
OPINION

The Power of Positive People

Philip Carrigan
Partner, Optia Partners
philip@optiapartners.com

Executive positions are rarely advertised in the media. Japan is a unique market in that companies come to Japan because it is the second largest market in the world but unlike in the US where companies and industries are spread throughout the US & EU, in Japan, you have every major company from all industries in one city, Tokyo, all competing for the same hard to find highly qualified bilingual Japanese candidates who are extremely risk averse especially when considering to change their jobs. The competition for talent here is intense. This is one of the unique features of the Japanese job market and makes networking all the more important. A pharma executive wanting to go to the next level must have a keen pair of eyes and ears and be always scanning in the market for opportunities.

A company's first option when hiring a new manager or director is normally searching within its own organization. If there is not an appropriate candidate the company will use its external network. These two methods are often limited. Thirdly, an agent is asked to present candidates from within their network or actively recruit from the market.

Many of the candidates we meet have excellent knowledge of their own companies and of the key opinion leaders in the industry. However, contacts diminish quickly outside of their immediate circle of influence.

Some of the most interesting career advancements come from unlikely meetings. I remember speaking to a candidate about a client he was reluctant to meet. However, he decided to attend the meeting and they clicked. They were a match in terms of personality and goals and my candidate has been working at this company for the past three years. He has

been recently promoted to director.

The mind is like a parachute. It only works when it is open. And open minds catch opportunities. The meeting of two business people who both have open minds and are willing to speak frankly and openly can lead to surprising results.

Some of the best and most interesting opportunities come from informal meetings. We know of many examples where candidates have met clients and one thing has led to another and the next thing you know a position has been created around the specific skills of the candidate. The candidate and client do not completely understand what the other has to offer until they meet.

The job market is not linear; it is not black and white. Business is a creative force giving birth to new markets, products, demand and new business in markets that did not previously exist. And driving all of this growth and change are people.

The people that we work with are one the most important aspects of our career. It is important to be part of a growing company with a strong pipeline of products. But where are these products aimed? People. The people we interact with and work with everyday give us much inspiration and joy. When we speak to candidates about the challenges at their companies, it is their fellow colleagues and superiors they mention. Colleagues, managers and directors had something to share. These people inspired them and made a difference to their careers.

We will only grow and change in our careers in five years from now because of the people we meet and the ideas we digest. If we look back on our own lives it is easy to see that the significant turning points are because of the people we have met.