

The CEO's role in talent management

How top executives from ten countries are nurturing the leaders of tomorrow

Executive: Maarten J Hulshoff

Title: Chief Executive Officer

Company: Rodamco Europe N.V.

Location: Rotterdam

CEO since: 2001

Age: 58

Previous position: CEO of Rabobank International (part of Netherlands-based Rabobank)

Sector: Real estate

Revenue (2005): US\$845m

Maarten Hulshoff ties Rodamco Europe's fast growth to the quality of its management team and other employees. The Dutch real estate development company has been acquiring shopping centres throughout Europe, including major European hubs, Paris, Lyon, Madrid, Barcelona, Vienna, Prague, Warsaw and Budapest.

With so many international holdings and a management philosophy of delegating responsibility, Rodamco requires executives who understand regional business conditions but can also see the big picture. Senior leaders work with more junior managers on local decisions and company-wide policy. "We have created an interesting balance of being European while local in most of our countries," Mr Hulshoff says. "In France our team is French, in Sweden the team is Swedish, in Poland it is Polish."

Talent management begins with recruiting. Rodamco relies on executive search firms to find the right people. Mr Hulshoff favours people with backgrounds in real estate development and retailing. He also likes to see a résumé filled with blue-chip organisations and experience in helping companies to grow rapidly. Mr Hulshoff spent two decades as an executive with Citigroup and was CEO of the Dutch financial services firm Rabobank. "I like to recruit from well-established corporations with a very strong culture where people have learned tricks of the trade to manage their people and provide clear leadership," he says. "I'm looking for people who have lived through changed management and changed leadership. People who have an open eye to reach the future and keep adding onto the best

practices of the past—that's the right mix."

Managers are responsible for developing executives in their own groups. They measure performance through annual evaluations, which combine scoring in leadership categories and essays. Based on these reviews, executives outline a development plan. The firm has a formal mentoring programme that pairs senior and junior executives. Mr Hulshoff himself mentors four people. The firm also uses coaches to work with those people who are adapting less readily to new ways of doing things. "The speed of the move in business depends on the slowest mover, unfortunately."

Separately, Rodamco conducts two leadership development forums lasting three to four days, where Mr Hulshoff and other senior managers speak about strategy and leadership, along with smaller events. A two-day retreat last year required about 70 executives to engage in team-building exercises. In one drill, the executives split into groups and had to solve theoretical business problems—but with a twist. Junior executives assumed leadership roles while more senior-level managers were subordinate. "The exercise showed people how to lead for themselves," explains Mr Hulshoff.

Rodamco has two potential successors respectively for the CEO and COO roles. Its wider succession plan covers about 35 senior-level positions immediately and also three to five years into the future. Rodamco's board focuses more on financial performance and entrusts Mr Hulshoff to oversee talent

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management. But he says directors may become more involved. Mr Hulshoff's head of human resources is a member of his inner circle of executives and ensures that Rodamco is executing its talent management strategy. "HR is a facilitator," responds Mr Hulshoff.

Mr Hulshoff spends about 20% of his time on talent management. One of his challenges

in talent management is keeping people satisfied with their positions until he can promote them. He says that he cannot simply transfer an executive from one country to another. He prefers to advance people within their own countries because they understand the language and business environment.

Rodamco encourages executives to be accessible. Mr Hulshoff often speaks to Rodamco employees at all levels, frequently on site. He says that he knows about 50% of the company's roughly 600 employees by name and the rest by appearance.

He seeks advice from people inside and outside the organisation. "I am a fairly open person in terms of asking people about advice," he says. He likes to meet his informal advisers in casual settings. "I'd rather drink a good glass of wine with one of those guys than have them watch their clock tick and pay by the minute."