

Finding a manager can take up to half a year

Philippe Riboton is probably the only hunter whose "victims" willingly and gladly look for him. He is a headhunter, a man who finds the best managerial minds for top European companies.

PETR KAIN

Philippe Riboton came to Prague in the early 90s when Czechoslovakia began to breathe freely. The young Frenchman was enchanted by the atmosphere and decided to stay. He founded a cult business and lifestyle magazine called The Prague Tribune and a recruitment agency, Synergie. Today, Riboton "hunts" for the best and brightest managerial minds across Europe.

LN You are a headhunter. How would you describe what you are actually doing?

I often say that a headhunter is quite comparable to a divorce lawyer. You never think you'll need one, but when the time comes, it's better to know a really good one. That's why I meet senior managers every day who are not looking for a new job, but just want to stay in the loop about what is happening in their field and the country in which they operate.

LN So, if a company is looking for a new financial director or even a CEO, can it turn to you?

Of course. As a rule, we help companies start a new management team. Nowadays, senior managers are in their positions for about three years. One year before their replacement, companies start looking for their successors.

LN How long does it take on average to find someone?

I would say about three to six months. In the case of more complicated positions, this may take a year or longer.

LN What does a typical manager you search for look like?

Figuratively speaking, the type of people we look for have quite a specific DNA. They are managers who have experience with life in a country other than their own. They either studied or worked abroad. To give a concrete example, we recently



received an assignment from a company in the Czech Republic who was looking for a Czech CEO, requiring the person to have been in the same position in the past internationally. We have been looking for such a person not only in Europe but also in North America for example.

LN Is it true that some managers may be unsuccessful in one company but shine in another?

Of course. There is a bit of a problem in Europe that failure is rather stigmatized. Failure is simply a failure. In the United States, they see it as an essential part of success. As a lesson for

Nowadays, Senior Managers stay in their positions for about three years. One year before their replacement, companies will start looking for their successors.

”

always apply. For example, in banking or insurance you rarely find a manager who comes from a completely different field. But even there it sometimes happens.

LN What was your most difficult assignment?

The hardest is when there are very few potential candidates who can hold the position. For example, we have recently been looking for a CFO for a client in Turkey. The assignment called for an experienced financial director of Turkish origin, but currently operating outside Turkey. There are not so many people like that. And when you do find them, a second, more difficult task is ahead of you: convincing them to return to their native land. And that isn't easy, because there are currently two countries in Europe that are not very sexy from this point of view. The first is Ukraine and the other is Turkey.

LN Did you finally manage to persuade someone?

Yes, but we were lucky. One man had aging parents in Turkey who he wanted to take care of, so he accepted our offer.

LN Has anyone ever tried to head-hunt you?

Sure, they've tried it. But I always say that this job brings me too much pleasure. I have a great amount of freedom; I work a lot, I have four to eight meetings a day, but I am still the master of my time. And when I have only four meetings, I can fit in a visit to an art exhibition. That's amazing. Why would I change it?

your next career step. As they say: fail, fail again, fail better.

LN Is it also true that a manager can succeed in a completely different position from what he did in his previous job?

Certainly. It is also my role to help people change environment, change the sector in which they operate. Otherwise, my job would not be too much creative like if a company sought a CFO and we would simply look for the same CFO to replace him. Also, if you want to be a really good manager, you should work in several companies and several industries. Clearly, this does not

MAGAZÍN INDEX LN

INDEX LN

Jak se z pařížského novináře stane pražský headhunter, čtěte v magazínu Index

VYCHÁZÍ V PONDĚLÍ 17. PROSINCE