

# CPM Insights 06

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## Technical profiles 'in good shape'

**Technical profiles are said to be in short supply, but is that really true? When we say that, we normally just mean that companies do not find it very easy to fill their vacancies for technical profiles.**



Belgium does have technical expertise running around. Or perhaps we should say such expertise is around, whether it is *running* around is another matter. The rare birds with a great depth of expertise tend not to fly about. They generally sit where they can lay their eggs, where they can use their specific knowledge and keep brooding it. To tempt them, you need to give them a reason to leave their nests. You have to make more of an effort.

The rare birds that excel in their fields do not always shine in management and other skills. They operate more in depth than in breadth. However, compartmentalisation does not work in business. A company posts the best results when its different departments interact readily. The elements that make the man or woman

with a technical profile the perfect candidate are often the right personal, emotional, social and intellectual skills.

A good HR partner therefore does more than spot tech talent, he also asks himself what else does the client expect beyond expertise? What other skills contribute to the business objectives? Does a candidate have that potential? And how do we find out? Does the talent we are seeking lie hidden among our existing workforce? Can we uncover more of it there (development) or do we have to look for reinforcements (search)?

Technical profiles, T-shaped development and searches are the topics addressed in this CPM Newsletter. We hope you find it instructive to read.

**Christine Van Velthoven**  
Managing Director

# The T-shape of people and companies

For rapidly evolving, research-driven, scientific sectors, it is very important – though not necessarily easy – for education, research and practice to provide mutual stimulus for one another. Education as such can never follow the latest developments in specific subjects, let alone stay ahead of them. Industry is more dynamic than academia. The market does not expect new graduates to know everything or even be up to speed with the latest developments. We know we have to practice life-long learning because the electronical, mechanical, IT, medical, bio and pharmaceutical sectors, not to mention the financial, economic and many other areas, never stand still. A passionate researcher as a teacher? Ideal! A manager who keeps looking for new solutions? Great! Training from someone who knows the ropes? Fantastic!

## Wanted: the researcher, teacher and practitioner

Ideally, our people are researchers, teachers and practitioners all in one. That is a lot to ask for. All that knowledge in one head with only 24 hours in a day makes it practically impossible for one person to play all the roles.

On top of that, each role demands different skills. A researcher should be capable of being a good teacher. We use the term 'be capable of', because what makes a person an inspiring instructor or coach is not just a matter of extensive knowledge, but of patience, good communication, a clear structure and empathy. Although some colleges and universities do their best in this regard, a technical education ideally generates good technicians, but rarely good managers as well. Companies have understood that. They understand that individual technical profiles can never know everything and be capable of everything. Continuous training in a working environment now goes without saying. By now, companies have also understood that they should help their technical people acquire management skills. Because no one working in a company is an island.

## The first ambassadors of the T-shape model

Companies need 'hybrid' managers; that became clear a long time ago. In the London newspaper *The Independent* in 1991, **David Guest** was the first to refer to 'T-shaped people' as "this type of rounded personality (...) equally comfortable with information systems, modern management techniques (...)". **Marco Iansiti of Harvard** also used the term for people who "are not only experts in specific technical areas but also

intimately acquainted with the potential systemic impact of their particular tasks (...)".

The I-shaped professionals of earlier times, for whom everything revolved around vertical, profound specialisation, proved insufficiently

resilient in the face of change. T-shaped professionals combine in-depth knowledge of one field with a good understanding of others, and are much more stable as a result. The T-shaped people were initially a side-effect, occurring despite rather than because of corporate policy. The I-shape was encouraged; the T-shape was what curious professionals made of it themselves.

**IDEO** was a pioneer among companies that deliberately sought the T-shape in their employees. CEO **Tim Brown** put it this way: "We look for (...) T-shaped people. They have a principal skill that describes the vertical leg of the T – they are mechanical engineers or

industrial designers. But they are so empathetic that they can branch out into other skills, such as anthropology. They are able to explore insights from many different perspectives and recognise patterns of behaviour that point to a universal human need." Another fervent supporter of the T-shape principle is **IBM**. The company has collaborative structures in place with universities, government and industry partners worldwide to search for innovative solutions for the service sector. Transdisciplinary collaboration also demands T-shaped people.

## T-shaped people within strategic HRM

T-shaped people are thought to adapt more

readily to change. As they function well in a multidisciplinary, multifunctional and multicultural context, teamwork is thought to come naturally to them. But where do companies strike a balance when making the choice between specialists and generalists? The first studies on the subject date from 2001. One fairly logical conclusion was that generalist thinking became more important as market demand became more susceptible to change. Another study pointed out that progress always came from interaction and confrontation. In addition to the criticism that these are pretty self-evident conclusions, it could be pointed out that the T-shape may be an ideal, but is not a solution for companies because it is too difficult and too expensive. How can every company have and retain T super-employees? Wouldn't they do better to ensure they have enough of every type to form the T together?

Perhaps the fact that studies of differently shaped skills are being carried out is more important than the results themselves. Because the importance of vertically and horizontally orientated skills is under debate, people are thinking about the difference, about the industry-specific and more general role of employees and therefore about the role of HRM within companies. After all, there is enough scope to enable people to learn quickly, subject to the use of the right organisational model and the right tools. If you want to permanently motivate good people, you give them the chance to develop within a company, and that development will go in every direction. The fact that people are then embedded in a company both in depth and in breadth directly demonstrates HRM's strategic importance. 'Managing people. Meeting aspirations', CPM's baseline, sums up this story emphasising how important people are in achieving objectives and how important objectives are in stimulating people, in every direction. ■

### Sources:

Guest, David (1991) *The hunt is on for the Renaissance Man of computing*. *The Independent* (London), September 17, 1991.  
Iansiti, Marco (1993), 'Real world R&D: Jumping the product generation gap', *Harvard Business Review*, May-June, pg. 139.  
Brown, Tim (2005) *Strategy by Design*. *Fast Company* en (2009) *Change by Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation*. Harper Business.



# CPM talks to clients and engineers about T-Professional Development

## What is T-Professional Development?

IDEO and IBM are one of first companies that introduced the T-shaped model and set up programmes to train its consultants to be business partners. In the 'new economy' T-Professional Development has since become a must for managers to be successful. The vertical of the T represents an area of expertise, for example R&D. In the T-model the arms of R&D extend beyond one's own discipline. On a transdisciplinary basis they seek connection with, for example, Finance, HRM, Sales and Operations. T-Professional Development stimulates boundary-crossing skills, enabling you as a professional to come up with ideas that transcend your own area of expertise.

How can you develop the arms of the T? How can you learn to think across the whole range

of the company? This individual competency development begins with solid self-knowledge. Self-reflection is and remains the beginning of greater wisdom. Who am I? What are my strengths and weaknesses at present? Where do I want to go? What boundary-crossing skills do I want to develop? What is my plan for achieving this?

## T-Professional Development, a valuable approach

**Christine Van Velthoven**, Managing Director of CPM: "T-shaped Professional Development has already proved to be a very valuable approach for issues that clients come to us with. Below are a few concrete examples I can give you from experience, quite recognisable for most engineers."

"With questions like these we advise starting with 'being aware'; often development centres are set up for this purpose", Christine Van Velthoven continues. "Through an intensive screening process we measure your current strengths and weaknesses and look for development potential. Our consultants then help to set development goals and to set out a path for strengthening these competencies (PDP: Personal Development Plan)."

There are no standard formulas for this – it calls for a plan that is tailor-made to both the organisation and the individual. CPM supports these development paths through training and coaching. But developing the arms of the T is a task that involves so much more, as the following examples illustrate.

FOR SEVERAL YEARS I HAVE BEEN THE LOCAL R&D MANAGER IN BELGIUM. AN OPPORTUNITY HAS NOW ARISEN TO BECOME R&D MANAGER FOR THE WHOLE GROUP. I COULD REALLY USE SOME ADVICE ON HOW BEST TO APPROACH THIS.

MY BOSS HAS ASKED ME TO TAKE ON THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT FOR THE MARKETING OF OUR NEWEST PRODUCT. THAT WILL REQUIRE NEGOTIATION WITH SEVERAL PARTIES, INCLUDING THOSE OUTSIDE MY AREA OF EXPERTISE. HOW DO I GET THE PARTIES TO WORK IN ALIGNMENT?

I AM AN EXPERT WHO HAS ALREADY PROVED MY WORTH IN THE COMPANY. NOW MY COMPANY WANTS ME TO TAKE ON A SALES ROLE AND I'M NOT COMFORTABLE WITH THAT. CAN YOU HELP ME?

OUR COMPANY WANTS TO TURN OUR INTERNAL RESEARCH DEPARTMENT INTO A SELF-SUPPORTING BUSINESS UNIT. MY CEO HAS ASKED HOW I PLAN TO APPROACH IT.

## T-Professional Development – how did they do it?

### ANL Plastics



**ANL Plastics develops and produces custom thermoformed plastic packaging, for food and non-food. It has 400 employees working at three sites (in addition to the site in Wellen, Belgium, two more production sites in France and Poland). [www.anlplastics.be](http://www.anlplastics.be)**



#### Joris Vrancken, Managing Director ANL Plastics:

"Engineers represent a small proportion of the staff of ANL Plastics. Obviously they have to work together with colleagues with totally different backgrounds and from different departments, often leading the way in technological affairs. In the academic world, it is possible to conduct research for the sake of research, but in a business context, technology

has to be in favour of the company. This requires a different and a wider vision. Whether somebody has that vision is already evidenced to some extent by their background and interests and the path they have already taken. Their choice of study and training obviously does not tell the whole story. My tip to young engineers is to think as broadly as possible.

Young engineers like Johan Verbert start out at ANL Plastics by systematically applying and developing their subject knowledge in our various departments. Young engineers already have quite an expansive view of the world, a trait unique to their generation. But what they do not have is economic or business experience, and things like coaching still tend to be just theoretical. In order to actually support young talent, motivating guidance is the most efficient approach; it begins within the company itself and can be strengthened by HR professionals, in the case of ANL Plastics that is where CPM comes in."

#### Johan Verbert, Management Trainee ANL Plastics:

"I am a civil engineer in computer sciences, have taken my doctorate, and just over a year ago I was

approached by the search department of CPM to gradually take on the technical management at ANL Plastics. In the academic world you work amongst like-minded people, are given a clean slate with little time pressure, and do your own thing. At ANL Plastics we have to work well together as a team if we want to achieve our goals. We have to take into consideration the client's expectations, the agreed timescales and the overall financial picture. At the same time there is a lot of mutual support, I can feel there is confidence in me, and making mistakes is allowed. Keeping abreast of technical matters is easy, in my mind, but as far as providing leadership and coordination, I've still got a lot to learn. And so that is what I am trying to do. I am doing it on the job while also getting structural guidance from CPM. For example, you soon learn that people have good reasons for doing things the way they do. If you want change, then you need to understand their motives first. I recognised that in my own work too – and that is always my first tip to young engineers: it is important to know your own strengths and weaknesses. You can work on those weaknesses. Receiving (or asking for) constructive criticism is always a good start. And as a member of a team in a company you are never alone."

### UNILIN



**The UNILIN Group from Wielsbeke has three divisions (Flooring, Panels and Insulation) and is European market leader in the upper segment of laminate with its UNILIN Flooring. UNILIN employs more than 3,800 people across 17 production sites. [www.unilin.com](http://www.unilin.com)**

#### Stefaan Lauwers, Operations Director UNILIN:

"UNILIN is a process-driven company, so quite a few engineers work here. You mainly come across them where you would traditionally expect to: in production, quality control, technology, R&D etc., in other words in the technical departments. Less so in sales nowadays, for instance. We do give salespeople additional technical knowledge so that they can head into the marketplace

with an in-depth knowledge of our products. By means of 'succession planning' we make an effort to allow technical people to gain experience in business development and sales-orientated functions, a step which is not always evident. The combination of technical knowledge and insight into the business and the market, coupled with business economics, are trump cards that will allow one to progress into higher management positions within UNILIN.

In the technical positions the challenges are huge. In addition to developing their specific technical knowledge, our technical people learn to take into account financial aspects and cost management early on in their career. Cooperation within and amongst teams, whether or not on a project basis, means that interpersonal skills are also important. Learning to consider the person behind the employee is a prerequisite for achieving success within UNILIN. 'Succession planning' is looked at in company context and not just within the department or division. Because UNILIN is a major international group, there are real opportunities to grow within the business. If the employee and the company are both confident, based on achievements and

potential, job rotation is certainly a possibility. Potential successors for each position are mapped out on a regular basis with the aim of being able to ensure prompt individual succession and (re)orientation if applicable. Internal mobility and career planning are aspects that we are dealing with in an increasingly conscious manner. Having a clear perspective on where the gaps are within the organisation means we can work to remove them.

Training programmes and competency development are therefore tied in with this in a targeted way, on both a collective and individual basis. So as an employee or engineer you will not stay in only one job at UNILIN. Keeping

a sufficiently broad outlook and always being willing to learn is the way to go.

Being an engineer myself, I have learned the majority of my non-technical competencies on the job, by taking up various challenges and by progressing within the company. Time spent working abroad is quite tough but also a great opportunity for learning. My tip to young engineers today is this: you all give the appearance of having plenty of interests in your life – apply that attitude to your work too."

## READING TIP

# Are you interested in T-Shape Development and want to know more?

Let our consultants be your guide.

### THE TEN FACES OF INNOVATION Kelly, Tom; IDEO

Are you a *Cross-Pollinator*? Do you work with a *Hurdler*? Or a *Storyteller*? These are just a few of the roles that Tom Kelley, author of the bestselling *Art of Innovation*, suggests people can play in an organisation to foster innovation and new ideas – and fend off creativity-stifling

naysayers. Inspired by the roles that Kelley has seen emerge at IDEO, the leading design firm where Kelley is General Manager, *The Ten Faces of Innovation* is filled with engaging stories of how businesses have used innovation and design thinking to transform customer experience. ■



## TELEVIC



Televic is a Belgian company that produces and implements high-quality, hi-tech communication systems for specific niche markets. It employs more than 400 people worldwide. The head office is based in Izegem. [www.televic.com](http://www.televic.com)



Lieven Danneels,  
CEO Televic:

"Televic is an outstanding example of a technology company where you come across

engineers in all facets of enterprise. It is true – looking beyond the purely technical is a day-to-day reality here. To lead it on the right track, we have drawn up a competency management policy together with CPM. Competencies have been defined for every position, even the non-technical ones. Our values – innovation, flexibility, no-nonsense, sustainability – require skills, but also the right attitude. We as the employer, and even the employees, feel a responsibility to develop individual competencies to the highest possible level. We make it a reality too. Every year, each employee works with an action plan designed around no more than three competencies. In the competency-building a 'fit' needs to be found between the employee, his or her role

in the firm, and the organisation. At Televic there is a dual career ladder – professional and managerial – because everyone needs to be able to evolve, from the engineer with interests beyond the purely technical to the engineer who is, and wishes to remain, primarily a specialist. No two people are the same, everyone needs to work out for themselves, where their strengths lie, and then develop these. That is actually the tip that I want to share with young engineers: know yourself. For both personal and professional success that is very important." ■

## CPM, a member of the CFR Consulting Group



Recently Christine Van Velthoven, Managing Director of CPM, has taken up the role of CEO of the CFR Consulting Group, an alliance of 48 leading offices in 31 countries that provides professional executive and management search and selection recruitment services internationally.

'Search and Selection' has always been one of CPM's key strengths, valued highly by customers. Today, this similar efficient approach has been institutionalised in all CFR member countries for international projects. Seen the recent growth – 20% last year – and motivating

results for clients using the CFR network, there was a need to formalise our network structure and organisation in order to reassure a consistent level of client satisfaction and results. Now more than ever, the CFR Consulting Group is ready to take up every international search and selection challenge you, as an organisation, are facing.

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## DID YOU KNOW THAT ...

... the CFR Consulting Group was founded in 1996 and has a fee income today of US\$ 56 million.

... the driving forces behind our daily success are our more than 300 professional consultants, in 48 offices, in 31 countries.

... all member agencies and experts share the same core values of professionalism and commitment.

... our formula for success is based on local best practice combined with international compatibility.

# High-quality direct search

## Seeking the extra potential in candidates: the 'T-shape' concept

Talent development is an area where CPM as an HR partner can help its client companies, that goes without saying. In addition to the development of existing talent, a second important pillar for HR management is a qualitative search capability. The use of new media means that ways of seeking and hiring talent are becoming more democratic. Any searcher can compile profiles with the right degrees on LinkedIn. Any individual can post his or her CV on a variety of jobsites. There are good and bad sides to this development. The near-automatic inflow of candidates is convenient, of course, but the results of a search conducted through the internet and jobsites are not always that accurate. In addition, a growing number of CVs on jobsites remain available after their 'sell-by date'.

This also implies that such trawling methods are not the right solution for all vacancies. The 'public' jobsites are of little use in the case of vacancies where demand exceeds supply. Perfect candidates, from specialists to the management and director level, are not always looking for new opportunities and therefore have to be identified and motivated. A more active form of search is essential, and that is work for specialists.

### How does CPM go about searches?

#### Proprietary database and direct search

Over the years, CPM has built a proprietary database with quite a different approach: CPM offers candidates a platform to register their CVs themselves through the website ([www.cpm-hrm.be](http://www.cpm-hrm.be)), but above all undertakes personalised and active searches for interesting profiles, fills in the details itself and keeps them up to date. Ultimately, the CPM database is a 'closed' tool, not just because of the concern for quality, but also due to the confidentiality of the information.

CPM works hard to keep up with what is happening in HR in a number of sectors. Its database contains more than just facts about candidates. Information about their motivation,

personality and social skills for example can be crucial in finding the right match. And this is not only for people who are actively seeking a (new) job, but also people with interesting profiles, who might be prepared to listen if an attractive job offer presents itself, are relevant. At CPM, we understand the art of inspiring people to take up new challenges. This demands a strong network, in which CPM consequently invests a lot of time and energy.

#### Two heads are better than one

When CPM receives a request for a technical profile, for example, every executive search begins with a sound understanding of the vacancy. The consultant and the search specialist approach the request in tandem, with confrontational questions such as what is expected of the profile, are the requirements in line with the job, does the request fit in with the company's strategy? As a result, it is not unusual for the desired profile to be adjusted. After all, a search is a process. The targeted research does not start until this stage is completed. The search expert then places an objective filter on our proprietary database and searches actively in the market (the relevant business sectors) for possible eligible profiles on the basis of their professional experience and achievements. The CPM consultant/psychologist subsequently

refines the list of possible candidates on the basis of 'personality' (interest, motivation, cultural match etc.). The psychologist's lens is an important additional angle that CPM can offer in an executive search. When a company is looking for a technical profile, the greatest specialist is not always the perfect fit in terms of growth. In many cases, other skills dictate the ultimate preference. The decision is based on future outlook. The shortlist the client receives from CPM will have already passed the 'future' test.

#### Is there anything left to find?

Technical profiles are said to be in short supply. We don't claim that they are easy to find, but they are around. It is true that technical talent rarely floats to the surface. That means that more effort, more experience and more power of persuasion are needed to find it. On the other hand, as a rule technical talent will not bear restrictions of age, geographic borders or the possibilities of the moment. That makes the people who have it extremely interesting profiles. CPM's psychologists are definitely equal in this task.



## ANL Plastics: search for a technical director

The world of plastic packaging is evolving rapidly. As one of the market leaders, ANL Plastics wanted to be ahead of this evolution and help shape it. At a time when technology, which once gave many companies their leading edge, can now be copied and become common property so quickly, the challenge lies in focusing on the core business of thermoformed packaging, particularly proprietary tool production. Top priority in the company's change process was given to modernisation. Becoming lean and mean, optimising and taking a technological approach based on theoretical models. This would enable the company's in-house tool shop to produce the best tools from the point of view of the ultimate product price.

ANL Plastics asked CPM to find an experienced technical director in the plastics field, who would have the potential to reshape the tool shop cost centre into a technologically leading-edge, profitable operation. Experience of thermoforming was strongly advocated as one of the target profile's 'must haves'.

The **executive search** process delivered a stack of market information indicating that the ideal profile might not exist. People with management experience were found in the market, but they specialised in technologies other than thermoforming. On the basis of this information and on-going communication with the client, the ideal profile was adjusted and changed from 'graduate mechanical engineer with expert knowledge and management experience' to 'young, dynamic computer sciences civil engineer with a passion for technology and the automation of technical processes'.

CPM found the right candidate through a solid headhunting process. The subsequent round in the CPM Development Centre and coaching by a CPM consultant provided a personal enrichment that the successful contender could only have dreamt of, as well as essential future-proofing for the company. Awareness of the need to develop the engineer's soft skills and the opportunities that ANL Plastics offered him through development and coaching thus laid the foundations of future success for both candidate and company. ■

### READING TIP

## Are you interested in T-Shape Development and want to know more?

Let our consultants be your guide.

### HOW BELL LABS CREATES STAR PERFORMERS

Harvard Business Review Article

Robert E. Kelley, Janet Caplan

Source: Harvard Business Review

12 pages. Publication date: July 1, 1993

How can managers increase the productivity of professionals when most of their work goes on inside their heads? Robert Kelley and Janet Caplan believe that defining the difference between star performers and average workers is the answer. Many managers assume that top performers are just smarter. But the authors' research at the Bell Laboratories Switching Systems Business Unit (SSBU) has revealed that the real difference between stars and average workers is not their IQ but the ways top performers do their jobs. Their study has led to a training programme based on the strategies of star performers. The SSBU training programme, known as the Productivity Enhancement Group (PEG), uses an expert model to demystify productivity. The star engineers selected to develop the expert model, identified and ranked nine work strategies, such as taking initiative, networking, and self-management. Middle performers were also asked what makes top-quality work, but their definitions and ranking of the strategies differed significantly from those of the top performers. Once PEG got underway, respected engineers ran the training sessions, which included case studies, work-related exercises and frank discussions. The benefits of the programme were striking: participants and managers reported substantial productivity increases in both star and average performers. ■

# Reinforcements at CPM

Like our client companies, we are an organisation that constantly strives for improvement. We strengthen our structures on an on-going basis, by attracting additional talent, for example, thereby benefiting our professional advice to our clients. We have recently been joined by some new people, who are showcased here by way of an introduction: Management Consultants & Market Managers Bernie Caessens and Maurice Gorissen work out of the Ghent and Hasselt offices respectively. Their colleague Howard Zhu heads Competence@China, the CPM office in China.

## BERNIE CAESSENS

Managing Consultant & Market Manager (Ghent)



### Educational background:

- Master degree in Psychology, Ghent University, 1998
- Doctorate in Psychological Sciences, Ghent University, 2002

### Professional experience pre-CPM:

- 1998-2005 Post-doctoral research in Vakgroep Experimentele Psychologie (Experimental Psychology Group), Ghent University
- 2005-2006 Consumer Experience Center Manager (Product Strategy and Marketing Department), Philips NV
- 2006-2008 Senior Research Expert Sound Coding, Cochlear Technology Center
- 2008-2011 Project/Program Manager C-DACS System, Cochlear Technology Center

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### What kind of professional career did you have before joining CPM?

In my previous job, I built up strong project management experience in an international context. On the basis of my core role in product development I was closely involved in the entire value chain: Research, Marketing, Business Development, Manufacturing and Logistics, Purchasing, Supply Chain, Service. I bring specific market knowledge of the pharmaceutical and biotechnology sectors to the table at CPM. From previous roles, I also have a strong affinity with software development and IT. Naturally, my educational background and PhD in the psychological sciences give me a very sound base in psychometrics. In the words of management icon Michael Porter, I see myself as someone who has "the ability to take an extraordinary complex, integrated, multidimensional problem and get arms around it conceptually in a way that helps, that informs and empowers practitioners to actually do things".

### How do you see your role at CPM?

As a managing consultant and market manager at CPM, I actually see three important roles for myself, which are not necessarily listed here in order of importance:

There's my management role in the Ghent office. My primary aim here is to develop the group of senior and junior consultants further into an even tighter team of professionals for whom quality and service are the central focus. The nice thing is that it's mostly a matter of dotting the i's and crossing the t's, because this team is already in place.

Then there is my role as market manager, a role I share with my colleagues from Antwerp, Brussels,

Hasselt and China and which is fairly new within the organisation. The aim is to fulfil our role as strategic HR partners even better in the context of increasing specialisation within a knowledge-driven economy. As the technological aspects of products and services increase, it becomes ever more important for us as HR partners not to lose touch with industry. To meet this need, we specialise in a number of sectors, each of which has its own character and specifications. In addition to some more standard areas, I contribute specific knowledge to CPM's portfolio in the healthcare and biotechnology sectors.

Finally, there is my role within the CPM management team. In that capacity and on the basis of my experience, I want to keep my finger on the pulse of what is going on in the area of talent selection & development to further strengthen CPM's expertise in this domain. We naturally want to do this in collaboration with our clients, in order to ensure a seamless match between our services and their needs. My business development and project management experience offers a significant advantage in that respect.

### What is your take on the HRM of technical profiles?

I am convinced that people with a strong T-shaped profile will play an important role in our future industry. The past years of globalisation and the consolidation of new technologies (e.g. the social media) in business create a need to step out of our own comfort zone. Even people with highly technical jobs need a variety of so-called 'soft skills'. Think for example of the way e-mail is handled, where there is no non-verbal component in the communication and both sender and recipient have to display increased empathetic capabilities to communicate efficiently.

At CPM we approach the T-shape in the context of acquiring, developing and retaining talent. Acquiring it, because expertise is called for in making a clear assessment of the competences in the breadth of the T, even more than for technical competences. Developing it, because unfortunately the current education system still pays too little attention to non-subject-specific competences. Retaining talent, because T-shaped people constantly explore alternatives. How do you prevent their craving for innovation

from driving them elsewhere? How can you ensure that their jobs satisfy them and remain challenging?

### And furthermore ...

HR management is often the subject of debate, even nowadays and despite 60 years of studies and kilometres of research results that have demonstrated the value of good HR management. In my opinion, that's the heart of the problem: HRM practices are often limited to operational

interventions. To have a real impact, to really deliver added value, it is essential for a strategic vision of human resources to be in place and to be applied systematically. This is the only way for strategic HR to develop into a fully-fledged decision-making science which helps managers to direct the corporate vision. The biggest stumbling-block is that a lot of people seem to think that building a strategic HR policy is expensive and leads to cumbersome structures. I think it's time to throw out these fallacies.

## MAURICE GORISSEN

Managing Consultant & Market Manager (Hasselt)



### Educational background:

- Bachelor in Marketing, Provinciaal Hoger Handelsinstituut Limburg, 1985
- Post-graduate studies in Information management, Limburgs Universitair Centrum (now Hasselt University), 1990
- IT consultant, Syntra Genk, 1999
- Teaching certificate, STEPS Hasselt, 2004

### Professional experience pre-CPM:

- 1985-1989 Insurance and food sectors
- 1989-1995 VOKA Chamber of Commerce Limburg, Secretary
- 1995-1999 UNIZO-Limburg, Managing Contact for SMEs
- 1999-2005 Livios NV + Verstandig Bouwen bvba, COO
- 2005-2007 Circuit Zolder, Head of Sales
- 2007-2008 VOKA Chamber of Commerce Limburg, Director of Services & Networking/Events
- 2008-2010 Bouwunie Limburg, Director

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### What kind of professional career did you have before joining CPM?

I have worked in a variety of management positions in SMEs and service organisations over the years. Attracting, retaining and coaching employees formed a direct part of my areas of responsibility. In my experience, you have to be open to professional support as a line manager: where I didn't have the right knowledge of well defined, specific HR topics I called in external specialists. The more professional and detailed the HR strategy, the more efficient the team and the more smoothly internal communication works, that's what I have found. Thanks to these years of practical experience and external coaching, I can give CPM clients targeted and effective support in their human resources strategies as a managing consultant.

### How do you see your role at CPM?

My focus within CPM lies in executive search, with particular reference to more senior profiles who in many cases also have to fulfil a managerial role. I want to persuade CEOs not to spend too long searching for that one specialised employee themselves, thereby losing precious time. A better way is to set up a meeting to analyse the job thoroughly, so that CPM can get a search going quickly and efficiently.

A second focus lies in talent development. Companies often have very good employees with growth potential on board. With CPM's expertise, we can work out a personal development plan together to support employees in their internal careers.

### What is your take on the HRM of technical profiles?

Filling jobs requiring technical profiles is still one of the greatest challenges for HR managers. A lot of employers have developed strategies for early acquisition campaigns at the colleges and universities, to attract the best candidates as first-comers. As a result, final-year students are already under contract before they complete their finals. Employers without such strategies face protracted searches for new hires. CPM wants to encourage these companies to work out a clear timeline within their HR strategies. Once this step is taken, we can develop an action plan together to identify the most suitable candidates via search. CPM has the experience, databases and contacts to do this.

Developing and supporting technical employees to take on managerial positions is often felt to be a difficult exercise. Clients who engage CPM's support here are assured of a method that integrates the people involved, managers and colleagues into the process and sees team spirit improving as a result.

### In conclusion, here is a tip:

Every manager has to be open to 'employee development' – in times when the employment market is tight, an investment in your in-house team will show returns.

# HOWARD ZHU

General Manager of Competence@China



## **Educational background:**

- *Applied physics (Fudan University Shanghai) and computer sciences (VUB Brussel)*

## **Professional experience pre-CPM:**

**1992-1994** Procter & Gamble Shanghai: District Sales Manager

**1994-1995** Lenovo Shanghai: Telecommunication Department Manager

**2000-2005** AZ VUB: Leading Project Manager

**2005-2010** Real Dolmen: P&L Manager Java Unit

**2010-2011** A Star Trade: Managing Director

## **Languages:**

Mandarin, English, Dutch

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## **What kind of professional career did you have before joining CPM?**

Because of my IT background, I was deeply involved in project management and people management and therefore played a role at the corporate level via HR management. As a consultant in a professional services consultancy, I worked for clients from a variety of industries. Starting with a sound understanding of their needs, I helped them to implement and optimise the various key processes of their process-driven companies. As a people manager, I was engaged on a daily basis in recruitment, development and support, performance analyses and other HR-related responsibilities.

## **How do you see your role at CPM?**

As the General Manager of Competence@China, I am responsible for all CPM's HR consulting activities in Greater China. China is THE fastest-growing economy in the world, so we are faced with an enormous challenge in relation to talent. It is my role to ensure that Competence@China gives its clients optimum support in all human resources challenges so that they can achieve their strategic objectives. For this purpose, it is important that we understand our clients' specific businesses, with all their opportunities and threats. This is the only way we can support them effectively, efficiently and qualitatively in recruitment and selection and help them to develop and train their employees. We are determined to make Competence@China one of the strongest brands in HRM consultancy in China.

## **What is your take on the HRM of technical profiles?**

T is the first letter of 'technical' and 'talent'. The letter T describes the ideal profile for talents the way companies like to have them or mould them. Companies need R&D engineers with enough commercial skills to understand and support the sales team as well, IT specialists who excel in project development and implementation and also have an eye for the corporate objectives, project managers who are very strong technically and at the same time good people managers for

their teams. Developments are certainly going so fast in China that the T-shaped profile has become a must in recruitment and development.

Competence@China teaches its clients how important T-shaped talents are to the company, now and in the longer term. Even during the recruitment process, we keep drawing our clients' attention to the importance of future needs and further developments. We use competence models, development centres, training and coaching to help our clients to further develop their employees, not just in the vertical/technical sense, but also horizontally and on an interdisciplinary basis.

As far as the vertical axis is concerned, we help clients to find the best way to organise and share the knowledge within the company, to systematically train and further develop their technical talents so that they perform to the best of their capabilities, totally ready for the challenges the future will bring. All these processes are set up, implemented and tracked in accordance with the corporate objectives and the company's mission and values.

On the horizontal axis, we help companies to define their competence models, see the interdisciplinary challenges for every profile, and adjust the recruitment and development strategy accordingly by measuring individual qualities and needs. We encourage our clients to map out development paths, including horizontally, to make it clear how an individual should evolve further.

## **To sum up ...**

Help, assist, I use these words all the time when I talk about our business, whether I'm referring to individuals or companies. Helping is the cornerstone of our service delivery, the essence of our mission and values. HRM is about people and consultancy is about helping. Helping people – that's HRM consultancy. ■