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China business and policies in perspective

# Top China executives command premium

## Interview

The hunt is on. Western multinationals and Chinese firms are recruiting top mainland executives to cement their mainland presence or advance their global ambitions, opening up a world of career opportunities for select talent.

Where Western companies once had the edge in the race for the best people, domestic firms are matching them hand over fist.

“Certainly, multinationals that have big investments in China are seeking qualified Chinese executives to go into their China operations,” Janet De Silva, dean of business school Ivey Asia, told the Hong Kong Economic Journal’s EJ Insight.

“Chinese enterprises operating in China are also seeking well-qualified Chinese executives with international experience... to help them take the Chinese enterprises global.”

De Silva said the need for qualified staff is highlighted by retail training academies set up in China by luxury brands such as Cartier and Montblanc.

The training centers are putting through twice as many students as they need for their mainland stores, with the aim of seconding the extra staff to other operations.

“Chinese executives are being promoted to country or regional levels. We just haven’t seen them yet at the headquarters. I think that’s still about five to 10 years away,” she said.

“But there are board assignments that are increasingly multinational, like at GM [General Motors Co.], for example. As they look for new directors, they would be looking for Chinese or Asian talent to join their boards because they do so much business now in China,” she said.

The retail, hospitality and financial sectors have the greatest need for Chinese executives.

At the same time, Chinese firms and state-owned enterprises are waging an all-out campaign to make sure their senior staff have the skills to help them expand globally.

De Silva cited the Agricultural Bank of China as a case of one business looking beyond the horizon. It sent 26 of its senior managers to Canada for a one-year executive MBA program run by Ivey three years ago. Of the 26, 13 were later transferred overseas.

“They specifically say they don’t want any case studies on China in the program. All the cases should be international... [to give] a strong understanding of how companies operate outside of China,” she said. **Jolie Ho**



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Ivey Asia's Janet De Silva says the retail, hospitality and financial sectors have the greatest need for Chinese executives. Ivey Asia

## Ultimate dampener for festive season

### Policy Watch

China has issued the ultimate dampener this festive season – no lavish parties and travel.

The government’s fight against official extravagance, launched this year by President Xi Jinping, comes to a climax in the run-up to Christmas and the new year.

In a Dec. 8 edict, the government directed bureaucrats and Communist Party cadres that any official receptions should not feature shark fin and bird’s nest soup, exotic wild meat and expensive alcoholic drinks.

Lower-level officials should not stay in ho-

tel suites during trips, according to guidelines on the use of public money.

Local authorities are prohibited from excessive wining and dining of visiting central functionaries.

The central government is especially wary at this time of the year when official spending has tended to go over the top in recent years.

China has punished almost 20,000 officials in the past year for various violations of its frugality regulations

These measures are part of a wider effort to fight corruption, improve governance and win back public confidence. **SC Yeung**