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Focusing on people and career development to regain employee confidence

Last year there was a lot of talk about the risk of employees leaving once the recession was over and when the job market was more buoyant. It's encouraging to note that market confidence is improving and job market movement is happening again. There are more vacancies advertised and people who have been without work for some time, having experienced redundancy, are finding work at last. This undoubtedly demonstrates an up- turn, but also I wonder if more vacancies indicate increased attrition as a result of the delayed consequence and hangover from the workplace stresses experienced during the tough times. There are no clear figures on this however.

During the recession successful organisations survived by shedding staff, hunkering down, focusing on performance, cutting costs and consolidating core business. Although the focus was on 'pulling together', behind the scenes a lot of stress was experienced and manager / employee relationships were commonly strained.

For some, the tensions experienced in the workplace were almost intolerable. I saw many individuals for career coaching who were hurting, stressed and having doubts about their career sustainability. They were surviving by holding on and biting their tongue, or spinning out and being at risk of performance management. With their career confidence going down the gurgler, self doubt was rife and jumping ship a desperate idea driven by career survival, but impossible with no jobs available to jump to.

It is interesting to note that HRINZ has announced that The 2010 HRINZ National Conference and Expo will explore the topic of 'Restoring the Trust' *and will address how and why we need to establish trust as the cornerstone for everything we do in the future.* It wasn't so long ago that the economy was booming and the job market was candidate tight and experiencing skills shortages. Then organisations were concerned about retention. Slogans such as "It's about the people" or "Our people are our greatest resource" were everywhere and people development was considered a smart retention strategy. As a result of financial survival becoming a critical emphasis, employees in some organisations felt they became a very poor second. With such a dramatic shift in organisational drivers employees experience little support and can feel a sense of betrayal and lack of trust.

It is tempting to conclude that career confidence is inextricably linked to market confidence and organisational conditions. Although these are external factors, they have a very real impact on career sustainability and confidence.

With an improving economy and tentative indicators that the market is regaining confidence let's hope that organisations will re-invigorate employee confidence through building trust and focusing on people again.

The recession has provided a massive global learning experience and I'm hoping that we have learned skills and developed greater resources that are more resilient, transparent and self reliant. The challenge for organisations now is to engage and retain their best through supporting career and personal development.

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