

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.