

TALENT

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BEHIND THE SCENES

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a word from the editor

SURVIVING THE RECESSION



The gloomy economic outlook spells a time of 'sturm und drang' as many of us have little to look forward to. Rising costs amidst shrinking real incomes makes it challenging to live, work and play.

But not all is lost. Now it is the best time to take up that certification or go for a training course you have been putting off to upgrade your skills. Consider a mid-career switch - gaining employment in a non-related industry broadens and diversifies your experience and expertise, thus potentially increasing your employability when the economy picks up.

Be open to taking on more responsibilities and diverse portfolios. And never underestimate the usefulness of networking - you might just find a new job through someone.

Most of all, stay positive and never give up!

Annie Yap

Ms Annie Yap,
CEO,
The GMP Group

EMPLOYMENT NEWS FLASH

'PAINFUL' WAGE CUTS FOR 2009

Millions of wage-earners will face drastic pay cuts because of the global economic crisis, said the International Labour Organisation (ILO). According ILO, global growth in real wages is expected to reach 1.1% in 2009, compared to 1.7% in 2008. Meanwhile, in industrialised countries, wages are expected to shrink by 0.5% in 2009 after an increase of 0.8% in 2008. With many countries already in recession, ILO predicted that the global financial crisis will bring the totally tally of unemployed workers to 210 million by the end of 2009.



NEW MEDIA EDUCATION FOR WORKING ADULTS

The Workforce Development Agency (WDA) had signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Singapore Media Academy (SMA) and Ngee Ann Polytechnic to establish a new media education and training centre for working adults by 2011. The government is ready to pump in \$40 million for the centre. The training centre aims to train and retrain 3,000

professionals in the media industry and provide a training environment for Singapore's media workforce. After completing each course, each participant will get a nationally issued certificate. They can then accumulate relevant certificates in exchange for a qualification such as a diploma.



feature story

TUNED FOR PERFORMANCE



More than just consummate practitioners of music, symphonic conductors are impeccable as managers, orchestrating every instrument to pitch and rhythmic perfection.

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COMPANIES TO GAIN FROM SPUR

To help companies tide through the economic downturn, the Singapore Government has set aside a \$600 million budget for a new training initiative. The Skills Programme for Upgrading and Resilience (SPUR) will help companies cope with the cost of retraining their excess manpower. This means that companies can expect to pay 10% of course fees while the government pays the remaining 90% of it. For staff aged 40 years and below, the absentee payroll for a 140-hour course is equivalent to their monthly pay in their organisation.

WOMEN LIFT EMPLOYMENT RATES TO 17-YEAR HIGH

Women have been credited with boosting employment rates to a 17-year high in Singapore, said a report released in late November 2008 by the Manpower Ministry. This is attributed to the efforts by the government and unions to entice women back to work. Seven in 10 women aged 24 to 54 are employed compared to six in 10 last year.

Meanwhile, employment rates for those aged 55 to 64 have seen an increase due to older women joining the workforce. There are now about 835,000 women in the job market, compared to 818,100 a year ago.



TUNED FOR PERFORMANCE

EXPERT ADVICE

MIND YOUR 'P's

Next to resume and cover letter writing, going through an interview is another grueling part of job-hunting that many of us dread.

But fret not. Keep in mind the 3 'P's and you might find your next interview a breeze.

PREPARE

- Find out about the job and company - it is a good way to find out how you fit in the organisation.
- Ready a set of questions you would like to ask the interviewer.
- Dress appropriately - if in doubt, dress conservatively.

PRACTISE

- Do a mock interview with a friend or practice in front of a mirror.
- Rehearse some of the most frequently asked questions interviewers ask.
- Review your resume and be prepared to answer questions about its contents.

PROCESS

- Listen and make eye contact with your interviewer.
- Mind your body language - your body language plays a major role in communication (55%), followed by tone of your voice (38%) and lastly the words you use (7%).
- Respond clearly and concisely, and give sufficient details.

And finally, be confident!



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The conductor's supervision of his ensemble is a fitting parallel for any manager, where they are tasked with the challenge of bringing out the best in the members of staff under their care. Most managers today are familiar with the importance and fundamental mechanics of employee performance management, which essentially is the charting and monitoring of an employee's progress with regards to predetermined goals and milestones.

Setting the tune

Just the way a conductor leads every musician's melody or beat into a piece of music, so should a manager align his employees with the company's direction and core strategies. By outlining its immediate and long term objectives, and making it relevant to the function of an employee, he will be able to see his worth and significance in the larger scheme of things.

Listen to the music

Effectuating performance from staff requires managers to complement their leadership with empathy. Managers should listen to their subordinates' motivations, concerns and difficulties faced on the job. Only then can they then seek to create an informed equilibrium and environment for each of his staff members to function at his or her best.

Better equipment, better performance

Managers have their own tools to aid them in managing employee appraisals. The digital age has availed a broad palette of performance management programmes to help managers organise and execute staff assessments. The general function of these software is to manage performance-related data and churning them into digestible graphs and metric tables for a dynamic perspective of the corporate performance climate.

Every instrument plays its own melody

Specificity and clarity are paramount in communicating what is required of each staff member. Even between different employees bearing similar job descriptions, a manager must understand them enough to differentiate between their intrinsic individual strengths. That way, individualised KPIs that are biased towards the unique skill combinations of employees will result

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in more realistic expectations, more accurate evaluations and greater productivity.

Putting them all together

Implementing thorough performance management is worth the effort. Effective performance indicators and appraisal systems are ultimately about leveraging on understanding and communication to inspire results. Ultimately, a piece of music is the sum of its sounds. In a grand coming together, all the melodies and rhythms form a unique blend of sonic textures where every sound is reliant on the other. Similarly, as the different clearly defined responsibilities of all staff come together, led by the overhead corporate agenda, the company can collectively conduct and achieve a higher level of performance.



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Diploma/Degree, 2-3 years' relevant experience in insurance industry

SOFTWARE ENGINEER (ref no: 081980)

Degree in Computer Science/IT or related discipline, min. 2 years in application development and maintenance experience, experience in bookmaking/banking advantageous

HR MANAGER (ref no: 082097)

Degree, min. 8 years' relevant experience, of which 4 years in a managerial position, familiar with SAP system advantageous

SECRETARY (ref no: 082099)

Diploma/PSC or equivalent, 3-5 years' secretarial experience to senior management