

## people YOU SHOULD KNOW

## Executive recruiter Richard Mills

## The jobs and people matchmaker

By Joan J. Teotico

Richard Mills, chairman of Chalmé Associates Executive Search Services, has interviewed about 15,000 people over the past 15 years in his executive search and management consulting career and he never gets tired of it.

"I meet and interview about a thousand people a year. People are the most interesting and complicated creatures in the universe," he says. "They are the best and the difficult part of my job. It's utterly fascinating to get to know them and try to figure them out."

Mills is from Canada where he grew up in a small town outside Toronto. He graduated from the University of Waterloo, a prominent technical post-secondary institution, with a degree in chemistry although he never wanted to become a chemist.

## New man at the new Dusit Thani

Prateek Kumar is the first general manager of the newly-rebranded Dusit Thani Manila. He has 13 years of experience in the hospitality industry, mostly in hotels in Singapore. Prior to his Manila appointment, he was responsible for the pre-opening of the Ascott Raffles Place, a luxury all-suite hotel in Singapore financial cityscape. He also worked for the Raffles, Starwood and Renaissance groups.

Says Kumar: "I have always pursued perfection. Now that I am entrusted with Dusit International's flagship, I point towards giving perfection a new meaning. Dusit Thani Manila will be all about redefining the benchmark of product and service excellence in the hotel industry."



Prateek Kumar

He admits he didn't know what he wanted to be when he was young. After college, he went from one job to another, working in finance, then owning a computer software company, and later working for one of Canada's largest contract engineering firms as right-hand man of the CEO.

"I worked for a great guy who was interested at figuring out the world as I was," he recalls. "He let me get my hands into every part of his business. In the end, I figured out I liked recruiting."

From there, he didn't look back. He started coming to Asia during the dotcom boom times when it was fashionable for companies in North America to hire experienced engineers and relocate them. One project he did in South Korea for IBM was reported on television as the largest technical recruiting venture in Korean history. Mills and one of his Korean engineers

## Change at the top for the Pen

New general manager at the Peninsula Manila hotel is Englishman Jonathan H. Crook.

Before moving to Manila, Crook's career spanned stints with Peninsula hotels in the United States and Asia, specifically New York, Chicago, Beijing and Tokyo. He also held hotel food and beverage positions with the Dorchester and the Millennium Gloucester in London and the Sonenalp Resort in Vail, USA.

Crook says of his Manila appointment: "It is a great honor to join this wonderful hotel and iconic property and I look forward to continue building on the property's outstanding reputation for service excellence."



Jonathan Crook

were subsequently on the cover of ComputerWorld magazine. "I really enjoyed international recruiting because it allowed me to meet so many wonderful people across Asia," he says.

That all ended when terrorists struck in the US on 9/11. Because he suddenly didn't have much to do, he took time out in the Philippines with his Filipina wife. She talked him into helping her recruitment company – but the catch was that she would be the boss and he would be her employee. Surprisingly to him, it worked.

Mills' job at Chalmé Associates involves executive search and consulting engagements for companies across the Asia-Pacific region, mainly finding candidates for senior management jobs with multinational corporations. His typical day involves meeting candidates, talking about their careers, and meeting clients to discuss the nature of their business.

He enjoys his work, particularly meeting people from a variety of industries such as in pharmaceutical, mining, information technology, sales and banking to name a few. "I find it fascinating how people with different interests and backgrounds still manage to work together to build organizations," he says.

Asked what are the vital factors that employers look for in jobseekers and candidates, Mills says it is important to get to know the people and what is important for them, knowing their basic skills and background, and most importantly, the "personal characteristics of a person."

"It's all about doing a lot of research, talking to people who know them, getting to know what they are doing, what they have done and what they want to do in the future," he adds.

Mills notes that his clients and candidates are often the same people. "My clients today could become my candidates tomorrow and vice versa. There is a 25 to 30 percent attrition rate for people at the senior levels in most countries these days and the time it takes for them to find a new job is from six to nine months.

Therefore it is important to think ahead about what would be best for a person's career. You can't think short-term. If things go wrong, it is a disaster for everyone involved," he stresses.

He says the only drawback of his chosen profession is that the results can be hard to see.

If he had not become a recruiter, he would have liked to be an engineer, because "you can see and touch what you helped build and show it off to your mom. In executive search, you can't do that so easily because clients need a lot of privacy for their senior positions."



Richard Mills

Mills has two sons and the family is based in the Philippines. He loves playing with his children and spending time with the family. His Filipina wife Rebecca is president and founder of the company and working with her is an achievement for him.

"We always wondered whether we could work together and it is amazing to find out that we can. And despite challenges, the Philippines is still a very good place to be and it is far better than people give it credit for. We hope we are making a strong statement about this by building our regional business from Manila and not elsewhere," he declares.

In addition to recruiting for large organizations, Mills plays a strong role in promoting the Philippines as a place to do business. He is a frequent speaker at regional conferences and his articles have been featured in international publications.

He is founder of the International ICT Awards, a regional event that promotes the outsourcing sector in Philippines and which has become one of the largest of its kind in Asia.

In the recruitment and human resources industry, building relationships is vital, he believes. "Assume that every person you deal with, you will know for the rest of your life. If you disappoint someone, you can destroy the relationship, making it hard to gain back. Be careful about over-selling yourself. Ensure you deliver what you promised and do more if you can."