

Lola Trapsh, Country Manager for Belarus gave a long and earnest interview, Kyky.org

Minsk, Belarus – Lola Trapsh, Country Manager for Belarus gave a long and earnest interview to Kyky.org, a Belorussian online magazine with unconventional opinions on business and hot topics covering Minsk and Belarus.



KYKY: What is the difference between head-hunting and hiring a staff member?

Lola Trapsh: The search for a regular staff member starts with a company posting a job vacancy with an attractive job description, in order to reach the candidates that fit the criteria and are currently looking for a job. Our approach to searching for top managers is different. We do not hang out a bait in the hope of someone swallowing it, instead, we use market knowledge and understanding of the goals and organisational culture of our client in order to target the people with the

necessary qualifications and experience. As a matter of fact, we do not search for job-seekers, rather the aim is to find those who can cope with the challenges our client is facing. Many candidates are afraid of change, but sometimes you can and should awaken their ambitions.

Most of the managers we work with are people who do not have time to consider an alternative job, or are doing well at their current work place. When we approach them with our proposal, they usually examine it very closely and weigh thoroughly all cons and pros.

KYKY: When you offer a person a position, does it automatically mean the he/she has the job?

Lola Trapsh: Not at all. Depending on a position, when we begin the market search, we end up with a list of around 200 candidates, whom we want to interview. Subsequently, we use objective filters to narrow the list down.

The first filter is English proficiency. It saves us from unnecessary amount of work at the initial stage, since here, in Belarus, we immediately lose more than 50% of candidates. On the other hand, this limits our target market, and we proceed to look for candidates in other sectors.

The second filter is work experience in a foreign company. For the international companies this is important and additionally implies a set of requirements, such as: planning and rigorous budgeting experience. Then, we look at the specific requirements of the client, e.g., five years of management experience. In some cases, candidates must have business education - for example, an MBA.

The third filter, which cuts out another 15% or so of candidates is whether a person is interested in a particular job opportunity. Some candidates might turn out to be owners/ partners/ co-founders of a business, others are expecting promotion or becoming a shareholder, in this case, they are ready to sit on the fence and wait.

All these filters help significantly shorten our list and, as a result, we will provide the client up to five final candidates. The final decision on which candidate to hire is taken only by the client.

KYKY: What about the international candidates - are they willing to move and work in Belarus? What attracts them here?

Lola Trapsh: Yes, actually recently, foreigners are looking for opportunities to come here. Our market does not produce sufficient number of experts due to the fact that there are very few successful companies with long-standing history here, and very few managers have work experience in such successful systems. At the same time foreigners can offer such international experience and knowledge. After all, if the wheel is already invented, why reinvent it? A good example here in Belarus is the retail sector. Companies, that attracted foreign managers see almost immediate positive effect. In more mature markets, however, it would take them three or more years and much larger budgets to achieve similar results. Thus, managers like our developing market, where their experience is in demand and the status is high.

KYKY: How long should a top manager work in one place to remain effective? The common belief is that top management should change, otherwise the company will suffer.

Lola Trapsh: "Should" is an overstatement. However, just like there is an "actor of one role", so in business one can become a hostage of a company. At some point, his genetic code is so adjusted to the company that he will not be able to work effectively anywhere else. Why change anything if he and the company are doing fine? We need to weigh the risks well and understand whether a manager will want to change anything after working for 45 years in one place. What if in the course of his tenure a company was experiencing growth, merging with other businesses and overcoming crisis successfully? It has already been a dynamic experience. The main question is whether they just spent their time or were actually effective?

KYKY: Many complain that women still earn less, and few are promoted to top positions. Is it true?

Lola Trapsh: It is not true. Maybe women earn less, but they put these restrictions themselves. In my experience I have not seen true gender inequality. If a company really wants to hire a professional, they will pay what she asked. The only problem is that men are asking for more than women.

For the past five years, European companies are aligning up to 50% of women on the boards of directors. This is a matter of balance, not even gender. It's just that men and women have different approaches to solving issues. On the one hand, women are multitasking, and can dive deep into details. On the other hand, men are single-tasked and prefer strategy. Roughly speaking, a man is interested in making a big deal, and a woman can make ten small ones with the same result. These are different approaches - and when these people meet on the boards of directors, the system works better.

This year in our market there were many programs for the development of women's leadership and entrepreneurship. I have an ambivalent attitude to this. On the one hand, it's wonderful that there is so much effort aimed at this. On the other hand, we say that there is no inequality, but for some reason, we single women out and train them intensively, emphasising that they still have a lot to learn. It seems to me that nothing highlights the differences more than a separate approach in anything.

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Lola Trapsh is the Country Manager for Belarus at [Pedersen & Partners](#). Before joining the firm in 2010, Ms. Trapsh was the Director of another Executive Search firm in Belarus, and had built a strong career in the HR Management and Executive Search functions at various senior level positions.

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