

newsnviews

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People Before Profit - Has It Worked?

In September 1979 and in the wake of Thatcherism, CJR opened a small office in Croydon High Street. Placing people before profit was to be the underpinning ethos of the business. Twenty-one years on, we can look back and say confidently - it has worked.

A Leap Of Faith

So, what did we mean by 'people before profit'? As an employment agency we knew we were entering a highly competitive sector. Agencies had a reputation for employing aggressive sales techniques, where fee-driven staff, working in competition with each other, did not always work in the best interests of their customers. We believed that by working differently and with complete integrity in matching people with jobs - we could still make a living. We also believed that this approach would result in happy applicants and happy employers, which in turn was likely to lead to repeat business, recommendations and success. In practice it

was not quite as simple as this, but it proved to be a sound philosophy that has stood the test of very testing times

Boom Boom Bang!

Helped by an increasingly confident economy in which new companies were opening and others expanding, recruitment demand was high. Within no time, we were also being asked to supply temporary staff. We were able to convince all candidates who visited us that they were in safe hands and managed to persuade more and more employers that we actually practised what our brochure preached.

These first seven years flew past. The kind of service we were offering was in demand and our client base began to stretch well beyond Croydon, benefiting from a hyperactive City market. By 1985 the level of activity in the City became unsustainable and we experienced at first hand the effect of the 'Big Bang' on City workers as they began to cascade through our doors. This was the first sign of a downturn in the economy but in Croydon, we were still enjoying high levels of business. By 1986, with four additional staff, we realised that we had outgrown our High Street office and it was time to move. And so, from two people, two desks and two phones, we moved off the High street to prestigious new offices in Park Street, offering room for expansion.

Surviving Recession

Fortunately CJR had three good years to acclimatise to the new offices and attendant costs before we began to directly feel the effects of a recession that was to decimate the South East. As Maggie was ousted from power in 1990, so the recession began to take a grip of our town. Companies were either closing down, sizing

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Friend and mentor Sir John Harvey-Jones joins us for lunch

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Catherine Johnstone and Veronica Davies - Business Partners since 1979



Celebratory Issue



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down or simply moving out of town. Very few were recruiting and when they did, it was on their terms. In 1991 alone, 5000 agencies closed in the UK - 43 in Croydon. The most vulnerable appeared to be the small independents like our own. A strategy for survival was critical.

Smiling Through Adversity

Our 'housekeeping' skills were helpful. We knew how to economise (from cleaning our own offices to the partners not paying themselves). At the point where we were facing redundancies, one of our staff moved to Birmingham, where her husband had managed to find work - and so another crisis was avoided. The remaining team of 12 (including the partners) pulled together and worked tenaciously against a backdrop of hundreds of candidates from graduates to directors registering for work that simply wasn't there. Our role became one of counsellors - smiling and giving people sound advice, particularly reminding people of their value and that with a positive approach they would eventually secure work. Unlike many, we never turned anyone away nor did we restrict our availability. This policy had an unexpected effect. As many of these candidates secured jobs, they came back to us and brought us new business. This new business proved to be a lifeline.

Creative Thinking in a Crisis

Around 1990 we launched two main initiatives that finally turned us back on track. Aware that we had developed valuable skills in career counselling, we marketed these to companies wanting outplacement services. Several contracts ensued. Counselling redundancy victims proved arduous but rewarding. To this day we still benefit from the work carried out then. The second initiative involved coaxing

clients who needed to recruit help but were either afraid to commit or constrained by stringent budgets. It was clear that they needed a 'get out quick' option as well as the ability to recruit without attracting heavy front loaded fees. We needed to come up with an effective solution that nervous employers could afford. Rolling Contracts proved to be the answer. These contracts enabled organisations to buy in essential help for three months at a time with the option to roll the contract for another three months. This, and an affordable staggered payment system, began to help oil the wheels of recovery for many organisations - not least our own. By 1993 we knew we were over the worst, and stronger as a result of our experience.

21 Years On

Today, we employ 19 people at Saffron House. The partners are still the same and our very first employee is still with us! We employ over 200 temps each week and place hundreds of people in contracts and jobs each year. Unlike other agencies, none of our staff are on targets nor commission (we think profit sharing is more sensible). We are a team and still clearly demonstrate our 'people before profit' ethos. We have actively resisted branching out, preferring to increase our range of services and widen our range of candidates. The present UK economy is very buoyant with jobs, once again, outnumbering candidates. Not an entirely unfamiliar picture. If the law of what goes up must come down is imminent, we do at least feel better equipped and don't anticipate such a bumpy landing as ten years ago.



Catherine Johnstone

Sir John Harvey-Jones joins the Celebration



Sir John with Catherine Johnstone and Veronica Davies - 12th September 2000

Sir John Harvey-Jones has been a friend to Catherine Johnstone Recruitment ever since we asked him to come and speak to employers in Croydon in 1996. Since that memorable "Hearts and Minds" seminar, Sir John has continued to speak his mind on HR issues worldwide as well as completing a new "Troubleshooter" series for television. As you can see we were thrilled that he was able to find time to join us for lunch at Croydon College and meet our families and friends.

Double First!



(L to R) Phil Thomas, Veronica Davies, Catherine Johnstone & Sue Cooper

Nearly 150 guests joined the CJR team to celebrate their "coming of age" on Friday 1st September. Amongst the guests were Phil Thomas, previously of Chevron Oil, who was the very first CJR client back in 1979 and Sue Cooper, CJR's first employee - now Temps Controller and still smiling 21 years on!

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Visit our new web site at www.cjrecruitment.co.uk





Happy Birthday!

September 2000 was business as usual but one Friday the team pitched in to blow up hundreds of balloons and serve chilled champagne to our many guests.



OUR CANDIDATES AND OUR INTERVIEW PROCESS

Our Candidates

Our candidates are wide ranging* but tend to be mainly office based and include: school/college leavers, graduates, administrators, accountants, IT specialists, HR personnel, secretaries, telephonists, call centre/customer care staff, marketing managers, project staff....the list goes on.

Most candidates are seeking appointments that are full-time, others part-time. Some are seeking permanent opportunities whilst others prefer temporary, contractual or interim management assignments.

*Whilst we are not a 'specialist' agency, we have consultants who can offer specific sector experience e.g. financial services, HR, IT etc.

Our interview process for permanent staff

Our policy is to interview 'face to face' all candidates before we send their details to clients. We encourage prospective candidates to make an appointment, but where possible will see speculative callers. We ask all candidates to complete an application form in their own hand-writing at our offices and to provide a CV but also offer guidance on CV preparation. Where appropriate, candidates are encouraged to bring any other information in support of their application.

We ask candidates to allow at least 40 minutes for their interview with us. All of our consultants are trained in competency based assessment and other effective evaluation

techniques. Whilst this may sound daunting the process is conducted in a way that puts candidates at ease. Where appropriate, we will test candidates to assess their PC, literacy, numeracy and/or other skills. We fully appraise candidates of both vacancy and client details prior to submitting their CV to the client. Our policy is to always select and recommend on the basis of a candidate's ability to do the job. Whilst understanding that age restrictions in a job profile are not illegal, CJR will encourage clients to keep an open mind. Our staff are kept fully up to date with employment law and work within the regulations.

Our interview process for temporary staff

The process is similar to that above but as temps are being selected by us and not the client, our approach needs to be more searching. To this end we have rigorous skills evaluation and testing processes that all temps have to undertake and we also take up references on all temps. We ask clients for feed-back on newly assigned temps and keep appropriate records.

The above is a brief overview of the way in which we operate. We are always pleased to have clients visit us and take the opportunity of seeing us at work and to see the systems that support our selection, testing and training processes.

Candidates Who Stand Out From the Crowd

► **Trading Assistant** Full understanding of trading operations incorporating daily positions, market analysis, reconciliation, dealer / client / broker liaison and settlements. Awareness of the commodities market, stocks, futures and options. Accustomed to meeting the pressure and pace set by a trading desk and enjoys the challenge of deadlines. Combines enthusiasm and flexibility with hard work and an ability to assess situations and respond accordingly. Good spoken / written French & English and fair Spanish. Salary: £21,000.

(Ref: 0671/GH)

► **Facilities / Operations Manager** A great candidate! Experienced in the building services sector - encompassing a broad range of responsibilities - client liaison, operating and facilities procedures, budgetary control, manpower etc. Highly motivated - very much a linchpin, pulling projects together whether high level security logistics, general building management or tendering for business. A broad understanding of the challenges involved in running a multi-site operation. Salary: c£23,000

(Ref: 0405/GH)

► **Sales Administrator** Thorough understanding of the sales order process and supply chain including stock analysis, supplier contact, distribution and delivery. Possesses a methodical approach to both pressurised deadlines and routine administration ensuring the department runs smoothly. Professional and efficient, communicates well, getting the best out of suppliers and those involved in negotiation issues. Salary: £16,000

(Ref: 0649/GH)

► **Export Administration Clerk** Confident administrator looking to transfer the skills gained in the Middle East to a related role in the UK. Experienced with stock and cost control, commands basic knowledge of Middle East languages including Arabic - liaising with new clients, taking orders and handling delivery, shipping and haulage logistics. An efficient and capable candidate who displays an eye for detail. Thrives in a challenging environment. Salary: c£18,000

(Ref: 0644/GS)

► **Quality Manager** A motivated, qualified and experienced manager. An Associate Member of Institute of Quality Assurance and IQA local committee member. Recently gained a masters degree in Quality of Management. Looking to join a company that acknowledges the value of this role within the work place. Good experience of customer care and client contact and active involvement in implementing and maintaining quality management systems. Computer literate with good keyboard skills. Salary: £23,000+

(Ref: 504242/GS)

► **Sales/Marketing Executive** An enthusiastic and dynamic candidate seeking a part-time/job share position in the sales/marketing/account management field. A motivated self-starter with a wide range of sales and marketing skills and confident in working in both retail and business to business environments with good expertise of taking projects from inception and planning through to completion and delivery. High energy levels and creative with a hands-on approach. An exceptional range of skills and available immediately. Salary: c£14,000 (p/t)

(Ref: 0651/MB)

► **Market Analyst** Highly motivated, with project development and market intelligence experience. Sound business awareness and an excellent communicator. Expertise in new e-business development activities, direct marketing, designing and administration. Committed to quality and focused on supporting various internet start-up projects and existing businesses. Looking to enter the 'new economy'. Actively seeking the right opportunity within e-business with an emphasis on marketing. Salary: c£25,000

(Ref: 0653/MB)

► **Trade Marketing Manager** A self motivated manager with a determination to succeed. Fully versed in the marketing mix along with practical trade marketing experience - appreciates the relationship between Sales - Marketing - Trade and End User. Strategic thinker, setting objectives and achieving goals. Evidence of sound decision making under pressure and possesses the ability to 'make things happen'. Salary: £40,000

(Ref: 0672/GH)

► **Business Manager** Multilingual Business Manager with extensive front line International trade experience in the diverse and complex Middle East markets. Experienced in building customer relationships and able to liaise effectively with individuals at all levels. Strong negotiator, numerate and commercially aware. Salary c£30,000

(Ref: 0661/PW)

► **HR Manager** An HR generalist, IPD qualified, commercially aware and results orientated. Used to working in a 'constant-change' environment. Customer focused and proven experience of employment law, employee relations, grievances and disciplinarys. Salary c£28,000

(Ref: 0541/PW)

► **Personal Assistant** Well groomed, professional and extremely personable. Over 10 years experience as a PA and highly competent. Confident, knows what's expected at this level. Very well organised, displays a flexible and proactive attitude to work. Enjoys a challenge. No stranger to supporting a team, juggling and



prioritising several tasks at one time, whilst remaining calm and maintaining a sense of humour. Salary c£23,000

(Ref: 009/PW)

► **Visual Merchandiser/Marketeer** An extremely proactive and competent candidate with experience of business development and a creative ability that allows her to excel in design and writing based roles. Has experience of high level liaison as well as organising the production of and contributing to company brochures, literature and pieces in many newspapers and trade magazines. A progressive and ambitious person. Would flourish in a role that allows freedom to use initiative. Salary £20,000+

(Ref: 504665/JB)

► **Operations Manager** Extremely professional MBA undergraduate with 10 years of retail/merchandise management experience and profit and loss responsibility for over 250 outlets in the UK and Eire. Excellent people management skills combined with a sound track record resulting in a 25% increase in sales and an empowered workforce. A full knowledge of buying, stock management, recruitment, training processes as well as managing numerous store openings. Currently looking at retail and non-retail based opportunities and has the potential to progress quickly in either. Salary £30,000+

(Ref: 0282/JB)

► **Credit Manager** Extremely capable candidate with over 15 years of credit management experience and responsibility for the debts on a turnover of up to £250 million. An organised, analytical and assertive individual with excellent communication/negotiation skills and the ability to effectively manage a team of up to 12 in collecting £25M to £50M per month. Currently available with immediate effect due to redundancy. Salary £35,000

(Ref: 0315/JB)

► **College Leaver**

A' level educated with two years work experience. Flexible, reliable and personable. Would enjoy opportunity to use literacy and PC skills in a creative and busy environment. Salary c£12,000

(Ref: 0189/GH)

