

RECRUITING RECOGNITION

RI Awards honor
Japan's top companies

By Megan Casson

Competition is fierce in the recruitment industry. Being recognized for excellence is important for setting yourself apart in the eyes of job seekers, and the RI Awards—the industry's biggest competition held annually in Australia, the United Kingdom, and Japan—is one of the most sought-after accolades.

This year's black-tie gala, co-produced by Custom Media, publisher of *The ACCJ Journal*, brought together the biggest and best recruitment companies in Japan on July 29 at Tokyo American Club.

A judging panel of 14 industry experts selected the winners, and RI Awards Director David Head presented 18 trophies to 14 companies.

Head spoke to *The ACCJ Journal* about why he thinks the honors are important. "It's just the sheer fact that we reward—and look for—the best in the recruitment sector. It's a great way for us to highlight the industry we work in and the great people we have in the industry. That's what it's all about."

AFFECTING CHANGE

One way in which the RI Awards highlight important issues in recruitment—and thus encourage companies to evolve and advance individual sectors—is through named awards. One example is diversity and inclusion (D&I), which is a hot topic in Japan. Having a prize specifically

for D&I is a great way to inspire recruiters to think more carefully about inclusion, to assess the composition of their team, and to help diversify the workplace in Japan. This year's Diversity & Inclusion Champion award went to Michael Page International (Japan) KK.

Lawrence Shalberg of executive search brokerage The Agency feels that winning two prestigious RI Awards is a testament to the success of his company, which took home both the Best Small Recruitment Company to Work For and the Best Newcomer—Rising Star awards. He said the distinctions were "very honoring" and that it seems the size of a company need not determine the impact it makes.

LEADING THE WAY

The Business Leader of the Year award went to Matt Nicholls of RGF Professional Recruitment Japan. The prize goes to an individual, but Nicholls doesn't see it as a solo honor. "We have such a strong team, so that's why I think we won it. And it shows in the growth of the company. We have gone from 19 to 123 staff and we have great people."

Recruitment was virtually non-existent in Japan until this year's RI Hall of Fame winner, Yasujiro Okano, founded the pioneering recruitment firm Staff Service in 1960. Fast-forward 47 years and Japanese giant Recruit Holdings Co., Ltd. bought the company for \$1.5 billion.

The range of contenders in the 2018 RI Awards shows just how far recruitment has come since Okano's innovation nearly six decades ago, and how the hard work of each company—and the contributions recruiters are making to the workforce—are changing Japan and the world for the better. Congratulations to all the nominees and winners! ■

2018 RECRUITMENT INTERNATIONAL AWARD WINNERS

IT & Technology Recruitment Company of the Year
SThree

Healthcare & Life Sciences Recruitment Company of the Year
SThree

Best CSR Initiative
Morgan Mckinley

Banking & Finance Recruitment Company of the Year
Robert Walters

Best Back Office Team of the Year
Robert Walters

Growth Company of the Year
Robert Walters

Rising Star
The Agency

Best Small Recruitment Company to Work For
The Agency

Best Large Recruitment Company to Work For
Hays

Best Medium Recruitment Company to Work For
Apex

Best Specialist Recruitment of the Year
Apex

Diversity & Inclusion Champion
Michael Page

Technical & Industrial Recruitment Company of the Year
Boyd & Moore

Best RPO Provider
Boyd & Moore

Best Executive Search Company of the Year
RGF Executive Search Japan

Business Leader of the Year
RGF Professional Recruitment Japan

Outstanding HR & Recruitment Professional of the Year
Shinsuke Hoshi, en world Japan K.K.

RI Hall of Fame
Yasujiro Okano



Japanese recruitment agency Apex Inc., which specializes in talent acquisition for domestic and global companies in the real estate investment and finance sector, received the Specialist Recruitment Company of the Year Award at the 2018 RI Awards on June 29.

Kazuhisa Hashimoto established Apex in 2006, two years prior to the global financial crisis. When the crash happened, recruitment agencies were falling into bankruptcy and exiting the market. This prompted Hashimoto to continue working solo until 2012, when Shinzo Abe was elected prime minister and the market began to improve.

GROWTH

Since then, as the market has advanced, Apex has expanded every six months and now employs 11 experienced staff, many of whom are bilingual. Hashimoto manages operations—including the hiring and training of new employees—for the company that provides staffing at various levels and offers an extensive database to its clients.

"I think recruiters or headhunters are still undervalued in Japanese society," said Hashimoto. In the United States, recruitment and headhunting is perceived as a much more reputable career, and he hopes the industry in Japan can erase this gap through promotion and better salaries. By 2020, he hopes to have expanded his company to 20 employees.

ENVIRONMENT

At Apex, employees are paid according to their performance. "I don't give them so much pressure. I just give them the target. Most of my staff reach that goal because our company has a good compensation system," Hashimoto said. "The more revenue they make, the more income they make; and so we have a very highly competitive commission structure." Most recruitment agencies offer an incentive ratio between 25 and 30 percent, but Apex doubles that.

"I think we have a good working environment. Staff don't need to come to the office every day; they come every time they need to, so we don't have the concept of paid vacation and sick leave," he explained. With the exception of a mandatory weekly meeting and their own client commitments, employees are able to customize their schedules by arriving and leaving as they wish—even working on weekends if they choose.

CHALLENGES

Although job opportunities are on the rise in Tokyo, recruiters are finding it increasingly challenging to convince job seekers to accept their clients' offers. "We have to negotiate with clients to raise the salary or offer more benefits," Hashimoto said. "I often ask our clients to invite the candidate for dinner. Because I am the agent, my impact is limited. But, for a direct employer, the pathway to the candidate has a stronger impact."

IMPETUS

Prior to receiving their RI award, Apex had picked up two Nikkei Human Resources Agent Awards, in 2015 and 2016. The accolades have strengthened the trust and connections the company has cultivated over the years and improved its status in Japan's real estate investment and finance market. Apex has strong links within this sector in Tokyo and has obtained a reputable status with both employers and employees.

To build upon this local success, Hashimoto is looking to expand not only in Japan but also to the United States. He said that the RI Award will be a "good appeal for global companies" and will fuel his plans to set up a US subsidiary through which he can aid new university graduates as they begin their recruitment career—the way a US subsidiary recruitment corporation took him under its wing 20 years ago. ■



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