

Increase in international recruitment may herald upturn

South African executives have become prime targets for recruiters from all over the world but Chinese recruiters have especially been very active here. “Chinese high-tech companies are just beginning to understand the need for marketing, brand-building and globalisation and they are looking for skilled marketing executives who can help them achieve that goal,” says Neil Maslen MD of executive search firm Mindcor.

“South Africa is known as a market that has produced top-class executive talent. Many South Africans are heading up major international companies around the world and South African executives had always been in great demand and have proved that they can adapt to new environments quickly and effectively.”

Maslen said his own company had gone into a growth cycle with a number of major search assignments given to them in the past few weeks looking for top executives with proven entrepreneurial skills who could help companies grow.

Many optimistic the worst of the recession is over

“Without exception, the people we were dealing with were optimistic that the worst of the recession was over and that the economy was ready to go into growth mode hence the need for new executives to help drive the growth cycle.”

“Foreign expat executives have fewer options today,” said Michael Norman, a vice-president for Sibson Consulting, a human resources firm based in North America. “But for those with unique skills or knowledge there are growing opportunities working for Chinese companies.”

China's economy grew a stronger-than-expected 7.9% in the second quarter; one reason why Sibson, which is looking for local partners, sees high demand from Chinese firms for executives with specific technical or marketing skills.

China International Intellectech (Shanghai) Corp, an executive search and consultancy, said that last year, it recommended over 1000 foreign executives for positions in multinationals doing business in the mainland. The list of Chinese companies taking advantage of recruiting foreign executives is growing as they expand globally.