

Elias Neocleous & Co LLC



Anna Mylona, Head of Human Capital at Elias Neocleous & Co LLC, explains how the firm's transparent career paths are directly linked to its people-centred Performance Management system, which is continuously nourished and developed.

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Delivering on a Promise

Can you provide a general outline of your recruiting process? What skills are you looking for and what are some of the things that make certain candidates stand out?

Gaining and sustaining a market-leading position is very challenging and requires continuous development and transformation. This is especially true in our complex profession, which is constantly evolving and demands the highest standards of professional knowledge, skills, stamina and innovative thinking. In order to achieve our ultimate objective of providing the highest quality service to our clients in all disciplines, we need to continuously develop and reinforce our human capital.

Talent acquisition is one of the most vital HR processes in our firm. Identifying and placing the right person in the right position at the right time is key to achieving a dynamic team synthesis and a healthy workflow. During the planning phase, we identify a vacancy and develop the job description and ideal candidate profile for the role. Then, we devise our strategy to attract talent, depending on the complexity of the role. We refer to our robust database, we use the careers section of our website and our strong social media network as a medium, as well as job search apps and our strong relationships with recruitment agencies. The screening and evaluation processes are of great importance to identify the successful candidate who not only possesses

the required skills and knowledge but will be a good fit for the team and our corporate culture. The candidates who stand out may not necessarily be the best in their field but they will be the best fit for us. We look for those innate skills that are difficult to identify and measure, for values such as integrity, a passion for growth, out-of-the-box thinking, self-motivation and a positive attitude. Our approach is to recruit the person and then train the skill, if we need to. On occasion, we may even challenge conventional processes by identifying the talent and then creating the position.

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Number of Cyprus-based employees: Around 165
Number of internationally based employees: Around 10
Locations of employees (including remote workers): Cyprus, Prague, Budapest, Kiev, Brussels
Number of employees who left the company in 2021: 21
Number of new hires in 2021: 37
Average age of staff: 23-68
Gender distribution of staff: Female 41.2%, Male 58.8%

Once someone is hired, how are they trained? How are employees evaluated on their performance? Do you use key performance indicators (KPIs)?

We take pride in being considered the preferred choice of some of the highest calibre professionals. When someone joins our firm, we consider it our obligation to deliver on our promise, which is to offer the best working experience and a long professional journey. Our effective onboarding and orientation process is a vital initial step, which enables new colleagues to understand the organisation's vision, goals and objectives and helps them adapt more quickly and seamlessly to their new business environment. Our firm offers professional opportunities in various disciplines and, whether joining our legal or non-legal team, the new member becomes an integral part of the firm and receives the appropriate training and development. One of our best practices is the intense legal training we offer to young professionals. This is delivered with the aim of developing the future leaders in the field. In fact, this has been the career path for most of our Partners today. Our transparent career paths are directly linked to our people-centred Performance Management system, which we are continuously developing. The system is based on our own competency framework, which translates our values, mission and vision into operational actions and our metrics, both qualitative and quantitative, are carefully designed in the form of Key Performance Indicators.

How is performance reflected in being considered for professional progress (promotions, raises, bonuses)?

We recognise our people as individuals who bring their unique talents, experiences, knowledge and creativity and add value with their individuality and professional persona. As a firm, we have the intelligence and mechanisms to identify, utilise, develop and invest in those individual qualities, which we believe is the only way to achieve sustainable growth. We cultivate a performance culture, in which exceptional performance is rewarded and where people can reach their highest potential and achieve their personal and professional objectives. We give people wings and it then depends on each individual how high they will fly.

What are some of the specific benefits that employees of your company can look forward to?

We offer a combination of monetary and non-monetary benefits, ranging from the opportunity to join a pension or provident fund through to a semi-funded daily lunch buffet. We embrace diversity and we offer opportunities to people from overseas to join our team. We have attractive relocation packages and allowances and pro-

vide all the necessary support to our new colleagues and their families to adapt to their new environment. Our team enjoys discounts in various shops, gyms, as well as, in dining and hospitality establishments, as a result of several business synergies we have established. Most importantly, however, we support professional development and facilitate learning. One can definitely look forward to an intellectually stimulating culture that rewards contribution and unlocks people's highest potential, in a transparent team environment. Whilst we enjoy several benefits, we also live by the philosophy of 'paying it forward'. As a firm, we respect the communities in which we exist as a business, and in this respect, we integrate social concerns into our business operation. We have a strong sense of corporate social responsibility and our team engages in many activities that are aimed at contributing to society and to our less fortunate community members.

Were particular efforts made to help employees carry out their work and stay well mentally and physically during the lockdowns and the ongoing pandemic?

Undoubtedly the pandemic has posed numerous challenges for everyone on a global scale, and it continues to do so. For us, the health and wellbeing of our people is always at the forefront of our thinking and everyone's safety is always our top priority. Simultaneously, however, we need to safeguard our operations and productivity in order to retain a healthy and viable business for everyone's benefit. These intentions are communicated effectively in order to keep everyone aligned with all the actions the firm takes and the reasoning behind them. We made and we continue to make great efforts to maintain a healthy environment and a healthy spirit. Further to ensuring a safe environment, with high levels of office hygiene and social distancing, we also introduced employee rotation and working from home practices. We were privileged to already have in place the appropriate tools, infrastructure, technology and intelligence to implement these measures and workable solutions, which contributed to achieving successful business continuity. Of all the measures and professional actions we adopted, the most significant one, I believe, was our people-centric approach. With absolute respect to all our people, we took into account the personal needs of everyone and maintained effective communication with trust, honesty and transparency. We focused on continuously encouraging and supporting our team, which resulted in us emerging stronger, more resilient and even more creative from this global challenge.

Are you concerned about the so-called 'Great Resignation'? Do you expect it to arise in Cyprus?

I strongly believe that the 'Great Resignation' is an effect of the circumstances imposed by the pandemic and it is happening on a global scale. The changes brought by the pandemic, which disrupted normality, seem to have triggered a 'change-ball effect' and a need to change other aspects of life, including employment. During repeated lockdowns, people have had time to reflect and see their lives in a new light and, for many, this has led them to reinvent their professional careers. Also, the pandemic has clearly caused a fear of 'career lockdown' and anxiety in terms of career development and progression, which, as a result, has led people to look for other opportunities. Moreover, the virtual or hybrid work setting has unavoidably caused feelings of exclusion and disengagement for some, which have also been major forces in the employee movement. Undoubtedly, employee loyalty, as we once knew it, has been challenged the last few decades by both generation Z and millennials, who have a different mentality and set of values. Therefore, I expect that this phenomenon will probably eventually balance out, but it will not cease to exist, either in Cyprus or globally. However, being aware of all these various parameters, I believe we should not be concerned about the 'Great Resignation' but should embrace it and work around it. This is a great period for transformation and for organisations to reinvent themselves. It is a time to re-examine talent retention strategies, employee benefits, work wellness practices, career paths and development plans. Most importantly, we should be focusing on re-energising and reconnecting our people to their working environment and on building and sustaining healthy, people-centered corporate cultures, based on communication and trust.

What are some of other current Human Resources sector trends?

Other significant trends definitely involve digitalisation. The future we were planning and thinking about is actually here. We are living in the digital era and all functions need to be transformed in that direction. The HR function will play a significant role in this new era, as it needs to lead this change and drive people successfully into it. The key to embracing technological change is to promote upskilling and the development of soft skills and to focus more than ever before on emotional intelligence. This transformation, like any other upcoming challenges, needs to be embraced effectively, through the mindset that people are at the heart of our business. Our role is to equip our people with the tools and skills that will enable them to face the future, whatever it brings, with confidence.

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