A new breed of manager is emerging in Europe. Dubbed “the Euro-executives”, the new managers feel at home in any European country, speak two or three languages with enviable fluency, and bask in the certainty of heading the shortlists for the most influential jobs. Cuckoo-like in their rapid ascendancy, they are pushing out the older breed of executives who know how to manage in only one or two countries, speak only their native tongue, and prefer to work for one company for most of their working lives.

The hallmark of true Euro-executives is adaptability, enabling them to blend easily into the local culture of different European territories. These skills are not easy for others to emulate. Unlike languages, cultural adaptability cannot be learned at night school. Aspiring Euro-executives who, through hard work, become proficient in two or three European languages still do not equal born Euro-executives who have been listening and thinking in several languages for most of their lives.

Companies seeking to expand into Europe now realise that macro-structures make more sense. But they need a management organisation which fits the new regime, replacing the practice of running separate companies in each country with a single pan-European entity. It is in this new macro-structure for Europe that Euro-executives flourish. Indeed, they will be the only kind of executive qualified to run a pan-European operation. The old-style single country manager is thus becoming vulnerable, restricted by a lack of experience in European markets.

The search for the Euro-executive

As the traditional single territory manager becomes redundant, Euro-executives will become the most valued management species, with major companies competing for their services. Initially, they will be in short supply, however, as a market research report The Search for the Euro-Executive, prepared by SRU and published in 1989 by headhunters, Saxton Bampfylde International, shows. The report highlights the difficulties which some companies seeking to expand into Europe will face in recruiting top managers. In the UK, for example, there may be problems at middle-management level in companies with newly Europeanised horizons.

The smaller European countries produce a higher proportion of executives in relation to their population size. The Danes, Dutch, Swiss and Scandinavians are accomplished linguists and find it easy to settle and succeed in widely differing...
countries. Other factors which make a successful Europeanist may not appear on an individual’s CV, but are revealed in the Saxton Bampfylde study. The influencing factors include:

- Parents of different nationalities
- Education and residence in several countries
- Changes of jobs to widen experience

The actionable point for the recruiter is that the best Euro-managers are not too tightly emotionally wedded to their present company. A life-time of international service within one large company may serve to blunt sensitivity to local culture, such is the company-cultural potency of some of the world’s largest organisations, insulating executives from the mores of their host country.

On gender, the study found that few experienced Euro-executives were female. It is not difficult to see how the colonial attitude to hiring management and development in many international companies tends to favour selection criteria which relate more to an executive’s ability to thrive in Africa and the locker-room, rather than in the more subtle milieux of top European boardrooms. But women not only represent the majority of modern language graduates, they are also widely thought to have the majority of men in sensitivity, another hallmark of the Euro-executive. It therefore makes sense to look for female candidates for important European positions.

**Recruiting Euro-executives**

Although it is clear that ideal Euro-executives are in short supply and much sought after, it will not be easy to track them down and attract them. The Euro-executive phenomenon will, therefore, make good business for the better headhunters with good European facilities. Recruiting first class candidates is a skill which demands patient stalking, skilled advocacy, as well as money, if potential recruits are to be persuaded to change company.

Broad-scale recruitment methods are unlikely to be effective or economic in attracting this class of managers for two reasons:

- They do not read job ads: They already work in good companies, holding down excellent jobs, and have no need to job hunt.
- There are few pan-European media through which to reach them.

The wise recruiter will pre-empt the difficulty and the high cost of locating and attracting targets by recruiting them at an early stage in their careers; for example, at those business schools which offer MBA courses with a specific European content. A selection of leading schools with a strong European business content are listed at the end of this chapter, though many more business schools are offering Euro-options and subsidiary language courses.

The executive search consultant thrives on an upper management skill shortage. It must come as no surprise, therefore, to learn that the emergence of Euro-executives and the value placed on them by European-based business are major factors in accelerating the headhunters’ efforts to themselves adapt to the new demands of the Single Market and the ever widening European marketplace. The key to successful headhunting lies in an ability to carry out research in several different European countries simultaneously, in the appropriate