

International Employees & Employment

Together Abroad Takes It a Step Further

Web portals, entry points to information - there are so many these days, how to choose, which way to go? Such questions are not dissimilar to those posed by individuals looking for employment.

Where to look for a job? Which job? How to prepare a CV for the Dutch market? Which rules apply? How to recruit a suitable candidate for my international enterprise?

Together Abroad is a business, a portal which is geared towards helping individuals "... identify the correct path for themselves," according to Irina Eschbach - be that a candidate or a particular enterprise. As a starting point the most obvious are job listings - beyond that, Together Abroad offers a variety of services, opportunities and answers tailored to the specific needs of international employees as well as employers. Not all of which are quite so obvious.

Together Abroad is a vertically organised portal, which means that in their very specific niche market - international career development and employment - they provide information and services from A to Z. It is a three-dimensional approach to recruitment in which they have thought of and considered not only the core of their business - employment - but also everything that facilitates it. Supply and demand are comprehensively brought together in this unique portal.

Already clients such as ABN AMRO, Teleena, Markant International, Worldwide Broker, Crown Relocations, Mechel Services Global, Adams Multilingual Recruitment and Blue Lynx are taking advantage of Together Abroad's services. Due to their web presence new clients are finding them daily, and, according to Linda "...within two or three years, it will be difficult to avoid us when it comes to multilingual recruiting."

Like the synergy created by providing services to individuals as well as business, so has the synergy of Together Abroad's founders resulted in a dynamic business that continues to embark on new initiatives in the interests of international employees and employers. In the case of its founders, it is the synergy of a human resources professional with that of a natural sales talent, each with international backgrounds.

Personal Experience

The personal experiences of Linda Groener and Irina Eschbach are intrinsically woven into the concept of Together Abroad. Linda, who is Dutch, was confronted with the challenges of repatriation after years of working and acquiring valuable experience abroad when she returned to the Netherlands and could not find an outlet for her acquired skills and interests. Irina, Russian by birth, arrived in the Netherlands as an international without access to the support services provided to expats. She too had a wealth of skills and a degree but could not find the right path towards putting these to good use. The advice she received was not reassuring: "... investing in a two-year citizenship and intensive language course was not where I expected to have to start with the skills and interests I had."

Eventually the two did find their way into the 'international' market of The Hague and ended up working together. There was a click, a common ground of interest and over time the determination to do something about the hurdles they themselves had confronted. Furthermore, as Linda pointed out, "... I saw that increasing attention was being paid to recruiting international SMEs to the Netherlands and I started to anticipate what the needs would become"; future foreign employers seeking support, guidance and knowledge in the process of finding and recruiting staff locally.

Today, less than a year since they launched Together Abroad in November of 2009, Irina and Linda continue to incorporate what they learned when dealing with the issues they personally confronted when they got here into the package of services they offer their clients today.

The Obvious

Together Abroad is not a recruitment agency - rather it facilitates the work of employment agencies as well as direct employers. Among the 'obvious' that Together Abroad provides is a platform where agencies and employers can personally upload information about jobs they have. Once uploaded these are viewable, free of charge, by candidates looking for employment. Individuals can also upload their own CVs into Together Abroad's growing database, which in turn can be viewed by (or hidden from) the corporate clients with which Together Abroad works. The next steps, pursuing a job or a candidate, is left to the individuals involved. If a match is made, Together Abroad takes no fee or credit - just the satis-

faction of knowing that their job is done.

In their first year of operation they have already built up a database of more than 2,000 CVs and can proudly claim that they have had more than 11,000 visitors on their site in the last month. Their continued speaking engagements, networking and presence at international fairs will ensure that these numbers continue to grow exponentially, as will the growing list of businesses seeking their advice and services.

The Not So Obvious

Here is where Linda and Irina take their concept a step further. Listing employment opportunities is just scratching the surface when it comes to creating an international career portal. The additional services Together Abroad provides its individual clients include answers and guidance to the following questions; what if my job search and applications are not showing results; how does my CV and approach to interviews, covering letters etc. need to be culturally attuned to Holland; I have been made redundant, what is my position in the Dutch context; do I need extra training, education for what I want to do; where can I find internship programmes; and, my lump sum payment is running out, do I qualify for any assistance or reintegration programmes?

Together Abroad, unlike other agencies, has thought to ask the questions which may affect its clients not only when they are actually looking for a job, but when it all turns sour as well. What happens then? Yes, these individuals return to the job search market - but are they aware that they may be able to take advantage of other opportunities? This is but one of the 'not so obvious' elements of Together Abroad's services package. They think of their clients from start to finish. Some answers to the questions are provided in the portal, on their website, others can be found by attending one of the sessions, coaching or training, provided by them.

Providing answers is one thing, being able to provide solutions, is the next. Together Abroad is a nationwide partner with the UWV (the Uitvoeringsinstituut werknemersverzekering - office for reintegration (into the labour market) and temporary income) for the reintegration of unemployed 'multilinguals' who receive employment insurance (IRO), and they are currently in negotiation with several municipalities to be similar partners regarding the personal reintegration budget (PRB) for individuals who need and qualify for social assistance (administered in the Netherlands at the municipal level).

For companies they can provide a full HRM package and guide newcomers in their recruitment of internationals through all stages, from recruitment, to employment to personal leave. As Linda pointed out, "...particularly for Dutch smaller companies who need to recruit foreign expertise or for smaller companies expanding into the European market from the Netherlands that require an 'international' employee from the



local resources pool, we can provide the support that is often found 'in-house' by larger corporations. We know the ins and outs, what to be aware of, what not to forget, and where to find the answers to specific questions."

The Point Is

Together Abroad has been created to catch those who fall through the net: the individual who has come to live in the Netherlands and would like to work; the small enterprise which has spread its wings and may need one or only a few international employees, but are not sure about which rules and regulations apply; the international employee who has just lost their job but does not have access to an HR department that knows the applicable rules and regulations; the recently graduated student who would like to stay and work for a while, and many more examples. The point is also, that their services, information and expertise is as relevant to you when you are starting, have to re-start or are interested in redirecting your career.

For those who have fewer questions, but are still looking for a job or an employee, Together Abroad also has a valuable asset - their network of agencies and companies that are already participating in this portal and that provide many opportunities to the international, multilingual individuals living in the Netherlands.

Irina concludes by saying, "...we are here, all of us together, as internationals, living abroad, or having lived abroad or hiring someone from abroad - why not pool resources and be there for one another, Together Abroad."

For more information about Together Abroad and their individual as well as corporate services visit www.togetherabroad.com or call Linda Groener at 06 - 229 667 37. You can also visit their stand at the Feel at Home in The Hague Fair on September 19, at City Hall.