

## Hunting for World Class Executives



“Home is where the heart is.”

This adage certainly rings true for Richard Mills, one of the founders and chairman of Chalre Associates Executive Search. A Canadian by birth, Mills has been living in the Philippines with his family for several years now and is admittedly a proud fan of the Philippines and its potential for growth.

Mills’ company is into hunting—for top executives. Chalre Associates is one of

Southeast Asia’s most prominent senior management recruitment partners. It services multinational corporations throughout the Asia Pacific region, with special focus on the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. Mills said these countries are currently underserved by traditional executive search firms who normally train their eyes on the big five regional centers in Asia—Singapore, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Sydney and Shanghai.

Mills said that recruiting world-class managers in any country is challenging, but it becomes more complicated in emerging countries because of four factors—fewer world-class senior managers have yet been developed, background confirmation can require more time and requires strong personal relationships developed ahead of time, a need to remain involved in the placement after it is completed, and senior managers in emerging countries are paid less than managers in the Big 5 markets, making executive search fees lower.

Chalre Associates is also known for producing the Asia CEO Forum, the largest regular business event in the country and considered as one of the most important business forums in the Southeast Asian region. Mills started the forum along with Chalre president Rebecca Bustamante in 2007 to serve as a hub for the spreading of ideas that help executive managers oversee enterprises across the region. The business forum attracts a growing number of loyal attendees each year, from expatriates to Asian management personnel overseeing multinational and regional organizations. Held monthly in the Philippines, presenters are

leaders in their own fields. According to Mills, the Asia CEO Forum is actually a CSR (corporate social responsibility) undertaking of Chalre and they are doing this to promote the Philippines as a premier business destination in Asia.

“Eight years ago, I started a similar morning event, specific to the ICT industry, when this business process outsourcing [BPO] was still a new concept and there were many concerns that need to be addressed,” Mills said. His aim was to get senior ICT leaders together to swap ideas. The ICT forum has done very well, and developed an awards event called the International ICT Awards that is now one of the largest awards in the Asia Pacific region.

Mills said that what struck him was the overwhelming positive response from expatriates who talked about how great it was to do business in the Philippines compared to other countries they had been to. This sentiment led him to form Chalre Associates along with Bustamante.

In November 2010, Chalre held the very first Asia CEO Awards held in Dusit Thani Hotel, Makati City to recognize leaders and CEOs who excel in what they do. Now on its third year, the Asia CEO Awards represents the grandest alliance of local and international business people with the shared goal of promoting the Philippines on the world stage. It has become one of the largest and most prestigious business events of its kind in the region, a must-attend occasion for business leaders active in SE Asia. Mills boasted that participants to the 3rd annual awards this November have tripled in size.

“What we are seeing in the Philippines now is the same energy and enthusiasm that we saw in the BPO sector years ago, but this time in a host of other industries like consumer goods and agriculture to construction and tourism,” Mills said.