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signs of a market RECOVERY

BUSINESS CONFIDENCE is returning,
says Event Recruitment's John Hackett.

Just over a year has passed since the market fell off a precipice in October 2008, but the last few months have seen a clear improvement in market conditions, business confidence and in turn employment prospects for staff in the events industry.

While the first half of the 2009 calendar year was a very quiet period with many employers expressing particular caution about business conditions and prospects for the future, we have seen a definite shift in attitude over recent months. There is now certainly an increased optimism and many companies are reporting a growth in business opportunities and are therefore assessing their staffing levels to determine if they can accommodate the increases in workload resulting from this upturn.

As market conditions improve many employers are facing a potential shortfall in capacity in their businesses due to downsizing staff numbers and, as a result, restructuring teams and positions. Of course, as business levels increase those teams working at reduced capacity could struggle to meet operational demand and this may be already happening in your organisation. As a result, we have seen an increase in short-term temporary positions to cover increases in workload – a sure sign that things are on the improve!

Utilising temporary staff represents a useful and cost effective strategy as organisations assess the sustainability of this current market upswing. It is only natural to be hesitant about committing to a permanent staff member if you feel the market is still unpredictable. But if the workload is there it is certainly worth considering temporary or contract staff to meet this current demand. A temporary employee will not only provide necessary support to achieve your operational goals but over time will become accustomed to your business processes, systems, clients and projects. Then, if business continues to show signs of a sustained improvement this temporary staff member can be considered as a permanent addition to your team. Job seekers too are beginning to feel more positive about their

employment prospects. Those who have been dissatisfied in their current roles have had to “sit tight” over the last 12 months because there have either been no attractive job opportunities available in the market or they have been fearful of leaving the security that their current job provides. This scenario is certainly changing and as more roles become available with improving market conditions, more job seekers will be considering their options and seeking to leave roles where they have felt unchallenged, unmotivated or unappreciated.

As well, some organisations have been compelled during these difficult market conditions to implement a freeze on staff salary increases and in some instances a reduction in staff working hours (and salaries as a result). With a market turnaround, those staff affected will be very likely considering what is on offer elsewhere so they can attempt to redress the balance with respect to their salary and working conditions. If, as an employer, you have had to introduce these strategies to retain your team now is the time to be talking to your staff, particularly if you are not in a position to reverse these strategies immediately. That way, you can give them some level of comfort that there is light at the end of the tunnel and not end up losing your top performers to the competition.

My main hope, as I am sure everyone will agree, is that this market improvement will be a sustained one. If that is the case then employers in the industry will need to respond to this by focusing their efforts on strategies that will not only help to retain their current team but also give them the capacity to attract and secure new quality staff so they remain competitive in the industry moving forward.

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.