



CLIFTON HILL ASSOCIATES



Case Study

Director of Government
Affairs, Brazil

Kinross Gold Corporation

Senior Leadership role

Client: Kinross Gold Corporation

Role: Director of Government Affairs, Brazil

Location: Belo Horizonte

Time to shortlist: 6 weeks



Challenge

At the time of executing this assignment, Brazil had become an increasingly complex operating environment for mining companies; Brazil's new regulatory framework was under discussion with potentially increased taxation and royalties levied on the mining sector. In addition, Kinross operations are located adjacent to an urban centre, which adds specific external affairs complexity requiring pro-active and progressive stakeholder and issues management. This uncertainty, underpinned by a senior leadership change, prompted Kinross Gold to retain CHA to refresh the external affairs function in Brazil.

CHA was tasked with finding candidates who fluently spoke Portuguese as well as English, with a successful track record of working within a multi-cultural, highly regulated organisation. The ideal candidate needed to be impactful both at the local level as well as nationally, and able to act as a credible and trusted representative of Kinross Gold.

This was an important hire for Kinross Gold; the Government Affairs function is instrumental in strengthening the company's license to operate, and Kinross Gold saw this as an opportunity to bring on-board a Director who is forward-thinking and modern in their approach to stakeholder engagement.

Unfortunately, a very "old school" approach to government relations was pervasive in Brazil, and consequently many candidates believed that the most important attribute a government affairs professional could have was 'who they know'. Kinross, on the other hand, have always been determined to be more forward-thinking in their approach to obtaining a long-term social license to operate, and in doing so have always sought the most progressive thinkers to join their external affairs functions, globally. Brazil was to be no exception.

Solution

CHA launched a focused search, aimed at identifying suitable Brazilian candidates both in-country and living internationally. We were aware that the right candidate may not come from a mining background, and so we mapped out any senior candidates operating within external affairs functions in any heavily regulated industry, or in a relevant advisory/consultant role.

Using a combination of interviews aimed at exploring competency, leadership skills and cultural fit, followed by psychometric assessments, CHA presented a short-list of 4 candidates within 6 weeks; 3 Brazilian males and 1 Brazilian female.

Kinross Gold put special emphasis on the psychometric assessment results, thoughtful that the right candidate would be likely to showcase specific characteristics more so than others. Whilst these assessments were not by any means the deciding factor for Kinross Gold, they did help considerably to guide the interviews, and prompt certain questions which may not have otherwise been obvious.

It took 5 months from proposal to completion to place the successful candidate, including working his notice period.

What was key to the successful placement?

The external affairs function in a mining company can either be a critical business risk, or a significant competitive advantage; whilst most large mining houses recognise the fundamental importance of maintaining their social license to operate, the importance of Government Relations as a factor in this is still all-too-often overlooked. Understanding the consequence of this function to Kinross's business as a whole was central to building our research strategy – helping us to ensure quality over quantity.

Secondly, it was vital for CHA to gain a deep understanding of the types of candidates Kinross was looking for; notably, this helped us to prioritise distinguishing between candidates who favoured 'new' or 'old-school' stakeholder engagement methodologies. Having this understanding further informed our interview strategy, ensuring we asked the most relevant questions which uncovered both competency and stylistic approach at the same time.

Client Perspective

CHA did an excellent job. I especially appreciated the fast and dedicated work the team did, from brief to market scan and longlist, that was quickly brought back to a manageable number of credible candidates. Their availability to discuss and brainstorm about the strengths and weaknesses of potential candidates, providing valuable additional insights was appreciated. They have always been very responsive and quick to act, scheduling interviews quickly – operating in a very collaborative way.

Nichole and Fran provided local and international context to the candidates' backgrounds, and how that would shape how they could be successful (or not) in the specific role. I have always found them to have excellent judgement about candidates. I have worked with CHA in Brazil, Chile, the USA, Spain, and Africa - they have always demonstrated to be effective operators.

I have worked with various recruiters over the years as both a candidate and a client. I have found CHA stands out in international external affairs recruitment as a boutique that is not simply looking to complete an assignment and collect a fee but is truly committed to ensure that the right candidate is placed in a role where they can be successful, and where the client hires the best fit for the company.

They are a pleasure to work with and will always hit my short-list for future recruitment needs.



Michiel Van Akkooi, SVP, Government Relations, Kinross Gold



CLIFTON HILL ASSOCIATES

15 Stratton Street,
London, W1J 8LQ,
United Kingdom

+44 (0) 20 7078 9606

info@clifton-hill.com
www.cliftonhillassociates.com