

Digital/tech and values-based searches drive talent demand in Consumer Segment

Interview with Michal Vajskebr, Global Practice Group Leader – Consumer, at SpenglerFox.

2015 was generally been a good year for the consumer and FMCG segments. As with most other business segments, we saw some geographies or regions where there were concerns or fears about investments and economic growth. However, overall 2015 has been positive for our Consumer customers. If we look at what our clients are searching for in the way of executive talent, anything connected to online and digital business is generating demand. Also the Consumer segment is currently experiencing a significant amount of technological disruption that creates new work for us thanks to demand for new executive and leadership skills. These sought-after, new skills are also generating work for us in other ways: mainly through requests from clients to assess their corporate culture and examine how it works. As companies bring in new talent with different (in some cases completely new) skill sets, they have to think about how to keep these executives happy and how to support them in their roles.

In 2015 we saw a shift in the content of client service demand. Much more of what clients want from us, with regard to my previous comments on helping client-businesses redefine and develop their corporate culture, revolves around cultivating leadership skills and forming corporate meritocracies. Companies are looking for candidates who are values-focused. This is the type of candidates they

want to find to fill vacant leadership positions. Companies are working more to tailor jobs to a specific candidate type or profile that matches a corporate vision or values-oriented philosophy for the company moving forward. We now see this values-based executive search often coupled with overall efforts to modernize and make businesses more efficient. This is exemplified in a project we did for a partner representing a handful of globally-known companies pursuing such projects include 3G, Berkshire Hathaway, Heinz, AB Inbev and Burger King among others. A lot of our work during 2015 focused on developing strategies for values-based executive talent search. We expect this trend to continue in 2016.

Change or disruption (perhaps evolution is a better word) has also boosted demand for a cross-offering of SpenglerFox services in the Consumer segment via our Human Capital Solutions (HCS) counselling. Consultancy in this area recently generated a call for a dedicated consultant at our offices in Germany as clients look at how they need to adapt and modernize.

Since I mentioned how specific markets are doing, I believe it's worth pointing out that our Consumer practice is growing fastest in what I call Europe-adjacent markets. We see interesting growth in the number of projects we have in Middle Eastern countries; however, South Africa is an interesting market as well. Growth in Europe has slowed down somewhat. Central and Eastern Europe is a smaller market for us than it used to be, but growth in Germany and Western Europe is generally positive. I think the factors of greatest concern for us at the close of 2015 relate to how geopolitics impacts economies in different regions as we move forward. For example, the Russian market is now smaller and is growing slower than it used to: due to political uncertainties.

This situation, however, has helped us to rethink our business; both in assessing strategy for the markets where we operate as well as developing our skills in helping clients make placements in roles at much

higher levels. These include, for example, searches for a region-wide president for EMEA or a corporate president for the US market. In a nutshell, 2015 for SpenglerFox's Consumer practice group has been about keeping pace with our clients and making sure our services evolve as their needs evolve. Our key focus is to keep a step ahead of our clients.

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