

I Wanted to Live and Work in Russia

*Englishman Gergely Stewart
has been successfully
involved in recruitment
for the past 8 years*



*Englishman **Gergely** (pron. **Gergey**) **Stewart's** biography is an engaging one. Born in Budapest, raised in London, now he works in Moscow where, along with Russian partner Anna Khrustaleva, he started the recruitment company Adelphi, of which he is the owner. Started his career in the Russian capital four years ago, for the first two as Regional Director of the British company Cobalt Recruitment, where he was responsible for its activities in Central and Eastern Europe, including the RF. Today, Adelphi offers the expanses of Russia, as well as the countries of the CIS and Central and Eastern Europe, diverse services in sourcing and recruiting personnel. Its Managing Director, **Gergely Stewart**, told our BIGMOSCOW correspondent all about the day-to-day workings of the company.*

*– **Gergely**, for the first two years, you worked in Moscow at Cobalt Recruitment, which essentially has the same aims as Adelphi. What was it that made you want to start your own business: personal ambition, new opportunities, or was it something else?*

– You are right, the aims of both companies really are extremely similar. But it wasn't that so much. Put simply, I realised that, regardless of the economic details, I wanted to live in Russia. The question was unavoidable: how would I live there, what would I do? Being in London, I started to think

**I struck lucky: I met
an excellent business partner.**



I realised that... I wanted to live in Russia.



about what kind of employment I might be able to find for myself in Moscow. The interesting thing is that in London I was working as a chef in one of the best-known restaurants. But it wasn't for me: the money wasn't great and I really didn't have much free time at all. Also, no sooner had I got to know fairly well what the restaurant business was all about than I realised that it really wasn't me. Setting up a recruitment company seemed like a worthwhile thing to do, and I had a feeling that I might be able to achieve something in that business. The business, of course, is not an easy one, but, on the other hand, it doesn't require large amounts of money and investment or having to attract any serious assets. Initial outlay is office rent, computers, office equipment, and hiring staff. So, we are not talking about any inordinate sums.



adelphi-recruitment.com

– Does your company have a large staff?

– At the moment we have 12 people working for us.

– Are they only Russians or are there also people from other countries?

– I have one Englishman working there: two, if you count me as well. The rest are Russian, including my business partner.

– Was it difficult finding people to work at an English recruitment company?

– I wouldn't say so. The first idea was to understand what the situation was in Russia in the area I was intending to plunge into so that I could develop the business from the ground up. It worked. The first team was put together in London but when the time came to get ourselves over to Russia, it transpired

Our business has grown from 3 or 4 to 12 employees, which is an annual growth of 30–40 percent.



About Adelphi



**Moscow made
a big impression on me.**



that, for example, one Russian girl didn't want to leave England behind. The it turned out that overall few wanted to go. So, in Russia a completely new team had to be put together. At first there were three or four of us. Then I struck lucky: I met an excellent business partner – Anna Khrustaleva. Her attitude to the business is different from the majority of recruiters who think only of short-term profit. Anna has a much broader perspective on the issue. She is interested in the actual processes, all the more so as we were both involved in the property market at the time. So, I can't say that I was searching hard for a partner. She simply popped up in the right place at the right time.

– ***What are the kind of managers Adelphi recruits, and how? What kind of companies are your clients – just Russian ones or are they also foreign ones operating in the RF?***

– We do it by specializing. Each of our employees is a consultant specializing in one particular area. They carry out a search for middle and high-ranking managers: top managers who receive a salary of, for example, from 100,000 to 1,200,000 roubles. There are various sectors: pharmaceuticals, property, retail chains, and IT. I should also mention the finance and accountancy positions which there are in all of these sectors. 70 percent of our business is international companies.

Opinion



Vladimir Tsarkov,
President of recruitment
agency Profil, and Doctor
of Historical Sciences



– The Moscow market for staff recruitment services has reached its own particular milestone being now just over 25 years old. In this relatively short space of time, an extensive infrastructure has been built: modest recruitment companies have subsequently transformed themselves into large groups. Narrow-focus HR agencies are growing successfully, many of them united in professional recruiter organizations, and their activities are providing specialized social networks, powerful "work" websites, media, and a field-specific video and print industry. And all



**Both Russian and international companies
insist on quality work above all else.**



– Is it possible to say which sector in Russia most of the requests for top managers and specialists come from?

– That’s difficult as a lot depends on the sector in question. Let’s take real estate, for example. Here, most likely, we are now talking about replacing those people who used to be involved in operational sites. If four years ago one could assume that completely filling a shopping centre with tenants was a foregone conclusion, then now the situation has changed. Now, tenants have to be fought for, new contracts are needed, and that means getting new people in too, people who will do this, not just sit there twiddling their thumbs but who will get out there and assert themselves.

– I would have thought that recruitment in the current situation in Russia is less than straightforward. The crisis that has developed, the sanctions, the fall of the rouble: is any of this reflected in your company’s activities? Are firms perhaps not particularly desperate to take on new staff?

– Yes, that’s true. But the thing is that the Russian recruitment market is already sufficiently developed now. In any case, it is a on a bigger scale than it was when I first started. I mean, our business has grown from 3 or 4 to 12 employees, which is an annual growth of 30–40 percent. And that is all with the current economic conditions in Russia. Why has that

Expert



Natalya Storozheva,
Managing Director
of the Centre for
Business and Career
Development
“Perspektiva”



– Compared with the European recruitment market, the one in Russia is smaller, despite the country’s larger population. Experts give various explanations for this. But I think that it is lagging behind for now because every European company automatically turns to an agency when recruiting personnel. They don’t retain recruiters on their staff – it would be almost like keeping your own fireman or policeman. In Russian companies, though, a huge number of HR officers (recruiters)



About Gergely Stewart



happened? Firstly, there are certain market requirements, and you simply have to understand what they are. Let's say companies operating in a segment like pharmaceuticals are feeling comfortable in the market, planning new businesses, developing new products and marketing strategies. If we are talking about more limited markets like real estate, then the situation is different. It still needs high-class specialists, but of a different profile. If three years ago those in demand were managers involved in finding land, building business centres

or office blocks, then now with these jobs we are simply coming up with zero. These days all efforts are directed at getting as much income as possible from already operational sites. Hence the labour force is there, it is simply a case of finding the people – not who are free at the moment and out of work – but who do the job in this day and age with greater quality. Those are the kind of people we need to procure.

– Another way of looking at it, is that a good manager comes with a good salary and, no doubt, not



all companies are going to be up for that?

– That's right. But on the other hand, there are now very few job candidates pushing for unrealistic demands. To a certain extent, in this regard, it has now even become a little easier than it was in the run-up to 2008. The market in Russia then was booming and people were forming patently unrealistic expectations. Some companies were paying their senior managers just silly money. Times have changed. But it should be pointed out that salaries in roubles haven't fallen, they have shrunk in two ways: in their exchange

– The most important thing at the moment is to be patient. Firstly, I believe in Russia's great opportunities. If this wasn't so, I wouldn't have chosen here to start a business. In my assessment, there are prospects, but we will get a feel for them, presumably, in two or three years, when our everyday work yields some tangible results. The crisis is good in that, in such times, weak competitors leave the market. Secondly, the present situation opens up the possibility of building trusted relations with clients, which always pays off a hundred times over. Thirdly,

If friends come over from London, I have to take them to a real Russian restaurant, and a Georgian one.

value, due to the rouble falling, and from the point of view of the consumer basket, insofar as food has become more expensive. Hence I wouldn't say that rouble salaries in Russia have dropped particularly.

– Does Adelphi have any firm plans for the future in Russia? Do you see the Russian market as having good prospects?

the level of competency on the Russian market is still a little lower than on more developed markets in a number of other countries. It is right down to this that our company has grown to four times its size. Obviously, one of the reasons is that our clients have become aware that we offer them higher quality services than other companies. After all, both Russian and international companies insist on quality work above all else. This



is what they really want, and the market is ripe for that.

– You speak excellent Russian. Where did you learn it and why did you choose Russian exactly? Is knowing Russian a great help in your work?

– I started to learn Russian when I was still at school in London. It is difficult to articulate exactly why it was I made that exact choice. There was a certain element of the exotic in it. It all happened in the 1990s, everybody was hearing about Russia, it was always on the news, and I thought: why not? If there is the opportunity, why not try learning something different rather than just German or French? Then I came to Russia as part of a student exchange, and I liked it here. I wouldn't say that I fell in love with Russia straightaway, but Moscow made a big impression on me. It was kind of like another world, yet still the same one, very similar to the one in Europe. And I thought that I had to be in Russia, had to understand what peoples' lives here were like. And with time, I came to the conclusion that I feel very much at home here. That is why I am here. But I wouldn't say that living in Russia is easy in every way: there are some things that are really quite irritating.

– Like?

– Like, when I had to go for

a Russian temporary residence permit, it took me three months. It took up a lot of time I could have spent working. I was stuck in a queue at various authorities, where sometimes people would offer to sell you their place in the queue... That's when you realise that there are, of course, difficulties to overcome. However, it doesn't alter the generally positive picture. I like the fact that Russians are very emotional, open compared with the English, let's say. The directness of Russians appeals to me. At first, you could be forgiven for thinking Russians are somewhat rude but really they are just straightforward. Let's say if the waitress attending to you is in a bad mood, you will, no doubt, know about it. And such a direct approach actually appeals to me.

Hence, business is good, but I am not in Russia purely for that. There are a lot of other countries where you could set a business up, and I don't rule out the possibility that there are other nations where being in this business would be even more lucrative than it is in Russia. But I am still here.

– Do you know of any foreign businessmen who manage to get by successfully in Russia without knowing the language?

– I think that anyone coming to Moscow for at least two or three years should learn Russian. Not so they can



**The directness of Russians
appeals to me.**



run a business but so they can live here. You have to interact with people, live in their world, and not feel as if you are some kind of island in the country you find yourself in. As for business contacts, expats who don't know Russian find developing their businesses extremely challenging.

– What impressions of Moscow can you share with us? How do you spend your free time, what kind of food do you prefer?

– Moscow has changed greatly over the last 10 years. The city is expanding very rapidly. I've been doing a lot of sport, especially during the summer. Sometimes I need to feel away from this

supercity. Which is why I like places with the greenery of Gorky Park in the middle of the capital, Neskuchny Garden near where I live. But even so, business, clearly, is the main part of my life.

I like the great variety of cuisines on offer in Moscow. If friends come over from London, I have to take them to a real Russian restaurant, and a Georgian one, to a restaurant with eastern cuisine. You don't come across such good Georgian, eastern cooking in Europe as you do in Moscow. And the Italian and French restaurants here are not as good quality as they are in Europe, and they are more expensive. But that is something that is more than possible to live with. ■