

Plenty of Space in Shanghai

Talent&Pro is a young and flexible Operational Consultancy agency that focuses on banks and insurance companies. It is an agency that, apart from providing high-quality services towards clients, is strong regarding the personal development and career opportunities of its own employees as well. Those employed at Talent&Pro are offered a two-year contract, with a one-off extension to five years, during which they receive all the space to prepare and shape their plans for the future. Basically just like Marco Hoekstra did it. With many years' experience in banking and finance, he started out at Talent&Pro as operational manager in the Netherlands 7 years ago. Currently, with over 400 employees, Marco is focusing his attention on Talent&Pro China.

A born developer, Marco has great interest in fast economic development. After the Netherlands, Germany and the UK were conquered, it was the right moment to realize a new Talent&Pro branch in the Far East. "A place where the market is developing at top speed, where the hectic pace of the improving economy requires new strategies all the time, and where young, highly qualified individuals have a passion for internationalization..." Shanghai, China.

Research

"Quite an amount of research preceded the choice for Shanghai. From Singapore to Thailand, from Taiwan to India: we traveled all over Asia. At first glance it may seem more obvious to establish yourself in a country that has advanced a little more, economically. Still, there are also disadvantages in that. Maybe the market in those areas is more 'ready' for you as a company with a typical Western style, but that does not necessarily make it more fun. For example, if you arrive from Hong Kong in a relatively less developed place like Shanghai, you will see that over time you have become spoiled. To start out in the youngest economy was a more logical choice for us."

Switch

The branch in Shanghai became a fact as of October 2006, with Marco Hoekstra at the helm. He visibly feels at home there. "It's great to see the success we have. In the Netherlands almost all our employees end up with one of our clients holding a permanent contract, after their time at Talent&Pro, and then hire us in their client role for new challenges. Of course we are not that far advanced in Shanghai yet, but the first reactions are encouraging. In a market that is internationalizing this rapidly, we can switch between various cultures, which is invaluable. And that is what Talent&Pro offers. In China we only employ Chinese, all of whom have experience abroad. They are not only experts in insurance and banking issues, but, moreover, they are excellently capable of dealing with cultural differences."

Just a little different

To maintain highly qualified employees for your company can be difficult in China. How does that work at Talent&Pro? "We have not been active long enough to see how things will work out for us, but I think that our model bears its fruit in precisely this way. All orders that our employees receive are aimed at further development. Our organization structure is flat and

open. That is relatively new here in China. People from the 'lowest' level within the company are not used to being able to become friends with me, the manager. Despite the fact that personal connections are so important here to successfully do business. Therefore I try to do my best to loosen my employees from the purely business-like issues. Many Chinese are quite bewildered by that, but in my experience they quickly accept from a Westerner that things really can be done in a different way. Especially if you make an effort to deal with the local culture, instead of pressing your own demands at all costs. There is plenty of space for a social approach in this city of millions."

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