

# A TOUCH OF CLASS

**Paola Diana is the chief executive and founder of Nanny & Butler, an agency specialising in recruiting childcare and household staff around the world. She tells RM why their approach is unique in recruitment.**

**Recruitment Matters:** How did Nanny & Butler start?

**Paola Diana:** I'm Italian, and ten years ago I needed a British nanny for my kids. I'm a strong believer in bilingualism and I couldn't find a nanny suitable in Italy. I thought the idea of an agency specialising in finding nannies was a clever idea and a shame something like that didn't exist in Italy. I opened the first agency and was inundated with requests – the demand was huge.

**RM:** Was the next step expanding?

**PD:** It was. I opened two offices, one in the heart of Rome and the other in London. London was a must. There is such a strong demand for British nannies, it made sense to start recruiting from there.

**RM:** Was the demand for nannies only?

**PD:** Not at all. We began fielding many, many requests for every kind of house staff, and I would say "No". I wasn't confident in getting the right people and I wanted to be a provider of very good candidates. But I realised I couldn't stop the wave and learned how to recruit different kinds of staff.

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We went from nannies to maternity staff, butlers, chefs, private jet crews, chauffeurs – all very good, of course. In the last year, I've noticed a huge demand for personal trainers.

**RM:** That sounds like a natural progression.

**PD:** It was. Our mission statement is "Trust Us". When a family trusts your service and values, they are comfortable

asking all kinds of requests. They learn about the way we recruit and the way we use time.

**RM:** Would you agree bespoke recruitment requires a different skillset?

**PD:** Oh yes. Recruiting for an office is far different from recruiting someone who is going to live in your own home. It's sensitive. You not only have to be good with kids, but good with parents too, plus the other staff who work there. T

**RM:** What kind of candidates do you look for?

**PD:** We look for a person

who has experience, can take responsibility and is trustworthy. These are the three most important things. Then comes motivation. When a candidate is motivated, particularly in a home environment, they work better. We never push our candidates. We really prefer to send people who are willing to stay long term with their families. It's better for us to make a good selection and provide the very best people, and those people are the most motivated.

**RM:** What does good recruitment mean to you?

**PD:** Good recruitment for us

starts with carefully checking every candidate's paperwork – from qualifications, to references and DBS checks. But that's not enough. After that, we need to check the character of the person. Many families will request people who are fun, nice, enjoy entertaining children – and that doesn't come naturally to some people. Many of our families travel a lot and travelling with children can be very stressful. We have to act like psychologists, examining candidates' traits and choosing the right person for the job.

**RM:** Nanny & Butler has offices in London, Rome and New York. How do those

markets shape your approach to recruitment?

**PD:** Having an office in one country doesn't mean we're close to that country. Our Italy office covers Switzerland, France and Monte Carlo, for example. The important point to remember is we have candidates who are willing to do a lot of travel. Our London office works with a huge number of clients in the Middle East. Our kind of recruitment is difficult because every family is different. We really need to understand their needs, requirements and feelings. Of course, different nationalities have different approaches,

but we love the challenge and every search is unique.

**RM:** What is your goal for 2016?

**PD:** The goal for 2016 is to continue to grow and maintain our reputation for helping families find happiness. But we also know these jobs can transform a life and make a person better than they were before. We got sent a bottle of champagne and bouquet of flowers from a candidate because we placed them in a dream job with a family travelling the world in a private jet. She wouldn't have been able to do that if not for the job. It's a very exciting time.

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