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Welcome to the new edition of Nigel Wright's Executive Search Consumer Update

As we approach the end of the year, many feel that the outlook for 2014 is starting to appear healthier than it did back in January. The Eurozone has eased out of an eighteen month recession and the perceived risk of a major financial disaster, has largely disappeared.

In the long term, although growth will continue to be slow, industry leaders are more optimistic about current conditions as well as the prospects for business, over the next six months and beyond.

Like other sectors, the consumer industry has to continue to move forward amidst the enduring burden of austerity and high levels of debt and unemployment. It also has its own specific problems to overcome – namely, the inconsistencies evident in procurement and supply chain practice which has led to the high profile 'horsemeat' scandal in the food sector; and the prolonged failure of retailers to counteract the changing nature of consumer habits and spending.

Overall however, the consumer sector is responding to these challenges in the same way it always has. Through innovation. The horsemeat scandal has led to greater emphasis on traceability and changes in the way food is sourced, processed, tracked and labelled. In particular, a streamlining of the supply chain is currently underway, with companies expressing a wish to establish more 'collaborative' 'long term' relationships, with fewer suppliers.

The continuing contraction of bricks and mortar retail is also leading consumer brands to diversify more into multi-channel distribution, online customer engagement and advertising. The FMCG sector spent more on advertising in 2013 than any other industry, with a large proportion of that investment now focused online. Consumers now expect to engage with products in a more intimate and personal way, and online has increased the opportunities for brands to be innovative in this area. Even in the context of the traditional retail format, the emergence of the 'showroom' model sets the scene for an interesting period of transformation in the sector.

As ever the question of competence remains. In this increasingly complex and challenging environment consumer businesses need to ensure that they have the necessary skills and leadership capability embedded in their organisations to allow new ideas to flourish. The market is flooded with candidates, but finding the best-match means a commitment to a recruitment and talent strategy which is directly linked to the businesses strategic priorities. As financial constraints begin to slacken, short term 'high volume' solutions are being edged out by new targeted recruitment plans, with the objective of identifying talent for future development; often on an international scale.

At the same time, being mindful of the competitive market for talent, consumer businesses are working hard to retain their best people. By engaging employees in the company and creating innovative training and development, diversity and sustainability initiatives, companies are moulding their cultural environment so that it reflects today's society as a whole; while at the same time making themselves more competitive. Workforce planning will continue to dominate the agenda for HR teams this year and beyond, in effort to attract and retain the best people.

Nigel Wright continues to work alongside leading consumer brands, supporting them in the selection and development of talent across executive, sales, marketing and operations roles. Although our business is international we pride ourselves on our ability to be effective at the local level, within the countries we operate. We have an intimate understanding of the trends that are impacting the consumer industries and our experienced consultants can advise clients on key strategic areas that go beyond the hiring process.



Celebrating Our First 25 Years

On 29th July 2013, Nigel Wright Recruitment celebrated its first 25 years in business. Founded in 1988 by Nigel, a chartered accountant, our company has gone from being a small, regional finance recruiter in the UK, to become a recognised specialist recruitment brand in Europe and beyond, employing over 100 consultants across ten international offices. We currently have offices in Newcastle, Copenhagen, London, Paris, Stockholm, Amsterdam, Oslo, Madrid, Brussels, Dusseldorf and Geneva.

In the late 90s, following a period of strong year on year growth, we developed a national and then international recruitment proposition, from our home in the North East of England. With a history of doing business with locally based multinational consumer companies, we opted to pursue a niche, specialist approach in that sector. Today the company is the preferred talent partner for many of the world's leading consumer products, utilities and services groups, at a local and global level.

Our discipline expertise has also evolved significantly since 1988. Although the core finance team, on which the business was originally established, still exists - recruiting top finance and accountancy professionals into a wide range of businesses and organisations - we now offer clients teams of consultants specialising in Executive Search, Marketing, Sales, HR, IT, Supply Chain, Manufacturing and Engineering disciplines.

Our success couldn't have been achieved without the specialist model we have established and continue to evolve. By retaining a strong presence in the countries we currently operate, working alongside global consumer businesses to support them in the selection and development of talent, Nigel Wright has created a strong foundation from which to develop its business elsewhere.

Emerging markets, for example, continue to be a focus for many of our clients and in line with global demand, we have been instrumental in building client capability in Africa, Asia, the Americas and the Middle East, in recent years.

During the latter stages of Nigel Wright's rapid phase of growth, the decision was made to involve a private equity firm in our growth plans and in October 2010, Baird Capital partners came on board. This saw a minor reorganisation of the business and the development of strong plans to continue with our international expansion. In 2012 the Nigel Wright Board outlined our new BHAG (Big Hairy Audacious Goal) stating a clear ambition to become a globally recognised leader in recruitment over the next ten years.

Our knowledge and expertise of the consumer sector and the countries in which we operate, continues to make us a credible service provider to our customers. It also allows us to be innovative and creative in our approach to the market - this strategy has been instrumental in building the Nigel Wright brand since the very beginning. We look forward to continuing to support all of our customers worldwide, and sharing in their success over the next twenty five years.

MARS

Andy Owings

Director of Operational Excellence
at Mars Chocolate¹

Mars is a global company with more than 70,000 associates (how Mars refers to its employees) operating in 73 countries. The business is guided by five principles – Quality, Responsibility, Mutuality, Efficiency and Freedom – which have been at the heart of Mars since its inception.

As part of its Quality and Efficiency principles Mars strives to make continuous improvements in manufacturing practices, learning from other markets and making operations and ways of working standardised at a global level. Andy Owings is Global Director of Operational Excellence at Mars Chocolate and is responsible for driving global manufacturing excellence through Mars's Ideal Plant Programme (IPP). We caught up with Andy to discuss his role as well as the 'people and relationship' improvements that have been taking place across the Mars business.

Tell us a bit about your current role and how you got involved in the global operational excellence programme at Mars Chocolate.

My role encompasses the Ideal Plant Programme, a series of lean transformations covering our 28 chocolate manufacturing sites around the world. The global aspect is fairly new as traditionally operational excellence had a regional focus at Mars. Since we achieved the initial targets of the Ideal Plant Programme, the role has broadened to include more holistic operational excellence.

To this end, I work with the regions to set and achieve their continuous improvement targets each year and lead a group of senior manufacturing directors from each region to standardise our operating system globally and share best practices. I also take responsibility for representing operational excellence across Mars from a cross-segment perspective, sharing knowledge and expertise, standardising our cross-segment operating principles and developing training initiatives for Mars University.

What are the objectives of the Ideal Plant Programme (IPP) and how sustainable is it?

The overall objective, led by our principles, is to make our plants and systems more efficient with high quality. Although year on year cost savings are of course important - this has never been just about that. To keep the programme sustainable, we've been very intentional about ensuring we engage associates and build organisational capabilities. We are seeing a change in ways of working as evidenced by the fact that there is a greater understanding and commitment to increased standardisation, more rigorous use of lean and problem solving as well as a change in leadership behaviours. It's a great sign that we're also seeing the methodology and tools being implemented in new ways and to different areas of the business!

Can you describe some of the IPP's key achievements and what role you and your team have played in ensuring success?

Operational excellence improvements and cost efficiencies are core elements of the programme and we've had some phenomenal success on this including large increases in productivity, overall equipment effectiveness (OEE) and quality; waste reductions and new, streamlined function processes. For us though, great people are at the very heart of Mars, and from the very beginning, we focus on creating a team vision of 'leveraging our global scale by driving operational excellence, connecting associates, and developing talent'. We're really proud of our achievements in this realm.

¹Since this article was written, Andy Owings is now Factory Director for The Wrigley Company Limited in Plymouth.



Tell us about some of those achievements?

The programme has touched nearly every manufacturing associate, with over 500 of those being involved full-time in the programme: attending training sessions, making improvements, communicating new ways of working to their fellow associates. We've seen a disproportionate number of associates involved in the programme being promoted and given increased responsibility – this is core to our Freedom and Responsibility principles which encourage personal and professional development.

We've always had a challenge in ensuring that best practices are shared across sites to leverage all the great work happening in our different regions. Through this programme, we have really institutionalised the broader sharing of knowledge and practices and accelerated our standardisation of our operating system.

I'm also particularly proud of the capabilities our global team has built to deploy transformational change programmes on several sites simultaneously, completely independently.

Prior to joining Mars two years ago, you spent five years with McKinsey & Company. How have you found the transition from working as a management consultant to having an in-house strategic role?

In terms of work there were many similarities, for example focus on change management, day-to-day interactions with shop floor operators, frequent travel between sites, etc. However the perspective is vastly different. Mars is a people business; it is genuinely collaborative environment where we look to bring people on board at an early stage in the process. As a result, I've developed some great relationships with many remarkable people within Mars!

You're a relatively young leader who has ascended very quickly into a senior role at a major brand; what aspects of your career to date have helped you to climb the ladder? What advice would you pass on to other young aspiring leaders?

The advice that has helped me, and that I would pass on to others, is to keep challenging yourself and look for opportunities to stretch

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your role and learn. Autonomy in my career has also been key and something that is encouraged in all associates at Mars. Also something that I would always encourage my teams to keep in mind is family and personal priorities, which ultimately come before work. If you forget this it can lead to not feeling fulfilled in either. Mars, perhaps because it is a family-owned business, is a company focused on associates as individuals with personal priorities. Mars encourages all associates to embrace these values and enjoy a work-life balance.

You have specialised in lean manufacturing for seven years - first with McKinsey and now with Mars Chocolate - how has lean manufacturing evolved during that time? What are the latest trends internationally?

Lean has always been about reducing waste, variability and inflexibility; however in consumer packaged goods, waste has typically been the focus because it's easiest to understand and the benefits flow through quickly. In recent years, we have been seeing a greater focus on variability and inflexibility. For example, through Six Sigma for the development of robust, quality processes; levelled or pull scheduling; flexible manpower systems, etc. Previously, manufacturing was viewed in isolation, with the 'voice of the customer' referring to the warehouse or distribution centre, rather than the actual customer. Now there's much more



There's a real focus on collaborative working, the power of relationships and ensuring that there are mutual benefits.

integration with the rest of the supply chain. There has also been increased understanding that lean is more than just a collection of powerful tools - it's about harnessing the power of great people by empowering them and giving them appropriate tools.

Is there a global 'Mars' culture? How would you describe it?

I think it's amazing how global Mars's culture really is. Regardless of the local culture, Mars is a people and relationship driven business. It's also entrepreneurial, encouraging associates to discover solutions and take pride in developing themselves. The company has an amazing history and heritage which is reflected in the culture. The five principles run through the core of the business and everyone who works within it.

What attracted you to the opportunity at Mars Chocolate? Why should other people consider joining the organisation?

There's a real focus on collaborative working, the power of relationships and ensuring that there are mutual benefits. I also liked the idea of working for a private company, where it really allows a long-term focus on associate engagement, capability building, and talent development. I have been in several principle-driven organisations, but Mars consistently impresses me with the way it truly lives its principles day-to-day.

At McKinsey, you worked across a broad range of industries including consumer packaged goods, telecoms and pulp & paper. Why did you move into the food industry?

It's almost a certainty that the world will continue to need more food! Some of the biggest challenges of the 21st century will revolve around how we handle this demand for food in a responsible way. Mars has already taken significant steps to address some of the big issues, from a 15% saturated fat reduction and reformulation of its core chocolate brands in the UK, to committing to 100% sustainable cocoa by 2020, and its partnerships with Rainforest Alliance and the Fairtrade Foundation.

On a personal level, I think that food is very easy to relate to. Mars makes some of the most well known and best loved brands whether in chocolate with the likes of M&M's, Snickers, Dove/Galaxy, Twix, Maltesers, Mars, and Bounty; in food with Uncle Ben's, Dolmio and Seeds of Change; or for our pets including Whiskas, Pedigree, Cesar and Sheba. The brands are relevant to what you eat for dinner, how you snack, celebrate and gift, to what you feed your pet, and even the coffee or tea that you drink.

What are the ambitions for Mars Chocolate's global operational excellence programme over the next 12 months?

When we look at how we are developing our supply chain, five years ago we were more inward focused. Now we are accelerating our journey to become more responsive to our customers, providing value that they individually want. Within manufacturing specifically, our strong growth has necessitated a focus on streamlining our processes and ensuring efficiency to build new capacity quicker and more effectively. We've also focused on building capabilities around the world to really drive continuous improvement day-to-day and developing the next generation of leaders. Of course we're also working hard to become more socially and environmentally sustainable, in line with our pledge to become Sustainable in a Generation.



Mark Escolme

Managing Director - Gü Puds

Gü Puds is celebrating its ten year anniversary. The London based premium dessert maker has grown rapidly during that time and is now a recognised and celebrated brand in Europe and beyond. Nigel Wright caught up with MD Mark Escolme to talk about the secrets behind Gü's success, as well as the business's plans for future growth, outside of the UK.

In the two and half years since you joined Gü Puds, the business has grown rapidly, both here in the UK as well as overseas in France and the USA, what has driven this growth?

It's been a combination of bringing new Gü products to the market, filling in distribution gaps in existing markets, opening up a number of new overseas markets and hiring really good people who have made a huge impact. In the UK, we now have a bigger presence in retailers like the Co-op, Morrisons and Asda. In France, our distribution has increased from twenty to sixty percent over the last two and a half years and we're now considered a truly national player in the French retail market. We have a presence in Germany, Austria, Holland, Scandinavia, USA, Australia and New Zealand, and half of our turnover now comes from overseas; whereas two and a half years ago, only five percent was attributable outside of the UK. Finally, we've introduced new skills and knowledge into the organisation, hiring people from good quality companies in the UK and Europe.



MARK ESCOLME

Breaking into the French market in particular must have been very satisfying. How did you sell chocolate soufflés to the French?

It's true that a lot of British food companies have really struggled in France, due to the different tastes and also the very aggressive grocery retail environment. In France you've got to build awareness, and we've successfully built awareness of our brand through TV and posters over the last two years, and that has been very important in establishing what the Gü brand is about in the French market. We started relatively small in the Paris area, really got to understand the consumers with some good sampling campaigns, and step by step, we expanded our distribution. We were very methodical and relatively patient about how we grew in France; but I think the reason why it's done so well is ultimately the same reason why it has done so well in the UK – it's unique to the market. Even though the French desserts market is twenty percent bigger than the UK's, we've managed to take share from the three or four established premium dessert brands, and grow



incrementally. This is because Gü has got a taste and a quality that no other product currently on the French market can deliver, and the French appetite has been very strong towards it. So far, so good!

Gü has progressed from being a small to a medium sized business very quickly. What organisational challenges have you overcome so far and what further challenges do you anticipate facing, as Gü transitions into a global business?

Firstly, the business has become a 24/7 organisation, whereas previously it was a two shift, five day week factory. Consequently, we've had to hire an enormous amount of people very rapidly and train them in the principles of Gü. That's been really challenging. Secondly, we've improved our operational capabilities to facilitate international growth, such as developing our supply chain. That's extremely important for a short shelf life product. Thirdly, we've had to adapt our structure to cope with the changes in how we operate. Although we continue to manufacture everything in the UK, we now ship to thirty or forty international retailers, in different parts of the world. That is also an area which continues to challenge our capabilities.

When you joined Gü in 2010 the old 'entrepreneurial' team were exiting the business. How did you maintain the 'entrepreneurial' culture of Gü during this initial period of transformation? What changes did you make?

As you get bigger it becomes more expensive to fail, particularly at the later stages of new product development and the launch stage. In larger organisations, you've got to learn to fail very fast, and by that I mean you must have a rigorous process of innovation development in place, where failing products are identified quickly and investment is stopped. You need to establish success criteria that will determine which products are launched, rather than simply giving favour to the

ideas of one person – the original entrepreneur. That cannot happen in a larger organisation. At Gü, I believe we've managed to empower our people to be creative and come up with new ideas. They feel like they're part of an entrepreneurial organisation; and by introducing more process, discipline and rigour to the innovation program, it is now very clear what success and failure look like. We test every product before we bring it to market and have minimum success criteria, measured against a competitive independent benchmark. If a product falls below that benchmark then we don't launch it; regardless of how many people internally might like the product. That's a very difficult cultural change to make in an organisation but it's a change which I hope is helping us to learn quickly, fail earlier and focus on fewer, bigger ideas.

How does a growing business maintain high standards of customer and employee satisfaction when chasing aggressive growth targets?

As a marketing organisation as well as a manufacturer, there are three measures that we do not compromise on. Number one is safety in our factories, and as much as we try to accommodate greater demand in our factories, we do not compromise on the safety of our employees. The second thing is quality. We're a premium brand and our products typically cost more than our nearest competitors in all markets and if they don't look or taste better than competitor products, then we wouldn't have a business. So, we spend a lot of time doing taste panels and getting feedback from consumers, making sure that any issues are dealt with very quickly. The third area is customer service, and again we try hard to ensure that our products always reach customers at the right time, that the right quantities are delivered etc. That process is obviously very complex now, because we're dealing with multiple international customers that have different requirements. Safety, quality and service are the three metrics that we measure everyday in the business.

The food industry has taken some knocks this year, how do you see the sector evolving in light of the recent scandals? What impact would an increase in demand for fresh/chilled products have on Gü?

I think it's certainly impacted the protein market, but I haven't seen an impact in our area as such. It is, however, something that we do need to be very conscious of. For example, a couple of years ago, to satisfy our critical consumer base and build trust in our brand, we made a big investment switching to free range eggs. It's very important that we continue to be transparent about where we source ingredients and materials from and we spend a lot of time and energy making sure that we stay very close to our supply chain.

Prior to joining Gü, you worked for large blue chip businesses. How have you found the transition from working for 'big corporates' to managing a private equity style business? What advice would you give to other people going through a similar career change?

In larger matrix organisations, decision making is far more consensual, so when you move to a smaller, entrepreneurial business, you have to become more decisive and intuitive and less consensual. I've found this aspect incredibly refreshing and far more energising. Firstly, I would advise people to build strong external networks, outside of multinational 'blue-chip' businesses. I worked for a large multinational organisation and spent most of my time outside of the UK, in overseas markets. When the time came to start thinking about doing something different, I discovered very quickly that the world didn't really exist beyond the company I was working for. My network was internal rather than external, and this greatly reduced my options when seeking new employment in different types of companies, doing different jobs to the ones I had already done. I had to work very hard to establish an external network to help my career. Furthermore, private equity firms typically assume that big company executives require a small village of people to support them and that they will struggle in environments which require them to work with fewer resources and less market data. So initially, when engaging with businesses directly or via search firms, be prepared to pick out nuggets from your career which help demonstrate an ability to adapt your style, your working practices and your aptitude to manage resources in smaller environments.

Embedding digital capability continues to be a focus for many businesses. Even the food manufacturing sector is catching on, trying to capitalise on the 'buy now' culture, which is so pervasive in the UK today. What is Gü up to in this area?

I recognised early on that a typical Gü customer is very connected online and engages in dialogue about our brand and our products, as well as those of our competitors, on social media networks and other online forums. Therefore, we've made an enormous investment in digital in the UK and overseas with twenty percent of our total A&P budget now being spent in the digital area. We really believe that it has a huge role to play in building awareness of the brand and recruiting people to the brand. And it's not necessarily us pushing the message out, but rather our customers talking about our products through community chat rooms or our Facebook page etc. Judging by the web content there is real passion for the Gü brand, we have a lot of brand ambassadors. We have a team that work 24/7, creating content or responding to dialogue all of the time, and they are very good at keeping people engaged with the business. Although we have a large number of social media followers and online advocates, we're aware that there is a lot more we can do in this area. Specifically, we're researching whether or not this online activity actually translates

Gü is ten years old this summer and we're giving our customers the chance to come up with an idea for a ten year anniversary Gü Pud, which we will launch later this year, as part of our celebrations.

into a sale; that's really important for us to know, because we don't currently use online as a way to sell. We're still reliant on traditional grocery channels, so we're keen to learn more about how digital is impacting that model, and how we might seek to connect the two.

Brands seeking to gain significant wins last summer were able to be creative around the Olympics and the Jubilee celebrations. How does Gü anticipate filling the void left by these global events?

I think we have a bigger and better innovation program this year, offering a series of new products. We've just launched a Gü York Cheesecake, for example, and the initial reaction to that has been very positive. Last year we did an on-pack 'win sixty diamonds' campaign for the diamond jubilee, which was hugely successful, but this year we think we've done even better. Gü is ten years old this summer and we're giving our customers the chance to come up with an idea for a ten year anniversary Gü Pud, which we will launch later this year, as part of our celebrations. The inventor will also receive a percentage of the profits made from sales of their creation. The reaction to that campaign, so far, has been even bigger than the response we had to the jubilee promotion.

Are you doing anything as a company to celebrate your anniversary?

We're having a big company picnic, where our chef will be creating puddings for everyone to try and we'll play games outdoors etc. We had Boris Johnson visit our factory in May to launch a fund for the London Enterprise Panel, and he used us as an example of one of London's most successful businesses over the last decade, growing from London to become a multinational company, but still based in London and providing jobs for people living in London. We also have a number of other press events planned this year.

What are the strategic focuses for Gü over the next months?

Developing new market opportunities and hiring people with international experience who can help us get into new markets and find us new opportunities beyond the UK. We want to continue building our distribution base in the USA; we're also just about to launch into Canada and Denmark this summer, so those markets will become a big focus for us. I think innovation continues to be important. We're a lifestyle product, so we need to keep coming up with new ideas that will keep customers engaged and keep us ahead of private label, as well as our other competitors. Finally, I think as we grow we want to try and become more efficient and get more out of our manufacturing facility, making sure that we're able to satisfy a greater demand in new countries.

Regaining control of the supply chain

Nigel Wright's latest management report - 'How has the current economic climate prompted consumer companies to regain control of the supply chain?' - considers the impact volatile economic conditions, the rising cost of raw materials, emerging markets and changing consumer preferences, among other macro-factors, are having on the supply chain strategies of consumer companies.

Based on interviews with six supply chain leaders from the sector across Europe, the report uncovers three strategic priorities underpinning supply chain best practice today: supplier relationships, closer integration and coordination, skills for now and the future.

Outsourcing components of the supply chain and working to optimise supplier networks were central features adopted by the companies interviewed. The emphasis is to reduce cost and improve service, while at the same time reducing the risk of outsourcing by retaining a direct involvement in the relationships. As one interviewee commented, "it's like we're 'married' to the suppliers". Reduced consumer spending has been one of the main catalysts for this approach. The VP European Supply Chain at a home entertainment group, for example, explains that consumers are certainly spending less and as a consequence the business is reducing its manufacturing 'footprint' by working with more wholesalers to manage through the reduction in consumer spending.

Reducing inventory levels and creating more flexibility to generate faster lead times is another strategic priority raised in the report. Interviewees argue that the supply chain must have greater alignment with overall business strategy, with better integration and visibility across the organisation, if greater flexibility and more efficient stock control are to be achieved.

The research uncovered that supply chain leaders will often find this difficult. However, a renewed focus on cost reduction and customer service has actually created a revived interest in 'sales and operations planning' – a system which all of the businesses in the study had adopted or were adopting or would like to adopt in the near future. Creating greater foresight in the supply chain makes it more flexible and therefore more able to adapt quickly in uncertain times.

In the final section of the report, the issue of skills is raised. What is apparent from the research is that the greater importance of managing supplier relationships as well as internal 'bridge building' with commercial departments means that technical and analytical skills, although still paramount in the discipline, are being joined by diplomatic, negotiation and general communication skills. These qualities are increasingly given equal importance by supply chain leaders when building up the competencies of their teams. One issue that was raised in this context was that technical/analytical skills are easier to develop compared to diplomatic skills, which are more innate and also more difficult to find in the supply chain discipline. Therefore finding and retaining talent that has the ability to plan and do complex analysis as well as communicate effectively with internal and external stakeholders will be central to the hiring strategies of companies over the next few years.

The report concludes that the supply chain has grown in importance as a tool to help businesses manage the risks associated with some of the big challenges facing them today and we are entering an era where supply chain leaders will take on greater responsibility for strategy that goes above and beyond their discipline.

The full report can be downloaded from www.nigelwright.com/downloads



Crispin Mair

Co-founder - Crimson & Co,
Supply Chain Consulting

Following our report 'How has the current economic climate prompted consumer companies to regain control of the supply chain?' we caught up with Crimson & Co Director, Crispin Mair, to talk about some of the latest developments in supply chain practise in the FMCG industry, as well as his plans for Crimson & Co, as it enters its second decade in business.

Crimson & Co is celebrating its tenth anniversary this year? Tell us why you chose to set up the company?

If you go back 10 years, myself and two colleagues were working for IBM Global Business Services, following the sale of PwC's consulting business to IBM, in 2002. We had come from an operational strategy and performance improvement background, but were now working for what felt like a marketing and sales spearhead for IT services. We increasingly felt that we had moved away from providing independent and impartial advice. We weren't comfortable with the integrity of that consulting model, nor were we particularly enjoying the challenge, so we decided to set up a consulting brand that stood for our values and was 100% focused on the client. We spent a long time working on those values, as well as recruiting people who would embody them, centred on a moral code of practise. Today, we have an enviable client base of companies who we enjoy working for, and with, people who actually want to make a difference.

You specialise in a range of industry sectors. What are the big supply chain challenges for the FMCG industry this year?

The industry doesn't change that much from year to year and therefore the challenges often remain the same. There are some big trends, though, that FMCG increasingly has to deal with. One in

particular, which every company that we go into is grappling with, is the growing diversity of product portfolios. A more diverse customer base, retailer demands for bespoke packaging requirements and the fact that promotional volumes are nearing 80% of company sales, means that FMCG has essentially become an engine for churning out new products and new packaging configurations. The supply chain, therefore, has to deal with ever greater complexity. This has been the case for the last twenty years, but the reality is that the goalposts keep moving and it is therefore an ever increasing problem to overcome.

Are FMCG businesses doing enough to plan for potential supply chain disruption, in this environment of greater complexity?

No, not in my view; we find very few companies that have done proper supply chain risk assessments whereby they sit down and brainstorm all of the things that could possibly go wrong in both their own and their suppliers' businesses. A proper risk assessment should prioritise all possible damaging events, based on likelihood and potential impact. A series of mitigation plans should then be drawn up, highlighting how risk can be reduced, or dealt with effectively if it were to arise. Companies might, for example, have a site mitigation plan in place, outlining what they would do if they couldn't use a particular production facility for a couple of weeks. They will also take part in exercises which will help them to prepare for this potential



problem happening. They rarely, however, take the time to evaluate very specific risks within the length of their supply chain. You often find that the procurement department carries out financial risk assessments on their suppliers, ensuring that the supplier has a robust and sustainable business model in place. What they often don't consider, though, are the operational contingencies, such as what they would do if that supplier's production facilities were suddenly unusable, or what the impact would be if they couldn't source a particular product, or if a train carrying materials got held up at a border. The best risk assessments include understanding Plan B for the operations; it's not just about minimising potential financial losses but about making sure that the opportunity from getting the product to market isn't lost.

Optimising supplier relationships to reduce cost and improve service remain a key priority in the FMCG sector. Tell us about some of the projects Crimson has led in this area and what impact you had?

I don't think FMCG companies are as advanced in this area as they often like to portray and, in my experience, it tends to be worse in the larger the companies. In some companies, procurement is too detached from day-to-day operations planning, and in others there is under-investment in the capability of procurement personnel. Procurement people are often just price negotiators and, as a result, there is not a strong understanding of the benefit that supplier development can bring. This is often not the fault of the procurement department but is the result of thinking in silos. For the majority of companies that we go into, this is one of the 'big ticket' items we will spot straight away. It is easy to say 'you really need to work closer with your suppliers' but there is usually a wall of resistance to break down first, as companies don't realise how it will benefit them financially. We often have to convince them that they will truly get price reductions from suppliers, if the communication and integration between themselves and their suppliers, was better. By working together they will reduce lead times, reduce the amount of stock, improve the accuracy of both companies' planning processes, improve transport efficiencies; there is a whole wealth of improvements that can be brought about by working together. We currently have consultants based at several major FMCG companies working to improve collaboration with packaging suppliers, to try and improve product availability.

What do you perceive to be the potential pitfalls of using international suppliers?

If you use international suppliers then you obviously have longer lead times, different payment terms and many other complexities to deal with. A lot of companies are being forced down the route of outsourcing or sourcing from the Far East, and they've often done it purely based on purchase price but failed to work out what the 'full cost to buy' is. 'Full cost to buy' means factoring in all of the ancillary costs the business will incur while dealing with a long distance supplier. This will cover increased working capital, increased obsolescence, quality issues causing delays, poor reactions to changes in demand, and so on. A lot of these costs are not built into the initial supplier agreement. What we're finding is that a lot of our clients are still happy to place base-load supply on longer lead times from companies in the Far East, but also dual-source with suppliers closer to home, often in low cost Eastern Europe countries, who can guarantee top-up volumes at short notice, if and when required. We're still amazed at how few companies have really done a proper 'full cost to buy' analysis.

Companies with very efficient and organised supply chains tend to have employees who are used to working in steady, controlled environments over long periods of time.

You indicated a potential talent issue within procurement earlier; what other supply chain talent gaps have you identified in the FMCG industry?

Companies that are transitioning from lean to more agile supply chain models require different styles of thinking and different personality traits. Companies with very efficient and organised supply chains tend to have employees who are used to working in steady, controlled environments over long periods of time. You can certainly ask those people to become more agile and reactive, to learn how to change plans quickly or shorten lead times, but it's a culture that, ultimately, the majority of them won't be used to. Another big challenge for FMCG is that all of the capability within the supply chain has traditionally been focused within manufacturing and production. That's where all of the really good people typically are, and often the rest of the supply chain, including vital points of customer contact like logistics, have been outsourced. Today, however, because the biggest margins are in emerging markets, businesses are faced with the challenge of moving all of the most capable people at the back end of the supply chain to the front, to focus on developing smarter distribution channels into underdeveloped regions. The companies that are able to do this effectively and capitalise on the opportunities in emerging markets are the ones that will be the ultimate winners.

Are companies in the sector not doing enough, then, to ensure the supply chain is primed to support emerging market growth?

No, they're not. Although many say it is a major part of their focus, the reality is that supply chain directors don't spend enough time thinking about distribution from the factory gate to the end customer. If you really wanted to challenge them you could ask 'Can you describe, with some acceptable level of accuracy, how many distributors with stock holding points there are between your factory and the end customer in the deepest, darkest part of China?' That's really how they need to think about it these days. It's interesting because we've spent the last ten years espousing the end to end supply chain, from the customer all the way back to the supplier. Nowadays the spotlight is shining brightly on the customer distribution channels within this whole end-to-end view, especially in emerging markets.

In your experience, which companies are the most innovative in this area and why?

The most innovative companies are direct sales businesses, who are leaps and bounds ahead, not necessarily in terms of having rigorous processes in place, but certainly in terms of creating innovative ways to deal with the complexity of mass product distribution and



getting to the end customer, with exceptional levels of service and quality. They are right at the extreme end of customer propositions, where they have very limited comparable demand history, crude forecasts, sales periods in weeks not months or years, long lead-times, very rapid NPD and yet are still required to deliver 99.8% item fill rates. That has driven them to conceive very clever ways of servicing the customer and interacting with them, giving them the latest information on what products are available, understanding what it is they are likely to want in a few weeks' time; planning the whole business on a day-by-day, hour-by-hour basis. It's the fact they are actively managing a consumer relationship, rather than selling through a retailer, for example, which has driven these companies to be so good.

Would you agree that FMCG supply chain leaders should take on greater responsibility today, which goes above and beyond their discipline?

The supply chain should cover manufacturing, planning, distribution and procurement. This is not new thinking and successful companies have embraced this, whereby the Supply Chain Director essentially becomes a COO, with control over the entire supply side of the business. Where we have seen a push back in recent times is where supply chain leaders lose control of the inventory in markets to market General Managers, which is a lost opportunity because you end up with inefficiency in the business that doesn't need to be there.

Most FMCG businesses, however, are generally product driven, where the focus is on marketing and brand creation and, as a result, they typically have inefficient supply chains. The fulfilment side is often just taken for granted.

What would you like to see Crimson achieve over the next ten years?

We want to be recognised as the best strategy and performance improvement consultancy in the world - the 'McKinsey of supply chain' - and to carry on doing work that we enjoy, for businesses that want to change for the better. We're currently looking at globalisation options and increasing our delivery presence on the ground in emerging markets. We've typically grown through delivering what the client wants, to a high standard, and I expect that to continue. We don't, however, do a lot of advertising. We are known by a select group of companies that covet our services and we essentially move from referral to referral. So, we'd like to improve our brand recognition. Our client list is already impressive though and includes BAT, Diageo, Carlsberg, Tata Global Beverages, GSK and the NHS, to name a few big brands.

What plans do you have to mark your tenth anniversary?

We're walking up Snowdon as a company, next month. We have all of our usual networking events, and we'll be making them as big and as flamboyant as possible. We're also going to be working!

Search without boundaries

Oliver Reed
Associate Director
oliver.reed@nigelwright.com



Nigel Wright delivers search assignments on a global scale. These assignments are typically for large, multinational consumer companies and involve the identification and selection of senior 'international' talent for key, strategic roles.

Companies with multinational operations, particularly in emerging markets, are realigning their hiring strategies to take advantage of the evolving global employment market. The era of the short term expatriate solution for establishing and stabilising an international office is disappearing. Expatriates are staying in overseas markets longer than they used to; incentivised by a positive economic outlook, career development opportunities, greater autonomy and higher salaries.

of services including individual search mandates, ongoing service agreements, talent pool creation and talent mapping. These services stretch across emerging markets as well as mature 'western' markets. Often an assignment will involve deploying one senior consultant to liaise at the executive level of the client, and coordinate the project on a multiple region basis, with Nigel Wright's teams.

Working exclusively with consumer companies - typically blue chip but also Private Equity backed, growing businesses - Nigel Wright Executive Search's main focus is General Management, Commercial and Operations (Supply Chain & Manufacturing) roles at the local, regional and group level. Specific discipline specialists exist in all of Nigel Wright's offices and again, these 'experts' share market knowledge with each other as and when it is pertinent for a particular search assignment. As Reed noted, "We have built up a vast amount of internal knowledge of our specialist sector and disciplines, which continues to grow as we embark on new projects in new territories."

The best talent could exist anywhere in today's global economy and as a search firm, having the flexibility and capability to find it is what ultimately makes you stand out in the market.

Businesses also want a different breed of talent today. Experienced, but also highly mobile, multi-lingual and with an intrinsic understanding of the new 'global' economic landscape. And it's not just expatriates they seek to hire; recruiting and nurturing local talent is considered vitally important, as is attracting highly educated, skilled and 'multinational' native talent back home. Regional, non-native managers are also coveted, as companies seek to build regional knowledge but also diversity into their executive teams.

According to Oliver Reed, Associate Director and Head of Nigel Wright's Executive Search practice in the UK, "The best talent could exist anywhere in today's global economy and as a search firm, having the flexibility and capability to find it is what ultimately makes you stand out in the market." Nigel Wright Executive Search, the search arm of Nigel Wright Recruitment has a proven track record, with over 20 years' experience working alongside the world's biggest consumer brands, helping them to build their capability in domestic and overseas markets.

With an established and integrated network of executive professionals and research teams, fluent in 25 languages, Nigel Wright believes it has a unique offering to today's market. It has no country restrictions and it offers clients a truly global approach to search, by utilising its teams across its network of offices who work together to get the best results. The executive search teams also offer a wide variety

Nigel Wright is truly international; however the business takes pride in being effective at the local level, within the countries and regions in which it operates. For Nigel Wright's candidates this means they have the benefit of what Reed calls the 'no silos' approach; once a candidate is identified and registered on the database "they can be immediately represented in any of our markets across Europe and beyond". This kind of seamless operating model isn't prevalent among multinational executive search firms. The results are excellent too. Search firms always enjoy telling their most heroic stories and some of Nigel Wright's most recent achievements really showcase the company's talents. For example, a Belgian craft beer manufacturer seeking a USA Country Manager was delighted to hire an experienced, British-American beverage industry professional, living in Brussels, seeking to return to North America. "Because we're well networked within that sector and the fact that we took advantage of our holistic knowledge and expertise, within two weeks our consultant had a strong long list of candidates from which to begin the interview process."

This year Nigel Wright's clients have retained the business to relocate the world's best talent in the USA, Africa, India, China, Australia, Brazil and Japan. Headhunting outside of Europe always requires exceptional market intelligence and Nigel Wright has consistently shown an ability to quickly understand territories and establish relevant networks to get results for its clients. Its team of international consultants and researchers has also been able to seamlessly conduct business in remote places and has faced cultural, linguistic, political and logistical challenges; yet still retained excellent standards of customer service.

According to Reed "Having the capacity to effectively source talent either 'on the ground' or bring in the best talent from the around the world is essential to support our clients' growth, anywhere in the world."

Anders Karlborg

President Customer Order & Logistics,
Supply Chain - Huawei

Huawei is a \$35 billion company, with 150,000 employees worldwide. In 2012 the business, which is headquartered in Guangdong province in South China, overtook Ericsson as the number one telecommunications equipment maker in the world. Today, 70% percent of its revenue comes from overseas markets; namely Europe, Asia, South America and Africa.

Huawei has ambitions plans for further international growth following the launch of its Enterprise Business in 2011, which it hopes will achieve \$15 billion sales by 2016. Its consumer business is also growing rapidly, selling 120 million electronic devices globally, including 30 million cell phones, in 2010. Despite this phenomenal rise to dominance in the global ICT sector, very little is known about this Chinese 'collective' which is still ran by founder Ren Zhengfei, who established the business in 1988. Nigel Wright caught up with Anders Karlborg, President Customer Order & Logistics, Supply Chain to talk about supply chain transformation and the role his team is playing in Huawei's enduring success.

What is your responsibility regarding the supply chain? What are the main challenges driving supply chain projects at Huawei?

I'm in charge of the global supply chain at Huawei. This includes global order and logistics and global supply network management. We currently have five supply facilities worldwide; in China, India, Hungary, Mexico and Brazil. We also have a further 1000 regional supply chain people operating across sixteen markets. The main challenge my team face at Huawei is cultural adoption; specifically, integrating the Huawei supply chain into international markets outside of China by creating a supply chain management system that is truly harmonized, in terms of language, KPIs etc, that can be rolled out worldwide.

What technology improvements is Huawei seeking to make to its supply chain in 2013?

We're installing a barcode system and establishing online ordering. First and foremost we are a B2B company and therefore it's difficult to create visibility in our supply chain, compared to other consumer focused technology businesses. These new systems will enable our customers to track the flow of orders and allow us to respond

Huawei is always ready to cooperate extensively with governments, customers and industry peers to address cyber security threats and challenges all over the world.

quickly to customer demand by giving our teams instant 'real-time' information, which they can act on.

Building robust and sustainable supplier relationships is very much at the heart for Huawei's growth. What has the business done to improve supplier management?

Remote supplier management isn't easy, specifically with regards to communication, quality control and urgent order fulfillment. We believe in taking advantage of the systems we now have at our disposal by getting our suppliers involved in our Integrated Product Development (IPD) and Design For Supply Chain (DFSC) processes early on. Also, as part of Huawei's supply chain management strategy, we have established five global sourcing centers that allow us to be close to our suppliers, R&D as well as Huawei HQ.

Huawei's ambition to create a truly customer-centric culture requires a significant investment in people development. From a supply chain perspective, what initiatives have you led in this area?



I've recruited suitable people from outside of the organisation and introduced individual development plans to guide our internal managers. I believe in giving people the necessary autonomy to just go for it and make a difference. I've also introduced a performance evaluation process across all levels, which has a focus on developing excellent customer satisfaction skills.

How does Huawei address skill shortages in its supply chain?

Basically, we seek English speaking people with excellent communication skills and a global perspective on doing business.

Huawei is now the world's largest telecoms equipment-maker, overtaking Ericsson in 2012. What is the next stage in the company's evolution?

We plan to grow market share within the consumer (i.e. mobile devices etc.) and enterprise sectors. We are also moving increasingly towards being a fully integrated E-commerce supply chain. By that I mean we aspire to be a truly internet based company, where all of our transactions take place online, in the same way that Amazon, Ebay etc. operate.

Building cost effective telecom and broadband networks in Africa has played a major role in Huawei's rise to dominance in the telecoms sector. What are the supply chain challenges of exporting into African countries?

A lack of transparency when dealing with Customs and Excise is one of the major issues in the African continent. Efficiency is another, specifically with regards to the ability of the transportation supply chain to deliver on time and poor warehouse management. Huawei is constantly reviewing these areas and seeking ways to establish

more robust supply chain nodes (e.g. manufacturing, transportation, warehousing) to meet the customer demand for fast and reliable supply of goods.

Huawei's global growth is scrutinised by western governments. What is the business doing to alleviate fears of its supposed links to Chinese espionage?

Huawei is always ready to cooperate extensively with governments, customers and industry peers to address cyber security threats and challenges all over the world. The business has always been open and transparent in its collaboration with all parties in addressing the global issue of cyber security, and works through a variety of platforms, organizations, and channels to do so. As a result of close cooperation in responding to security emergencies, leading global carriers have fully acknowledged Huawei's contributions in minimizing security risks to their existing networks.

As an experienced supply chain professional with many years experience in the field, what companies do you try to emulate in terms of supply chain best practice?

We have different targets to meet in different areas of our business, but generally speaking companies such as Ebay, Cisco, Amazon and Taobao Marketplace have excellent supply chain models.

What kind of leader are you? How do you get the most out of your teams?

I focus a lot of my attention on developing people and place a big emphasis on results, which I regularly review with my teams. I believe in leading by example and from experience I know this can have a positive impact on productivity.

A quick catch up with...

Tom Allchurch, CEO at Bigham's

Former Unilever and Amazon executive turned restaurant entrepreneur, Tom Allchurch, is now heading up premium ready meal brand Bigham's. We caught up with him to chat about his role and how Bigham's has grown its customer base to nearly one million, during his three year tenure.

You've been CEO at Bigham's now for over three years. Can you describe some of the businesses key achievements during that time and what role you and your team have played in ensuring success?

We've continuously improved our quality which has allowed us to double the size of the business. We have so many ideas on quality improvements, its almost never ending. We've also improved productivity and by continuing to do so, will allow us to invest more in marketing, grow sales and profits for our retail partners, and hopefully justify increases in distribution and range. We've also built a great team which we continue to develop and grow.

How is Bigham's seeking to keep manufacturing costs low amidst rising food prices and changing consumer habits?

Our job is to be as lean as possible, and if we are, that will offset food cost inflation. We listen very carefully to our consumers, and make sure that our dishes are the ones that they enjoy the most.

The food industry has taken some knocks this year, how do you see the sector evolving in light of the recent scandals? What impact would an increase in demand for fresh/chilled products have on Bigham's?

The message from 'horsegate' is that cheap food can mean corners are being cut. We are growing because consumers know that they can trust us to have long term relationships, with the right suppliers. We have been adding capacity steadily, and that will continue.

Bigham's has grown very quickly since you joined the business in 2010. What organisational challenges have you overcome so far and what further challenges do you anticipate facing as Bigham's gets bigger.

The only challenge is to make sure that we attract and recruit the very best and most passionate people possible. We are very clear

about where we are going and how we want to go there, and we all naturally want to be part of something special.

You were an entrepreneur yourself for many years, prior to the sale of Fresh Italy, and prior to that you enjoyed a fifteen year 'blue-chip' career with Unilever and then Amazon. What key learnings have helped you most today, in your role as CEO?

I've learned that it's important to do something that you are passionate about and that companies striving to improve every day to offer the best quality products and services, are the ones that succeed. It's important to take action to develop better products and services quickly, rather than spending your time managing processes. I hope by working at Amazon during the early stages and working for myself, I understand what Charlie feels and also, that I know how to help a company evolve through a period of rapid growth.

What attracted you to the opportunity at Bigham's? Why should other people consider joining the organisation?

Charlie is passionate about making the best food for people to enjoy, and we have a culture underpinned by a determination to improve every day. What we are doing here at Bigham's is something that lots of people identify with and want to be a part of. As our reputation grows and we get even better at what we do, we anticipate more people wanting to join our business.

What are the ambitions for Bigham's over the next 12 months?

We want to make more improvements to our quality and productivity, become better known by consumers, and sell more food for our retail partners. Our focus is on getting people to try Charlie Bigham's in store, because we believe once they have tried our products, they are very likely to become regular customers. We've got 700,000 people eating Bigham's now and hopefully we will reach the one million mark, very soon.

Tracking our service performance

Nigel Wright is committed to offering outstanding customer service across all of its markets and part of that is seeking regular feedback from customers so that we can continually improve our service.

Collecting valuable data helps us to refine our processes as well as develop training programs for our teams. This in turn gives us a strategic advantage in the marketplace by allowing us to review issues and then make immediate improvements, across all areas of our business.

In 2012 our International Consumer Business NetPromoter Score was 95%. That means that 95% of customers would recommend our services to others.

Each month we survey clients and candidates to find out how they perceive our services. As well as the NetPromoter score we also ask customers to rate different aspects of our service on a scale of 1-5 (five being excellent and 1 poor).

To the right is a table representing data from over 550 consumer client/candidate responses in 2012. An overall percentage has been calculated for each category.

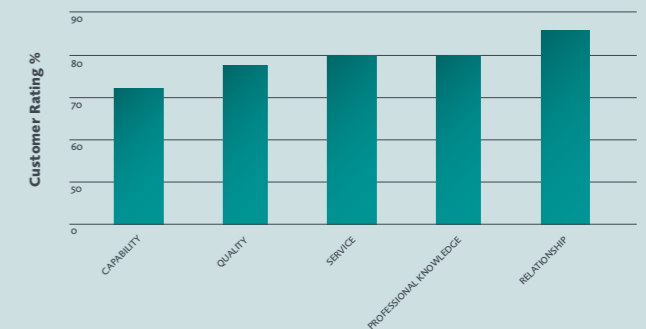
As you can see our relationship building, quality, service and professional knowledge are all rated between 75-100% (Very good to Excellent).

If we delve into the detail, the chart below outlines fourteen of the key factors central to the candidate engagement process. All categories are rated above 3 (Good) and over a third are rated 4 (Very Good) and above by consumer candidates served in 2012.

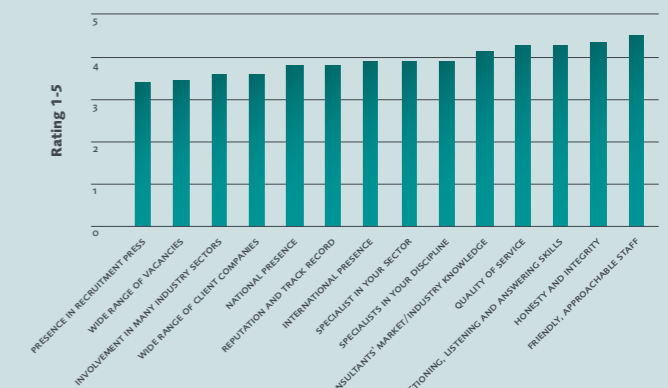
Similarly, clients are also content with the overall service they received. Out of twenty three customer service factors, none fall below a rating of three (Good). Some key areas central to our business ethos such as sector specialism, and professionalism and communication are all rated above 4 (Very Good).

In any aspect of performance measurement the objective is to analyse results and look for ways to improve scores. This is what we will endeavour to do throughout 2013.

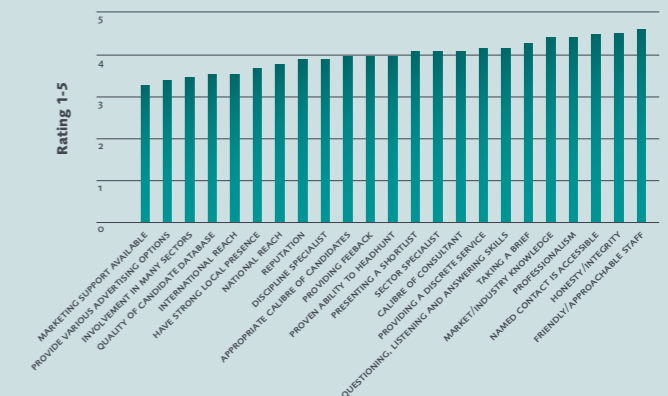
Customer Service Ratings 2012



Candidate Ratings 2012



Client Ratings 2012



Shikha Sethi joins Nigel Wright's Executive Search practice in London

Having spent over seven years in senior HR roles at a multinational blue chip company in Hindustan, Shikha Sethi certainly has a unique understanding of the global FMCG industry.

Her experience gained from working in the high growth Indian consumer market has equipped her with in-depth knowledge of Asian culture and emerging market dynamics and in joining Nigel Wright she hopes to use this knowledge, as well as her experience in senior level talent acquisition, to help develop opportunities in international markets outside of Europe.

Tell us a bit about your background?

I'm Indian but I grew up and went to school in Lagos, Nigeria. I then moved to Bombay in India to complete my graduate degree and then to Sydney in Australia, where I got my MBA. Following the completion of my MBA, I returned to India as a Management Trainee with The Coca Cola Company. I stayed with the business for over seven years before moving to London, where my husband is now based, to join Nigel Wright.

What attracted you to the opportunity at Nigel Wright?

I have extensive experience of talent acquisition from the client's perspective, so I was interested in the opportunity to work for an executive search firm and see things from the other side of the fence, so to speak. Nigel Wright also offered me an exciting proposition to develop the Asia Pacific market. I believe there is a tremendous opportunity to identify talented candidates that can have an impact in the emerging consumer markets in Asia.

How are you finding the transition to executive search, having previously fulfilled in-house talent acquisition roles?

The transition is very interesting and challenging. I do still have a tendency to put the 'HR manager hat' on, but I think that actually makes talking to candidates and clients easier. I am also in the unique situation of knowing how best to approach HR professionals, having been one myself.

What impact do you hope to have at Nigel Wright?

I want to build a sustainable business for Nigel Wright in the Asia Pacific region.

You've spent over seven years in Asia during what has been a period of aggressive growth in the region. What key trends will define the region over the next few years?

The increase in the number of large retailers will challenge consumer goods companies to improve overall category management. By using better point-of-sale merchandising as well as taking advantage of the science of consumer behaviour, companies will seek to influence consumers to engage more with products in-store, and ultimately boost sales. With more and more international brands now available to consumers, especially luxury items, home-grown companies will have to place a greater emphasis on local quality and workmanship, to enable them to compete with international players. Lastly, the demographic dividend will lose steam if businesses fail to work towards improving home grown skills; specifically in areas such as Key Account Management, Category Management and Commercial Excellence.

What are main challenges for consumer businesses seeking to building capability in the Asian region?

I believe the main challenge is the 'Jack of all trades, master of none' milieu that is so pervasive in today's Asian workforce. To explain; graduates want to leave University and go straight into managerial jobs without gaining the vital experience they need to be able to fulfil these types of jobs. The lack of young people 'getting their hands dirty' has meant there is a situation today in the Asian consumer industry where there are a lot of managers but not many functional experts. It's important to realise therefore, that both education and experience are equally important and compliment each other in the workplace.

From a talent perspective, what skills are most in demand in Asia?

In India as well as Vietnam, the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia and Cambodia, there is definitely a need to build commercial and supply chain capability. There are a number of large retailers and FMCG businesses operating in these markets today that need people who have experience managing the commercial and supply chain functions of big, complex organisations. Cold chain management, category management and Lean Six Sigma, for example, are skill areas that Asian companies really need, to become truly competitive players in the consumer sector.

Is Nigel Wright well placed to facilitate client growth in international markets outside of Europe? How?

There are a lot of consultants operating in the industry, but I believe we stand out due to the fact that we take the time to understand our

clients' culture and needs and act as brand ambassadors for them in the marketplace.

What's the business environment like in the Asia region compared to Europe?

Currently, Asia is experiencing high growth and in the main the business environment is buzzing. A lot of people are succeeding in their careers and there is a lot of positive energy in the region. At the same time however, rising commodity prices as well as Eurozone and US economic instability threatens to dampen the Asian spirit. Exports to the west have dropped and some people are beginning to feel the pinch.

Apart of the cultural aspect, what are the biggest challenges for US/European executives like relocating to Asia?

I don't think there are any significant challenges for executives. Life is certainly different compared to the west, but that just adds to the charm. As long as people learn to accept the cultural differences and

not challenge them, either professionally or otherwise, then they will be fine.

From a personal and professional perspective what have you liked/disliked the most about working in Asia?

I can't talk about Asia, as I have only lived and worked in India. Even though the work life balance is still a challenge, in India relationships at work tend to transcend the professional space. People often become friends socially and sometimes, even for life. I think that separates India from the rest of the world.

What's the best piece of advice you have received?

From my father: "You are running a marathon, not a race."

Outside of work, how do you relax?

I like to travel and meet new people. I love to read and I'm also a bit of a TV junkie!

Gender diverse boards essential ...says consumer sector

A report by Nigel Wright found that the overwhelming opinion held by senior executives working for major global consumer brands, is that gender diverse boards are a good thing for business.

The report, which is based on data collected from over one hundred senior executives and board level employees at some of the world's biggest consumer companies, also found that the sector is largely opposed to the prospect of imposed quotas from the EU.

Looming in the background for firms with European operations is the 'threat' (as many perceive it) of quotas for the recommended number of women that should make up a board. Currently Norway, Spain and France are the only EU countries that have a legal quota system. In the next few years, if more member states or companies do not voluntarily move to a more diverse board structure, the European Union will begin enforcing quotas. Only 8% of respondents to Nigel Wright's survey believed quotas were necessary to incite change.

Time might be running out, however, for consumer businesses to pre-empt this shift in policy. An alarming 79% of respondents indicated that gender diversity was not a top ten strategic agenda at their business. Despite this, the majority agreed that having more women on the board would lead to better decision making, greater awareness of and attention to managing risk, better understating of employees' needs and better understanding of business culture.

Although, across the sectors, the move towards an acceptance of the benefits of gender diverse boards has been incremental, it was the view of many respondents that Consumer businesses are perhaps

well placed to take a lead in promoting the benefits of gender diversity to other sectors:

"Many consumer businesses have female target audiences – even if the products themselves are used by men, women tend to be the purchasers. Consumer businesses have clearly recognised the benefit of having the internal insight of their purchasers on the boards." MD, Leading fashion brand.

The report also documents the alternative view, which is perhaps more prevalent outside of the consumer sector - that gender diversity is irrelevant. Proponents of this view argue that creating a team of 'well-rounded' individuals with the best skills, knowledge and experience should be the only important consideration when appointing a board. A discussion is also offered on why there are not currently more women on the boards of consumer companies.

The full report which includes a summary of other research conducted into this area and a suggested further reading list, can be downloaded from www.nigelwright.com/downloads



About Nigel Wright Executive Search

Nigel Wright Executive Search is a specialist search business that focuses on director and 'C-Level' placements. Our practices cover board and general management, commercial, operational and support functions.

www.nigelwright.com

Nigel Wright

Overview

For over two decades we have employed a robust, research led search process, to identify and secure talent around the globe for some of the world's leading companies.

We have a strong international network of senior contacts that can advise on projects across geographies or industries. Our clients benefit from a service that includes in-depth candidate assessment as well as invaluable market research that informs strategic decisions beyond the hiring process.

All of our search consultants have first hand industry experience and can quickly understand your needs and the solution you require.

The benefits

We are renowned as a premium, specialist executive search consultancy that has credibility in the marketplace and the ability to attract only the highest calibre individuals.

We see our involvement with your company as a strategic business alliance. We will work as an advisor to your business and help you to realise and assemble an exceptional leadership team.

Nigel Wright Executive Search can ensure that you maximise your return on investment by providing you with talented individuals who have the ability to strengthen your position in the market and help your company grow.

We employ consultants that intimately understand your industry as well as the leadership challenges you face. They will ensure that candidate's career motivations are aligned with your businesses values and ambitions.

Our unique approach

Each assignment is managed by a specialist consultant who is supported by a multilingual research team. We treat each project individually and tailor the solution to meet the needs of your business.

UNDERSTANDING

Before any assignment we will take the time to thoroughly understand your business culture, strategic outlook, financial status and operational challenges. We can then advise you with confidence, on the types of skills, qualifications and experience you should consider, in prospective candidates.

RESEARCH AND SOURCING

We believe that a research led approach will guarantee exceptional results. We have dedicated research teams (covering 25 languages) responsible for the EMEA, Asia-Pacific and Americas regions. By drawing on our comprehensive global network of consumer industry leaders, relevant industry bodies and venture capital houses, we ensure that we are kept fully informed of market movements and trends.

MARKET INTELLIGENCE

During the search process our team of consultants and researchers collect valuable market information that is presented to you in a report at the end of the assignment. This report includes feedback and opinions on the role and industry sector trends, competitor analysis and salary benchmarks.

TALENT MAPPING AND SUCCESSION PLANNING

Our expertise in the consumer sector across the world means that we can provide our clients with an in-depth analysis of how their organisational capabilities compare to others in the sector. We then use our extensive networks to help our clients plan for the future, by identifying the right talent internally and externally for their business.

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