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A Word from the Group General Manager

Dear All,

Welcome to the February edition of our newsletter. I hope you all enjoyed the start of the Chinese New Year and feel invigorated to face the challenges ahead.

While there is clearly some uncertainty to face in the months ahead, some clear trends are emerging:

Companies are cutting cost and looking at ways of improving efficiency. There will be staff reductions in some areas. Companies still have a need to recruit and retain key talent to see them through troubled waters.

There are alternative options for increasing your labour force without increasing headcount.

In this edition we describe some of the benefits of outsourcing HR and payroll functions to Gemini, and the benefits of contract or interim managers.

Gemini offers solution for all your recruitment needs, and we would be very pleased to discuss with you options for dealing with any current HR and employment problems.

Yours sincerely,

Graham Price

Group General Manager

Thought for the month

"Start by doing what is necessary, then do what is possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible."

St. Francis of Assisi (1182 - 1226)
Italian friar, founder of the Franciscan order

Gemini Personnel – Hong Kong

Gemini Temporary Division

Gemini has a specialist team devoted to finding temporary staff, and more importantly outsources staffing and payroll services. If you have a need for key producers in your business but face a headcount freeze, we can help. The following article describes how **Gemini** can help your business even through a headcount freeze.

To HR or Not to HR?

Businesses are faced with the question of how much to invest in Human Resources (HR), starting with "Do I need to have a dedicated HR department. But in today's competitive business world, does it pay to invest in a human resources (HR) department?"

Why do companies have an HR department? A good HR department will address the following:

- Workforce planning and employment
- Development of human capital
- Total rewards for human capital
- Employee and labour relations
- Risk management



Larger businesses will usually choose a dedicated HR department. Large developed organisations, especially those with wide ethnic, racial, generational, socio-economic, educational and professional diversity of employees population, need a department focused solely on people, human-capital professionals intimately familiar with the day-to-day inner workings of operations, and the capacity to be proactive to challenges and changing requirements.”

But for many SME's HR is a secondary responsibility for the Managing Director's PA or the CFO. A company with only 10 people, little to no attrition, struggling for financial solubility and depending primarily on a CFO might be better off outsourcing the employment of Staff, and payroll administration to a Company like [Gemini](#) and delegating the talent management and employee-relations responsibilities to an office manager.

Outsourcing staff and payroll

[Gemini's](#) Outsourcing and Temporary Division are able to provide a range of choices to employers.

Many of our clients need additional staff but are faced with a headcount freeze. Outsourcing the employment of staff to [Gemini](#) provides them with a low risk source of manpower, and no committed increase in headcount. Additional benefits of this approach include the automatic replacement of staff who decide to move on.

By using [Gemini's](#) payroll services, companies are saved the administration associated with preparing employee tax returns, generating weekly or monthly payslips, management of a Mandatory Provident Fund. Even the hiring and firing process can be delegated to [Gemini](#).

[Gemini](#) also assists Companies who are setting up in Hong Kong, or which do not have an entity in Hong Kong. For example one US based client with a sizeable manufacturing business in China, employs a regional sales manager who is based in Hong Kong. He is legally employed by [Gemini](#), who manage payment of wages, travel expenses and MPF contribution, while he performs his duties for the manufacturing business. This arrangement has been operating successfully for some years and has saved the client company from the expense and inconvenience of setting up another Company in Hong Kong solely to employ one individual.

There is no one size fits all solution. Only this week [Gemini](#) has signed arrangement with a major sourcing company for simultaneous recruitment of in house managers, and to avoid further increase in headcount outsourced employment of production staff using [Gemini's](#) recruitment and payroll service.

[Gemini](#) act as the employer and handle all the human resources function including contract preparation, payroll, MPF, tax returns, employee compensation insurance and leave coverage in compliance with the employment ordinance.

If you would like to discuss this service future please call [Gemini's](#) Temporary division hotline on 2525 7283.

You've hired the best; can you keep them when business booms again?

Greg Basham



How quickly things can change when it comes to the economy and the business climate. It was March 2008 when the headline in SCMP read "Job vacancies and turnover rates hit five-year high." By December headlines shifted to "Hong Kong job cuts so far are just a start" (Financial Times FT.com). The first headline was a warning to employers that improving recruiting methods and managing staff better to avoid unnecessary turnover was a must or employers would lose the talent war to organizations who take seriously what it means to be an employer of choice. While the times are vastly different now the risk of harming and, in time, losing top performers remains the same.

While there might be some solace in all this bad news that it is an employers market right now when it comes to picking top people, it is not a time for complacency. This economy will rebound as it always does and the future belongs to those organizations who prepare today. The point is that while hiring numbers are down it is the best of times to strengthen recruiting practices and focus on providing motivating conditions for employees to improve the bottom line.

Why "hidden turnover" matters

Our experience supported by organization-wide surveys consistently shows that "hidden turnover" in organizations is far higher than the numbers who actually leave. If unmanaged these numbers can grow even higher when jobs are scarce and this can affect your ability to keep top performers motivated and prepared to "go the extra mile." The key people risk today is rising numbers of the disengaged, disaffected and dissatisfied who will do little to achieve critical objectives in perilous times.

The risks in downturn conditions are not dissimilar to the risks in high turnover periods. If workloads become unmanageable, those who remain can experience a range of emotions from frustration and unhappiness to loss of morale and stress to the point where some will psychologically quit yet remain on the payroll. When some of these become malcontents they can actually do more harm to the morale of others than make a useful contribution.

Five Main Triggers for Top Performers to Quit

Nothing hurts an organization more than the loss of its top performers as these are the people who make the greatest difference in productivity, presenteeism, creativity, innovation and client satisfaction and service. While motivating and retaining top talent is a challenge at the best of times, it must not be neglected in tough times. Top performers want opportunities for growth, learning, recognition for good work, and career development - all of which can get lost in periods of high turnover or downturns when workloads become unmanageable.

We have learned a lot about why people leave their jobs conducting independent exit surveys for organizations. We see a consistent pattern when it comes to what causes top performers to leave and with the exception of those who leave for better jobs and promotions, the reasons for many to leave are a result of the management practices these people encounter every day at work.

The five main triggers for high performers to leave are:

1. Other good performers are leaving.
2. Replacements take too long (or don't come at all).
3. Workloads become unmanageable with no end in sight.
4. When replacements arrive, they are less capable than those who left.
5. Opportunities for growth and learning disappear.

Managing workloads is crucial at all times and care must be taken to ensure that managers are not dumping all the extra work on the best and the brightest for unreasonable periods of time or they will leave the moment new opportunities arise. If the talent wars commence again it is better to prepare now despite the tough conditions. Both managers and human resources departments must be focused at identifying top performers and keeping them unharmed and on the team with continuing opportunities for growth, achievement and development.

Greg Basham is the CEO of eeVoices Ltd, a Hong Kong based company that conducts pre-employment screening, exit interviewing and organization surveys.

Considering staff cutbacks?

Here are a few guidelines, your [Gemini](#) consultant would be pleased to advise.



Today, organizations and employees are facing cutbacks and turbulence. If they aren't laying people off, they're cutting budgets big time. As entrepreneurs, we know that a slumping economy translates into difficult decisions for the workplace, and how these decisions are carried out impact how employees feel about their organization.

While these tough times are forcing business owners to deliver bad news, it doesn't have to lead to decreased employee motivation or commitment. Here are a few lessons I've learned regarding how to effectively communicate with staff during difficult times:

Tell them all you know

Hiding details or facts from employees rarely benefits anyone, and employees eventually find out the full truth anyway. If you haven't been 100 percent upfront with the details from the beginning, your lack of transparency will be held against you in the future.

Tell them when you will know more

Sometimes you don't know all of the facts or possible outcomes. The best thing you can do is to admit what you don't know and inform them when you expect to have more information. Of course, you'll want to deliver on your promise to follow up.

Provide options

In uncertain times, entrepreneurs want to know that they have viable options. In the case of layoffs or budget cuts, you may not have a choice when it comes to making tough decisions. However, you can offer options to employees about how the changes will affect them. For example, one struggling organization I know is offering employees a chance to take a lower-paying job or a severance package. At the very least, the choice leaves the employees in control of their own destiny.

Show your pain

These are painful times when people are losing the status quo. It is completely appropriate, and often times welcomed, for the person delivering bad news to show that it's a tough and painful decision. I still remember a former boss of mine who said, "This was one of the hardest decisions I've ever had to make." I believed him.

Don't sugar coat or minimize the message

You may want to deliver the bad news in a way that makes it seem "not so bad." You may even sprinkle in a few "look on the bright sides." While a certain amount of optimism may seem appropriate, be careful not to overdo it. What may seem like "no big deal" to you may be a huge deal to the employee who is hearing the bad news for the first time.

Giving tough messages during tough times can be difficult, but by being honest and forthcoming with your concerns, you'll set yourself and your staff up for future success.

Provide help

If you are forced to lay off staff, talk to Gemini about providing outplacement services. We can provide a range of services including advising staff on their options, help with CV preparation, introductions to employers. Gemini can provide a hot desk for your staff to work at resume preparation and advice from our consultants on presenting themselves to employers.

Real Estate Interim Management

Gemini is able to provide interim managers through Gemini global Staffing Solutions (www.gemini-global.com). The following article describes a personal experience of interim management. Please contact us for further details.

This month Marcus Bowen describes his experience as an interim manager for the real estate portfolio of a major international insurance company.



I have just completed an assignment with a major international insurance company, I guess the modern term for my role is 'interim manager', but this is unusual in real estate. As an interim, I run my own company and am hired as a specialist expert for short term assignments, to work in an executive capacity. As an interim, I not only advise on the situation, but implement measures to solve the problem.

A suitably qualified and experienced interim provides the best of both worlds; an internal consultant who is deeply immersed in the job in hand but without the long term employment commitment. The interim implements with the best interest of the business and has no incentive to cross sell other services or create for himself a long term position.

Traditionally, when a business faces such a need they hire-in a suitably qualified individual as a staff member. This may be augmented by some input from management consultants and consultancy sections of large surveying business.

So why depart from this approach? Putting aside some of the secondary benefits of hiring an interim such as cost effectiveness and head count avoidance, the principle reason made a lot of sense... Why hire permanent members of staff when it is unclear a long term solution will need them?

Assignment objectives could be summarized as follows:

- Strategy - To introduce a more strategic approach to accommodation planning
- Consistency - To make real estate management more consistent across the region.
- Management - To reduce the amount of time senior management spent on accommodation
- Database - To create a reliable and sustainable on line database of all property data.
- Governance - To improve the property expenditure approval system.
- Best Practice - To set a 'road map' for further development of a best in class estate.

In summary the assignment was in 2 parts;

- Design and procurement of a pan-regional real estate adviser contract, competitively let and negotiated to a preferred bidder stage.
- Roll-out of the regional property adviser to all the local business units.

My role reported into a director at Regional Head Office in Hong Kong and at Head Office on a different continent. There were about 16 local business units, from Japan to Indonesia. Understandably, each echelon had its own priorities as well as some they shared.

In October last year, toward the end of the assignment, I organized and facilitated a 3-day conference in Kuala Lumpur for all the local business property managers, who varied from administrators to project managers. This was a good introductory platform for the new estate director.

At the conference, local businesses participated in a benchmarking interview on their facilities management approach. We pooled the results to look objectively at the collective strengths and weaknesses against best-in-industry measures.

Finally, based on conference feedback and findings, I developed a series of 'best practice' work streams to pursue over the coming year. The day I left I switched off the laptop and Blackberry and handed over the running to the new manager, but I remain on call if they have any special requirements.

To my mind, the assignment was successful because of two other characteristics of interim management appointments that I have observed: the interim' can drive the change agenda much harder, faster than an internal employee as they do not have to worry about long term relationships and 2) as the position is clearly a 'means to an end', existing stakeholders in the change process are more likely to take advice as impartial and in the best interest of the business as a whole (however unedifying!).

*Marcus Bowen is Managing director of **CASP-R**. A management consultancy specialising in corporate real estate, with bases and registered companies in the UK and Hong Kong SAR, with plans for bases in mainland China and USA.*

J.M. Gemini – China

Despite Economic Recession, Executive Jobs In Several Sectors Expected To Grow In 2009



According to the latest semi-annual Member Outlook Survey conducted by AECS in December of last year, several market sectors are expected to strengthen despite the state of the world economy. Search consultants anticipate executive job opportunities to increase in healthcare (32%), government (30%), pharmaceuticals/biotech (26%) and natural resources (26%).

While the overall outlook of search consultants for 2009 is negative, recruiting demand in several industries is expected to remain stable throughout the year, including non-profit (52%), education (48%), professional services (39%), media/entertainment (34%) and information technology (30%). Also members surveyed expect the global executive job market to rebound in the second half of 2009.

The survey findings reveal that search consultants expect to see the greatest scarcity of talent in finance and accounting positions, as well as in executive management/board positions and engineering posts. Globally, China is expected to see the greatest need for executive talent in 2009 (66%), followed by India (43%) and Eastern Europe (30%).

J. M. Gemini is uniquely placed to assist clients in their executive and senior management needs offering both Executive Search and Interim Management solutions. For further information please contact franke@imsinchina.com or anthonya@jmgemini.com

China encourages graduates

The State Council pledged to give top priority to the employment of university graduates, reflecting the spread of the global financial crisis and the "austere" job situation.

Premier Wen Jiabao presided over a cabinet meeting in January on the issue of employment of university graduates, China's "valuable human resources". The council decided to adopt more measures to promote the employment of university graduates:

- Subsidies and social insurance will be offered to graduates who work in villages
- Government will help those who work in remote areas to repay student loans,
- Graduates are encouraged to work for small or private companies,

- Graduates are encouraged to start businesses, with favorable tax and loan policies
- Universities were ordered to improve their job placement services,

According to published reports, China had nearly 5.6 million university graduates in 2008, and this year, the figure is expected to top 6 million.

Source: Xinhua 2009-01-07

Gemini - Thailand

Holidays

There are no public holidays in Thailand until the Thai New Year - Songkran 13 to 17 April.

Skills Gap in Thailand

The World Bank recently published its survey on the competitiveness of Thailand, covering some 1000 large, middle and small companies from the most relevant sectors.



Shortage of skills remained a key obstacle for Thailand to move towards a knowledge economy: 40% of the companies now see labour skill level as a major constraint compared to only 30% in 2004.

Filling vacancies takes time because applicants lack skills that firms look for: basic aptitudes as well as technical skills do not meet requirements of the companies and hence it takes on average over 5 weeks to fill a technically oriented position. Command of English is slightly decreasing compared with 2004 and basic IT skills again are still short of expectations (do we need more Internet cafes?). The handicap on English is diminishing once we enter a professional level of hires.

What's causing these gaps? Few people will question the survey's findings that much of the above is attributable to the Thai education system: observers quote a reluctance to fail students, a dependence on rote learning and archaic syllabi as being among the main causes for the backlog. As a result many candidates are entering the job market very ill-equipped to deal with the challenges of today's business environment.

As there is no immediate remedy in sight, we typically advise companies to recruit for "talent" rather than knowledge.

Talent are our innate abilities that we carry with us throughout our life and are broader than just verbal and/or mathematical intelligence, experience and know-how.

Talented people are wanted everywhere at every stage of their career.

Therefore company management must make sure that people are in the "right" job that challenges and develops their talents – this will create the necessary link for staying for the long term and thus creating a virtuous cycle where both company and employee benefit.

New Law on Labour Protection

The revised 2008 version of the above immediately touches on an important issue in these economically challenging times: temporary cessation of business operations for reasons other than force majeure.

The first change concerns the guaranteed wage levels: from now on the company has to pay 75% of the normal wage rate – up from 50%.

Secondly the company need to give 3 work days prior warning before sending employees home on reduced pay.

Asian Human Resources Group (AHRG)



AHRG is a unique grouping of firms in multiple locations that are properly licensed to do business in their respective territories and have a network of affiliates and consultants. Member firms currently comprise:

[Gemini Personnel Limited](#)

[Gemini Thailand](#)

[JM Gemini Limited](#)

AHRG companies currently have offices in Hong Kong, Kowloon, Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Bangkok, with affiliates in Singapore, Seoul and other Asian cities.

For further information see www.AHRG.biz

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Food for thought

EMPLOYMENT HANDBOOK

All businesses are recommended to issue employees with a Handbook containing essential information about the Company. In China this is mandatory.

Some suggested points to be covered are set out below:

OFFICE POLICY

Dress Code:

- 1) You are advised to come to work dressed according to your salary.
- 2) If we see you wearing Prada shoes and carrying a Gucci bag, we will assume you are doing well financially and therefore do not need a raise.
- 3) If you dress poorly, you need to learn to manage your money better, so that you may buy nicer clothes, and therefore you do not need a raise.
- 4) If you dress just right, you are right where you need to be and therefore you do not need a raise.

Sick Days:

We will no longer accept a doctor's statement as proof of sickness. If you are able to go to the doctor, you are able to come to work.

Personal Days:

Each employee will receive 104 personal days a year. They are called Saturdays & Sundays.

Bathroom Breaks:

Entirely too much time is being spent in the toilet. There is now a strict three-minute time limit in the stalls. At the end of three minutes, an alarm will sound, the toilet paper roll will retract, the stall door will open, and a picture will be taken. After your second offense, your picture will be posted on the company bulletin board under the 'Chronic Offenders' category. Anyone caught smiling in the picture will be sectioned under the company's mental health policy.

Lunch Break:

- Skinny people get 30 minutes for lunch, as they need to eat more, so that they can look healthy.
- Normal size people get 15 minutes for lunch to get a balanced meal to maintain their average figure.
- Chubby people get 5 minutes for lunch, because that's all the time needed to drink a Slim-Fast.

Thank you for your loyalty to our company. We are here to provide a positive employment experience. Therefore, all questions, comments, concerns, complaints, frustrations, irritations, aggravations, insinuations, allegations, accusations, contemplations, consternation and input should be directed elsewhere.

Take a break!

Kids Are Quick

TEACHER: Maria, go to the map and find North America.

MARIA: Here it is.

TEACHER: Correct. Now class, who discovered America?

CLASS: Maria.

TEACHER: John, why are you doing your math multiplication on the floor?

JOHN: You told me to do it without using tables.

TEACHER: Glenn, how do you spell 'crocodile?'

GLENN: K-R-O-K-O-D- I-A-L'

TEACHER: No, that's wrong

GLENN: Maybe it is wrong, but you asked me how I spell it.

TEACHER: Donald, what is the chemical formula for water?

DONALD: H I J K L M N O.

TEACHER: What are you talking about?

DONALD: Yesterday you said it's H to O.

TEACHER: Winnie, name one important thing we have today that we didn't have ten years ago.

WINNIE: Me!

TEACHER: Glen, why do you always get so dirty?

GLEN: Well, I'm a lot closer to the ground than you are.

TEACHER: Millie, give me a sentence starting with 'I.'

MILLIE: I is..

TEACHER: No, Millie..... Always say, 'I am.'

MILLIE: All right..... 'I am the ninth letter of the alphabet.'

TEACHER: George Washington not only chopped down his father's cherry tree, but also admitted it. Now, Louie, do you know why his father didn't punish him?

LOUIS: Because George still had the axe in his hand.

TEACHER: Now, Simon, tell me frankly, do you say prayers before eating?

SIMON: No sir, I don't have to, my Mom is a good cook.

TEACHER: Clyde, your composition on 'My Dog' is exactly the same as your brother's. Did you copy his?

CLYDE: No, sir. It's the same dog.

TEACHER: Harold, what do you call a person who keeps on talking when people are no longer interested?

HAROLD: A teacher

And for Valentines day.....

A Greek and a Scotsman were sitting in a Starbuck's cafe one day discussing who had the superior culture. Over triple lattes the Greek guy says, 'Well, we Greeks built the Parthenon,' arching his eyebrows.

The Scotsman then replies, 'Well... It was the Scots that discovered the Summer and Winter Solstices.'

The Greek retorts, 'We Greeks gave birth to advanced mathematics.' The Scotsman, nodding in agreement, says, 'Scots were the ones who built the first timepieces and calendars.'

And so on until the Greek comes up with what he thinks will end the discussion. With a flourish of finality he says, 'The Greeks were the ones who invented sex!'

The Scotsman replies, 'Indeed, that is true, but it was we Scots who introduced it to women.'

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