

newsnviews

@cjrecruitment.co.uk

Walking with Giants

Let's be frank, for many UK businesses, the past couple of years have been tough. The reality of global competition has forced a strategy of 'strength in numbers' with big companies becoming colossal, whilst the mettle of smaller companies has been tested to the hilt in keeping up with the new David & Goliath dynamic. For those of us who dare to remain small in the B2B sector, it has been a defining time. As the dust settles from battles fought – and won, we believe that our founding belief that 'small is beautiful' is still sound.



"It takes courage to stay small..."

Back in 1996, when business Guru Sir John Harvey-Jones first visited us to talk at one of our employer forums, he showed a real interest in how CJR worked, talking to all our staff and asking

searching questions in true 'trouble-shooter' style. Eventually he said, 'What you have here is unique. Why on earth haven't you bottled it and opened other offices?' With some trepidation, we explained that we enjoyed being in close control of how we worked. That we felt sure our core values and the service we offered could not be guaranteed in a multi-site operation. Sir John replied, "Well done - it takes courage to stay small".

It certainly does - but courage is not enough. A loyal, hard-working team with stamina, ingenuity and adaptability is fundamental. The early 90's recession was one of the greatest tests for UK businesses with recruitment amongst the worst hit (over 5000 agencies closed in the first year alone). Since then, no business, large or small, dared be complacent and as a small business we learned to be alert and quick to adapt to change.

The Millennium & the era of Out-sourcing

With the new millennium, the reality of world markets began to bite. It seemed that to be a world-player, business had to be big but also highly focused. Mergers and acquisitions escalated and as organisations grew, the logic of 'out-sourcing' came into vogue, enabling

organisations to concentrate on their core business by contracting-out support services. Recruitment was one of the main targets for out-sourcing. To some, it was seen as buying in expertise and prudent delegation. To others, it was seen as cost saving and a way to delegate responsibility. To most it was a new approach. Initial contracts and tendering processes were generally managed by procurement departments and/or specialist Out-source Consultants. Bluntly, most proved unsuccessful. Throughout, we continued to work closely with HR departments and line managers whilst contracts and tenders were scrapped, re-drafted or disbanded. Eventually, around 2003, the fine art of designing tenders and contracts was achieved. Inevitably, they were complex and lengthy with many involving a 'transparent' e-auction process. It was at this point we realised our vulnerability.

E-auctions – like tumblers in a fruit machine

The lure of national and global contracts offering high-volume business from public/private sector, multi-site operations –



2 REC Audit
1st in Croydon!

2 Survey
2005 Croydon salary survey



2 New Neck on the Block...
Aaron joins temp team



3 Gate Gourmet /BA

'No such thing as a free lunch'

3 One In A Million
Awards for Temp Worker Of The Year



4 Candidate List
Focus on PA's



meant agencies had a great deal to win – or lose. E-auctioning (rather like tumblers in a fruit-machine) revealed our worst nightmare – lowest bids displayed rates that were simply untenable for smaller agencies (some agencies were charging less than we paid our temps). Secondly, the geographical reach of the big agencies appeared to close the door on our own potential as a Croydon/London and South supplier. We knew we could meet all criteria related to quality, integrity and local delivery – but not on lower rates and we couldn't serve multi-site clients effectively. We were convinced that those winning contracts based on lowest cost would ultimately fail to deliver – the commodity was skilled people not nuts and bolts.

Regardless of our view, sitting it out was not an option. We quickly embarked on a survival strategy to improve our service and delivery by focusing on new business development, widening our

candidate catchment and offering a 'failsafe/second tier' solution to any clients were we to lose preferred supplier status. All three elements have proved successful - without affecting our core values. Through a bolder and consistent networking campaign, we now have a more robust client base; by well-managed student/graduate campaigns and prudent subscription to search-engines, we have increased the calibre and choice of our candidates and, significantly, most clients who drifted through out-sourcing have returned.

Remaining small in an arena of powerful competitors, has been our greatest challenge to date. The battle of scale will never end but we are quite sure that there will always be a need for good small businesses and the unique service they can offer. Does it take courage? Well running a small business is not for the feint-hearted – but it is very rewarding for everyone who stays with it - because you know you count.

FIRST IN CROYDON



In April it was great to hear the result of our Audit Assessment - a 98% pass. Even more heartening was the REC news that we were the first agency in Croydon and so far one of only 56 in the country to achieve this quality mark.

2005 Croydon Salary Survey

Our thanks to all who participated in the first of our annual Salary & Benefits Surveys. The results reflected our perception of typical market average salaries and levels of benefits giving comfort to some employers, (pockets of) concern to others and a surprise for a few. All agreed it was a very useful tool and want to continue to participate in the future.

When we embarked on this initiative we were able to call in the expertise of John Miller a friend and mentor of CJR's. John's lifetime career has been in HR (pay and benefits being his specialism) - most recently as HR Director for a City-based leader in Financial Services. Together we realised that in order to achieve

meaningful results for Croydon employers, we had to ask the right questions covering (within reasonable parameters) all posts. Many of you I know, found the document survey 'weighty' (you should have seen the first three drafts!) and we realise we could have timed it better than just before Christmas. However, your feedback has been very useful and will help us in our search for excellence in the 2006 survey. We anticipate it will be more user-friendly and we propose presenting this in the Autumn. If you weren't able to participate we would encourage you to do so this time. If you weren't invited to participate but would like to be, please let Geraldine Healy know – gerry@cjrrecruitment.co.uk.

Auf Wiedersehen Pet!

After eight brilliant years on the Temp Desk, our Geordie lass Nicola moved on to take up the post of Internal Recruitment Consultant (Europe) for the Angela Mortimer Group. A wonderful accolade and an opportunity to flex her wings and make use of her language skills, recruiting for AMG branches in the UK,



Nicola Reed – Eight years with CJR

Frankfurt, Paris and Brussels. An added bonus is that AMG is now recruiting through us!

Aaron Jackson bravely stepped into Nicola's shoes – and after two months, well let's just say that ducks and water come to mind! No doubt the seamless transition to this demanding post owed much to Sue Cooper – a great mentor and one of the most experienced Temp Managers in the sector. Aaron joined CJR early in 2005, in this short time, he has demonstrated remarkable HR skills – accurately identifying sound matches



Aaron Jackson - New face on the Temp Desk

between people and jobs but also revealing many of the attributes essential to the fast-pace of the temp desk – not least youth and energy! Nicola will be a hard act to follow but we have every confidence that he will meet the standard – let's hope for at least another 8 years?

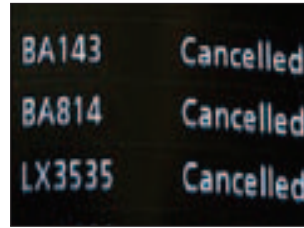


FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The British Airways/Gate Gourmet debacle that grounded 900 flights and affected 100,000 passengers at Heathrow last August is now estimated to have cost BA £40-45 million! So, what can be learned not just by BA and Gate Gourmet but by the many organisations now outsourcing their 'non-core' activities? We think there is a fundamental lesson that needs addressing and should be recognised by anyone (buyer or seller) in the outsourcing arena.

Trouble kicked off at Heathrow when Gate Gourmet clumsily tried to sack 350 catering staff in the face of huge losses and the threat of their UK operation going into administration. Their mis-handling of the sackings triggered unballoted strike action, not only by Gate Gourmet workers but also other contracted BA ground staff. This virtually brought operations to a halt during Heathrow's busiest month of the year. BA's PR response was masterful (almost heroic) in the way they swiftly set up resources for stranded passengers. However, they loudly abdicated all responsibility firmly placing the blame with their contractor Gate Gourmet.

Initially it appeared that the deal between 'master and supplier' was over. Of course this was impossible – there was no other contractor able to supply BA with the ready resources – so a deal had to be struck. After months of damaging media focus and wrangling between unions and management – a compromise agreement was reached and, by December, a new contract forged between BA and Gate Gourmet. The new terms increased the contract



value by £140m also extending the deal by two years! Could this be a clue as to the cause of the catastrophe – with both master and supplier to blame? Clearly, the initial contract agreed between BA and Gate Gourmet was unrealistic. How else can we construe the re-valuation of the new agreement?

We suspect, from our own experience of tendering for staffing contracts, that those winning contracts do so on cost, often yielding to the tightest of margins coupled with expensive agreements on quality standards. The reason suppliers, such as Gate Gourmet, are willing to take risks is driven by the enormity of the contract. The buying organisation will select a supplier on the basis of quality/availability of resources - and cost. However, in many

tendering processes, cost appears to be the deciding factor. This is evidenced in the now popular e-auction processes, where competing suppliers' margins are revealed to all. In the frenzy to win big business, we've seen dangerously ambitious margins. Many of these contracts are now failing with dire consequences not only for the supplier but, in turn, the host organisation – as in the case of BA

There's no such thing as a free lunch
Messages from the media on the BA/Gate Gourmet case highlighted the wisdom of 'addressing the need for change by agreement – not mass sackings' and certainly 'not to tell staff that they've lost their jobs by text! '... We would say that the old adage 'you get what you pay for' still stands - especially in business.

One in a Million - 2006

Thanks to all of our clients for the many CJR Temp nominations for the REC annual One in A Million Awards. We are always pleased to hear your commendations but it's even better to see it in writing! We have selected our own winner and runner-up and will celebrate this on Friday 9th June during National Temporary Workers Week and hope as many of you as possible will join us in the celebrations at Saffron House. We have also been able to submit three nominations to the REC for the National Awards. Having won the very first UK's Top Temp award four years ago, we thought we might try it again – you never know...



UK's Top Temp 2003!

One in a Million Award is presented to Kevin McKenna by Malcolm Wicks MP



ELECTRONIC NEWSVIEWS

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Candidates Who Stand Out From the Crowd

Focus on PA's

We have recently seen a number of exceptional PA's. Below are just a few examples to illustrate the diversity of talent that often lies hidden within the acronym 'PA'. From the traditional one to one assistant to those managing high profile projects or simply ensuring the smooth-running of a busy department or small business. If any of these 'snapshots' interest you, call us for full details.

▶ **Well presented and professional Office Manager/PA** looking for a challenging and rewarding position in a forward thinking company. Possesses excellent interpersonal and communication skills, used to managing staff in all aspects from recruitment to leadership, motivation and training. Experienced in providing first class customer service and resolving complaints to a satisfactory conclusion. Thrives in a busy and pressurised environment, juggling tasks to accommodate changing priorities. Sound knowledge of IT systems. Salary c£25k.

(Ref: DS/2)

▶ **Fantastic PA** with a wealth of experience at senior level. Highly organised, used to extensive diary management/ travel arrangements /organisation of conferences/trips abroad etc. and has prior experience of managing a team of secretaries in addition to her PA responsibilities delegating work to them and acting as point of contact for all day to day issues and grievances. Extensive background in the Insurance industry and very happy to continue in the sector or look at a new challenge. An experienced communicator who would bring confidence and composure to a role. Excellent IT skills across a number of packages. Particularly seeking local positions around the Croydon area. Available immediately. Salary £25k pa plus.

(Ref JB/1)

▶ **Articulate, intelligent and capable PA/Secretary** who will impress at interview. Good secretarial/ PC skills (70 wpm typing, excellent Word, PowerPoint and Outlook, good Excel and experience of various databases including some Access). Combines efficient and effective time management and organisational skills with previous experience of setting up events and seminars. Very adept at prioritising and juggling duties, liaising with a number of contacts both inside and outside of

the business. This candidate enjoys communicating with people and taking ownership of projects. A first class attitude and personality. At ease working as part of a team with common and individual goals. Available at short notice and keen to work locally. Salary c£22k plus.

(Ref JB/2)

▶ **Versatile and intelligent PA/Office Manager** with a creative flair. With a career in the arts and entertainment industry this PA can 'turn it on' working in a hectic and diverse environment. In a previous role she provided 1:1 support to a 'celebrity' business person, a role where there was no room for error and a highly efficient person was required, delivering to a high standard. Combine this with an accommodating manner, a down to earth approach and an easy sense of humour and you have a top PA in your team. Available immediately. Salary £25k

(Ref GH/1)

▶ **A PA/Secretary to senior management.** A delightful candidate with over 25 years experience of working within the private, public and not for profit sector. This senior PA is a confident, proactive and friendly individual with a genuine willingness and a "hands on approach". Her key strengths lie in her organisational skills, her ability to multi task and work under pressure, her "advanced" MS Office skills and in her experience of handling projects and change. She has extensive experience of diary management, travel arrangements, producing complex reports and documentation, putting in place policies and procedures as well as people management. Available for interview now. Salary £21k

(Ref MM/1)

▶ **Part Time PA/ Secretary** with over thirty years secretarial and administrative experience demonstrating a dedicated attitude and approach to her work. This excellent candidate has a plethora of skills that she can bring to any company including excellent organisational and MS Office skills, an ability to multi-task and a willing and flexible approach. Available for up to 25 hours per week but can be flexible regarding days and hours. Salary pro rata c£13k

(Ref MM/2)



▶ **A first class Team Secretary/Administrator** whose key skills are without doubt in organisation and accuracy/attention to detail, imperative for providing secretarial and administrative support to 50 Financial Analysts. Intermediate level skill in all MS Office products and highly capable of learning new and bespoke systems quickly. Current responsibility for updating and maintaining the web based client database. Extremely personable, articulate and very well presented.

Ideally looking to work Monday-Thursday, 9-5.30pm and available at one month's notice.

Minimum salary £25k pro rata

(Ref SP/01)

▶ **An experienced and highly professional PA** who has worked at Senior Management level for a number of years. Enjoys PA duties as well as additional responsibilities including project work, facilities management and supervising other secretarial staff. Demonstrated a natural ability to use her initiative and take responsibility where possible. Fast and accurate touch typing with advanced IT skills in Word, Excel and PowerPoint. An excellent PA with a natural charm - an asset to any company. Available immediately. Salary: minimum £23k

(REF SP/01)

If you would like to receive our regular Candidates List, please contact us



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AT WORK IN CROYDON,
LONDON & THE SOUTH

Catherine Johnstone Recruitment

Saffron House, 15 Park Street, Croydon CRO 1YD

Telephone: 020 8680 5777 Facsimile: 020 8681 0292

E-mail: cjr@cjrrecruitment.co.uk www.cjrrecruitment.co.uk



**Any questions?
020 8680 5777**