

Path to a new start

Jill Pengelley
Editor CareerOne

THESE days, no one seems to fire anyone. Employers rationalise their payroll, they retrench, they downsize and, increasingly, they "outplace".

Michelle Bentley, 51, is general manager of outplacement services firm Donington (SA).

She acknowledges she is leading a team in a rising industry unheard of at the time she entered the workforce.

Companies call on outplacement specialists for advice on letting people go and to prepare those individuals to find new jobs.

It is Ms Bentley's responsibility to help retrenched workers at a time when they are feeling vulnerable and apprehensive about the future.

"They will be feeling mixed emotions that may involve being angry, upset, hurt, with a sense of loss of friendships, comfort and business relationships," she says.

"We can provide the strength and help them map out from where they are now to where they could be or would like to be.

"We can assist them with the technical aspects of preparing themselves for the market but we also help with the emotional side."

Ms Bentley began her working life as a teacher, progressing to deputy and acting principal at Annesley College.

At the same time, she completed an MBA at the University of Adelaide, which she says whet her appetite for life beyond the school fence.

She left Annesley in 2003 and ran her own business in leadership and management development before



SPECIALIST: Donington SA general manager Michelle Bentley, who helps retrenched workers at a time when they are feeling vulnerable. Pictures, cover and above: **GREG HIGGS**

taking a job at OzTrain, a training and development company. In February, she was invited to join Donington (SA) as its general manager, overseeing career management and outplacement services.

She says her role is not to get the retrenched person another job but to position them to make good career choices.

Work with the outplaced person often begins as soon as the news has been delivered. A Donington consultant waits in an adjoining room to speak to the employee. Some are

“People are our greatest asset but unfortunately, they are our greatest expense”

ready to explore their options but others are too upset to talk.

Support from Donington staff can range from a single meeting to several over a period of months.

Ms Bentley says it also is important managers know how to deliver the bad news. The message delivered is usually fairly brief and often scripted. She says it is best to be firm, with a softness to the voice but without apology.

She advises the use of the word "regret" instead.

"We can provide briefings to managers to get that process as right as we can," she says.

"You don't start talking about the weather or the footy. It's about delivering the message as diplomatically and respectfully as you can."

Outplacement consultants are a discretionary expense and have been an evolving business for the past 15 to 20 years.

Up to 70 per cent of a company's expenses can be tied up in staffing.

"If they need to make significant savings, that's where organisations will look," she says. "It's very hard to make savings by cutting back on stationery but reducing one employee can save many tens of thousands during tough times. People are our greatest asset but, unfortunately, they're our greatest expense."

Ms Bentley says it can be money well spent to protect the employer's brand. Maintaining the dignity and respect of the individual increases the chances of a good parting relationship with the employer.

"No manager or organisation enjoys or would take on, without necessity, to outplace someone," she says. "Therefore, if one can part on optimal terms in difficult circumstances, that's going to be advantageous. It's about enhancing relationships and reputations."

Executive call

Prof. Brian
D'Netto
School of
Business
Uni of SA



CHINA'S rapid industrialisation has required substantial investment in its human capital, providing an impetus for management development.

Overall, managers in China are quite young, with nearly three-quarters of the sample in the 25-34 age group. Chinese managers are ambitious and career-oriented.

Contrary to Western perceptions, women have made significant inroads into management in China. Female managers appear to have greater upper-management support than their male counterparts and take a more active role in their development.

However, only a very small proportion of Chinese enterprises send managers to participate in external programs - off-site programs that comprise both short-term executive development and long-term MBA-type programs.

As Chinese enterprises intensify their management-development efforts, the competitive edge Western countries enjoy will disappear.

External development programs expose managers to current industry practices, facilitate interaction with practising managers in other organisations and provide information on the latest thinking in the field.

Strategic integration of management development, a supportive organisational culture and active individual involvement are elements vital to continued management-development effectiveness.

HAYS
Construction

Civil Manager

An up and coming plumbing and civil company has an exciting and challenging opportunity for a Civil Manager to join its vibrant team in Adelaide.

To be successful in this role you must have a civil and/or trade background, a sound knowledge of HSE systems and experience in plumbing and civil project management. You will also require a working knowledge of MS Project and AutoCAD and have a proven track record in the successful running of civil projects in Australia, such as major roadworks, site excavations, base preparation, kerbing and stormwater drainage. In addition, you will need to have excellent communication and time management skills.

This is an exciting opportunity within one of the state's fastest growing plumbing and civil companies. For the successful candidate who can demonstrate management and business development ability there will also be the opportunity to advance to an executive role within the company.

For a confidential discussion regarding this Civil Manager role or any similar positions that may be available, please contact the consultant below. Ref: 188794

Please contact Olivia Wong
T 08 8212 5242
E cp.adelaide@hays.com.au

Specialist Recruitment hays.com.au

HAYS
Human Resources

Senior HR Executive

Located in Adelaide's pristine hills district, Hays Human Resources is seeking a Senior HR Executive to cover a maternity leave contract until early June '09.

Playing a vital role in the organisation, you will lead and manage the HR initiatives by being a cultural leader and partnering all functional Area Managers and employees to make the work environment mutually beneficial and rewarding.

We are seeking an outstanding HR professional who is looking for a unique role that is challenging and inspiring.

To succeed in this diverse opportunity, you will be degree qualified, have a strong HR management background along with a solid understanding of the current IR legislation and experience with redundancies.

You will be adept at managing HR projects along with driving a change agenda by gaining support of those around you. You will be a natural leader with outstanding communication and influencing skills who is tenacious, credible and has a hands on approach and work ethic.

For further details regarding this opportunity please contact your Hays Human Resources Specialist on the details below.

Please contact Kylie Kaufmann
T 08 7221 4122
E kylie.kaufmann@hays.com.au

Specialist Recruitment hays.com.au

HAYS
Accountancy & Finance

Senior Payroll Officer

As a market leader within its industry, our client is committed to creating a rewarding workplace for its employees. Our client's highly skilled team provides a variety of professional services to the Australian general public. An exciting opportunity has now arisen for an experienced Senior Payroll Officer to become an integral part of its dynamic team.

This influential role will involve overseeing and making necessary adjustments to the payroll, preparing and sending the weekly/daily electronic payroll, collating information for monthly reporting, as well as creating and maintaining financial records. You will also be involved in problem solving within the payroll department, assisting Payroll Officers with related queries, as well as supporting the national Payroll Manager when required.

To be successful for this position you will be proactive, operate in a professional manner and work effectively as a team player. If you are an excellent communicator, have a high level of accuracy, as well as efficient time management skills, then this could be the role for you. To register your interest for this position, or for a confidential discussion, please contact the consultant below.

Please contact Rebecca Park
T 08 8231 0820
E rebecca.park@hays.com.au

Specialist Recruitment hays.com.au