

SURVEY

RECRUITMENT

Bottoming Out

The widespread job shedding seen in the first half of 2009 has slowed down but the jobs markets remains depressed. **BUSINESS PLUS** canvassed leading recruiters for their views on whether there's light at the end of the tunnel

Mark O'Donnell

Deloitte

The labour market shakeout over the past 12 months is by far the worst I have ever experienced as a recruitment professional. I think it is the worst anyone has



seen in that it was so sudden. However, since the summer clients are starting to plan again and talk about recruitment. There is very stiff competition for roles at the moment. We are seeing that people are staying put as there is a fear of moving, although this is starting to change.

Employers in niche areas such as compliance, internal audit and quality are finding it hard to recruit staff just now. There is still a dearth of qualified people around for those roles. In terms of salary reductions for new senior hires, which is our area, I would say reductions of 12% to 20% in basic pay are commonplace, with in some cases reductions of 50% to 80% in benefits. Another trend is that interim and contract work is becoming more prevalent.

Fergal Brosnan

Berkley Group

Berkley has been through two previous recessions and this is the worst. However certain verticals have weathered

the storm better than others. High end/value roles in the R&D sector have coped really well. That applies to both the pharmaceutical and life science sector, and the IT sector. The three months to the end of August were excellent for new projects. However, it's more a whisper than a shout from the rooftops and we have to be cautiously optimistic as opposed to exuberantly confident.

We are already seeing companies who shed staff begin to come back looking for temporary and contract staff with a view to full-time employment in three to six months. We believe that many companies over-culled and are now in a situation where they are struggling to deliver to a more demanding client. So common sense should dictate an uptake in hiring, which is starting to happen, especially in the contract market



In the current environment, recruitment consultancies can really show their worth to employers by screening out the irrelevant applications for advertised roles. After the enforced 'holding' period after being made redundant, there appears to be the realisation by candidates that they can't sit still. The main obstacle for most people is location. People cannot simply up and sell a house to move to Cork or Galway from Dublin.

In regard to sales and commission-

based roles, there are two trends emerging. Base salaries have been reduced by around 15% since peak levels, with a more dramatic drop of 20% to 30% for salaries paying over €70,000. An increasing number of companies are moving towards commission only/agent roles.

Michelle Noone

KPMG

The past 12 months have certainly been very difficult but we are now starting to see movement in the market. Soaring unemployment has increased the



supply of candidates, which provides clients with a good selection of relevant candidates. There has been a certain consistency to recruitment at a senior management level. Candidates with jobs will still put themselves forward if an interesting opportunity is advertised. This is due to a focus on career progression or due to uncertainty in their current role. Candidates are not moving for financial reasons, as salaries have been reviewed right across the board at all levels.

Companies involved in property or financial services sectors are finding it difficult to attract candidates at the moment. In our experience, there has been an average of 10% to 15% reduc-

tion in salaries being offered. We have also noticed an increase in both client and candidate requests for interim contracts. However, it is permanent roles that have been filled in the main.

Lisa Holt
Careers Register

It's very tough out there and candidates who are out of work are really finding it hard to get back into the workforce. Employers are very cautious about hiring and have raised the bar very high. They want each candidate to shine in all aspects and responsibilities of the new role. There is no compromise and rightly so. This means that candidates who are out of



work and seeking jobs need to be highly prepared for interview and strong enough to take the knocks when they come. Self-esteem issues are high, and as a recruiter one cannot underestimate the impact that constant rejection has on a candidate.

Across all areas, clients are looking to try before they buy. It makes buckets of sense and eliminates their worries if the candidate does not thrive in the role. They can call us and say we want to finish up that contractor or temp, and it's not their responsibility. However some clients are also hiring onto their own payroll, but for a six-month or 12-month contract with a view to a possible permanent job. It's a mindset change for candidates, but if the job is a good one they are taking the leap of faith.

There is a change in the way we have to deal with people. The role requires much more empathy, patience, tenacity and determination. People are our business and must always remain our top priority.

Sandra Lawler
Alternatives Marketing

Demand for marketers has mirrored the economy with a decline in demand since April 2008. However demand has remained buoyant in some sectors, including telcos and utilities, which still face significant competitive pressure. Other businesses, having made a number of adjustments, are becoming active again, especially in the interim marketing area.

This is a really good time for smart companies to bring in excellent talent on realistic salaries. There are excellent candidates available now, who through no fault of their own find themselves without



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