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what a difference A YEAR MAKES

JOHN HACKETT IS calling for industry members to contribute to his company's new survey that will, hopefully, show that the industry has turned the corner.

As we all know the past 12 months have seen some dramatic changes in the events industry as a result of the global financial crisis. These turbulent times have seen many companies having to rein in spending through employment cost cutting measures such as freezing staff salaries, reducing headcount and retrenching staff, reducing employee work hours, putting a hold on hiring new staff and decreasing training/professional development spending.

On a more positive note some sections of the industry have been spared from this general malaise, whether it be through loyal and repeat clients, a niche market that has been resilient in these difficult times, or low business overheads that has allowed them to "sit tight" through these quieter times until the market finds its feet again.

We have spoken with a number of candidates who have confirmed that the cultural dynamics within their workplace has changed dramatically during this slow down. For example, staff redundancies, team restructuring, changed working hours or altered job responsibilities have all had a significant and, at times, detrimental impact. As a consequence team morale has sometimes waned, support for management has been tested, and the team's belief in their company's goals questioned.

There has also been evidence that some employers have had to reassess their staff training and professional development budget during these difficult times. In the short term this is a cost cutting strategy that should only have minimal impact on your team and business. However, if it is sustained as a long-term strategy, particularly after business conditions improve, it could impact negatively on not only team productivity but also your organisation's competitiveness in the market.

Salaries have also been "top of mind" for both employers and employees during this time and we have seen definite downward pressure on salary packages at all levels in the market. Many job seekers have lowered their salary expectations in the hope of being considered for the limited number of roles available. Anecdotal

evidence clearly shows that salaries have shifted in the employer's favour as the supply of job seekers has increased and the number of available jobs fallen.

However, the challenge that lies ahead is to be able to read the market as the economy eventually bounces back. It is important that, as an employer, you keep up-to-date on salary movements so that you can respond accordingly and ensure that your team is fairly rewarded in line with market expectations. This, in turn, will assist you in maintaining your existing team and talent as the market improves and business activity increases.

With the economy slowly showing some signs that the worst may be behind us, I am interested to find out what your experience has been over these past six to 12 months. Have you experienced positive or negative changes within your workplace during this time? How have you and your industry colleagues been personally affected by this economic downturn and are you now seeing the so-called "green shoots" of recovery? And what impact will that have on you and your team? For example, will you consider employing temporary staff to get you over any increase in workload and hold off on committing to a permanent team member until the recovery is a sure thing?

These are the sort of issues we will address in our 2009-2010 Staff Issues & Salary Survey. Our 2008 Survey was well received by the industry and we hope that our next edition will continue to provide valuable industry insight and feedback, particularly given the significant changes that we have experienced over the past 12 months.

We are starting to collect data for our next survey and would be pleased to hear from anyone in the industry who would like to contribute. Please email Event Recruitment at mail@eventrecruitment.com.au to express your interest in participating and we will send a confidential link to our questionnaire for completion.

Event Recruitment specialises in temporary, contract and permanent recruitment for the events industry including event management companies, PCO's, corporate, government, association and not for profit sectors. Contact Event Recruitment on (02) 9279 2019 or email mail@eventrecruitment.com.au.