



# Media Release

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## **Building a global mindset - TeleForum**

**By Richard Summerfield, JT Group HR Director**

Even for a technology company such as JT, our people will always be our greatest asset. And in a small labour market such as Jersey, that means recruitment remains one of our most significant strategic challenges. It's an issue that is common to all telecoms operators in small states around the world, and so was one of the first on the agenda for a recent global conference hosted in Jersey. I was fortunate to give the presentation on this topic, and it looks like it might lead to some really exciting new opportunities for our employees, and some useful guidance for local employers.

But first, the background: the TeleForum is dedicated to the issues facing telecoms firms in small jurisdictions, which means more than 70 attendees from places such as Cyprus, Greenland, Gibraltar, the Faroe Islands, Liechtenstein and Iceland, amongst many others, arrived in Jersey recently for this year's conference.

It is hosted in a member company's home jurisdiction every year, but hasn't been to Jersey since 2007, so this was a chance for us to show what JT has achieved in terms of fibre-optic broadband and 4G, but also showcase our thinking on issues such as recruitment: with a potential workforce measured only in the thousands, and significant competition for the top people from other industries, how do you recruit and retain the people who will make your company exceptional?

The title of my presentation was 'Hiring locally – Acting Globally', partly in reference to the fact that in recent years, JT has grown considerably, with 2014 marking the year when the balance in our revenues shifted to the majority now coming from outside of our home base in the Channel Islands.

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We now have offices in London, Chicago, Boston and Melbourne, meaning that secondments (bringing with them the experience of foreign travel and living in different country) are now very much a possibility for our staff.

But in common with most other TeleForum members, the onus is on JT recruiting locally if at all possible, so the challenge of being expected to 'look local first', but also doing business on a global stage, is one which was very familiar.

Recruiting locally is often a legal requirement, but there are also political and social benefits of doing so, notwithstanding the fact that local people can often be more passionate about their home telco. They are also likely to more readily understand the the nuances of a jurisdiction, such as how the government works, and what motivates the community, which will be of great benefit in the efficiency of their work.

Conversely, in some cases, if an employee hasn't ever experienced life outside of a particular state, then there is the tendency towards a narrower view, which can be one-dimensional. With a smaller choice of candidates then there might also be the need to invest more in training, in order to make sure that all employees have the required skills.

The purpose of the presentation was to share some of the best practice in terms of getting the best 'local' people, and being able to give them a wider perspective; but also to invite members to participate in that thought progress, and encourage them to 'think globally.'

In terms of best practice for overseas recruitment, I suggested to the TeleForum members that firstly they need to make sure they have thoroughly searched their existing workforce first for the right person, before they consider bringing new employees in from other jurisdictions.

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Secondly, they need to think carefully about 'knowledge transfer': so using JT as an example, if we need to bring someone in from the UK, then we 'buddy them up' with a JT person, so that if they later move on, there is someone else with their knowledge and skills embedded within the organisation.

Thirdly, I advised them to be very careful over remuneration; there is a delicate balancing act over what you pay people who come in from other countries, and there is usually a slight disconnect with the levels they may be used to elsewhere. But the bigger you make that gap, the more disharmony you get, and sometimes you need the courage to walk away.

Finally, very often when hiring from abroad you are not just hiring the person you are offering the job to; you are also hiring their family. I think that can be the most common reason why recruiting from outside the jurisdiction fails. It's not that the new recruit doesn't enjoy their new job, it's that their family haven't settled.

Now, one of the main benefits of bringing people in from overseas is to help foster a global mindset throughout the organisation, which is essential when your customer base is also global.

But there are also other ways of achieving that, such as through sending employees abroad to gain their professional qualifications; even if it is simply studying in London for one day a month.

In addition, we encourage our employees to get involved with international groups and committees, of which there are many in most industries.

By joining a global committee, or simply doing your qualifications abroad, your employees will be able to broaden their perspectives, understand how other organisations work and build useful networks of new contacts.

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JT's strategy is increasingly around being able to compete on a global scale, and to do that, we develop employees who have that global mindset, initially by building it from within.

For that reason, I'm delighted to say that one of the initiatives which has come out of this year's conference is potential secondments between the TeleForum members, from a few days in duration, up to a few months. Our hope is there will start to be an inter-change of talented people, perhaps in the early stages of their careers, who will get the chance to move around the member states to experience life in the different jurisdictions.

I'm confident that will be a great way not only to share skills, but also to help our employees to broaden their horizons, and develop the mindset of global competition.