

## Success Stories: Ideas for Potential Players

Service/Consulting

# HRnetOne

Services

### HRnet One K.K.

#### ***Growing Business Across Asia by Making the Human Connection***



*HRnet One's 20-strong staff comprises consultants of various nationalities and diverse professional backgrounds.*

HRnet One is a human resource consultancy specializing in executive headhunting. Headquartered in Singapore, the firm focuses in particular on the Asia-Pacific region. The office of its Japanese subsidiary is located in a high-rise "intelligent" building in Tokyo's Uchisaiwai-cho district, home to a cluster of Japanese and foreign government agencies and major foreign-owned companies.

To save money, the Japanese subsidiary initially looked for space in small, multi-tenant buildings in other business districts of Tokyo, such as Shinjuku and Akasaka.

However, the parent company invariably rejected these locations. According to Mr. Shuichi Inoue, managing director of HRnet One's Japanese operation, the Singapore headquarters stipulated two requirements for its office in Japan. First, the level of rent was not a concern, but the lobby of the building must be active at all times. Second, buildings so small that one company could occupy an entire floor must be avoided. The goal was to secure a busy, well-networked place to do business.

"A career change is a major event for both employee and employer," explains Mr. Inoue. "First impressions are vital, and the company that acts as go-between must provide a clearly defined presence. For a little-known, foreign-owned human resources firm like us, our office location is especially important as a way of building confidence."

HRnet One was founded in 1992. After moving into Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, its next target for overseas expansion was Japan. It established a full-scale presence in the Japanese market in 2000. Mr. Inoue recalls that HRnet One was strongly motivated to invest here: "Though prices are high in Japan, it also offers excellent potential because of the size and maturity of the market."

- 1992 HRnet One Pte Ltd founded in Singapore
- 1994 Group company launched in Malaysia
- 1996 Establishment of Hong Kong office
- 1998 Taiwan office begins operations
- 2000 HRnet One K.K. established in Japan

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*Managing Director Shuichi Inoue seeks to utilize HRnet One's global network to expand business in the maturing Japanese human resources market.*

At the time when HRnet One decided to launch its Japanese subsidiary, Mr. Inoue was working as a headhunter at the Singapore headquarters. He was tapped as the person to lead the move into Japan, but he had been based in Singapore for many years, and so he decided to seek the assistance of JETRO's Invest Japan Business Support Center (IBSC). This approach allowed the firm to use rent-free office space at the IBSC in Tokyo's Akasaka district until HRnet One could make formal arrangements for its own Tokyo office. "I had previously worked in Japan and had a good knowledge of the place," he notes. "However, I was grateful for the advice of the JETRO staff, who helped us to complete the complex administrative procedures for setting up a corporation most efficiently."

HRnet One specializes in the recruitment of executive-class personnel for strategic positions in management and technology-related areas. The majority of its clients are foreign-owned companies. HRnet One recognizes that the Japanese human resources market is maturing and is determined to achieve further expansion of its business in Japan. There is clearly a growing need for skilled Japanese staff among HRnet One's clientele of foreign-owned companies and other organizations.

Some of the orders received by the consultancy have involved finding personnel for difficult-to-fill positions. The process begins with repeated discussions with the client. HRnet One then uses its accumulated data, its contacts, and its networks to locate the right person for each job. Mr. Inoue recalls one request from a foreign pharmaceutical company that was establishing an operation in Tsukuba, a city near Tokyo noted for its concentration of research facilities. "They wanted a person in his or her forties or early fifties who was experienced in clinical testing and could run a laboratory." In some cases, notes Mr. Inoue, executives from the parent company will visit Japan several times to interview candidates directly.

HRnet One's Japan operation has a team of 20 consultants. "People are everything," emphasizes Mr. Inoue. Instead of individuals with experience in the executive placement business, HRnet One has recruited talented

younger workers who have moved into this field from other industries. This reflects the company's belief that its employees are better able to achieve their full potential if they have no preconceived notions and are trained from scratch as specialists.

Each year the Japanese branch handles 50–60 placement projects. Its target is to increase this to over 100 within three years. To achieve this expansion, Mr. Inoue plans to increase his staff from its present level to 30 consultants. In terms of market focus, the company plans to target peripheral automotive industries and manufacturers in fields like LCDs and mobile telephones. At present, orders from foreign-owned companies seeking staff in Japan make up the bulk of the company's work. However, a key strength of HRnet One Japan is its ability to handle projects in collaboration with other branches around the globe. In addition to its headquarters in Singapore, the group has bases in Malaysia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Australia, China, Thailand, and other locations.

According to Mr. Inoue, Japanese candidates for career changes have a tendency to avoid saying "no" until the very last moment. "This makes the task very difficult. The key is to spot candidates who are likely to pull out as early as possible in the process, and to focus on the others—the ones who are most likely to take on the challenge of a new career opportunity." HRnet One has a success rate of 80–90%, and its reputation continues to strengthen.

#### Japanese Operation

Established :	November 2000
Capital :	¥66 million
Employees :	20
Business :	Human resources placement and consulting services
Location :	Imperial Hotel Tower, 1-1-1 Uchisaiwai-cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo
URL :	<a href="http://www.hrnetone.com/">http://www.hrnetone.com/</a>
Parent company :	HRnet One Pte Ltd (Singapore; employees: 200)