

## Great Start - The promise is in the name

*Britcham member Great Start was a pioneer in the human resources area when Astrid Rizzi started the company back in 1974. 'Britain Brasil' met Astrid to talk about her long career and the company's direction in the modern world.*

**N**estled in amongst the many photographs tracing the long history of "Great Start" which greet you as you enter the company's reception area, is a framed quote from Winston Churchill. "Never give in. Never give in. Never, never, never, never, in nothing great or small, large or petty - never give in."

### A wealth of experience

Astrid Rizzi Pike worked as a top level executive secretary for 18 years during which time she came more and more to the realization that international companies new to the Brazilian market needed a strong ground base upon which they could rely for solid advice coming from experienced professionals. The tellingly-named 'Great Start' company was born in 1974 with a dedicated commitment to providing all that a company could wish for in a new and daunting business culture.

The company was a pioneer in arranging fully equipped temporary office space, staffed with multi-lingual first class secretarial assistance, in the days when five-star hotels could not even offer an English language telex service! Astrid could also suggest, if requested, the best and most economical options for legal, tax and accounting advice and naturally got involved in helping relocate families. Whatever their needs, Great Start could offer the most practical and quick solution possible.

But the company's real strength lay in providing the best bi-lingual executive secretaries on the market to act as the company executives' right-hand, thus helping them get

started in Brazil in record time guided by someone who really knew the ropes. Astrid became São Paulo's premier source for bi and tri-lingual executive secretaries, becoming extremely well known in the market; a position she still hasn't lost to this day.

Astrid is very proud of the fact that there are valuable professionals to this day working for the presidents of such companies as Cargill, Mastercard, Federal Express, Renault and countless more who she placed ten, fifteen and even over twenty years ago!

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Claude Marcon was responsible for the start up of Renault in 1996. "Over time," he says, "we came to appreciate the level of candidates presented by Great Start, especially in terms of professional experience, and assistance and good counselling in a more profound ambit than is normally established with recruitment companies."

### This is the modern world

Today, Great Start is facing up to the technology - driven corporate world it was a pioneer in helping to implement into Brazil. "Great Start is all about giving new companies the chance," Astrid told 'Britain Brasil'. "The personal touch is something that is always appreciated and makes the difference between us and the big, faceless Human Resource companies operating in the market."

Multinationals invariably have their own HR departments these days which assume responsibility for the set up of the company in new markets and for the search for top level executive secretaries. However, Astrid believes that when she has the chance to interview the Presidents of companies in detail, the way ahead lies open. Combine the flexible thinking adopted by the best company Presidents and the ability Astrid has of seeing what is needed and solving the problem, and you have a winning combination.

"Don't look around desperately trying to find the solution," says Astrid. "The solution is here. Just give me a call!"

Astrid believes in the success of her recommendations to the extent that Great Start offers a one year guarantee for any necessary replacement - a long enough period for problems to develop. More and more these days however, her placements are being promoted to managerial positions.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, anyone can be trained to answer the phone and send an e-mail. The niche which Great Start fills is in guaranteeing exactly what top-level executives are looking for in a secretary. Such positions are extremely

difficult to fill these days and it is Great Start which fills them.

"They can ask the impossible and I get the impossible," affirms Astrid.

Robert Wong, one of Brazil's most famous Human Resources professionals, now with his own company - P & L, says it all when he says "There are some great firms as there are some great individuals. When you are fortunate to combine the two, one has the magic known as Great Start, the embodiment of Astrid Rizzi's dream. She makes the difference!"

