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Lincoln's Talent Plus growing both locally and internationally

by Tom Johnson

Since moving into its new Lincoln headquarters in 2004, Talent Plus has seen substantial growth in its client list, its employee base and its annual revenues. So substantial, that the company is in the planning stages for a second building on its Lincoln campus and a new international office in the Pacific Rim.

"When we moved into the building we had 80 employees," said Kimberly Rath, president and managing director. "Today we have 115. Our goal in 2007 is to select an additional 25."

Talent Plus provides scientific talent assessment tools for companies seeking to hire the right people for the right jobs. The firm's own spate of hiring has come as it has gathered strength in serving the growing retail, hospitality and health care industries.

"We focus on partnering with clients who are in a growth mode," Rath said. "They often don't have enough people in their talent pipeline to open more restaurants, hotels and health care facilities."

Talent Plus has taken on some heavy hitters as clients in recent years. Such well-known organizations as Ritz-Carlton Hotels, The Estee Lauder Companies, Mercedes-Benz USA and The Cheesecake Factory have incorporated Talent Plus tools into their recruitment processes.

"Our growth is averaging 20 percent a year," Rath said. "In the last three years, we've doubled the revenues of the company."

Much of that growth has come as the company's clients have expanded internationally, especially in Asia. That made an overseas branch for Talent Plus inevitable.

"We're opening an office in Singapore in March," Rath said. "It will have a staff of three or four people to begin with. Because of

our clients' growth in Asia, we need to be in their time zone, and we need to have employees who speak Chinese."

As important as the Singapore office is for future growth, the company has equally pressing needs at home. The company just finished out and occupied the last of the usable office space in its building at 1 Talent Plus Way, located on the southern edge of Holmes Park.

Soon the futuristic, three-story, mostly glass building will have a sister facility designed by the original building's architect, Robert Liner of Los Angeles. The design will complement the existing structure, but no construction dates have been set.

The origins of Talent Plus trace back to Dr. William E. Hall, a professor at the University of Nebraska who is regarded as the father of the structured interview process.

He left academia in 1969 to found Selection Research Inc., and apply what he had learned in the science of personality to human resources work in the private sector.

In 1989, Hall formed Talent Plus with his former student, Doug Rath, along with Doug's wife, Kimberly, and Sandy Maxwell. Doug Rath now serves as board chairman for Talent Plus.

"We believe everyone has talent to do something very well," Kimberly Rath said. "What we are asked to do for our clients is to assess a person's strengths for a particular job."

"We've studied the top performers in that job, so we know what the role model of success looks like."

Talent Plus conducts aptitude interviews with job candidates, using 50 different interview tools to facilitate the process. Clients then make their own decisions about hiring or non-hiring, based on the data. A toolbox of coaching tools is also



Talent Plus headquarters located at the southern edge of Holmes Park in Lincoln ... Planning for a second building at its Lincoln campus and a new international office in the Pacific Rim.

available to help develop employees after they are hired.

Rath said her company's other niche is helping companies to build a talent-based organization.

"These TBOs want an integrated model, so they can know the strengths of their leaders, managers and first-line staff," said Rath, who works directly with clients as a leadership management consultant. "They're working toward acquiring the talent that fits in each position, and they're developing and maximizing that talent for growth."

The talent-based approach has credibility with clients, Rath said, because Talent Plus uses the model itself as it recruits industrial psychologists, researchers, analysts, teachers, facilitators, project managers and others.

Rath predicted that in the coming years, there will be a war for talent as the baby boomers retire, and only companies with a well-defined strategy will win.

"The key is recruiting every single day," she said. "It can't be something you do just when someone is leaving. For retention, we need to give people meaningful

work and focus on how to recognize and reward people so they feel appreciated."

Kimberly Rath, 45, grew up in Lincoln and graduated from UNL with a degree in education. She joined selection research shortly after graduation and fell in love with the field of human development.

"I am excited to see people develop and grow," she said, "and I enjoy building platforms where people can do that."

She and her husband, Doug, have four children in a blended family — Tom, Makenzie, Austin and Kramer.

In her spare time, Rath is active in the Young Presidents Association and the Cather Circle, an alumni mentoring association at UNL. She also enjoys exercise, reading and dining with friends.

Rath is upbeat about the future prospects of Talent Plus, but knows the company must continue to apply its own scientific method to further develop the organization.

"Our growth will be determined by the people we select and how they want the company to grow and develop," she said.

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