

ADVISOR (March 2009)

The contact point

Consulting on offer in Italy. Gerson Lehrman Group (GLG), one of the world's biggest network of professionals, is focusing on Italy with a very clear mission: to recruit more experts into its network. Andrew Goldman, managing director at GLG, tells ADVISOR about his plans.

Can you tell us about Gerson Lehrman Group, which already has about 3,000 experts in Italy?

Gerson Lehrman Group (GLG) is a network of experts, it has 16 offices throughout the world, including three in Europe and others in the US and Asia. Right now we have available around 200,000 experts in our global network, ranging from world-class consultants, to former executives at major corporations, to physicists, engineers, lawyers, and financiers. We have been in business since 1998 and our strategy is consistent growth over time. In 2008, we generated approximately USD 284 million in turnover, a 22% increase over the previous year. The experts in our global network, provide their consulting services by telephone, at in-person meetings, or in specialized reports. The experts provide their services in their free time, so it is a way for them as well to expand their businesses and their visibility.

Who are the main customers that turn to your experts, your network?

We provide expertise to key decision-makers facing major decisions at the global level. We are capable of providing expertise to such sectors as asset management, investment banking, private equity, hedge funds and mutual funds, as well as to other consultants and corporations, and law firms. Our main customers are institutional investors interested in conducting research and in-depth analyses on certain issues and our job is to put them into contact with the expert capable of answering their questions and helping them make better decisions.

Customers' requests today are not the same as those of the past. Right now the market situation is very different. What do the customers ask you?

Certainly financial companies like private-equity firms are much more interested in the portfolio-management process. We can say that demand from this segment has increased, no doubt driven by the credit crisis. Especially with a view to cutting costs and finding the greatest return-on-investment, companies prefer to come to us rather than setting up an expensive, full-time team for the purpose. In addition, we recently signed very important partnership agreements with both Credit Suisse and Morgan Stanley. Morgan Stanley signed an agreement with us to provide integrated research services to clients of GLG. Credit Suisse signed an agreement with us back in September by which its analysts can benefit from GLG resources, and some of our customers have access to CS's global equity research analysts. Today more than ever, companies need to compare the information that they have, to further analyze all the inputs before concluding deals.

What are your plans for Italy? Will you adapt your business model to the Italian environment?

We have recently opened a client-service and recruitment center in Dublin. From there we will begin to contact academic institutions and consulting companies to expand our network. Right now in Italy we can count on about 3,000 experts, but our ambition is to expand our network not just in Italy but across all of the Continent. As we have in the United States and some other countries, we are focused on adding the best experts possible into our network and building the strongest relationships with the leading institutions in Italy and throughout the rest of Europe.