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LAWO and Caspian One's engagement began in 2017, when, further to meetings at a certain Amsterdam-based industry event, our services were requested to assist with a challenging Head of Sales and Solutions Engineering role.

Since then, successes with this role and others have only strengthened that partnership – seeing us collaborate with numerous contacts across the organisation.

In today's interview, we speak with Sam Schauland, Senior Vice-President of Global Operations at LAWO. Sam, working closely with Principal Consultant, Carl Hemsley – has made four placements through us between 2018-2021, at a ratio of 2:1 [CVs sent to individual interviews] and 6:1 [interviewed candidates to placement].

Hires to date have included:

- Broadcast Technology Specialist, New York
- Technical Support Specialist, Outside Broadcast, SMPTE 2110, IP – Ontario
- Broadcast Engineering Specialist – Projects, Commissioning, Design, Toronto
- Head of Project Management, New Jersey

Sam, what's your story with Caspian One – can you tell us how it all started?

I remember that my first reaction was, "How can someone in the UK do recruiting for the North American market, and be present in that market, and have the insight needed?".

In the beginning I was hesitant and I tried to connect with recruiters in North America because it felt way more natural to work with local companies. But then at some point I had a conversation with Carl and we gave it a shot – I was super surprised by the quality and number of candidates that kept coming in, and also, the reaction times – the communication was superb!

It did not take much time and Carl understood what we were looking for. Carl and I get along well and I felt that if I describe something he immediately gets it – so it all went very well and started from there.

Many of the placements we've made with LAWO have been across New York and North America and so on. Given this, how would you describe that relationship, working with a company that's UK-based but are delivering for international roles?

I think we as a company have a bit of an advantage because it is normal for us. Our headquarters are in Germany but many people work in North America, the UK and other regions, so coordinating with someone outside of the country (especially in the UK or Germany), is something I do every day – that part is easy.

Of course, the time difference is there, but especially on the east coast, I don't see it as a big challenge, as normally there are not many "emergencies" in recruiting. It is not like you have to have a reaction within an hour. All in all, the international aspect has not been a problem for us.



You mentioned local recruitment companies in North America – is there a particular value that we bring beyond just the relationship, working with us versus staying local?

I've worked in London in the past and I feel that generally spoken the way business is done in the UK is very organised – in other words: I am familiar with approach and I like it. It is very structured and that is definitely an advantage for us.

How would you describe the relationship you have with Caspian One?

It is professional, friendly and what I like is, it really feels like you're interested in the requirements. Carl for example asks questions, he really tries to understand what the need we have is for a certain position and beyond that, he asks for information that is not in the job description. For example: how independent is this position going to work? How will they fit in the overall structure? He tries to understand what LAWO is about and how LAWO North America differs from the LAWO headquarters, for example.

As a company we talk about the value of partnerships and investing time understanding clients. Do you feel that's the relationship you've had with us - where we've invested time in learning about LAWO as much as the vacancies we may be working on?

For sure, a definite yes. In my view it is clear that a relationship you have with recruiters is special. It is not a customer/supplier relationship like you normally have, simply because Caspian One only gets paid if you place someone. So, I can have you working for a significant amount of time and then say "ah, no, sorry we took another guy".

I try to keep that in mind because, if I were in your shoes some point I would say "you've done this three times, I'm not going to call you again". We've had situations where that has happened and while I appreciate that it has not been a problem I also try to play it fair - it is a long term relationship for both sides. I appreciate Carl, he has helped me a lot in the past.

What is it that makes you come to Caspian One - are there particular occasions when you think, we can't do this internally and need to reach out to an external agency?

The main reason is that with the amount of people we are hiring it is an advantage for us to rely on a partner that specializes in recruiting, knows the market, has a network and is professional in handling communication with the candidates.

There are other benefits as well, having a third party involved in the hiring process. I like that Carl can ask the candidates questions from a different angle and I know he is coaching the candidate as well; he knows me so he will say to candidates things like "make sure that you emphasize your view on task tracking and project documentation" - that helps everyone involved. Another point is that contract negotiation becomes so much easier as it is not only a dialogue between the employer and future employee anymore. Having a "buffer in the middle" makes this part of the hiring process a lot easier.

How much does our status in the industry and knowledge come into play as a specialist?

Your team has an insight into what is going on in the market and who is available, and that is something not everyone has.

At the time I started recruiting in North America I had also reached out to some big recruiting companies and it I had the impression that the Broadcast industry was not a big topic for them. Based on that we would not get the same result, service and expertise working with them.

Where could we be making improvements or working in a different way?

Carl is always my 'go-to' person, but I had a situation where we weren't finding the right person so I ended up reaching out to another firm, they quickly presented someone who had not been on the radar, and we hired them.

Is that something you can fix – no, I don't think you can, it is simply a matter of networks and coincidence.

For me the big point is that I know what I get.

I know Carl, I know that he is reliable and when I need to reach him, I get a response time that exceeds my expectation.

There is not much to improve beyond that in my view. Of course, you can always have a bigger network or understand the role even more – but I typically do not get candidates from Carl that are a complete mismatch. The service that Caspian One is providing is at a very high level.

Thank you for speaking with us Sam; do you have any final thoughts to share?

In my view is it important to look at where the industry and Lawo are going in the future and how roles will change. What we are experiencing right now is that it is getting harder to find people in general, especially skilled engineers but also managers. If you want to grow you have to care about your team and invest in it.

You could argue that has always been the case but I feel that the pandemic has made it even more important. We have been used to working remotely for a long time so that has not been a drastic change for us, but the role of recruiting good people, getting input on what people need and what you have to put on the table to interest good candidates will keep becoming more important.