

Interview with Larisa Fedorova, HR Director Bath Road

Why do you love Human Resources?

I came to HR by accident, but despite this, the profession seemed quite interesting to me. Working in HR still fascinates me.

We have a very interesting role in business - to be a guide, support for business in terms of human capital and talents. It seems to me that intellectually this is quite an interesting task and it is not so easy to accomplish. You need to be a mature person, understand HR processes well, understand business well and be in dialogue with business. Then HR brings the added value. Now external situation and business tasks are quite challenging. In this context, we are also responsible for creating an atmosphere where people feel that they are valued, that they are thought of - I see that I bring impact in my role.

The role of HR for me is also about development - intellectual and emotional, in general, about my development as a person.

In your opinion, what does your diverse experience bring to your current role?

I don't work in my own culture, it's still difficult for me and it's not easy for people with me. From a communication standpoint, I came from a more directive culture to a culture of softer communication. For me, dialogue with colleagues is a conscious work.

I never thought before that I have difficulties with English, but when you live in the UK, the expectation in terms of language level from you is completely different.

International experience helps me in several aspects. Firstly, when we are looking for talent in a company, it is always an international environment. Talent can be seen and appreciated in any culture, it is universal.

Secondly, I realized for myself that labor legislation in general is not so difficult. Each country has its own nuances, but the base is very similar. When the base in one culture is clear, it is possible to cascade this understanding to others.

In addition to working in Russia, France, UK, I had experience working with Italy, Tunisia, Singapore. Such an experience gives acceptance of completely different aspects of life. What is considered the norm in one culture may not be the norm in another. You need to be ready for this and show respect and acceptance.

HR is a function in which it is important to show empathy, to be accepting, understanding, but at the same time to give results. The combination of these factors, plus communication in a non-native language is not an easy challenge.

All the experience I have gained so far, including my role in C&B in Boulogne, working with different markets and cultures has helped me to expand the understanding of what is possible and impossible, what exists in the world.

What would you describe as your main career achievements?

I would say my adaptation in France when I moved to HQ and speaking French.

Another interesting experience is the integration of Akkadeas Pharma in Italy, a company that Ipsen bought and integrated within the CHC Division. It was a challenging experience for me – Ipsen CHC did not exist in Italy at that time, we were opening a branch. At the same time, I got acquainted with the culture, with people, with local legislation and business. For me, it was a big strength test.

Another interesting experience is the launch of an Engagement Survey in a very short time. I was offered to join the project and implement it in 2 months. I had to quickly learn how to manage a project, be flexible, sometimes

say "no", remaining in a collaborative manner, manage the expectations of many stakeholders. As a result, the project had to be launched and presented to all colleagues at GHRM.

Now I'm in the UK, and it took me about a year to adapt. Moving to a new country, a different rhythm of life, different ways of working, a different culture, a different business vision. Despite these challenges, it seems to me that the adaptation has been quite successful – our EES results are growing, employees recognize that we are moving in the right direction.

In general, for me, an achievement is when a person does something difficult, and at the same time he succeeds, and he enjoys it.

These achievements energize me, I enjoy them.

If you could give advice to your HR colleagues about owning their career, what would it be?

I have an interesting path, because many of the positions I held appeared as a new opportunity for me and I did not plan them. The way I imagine my career development is different in life. Sometimes the way we imagine our development, perhaps from our limited ideas, does not allow us to see the whole set of possibilities. However, the opportunity that has appeared at a particular time is probably the best and it is strange not to take advantage of it.

My career has turned out quite different than I imagined it. However, I realized a few things for myself. First, it's important to make a decision about what you want. Secondly, you need advice from an experienced, mature colleague in a higher position about next step that would be the most optimal for you in the future. Such additional information is very important because it allows to clarify the direction of the career movement. Third, your manager should know what you want.

What could Ipsen HR do more of to continue supporting career development of the HR community at Ipsen?

I think we can use more project assignments for development, in accordance with the 70-20-10 principle. Participation in projects gives an understanding of how processes are built in different functions and locations, helps to expand the network, strengthen visibility, and acquire new skills and knowledge through mistakes made.

We can also involve HR more actively in leadership programs. HR has to move toe in toe with the leaders, and if our partner passes the leadership program, then HR must be in it as well. Otherwise, there is no dialogue in the same language between us.

An important topic for me is what it means to be focused and strategic in HR. When there are many tasks and activities, and resources are limited, it is important to be able to be focused and effective. I think we can pay more attention to working on this topic.

Another area is the role of HR as a partner. In our work, we sometimes connect things that are not connected – a business that needs fast decisions and has a lot of expectations, and HR, where processes, compliance, risk minimization, empathy, human relations are important. How to connect these two worlds that are sometimes not connected, to influence and keep a reputation, to be effective. Traditionally, we learn this on-the-job, but perhaps coaching, best practice sharing can also help us in this. How to learn to influence business at such a fast pace and with high expectations when resources are limited.

If you were not HR, what would be your dream job?

As a child, I dreamed of being a doctor, then a teacher, but eventually realized that these were not my professions. If I dream, I would like to be an artist living in Provence, who creates all day, and in the evening goes to the seashore and enjoys this life.