

IRC Responds to Growing Demand for Trusted Board Advisors in Emerging Markets

Patrick Westerburger, IRC Netherlands | Nov. 14, 2017

Outgoing IRC President Patrick Westerburger of IRC Netherlands reflects on the growth of the executive search network under his leadership and analyses the latest industry trends during an interview at the recent IRC Global Conference in Shanghai. Rohan Carr of IRC Australia has been appointed as his successor.

How would you compare the executive search business today to ten years ago?

In the past, Executive Search firms provided access to job candidates. Today, everybody has access to a vast pool of candidates through the use of technology, which has completely changed our business. Executive search specialists are every bit as relevant today, perhaps even more so in the past, however, as trusted board advisors, which presents a completely different value proposition for our clients. In this enhanced role, search specialists have more responsibility than ever to cut through all the noise and efficiently find, engage and introduce the most talented executive leaders in the world. Most importantly, our search specialists engage leaders who are perfectly aligned with the client company's culture and strategic objectives.

How have the demands of clients changed?

Technology is changing how business is conducted across every sector of the economy and clients are now searching for leaders to fill positions that didn't even exist 10 years ago. Executive search firms need to be more creative and agile to respond to these changing needs. For our clients, it is the results that count, and of course they want the best results in the shortest possible

timeframe. Also, clients increasingly expect that we will identify the best leaders wherever they may happen to be across the globe, rather than from a local or regional pool of candidates.



You have been leading the IRC alliance for the past three years and you have been a member of the Executive Board for the past six years. How has the executive search network changed over this period?

First of all, we have grown considerably. We recently became the largest search alliance in the world with 83 offices globally. In addition to maintaining our strong presence in all the traditional markets, we have achieved a leading position in emerging markets too. We have expanded alongside our clients everywhere they've needed us and we will continue to grow our global footprint according to our clients' needs. IRC has transformed itself into an agile search organization that is able to adapt to the ever-changing needs of our clients. We are also proud of our expertise in diversity and inclusion. This expertise has become an integral part of our DNA. Over 50% of the new partner offices around the world are led by women. Our partners represent over 50 nationalities, and together, we speak over 40 different languages.

What is the unique selling point of IRC and what do you consider to be the network's greatest value proposition?

Thanks to our global presence, clients benefit from local expertise on talent search and talent management in literally every corner of the world. They simply need to contact their local IRC office and they will be able to fulfill their talent needs anywhere in the world. This one-stop-shop concept, captured in our tagline, “globally connected, locally committed”, works seamlessly and is creating strong competitive advantages for our clients.



What was the most rewarding thing for you personally as President of the IRC Executive Board?

Wherever I travel, whether for business or pleasure, I meet IRC partners. They are not just the best executive search specialists who know everything about the local market; they are also fantastic people, real world citizens and great friends. Getting to know all of them has been, and still is, very rewarding.

What message do you have for your successor, Rohan Carr, of IRC Australia?

The Presidency of IRC couldn't be in better hands than with Rohan. He will definitely bring IRC to the next level. I hope he will get as much energy from leading the organization as I did. Clients will benefit strongly from his expertise in developing programs that give them even better access to talented leaders and that will ultimately make them more future-proof. My message to Rohan is simply: enjoy every minute in your new role as IRC President.