



JOHN HACKETT
DIRECTOR, EVENT
RECRUITMENT

employment CRUNCH

JOHN HACKETT SAYS the tables have turned in the recruitment game.

The past few years have been an employee's market, where a skills shortage has meant that talented candidates "wore the pants" when it came to negotiating employment terms and salaries. However in this time of economic uncertainty, the job market is now very much in the employer's favour. Unemployment is on the rise and we have seen a decline in available events roles since October last year. Unfortunately, we are likely to see a continuing subdued employment market through the remainder of this year.

So, with less event roles available it is clear that competition for jobs will be greater. But there are strategies that job seekers can employ to increase their chances of being considered for those roles that are still available.

In the current environment your approach will largely determine your success - and flexibility and a realistic attitude are the answer here. When job seeking you may need to lower your expectations in terms of salaries and benefits or perhaps consider travelling further for a role. Employers are aware that jobs are scarce and they are not going to pay \$80,000 for someone when another equally suitable candidate is willing to take \$65,000 or \$70,000.

Also, I believe there will be a greater trend towards businesses employing part-time and temporary contract workers. Using temporary staff rather than hiring permanent employees will give employers greater flexibility in their workforce and allow them to grow their headcount and productivity in the short term when their business needs it most. Job seekers will need to consider contract roles as a realistic option in the current market. And remember that many initial contract positions can result in permanent roles if you make the right impression and as market conditions improve.

It is worth mentioning that a large percentage of the current

workforce has never experienced a downturn in the economy. As a result, some people are not equipped with the right attitude to attract potential employers. Economic downturns are humbling experiences for all of us and require a similarly humble approach. With greater numbers competing for the same role, a "superiority" complex or "know-it all" attitude is a huge turn off for employers. Likewise, those who place an overemphasis on salary and working conditions; a "what's in it for me" approach, will never succeed.

And these tough times are also having an impact on those who are still employed with initial research data for our 2009 survey suggesting that close to half of respondents are concerned about job security because of the current economic downturn.

This has also been supported by anecdotal evidence showing an increase in staff redundancies and staff hiring freezes. As a result, many companies will be working at "skeleton staff" levels. This will translate to increased workloads and longer working hours, possibly a need to take on more mundane or lower level duties and greater pressure to meet deadlines for existing staff.

Accepting that this is the current reality (and remember it won't be forever) and responding to this challenge with vigour and commitment should not go unnoticed by management when the market does turn a corner. So it will be those who are prepared to get their hands dirty and have a positive, "can-do" attitude who will succeed through these tough times ahead.

Event Recruitment specialises in permanent, contract or temporary assignments for corporate, government and association clients, event and exhibition management companies, PCOs, venues, the not for profit sector and venues. Contact Event Recruitment on (02) 9279 2019 or email mail@eventrecruitment.com.au.