



ISSUE 19 *February 2008*

We hope you enjoy the current edition of our quarterly newsletter, which provides a brief snapshot of topical HR and recruitment issues.

If you have any staffing or HR requirements, please contact Asphar and Associates on 08 9481 3799.

EMPLOYMENT NEWS

Unemployment rate falls to 33-year record low

The national unemployment rate fell by 0.1 percentage point to 4.1 per cent (seasonally adjusted) in January, according to ABS figures.

January's Labour Force statistics show that the number of unemployed people decreased by 13,900 to 458,400. The number looking for full-time work decreased by 27,500 and the number looking for part-time work increased by 13,600.

The national participation rate remains steady at 65.2 per cent (seasonally adjusted), following 26,800 additional people entering employment in January. Some 7,800 of these were new full-time workers and 34,600 entered part-time employment.

Skilled vacancies rise in early 2008

DEEWR's skilled vacancies index increased by 1.1% in January, with vacancies for professionals up by 3.9%, but falling for associate professionals, (down by 1.9%) and trades (down 0.3%).

The strongest growth was for medical and science technical officers (up 8.2%), information professionals (4.5%) and accountants and auditors (4.4%).

The largest falls were for food trades (down 3.1%), building and engineering associates (down 3%), and marketing and advertising professionals (down 2.6%). Vacancies increased in Victoria, the Northern Territory, South Australia, and New South Wales but fell in Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia.

New Zealand labour market tightens

A rise in women joining New Zealand's labour force has pushed the country's participation rate to a new record high.

The Department of Labour's recent figures show the number of people employed increased by 1.1 per cent (23,000) to 2,173,000 in the December quarter.

The labour force grew by more than the increase in the working-age population, on the back of increased female participation (up from 61.2% to a record high 62.4%), taking the overall rate up from 68.3 per cent to 68.8 per cent.

Annual employment growth rose strongly to 2.5 per cent in the year, up from 1.6 per cent in the year to September 2007, while the unemployment rate fell from 3.5 per cent to a new record low of 3.4 per cent in the December quarter.

RECRUITMENT NEWS

Move with the times

Employers and recruiters are fighting what is quite aptly called a 'war for talent', so they need a very good arsenal. CEO of the RSCA, Julie Mills, lists some of the key recruitment trends sweeping the industry:

Recruitment technology

Online job boards are growing in their reach and sophistication, taking advantage of niche markets and providing greater flexibility.

Networking sites

Despite the name 'social networking', sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook etc also have a clear professional purpose and some even have a job search option.

Sell a career, not a job

People no longer want jobs, they want careers. Are you offering a position description or job ad with a list of responsibilities? Or are you selling an opportunity to build a career?

Don't wait for the 'perfect match'



ISSUE 19 February 2008

Employers who want to tick every box for the right number of years' experience and specific industry background could wait a long time. It's not about 'dropping' standards, it's simply about changing them. Look for candidates with the right attitude, competencies and transferable skills, and then provide further training.

Think outside the box

Parents of young children, mature-age workers, and people with a disability are some of the groups who have been left behind in the jobs boom. Often these groups simply need flexibility such as finishing in time to pick the kids up from school. Perhaps they need some modifications to a workbench, to accommodate a bad back. Or maybe they just need a change of attitude - for an employer to move beyond the perception of 'too old'.

General manager of CareersMultiList, Matt Webster agrees that employers and recruiters need to think more creatively about organisational development and candidate sourcing strategies.

We always encourage clients to carefully consider their 'Critical Criteria' for each and every role, with an increasing focus on attitudinal and cultural fit, he said.

"Our highly experienced, specialist recruiters can find candidates with the required skills and competencies. Add to this their unique 'multilisting' capabilities with fellow specialists, and a little flexibility from clients around diversity of experience, and we're getting it right nearly every time."

Testament to this is a 96% fill rate and 90%+ retention rate (after 12 months) for specialist roles completed by CareersMultiList franchise partners, for their national clients.

Candidate shortage driving new attraction techniques

The candidate shortage has driven 85 per cent of the recruitment industry to change their talent search techniques, according to the RCSA's latest quarterly member research.

Its survey results show that the lack of suitable candidates is the top concern for the industry, and 91

per cent of agencies are devoting more time and resources to finding candidates than they did a year ago.

Moving beyond traditional search techniques, some 88 per cent of agencies are approaching passive candidates, 77 per cent use specialist or niche job boards, and 62 per cent are using 'refer a friend' initiatives. Further behind, some 38 per cent are using social networking sites such as Facebook, and only five per cent have created an office in Second Life.

For the first time since 2005, the survey shows engineers have been knocked off the top of the skills shortage list - 'business professionals' are now most in demand.

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Large-scale study finds Gen Y no different to any other group

Rather than being a distinct, homogenous group, Generation Ys are simply a product of their age and the stage of life they are going through, according to a senior organisational psychologist.

Melissa Wong from SHL said in an effort to bring more scientific analysis to the issue, SHL had reviewed personality data from the test results of over 3,500 Australians across a range of ages, in an effort to find out what motivated Gen Y in comparison to Gen X and Baby Boomers.

She said the media coverage of Gen Y traits included a number of recurring themes, such as a tendency to be demanding and difficult to manage; a focus on achievement; a desire for constant variety; and a lack of loyalty.

But the data analysis found that in terms of work/life balance, job security, learning and development, and varied work content, there was no difference in motivations across the generational groups, Wong said.

"This is really interesting because we're all getting ourselves really worked up about Gen Y. But we found there are not that many differences."



ISSUE 19 February 2008

Wong said the research had identified only three perceptible differences between Gen Ys and their Gen X and Baby Boomer counterparts. Gen Ys:

- enjoy being around people;
- want career progression - but that may mean lateral progression rather than vertical; and
- are slightly more cynical.

Wong said Gen Ys might seem more confident and demanding than other groups, but this was because they had the benefit of a skills-short labour market. She noted that Gen X and Baby Boomer candidates were also more confident and demanding in recent times.

"But [with Gen Y] it's brushing us up the wrong way, because of the fact that they are younger."

AACC says supportive employers will keep staff

Employers must provide a "collaborative, supportive and nurturing" work environment in order to hold onto their staff, says the Australian Association of Career Counsellors.

Speaking ahead of the annual AACC conference in March, AACC president Peter Carey said retention was the "number one issue" facing businesses.

While a growing number of companies were taking measures to improve their retention levels, by monitoring turnover and conducting exit interviews, employers needed to go further, Carey said.

He suggested offering flexi-time and job-sharing arrangements, provide a free childcare option, and developing assistance programs and counselling to help employees with issues like depression, personal or family problems, drug addiction and illness.

IR OVERVIEW

Rudd government launches Work Choices rollback

At the first sitting of the new Federal Parliament in mid-February, Workplace Relations Minister Julia Gillard introduced legislation designed to reform a number of key aspects of employment law.

The *Workplace Relations Amendment (Transition to Forward with Fairness) Bill 2008* removes AWAs, and provides for interim individual agreements until the end of 2009.

From the passage of the legislation, which still has to get through a Coalition-dominated Senate, employers will no longer be able to enter into new AWAs.

Gillard also announced that the Federal Public Service would cease offering AWAs from today.

The Bill also restores a no disadvantage test, which will replace the Howard Government's fairness test, and facilitates an award modernisation process.

The Minister subsequently announced details of the ten national employment standards that will form a new statutory safety net of conditions applicable to all employees effective from 1 January 2010 (subject to public comment and then legislation).

EMPLOYMENT MARKETING

Attracting, Retaining & Engaging Your Staff

An 'employer of choice' organisation is recognised for treating its employees exceptionally well, creating opportunities, and instituting work/life policies and benefits on an organisation-wide basis to create an enjoyable and fulfilling employment experience.

It has been well-documented that employer of choice organisations with innovative programs that build workforce capability and commitment out-perform their competitors in attraction, engagement, development and retention of their people.

Pay attention to what employees really want

In order of preference, recent surveys have found that employees rate their job satisfaction on the following factors: having a good manager; working on challenging and diverse projects/work; being rewarded and recognized for their work; learning and growing on the leading edge of technology, products, ideas and business; collaborative communication; having a degree of control, autonomy in their day – types of



ISSUE 19 February 2008

projects, dress, etc. Salary is of course important but rarely placed number one.

Offer an attractive package & benefits

Whilst effective leadership, work/life balance and career development always figure prominently in an employee's wish list, an attractive salary package is the first and key step in *attracting* a quality candidate to your organisation.

Create a corporate culture that isn't 100% corporate

Customers and clients should feel comfortable that they are being cared for, but let employees set the organisation's culture.

Encourage collaboration & communication

Silos are out! Share information and involvement across the organisation.

Clear paths for getting the work done

Removing obstacles and bureaucracy reduces frustration, which leads the way for employees to be more productive and career progressive. Finding employees with the right 'cultural fit', personality and attitudes is just as important as skills (and even more so in the current tight candidate market).

Foster innovation and new ideas to create a work/life balance environment

Offer flexible hours, telecommuting, compressed working weeks, job-sharing, job rotation, reward and recognition programs, workplace massages, paid tuition, days off, sports days, casual Fridays etc.

SAFETY MATTERS

Reform still planned for national OHS uniformity

The NSW Government has confirmed it still plans to reform the State's tough occupational health laws, and rejected media reports that it had shelved plans for legislative change.

The RCSA describes the current NSW OHS laws as the worst in Australia and says they "create an unacceptable and unsustainable level of risk for [recruitment] business owners, who can be prosecuted for incidents that are well and truly beyond their effective control, and despite their best efforts".

Employer groups including the RCSA have been campaigning for change to key elements of the OHS Act for years and the NSW Government tabled amending legislation last year, which was subsequently withdrawn after both unions and employers were unhappy with its content.

A spokesperson for NSW Industrial Relations Minister John Della Bosca told OHS Alert publication that "it was wrong to suggest that NSW has ditched plans to update OHS laws - that's simply not the case".

He noted that the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) was currently working on national OHS uniformity as a priority and said NSW would use the coming months to ensure its plans align as much as possible with the national reform agenda.

He said that NSW Cabinet was still considering an independent report on the OHS legislation.

The spokesperson said the Government was being cautious in modifying the OHS Act because its central elements had been in place for more than 20 years. He noted the laws had "delivered the lowest levels of workplace injury in 18 years" and said despite lobbying by employer groups, there was "no crisis requiring an immediate fix".

All articles in this newsletter courtesy of
www.shortlistonline.net.au, www.recruiterdaily.com.au and
www.CareersMultiList.com.au