

ONE-STOP SHOP

Large-scale recruiting to support G4S's rapidly expanding businesses in the Sub-Continent and the Middle East in the 1990s led to the creation of First Select International (FSI). Now headquartered in the United Arab Emirates, with offices in Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Poland and Cyprus, it continues to expand to meet the growing demand of its customers.

Andrew Hudson, FSI's managing director, explains that it quickly became clear that the absence of local recruitment companies to carry out this work meant that a vast amount of management time was being spent trying to match job applicants with staff positions.

The logical conclusion for the still-expanding G4S – which recruited 100,000 security personnel in India alone between 1989 and 2006 – was to start G4S's specialised company to meet the needs of its growing operation. It also quickly became clear that FSI could assist a general need for recruitment beyond G4S's needs and provide a wide range of personnel for companies doing business in Indian, the Gulf and Middle Eastern labour markets.

By the end of this year, FSI will be employing 1,200 people, operating out of offices in Europe, the Middle East and Asia, who have access to some 300,000 résumés and can swiftly match personnel to numerous and varied posts. In addition to its well-established speciality – security – it helps fill vacancies in aviation, construction and engineering, office and IT support, retail and financial services, healthcare, hospitality, education and the media.

Personnel range from senior boardroom executives to large workforces required for specific turnkey projects. FSI also provides a range of ancillary services to the business community, offering training, psychometric testing, video conferencing and

consulting. At least three new FSI offices are due to open by early 2010, whose staff will respond to applications, many of which arrive via its web-based registration scheme for job-seekers.

IN HARM'S WAY

If FSI can be characterised as a one-stop recruitment agency providing a wide range of personnel for an infinite variety of jobs, other G4S divisions must seek candidates from a much smaller labour pool – those who have acquired skills and experience that can rarely be replicated through formal training or education.

G4S Risk Management is a leading international provider of personnel able to operate in close protection, manned security and mine action roles in such hostile environments as Afghanistan, Iraq and Sudan. Its contribution to G4S's global operations, and the need for more personnel, is set to grow.

As of August 2009, G4S Risk Management was deploying 1,450 personnel in Afghanistan in close protection, manned services and management roles. This is forecast to increase to 1,600 in 2010.

Over the same period their manpower is expected to rise from around 930 personnel in Iraq to 1,700. Mine action and ordnance management personnel are also likely to increase from around 680 in 2009 to 800 next year.

Recruiting such personnel, all of whom will have a military, police or appropriate technical or disciplined forces' background, is largely carried out by company staff with similar experience.

Their roles require candidates to demonstrate specific skills quantifiable through qualifications. These include recent experience in a volatile or challenging environment, such as active military service or employment in locations with minimal infrastructure, experience of firearms, off-road driving, first aid,



communications and, on occasion, relevant language skills.

POLICE BACKUP

Another example of G4S indentifying a niche market and meeting its needs is G4S Policing Solutions. Dominic Bennett, its managing director, says the unit operates as a recruitment facilitator and consultancy for more than 40 police forces in the UK and Ireland, as well as a further 200 plus clients in central government, local authorities and domestic and international organisations.

In addition to direct policing functions, the unit also provides contractors for such roles as countering benefit fraud, planning and waste management enforcement, trading standards, restorative justice and witness liaison. At the core of Policing Solutions is a database of 17,000 former police officers and specialist staff.

The company vets its recruits prior to adding them, at the rate or around 200 a month, to the database. Bennett says that by late 2009 some 450 Police Solutions contractors were employed in a wide range of roles that included specialist fraud and counter-terrorism investigators, crime and intelligence analysts, statement takers and civilian reception staff. Recent cases where it provided contractors include:

- Securitas cash depot robbery in Tonbridge, Kent, where 35 investigators and major crime staff were deployed
- Reported abuse at a former children's home in Jersey, with 15 investigators, analysts and child abuse specialists sent
- Up to 60 staff provided to the Police Service of Northern Ireland Historical Enquiries Team to reinvestigate murders during the 30-year "troubles"
- Contractors attached to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in corruption cases in the Turks and Caicos Islands and specialist support to Bermuda's police force

FEW AND FAR BETWEEN

The examples cited above rely on recruiting specialist and generalist personnel from countries with a plentiful supply of human resources. However, labour shortages in some regions where G4S operates mean that recruitment is becoming more of a problem, with a greater reliance being placed on technological solutions to meet client needs.

Finland, a large country with a population of around

five million highly-educated and technically-adept people, has problems in finding enough personnel to match demand. This situation is set to become more acute in coming years now that the "baby boom" population has reached retirement age and fewer people are entering the labour market than are leaving it.

The Confederation of Finnish Industries estimates that 270,000 fewer people will be available for jobs by 2025. As a result, G4S Secure Solutions (Finland) may well serve as a test bed for new forms of recruitment that provide a combination of human and technical solutions.

Anton Stenfors, the company's ICT director, notes that while most Finnish companies prefer security provided by proactive on-site personnel, there is a recognition that technology must be utilised to augment the physical presence of operators.

A key factor that should help this process is the emerging market for "awareness" monitoring – of elderly people or property, for example – reflecting the fact that many Finns and other Scandinavians own holiday cottages or boats hundreds of kilometres from their urban homes.

Although use of CCTV is routine across much of the world, what makes the Finnish experience a useful indicator of where technology and G4S competencies may meet is in how a small number of strategically positioned personnel may be able to respond to clients who are self-monitoring their property via the internet or mobile phones.

Before this model can be fully developed, however, Stenfors points out that bandwidth-related issues will have to be addressed in order to allow the more sophisticated "intelligent" video systems to provide the kind of coverage required that will make such a joint effort between clients and their security providers fully viable.

A reminder, of course, that even in a digital world, a human response is what produces results, and that individuals need to be carefully chosen, well trained and highly competent. ■

FOR MORE INFORMATION ...

- on First Select International see <http://www.fsi.jobs/>
- on G4S Policing Solutions see <http://www.policingsolutions.co.uk>
- on G4S Risk Management see <http://www.g4sriskmanagement.com>