiddle for young professionals after leaving college, university or other educational institutions?

A: In the recent past attracting new talent into our industry has been a real issue. Most graduates had never heard of Freight Forwarding and had no concept of the industry as such. No formal curriculum/education or career path were

available. Several forwarders and trade associations recognized this problem and partnered with universities who now offer educational programs for our sector.

Many more companies participate in job fairs for graduates where they are now offering formal job training initiatives, which give industry newcomers a much better defined and attractive career path. Finally – the public awareness of our industry has increased as we have morphed from freight forwarding to logistics providers.

A lot more needs to be done and we cannot afford to relax in our efforts but overall the industry has come a long way in recent years.

Q: “Sourcing” can’t be studied. How did you qualify for this specific job?

A: In 1999, I started recruiting in the IT sector and as of 2001 in the freight and logistics industry.

Having been in many hiring positions like Country Manager of a large consulting company in Europe, Manager of several Corporate Services and finally CIO of Schenker U.S. along with a multi-cultural background has served as a great basis as I was keenly aware of what employers are looking for.

Interacting with and listening to countless employers and candidates during my time in recruiting has been very beneficial and helped me hone my skills even more.

Interview: Heiner Siegmund