

# Penrhyn International:

# Multi-country Work is Key to Search

By Pilar Gumucio

**A**s globalization spreads and businesses continue to expand and operate in more locations around the world, having the right search provider is even more critical. Companies are looking across borders to attract the right talent that will allow them to open new markets and relocate some of their operations more competitively, and they want to achieve these objectives at a faster pace than ever before.

Within this context, Skott Burkland, President of Skott/Edwards Consultants and current Chairman, explains why Penrhyn International really offers clients a competitive advantage.

“Our differentiator lies in our ability to do global search and to coordinate activities across many geographies,” he states.

Penrhyn International started in 1979

as a joint venture between Christopher Mill & Partners, based in London, and Leon A Farley Associates, based in San Francisco.

“Each firm had clients with requirements on both sides of the Atlantic, and a significant amount of business was exchanged. Over the years additional firms joined,” says Burkland.

Today, Penrhyn International has 18 offices in 13 countries, plus associated offices in Greater China. It is considered a federation of independent retained executive search consulting firms, working together in partnership to provide the highest standards of service in international assignments in virtually every industry.

Burkland describes how Penrhyn International is recently expanding fervently in South America and is reviewing potential additional

members in Europe. “We also plan to strengthen our position in the United States.”

At the same time, Burkland cautions that the addition of new members is a very rigorous process and one that is not taken lightly. “It is quite difficult to become a member of Penrhyn International, and we think that is the way that it ought to be.”

Yet he explains how more clients are demanding that Penrhyn International be able to service them simultaneously in various countries and regions, and as a result, this federation is exploring the addition of new member firms to be able to meet these mounting demands.

Burkland reports how many people tend to label search networks as “loose affiliations”. However, he indicates that Penrhyn International entails much more.

“I think we have more interaction, more trust, and more knowledge of each others’ capabilities than exists between the offices of the large search firms. This works to the client’s benefit, and that is demonstrated every time large clients select us to do multi-country work over the large firms,” affirms Burkland.

### Multi-country projects

As more companies expand their horizons and work on a global scale Penrhyn International gives clients a competitive edge because they are market leaders in their national markets, they collaborate together to source, select and attract the right talent and they create consultative partnerships that allow clients to excel and achieve their business objectives.

Burkland explains that his association is based on “people who are specialists in managing multi-country projects, and who have spent their lives in multi-cultural environments.”

This means that these consultants already have a great deal of experience, knowledge and understanding of companies and through their coordination with their member firms can effectively and simultaneously conduct multi-country and global searches for clients throughout the world.

Penrhyn International’s cross-border assignments vary greatly, from recruiting a CEO for an international firm to simultaneously recruiting entire management teams for clients that are expanding to new markets or undertaking new strategic directions. This not only implies using the knowledge of their clients’ markets on a national level, but also includes various member firms collaborating with one another to make sure that clients have the necessary skills required to achieve their global business objectives.

Obviously this differs from client to client. For example, the client can be based in one country and the position

can be based in another. It can also include sourcing candidates from a variety of countries, and even globally. The project may include supporting and advising on issues of organization and compensation. The search may



**Skott Burkland**

also include helping clients manage the cultural shifts that happen as companies continue to develop and grow. In the end, it is about maximizing local resources with a global vision that benefits the client’s performance.

### An effective partnership is key

According to the Chairman of Penrhyn International, there are numerous ways in which companies can fill jobs. “It is our challenge to ensure that companies recruiting senior executives, wherever it may be in the world, understand the potential value that a retained consultant brings. And it is also our challenge to ensure that we deliver that value.”


He adds that clients are becoming increasingly demanding about the pace at which they expect results. “That reflects the fact that organizations are much leaner than they used to be – if there is an empty executive slot it hurts, there is no cover – so there is an inevitable concern with pace. We have to respond to that concern.”

As businesses continue to expand, Penrhyn International fully comprehends the high levels of commitment and interaction required to achieve quality results across the border.

In fact, Burkland reports: “If you ask how often member firms find themselves working together, my answer has to be ‘not enough’... however, if you were able to see my e-mail inbox you would understand just how much we do work together. For example, someone in Australia needs help with finding a candidate with expertise in banking risk management; partners in London and Brussels and Zurich are working together on an assignment for a Fortune 10 company; a colleague in Brazil is asking a question about a particular company’s capability. And it is like that every day. Although we are a partnership of firms, we work like one firm.”

This level of coordination is fundamental, especially if you take into consideration that clients are being more selective in choosing search partners that can service them effectively and simultaneously in various parts of the world.

According to Burkland, the concept of “preferred supplier” is maturing and he expects it to continue to evolve. “Today many clients are using preferred supplier status as a cost control measure.” He hopes that this concept will evolve “into a value-enhancing measure, a way of ensuring an effective partnership.”

Penrhyn International aims to lead by example, establishing a consultative partnership that provides clients - wherever they may be in the world - with access to similarly high standards of advice and superior executive search capabilities. 

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