

COMPANY SPOTLIGHT

ISM Technology Recruitment

Thailand's rapidly-growing Information Technology industry is playing a vital role in the development of the country, creating enormous economic opportunities for Thai companies, particularly in areas such as multimedia, animation, design, gaming, web development, e-learning, e-commerce, telecommunications and mobile computing.

The growth of the market for smart devices and newly developing IT service delivery models are prompting Thai IT service providers as well as end-users, both large enterprises and SMEs, to evolve. Yet, adaptability is dependent upon the availability of a suitable human resource base that can properly support a move up the ladder of economic development. Both foreign enterprises and local companies in the Thai IT sector are constantly seeking people with the right IT experience and skill sets and to help them find candidates that can help them upgrade their capabilities, they often turn to recruitment companies.

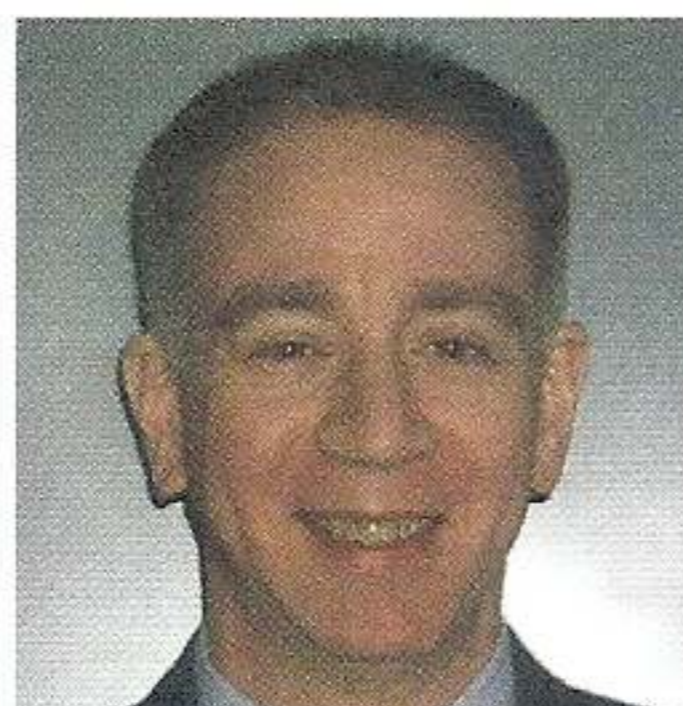
ISM Technology Recruitment, Thailand's first "IT-only" placement agency, founded in 1991 by Mr. Peter Fischbach, has become the leading choice for companies needing an efficient way to find and interview a pool of pre-screened candidates to match a specific technical job description. This "bank" is constantly being updated, not only with information about new candidates, but also with current information about the additional skills of those already in its database. It is one of ISM's unique features and provides the company with especially good insight into the constantly changing landscape of in-demand technical skills.

Mr. Fischbach explained that ISM places IT professionals in permanent jobs and also provides fixed-term IT contractors to corporate clients in all industry sectors. Overall, ISM seeks to make the process of recruitment and placement (which, for IT jobs, requires technical evaluation) more efficient, offering resources and information to both applicants and clients. ISM also carries out executive search assignments for clients in the IT sector, filling sales and account management positions as well as executive management roles. IT vendors' hiring decisions are often a leading indicator of demand in the tech sector, so this aspect of ISM's business also helps the company stay on top of IT market trends.

Why does a niche exist for ISM? Mr. Fischbach pointed out that most Human Resource departments lack the technical knowledge and industry familiarity to identify the right IT people and evaluate their technical skills for specific jobs. IT departments themselves are generally too busy to spend time searching for and evaluating candidates. This is a global phenomenon. ISM fills this gap in Thailand and, as a recruiter specialized in the IT field, has a real, competitive edge.

ISM recognizes that future demand for IT professionals will come not only from local companies expanding their operations within Thailand and throughout the region, but also from foreign firms (both inside and outside the region) relocating to or setting up new operations in Thailand.

Mr. Fischbach observed that in recent months more and more



Mr. Peter Fischbach,
President, ISM
Technology Recruitment

foreign companies that already have a manufacturing, service delivery or sales presence in Thailand have expanded their investment footprint by moving internal, corporate IT functions away from expensive development and support centers in their home countries, and establishing more cost effective IT resource centers in Thailand

These companies are already comfortable doing business here, and are likely to approach this broadening of their Thai presence with realistic expectations. The companies for whom this strategy has been successful have been willing to invest the time to build a small and well-balanced team, with (for example) one or two local software development managers who have good English skills and solid experience with the key technology being used, and then perhaps three or four more junior programmers reporting to them, who are technically skilled but who may not necessarily need to communicate very often in English. The skills, Mr. Fischbach noted, are

here, but employers must be willing to take a flexible approach in order to find and utilize those skills effectively.

When asked about Team ISM, Mr. Fischbach mentioned that in addition to looking for staff who either have a solid understanding of the IT industry or lengthy experience in the Thai job market, he hires individuals with "people skills" – the ability to interface with applicants and customers, both Thai and non-Thai alike. Indeed, the ability to communicate cross-culturally is a quality that is on display every day at ISM, where the company's employees regularly speak and exchange e-mails with clients' hiring managers who may be American, German, Belgian, French, Japanese, Singaporean, or any one of the dozens of other nationalities represented among the community of Thailand's foreign investors.

Additionally, ISM imparts career advice to its candidates advising them on the expectations which multinational companies have when hiring local employees. But perhaps more importantly, ISM itself reflects a cross-cultural partnership, which can be seen in the working relationship between Mr. Fischbach and Ms. Nongluck Boonpatip, General Manager of the company. Together they have accumulated more than 40 years of experience in Thailand's IT sector.

There were a number of issues that Mr. Fischbach highlighted during the interview which are relevant not only to ISM but also to the Thai IT industry in general. As the country has an unemployment rate hovering around 0.7%, there is stiff competition for qualified job candidates. Although given its well-known reputation, experienced staff, and extensive client list, ISM sits in an advantageous position for attracting some of the best and the brightest IT professionals both here in Thailand as well as from around the world, the company is looking to the future. Online job portals and social/professional networking sites are playing an ever-increasing role in the employment process, and ISM sees opportunities in this trend, both locally and regionally.

Regarding the Thailand Board of Investment, Mr. Fischbach mentioned that ISM is on the radar screen of the BOI, to which

it provides IT salary statistics. This business intelligence is valuable when the BOI sends its representatives abroad to promote Thailand as an investment destination, as cost and availability of IT professionals is one of the questions investors often ask BOI officials. Mr. Fischbach also remarked that, certain IT investments are eligible for attractive investment incentives from the BOI, a fact that ISM always mentions to potential clients who approach the company for staffing information in evaluating where in the region to locate their IT-related business activities.

can be found in a diverse range of majors at many universities, from computer engineering to business information systems, the number of qualified IT specialists still falls short of that required to support Thailand's ongoing transformation into a knowledge-based economy.

In less than three years, Thailand will undergo a fundamental economic change with the realization of the ASEAN Economic Community, an integrated single market and production base. For companies well-prepared to meet the challenges of AEC, there will be new and exciting opportunities in the form of a hugely expanded market for their products or services. Local enterprises that are involved in the IT sector must be alert to the changes that will come with a single open market, and prepare for AEC 2015 or run the risk of being overwhelmed by strong cross-border and overseas competition. The AEC will stimulate greater movement of people across the region. As Mr.

However, education remains an area of concern, particularly English language proficiency. Mr. Fischbach commented that in order for Thais to be competitive globally there has to be a marked improvement in the ability to communicate effectively in English. He also indicated that universities in Thailand are not producing a sufficient number of IT graduates. According to research collated by ISM, in 2009 some 13,000 students graduated in IT-related majors, which was just 5% of the total number of university graduates in Thailand. Although IT studies

Fischbach succinctly observed, AEC has the potential to be a game changer for both Thailand's and Southeast Asia's labor markets, especially in terms of recruiting skilled professionals. Furthermore, the firmly established model of business process globalization obligates companies in the IT sector itself to adapt their products and services in all markets more quickly, to keep pace with the demands of their customers.

Operating in the fast-paced global environment that characterizes the 21st century, businesses engaged in the IT industry should be accustomed to the need for agility, enabling them not only to foresee and accept change, but also to use change for their own benefit. With a well-established presence in Thailand, ISM Technology Recruitment has a proven track record, resources, leadership, and vision to manage future challenges and to continue its success as the "#1 tech recruiter in Thailand".

