

Careers: Pastures new - An interview with Acumen Resource's CEO, Paul Walsh

August, 2009

How did you come to be working in this sector?

A combination of (i) wanting to work for myself (ii) preferring the people side of the business to traditional actuarial work and (iii) having experienced a poor service when I used a recruiter in the past, all convinced me this was a niche I could succeed in.

What are the main issues/opportunities/challenges faced?

You have to be empathetic. I am continually surprised by how much personal and sensitive information a person will impart to you during the recruitment process, particularly when they are feeling at a low ebb. In contrast, when you succeed in securing their ideal role there is a huge sense of both personal and professional satisfaction in being able to help them.

How has your actuarial background helped you?

My broad actuarial knowledge is useful in understanding a candidate's technical experience, their transferable skills and advising on the different working environments. I'm still in a business development role; meeting clients, marketing & advertising and looking for new opportunities to expand our reach both in the UK and internationally. Communication, listening and perception skills are key to enable me help a candidate identify which type of role will best suit them. Coaching skills and being objective with people are also necessary as we help candidates with interview practice, career aspirations and salary expectations.

How do you see the sector (and your role) developing?

Hopefully more actuaries will enter the sector, which will benefit both the international actuarial and recruitment communities alike. There is a trend for companies to outsource their recruitment functions to third party providers and that as a specialist agency we aim to partner even more closely with our clients and manage their entire recruitment process. Our ultimate aim is to build world class actuarial teams for our clients.

What advice would you give to others?

It's not a calling like being a nurse or a doctor, but you have to want to help people. There are so many personal factors involved when a person wants to move job that you become a trusted advisor to people, not just an agent.