

Companies Not Recruiting In Large Numbers, But More In America Are Fine-Tuning Management Teams To Accelerate Growth

Executive Search Leader Sees Escalating Focus On Talent Despite Slow Pace Of New Hiring

By Bernard Vanderlande, [IRC Global Executive Search Partners USA](#) - Atlanta



U.S. employers may not be hiring in large numbers this year, but many are quietly recalibrating their leadership teams to ensure they have the right talent to propel business growth far into the future.

“We see more global companies investing for longer-term business growth by selectively fine-tuning their management teams now,” says Bernard Vanderlande, an Atlanta-based global practice leader for IRC Global Executive Search Partners.

“An increasing number of U.S. business decision-makers are assessing whether their current teams can deliver on strategic goals,” Vanderlande shares. “Business leaders are focused more now on the question of, ‘Can we really get to where we need to go as a company with the leaders we already have on board?’”

To answer that question, Vanderlande notes, growth-minded companies are beginning to innovate their approaches to management performance assessment and human capital contribution to the bottom line.

Specifically, they’re making three investments to determine whether they have the talent that aligns with strategic objectives or whether they can invest in management executives to give them the tools, insights and confidence to compete more effectively in a rapidly changing global economy. These are:

Top Areas of U.S. Corporate Investment In Management Talent

1. Competitive Leadership Benchmarking
2. Continuing Management Education and New Skills Development
3. Institutional Knowledge Mapping and Transfer

Source: IRC Global Executive Search Partners – www.IRCsearchpartners.com

“We believe more companies are engaging in competitive management benchmarking, creating talent and leadership performance analytics, and investing in continuing education and retention to create and sustain their competitive advantage related to people and intellectual capital,” Vanderlande reports.

Competitive Leadership Benchmarking

As U.S. employers in every industry sector look for ways to innovate, capture market share and grow revenue, they are invariably raising questions that connect current capabilities and resources with the performance expectations of shareholders, analysts, employees and others.

Just one of them, ‘Do I really have the best people in our most critical management roles?’ is moving business leaders to take a closer look at the markets they serve. They are also focused on how those markets are being shaped by regulators, competitors and consumers, as well how competitors are mobilizing talent to seize opportunities for new business development and growth.

This increasingly external look at the management skills and leadership intangibles required to elevate internal performance is in some cases moving companies to do a deep dive on competitors’ key people to determine how their skills and experience fuel financial performance.

For example, in the advanced manufacturing market, companies are ramping up their investments in automation, robotics and both plant and supply chain infrastructure. New technology advancements and equipment upgrades are consistently raising the value of technical knowledge and analytics.

This creates a competitive ripple effect. Not only must employers find or create an ever-escalating body of knowledge on their research and technical teams, they must also consider how a competitor’s recruitment of an expert in nanotechnology or an engineer with an in-demand Ph.D., for example, could provide that organization with decisive knowledge of emerging business threats and opportunities.

“U.S. companies are struggling to understand where their global competitors are investing and how talent may redraw the industry landscape of the future,” Vanderlande says. “Benchmarking against your competitors is seen as a way to make smarter, more informed decisions about how and where to invest in talent.”



Continuing Management Education and New Skills Development

Today’s senior business leaders attended business schools in the 1970s and 1980s, when the world looked a lot different and the pace of change and disruption in global markets was far slower than now. There is a growing recognition that investing in their continuing education will keep them sharp and connected to the new and far more complex global business dynamic.

For example, employers in sectors such as advanced manufacturing, alternative energy and clean-tech markets are for the first time offering or expanding executive education programs for senior management

and line leaders. While some are enrolling in courses at elite business schools, others are polishing their industry acumen with technical schools and association-sponsored online learning labs.

“It’s always much easier and less risky to keep people than to bring in new people,” Vanderlande says. “But everything around us is changing so fast; so the expectations of staying ahead of the curve from an educational point of view is putting new pressures on today’s executive leaders.”

Institutional Knowledge Mapping and Transfer

There may be no more critical indicator of the value of a company’s intellectual property than the flow of institutional and industry-specific knowledge in to and out of any organization steeped in manufacturing processes, patents and trademarks, supply chain innovations and/or technology.

The cost of losing vital knowledge is acute today among venture capital-backed clean-tech companies, many of which have realized their growth aspirations will take far longer to realize than once anticipated.

The real talent jeopardy many of these clean-tech companies now find themselves facing is the prospect of losing key management team members who simply aren’t willing to extend their careers long enough for venture investors to transfer ownership in an environment with attractive deal multiples.

“Fewer people are willing to stay long enough to see these emerging companies from start to finish,”



Vanderlande reports. “More of the VC-backed clean-tech companies now realize they need executive leaders with longer career runways. This is already forcing an assessment of which leaders have the desire and ability to invest in longer-range goals, because it’s not for everyone.”

The focus today is on mapping where the institutional knowledge resides and creating both succession and contingency plans to ensure it helps the next generation of leaders get ahead.

About Bernard Vanderlande

Bernard Vanderlande is a business executive who is at home in the world. His professional experiences have included building and managing an award-winning, multimillion dollar export company that introduced technology and education to emerging markets. With an educational background that spans an undergraduate degree from Oglethorpe University, an MBA from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the Owner /President Management Program of Harvard Business School, he brings extensive management experience in Manufacturing, Sales, Finance, Technology, and Human Resources. Building on his years of search expertise in manufacturing, wind power and solar energy technology, Vanderlande, as Managing Partner of Tula International – the Atlanta office of IRC Global Executive Search Partners – and global practice leader for IRC, now focuses more extensively on executive search in green industries, specifically sustainable energy.

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About IRC Global Executive Search Partners

IRC Global Executive Search Partners is a market leader in the global executive search industry with a track record of more than 25,000 completed search assignments for more than 1,000 clients across industry segments and executive management functions. Our clients range from large multinationals to middle market companies that enjoy the advantage of working with leading local firms around the globe, providing them access to expert local market knowledge, the agility and commitment of owner-operated firms, and the global reach of a strong alliance.

With a growing roster of leading executive search firms across EMEA, the Americas, Africa, Asia and Australia, IRC Global Executive Search Partners has more than 300 accomplished executive search professionals working on six continents, and in more than 35 countries. Ranked among the world's ten largest retained search firms, IRC Global Executive Search Partners has provided consistent and high-performance executive search solutions to its clients for the past twenty years. For more information about IRC Global Executive Search Partners, visit us online at www.ircsearchpartners.com.

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