



How has the recent economic downturn affected the HR functions in your organisation?

HR Monthly, October 2008



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If you look at companies in the market-place at present there's a very unusual situation occurring in the job market. Despite the economic slow down, there is a significant shortage of good candidates across most market sectors. The mining and resources sectors are in a sense keeping the economy afloat because of the high demand for a skilled workforce in those areas, along with infrastructure developments around the country.

On an international scale there is a significant expansion in China which is taking candidates out of our market and offering them two to three times above their local salaries: a lot of professional people with global mobility are now working all over the world. In Australia, the ageing population, combined with these other factors, is leading to a shortage of candidates in our market that, in my opinion, isn't going to change in the next three to five years.

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This means HR has a real chance to come to the fore. Most CEO's would say the critical aspect for them in the next three years is sourcing good talent and growing their leadership capabilities. The HR function is at the core of this. HR can now make its mark at a strategic level, whereas in the past it's been seen as more of a support function.

It's all very well to have good attraction strategies, but if there aren't good development strategies in place as well you're going to lose candidates fairly quickly. The HR function controls these aspects, so it's critical to have all of those elements fixed in terms of planning how you're going to develop your people in order for your business to thrive.





Niomi Hurley

HR MANAGER, CCR GROUP,
BUNBURY WA

Western Australia's booming industry hasn't been part of economic downturn, which means CCR Group has experienced minimal effects on HR functions throughout the organisation.

One area we have felt a reduction in is the requests from our clients that utilise us for equipment installations and maintenance within the north-west. The employees we utilise for these works have in the past taken up casual positions in between contracts so they were available. The increased time periods between jobs have seen these employees move on to other more permanent employment.

The shortage within the mining and industrial sectors is fairly prevalent, and with these employees removed from our employment group, our recruitment strategies are now focusing on an interstate approach in addition to our traditional strategy of attracting possible applicants from just Western Australia for this particular work. Our local workload has remained steady while our workshop fabrication requirements have actually increased.

With competitors feeling the pressure from the downturn we have been fortunate enough to attract good quality trades people to join the CCR Group team that are primarily seeking local employment. CCR Group has always driven a strong company culture and the efforts put into this are now evident by the increased number of applicants seeking work with us.

In an effort to reward our employees for their dedication and loyalty to the organisation, while also looking at the attraction of quality personnel, we revisited our pay structure in July. Although we are highly competitive within the local area in regards to pay rates for our employees, we still push the culture when advertising positions. This is in an attempt to attract good quality personnel who are seeking employment with an organisation such as ours while also attracting those applicants out there that are driven by more than just bottom dollar.

WEB POLL

Which of the following HR functions in your organisation has the economic downturn most greatly affected?

No noticeable impact	30%
Readiness to recruit	25%
Learning & development expenditure	23%
Remuneration	17%
Reward strategies	5%

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Interviews by Ali Klaver, managing editor of hrmonthly.

