

A SHIFT IN THINKING

The job sector has direct impact on the economy and it is vital that employers and employees create measures that move the economy forward, particularly in uncertain global times, writes **Jonathan Jackson.**

Speculation is mounting that job markets across the globe will soften and unemployment will rise. Towards the end of 2012, ANZ economist, Ivan Colhoun said; “the trend in newspaper and internet job advertisements is a signal of a softening labour market.”

His evidence, among other things, was the reduction in the total number of job ads appearing in both formats in a six month period.

“When this last occurred, in the second half of 2011, Australian employment growth slowed,” Ivan said.

The Reserve Bank of Australia’s December interest rate cut bore these factors in mind.

“On balance, members decided on cutting rates largely due to the softening in labour market indicators. Internet and newspaper job advertisement had declined for eight consecutive months suggesting that employment growth will remain subdued in coming months. In addition, the cost cutting measures across iron-ore and coal miners was feeding through to related business services industries – in effect further dampening confidence and activity in coming months.”

The RBA’s report also mentioned that, “Members observed that cost-cutting in the iron ore and coal industries was feeding through to related business services industries, resulting in some labour shedding. Leading indicators and

information from the Bank’s liaison contacts suggested that labour demand had softened, which pointed to only modest employment growth in coming months.”

There are several factors that will affect the labour market in 2013 and no doubt the employment sector will undergo various changes, including further redundancies, a softening mining sector, employee expectations shifting, the retirement of Boomers, Gen X moving into senior management roles and Gen Y influencing the workplace.

This means several things: management strategies will have to change; those made redundant will have to reconsider their skill sets; and financial education and management will need to be more closely aligned with employment circumstances. →

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PROMOTION

JOB SECURITY

JOB INSECURITY

UNEMPLOYED

Let's first look at management strategies.

A study conducted by recruitment specialist Michael Page found that a well-rounded talent management strategy will be vital to attract and retain staff in 2013, as employees look to strengthen their own positions.

The key survey findings of the Michael Page Australia 2013 *Employee Intentions Report* found that:

- 52% of employees indicate they are very likely to seek a new role in the next 12 months.
- 27% of respondents will look for a new position that provides a structured career plan, while many would remain in their current role if offered additional career development supported by training.
- 48% would like to be offered a flexible working arrangement and 43% cite health care/health insurance as the preferred employee benefit.

"Domestic business conditions are relatively steady across the majority of industry sectors and there is a positive volume of job opportunities for qualified professionals and executives going into 2013," says Phillip Guest, regional managing director of PageGroup in Australia and New Zealand. "With some staff turnover expected over the next 12 months, employers will need to pay attention to what job seekers are looking for in their next role and action effective talent management strategies to secure in-demand talent."

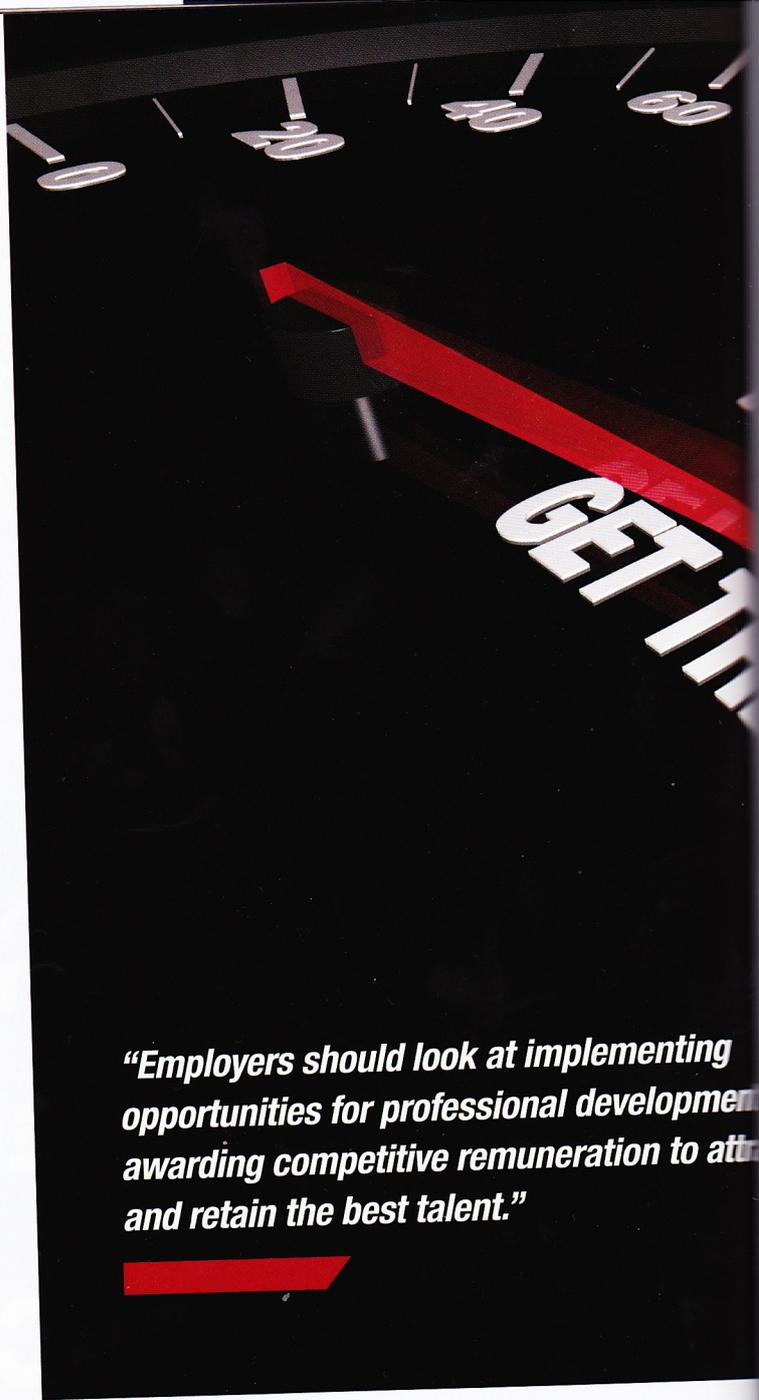
Some 27% of employees surveyed would be encouraged to accept a new position that provides a structured career plan and includes professional development and progression opportunities. This is followed by 17% who will look for an increase in salary, with 25% looking for a pay rise of 10-12%. Interestingly, a structured career plan and increased remuneration are also the two key requirements that would keep the majority of surveyed employees in their current role.

The survey also found that for almost half of the professionals surveyed (48%) a flexible working arrangement is the preferred non-financial benefit.

"To address the potential increase in staff turnover rates, employers should look at implementing opportunities for professional development and awarding competitive remuneration to attract and retain the best talent," Phillip says.

Michael Page has its own agenda and a rosier outlook than most, but they do raise some interesting points, not least the change in workplace arrangements and technological shifts.

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TOMORROW'S WORKPLACES AND THINKING

Futurist Morris Miselowski believes that today's significant shifts will be par for the course by the time we hit the year 2020.

"The eternal core of a business leader is underpinned by a childlike curiosity; a 'why not' and 'what if' attitude to every possibility they encounter in a daily fresh new world; a strong intuitive belief in how the world is evolving, all balanced by a strategic old-world whole of business pragmatism," he says.

"This will remain fundamental, but what is different is the speed of change and the breadth of opportunities and technologies that we will have access to."

Morris believes that technology will increasingly take over the burden of our 'linear and routinised' work activities and provide us with synthetic thinking and analysis.

"Successful business leaders will evolve into the realisation that human knowledge coupled to technological



advancements and a willingness and agility to readily and appropriately recognise and respond to the unusual and unpredictable will combine to offer us our unique point of difference and profitable competitive edge.

“Where we once may have jealously guarded our intellectual property and unique know-how, we will instead choose to seek out ways to leverage and make best use of these innovation possibilities by forming alliances with other business and providers who service similar and complementary markets, knowing that in this collaborative offering there is strength, growth and profitability for all involved.

“2020’s workplaces will need to be adept at uniting a physically present tribe of employees with a tribe of offsite and often transient staff, specifically chosen for their ability to add value to the task or project regardless of where they are on the globe.

“These tribe members may have history and longevity in

working together, but just as likely may only come together to perform one task or project and then disband, repeating this process over and over again, responding continuously to global marketplace needs for projects, skill, wisdom and insights.

“The old management paradigm of control will also slowly give way to the new paradigm of influence, as we learn that our workplaces are extremely fluid, malleable and adaptive and that to flourish in this new work context is to allow our people the freedom to explore new possibilities and methodologies whilst remaining true and fixed on the compass pointing steadfastly to the required outcomes.

“Better financial and business skills will attract the attention of employers and may ensure job security.”

“As the boundary between our physical and digital worlds disappears forever and we become more immersed and dependant on an Omni world where we are constantly-on and information rich in situ technologies, the ability to compartmentalise our lives into the historical dictum of eight hours work, eight hours play and eight hours rest will no longer have meaning, or purpose.

“The willingness and ability to effectively manage the personal needs of the individual with the commercial needs of an organisation will be a skill set muscle we will all need to exercise and strengthen.”

With a shifting job market it is important to continue to build on skills. Better financial and business skills will attract the attention of employers and may ensure job security. These are skills that should be learnt at school; however current curricula seem to ignore these vital proficiencies. As you’ll see later in this feature, it takes a MBA at an institution such as Macquarie University, higher education degree or even a strong mentoring program to gain some kind of preparedness for the workforce.

So while it is incumbent on employees and future employees to make themselves available to the workplace, it is also now a requisite of employers to accommodate the changing workforce.

Yes, the employment sector is changing and there are hardships afoot as the world adapts to what may come, but the survivors will be those who work together to make the shifts in requirement as painless as possible. **TGR**