

In times of crisis it is inevitable that the numbers men and women take over. Their particular talents are needed but far too many, to paraphrase Oscar Wilde, seem to know the price of everything and the value of very little indeed. A succinct, well known phrase in the English language is that if you pay peanuts, you get monkeys.

One of the inevitable results of this is discontent amongst the most talented members of staff, intangible assets, often trained by the company themselves, which are difficult to quantify. Cost cutting and high levels of unemployment are leading to the slow leakage from companies and countries of key employees according to Gianluca Balocco, Director of human assets area with Deloitte.

Some are leaving now in a steady drip of individuals, others are expected to leave en masse when the labour market picks up. "Companies are underestimating their best employees," Balocco announced, "they think that as it is more difficult to get jobs they won't move. But if their efforts are not recognised, they will end up leaving," he warned.

Deloitte estimate that 65 per cent of top directors in the world are very worried about the possible loss of their most valued employees once the recession is over, but 20 per cent of the companies have made no plans to avoid this and in Spain this figure may be significantly higher. Balocco advises a three pronged strategy, good wages, additional financial compensation and flexibility.

Sanitas was one of the top five best places to work in 2009 according to the Great Place to

Business management

Brain drain

Work Institute. They have 2,600 employees and a strong retention strategy, although Coral González, their personnel manager prefers to talk of loyalty incentives. The important thing for her is commitment. "If someone isn't happy and only stays because of fear of the crisis or unemployment, they are damaging the company even more. That's why we talk about creating loyalty; those who stay should do so because they really want to."

Her work to ensure the retention of key members of staff is within a global strategy of managing talent and is based on five main precepts, transparency, recognition of effort, individualised treatment, respect for the individual line bosses and assistance in professional development.

Randstad reported in a recent study that the thing that most employees value is the recognition and recompense of their efforts. Balocco however advises that development shouldn't be mixed with retention practices. "This tends to happen in Spain. Retention techniques should be applied to a specific group, to those that permit the company to maintain a competitive edge in the market." First you have to locate the key positions and then the key employees and finally apply the re-

tention methods apt to each case, adding, "financial reward is always fundamental".

According to Lola Calvo, personnel director of VisualMS (named as one of the best places to work among small or medium businesses I2009), small organisations in this respect have an advantage as, to balance their lack of resources, they are able to offer more flexibility and the feeling of being a part of a project where they have the ability to influence the outcome.

"Companies have taken ad-

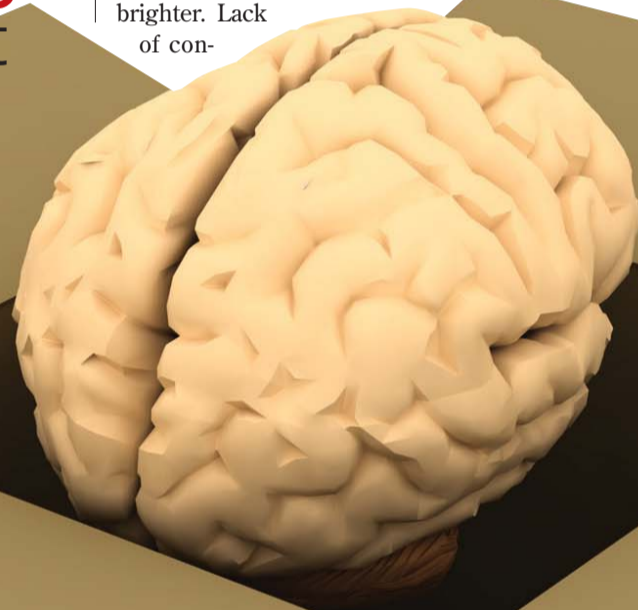
vantage of the crisis. Instead of motivating, they have done the opposite, including reducing the financial reward. When the market picks up they will pay for it."

The Deloitte survey asked a series of questions relating to which employees would still be with their current company now and 12 months after the end of the crisis. In terms of lack of wage increases, 44 per cent were looking at leaving now and 27 per cent would be looking to leave after the crisis is over. Too much workload was responsible for 30 per cent unrest now and 21 per cent said they would be looking elsewhere later. The lack of financial incentives affected 28 per cent now and 25 per cent would be rethinking their future when the world economy looked brighter. Lack of con-

fidence in work security sees 28 per cent looking for another job now, with a further 15 per cent confirming that they will be looking at the market when it improves. Lack of professional progress affects 21 per cent now and 22 per cent will be looking to improve their professional trajectory when the crisis ends. The lack of social benefits, pensions, health insurance etc. affect 14 per cent now and are set to make 13 per cent look at a move in the future. New job opportunities may only be attracting 14 per cent now, but 39 per cent confirmed that they would have their eyes open in the future and unhappiness with their immediate boss is forcing 13 per cent of employees to look elsewhere for work immediately whilst a further 14 per cent will be on the move once the market has regained its strength.

Balocco says that the methods applied to retain valued staff should in general be varied according to age. Those under 30 are looking for challenges, the baby boomers of 45 to 65 are, he claims, looking for better social benefits – health insurance, pensions etc. and financial incentives.

Companies are losing their best assets



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