



World Niche

JWU graduates are tracking trends and shaping careers in a global economy

BY WILLIAM DONOVAN

Economies around the world are evolving and the need for skilled workers is becoming more acute. Once overlooked or disregarded regions are rising to become international challengers. Countries previously crippled by war or hamstrung by political turmoil, have found their way to become traders in global business. Cultural traditions are giving way to modern practices. And the feverish advance of new technology is enabling commerce where there once was none.

Graduates of Johnson & Wales have been leaping into this turbulence, racing with the pace, often among those pushing the trends forward. They're finding new opportunities for their companies and their careers by viewing the world as a big community, but a much smaller place. A marketing professional divides his time between Belgrade and Boston. A chief executive in Dubai has business plans for 22 new countries. A sales manager in Warsaw has a defined territory — the globe. Too big? Not if you figure it out.

JWU interviewed a number of these graduates to learn about business trends emerging in their parts of the world. Entrepreneurial and ambitious, they are individuals who run companies or lead departments. They're in fields such as technology, human resources, education and finance. They've traveled considerably and they've seen firsthand how companies are reaching across borders to compete and expand their markets.

Simon Taylor '01 Belgrade and Boston

In Serbia, a country marked by war and political unrest during much of the 1990s, Simon Taylor '01 sees a market that is increasingly attracting foreign investment through affordability and the quality of its goods and services.

As the president of Spinnaker New Technologies, an applications software development firm based in Belgrade, Taylor has a clear view of the niche that Serbian companies and others in Central and Eastern Europe are trying to establish as they grow their businesses. It is defined by a cost structure that is below the U.S. and western European countries, yet a quality level that exceeds other developing markets such as China and India.

"The world has heard about India and China in terms of cheap products and cheap services," says Taylor, a graduate of JWU's hospitality management program. "One of the downsides to both of those markets has been on the quality side. A lot of different people have come back and said 'You know, we've tried Asia, we've tried China and the quality isn't always there.'"

"In the technology community, for years people have been looking to India for all of their outsourcing and software development needs," he adds. "Now companies are saying that if they pay a little bit more, they may get a lot more quality. Quality is really becoming a major priority in terms of global initiatives."

While the numbers aren't yet overwhelming, there is evidence that Eastern and Central European countries are making progress. Foreign direct investment into that region has been growing. In Serbia it is expected to exceed \$5 billion this year, up from about \$1.5 billion in 2005, according to the Serbia Investment and Export Promotion Agency.

Taylor, who divides his time between Belgrade and Boston where he oversees Spinnaker's U.S. efforts, says that Eastern Europe is "about 60–70 percent cheaper than the U.S. marketplace." Yet even at that



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discount he says there is still enough profit for companies there to afford quality controls and inspections.

Meanwhile the governments of many of the countries in that region have made quality a priority and are acting to assure outside investors.

"In a large system, it's very difficult to affect change on a national level, but a country like Serbia can very quickly enact legislation and regulations to insure that the proper quality controls are in place to protect investors," says Taylor.

He also expects more emphasis to be placed on marketing and branding of the region in the future. While India has a dominant position in the global outsourced IT market, and China gained enormous exposure by hosting the recent summer Olympics, Eastern Europe is still shaking a lingering communist image even as it has embraced capitalism and free markets.

"This is all new and just starting to happen now," says Taylor. "When I drive down a city road in Belgrade in Serbia, there's a lot of work to do. But those people have a major appetite for success and want to build their country into everything it can be."

PHOTO: TOM KATES

José-Carlos Redon '04 Kununurra, Australia

In Kununurra, Western Australia, José-Carlos Redon '04 spends his days meeting with farmers and his nights as a restaurant chef, studying the cultural aspects of food Down Under from beginning to end.

It's the latest stop for Redon, a graduate of JWU's food service management program, who has become a global gastronome of sorts. During the past three years, he has lived in and studied the food industries of Croatia, France, Italy, Spain, Switzerland and Mexico.

Much of what Redon does is related to his involvement with Slow Food, the international non-profit organization whose mission is to preserve cultural cuisine and support local production. While living in Mexico, Redon was the Latin America and Caribbean area coordinator for Slow Food, which is based in Italy and has 85,000 members in more than 100 countries.

The Slow Food movement was founded in Italy on the concept of "eco-gastronomy," recognition that there's a connection between "plate and planet." It's catchy, but not as simple as it sounds. Redon is building a base of experience that will enable him to act as a link between farmers, cooks and universities to create awareness and a demand for certain types of foods — specifically locally grown.

"The generation of people born in the 1970s and earlier — they're aware of what good food means," he says. "They have a better understanding than young people in their 20s."

It was once more common for fresh milk to be delivered to homes, he notes as an example. Today people buy milk at the grocery store when they need it. "But you don't know how fresh it is, even if there's an expiration date," says Redon. "The taste is very different. So as a social phenomenon you have the milk that is less fresh than what is outside your home. That happens with a variety of other foods, too."

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By studying the cultures and cuisines of different countries, as he is doing with the Aborigines in Australia, Redon also hopes to learn about mealtime traditions — and how they might be maintained. In today's fast food market, he sees those traditions slipping away.

"The changes in food service restaurants such as fast food have meant a change in our lives," he says. "We no longer consider it time to prepare the meal or enjoy a meal, as perhaps you do in a family occasion. That has changed that aspect of peoples' lives and ways of eating and what we eat."



Michael Zawadski '04 Warsaw, Poland

Michael Zawadski's job is to convince international event organizers to run their shows in Poland, an often challenging task when, as he admits, three things usually come to mind when people think of Poland: World War II, communism and Pope John Paul II.

But as the senior sales manager for the Warsaw International Expo Center, Zawadski '04 enlightens them about something else — the strong economic expansion occurring in Eastern Europe. While the economies of the U.S.

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and Western Europe have been on the edge of recession for the past year, the gross domestic product in Poland has been growing at a hearty seven percent. Cities such as Warsaw and Prague, once dreary under the old Soviet Union, are emerging as dynamic business and tourist destinations.

That gives Zawadski, who received his graduate degree in hospitality administration, plenty to talk about as he travels to trade shows around the world recruiting international organizers to run an event in Warsaw.

"If there's an organizer who organizes a trade fair such as the boat show in Chicago, I would go to him and say 'There's a really good market in Poland for something like this. There isn't a trade show that adequately represents that industry. You should come out here and organize the fair'" says Zawadski.

"What we notice in terms of international shows is that because things aren't going too well in the U.S. or Western Europe, a lot of organizers are launching their events in Central and Eastern Europe," he adds. "There has been a huge influx of foreign organizers."

During the past two years two of Europe's most glamorous events, the Miss World pageant and the European Film Awards, were held in Warsaw. Expectations are that 2009 and 2010 are likely to be "breakthrough years."

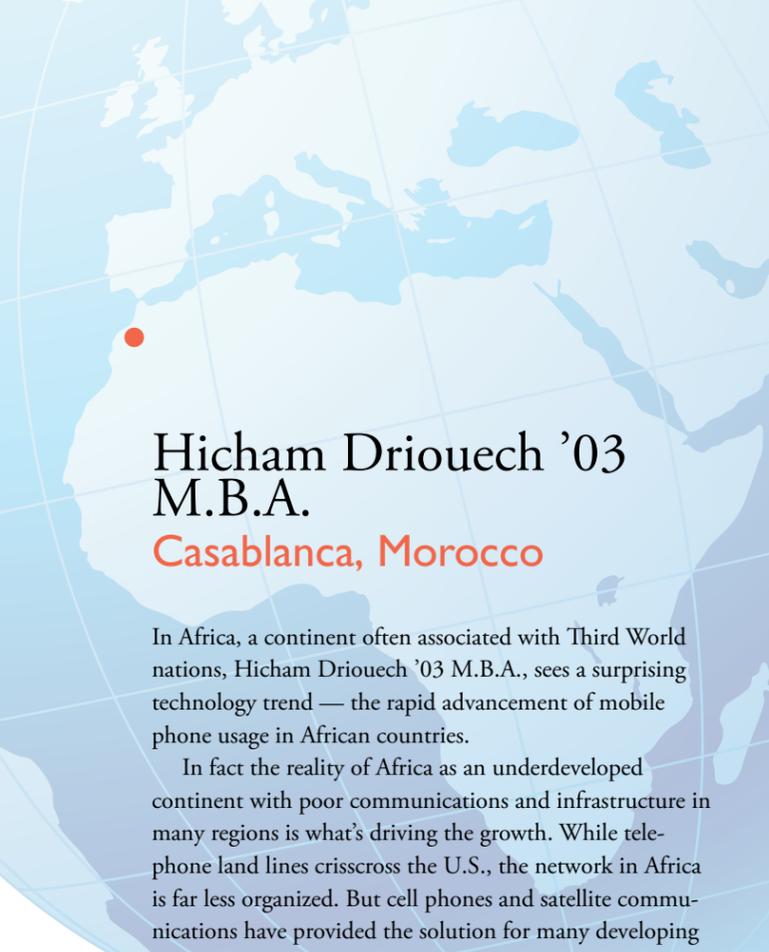
But challenges exist. Zawadski says that Poland's "destination marketing" needs to improve and that the country lacks a brand image. That differs from competing markets such as Hong Kong or India, which are the trade fair capitals of their regions.



"So a challenge I face when trying to bring international organizers in to Poland is that they don't know much about the country," he says. "But when they come out here and they see the development, they say 'We never knew about this place.'"

Making his sales pitch easier has been Poland's integration into the European economy since its break from the Soviet Union in 1989 and its membership in the European Union since 1991. International companies face fewer regulations than in the past.

"[Joining the EU] changed Poland's position on the world stage," says Zawadski. "As part of the European common market, it's easier to do business. You don't need travel permits or visas and there aren't that many border control problems as in the past. That's all important for a trade fair."



Hicham Driouech '03 M.B.A.

Casablanca, Morocco

In Africa, a continent often associated with Third World nations, Hicham Driouech '03 M.B.A., sees a surprising technology trend — the rapid advancement of mobile phone usage in African countries.

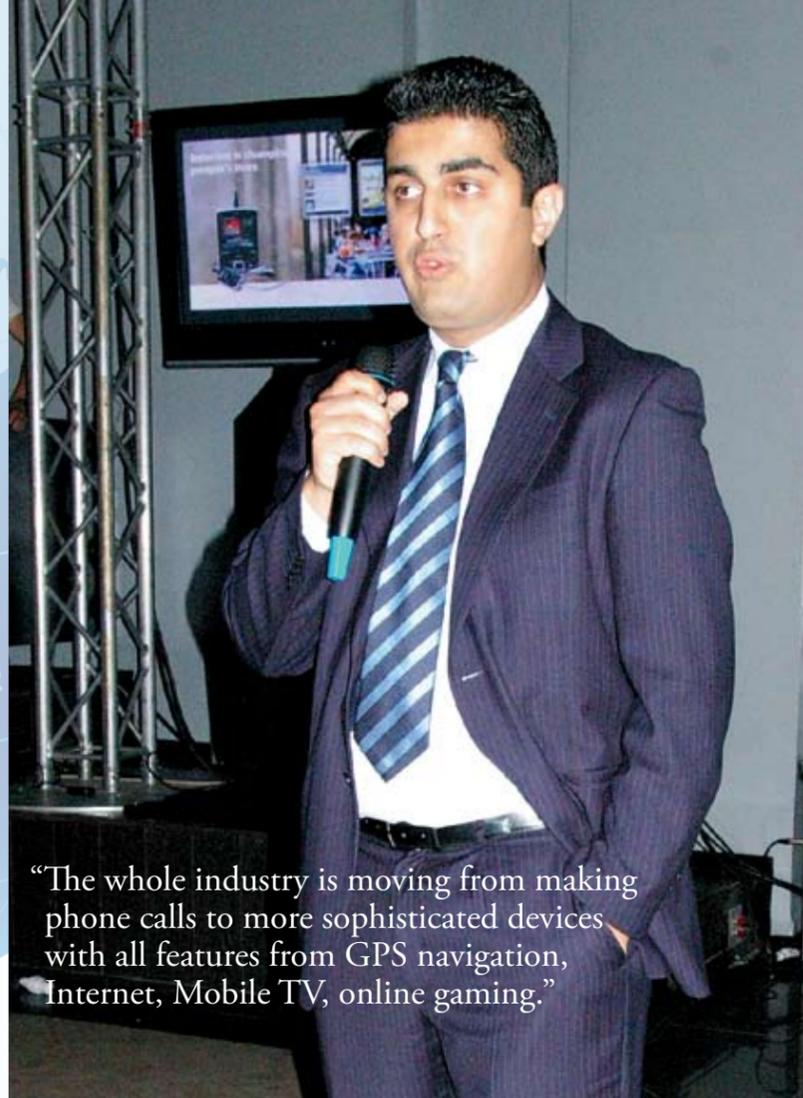
In fact the reality of Africa as an underdeveloped continent with poor communications and infrastructure in many regions is what's driving the growth. While telephone land lines crisscross the U.S., the network in Africa is far less organized. But cell phones and satellite communications have provided the solution for many developing countries. According to several studies in recent years, Africa has had the largest growth rate of cellular subscribers in the world.

Based in Morocco, Driouech is the retail marketing manager for Nokia, the international mobile phone producer, covering North and West Africa. While overseeing a sales territory that includes 22 countries and five different languages, he's observed how the lack of land lines in his part of the world has also prompted cell phone users to typically want a more sophisticated device than in the United States.

"In the U.S. most people use their phone to make a call, not to connect to the Internet or watch movies or TV," he says. "In Africa people are looking for the most expensive phone, to have everything. They want to invest in a single device so they can have everything instead of having many devices."

Also driving the growth is the cost of cell phone service, which Driouech says is 30 to 35 percent less expensive in Africa than in the U.S. Additionally, subscribers only pay for calls that they make and not for calls they receive, as they do on many plans in the U.S.

"The cost of the service is the most important element of (the mobile phone) business," he says. "If the cost is high, people won't buy a lot of phones. If the service in the U.S. remains as high as it is today, if people continue



"The whole industry is moving from making phone calls to more sophisticated devices with all features from GPS navigation, Internet, Mobile TV, online gaming."

paying for incoming calls and if the rate for the Internet connection remains high, I don't think it will develop fast compared to Africa and Europe."

Driouech says the penetration rate of cell phone subscribers is still only about 30 percent in Africa, compared to about 85 percent in the U.S. and much higher than that in many European countries. But the cell phone has become a vital part of economic development in many developing countries, helping small businesses to expand their markets.

"The whole industry is moving from making phone calls to more sophisticated devices with all features from GPS navigation, Internet, Mobile TV, online gaming. Today the whole industry is moving towards that."

Melissa Ooi '99 Butterworth, Malaysia

Sarah Palin meet Melissa Ooi '99 — a career woman in Malaysia who is "going for it."

Married, in her early 30s and the mother of a young child, Ooi is a finance manager for Dell Computer, helping to develop best accounting practices for operations in Dell's Asia Pacific Japan region. Her ambition, to move up the corporate ladder, is becoming more common among women in Southeast Asia. But it is a break from the traditions of those countries, where working women were expected at some point to put their careers aside and turn to their families.

Instead they are trying to do both, pursuing new opportunities as Malaysia becomes more involved in the world economy. Just as Palin's run for vice-president while being the mother of five children renewed discussion about career women trying to "have it all" in the U.S., so too there are questions in Malaysia.

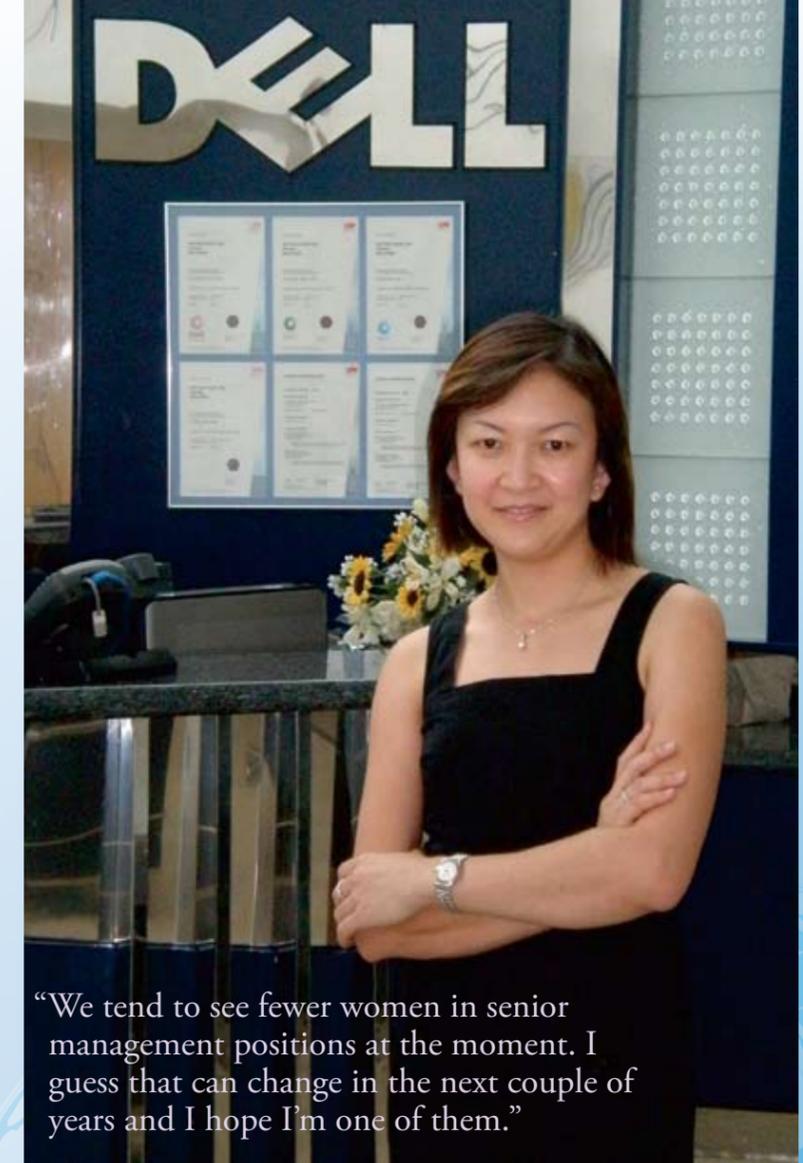
"In my part of the world the traditional values and traditional view of women is still very strong," says Ooi. "Women hold positions, but there will be a time when they will say, 'I've done enough. I'm going to stay home and take care of my family.'"

Ooi says that there are women who choose not to have families and focus on their careers. But the decision to aim for senior management while raising a family — "Going for it," as she says — is still relatively novel and even a source of debate among women of her own generation.

"It's a very complex society right now," she says. "I have friends who are very traditional who get married at 20 and have five kids and decide not to work and tell me my place is at home. We're still trying to strike a balance and achieve that equality for women."

The split is often determined by post-secondary school experience. Ooi went abroad for her education. Many of her colleagues have experience overseas. Her husband is Malaysian, but also attended a university in the United Kingdom. They believe they're more "westernized" than other members of their generation who remained in Malaysia.

As tradition slowly yields to what Ooi calls a "modern" view of women in the workplace, government and industry in Malaysia are becoming more accommodating to women. Government employees can take as



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much as three years maternity leave and return to their jobs. A federal law has been proposed expanding maternity leave for private sector employees from 60 to 90 days, and more employers are providing amenities such as nursing rooms and daycare facilities.

All of that has enabled more career-minded women to stay in the workplace and increased their numbers in middle management positions. But Ooi is looking beyond. "We tend to see fewer women in senior management positions at the moment," she says. "I guess that can change in the next couple of years and I hope I'm one of them."



Vasco Rodrigues '83 Syo Paulo, Brazil

In the 1970s, before he enrolled in Johnson & Wales, Vasco de Jesus Rodrigues '83 had already traveled to Asia and parts of Europe, studied law in his native Brazil and medicine in Panama and had come to recognize tremendous gaps in international development.

“What Americans had in New York City or Providence in those days, Brazilians would have in their homes years later,” he says. “But today what you have in New York, may be feasible to have here almost at the same time.”

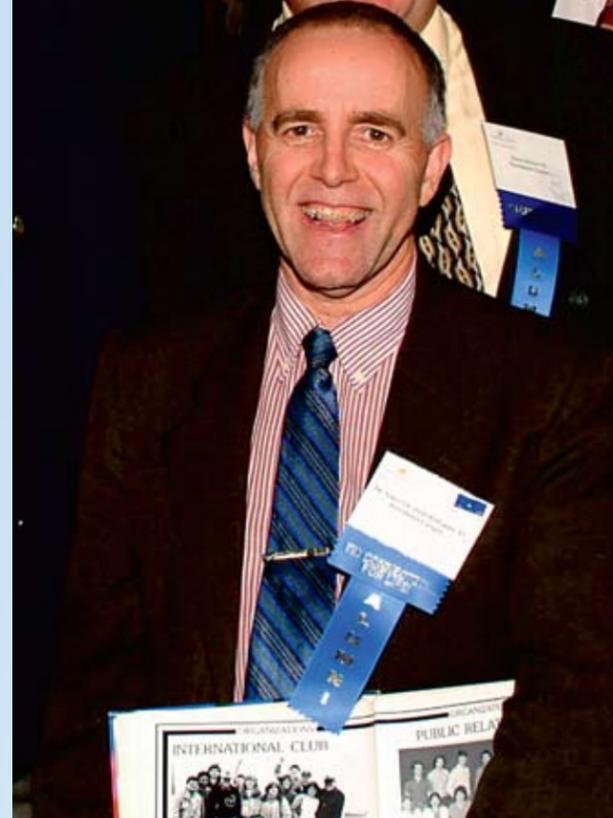
Boosted in part by commodities, exports, vast oil deposits and recently tapped natural gas, the economy of Brazil has emerged as the largest in Latin America and is thoroughly involved with the global economy.

Rodrigues, a professor of international law who works as a consultant to businesses and governments, says the prosperity has brought mixed blessings for Brazil's major

“There is a lot of investment in Brazil. Now the manager and company president need to know about Brazilian law, international law and laws applicable in the U.S. Brazil has made its way in to the global economy.”

cities. Brazilians are able to afford more luxury goods and automobiles, but roads have not been upgraded to keep pace. The results are enormous traffic jams with all of the associated health hazards.

Rodrigues often works with countries as a United Nations consultant and regularly travels around the globe, observing the impact of globalization. Brazil's rise in the international economy has placed a spotlight on the weakness of its educational systems. “The changes are very fast and the pace of the universities is like a turtle walk com-



pared to what the economy demands,” he says. “But now we are in a new century and it's a different Brazil.”

Because the educational system has lagged behind the economy's growth, the pool of well-educated workers is relatively shallow. To compensate, Rodrigues says that many major companies in Brazil have created their own in-house M.B.A. programs. Often they recruit college professors from overseas to teach classes inside their facilities. It's a reversal from a practice of an earlier time, he says, when the senior management of Brazilian companies would leave the country for weeks to attend classes in other countries.

Rodrigues expects the demands of industry will force universities to adapt, just as Brazilian companies seeking to compete on global turf are being forced to change their operations. Workplace conditions, labor rights, the humane treatment of workers and local responsibility are coming under particular international scrutiny, making advance inevitable.

“There is a lot of investment in Brazil,” says Rodrigues. “Now, more and more, the manager and company president need to know about Brazilian law, international law and laws applicable in the U.S. Brazil has made its way into the global economy.”

Sunit Bahadur '01 Dubai, New Delhi and Shanghai

The demand for labor rises and falls in the global economy, but the need for talent is constant. Sunit Bahadur '01 M.B.A. says there's a shortage of talent — in Asia, Africa, Europe, the U.S., everywhere — and it's his job to find it.

Bahadur, is the chief executive of the global division of OMAM Consultants Overseas FZE, an international human resources firm based in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. He's currently leading a company expansion that will place OMAM offices in 40 countries by the year 2020, 33 more countries than it is in today.

The aggressive program is OMAM's way of participating in the globalization of the HR industry. International corporations are outsourcing more of their human resources functions, even as they find it harder to hire and keep skilled professionals to run their operations.

“Talent acquisition is the key goal of most of the companies globally today,” says Bahadur. “There is no question we have a lot of workers. India itself produces about 1.5 to 2 million new engineers every year. But how many of them come from good schools? Not many. So you have the workers, but not the talent.”

Bahadur says that ripple effect of the talent shortage has been far reaching. He regularly sees companies postpone planned projects because they lack the personnel to direct them. Succession planning is another problem for companies trying to transfer executive control with minimal disruption.



“Talent acquisition is the key goal of most of the companies globally today.”

Bahadur says that HR companies are also helping corporations to form international teams who can lead operations that cross many cultures. He says it's understood that each team should have members from different countries who have experience in other cultures. The challenge is finding those individuals.

“They don't know how to define leadership in an international domain,” he says of the corporations. “It's much easier to define leaders in countrywide or regional or local domains. Defining them in an international domain is a big problem.”

Yet it is that sort of problem that is helping to drive the expansion among international HR companies. A study by the Hackett Group, an Atlanta-based consulting firm, found that internal HR spending among many of the world's leading companies was 13 percent below a general corporate average, while the HR personnel-to-staff ratio was 15 percent less.

“A lot of these companies are giving exclusive work to consultants like us,” says Bahadur. “We become an extended arm to these companies and that's only going to increase. As globalization becomes more complex, they are going to be outsourcing more and more.”

