

EMBRACING THE CHANGE!

I suspect I am not alone when I say I am fed up with hearing the words 'downturn', 'crisis' or the dreaded 'r' word so I have decided to just call the whole shemuzzle an economic 'change'. My reasoning for this is because change implies a certain amount of free will and opportunity. Change is neither good nor bad and depends only on how we react to it.

As the economy 'changes', so do the meanings and implications for our company policies — such as flexible workplaces, work life balance and staff retention. On a recent surf of the internet, it appears that due to the economic 'change', these workplace policies have taken on a whole new meaning. Before the 'change' these policies were seen as a perk or a 'best-practice' for companies who strived to be an employer of choice.

Now workplace flexibility has become a real survival technique - an alternative for staff redundancies while riding out the 'change'. By offering part time hours, job-sharing and extended leave to staff rather than staff 'cut-backs', one thing remains the same — these best-practice strategies are still ensuring companies remain an employer of choice. When a business shows they care about their biggest asset, their staff, they are benefitting themselves through talent retention and ongoing staff loyalty. Where a company can ride out the 'change' by keeping on staff through offering flexible options of employment, loyalty is shown to the company in return. And, it seems that how these staffing shifts are implemented, whether in the positive or the negative, does not go unnoticed in the marketplace either! A prime example of this being the Pacific Brands debacle.

On page two read some examples of companies experiences with workplace flexibility as a strategy to riding out the 'change'. Also read about financial incentives for skilling up your staff! On page 3 find out about NORTEC's exciting \$25,000 Community Grants Initiative and in our regular community updates find out how NORTEC is helping small businesses start and grow in our region.

Happy reading and a positive business time ahead!



'The Better Way to Work!'



THE HIDDEN COSTS OF RECRUITMENT

Hiring the wrong person is expensive. According to some studies it can cost businesses between 30% and 200% of a person's annual salary. In real terms, this means that if you fill a role worth \$70,000 a year with the wrong candidate, it could end up costing between \$21,000 and \$140,000 - a loss most businesses can't afford to make.

Regardless of the growing unemployment rate, we are still in the middle of a multi-industry skills shortages and many employers find they don't have the luxury of being too particular when choosing staff. But which traits are more important in potential employees: experience, skills or character?

Psychologist Dr Ken Byrne says there is much more to finding the right person than looking at their skills, motivation or even their experience. "Organisations should hire for character, and then teach skills," he says. "They tend to hire people for what they know; their skills, past experience or qualifications. Then, once they are hired, managers invariably want to fire the person for who they are. Businesses should be willing to compromise on skills if they have the in-house resources to teach them. But they should never compromise on character or personality."

"Human services positions require a high degree of patience, a desire to help others, a willingness to follow procedures and the ability to empathise. You wouldn't hire someone with high levels of aggression or dominance for these positions, but those traits don't tend to appear during an interview. The challenge of any interview is to find out who the person is, not just who they say they are."

Using a recruiting service can save employers time and money, he says.

"Every hour you spend on recruitment is an hour not spent on the business. People think they are capable of advertising and interviewing competently, but often they aren't, and they can end up wasting a lot of time and money. You can save yourself both of those things, and a lot of stress, by using a recruiter."

(article sourced from 'The Big Chair', www.theage.com.au)

Looking for a better way to work? NORTEC provide businesses and jobseekers on the Mid to Far North Coasts of NSW with employment and training solutions. Visit www.nortec Ltd.com.au or call 1800 NORTEC for more information.

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In the confrontation between the stream and the rock, the stream always wins - not through strength, but through persistence.

Buddha

IS YOUR BUSINESS FLEXIBLE?

In this changing economic climate, the business case for flexibility is morphing into a new shape, and so is business practice. The business focus now is on reducing overheads and finding viable alternatives to redundancy. Can flexibility play a role in meeting those needs?

Scanning news reports from Australia and overseas, we found examples of large and small businesses adapting to the impact of the new economy via flexible work practices. KPMG in the UK, for example, has asked its 11,000 staff to volunteer to switch to a four day week, or take a long sabbatical on 30% pay, to avoid redundancies in the future. KPMG's plan has not been implemented, but this contingency is part of measures the company hopes will help it better manage the current economic turmoil.

Closer to home, the North Coast Ad Agency has reportedly introduced a four day week for all staff.

Management negotiated with staff for a reduction in working days across the organisation in expectation of a quiet year ahead. In late 2008, the company switched to a four-day week, closing the business on Fridays, following negotiations with all staff involved.

The experience? According to David Kavanagh, CEO of North Coast Ad Agency, to begin with some staff were unsure about the change as it required a complete cultural and psychological shift, as well as a decrease in salary, while others were extremely enthusiastic and have used their extra day completing study, caring for children and managing rural properties. David opined that closing the door on a Friday is a rarity in advertising, but he believes it will catch on and he also sees the change as a positive environmental impact in reducing their carbon footprint.

The outcomes? In terms of measuring success, David reports increased productivity in the few short weeks they have been operating on the four day week. Staff are working more efficiently to ensure Fridays are completely clear and management are closely monitoring staff to ensure extra work is not being completed at home. The financial return of this initiative will not be known for some months but the hope is that figures will be more positive in the first quarter than had been anticipated prior to the change.

Whilst it seems that the majority of employers are still reacting to the global credit crisis (and the need to cut costs) by implementing redundancies, expert opinion and best practice businesses are looking to workplace flexibility for strategic solutions. Enabling staff to reduce their hours can help cut people costs, working from home can help cut capital costs and taking periods of leave can reduce leave debts. There may also be additional efficiency and environmental benefits which are attractive to best practice employers. In the long term the market will recover and keeping great staff and a reputation as an employer of choice will pay dividends.

(article sourced from www.workplaceflexibility.com.au)

GOT A NEW BUSINESS IDEA?

NORTEC Local Providers of New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS) for Clarence and Northern Rivers NSW

Do you have a new business idea? Want help to get it off the ground? The Federal Government funded New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS) can help turn your business idea into a business reality by offering financial support in the first year of operations, small business training and specialist business advisory support.

NORTEC, in partnership with Northern Rivers Business Enterprise Centre (NORBEC) are providers of the NEIS program in the Clarence and Northern Rivers Regions and are excited to be able to offer a local service provision of NEIS in our region. To find out more about NORTEC's delivery of the NEIS program or your eligibility visit www.nortectld.com.au

For any enquiries regarding the delivery of the NEIS Program in the Clarence and Northern Rivers regions of NSW, please email: neis@nortectld.com.au

North Coast Business Roadshow—September 2009

NORTEC are exhibitors again at the annual North Coast Business Roadshow and are excited to again be a part of this annual event. The Roadshow is held during the NSW Small Business Week and offers a one-stop exhibition-style advice centre where business owners, or those looking to start their own business, can gain valuable information to manage their business successfully. Venues are as follows so mark the date in your calendar to ensure you don't miss out! The Road Show is free but you can also book into your local networking event prior and benefit even further by establishing and making business contacts!

Tue 8th - Coffs Harbour @ The Coffs Show Ground - Coffs Harbour Chamber of Commerce breakfast, commencing at 7am, cost TBC. FREE Road Show from 8:30am.

Wed 9th - Yamba @ The Yamba Golf & Country Club - Yamba Business Networking Group 'after hours' event, commencing at 5pm, cost TBC. FREE Road Show from 4pm.

Tue 15th - Tweed Heads @ The Cudgen Leagues Club - Kingscliff & Tweed Heads Chamber of Commerce breakfast, commencing at 7am, cost \$25. FREE Road Show from 8:30am.

Wed 16th - Ballina @ Ballina RSL Club - Ballina Chamber of Commerce breakfast, commencing at 7am, cost - members \$25, non members \$30. FREE Road Show from 8:30am.

Tue 22nd - Byron Bay @ The Byron Community Centre - Byron United 'after hours' event, commencing at 5pm, cost TBC. FREE Road Show from 4pm.

Wed 23rd - Lismore @ The Lismore Workers Club - Lismore Council EDU/Northern Rivers BEC breakfast, commencing at 7am, cost \$15. FREE Road Show from 8:30am

For more information visit www.businessroadshow.info

Please note—NORTEC provides this information for reference only, sourced from relevant websites and publications.

Are you a not-for-profit organisation in the - Mid or North Coast regions of NSW? If so you are invited to apply for your share of a \$25,000 grant to support your organisation's efforts in the community.

NORTEC Employment and Training Limited is making available the \$25,000 grant package as part of their Community Grants Initiative and applicants from the not-for-profit sector in the Coffs, Clarence, Richmond, North Coast and Tweed regions will be able to tender for a share of the \$25,000. Crucial to the success of the applicants will be the demonstrated ability to utilise the money for community capacity building.

NORTEC themselves are all about community capacity building, being a long-established not-for-profit organisation in the Northern Rivers region of NSW, delivering employment and training solutions for jobseekers and businesses. NORTEC reinvest funds into community program delivery, charitable donations, sponsorships and activities such as the current Community Grants Initiative. Recently they were highly successful in the contract announcements for the 2009 Federal Governments Job Services Australia program and will be opening offices and offering employment services for jobseekers and local businesses throughout the Mid and North Coast regions of NSW from July 1.

"The Community Grants Initiative is our way of introducing ourselves to the new regions that NORTEC will be servicing and investing back into the communities our team have lived in and been committed to for many years now. It is our way of showing the community what NORTEC are all about – encouraging sustainable and successful communities", said CEO of NORTEC, Paul Bennett.

Applications for the NORTEC Community Grants Initiative will be reviewed and judged by a panel, members of whom will represent key community stakeholders in each region along with a representative of NORTEC. If you are a not for profit organisation based in the mid or northern regions of NSW you are encouraged to download an application package available on the NORTEC website at www.nortecld.com.au. Alternatively, to be sent a package please call Michelle Dowding at NORTEC on 07 5524 1222.



Noel Burke of Ballina admits he's a hoarder and he makes useful items out of broken down machinery and parts that others have given up on and discarded.

Like the Wombles from the children's television show, Noel makes good use of the things that he finds, through his passion for all things mechanical. Until recently however, Noel's challenges with reading have held him back from truly advancing in the passion of mechanics.

Over six weeks or so, Noel has built himself a motorised pushbike using the frame of a West Coast Chopper pushbike and the motor from a pocket rocket mini motorbike.

And he got everything to put the bike together from the recycling centre at Ballina's tip. In his Barlows Road shed where he has just set up a business doing minor mechanical repairs, Noel has a go-kart which he says really goes, and plenty of other bits and pieces.

Noel didn't do well at school because he has never been able to read very well.

Searching for jobs was difficult as he couldn't read all the words in the classified ads. His poor reading skills have meant he has never been able to get a trade certificate and get permanent work. Last year, Noel had one of those moments in life when he was inspired to change.

Noel enrolled in a numeracy and literacy course with NORTEC Employment and Training in Ballina and then attended lessons for two days a week over a period of six months.

Noel has said of the course that the one-on-one help has made a significant difference in his life—now he can spell the names of vehicles and parts.

While he opened his business in December last year, he still doesn't have a trade qualification but is offering to help local tinkers with their projects or to complete minor repairs on engines, including mower engines.

NORTEC delivers the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program (LLNP) funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). This is a free program for eligible participants. The program provides an opportunity to improve skills in reading, writing, speaking, maths and support in jobseeking and career goals.

For more information on the NORTEC Employment and Training Language Literacy and Numeracy Program, please contact 02 6686 8068 or visit www.nortecld.com.au/training/litnum.html

Got a Great Business Idea?

Do you have a new business idea? The Federal Government funded New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS) can help turn your business idea into business reality.

NORTEC, in partnership with Northern Rivers Business Enterprise Centre, are providers of the NEIS program in the Clarence and Northern Rivers Regions. The New Enterprise Incentive Scheme is a one year program that provides jobseekers with small business mentoring and financial assistance to help them with their business start up.

To find out more about NORTEC's delivery of the NEIS program or your eligibility visit www.nortectld.com.au/businc/about.html, email neis@nortectld.com.au or call 02 6686 8068

NSW Small Business Roadshow is On Again!

Operating a small business is extremely rewarding but can be very time consuming! Often owners of small businesses are so caught up in the day to day running of their business that they don't have time to seek specialist advice that could enable them to run their business more efficiently. A 'Catch 22' of business operations! However, the annual NSW Small Business Roadshow aims to address all small business needs under the one roof! Schedule half a day to gain all the advice you need from business advisory groups all under the same roof!

Represented at the Expo will be groups such as AusIndustry, local Government Council business advisors, WorkCover, local Business Enterprise Centres, New Enterprise Incentive Scheme providers and more! The Expo will be stopping at Coffs Harbour, Yamba, Ballina, Byron, Lismore and Tweed. For more details go to www.businessroadshow.info

Are you Looking for Volunteers?

If you are a not-for-profit organisation and are looking for volunteers, why not lodge your vacancy with NORTEC Volunteering? It is a free service and we advertise and source suitable local volunteers for you. Call NORTEC Volunteering on 02 6672 8288 for more information or visit www.nortectld.com.au/volunteering/

A big thank you to Budds Mitre 10 in Murwillumbah who recently supplied NORTEC Volunteering with paint to enable us to spruce up the office!



Where would our community be without Volunteers?



*Proudly supporting
NORTEC Volunteering*

Is your Child Struggling at High School?

With recent changes to the Federal Govt's Youth Allowance now specifying that young people receiving these benefits must be undergoing accredited training, the educational foundation of completing their High School Certificate is almost deemed necessary.

Parents of high school students, especially in the later years, know all too well the pressures that are on adolescents these days. This is a generation that is entering a very changing workforce and economy—and now more than ever the right education and training is crucial in our very competitive workforce.

However, the pressures of schooling can be compounded in a young person's life with further life stresses on the home front or problems with peer networks, mental health issues or drug dependencies etc. and continuing through their vital years of schooling can become all too much or too far down on their list of priorities!

These stresses make life far too complicated for high school students to focus on their education. This is where Youth Pathways can help.

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) funds Youth Pathways in alignment with other career and transition programmes as part of the Career Advice Australia initiative. NORTEC deliver Youth Pathways to high school students throughout the Northern Rivers, under the consortium name of Destination North.

Youth Pathways is designed to provide personalised support to a specific target group of young people, 13 to 19 years of age, identified as: Those *most at-risk* of leaving school before completing year 12 (or its equivalent), AND at risk of not making a successful transition to further education, training or employment. Or those that have *left school* in the proceeding 12 months, AND at risk of not making a successful transition to further education, training or employment. Youth Pathways core service components are: Assessment, Assistance and On-going Support and Guidance.

Destination North caseworkers work through local Northern Rivers high schools and/or the NORTEC Youth Services office in Murwillumbah to offer one-on-one personalised support to students. If you would like to find out more about the Northern Rivers consortium of Youth Pathways, Destination North, visit www.destinationnorth.com.au or call 1800 355 415.



'connection and direction
for young people'



**NORTEC Business Incubators, NORTEC Youth Services and NORTEC Volunteering are all divisions of
NORTEC Employment and Training Ltd.**

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