

THROUGH THE LEAN TIMES

Senior management appointments become even more critical during an economic downturn. Those striving to retain senior positions should be proactive in enhancing their personal brand and position themselves for the good times. Here are some useful tips to lead through the lean times:

- Adopt a passionate and driven approach – do what you love, love what you do, and deliver more than you promise;
- Be aware of the triple bottom line which embraces ethics in business strategies through economic, environmental and social issues- all of these are important for sustainable returns to stakeholders. Research shows sustained returns to shareholders (and all stakeholders) are achieved locally and internationally (NYSE) when organisations deliver good governance consistently;
- Be teachable and strive for personal renewal by constantly reinventing and re-engineering yourself through ongoing learning (TIP:- intelligence + arrogance = ignorance);
- Openness and transparency are key elements in applying effective and ethical communication strategies;

- Emotionally robust and resilient individuals who are able to stand up more times than they sit down when challenged with setbacks or problems are more successful leaders and managers;
- Challenge the status quo and have the courage and tenacity to be a pioneer by suggesting creative and innovative ways to do things differently;
- Have a 'can do', positive attitude and do whatever it takes to get to where you want to be;
- Self-discipline and high self-esteem are key to success - arrogant or critical people are often people with low self-esteem who are afraid of taking risks;
- Be good teachers and good learners, be accountable, the buck stops with you
- Lead by 'being' true to the person you are but be consistent, disciplined and focused in your work - integrity builds trust. ■

Anne Pratt,
Managing Director, Memela Pratt and Associates
anne@mp-a.co.za

DOUBLE DIP – RETRENCHMENTS?

Further global financial market volatility and predictions of a double dip recession may be key indicators for further retrenchments and job losses, particularly in key sectors such as financial services and IT. South Africa may be facing another period in which businesses downsize to offset the impact of another recession.

Last week's extreme global market losses amounting to over USD2,5-trillion as well as the US S&P credit rating downgrade have prompted many analysts to expect that another recession is on the cards for the near future; and as 2008/2009 taught us, this would have a significant impact on employment.

The 2008/2009 recession hit the global economy hard, prompting large scale retrenchments and employment freezing in almost all sectors, but none so highly publicised as the financial services sector. In addition to this, many businesses regardless of size shut their doors adding to large-scale unemployment. South Africa was certainly not exempt from such activity having shed in excess of 1 million jobs in 2009.

While most markets showed steady growth in employment figures, particularly the US which saw significant increases in both labour and private hiring in May, June and July, the latest financial crisis may set

gains back, forcing the private sector to rethink its aggressive employment strategy. If this is the case, then South Africa may see a decrease in private sector employment statistics, influenced by international businesses that are directly affected by the global market and trading environment - in other words financial institutions. While South Africa may not be exempt from job losses owing to market reaction to a possible double dip, Winn believes that South Africa may fair better than other countries.

While internationally, key sectors will face possible job shedding, South Africa may be less prone to such steps. Following the 2008/2009 recessions and the subsequent market recovery, South African businesses, especially those sectors hit the hardest maintained a strategy to keep their workforces trim to ensure cost efficiency and profitability. In addition, the overall lower cost of living and lower cost of business operations, in comparison to other economic hubs around the World, have meant that both local and international businesses operating in South Africa may have less fat to trim.

Only time will tell to what extent South Africa's market will be subject to job shedding. Regardless, employers in the private sector will definitely be keeping a close watch on their respective sector performances, and will no doubt be undertaking proactive assessments of their business operations and workforce to determine possible human resource strategies in the future. ■

By Peter Winn,
Managing Director, Manpower SA
Peter.winn@manpower.co.za

