



Danger of staff complacency in finance sector

By Andrew Brushfield, Director, Robert Half International

As we emerge from a tough economic environment, to one where business confidence is lifting, there is a danger that improved market sentiment has caused employees to become complacent and less proactive in their attitude towards their career.

Robert Half's Workplace Survey of 330 Australian finance, accounting and HR professionals found one in two (50%) Australian employees believe the downturn is over, suggesting that many are starting to feel more secure, and are therefore more likely to take their foot off the pedal. In addition, with talk of a severe skills shortage in play, many employees now feel as though they no longer need to make the extra effort that the GFC demanded of them.

This assumption by employees, however, could seriously endanger their opportunity for growth within the organisation. In reality, now is the time for employees to take advantage of the economic recovery and for the first time in more than 18 months, advance their career.

Since the onset of the downturn, opportunities for career advancement have been limited, which is why employees need to use the recovery to prove their worth to their employer. Employees can take advantage of the upturn by using six steps to advance their career.

1. Be a leader

If you are striving for a more senior position, the recovery provides an excellent opportunity to

demonstrate leadership. As many companies restart projects that were shifted to the back burner during the downturn, they'll need individuals to lead these initiatives. Volunteering for these assignments can be a good way to demonstrate your ability, gain visibility and build new skills.

2. Take inventory

Keep track of any new skills you acquired over the past several months and instances when you were asked to tackle projects outside of your typical job description. Also consider in which areas you were particularly successful and what type of work you enjoyed the most. The information you glean can help you identify areas you might like to explore, skills you hope to build or enhance, or projects you'd like to assist with.

3. Work with your boss

With economic conditions improving, companies may have more funds to invest in training and professional development opportunities. Your boss can help you secure the necessary resources and outline milestones that are important to hit in order to achieve the level of success you seek.

4. Find a mentor

Getting to the next step can be easier with advice from someone who already knows how to get there. Before identifying a mentor, however, make sure you are clear about what your professional goals are and what you hope to gain from the relationship.

5. Network within the organisation

Networking can expand your base of contacts and help you identify valuable internal allies and establish connections that make it easier to secure resources and support. Making sure you are well known throughout the company could also increase your chances of securing internal transfers or a promotion.

6. Keep up with new trends

Keep informed of new trends in your industry by reading industry publications and online articles

and blogs. Your research will help you keep tabs on areas of job growth within your industry so you can determine how much promise your current career path has.

Although the downturn has been tough, employees need to understand that their role is crucial to the success of their company and to take advantage of the opportunity to tackle new projects, assume additional responsibility and take on more challenging work. As economic conditions continue to improve, employees can use these tips to leverage the effort they put in, and set themselves up for advancement.

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