

TRENDS IN RECRUITMENT AND STAFFING

By Gary Woollacott

Nothing is easy in Thailand, an ex-boss once said to me, but everything is possible. Well, nearly everything: hiring motivated and self-starting staff without considerable pain seems to elude most of us. A common refrain is that employers simply can't get hold of the talent they seek – without paying over the odds (as they see it). Perhaps something is happening, almost imperceptibly slowly, that is changing the jobs market.

We've all read recently of the disappointing PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) results. That doesn't bode well: employers will have to choose (and recruit) carefully if they are going to secure the talent they need to take their businesses forward. But just as pressing is the demographic time bomb – that pin has already been pulled. Slowly at first, yes, but its ramifications will be felt keenly in the future and there's nothing, sadly, that can be done.

Put simply, there are going to be fewer candidates: the workforce of Thailand is shrinking. This means that employers (assuming they actually *want* to hire) are going to have to be more flexible – and patient – in the way they attract talent. Those who are serious about employing the best may need someone who fulfills the role of a Chief People Officer – halfway

between HR and marketing – to identify and attract them. This CPO will spread the message that their organisation is actually a great place to work – and in a sincere, open and credible manner, not with the arrogance that we see today from some MNCs.

A colleague, ST, also in the recruitment business, put it like this: remember how quality was all the rage twenty years ago? All employees were urged to think of ways that they could constantly improve quality. Well, recruitment is the new quality: all employees will be on the lookout for talented people as potential recruits. This is going to require a radical change of mindset for almost everyone – and it will have to be led from the top. It will be of no use if the CPO and/or HR tries to do it alone: it could turn to be another well-meaning initiative that peters out. The CEO must get involved, along with the CPO/HR, and set into motion a realistic recruitment program – preferably with some decent financial rewards to motivate people.

And in case you're worried about us, we won't go out of business. There will always be cases where the need is senior or specialised or confidential so that the client wants a headhunter to handle it or, lower down, where many workers are wanted and only a mass recruiter will be able to handle it. So, for us, there is a silver lining in this looming dark cloud.