



RSM FOCUS

Welcome to issue 6 of RSM Focus – RSM Thailand's Newsletter covering various issues that face expatriate corporate and personal investors seeking to do business in Thailand

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The perfect candidate with the perfect resume – really?

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Introduction

Welcome to the sixth edition of RSM Focus. This edition features a topical article on searching for the perfect candidate with the perfect resume.

The perfect candidate with the perfect resume – really?

The war for talent, the shortage of qualified staff, the poor education system, the poor level of training, the low level of English fluency and of course the lack of initiative from candidates are constant 'complaints' from multinational and International companies in Thailand. Indeed companies all over the world even with high unemployment rates regularly complain that they cannot find qualified candidates to fill their vacancies. With the unemployment rate in Thailand running at 0.8% of the population it is surely not surprising that finding staff is going to be difficult but is it possible that companies are spending far too much time on trying to find the 'perfect' candidate when selecting a 'good' candidate may actually give the company a better result in the long run?

The search for the perfect candidate often starts with a search for the perfect resume..... But a quick search on the internet for the 'perfect resume' brings up literally thousands of sites all claiming to provide readers with the template for a perfect resume. The problem is, of course, that no two sites offer exactly the same advice. Job seekers regularly ask RSM to review their resumes and are often surprised when we advise "yours looks fine", they seem almost disappointed that we haven't found some small change or other that will result in them securing the ultimate job. Despite what a lot of recruiters/HR staff may say, it is only the really bad resumes that actually stand out, (ones that are far too long, ones with many spelling mistakes, poorly formatted ones etc.), and these invariably get 'binned'. Recruiters will in most cases at least have a quick glance at an individual's qualifications and recent experience. Whilst resumes can tell you a lot about a job seeker, they don't tell the whole story specifically around the candidate's soft skills and potential fit within an organisation.

Resumes really don't come with explanations. For example, changing jobs frequently or 'job hopping' as it is often referred to, usually puts off potential employers, many of whom won't even shortlist a candidate who they perceive is not likely to commit to their company for a significant length of time. But there are sometimes extenuating circumstances associated with a number of short term job assignments that the job seeker often won't talk about unless 'in confidence' at an interview. A candidate that has changed industries regularly is often overlooked, but gaining experience from many industries or business sectors can often prove highly valuable. Key lessons to be learned here are that employers should be wary of rejecting resumes based on first impressions, if a recruiter, who has interviewed a candidate, puts them forward there is usually a good reason. Employers should also be aware that presenting 'soft skills' on paper is extremely difficult. People skills are very often essential to successfully carrying out a job and they are much harder to learn whereas technical skills can be taught and refreshed more easily. This means human instinct in the hiring process is extremely important and preparing the right questions for the interview are so vital.

If we assume there is no such thing as the perfect resume then it is only fair to assume there is no such thing as the perfect candidate and it is our observation that too many clients are trying too hard to find the perfect candidate. A search of the internet uncovered a very interesting article by Kelly Studer, (LinkedIn August 2104), where she proposes the concept of a 70% principle for the perfect hiring fit and her advice applies to both hiring managers and job seekers. She argues that very often during the hiring process several candidates get rejected because they only meet 60 – 70% of the listed job requirements despite possessing clear talent and potential. Furthermore, the 'dream' candidate often appears during the process and confidently takes the job and performs extremely well for the first six months. The problem then arises that because the individual was so well qualified for the job that he/she becomes bored and begins to lose motivation. This naturally leads to demands for more challenges which the firm might not be able to meet but either way it ultimately is likely to end up with a job vacancy being open again as the candidate will either be promoted or leave for a new challenge.

Studer states that the mistake starts with the hiring manager favouring the most qualified candidate in order to avoid having to train and mentor them. She therefore suggests that hiring managers consider a new strategy as follows:

- Hire someone who is only 70% qualified. In other words look for candidates who can grow into a role by identifying the difference between what they can learn versus innate talents. Find out what really makes the candidate tick and also look at what gaps currently exist in your team and for someone who can fill those gaps. Don't try and hire someone who is just like you.
- Look for potential, not a perfect fit. Distinguish between "must haves" and "nice to haves". Relay these to your in house recruiter or Recruitment Company and ask them to find candidates who have passion and eagerness to take on new challenges. It is nice to have a candidate who can convince you they can do the role but you really want one that can tell you what impact they will make, how they would approach the role and what weaknesses they have.
- Trust your instincts. Put simply, you can use your head too much in making a hiring decision. Tap into what your intuition is telling you. Does the candidate inspire confidence in you that they can step into the role and be successful. Your intuition can be your best guide.

A similar approach can be adopted by job seekers when they are looking for their next job. When looking for a new role, guard against applying for ones you know you can handle easily.

- Be only 70% qualified for the next job you apply for. The 30% of responsibilities for which you are not qualified should be ones that stretch you, excite you and allow you to tap into strengths you have a natural aptitude for.
- Be clear about where you plan to take your career next. Outline what you want to be hired for in the summary section at the top of your resume. Write in the first person detailing why the hiring manager should want to hire you – the statement should make you feel a little nervous but you should be able to back up your confidence. Put simply, dare to stand out and create a memorable, confident impression.
- Emphasize your talents as much as your skills. Fundamentally this refers to your natural gifts and how you must highlight them in your resume and of course remove those that you feel you are not particularly good at. If you find you are being approached for jobs you don't really want it is probably because you are selling the wrong attributes on your profile.

There is clearly a risk of recruiters endorsing the '70%' approach outlined above as it may sound like they are proposing that their clients effectively accept second best when it comes to candidates for a particular role. However, if one accepts the premise that there is never a perfect candidate or perfectly matching resume for a job then to a certain extent hiring managers always have to dilute their expectations somewhat when making a hire. The 70% figure is arbitrary in a way, surely the point is that in many cases, the closer the candidate you hire is a match for a role, the sooner they are likely to want greater challenges that the company or role cannot deliver. If a slightly less well matched candidate is hired for a role, with the right support and guidance, they are likely to remain in your company for a longer period of time and will probably be more committed and more productive overall to the operation.

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