

VF Asia Sourcing Case Study



VF is a US\$11 billion apparel and footwear company with a diverse portfolio of over 30 lifestyle brands which are sold in more than 150 countries.

Within Asia Pacific, the company's regional sourcing head office in Hong Kong oversees supply chain operations in mainland China, Thailand, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia and India.

VF Asia has about 1,500 employees involved in the sourcing side of the business. These include merchandising professionals, quality assurance managers and personnel involved in shared services such as IT, logistics, human resource management and finance, as well as specialist roles such as garment specialists, textile engineers and industrial engineers.



Talent acquisition challenges

As an apparel and footwear sourcing division of the organization, one of the key challenges that VF Asia faces in recruiting for these roles is that the company's operations span many markets, some of which may not have a viable local talent pool. Furthermore, while many of VF Asia's products and brands are recognized internationally, the company's name may not have a similarly high profile among prospective candidates.

Challenges

- Recruiting for diverse locations
- Relatively low profile of VF Asia as an organization
- Building a talent network within the sourcing / supply chain industry

Solutions

- LinkedIn Recruiter
- LinkedIn Job Slots
- LinkedIn Career Page

Why LinkedIn?

- Access to an international talent pool
- Enables direct sourcing, reducing costs
- Provides platform for employer branding

Results

- Successfully filled roles in diverse locations
- Reduced hiring cost without affecting time to hire or candidate quality
- Helped strengthen employer branding and build up a network of future talent
- Enabled HR team to deliver more strategic value to the organization

To address these and other talent acquisition challenges, VF Asia began using LinkedIn Recruiter and Job Slots as well as LinkedIn Career Page to access a wider pool of international candidates, making its recruitment efforts more proactive and cost-efficient.

Meeting the diverse recruitment needs of multinationals

LinkedIn is proving to be an invaluable tool for meeting the diverse recruitment needs of VF Asia across different markets, said Nicola Wainwright, Talent Acquisition & Engagement Manager, VF Asia Limited. For example, when looking to recruit a civil engineer to be based in Thailand, Wainwright joined several specialist groups on LinkedIn that were relevant to the profession in order to build up VF Asia's knowledge and talent networks. This resulted in connections with candidates in Singapore and Thailand for the job opening.

The ability to reach out to an international talent pool through LinkedIn was a significant advantage, said Wainwright. "We are a talent mobile company to a large extent, we have associates who travel a lot and we also move our people around the region; LinkedIn mirrors that - now I don't have to live in Singapore in order to reach out to people in Singapore through LinkedIn."

Becoming more cost-efficient with direct sourcing

The direct sourcing approach has also resulted in dramatic savings for VF Asia. "From the cost perspective, I can tell you that the LinkedIn package we have paid for itself five or six times over. With LinkedIn's help, we have only spent a fraction of our recruitment budget so far this year, and it has not affected our time to hire or candidate quality, which are important indicators for us."

In less than a year since it has been using LinkedIn, VF Asia filled about 20 per cent of its open headcount using Recruiter and Job Slots. Notably, it has been successful in using LinkedIn to hire for senior specialist roles which traditionally would have gone through a recruitment agency, such as roles at manager and director levels, amongst others.

"Like every company these days, we are trying to get leaner in terms of cost and one way of doing this is to reduce our reliance on third party recruitment agencies and focus on reaching out to talent directly," said Wainwright, who estimated that the charges levied by international recruitment agencies typically work out to 20-25 per cent of the cost of the hire.

Strengthening employer branding and building a talent network

The LinkedIn Career Page also helps VF Asia enhance its visibility and strengthen its employer branding.

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Nicola Wainwright

Talent Acquisition & Engagement Manager, HR & Facilities
Management,
VF Asia Limited

The page is updated regularly with information that is geared towards readers in the Asia Pacific. "We want it to be informative and user-friendly, and different from our corporate web site with information that is more specific to our region. It provides us with another landing zone to attract candidates so that they can find out more about working with VF Asia and the jobs that are available with us."

Wainwright also finds LinkedIn connections very useful in helping VF Asia build up a network of future talent. "LinkedIn helps us engage better with talent in the market by allowing us to talk to them directly. We can build up a pipeline of contacts which is useful even if the candidate is not suitable for the position that we are recruiting for at the particular point in time. Or if we come across a strong candidate who is based in another location and who is interested in working with us, we can refer them to our HR manager for that region."

Transforming the talent acquisition role within the organization

The use of LinkedIn has helped transform the talent acquisition role within VF Asia to deliver more strategic value to the organization. For example, through LinkedIn, Wainwright and the wider HR team are able to get a better picture of the talent pool in various markets and advise internal customers at VF Asia.

For example, if VF Asia wants to know if it would be more effective to recruit a merchandizer in Cambodia for the Cambodian market or to look for talent elsewhere, it can do a search on LinkedIn to find out how many people in the country fit the required profile. The company can then extrapolate from this to get an indication of the pool of prospective candidates in the country.

While the company will continue to use referrals and job boards for certain roles, LinkedIn is proving to be particularly effective in recruiting for senior management positions or specialist roles. "It is important that we build up our talent acquisition strategy around these different channels that are reflective of the diverse world we live in," she said.