



HEADWAY

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM AHEAD
PART OF THE EUROPEAN EXECUTIVE SEARCH NETWORK



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► THINKING AHEAD

82% favour bringing future top management in at sub-top level.



AHEAD's September 2009 survey provided a useful market snapshot with 56% reporting that economic recovery was already underway. That's in line with latest findings by the Chicago Booth Business School (p4). Six months later, and with recession officially behind us, we now see a game of two halves.

'Encouragingly, some companies are already focussing on growth and are hiring systematically again,' explains AHEAD's Managing Partner Guy Vereecke. 'But others still face challenging times and remain in a slippery situation with further job losses possible.'

So how are HEADWAY readers coping on the talent front? In our latest Spring survey¹, over 60% confessed that they had lost good people with potential in the past year. Moreover over 90% recognise that to fuel their company's future growth they will need to hire externally new talent with potential to climb the corporate ladder.

Meanwhile, some industry observers predict significant turnover at the top of companies in the year ahead, following a period of risk and aversion to change. That said, 82% of CEOs and HR managers in our survey favoured bringing future top management into their company at *sub-top* level to acclimatise. Respondents highlighted a wide variety of sought-after personal attributes for those with potential for top positions, notably *personal integrity*, *passion* and great *people skills*.

Although most (86%) agreed that succession plans should always be integrated with competency frameworks, many confirmed that over-reliance on competency frameworks can sometimes be limiting or too rigid. The majority recognises that succession planning is not only about organisational needs, but should balance the needs and aspirations of individuals too.

According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development 'today there is no one model for succession planning and there are no hard-and-fast rules.' This was reflected in the breadth of readers' recommendations simplified in the words of one CEO, 'understand where the organisation is heading, and know your people'.

► INSIDE INTUITION¹

“The effective manager does not have the luxury of being able to choose between ‘analytical’ and ‘intuitive’ approaches to problems.”²

Intuition is a phenomenon that spans languages, cultures, continents and history. Everyone has it, for it is impossible for us to function effectively without using ‘gut feeling’. But to what extent is intuition relevant in the world of business today? When senior managers in the US were asked in a survey how often they used intuition in making decisions 12 % said *always*, 47% said *often*, 30% said *sometimes* and the remaining small minority (one in ten) said they *seldom* or *rarely* used it.³

Indeed one could argue that in modern organizations fast, decisive, intuitive decision-making is not only necessary, but it is often seen as an absolute requirement of effective entrepreneurial and transformational leadership.⁴ An entrepreneur needs to have at his or her disposal the *creative intuition* with which to develop new ideas, the intuitive alertness and contextual awareness with which to recognize opportunities, select feasible ideas and reject non-feasible ones, and the foresight and intuitive vision to be able to see beyond the present. According to Sadler-Smith, intuition is more likely to be used in people-oriented decisions, quick decisions, unexpected decisions, uncertain or novel situations, and situations where there is a lack of explicit clues.⁵

Thomas Edison is one of the most successful inventors of all time, with over one thousand patents to his name. His approach to creativity was deliberate, managed and strategic. Edison’s lessons in enlightened creativity include:

► **Set idea quotas:** for himself Edison set the quota at one minor invention every ten days and a major one every six months. He also set idea targets for his workers.

► **Challenge assumptions:** the story goes that before hiring research assistants Edison would take the applicant out to lunch and if they seasoned their soup before tasting it they didn’t get the job because, in Edison’s view they had an assumption that the soup needed seasoning which they did not bother to challenge (i.e. by tasting the soup first).

► **Learn from mistakes:** instead of regarding failures as failures, to discover something that did work, Edison regarded failures more positively – as discoveries of things that didn’t work.

► **Capture ideas:** Edison was an obsessive note-taker and recorder, so much so that in the Edison Archive there are around 3500 note books which he actively used as his *paper-based memory*.⁶

1. Sadler-Smith, Eugene, Inside Intuition, Routledge, 2008, 352 p2

2. Herbert Simon, scholar, researcher and Noble prize-winner, in Sadler-Smith, Eugene, Inside Intuition, p. 270

3. Burke, L. A. and Miller, M. K., Taking the mystery out of intuitive decision-making, Academy of Management Executive, 1999, 13(4): 91 -99 in: Sadler-Smith, Eugene, Inside Intuition, p. 3

4. Sadler-Smith, Eugene, Inside Intuition, p. 13

5. Sadler-Smith, Eugene, Inside Intuition, p. 269

6. Sadler-Smith, Eugene, Inside Intuition, p. 76-77

► BIG BRAND RECRUITERS COMPARE NOTES

How has the crisis affected recruitment among FMCG heavyweights? What sort of profiles are they after? And what is young talent looking for in an employer today? ...



These were just some of the questions posed to sector experts at a recent METRO roundtable including Pierre Leman, HR Account Manager at Henkel, Gaëlle Helsmoortel, Recruitment Director from L’Oréal Belgilux, Roel Lambrichts, responsible for Talent Acquisition Europe at Coca-Cola, and Nicolas Goffaux, who leads AHEAD’s consumer practice.

According to Roel Lambrichts, of course it’s an advantage to have a worldwide brand like Coca-Cola. But paradoxically, few people really know them as an *employer*. Surprisingly, some candidates assume that the brand is too big and important for them, and that they only hire the *crème de la crème*. They may assume that they have no chance of a job there, so don’t even apply.

Meanwhile people think of L’Oréal as a *glamorous* brand, but it still needs people in non-glamorous roles like engineers and pharmacists. Gaëlle Helsmoortel explains that L’Oréal has a very entrepreneurial culture that believes in talent and tries to hire people with the most potential. That’s why they don’t have formal job descriptions which can be limiting – instead, they favour job *guidelines with some key words encouraging a creative and entrepreneurial approach*.

‘We are often in the role of ambassador for our clients, and I note that the candidates we welcome ask a lot of questions about company culture. So we really need to know that well.’ explains AHEAD’s Nicolas Goffaux. ‘Candidates discuss a lot amongst themselves and relate their experiences, both positive and negative,’ says Nicolas. ‘The perception they have can prove vital in their decision making.’

At Henkel the link between their company name and their products is not obvious, so recruiters need to work at that. Interestingly they also use social network sites like Facebook or Twitter to interface with ‘generation Y’ candidates. HR has needed to adapt and be inventive.

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‘If you torture data enough, they will confess!’

► INTRODUCING CAROLINE DERUYTTER HEADWAY FINDS OUT WHAT MAKES HER TICK...

With a Masters in Commercial Sciences from VLEKHO and an early career with DHL and UPS, Caroline comes with useful experience in executive search in Belgium, Spain, France and the Netherlands. Now she joins AHEAD after 5 years as a coach in management competencies at HUB.

'Now that I'm back in search, it's really rewarding to hear former companies and candidates still feel very satisfied with the way I helped them. There is plenty that I enjoy about this profession and now after 5 years experience as a coach, I have an even more solid platform for success in this role. As my background has been in services with a focus upon the industrial sector, I would say that my most immediate added value is within this category.'

So how does the reality at AHEAD match your preconceptions of the firm?

'For several years AHEAD had been on my radar, as a seemingly mature team with a very professional approach. Indeed people at AHEAD tend to think and act as if they are an extension of their clients' team. That's probably what sets them apart from most other search firms. And now that I'm on the 'inside' these preconceptions have been confirmed. Everybody at AHEAD seems to be focussed into the same direction allowing true success as a team.'



'After riding the recession with no losses within the team, AHEAD starts 2010 with the appointment of an additional consultant in Brussels. We are delighted to welcome Caroline Deruytter to the firm.'

Guy Vereecke, Managing Partner

And out of hours, how do you get your kicks, Caroline?

'With a lively family too, my spare time is quite limited. However, one pastime that gives me real pleasure is running. In 2006, I was so overwhelmed by the atmosphere when my husband crossed the finishing line of his first marathon in Berlin, that I wanted a piece of the action too! So in 2008 I managed to complete the New York Marathon, Berlin in September 2009 and am currently preparing for London in April 2010. It's a fantastic way to experience major cities...and the stamina that running builds certainly equips me to go the distance on demanding search assignments!'



► ESCAPING THE LABYRINTH

AHEAD candidate Marie-Ange Levan is a Financial Data Mining Analyst with Delhaize, previously with Danone, Accenture and Euroclear.



'You cannot work with data without a degree of intuitive understanding. You've got to understand the business and use your 'good sense' of intuition and curiosity, then you add the data. And you can be sure that something will come out of it. Data Mining is exactly that. 'If you

torture data enough, they will confess!'

After graduation I went into consulting because I wanted a variety of projects, and the reality is that I learned to learn, but for me, I could not dig deep enough. Yet in my job now I am really immersed in the day to day life of the company from the inside. It's that reality of life that gives data its true meaning.

Before joining Delhaize, I didn't know what name to put to the function I was looking for but this job was absolutely right for me. 7 months later the time has gone really quickly, which is a very good sign. The job content is great. Every

day I play a new game. Each project is a puzzle – how to get out of the labyrinth. You know there is a way but you don't know how, nor how many steps it will take nor who you will meet en route. Logically with common sense you solve the puzzle. It takes patience, is very challenging and fun.

When I met Nicolas Goffaux, I already had a good feeling about this job, but he really listened to my needs. He was very transparent with me and gave timely feedback. Maybe it's because of AHEAD's structure, but the process was very streamlined and personal. It seemed like just Nicolas, Delhaize and me. That's a good thing in my books.

Looking ahead, I want to keep learning every day a new piece of the puzzle. So in 5 years time I guess I'll be a real expert in data mining and enjoy teaching and enthusing others too. All my experiences along the way have helped me on this path. So if you are not where you want to be yet, don't give up. Optimise the things you like and things you like will become your reality.'

► CHICAGO BUSINESS FORECAST FROM BELGIUM AND ABROAD



U shaped economic growth is predicted in the year ahead, even if political mistrust continues to rise. So says Professor Hurst of the University of Chicago in their annual business forecast¹. 'The economy starts to get better when consumers start spending a little more, businesses start spending more, and they stop hoarding cash.' Due to the actions taken by the Fed, 'we are in the Great Recession rather than the Great Depression,' adds Randall Kroszner, recent Federal Reserve Governor.

Meanwhile in Brussels, Chicago alumni and guests gathered in February for the annual business forecast dinner at the Stock Exchange – sponsored again by AHEAD. Alumni president Kris Vansanten set the scene with results of their annual survey predicting that real recovery in Belgium will not take place until 2011; that inflation will rise, and interest rates stay flat. Key concerns however are unemployment, social unrest and a reduction in private wealth. 'Recovery starts on a mountain of trouble,' he notes. Yet, an encouraging 50% of their respondents anticipate that their company will grow in 2010.

Howard Gutman, US Ambassador to Belgium, then stressed the importance of positive thinking and actions 'Tomorrow will be better... If you hire tomorrow more than today, you are already happily rebuilding'. Admittedly, some industries like automotive have been in crisis for a very long time so

their collapse is not sudden. The secret now is to rebuild industries we are meant to have and choose a direction for the better. For example 'we were not supposed to build hummers for private use.' Meanwhile politicians are taking positive action too, like Kris Peeters' promotional visit to Silicon Valley; also companies such as Microsoft are exemplary in building their innovation centre (MIC) in Mons.

Luc Bertrand, Chairman and CEO of Ackermans and Van Haaren advocated exports especially in emerging markets like Indonesia and Brazil. 'Go where the growth is,' he advises. Moving to a world with much scarcity of resources, we should invest in green energy, renewable energy and infrastructure.

Hot foot from London, Jan Loeys of JP Morgan pointed out that generally the deeper the recession, the better the growth. He compares the current situation with a patient following surgery. Post-operatively, the patient needs vitamins and good nutrition. Once they are stable and out of danger, then the advice to diet will follow.

In summary, there was general consensus that the financial crisis is behind us. Now is the time 'to spend money and hire people'. Once the situation is properly stable, corrective measures can then be taken. Exports will be the engine of growth again, but governments should continue to support the economy.

Now is the time 'to spend money and hire people'.

1. Chicago Booth Magazine Winter 2010, p 31-37

AHEAD is a leading search firm specialising in high achievers. Headquartered in Brussels, we were formerly YESS International Brussels, created in 1990 by Egon Zehnder International. Today AHEAD forms part of the extensive EESN network covering Europe and beyond.

AHEAD's primary expertise is in search of high achievers for demanding positions in most sectors and specialisms in Belgium and internationally. Among clients, we have a reputation for succeeding when other methods fail; and among candidates, for exemplary conduct towards them.

AHEAD also helps clients with well targeted advertising plus related HR consultancy and assessment solutions (such as management audit, succession planning, ad hoc projects including diversity or tailored market research initiatives).

To receive more information, please do not hesitate to contact us via T. +32 (0) 2 223 23 90, brussels@ahead.be or consult www.ahead.be. It would be a pleasure to hear from you.



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