

Case Study

Stepan Company



Highlights

- Filled critical positions quickly and cost-effectively using LinkedIn Recruiter across China, India and Singapore.
- Tapped into LinkedIn's base of over 150 million professionals globally for wider international reach.
- Saved S\$250,000 in recruitment costs in 2011, compared with the use of traditional head hunters. This translated into 10 hires found specifically through LinkedIn.

Company Profile

Stepan Company is a global manufacturer of specialty and intermediate chemicals used in consumer products and industrial applications. Founded in 1932, it currently operates a network of modern production facilities located in North and South America, Europe and Asia, and has about 1,900 employees worldwide.

Business Challenge – Competing for Talent

Stepan Company is ramping up its presence in Asia Pacific. In 2010, it began the process of establishing its regional headquarters in Singapore and based most key functions here, including sales and marketing, purchasing, human resource and R&D.

As Stepan expands its operations, one of the key challenges it faces is the "war for talent", said Brent Tignor, Regional Human Resource Manager Asia-Pacific, Stepan Asia-Pacific.

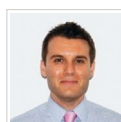
Setting up its Singapore operations, for example, involved recruiting "from the ground up". The company, which currently has 250 full-time employees in Asia, has also been adding people across the Asia Pacific region.

"Asia is the most dynamic market globally right now," noted Brent. "We have many competitors who are also trying to grow their presence here, and we are all going after the same pool of people."

The talent crunch is especially acute in the chemicals sector, where many key positions have to be filled by people with a specific skills. "For most hires, we need someone who is not only skilled in their particular function, but also knows the specialty chemical business as well," said Brent.

As a company experiencing rapid growth in the region, Stepan also needs to hire people who can hit the ground running. This means people with not only the relevant industry expertise, but also the necessary language capabilities and MNC experience. "When we hire a country manager in India or China, for example, the person will have to communicate frequently with our U.S. headquarters, so we need someone who is bilingual and has experience working with a Western MNC, in addition to having the technical capabilities to work in the chemicals industry," explained Brent.

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Brent Tignor

Regional Human Resource Manager Asia-Pacific,
Stepan Asia-Pacific

Singapore | Human Resources

Ensuring higher success rates with more targeted search

The LinkedIn approach has worked well for Brent, who was posted to Singapore in August 2010. "I came here without having any experience recruiting in Asia," he recalled. "There was no one to basically say, 'This is who you go to, to find people'."

Arriving fresh from Chicago, Brent found himself with a few critical positions to fill, among them that of a project manager in China. "We needed someone with substantial experience, who had a specific technical background, and was bilingual. I needed to find someone like that who was sitting in the middle of China, and here I was, sitting in Singapore, with this mountain to climb. And I was asking myself - how was I going to find someone like that?"

With LinkedIn, Stepan found a recruitment platform that not only offers an inherent top-level filter for its requirements, but also equips it with the tools to narrow the search even further.

"When I search for people on LinkedIn, two of my three criteria are already being met," said Brent, pointing to LinkedIn's predominantly bilingual-speaking user base, many of whom also have ties to Western companies.

Stepan uses the powerful LinkedIn Recruiter solution to drill down further for more targeted searches and to reach out to passive job seekers, that is, people whose profiles fit the company's requirements but are currently not active in the job market. He leaned on LinkedIn, worked the Recruiter tool and started contacting members of his target audience. Very quickly, he managed to make contact with an individual who met all of Stepan's criteria and within a month, the position was filled.

Using LinkedIn, Stepan is able to leverage its own knowledge of the niche industry in order to be more efficient in its search. "If we are looking to fill a position, we will ask ourselves - where is that person likely to sit? Given the nature of our industry, we know that if we are looking for someone with a specific background, he or she probably sits within a group of, say, 10 companies, or has touched those companies at some point in their career."

This approach provides the company with a more effective recruitment channel compared with the use of traditional headhunting companies, who may not be familiar with a specialized sector such as the chemicals industry. "A lot of search firms tend to look at much larger groups of people, trying to figure out whom exactly to go after."

Enabling wider reach to international pool of prospective candidates

Stepan scored a similar success with the position of business manager for its corporate office in Singapore. Through LinkedIn, Brent found the person he wanted, who happened to be living in Mumbai. "This was a person who had substantial experience in the industry, who lived in India. LinkedIn has enabled us to contact people whom we would never have known otherwise, allowing us to fill difficult positions quite quickly," said Brent.

Delivering substantial cost savings

The use of LinkedIn has also translated into immense cost savings for Stepan. As Brent explained, LinkedIn is particularly useful for filling higher-salaried positions such as country managers and business managers, because its network comprises mainly people who are more experienced and more established in their careers. These people would, in turn, have commanded a higher placement fee from headhunting companies.

"LinkedIn provides us with access to the right people at a much lower cost. Whereas typically we may pay about US\$30,000 to US\$50,000 for one placement, Recruiter has enabled us to fill multiple positions at substantial savings."

So much so that at the end of 2011, Brent was able to report savings of close to S\$250,000 (US\$200,000) through the use of LinkedIn, instead of going to head hunters to fill every role.

"By providing me with direct access to a database of contacts with relevant backgrounds who are potential candidates themselves or can connect us with someone who is, LinkedIn, specifically the Recruiter tool, has given me a competitive advantage in Asia's 'War for Talent'," he said.

LinkedIn User Tips

- Determine the exact background of the candidate you are looking for.
- Identify the possible companies that he or she would have worked, or is working, at.
- Used LinkedIn Recruiter to target your search based on the above criteria.