

HR services for the transport and logistics industry

Headhunting in a niche

In a differentiated sector such as logistics, finding distinguished experts is not always an easy task. At the French company Turnpoint the three Raynal family members, father Pierre and sons Cyrill and François, have specialised in finding suitable candidates for vacant positions on behalf of their customers. The two Raynal brothers spoke to ITJ editor-in-chief Christian Doeppen.

What prompted you to establish an HR office as a family-run company?

The activities of our father, who initially worked for Kuehne+Nagel in France, Egypt and in Ivory Coast, and later for Frans Maas in Europe from 1984 to 1997, establishing the road haulage and contract logistics areas, were the cradle of the company. But we also gained insights into the world of logistics. François worked in the area of contract logistics, amongst other things, working for ID Logistics in Shanghai from 2005 to 2011, and Cyrill, was employed by Ziegler, Norbert Dentressangle, Panalpina and Geodis, amongst others.

Since when has Turnpoint France been an independent unit?

Turnpoint was originally a company for mergers and acquisitions based in the Netherlands. But in 2003 the shareholders went separate ways, meaning that we'll be celebrating our company's tenth anniversary this year. In addition to the original M&A activities, as a part of which we accompanied projects in the United Kingdom, in the Benelux countries and Japan, amongst others, we've increasingly positioned ourselves as an HR services provider since 2009.

How many mandates do you manage in the HR area on average?

There are seasonal fluctuations, of course, but this year we'll process about 60 dossiers, and are thus looking confidently to 2014. In the HR area, about 60% of our headhunting is for managers and about 40% for specialists.

What nationality are your customers and candidates?

We work predominantly for French companies, including the three biggest in the logistics and transport areas. About 10% of our customers come from the freight forwarding area. Approximately one third of the staff placed by us is intended for international assignments, in logistics,



Photo: Turnpoint

Two generations are active in Turnpoint. The two sons François and Cyrill work with their father Pierre Raynal in HR services.

freight forwarding or maritime shipping. Turnpoint can offer language skills in English, German, French and Mandarin.

In what regions do you see particularly strong demand?

We've observed strong demand for Asia. We've handled three mandates in China ourselves, with candidates on site or with Chinese nationals who grew up outside their country. Expatriates are expensive. But Brazil is also becoming stronger again as is Africa, partially on account of the historic links to France, of course. The interest is in the Maghreb and the Ivory Coast or Angola, for example.

What skills are companies looking for in particular?

As a rule, this depends on the strategy of the company concerned. However, we've observed a higher level of interest in candidates with technical knowledge, amongst other things, in IT and with know-how in financial controlling. In general, there is a trend towards hiring experts from niche areas. Our customers have become more flexible on questions about age, for instance. They are no longer simply looking for people in the age group from 38 to 45.

What type of employee matches the profile or is preferred most?

We are seeing a return to the origins. Entrepreneurs and developers are in demand, general or corporate managers are less sought after. Our customers are generous when it comes to questions of character and temperament of candidates, if the quick assignment to a new task can be achieved, with fast productivity.

What is the French market like?

It's not an easy place today for transport and logistics players, where management expertise in restructuring measures and external growth are required. Candidates with MBAs from foreign colleges or experience in international supply chain management have a head start here.

You also believe in the benefits of international networks.

Yes, we've been part of Adiconsult, a network of 56 staff placement agencies in 32 countries, since 2010. As a French representative we're very satisfied with our collaboration with partners in the alliance, and consider it to be a suitable multiplier of our own efforts.

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