

Case Study

One of the leading consumer housewares brands turns to CriticalKnowledge to bring in a key leader for its China operations after the world's best-known recruitment firm is unsuccessful in its attempts over the course of more than a year.

CriticalKnowledge is a highly specialized search firm that focuses on the most difficult challenges in sourcing critical talent, globally.

- *We do not use recruiters. Our operations personnel have deep backgrounds in strategic intelligence.*
- *We pioneered the application of advanced strategic intelligence methodology to human capital sourcing.*
- *We leverage the knowledge and industry relationships of a global intelligence network of 5000 specialized sector experts on five continents.*

The result is our ability to deliver when no one else can.

Challenge

One of the leading consumer housewares brands in the world was seeking a senior executive to lead their China operations. They had paid a substantial retainer covering the full cost of the work to one of the best known search firms in the world to bring in talent to fill the role.

Ultimately, after more than a year, the search firm was still unsuccessful in bringing in a satisfactory solution. The client was forced to surrender the significant funds they had already paid in retainer fees in order to bring in CriticalKnowledge.

The client was one of the first players in its space in China, has been there a relatively long period of time, and has significant operations on the Chinese mainland including both supply chain and logistics, and manufacturing facilities.

However, the supply chain in China had become vastly more complex over the intervening years since they had started operations there. Competition in sourcing both raw materials and finished product had become significant. It was frequently difficult to find and develop suppliers who could deliver to exacting specifications. Manufacturing costs



I highly recommend CriticalKnowledge. They have the capability to come into the most difficult situations and deliver, throughout the world. We retained one of the most prestigious search firms in the world to bring in senior talent to run our operations in China. They were unsuccessful over the course of more than a year. We subsequently called in CriticalKnowledge, and they were able to source specialized senior talent to fill this extremely strategic position for us in a matter of weeks. We called on them again to bring in a sales leader for our German operations. And again they were able to deliver critical talent in a very difficult situation...CriticalKnowledge has proved the capability and sophistication of the process they have developed...CK has proven themselves to us in situations where the top firms in the world have failed, and we will continue to leverage their exceptional capability to produce results. They are a step above anything else we have seen.

*Chief Executive Officer
Leading Global Producer of Consumer Housewares*

were rising rapidly in the context of increasing competition for labor and increasing government regulation. Cultural issues were becoming a significant issue in managing both manufacturing operations and the Asian supply chain.

The client was seeking an individual who had native knowledge of Chinese cultural and business practices in conjunction with a deep capability in Western business practices. Given the relatively early stages of China's transition to a more market driven economy, such individuals were rare.

Why CriticalKnowledge Was Brought In

The client was not getting what they needed. They had found that the world renowned search firm they had

Case Study

engaged was recycling the usual suspects for this kind of role from the Hong Kong market, many of whom they were already familiar with. Traditional search firms rely on a title-driven search approach that targets individuals with similar titles from comparable businesses. In more complex situations, this kind of title driven approach is comparatively ineffective in terms of determining and defining ability to execute.

Furthermore, in the context of the client's operations, Hong Kong and individuals from Hong Kong provided a distinctively different cultural outlook than the China mainland and one which often clashed with practices on the mainland. This tension had significant influence on the client's operations.

The client came to CriticalKnowledge initially because of our focus on the most difficult situations in sourcing human capital and the operational expertise associated with our intelligence model.

These processes issues in conjunction with the global reach of CriticalKnowledge, and specifically CK's deep capabilities in China, led them ultimately to engage CK.

Process

- CK went through problem definition in depth with the client's operations personnel.
- The CK operations team built a detailed operational model of the role in the context of the relevant value chain. CK identified critical 'linchpin' components where the role was correlated with greatest value creation in the relevant value streams.
- One example of the many complex issues that came up in the context of the operational modeling and verification with sector experts from the CK intelligence network related to category-based development of suppliers. Supplier quality issues were producing significant operational problems. The level of development of the Chinese market and competition in the supply chain led to an environment where it was particularly critical to comprehensively assess suppliers and devote time and resources to those that could be appropriately developed.
- A second example of critical issues related to the structure of incentive and performance systems to

produce superior product management in the Chinese cultural context.

- CK gathered comprehensive intelligence in these complex technical areas and a deep understanding of all of the relevant players in the specific relevant market sub-segments.
- The CK operations team engaged in substantive discussions with more than 40 specialized experts worldwide in the technical area with specific experience in these market sub-segments in order to a) expand our understanding of the operational model for the role, and; b) funnel us to the few people who are the top of their game with respect to this specific need.
- The CK intelligence gathering process rapidly allowed the identification of the few people worldwide who were capable of undertaking this work.
- CK evaluated individuals against the detailed operational model created for the role in order to determine appropriate for the specific demands of the role.
- CK gathered in-depth intelligence on specific individuals through external third parties from our intelligence network and referred to us by our network.

Results

- After extensive work, CK brought in an individual whom the client evaluated as the best bridge between Chinese culture and commercially practices and Western business practices they had ever encountered.
- CK also certified the capability of the individual to execute at a very high level in terms both of the China supply chain challenges and the ongoing manufacturing operations.
- The individual was hired and continues to operate at a high level with the client organization.
- Traditional search is title driven, with recruiters calling up lists of people based on job title. After over a year of trying the traditional approach without success and at substantial cost to client, the client ultimately realized that they required a more sophisticated approach to solving their China problem. That led them to CriticalKnowledge.

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