

INTERVIEW WITH ROLF HEEB: MOVING FORWARD AFTER THE GREAT RECESSION (PART 2)  
4/21/2010

Rolf Heeb is founder and CEO of AIMS International - Germany, which has offices in Neuss/Düsseldorf, Hamburg, Stuttgart and Munich. In 2000, Mr. Heeb's firm, IFM, became the German partner of AIMS International and in 2002 he became a board member of the organization and, later, regional head of the EMEA Region. He was appointed president of AIMS International in 2007. Today AIMS can be found in over 50 countries on five continents and it has more than 90 offices exceeding 350 consultants. In the following interview, Mr. Heeb discusses the AIMS global network and how the search industry will climb out from under the Great Recession.

*Many of your competitors tell us that business in general was off 40 to 60 percent in 2009. Now that the numbers are in, what can you specifically tell us about last year? Just how bad was it?*

The range between countries is very big. From less than 10 percent to up to 50 percent. Based on the numbers we have in so far it seems that we are overall off by 30 percent compared to 2008 for 2009.

*Last month it was reported that the U.K. was also coming out of recession -- was that a surprise to you that the U.K. would lag America and other parts of the world?*

No, it was not a surprise to me. Since we have seen how our business in the U.K. developed over the last 18 months it would be a surprise to me if we would see a major positive change there within the next 12 months.

*Financial services has clearly been the top producing sector for the recruiting market worldwide until the downturn. Is it coming back to life yet? Which parts? And where?*

Financial services is already back but it is returning more slowly, as expected. This market segment always has been a major contributor to our business particularly in the financial centers of the world but also in emerging markets. Currently we see major international banks investing in people in reemerging markets but it is much too early to talk about a trend.

*What lasting impacts, both positive and negative, might this recession have on the recruiting business?*

Additional services beside recruitment will be developed by more and more search firms. This might become a competitive advantage particularly against smaller, local search firms which are not able to provide these services.

*Some of your colleagues have said that more clients are now looking at the whole talent management process as they plan to rehire workers. Do you see this?*

Yes, we see this trend. Even in the recession clients invested in these processes.

*Clients have told us that the downturn has provided an opportunity for headhunters to help improve their businesses. How?*

We were involved in a number of cases where we helped clients to develop the preferred supplier concept but also in questions like centralization/decentralization of recruitment management.

*Are there better ways of doing search, Rolf? Of working differently with, and for, clients?*

I don't know whether other ways will be better but there might be developments towards additional methodologies like market mapping, creating real top talent pools etc. These are not 100 percent new but they might become more and more important.

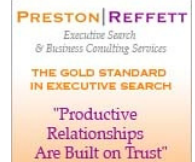
*Where do you see this profession in five years -- will it continue to move away from providing simple placements of workers to something more abstract like assessment and leadership development? We've all seen the move into these new areas but it has been slow to materialize. Is it in these areas and others where we might expect to see the primary growth to come?*

Definitely there will be a trend towards additional services built into the search processes and/or as additional services but I see two groups of search firms going in different directions. One will develop these services with an international scope and a real service focus and others only occasionally developing it.

*What are some new human resource management areas we might expect to see headhunters dive into in the coming years?*

I would expect to see management audits and business coaching becoming services headhunters will dive into more and more. These services are not new to the market but they are new to a lot of headhunters.

This concludes Part Two of our interview with Mr. Jenkins. To read Part One, please go to HSZ Media news archives. To report corrections and/or clarifications, please contact [dale@hszmedia.com](mailto:dale@hszmedia.com).



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