

Shortlist chats with... Rob Green, GRMSearch

Friday 29 January 2016 12:13pm



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Rob Green was a "bored and frustrated" marketing manager in the UK 14 years ago when he decided to make the leap into recruitment, joining Badenoch & Clark. Ensnoring himself in a high-energy London sales floor, Green started on a difficult start-up desk – placing accountants into hedge funds – before moving into the investment banking operations team.

A trip to the Cayman Islands led to him joining CML Recruitment in 2006 as a consultant, where he stayed for three years, eventually became managing director and partner, and moving to Hong Kong to set up its second office. From there, CML expanded and [rebranded to GRMSearch](#) with Green becoming CEO, and the company has since opened offices in Australia, South Africa and Japan.

What is your top lesson learned from establishing an international business?

"So many lessons, so many mistakes made. But ultimately the top lesson I have learned is to be humble and to admit that you don't know everything.

"Put trust in your staff, put trust in your convictions, but don't be afraid to hold your hands up if something isn't working and change it."

What skills are currently lacking in the industry?

"I think there is a dearth of proper research and searching skills. Some of the old guard still believe this is purely a sales job, but the research and data part of the business is as important, and actually being able to dig that little bit deeper and being able to use the data to decipher who is the very best out there is vital to our success.

"I'd like to see more training courses on this."

What in your view are the best and worst traits in the search and recruitment industry?

"My biggest gripe with our wonderful industry is that there are still very few barriers to entry, and this leads to a very splintered industry where the difference in quality of service can be huge.

"I would like, one day, to see one global governing body – lets call it the Chartered Institute of Staffing – and all recruitment practitioners would have to first pass a very hard series of exams, and also (like in law and accounting) have to collect CPD points every year to keep their certificate. This would streamline the industry and raise the standards to an amazing level, all recruitment professionals would get better and better every year and the most important people (the jobseekers and the hiring clients) would benefit hugely from this higher level of service. We could also then raise our fees!

"The best traits in our industry are its ability to consistently reinvent itself, to adapt to challenging economies – to threats to its very existence – and to keep coming back stronger than ever. What you have to remember is that recruitment is a hard, tough business and you have to work very, very hard to be successful. So this wonderful profession is full of very hard-working people, therefore, by its very nature, when we are challenged, we come back better than ever, offering more and better service to jobseekers and paying clients."

What are the biggest changes you expect to see in the executive search and recruitment in the next five years?

"My opinion is that we have seen off the threat of LinkedIn and still grown as an industry. LinkedIn has plateaued as a job board, people are realising it's maybe not the 'answer' and even they as a company have spread into publishing and training and other unrelated fields.

"In the past two years we have seen a huge increase in clients starting to really value their agency supplier relationships again and ditching job boards and in-house teams and coming back to their favourite agencies. I expect this to increase.

"I think we'll see a consolidation of the industry in Asia and Australia and an



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increase in M&A activity in the coming years.

"Trade bodies such as APSCo [Association of Professional Staffing Companies] will become stronger, which will lead to more professionalisation of the industry through education and training, which in turn will lead to a better service and I really believe a knock-on of this will be recruitment and search firms increasing their fees.

"We'll see a lot more companies across many sectors continuing to tighten their PSL's and PSA's to limit the number of suppliers they use, which in turn will lead to a reduction in the number of one-man bands there are out there.

"We will see more and more influence from HR departments, as the human resources sector improves through training and education and they become more commercially aware. A lot of HR professionals have not worked at the coalface of the business they are in, doing the deals, running the operations, etc. If you tie this in with recruitment/hiring/staffing being the biggest financial investment a company can make, then the role of an HR professional will have to become more attuned to the business needs and become more influential in the hiring process.

"There is huge pressure on CRM/ATS suppliers to continue to improve, so technology changes will drive industry changes, but it will be slow as the search sector hasn't always been early an adopter.

What is on the horizon for your company?

"I can't give too much away, but we are adopting new technology this month that will improve the recruiters' processes and therefore the service they provide..."

"We also plan to increase our footprint in Asia and Australia, with additional teams and offices – when we can find the right people! We are also in talks about a presence in Europe and the US, in order to offer a truly global service to our clients and candidates.

"I expect this year we may see our first acquisition. We are on the look-out for good firms to roll into the GRM family to increase the number of great professionals that work at GRM."

