

# **11 Knowledge Management: A Way to Make a Difference in Our Field of Industry**

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## **11.1 Introduction**

In the highly competitive market within which career management companies operate, the leaders distinguish themselves by offering high quality services, that are flexible to the needs of their clients, but that are also consistent across borders.

In the following article we will present the case of Lee Hecht Harrison, one of the leading firms in global career management services. Following a description of the company, we will discuss how the HR practices build corporate capability by focusing on the Lee Hecht Harrison methodology, by emphasizing quality and by supporting the growth of a culture based on being a learning organization. Finally, we will discuss two specific aspects of HR practice that make the company stand out, the first being the emphasis on orientation and certification of new hires and the second, long-term training and development of talent.

## **11.2 The Company**

Lee Hecht Harrison (LHH) is a high quality, innovative, global outplacement and career services firm. Established in New York in 1974 and now headquartered in Woodcliff Lake, New Jersey, LHH has grown from a regional to a national, to a global organization.

Today, LHH has offices in more than 150 cities throughout the world. It employs more than 600 full-time and 700+ part-time employees and maintains close business relationships with Global Partners in many other locations, allowing it to serve organizations and their employees virtually anywhere in the world.

LHH is a subsidiary of Adecco S.A, a \$15 billion international human resources company headquartered in Lausanne, Switzerland. Adecco is the worldwide leader in employment staffing services, with the highest revenue, cash flow and market capitalization of any firm in the industry, now operating over 5,000 offices in more than 55 countries. Its stock is publicly traded on the Zurich, Paris and NASDAQ Stock Exchanges.

The association with Adecco has provided for significant global synergies and substantial capital investments, particularly in job search technology, in addition to making available more and better market research employment opportunities for clients. Importantly, the goals of the two businesses have always been complementary in their desire to help people to adapt to changing work environments, to sustain their employment value and to connect to jobs.

### **11.2.1 Structure of the Organization**

In 2003, LHH's full-time staff totals over 600 employees, of whom approximately 67% are professionals and roughly 33% are support staff. The overall professional staff profile of consultants is about 50% male/50% female. Over half of the General Managers (those who run offices) are women, as are about 60% of LHH's senior management team, including the Chief Operating Officer.

LHH strives to be as flat an organization as possible, believing that customer responsiveness, service delivery and revenue and profitability growth are best achieved when « owned » at the local level. At the same time, they recognize the importance of firm-wide program and service development, quality assurance, and the capacity for providing national and international project management to corporate customers.

Major downsizing projects are coordinated by LHH's Project Services Division. Project Services was established in 1985 as the industry's first practice area dedicated to the delivery of career services for large numbers of people. Because the capabilities required to plan, deliver and manage a major downsizing/closure are quite different from those required to counsel an individual in career transition, the company has recognized these special skills and has created separate functions. Today, LHH's Project Services Division has developed the most sophisticated project management capability available anywhere in the career services industry.

Other corporate functions include Development and Delivery; Marketing, Sales, Information and Financial Services; and a small corporate headquarters staff.

All of LHH's offices are wholly owned and provide a full range of outplacement, career development, executive coaching, retention and workforce consulting services. There is no franchising or licensing of any of the programs or services which enables the company to fully define and monitor quality standards, as well as shift priorities/resources as required.