



As you may have seen in recent announcements, we have implemented some changes in the internal management structure of Ross Human Directions since our last newsletter that I'd like to tell you a little more about.

A key change is that the Group Managing Director's role that I have enjoyed working in for the past 20 years or so will now be performed by Ralph Shreeve, whom many of you will know from his role with us as Global Managing Director. I will be taking up a new opportunity that has been created by the Board – the role of Executive Deputy Chairman.

Ralph will take on responsibility for all the operations of the company under both of our brands, Ross and Julia Ross. Of course, Ralph will do this with the support of the existing teams in place - many of whom you know. Those of our clients who have not yet met Ralph will have an opportunity to do so over coming months so please do contact him if there are any matters with which he can assist.

I will be taking on a new role in the business. I will remain the company's largest shareholder and an Executive Director on the Board as is now the case. My responsibilities will move to a more strategic level and important components of my new role will be to explore international expansion opportunities as well as bringing substantial focus to client relationship development. Working closely directly with our clients is something I always seek to do as much as possible, and this new structure will provide the time and opportunity for me to do that in ways that add value to you now and in the longer term.

Ralph's experience in other organisations and strong background in HR and Recruitment place him ideally to direct the operations of the company moving forward and we look forward to introducing you to improvements and updated services in the coming period.

If you have any queries regarding this progression for the business, please do speak with your Account Manager or Consultant. I look forward to staying more in touch with all our clients in my new role. I do hope you enjoy this edition of RossNews and I welcome any feedback you have at marketing@rosshumandirections.com

→ economic update

by Glenn Meekin,
Group Financial Controller

The labour market in Australia is tight and there is some concern this may result in higher wages which would fuel inflation and increase the likelihood of further interest rate increases. Bond traders have factored in a one in five chance of an interest rate rise in the next 12 months.

The unemployment rate for February 2007 increased by 0.1 percentage point to 4.6 per cent. The unemployment rate in NSW increased 2 percentage points to 5.2%, while other states were unchanged or had slight falls.

Employment for the month increased by 22,000 due mainly to 20,700 new full-time positions. The participation rate increased to 64.9%, falling just short of a record high result. The rise in the participation rate was due mainly to an increase in people seeking part-time work. In February 2007, the number of people looking for part-time positions increased by 3.3 percentage points, the second largest increase since 1989.

In the past 12 months, 295,000 new jobs have been created with the bulk of these being in Queensland (40%), Victoria (23%) and NSW (17%). Economists expect jobs growth to be solid this year.

Business confidence is strong and this is driving employment growth. Jobs ads increased 3.4 per cent in February 2007.

Source: Australian Financial Review, 16 March 2007 – "Jobs Boom Triggers Wage Fears" pages 1 & 12, Author: Adrian Rollins.

in this issue

- economic update
- OHS - ergonomics
- training tips
- legal briefs
- regional employer award

→ OHS ergonomics

by Paula Spencer,
OHS & Injury
Management Officer

Ergonomics or 'human factors' is the process of designing or arranging workplaces, products and systems so that they 'fit' the people who use them with the aim of developing a comfortable, safe and productive work system.

The study of ergonomics takes into account things such as people's shapes and sizes, strength, vision, sound, thermal comfort, motion, vibration and workloads. Take for example vision. It is our primary channel for information so to ensure high productivity, we need to see the work area clearly. Adequate light with no glare reflecting off our computer screens will also reduce the chance of headaches and eyestrain.

By improving ergonomics in the work environment, we may be able to reduce mistakes, absenteeism and workers compensation costs, increase productivity and improve employee morale and retention. Often, simple modifications to work methods, equipment or layout can yield surprisingly good results.

As our society becomes increasingly mechanised, many of us are spending hours each day in sedentary positions, such as at a computer, using a mouse and talking on the phone. Over the next editions of this newsletter you will find suggestions on topics such as posture, computer placement, workstation set up, and breaks, which we hope you will find helpful.

Setting up the room

The size and shape of the room, the seating arrangements, and your location in relation to the audience are critical factors to consider before you prepare your presentation. Following, are some important room setup basics.

Is the room properly lit?

Effective communication, enthusiasm, inspiration, or motivation of an audience is impossible in a dimly lit room. You must be able to see the audience, and they must be able to see you.

Does the room have cool, fresh air?

A room that is too warm, with stale air, will put your audience to sleep – especially after a meal. Also ensure that adequate clean, cool (but not too cold) air is circulating.

Is the speaking area neat and professional, with no distracting clutter?

The place from which you present is your 'personal space', and your audience will judge you by its appearance.

The last thing to consider in room arrangement is the presenter's workspace. Your workspace is a reflection on you as a professional. When you arrange your personal space, try to:

- Set up a separate table for handouts on the side of the room or near the entrance. Stock the table with extra materials, pencils and notepaper. Locate this table away from your space, keeping your work area free from clutter.
- Use a separate table for the overhead projector. The table should be wide enough to hold your transparencies, a master copy of your script, and the student workbook. Avoid using a small table for the projector. Small tables tend to look 'overcrowded', and the materials appear to be messy.
- Put your notes where you can easily see them, but your audience cannot. This will make your delivery seem more spontaneous and 'live'. If you are not using a lectern, try to make sure your notes are not placed too low or far away. This will help you avoid breaking eye contact for long periods when you need to look at your notes.

Source: "Delivering Effective training sessions" McArdel, Geri

Best Deployment of Flexible Workforce Solutions

Today's on-demand business environment requires organisations to be capable of fast response to dynamic customer requirements. This calls for the ability to access experience and skills in a scalable manner who focus on key projects and offer flexibility to accommodate fluctuating workloads.

In spite of the fears of some arising from easing in unfair dismissal laws and other changes, the enactment of WorkChoices last year has not lead to the wholesale restructuring of workforces in Australia. Most organisations continue to apply the flexibility delivered by WorkChoices, in a responsible manner.

Employers know that in Australia, they have ready access to a substantial pool of high quality candidates across a breadth of skill categories through large recruitment organisations such as Ross and Julia Ross. This offers benefits including:

- ability to ramp up resources for time-short or short-term projects
- leave coverage
- accommodation of headcount restrictions
- capacity to adapt to workload fluctuations
- ability to access individual expertise not required on an on-going basis

In addition, maintaining an effective relationship with a good recruiter ensures access to a range of services that assists clients and supports them in the management of their temporary and contract workforce. These services include employment law advice, OHS, anti-discrimination and related legal and HR issues, and can free up your time to concentrate on your business.

All companies who manage their own workforces face a range of issues that require on-going investment in expertise to manage:

- discrimination claims
- workers' compensation claims
- headcount restrictions
- performance management (avoiding unfair dismissal claims)
- the need to hire staff quickly to when demand peaks
- ready access to skills
- increasing payroll costs
- redundancy issues

All of these issues can be removed from your organisation's responsibility through using the services of a large recruitment firm offering solutions such as Recruitment Process Outsourcing, Managed Vendor or Managed Contractors and Temporaries.

On a cautionary note however, it is critical that your chosen solution provider has the size and scale to meet your needs and that you remember that Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) for on-hired staff, continues to be the joint responsibility of clients and the recruitment company. As Ross Human Directions has a specialist OHS unit, clients can take advantage of the systems we implement for our on-hired employees at your workplace to assist with your own OHS management requirements.

The Canberra Julia Ross team have been rewarded for their continued efforts in assisting people with disabilities by CRS Australia – Australia's largest provider of vocational rehabilitation programs.

After receiving the Runner Up award in 2005, we have been named as the NSW/ACT Regional Employer of the Year for 2006 for working with our clients to open doors for candidates with disabilities ranging from depression to cerebral palsy, with the understanding and support they need.

Vocational rehabilitation involves helping people "manage the effects of their disability, injury or health condition to benefit their quality of life and help them to get or keep a job" (CRS Australia, 2007). Our work in this area is not restricted to the NSW/ACT region, with our Melbourne branch also working with organisations such as Job Support and Job Network.

This latest award is a testament to the commitment of our branch staff and branch managers in continually identifying ways to make a difference in our community. In October 2005, Telstra opened up a large call centre, where we had the opportunity to provide 70 staff. Having worked with CRS Australia before, our Canberra team recognised the opportunity to place 15 staff with disabilities into Telstra. Our team also placed such candidates into roles within Telstra's back office and into executive assistant, mailroom and switchboard operator roles.

Our passionate and empathetic Canberra Branch Manager, Catherine Harman and her team were also rewarded with a nomination for the Prime Minister's National Employer of the Year Award in December of 2006.