

Executive search specialist takes on new challenge

Prague-based head hunter looking for more international experience

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Monika Kubíčková ran her own agency for five years and is now a principal at Pedersen & Partners.

Monika Kubíčková has spent the past five years running her own executive search agency, matching job opportunities with people searching for the next career step - or who may not be looking for a new job, but are willing to consider a move all the same. The 41-year-old married mother of three has just taken a new career opportunity of her own, with her company TalentOn having been taken over by Pedersen & Partners Executive Search, a Prague-based company that is now present in 47 countries. After the takeover, Kubíčková has become a principal of Pedersen & Partners, where she will continue to specialize in executive search in sectors such as banking, finance, professional advisory services and private equity. Kubíčková sat down with *The Prague Post* to outline how executive search works, and to talk a little about her own career goals.

The Prague Post: You had a variety of roles earlier in your career, including in business development. What made you settle on executive search?

Monika Kubíčková: It's very similar to business development. I had to do a lot of fundraising for an MBA school. You still have to operate on a high level and deal with the decision makers. It's still about people. During my career, I searched for my subordinates, I had to find my successor at Clifford Chance and USBSP [US Business School Prague], so I learned how to do that. I learned that I had the skills to make the right assessments of people and I tremendously enjoy it. It's like fitting a puzzle

[with a piece] that is missing. You must be perfectly right, otherwise it doesn't hold together. You must have this business insight to understand what the role is really covering.

TPP: When you are looking for an executive, how important is personality, or is it all about their professional skills and experience?

MK: It's very important to know who you are recruiting. Company culture is important, but the particular person is very important. The client should assess [the candidate] themselves, but it's better to pre-assess. There are many personality types and some cannot fit together.

TPP: Does it ever happen that a person who seems right for a role turns out not to be suitable?

MK: For me, in the past five years, there was maybe one case out of hundreds. The executive left very early. ... It was the wrong process because they found the boss minus one prior to finding the boss, and then there was a personality clash. It's very small as a number [when these issues arise].

TPP: How long does a typical executive search take?

MK: If you do not consider the prior negotiation, then the search should typically take six weeks. Prior to the start, you have all the information from the client side. Then you go and identify a long list of potential targets, potentially suitable candidates ... You go one by one over the phone [with the candidates]. The long list is really long - it might be 100, around that number. From the long list ... some candidates prove to be relevant and interested. It depends on the position, but it could be 30 or 50. Some of them, if they're not based in the Czech Republic or far away, you will interview by telephone or Skype, or in the local office [if they are based nearer]. You sometimes re-interview by phone.

TPP: So you may actually carry out face-to-face interviews with 30 people?

MK: Yes, 30 is about usual - you want to be sure that you have covered the market. You regularly send progress reports to the client, [on a] weekly [basis]. The progress reports contain the long list and the medium list. Typically, the short list can be 10 or it can be five. For very specific roles, it can be three, but that's the minimum. I provide assessment reports on each presented candidate. These are very detailed - not just the jobs they've done, but real assessment of skills, of personality, of suitability for the role, the culture fit. These are three to five pages. Typically, [at any one time], you have one [search] initiated, one on the mid-list stage and one on the shortlist stage. In the meantime, you do your business development.

The Kubíčková file Name:
Monika Kubíčková

Age: 41

Nationality: Czech

Current position: Principal,
Pedersen & Partners Executive
Search

Previous positions: 2008-13,
managing partner, TalentOn;
2002-08, business development
director, US Business School
Prague; 2000-02, business
development role at Clifford
Chance; 1998-2000, worked on
merger at chemical raw material
supplier Alichem; 1996-98, law
department of ING bank

TPP: Why did you decide to have your own executive search agency taken over by Pedersen & Partners?

MK: I followed Pedersen & Partners for some time because they're really present in the market. I liked them for a long time, but still having my own company was more freedom sometimes. I was invited to join by Petra [Grabmayer, Pedersen & Partners' Czech Republic country manager]. I like this international exposure. Pedersen allows me to compete on a global scale. That was always my target. I can offer my existing clients this international exposure because we have offices around the world. We can make international searches and take Czechs out [of the Czech Republic] and repatriate Czechs.

TPP: Would you like to work overseas yourself in future?

MK: Obviously, for sure you would aim higher, that's obvious. But for the time being, my market is the local market - the Czech and Slovak republics - because there are many interesting companies in the financial services in my sectors. There's a presence of private equity funds. If you look at law firms, all major names are here, [but] many sectors are strong on London. I must develop to an international role. For sure you have to have your way up.

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