



The New Rules of Work

**A Guide To
Working In
Recession Britain**

by

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Me

I'm Mike Dauncey and I run TipTopJob.com. We are one of the largest online job boards with, as of Summer 2009, over 1,000,000 people registered as looking for work. I have been in the people and recruitment game for over thirty years. During this time I've helped more than 20,000 people find a job, and yes, even during the difficult storms of four previous recessions!

I believe that years of working in the employment business have given me a unique perspective on the job market and decades of advising both job seekers and employers have left me frustrated at the gulf between people's perception of the world of work and the often vastly different reality.

Given the enormous part that work plays in all our lives, whether as a true vocation or simply a way to earn a crust, it is staggering how little honesty there is about the working environment. My aim in compiling this guide is to shatter some of the myths, illusions, half-truths and downright lies that currently exist, and especially those told by some Recruitment Consultants!

Much of what I have to say is brutally honest and may not seem particularly politically correct. But I'll leave the idealism to

policy makers. My aim is not to outline how work should be, but how it actually is.

My goal is to help you to get a firmer footing in the shifting sands of our present economic environment. This guide will help you to understand the truth about what it takes to get and keep a job and to recognise and understand the changing approach adopted by employers in today's marketplace.

You may be wondering why I'm doing this. "What's in it for him?" you may ask. Well, in all honesty, the answer is not a lot. It's certainly not a money-spinner. Call it altruism if you like, but I wanted to make a difference. My aim is to get people talking about how things REALLY are in the current working environment – without any of the fluff, flannel and general misconception that abounds. I hope that you will find it useful, and all feedback is most welcome.

A Seismic Shift

These ‘new rules’ are necessary because the 2009 recession has created a seismic shift in the jobs market.

At this moment in time, the employment market is changing more rapidly than anyone could have foreseen. Hundreds of thousands of people are losing their jobs each month. The experts believe that the UK’s worst case scenario is five million unemployed. It makes Thatcher’s three million seem nugatory. And the problems are not confined to the UK. Across Europe and the US unemployment is rocketing.

2009/2010 may well be remembered as a unique moment in the UK employment environment. No longer is working about “landing the dream job” or funding a “lifestyle,” both ideas that have been the foodstuff of many a glossy magazine article in recent years. 2009 has seen a return of concepts that we thought were long gone – the idea of working for survival. It’s about getting a job, any job and doing anything you can to hold onto that job, because working has returned to basics - paying the rent, feeding and clothing the family. Put very simply; it’s about earning a crust.

Many workers, job hunters and legislators seem oblivious, however, to the impact of this change in economic climate. Most are content to act as if the current recession is simply a ‘blip’ that will soon end, leading to a return to ‘business as normal.’

But we see a return to ‘business as normal’ as probably impossible. It is my belief that we are seeing the beginning of a new era that will eventually be comparable to the transformations that took place at the beginning of the 1980s. At that time, society fundamentally changed the way it worked and the way it thought about work, the way companies treated their employees and the way that people went about getting a job.

Frighteningly, over 250,000 people lost their jobs in the first quarter of 2009. That’s a quarter of a million poor souls taking their places in ever lengthening dole queues, dusting off their interview suits, polishing their CV’s and hoping upon hope that they are going to be able to pay the rent or mortgage next month.

So...what does this mean for "real people"?

New entrants to the job market are finding that there simply isn't that much around – opportunities are scarce, competition is fierce, and much of the time they find doors repeatedly slammed in their faces – something that would have been almost unheard of even a year ago. The job market is becoming a place of frustration, anxiety, discouragement and even fear for increasing numbers of people.

Those lucky enough to be in work are facing a world of sweeping redundancies, reduction in hours, frozen pay rises and vastly reduced professional development opportunities. Never mind going for that promotion - just hanging on to a job has now become the number one priority. For the unlucky ones, this means being forced to take work that they might not have previously considered. As part of a growing trend of former professionals taking low paid work previously considered the domain of former Eastern block economic migrant workers, former advertising executives are now to be found working on farms in Norfolk.

Employers are floundering in their efforts to regain some control over a fast moving and fluctuating business landscape. They are having to restructure, reorganize and rethink how and who their

So...what does this mean for "real people"?

companies employ, how they should be paid and the relationship between the stick and carrot in maintaining maximum motivation and productivity.

I hope that by now I've painted a picture that is bleak and gloomy enough to make you sit up and take notice.

So, if you are worrying about how to find a new job, thinking about how you can get promoted, or even trying to avoid being sacked (sorry 'made redundant') then you need to read this. If you're an employer wondering what the hell is going on, then you need to read this too. Anyone who is involved in the world of work needs to read and understand the 'new rules.'

This guide cuts through the nonsense and flannel. You won't find much about "personal fulfillment", "creative satisfaction" or "lifestyle choices". Not at all. These new rules are designed to challenge the cozy consensus of 'certainties' that have taken hold in the job market during the boom times. The good times are over, it's time to move on and face up to the new realities. The new rules are a dramatic wake up call for everyone and anyone involved in working in the private sector.

Sorry, nearly forgot to say – if in the Public Sector – Congratulations – your job for life is probably secure and these rules just

do not apply. How about all Local Authorities voluntarily dropping their Salaries by 10% for one year and passing that on as a discount on the Community Charge to help everyone in these difficult times ?

Welcome to my guide to the 'New Rules of Work 2009'

Managing jobseekers expectations

Are you looking for that job that ticks all your lifestyle boxes? A career that enables you to harness your creativity in a positive, fulfilling and rewarding manner? Something that is well-paid, and enables you to fund your annual snowboarding holidays in Whistler? Something which has plenty of space for you to grow both personally and professionally?

Oh dear!

I see countless bright, ambitious young things who wax lyrical about all above. For many, it is their first taste of the “real” world. Fresh from school or college, they are bright eyed, bushy tailed, and brimming over with enthusiasm and, sad to say, utter naivety.

Universities do not help the exiting students who have had their expectations built up to expect high pay with their first Job – only a small percentage with flying colours will get the £30k+ Management Trainee jobs. The rest – you start at the bottom as you have no ‘real’ experience and will be lucky to get £12-15k.

All of this presents me with a problem: how to harness that enthusiasm but to inject it with a healthy dose of realism? And how to do this without crushing their spirit?

I recently commissioned a survey which threw up a very telling statistic. Out of 1,000 job seekers interviewed, 50% believe that their experience at school or college did not prepare them adequately for the realities of the job market and the world of work.

The truth is, no matter how many A* GCSE's you may have, no matter if you were head girl or boy of your school or if you played tennis at county level – impressive though this may sound, none of it counts for much in the real world.

Of course, with an understanding of how the job market and the work place really works, all these acquired skills and natural talents can be harnessed to maximize opportunity, but as with any activity, there is no point owning the tools without knowing how to use them. It's a bit like arriving in France, keen to explore and immerse yourself in the culture, but without speaking French, having any French currency, or bringing a guide book. You may have arrived, but without a bit of help, you aren't going to get very far!

The truth is that work is all about expertise, relationships and experience. Understanding that is half the battle.

So, in order to get your foot in the door, you need to consider the following:

Getting the interview

It may seem obvious, but it's not as simple as just sending out a CV, sitting back and waiting for the job offers to pour in. Most job applications get a couple minutes of attention at most at the initial "sifting" stage - so if you want to be in with a fighting chance of landing an interview, you need to follow these basic rules:

Register yourself everywhere you can. High street and specialist sector recruitment agencies, as well as online job websites are a must. Start with www.tiptopjob.com – we have over 80,000 vacancies listed at any time – but also look at the myriad of other recruitment sites such as Monster.co.uk, Jobsite.co.uk and Totaljobs.com.

Scour newspapers, both national and local and specialist sector publications, for vacancies. Know which days the job pages in the nationals focus on your chosen sector. Buy your copy early in the day and get your application in as quickly as you can.

Draw up a list of target companies, and cold call them. It may seem like a daunting prospect, but given the current economic conditions, companies are looking to make savings wherever they can. If they have any vacancies coming up and they already have your details and CV on file, it could save them the cost of using a

recruitment agency or placing an advertisement – this puts you ahead of the competition.

Withdraw or limit access to all of your social networking profile pages. As invasive as it sounds, some companies will do a background check on you and images of your latest drunken conquests will not be beneficial to the cause.

Research is absolutely vital. Find out absolutely everything you can about the company, their business and employees. Know and understand their sector and hint at that understanding in your application – this will intrigue them and make them want to know more about you. Check out their website, and those of their main competitors. Google them. The more research you do, the better understanding you will have of their business; use this in your application and you will stand a better chance of getting an interview.

Make sure your application goes to the right person, and flatter their ego. Telephone the company and find out who to write to, and what their job title is. If its not an HR department but instead is an individual (often the MD) then do a bit of research on them personally – a Google search can throw up bits of information that may be useful. Demonstrating that you know about conference they spoke at, or an article they wrote will convince them that you have done your homework and are someone worth talking to.

Get to know their employees. How do they dress? Where do they hang out? It may sound a bit like espionage, but hang around the offices after work and find out what they do – is there a post-work drinks culture, a 5 a side football team, a gym culture? Don't be afraid to network – a casual conversation with an employee in the pub can glean incredibly useful nuggets of information that could make all the difference.

Make your CV stand out from the crowd. To impress a potential employer you must demonstrate an understanding of corporate style. Again, research will stand you in good stead. Look at their website, and pay close attention to the layout and written style. Try to make your CV reflect this – a funky informal style may not get you far with a very traditional accountancy firm. It goes without saying, I hope, that you should make sure that you spell check everything you send and that it is clean, clear and well laid out on the page. Incredibly, over 50% of CVs and covering letters received by employers and recruitment agencies contain spelling or grammatical errors, which instantly consigns them to the scrap heap. If your written English is not that great, find someone to help you. A job application containing such basic errors will only irritate a potential employer, and portray you as being sloppy, slapdash, or stupid – none of which will help you to get an interview.

If there are gaps in your CV, make sure that you provide a proper explanation of these with your application. A potential employer will think the worst if you leave large periods of time unaccounted for.

You will need to supply contact details of at least two referees with any job application. At least one of these should be a recent employer, with another person, preferably someone older than yourself and a professional, to vouch for your good character. Make sure that you prime your referees beforehand, explaining the details of the job(s) that you are applying for, so that they can tailor what they say about you to make you sound like the perfect candidate.

Never, ever send a standard covering letter or email to a potential employer. It is lazy, and shows lack of imagination and effort on your part and is often the fastest route your CV can take to the nearest bin.

NEVER include your photograph on your CV – it is just a no-no. You do not want to put up any possible obstacles as people can be turned off very easily.

The ideal number of pages for a CV is three. People do not want pages of waffle, neither do they want something that is too

limited. Just facts of what and where you have been in a précis form. They will ask you to expand if they want to know more.

Never rely on a potential employer to return your calls or emails. Far too many times I've heard a disappointed job seeker saying "I emailed them but I never heard back." Success goes to the persistent – if you don't hear back, pester them but within reason. No one wants a stalker! Always follow up emails and letters with a phone call to make sure your correspondence has been received.

If you really want to make an impression, deliver your application by hand. It takes a confident, committed individual to do so, which will earn you their instant respect. Ensure you mark the envelope "Personally delivered". Also, unlike a phone call or email, someone will have to speak to you. Just make sure you look and sound presentable (see "interview success" rules). While you are there, ask very nicely and politely if anyone has the time to talk to you for a few minutes about the company. The worst that can happen is that they will say no.

If your application is rejected prior to the interview stage, find out why. Ring them up and ask for feedback. Ask if they might consider you for some (unpaid) work experience instead; your persistence may reap rewards and you may have better luck next time.

If this is your first or second job then consider doing work experience as a way of getting a foot in the door. If you are already working for an employer, for free, and they like you, they may well keep you on as and when any paid vacancies arise.

If you have experience and been working for some years and jobs are hard to get, then why not offer a two week free probationary period to prove your worth. But do ensure that you get a full Contract of Employment stating the trial period will be used to decide if you are a suitable candidate.

Apply for any job going in your chosen company or sector, including those for which you are over-qualified. Taking a more junior position will put you ahead of the competition when more senior roles come along – you will hear of vacancies before they are advertised externally, and if you are doing a good job, you stand a good chance of being promoted. Hiring or promoting internal candidates is almost always a cheaper option for companies than advertising or using a recruitment agency and its often a good company policy to promote from within.

If you follow these rules, you will be well ahead of the game when it comes to putting forward a strong application, and stand a better chance of getting interviewed for the jobs you apply for.

Interview success

Countless books and articles have been written on “winning at the interview stage”, yet jobseekers continue to make the same old mistakes time and time again. Read on, and learn.....

Remember, your interview starts the minute you enter the building. It is not unheard of for Receptionists or Secretaries to be asked to assess candidates based on appearance, manners and demeanor on arrival, so ALWAYS be nice to the person who greets you, even if they seem to be the most junior underling in the company – I do this with my staff. Take an interest in them and make small talk – comment on the weather, compliment them on what they are wearing, and smile. Don’t waste their time though – remember they have a busy job to do, so once you have exchanged pleasantries, sit down where you are told, and try to avoid looking too nervous. They will notice, and believe me; they will pass on anything especially positive or negative to their boss.

If on arrival you have arrived a bit hot and bothered as you have been rushing or it is a hot day, ask where the toilets are and go and freshen up – you will not look great if you go in perspiring and not looking cool and collected.

Presentation and appearance DOES matter. Ignore those who tell you that you have the right to dress, accessorise, talk and act as you please, that your facial piercing / tattoo / mohawk are an “expression of your individuality” and that employers will see beyond external appearances. Given two candidates of equal ability and experience, the job will invariably go to the one who is better presented; whose style fits best with the company.

Dress according to the job you are going for. Again, research is vital – find out what the company style is like (spy if you must). If a company’s employees are universally dressed in sober suits, it is not going to go down well if you arrive in a ditzy dress and killer heels or jeans & T-shirt. Always err on the side of caution when choosing your interview outfit – be smart rather than trendy, and keep accessories subtle.

Remember that the interviewer will almost certainly be older than you, so dress in a way that they will understand. Don’t make them feel past it by being too cutting edge, or by wearing anything that shows off too much of your youthful figure. Nobody wants to employ someone who is going to make them feel old, fat or boring every day of the week! So tone it down, or you risk aggravating them by your mere appearance – they won’t like you, and if they don’t like you, they certainly won’t employ you.

You don't need to spend a fortune on your interview outfit, but make sure that your clothes are clean and ironed, shoes polished, and socks match. Brush off any pet hairs before leaving home, and give your shoulders a quick check immediately before arriving at the interview – dandruff flakes are not a good look. Always remove piercings, cover up tattoos and tone down radical make up. You can always put them back in once you've got the job.

Approach family, friends or former colleagues and ask them to give you an honest appraisal of your personal style. Think carefully about who you can ask – and go for the person who will actually tell you if you have halitosis (bad breath) – and avoid the people who will want to avoid hurting your feelings. After all, what are a few hurt feelings in the short term compared to unemployment in the long term? And at least you can do something about your halitosis – that's a lot more easily to sort out than your home being repossessed because you can't get a job and therefore can't pay the mortgage.

If you smoke, try not to have a cigarette immediately before the interview. It may steady your nerves, but bear in mind that your interviewer may be a non-smoker, and there is nothing more off-putting than someone who enters the room wafting the aroma of stale cigarette smoke. That applies to your clothes as well as your

breath – stale cigarette smells are unpleasant – I know, I used to be a smoker!

It might not be good idea to have a spicy meal the night before the interview as it can affect some people, especially garlic smells.

Practice your handshake and opening greeting. A damp, limp handshake does not make a good first impression. Your handshake should be firm (not bone-crushing), and remember to make eye contact with the interviewer as they shake your hand. If your hands are prone to sweating, make sure you wipe your hands before entering the interview room. Your opening greeting should be formal – and address them as Mr / Miss / Ms to start out with – if they are happy for you to use their first name, they will invite you to do so.

Body language can give away so much about you and you want to exude confidence. Sit up straight, don't slouch, don't fidget, bite or pick your fingernails (or anything else!). Make eye contact, and smile where appropriate.

The way you talk can make or break an interview. It's not just what you say, but the way you say it. Make sure your interviewer can understand what you are saying – if you have a strong accent you

might want to try talking a bit more slowly than usual (practice this), and avoid the use of “street” talk or slang like the plague. You might find it useful to note that in a survey recently commissioned by TipTopJob.com, over 43% of respondents said that they would disguise a regional accent in order to get a job – so if you don’t out of some sort of misguided principle, rest assured that the competition will, which may place you at a disadvantage. Remember, it is likely that your interviewer will be older than you, and may find this sort of talk incomprehensible, or worse, offensive. Likewise, you know nothing about their personal life, so avoid comments that be interpreted as being blasphemous to any religion, homophobic or racist. Swearing is also a no-no.

Try to avoid using cliché in your interview. Remember, your interviewer may have seen six other people before you, and they will all have used words like “passionate” and “110%.” In fact it can be dangerous to suggest to an interviewer that you are “passionate” about certain careers. Think of something original to say about yourself and you will stand out from the crowd.

Make sure you have done your research before the interview. Check the company’s website for new announcements on the morning of your interview if you can. Ensure that you understand the industry as well – who are their main competitors? What are the

current challenges facing that particular industry? Armed with this knowledge, you will be ahead of the competition.

Don’t panic if you are asked a really tricky question. However much research you have done, there is always the chance that an interviewer will throw you a curve-ball and ask something that you really struggle with. Even if you haven’t got a clue, it is vital that you don’t let it throw you off balance. Buy yourself some time by saying what an interesting question it is and ask if you could have a moment to think about your answer. Never, ever make something up, or waffle around the point. If you genuinely don’t know the answer, then say so, but say so with confidence and use it as an opportunity to explain what a quick learner you are.

On most interviews towards the end, the person will ask if you have any questions – always have a minimum of two and no more than five. It never sounds good when people have none or too many questions. The last question ought to be – am I a suitable candidate and are you likely to offer me the Job? At least it will give you a guide.

If you feel that the interview has not gone as well as you might have hoped, why not offer “whatever happens” to come in and do unpaid work experience for a couple of weeks. It shows ambition, enthusiasm and commitment, and once your foot is in the

door, if they like you, they may keep you on. Alternatively, if you are experienced then try to secure a contract of employment against this trial period so it becomes seen as tied in with the interview.

How to keep your job

Across the country, employers are making sweeping redundancies. If you don't want to become an unemployment statistic, read on...

Forget the corporate flannel. Inevitably, it is those who are perceived to be “dead wood” that are the first to go when cutbacks are made. Those who are perceived to be lazy, lacking drive or creativity, pedestrian, or those who simply perform adequately rather than outstandingly, face the highest risk of redundancy. Yes, this may be illegal under current employment legislation. But people are people, and employers will find a way to keep on people they like wherever possible. So don't be dead wood. Ensure that your performance is the best it can be. Be professional, friendly, interested and hard working, all day, every day. Slog like you have never slogged before. At a time like this, you simply can't afford to have an “off day.”

Take as little holiday as you can. In a survey of 1,006 people recently commissioned by TipTopJob.com, over 50% of people interviewed said that they would be cancelling their holiday due to the recession, and that they believed that taking holiday whilst redundancies were on the cards put them at higher risk of redun-

dancy. If your team can cope absolutely fine without you for a fortnight, management will start to wonder whether you might be dispensable. Far better to carry holiday over to the following year, or even lose it altogether, than lose your job. Be prepared to cancel or reduce time off. Explain to your employer that, whilst you were looking forward to your holiday, you feel it is important that everyone pulls together during hard times, and you don't want to leave colleagues in the lurch. Make it clear that you are, for the time being at least, prioritising work over leisure time. When it's clear that your job is secure in the long term, then it will be time to celebrate with a week or two in the sun.

Acquire new skills that are relevant to your job, focussing particularly on areas where your colleagues are under skilled. If you possess skills or special qualifications that nobody else has, you are less vulnerable. Keep a close eye on training courses that you think may be relevant and ask to go on them. If the company you work for is making cutbacks, approach your boss to ask whether they would consider part-funding any training courses you want to attend, if you contribute to the fees. Even if the answer is no, they will appreciate your making the offer and it will be noted that you are keen to develop your skill set. Read everything you can – magazine articles, books, published conference papers. These will all help you to ensure that your skills are absolutely up to date. Just make sure

you mention what you have read to your boss – there's no point keeping your new skills a secret.

Work longer hours. Arrive early and leave late, and always be the first to offer to stay late to help your boss if he or she is having a crisis. Keep a jacket slung across the back of your chair, so that even when you are not at your desk, it appears that you are in the office. Keep your PC or laptop permanently switched on if possible, and leave your desk in an "active" state – a file open on your desk, a half drunk cup of coffee – anything to ensure the impression that you have just popped away from your desk for a minute. Don't take long lunch breaks, or slope off to a coffee shop; work through your lunch hour and have a sandwich at your desk – it will be noticed, particularly if you do so regularly. Don't stand outside the front of your place of work having a prolonged cigarette break and a chat with colleagues. Make sure that any extra time you put in coincides with when your boss is in the office. There is no point arriving at 7.30am each day, when your boss doesn't rock up until 8.30 or 9.00am, as your extra efforts will go un-noticed.

Keep a record of your successes. Whether it's an idea that you came up with that was later adopted by the company, or work that you did on a successful meeting, successful negotiation with a difficult customer, financial savings made, or targets that you have exceeded. This can form part of your armour in the face of possible

redundancy. Keep hold of any emails or other correspondence from clients or more senior colleagues which praise you for a particular piece of work.

Don't go off sick. Dose yourself up and drag your sorry self into work – even if it's in the almost certain knowledge that your boss will tell you to go home. It shows commitment and determination in the face of adversity, and that will impress your boss. Or, if you are really too ill, then make yourself available at home by phone and email, and offer to work from home until you are fully recovered.

Never get caught “skiving” – sending personal emails, online shopping or visiting social networking sites will only fast track you to the top of the redundancy selection list. Keep personal phone calls during working hours for absolute emergencies (Communication, not Conversation) – no employer wants to hear you arranging your social life on their time. Unless you want your boss to assume that you don't have enough work to do, and there-fore wonder why he or she is paying you, why would you engage in an activity that says you are bored, unmotivated, and frankly not that busy. Is that really a risk you are prepared to take in the current economic climate?

If redundancies are in the offing, offer to take a re-duction in salary or hours – if you and your colleagues get together and suggest

this to your employer, it may mean that nobody has to be made redundant. Your boss will appreciate your commitment to the company, and will feel like you are on his or her side. If your suggestion is accepted, then ensure that you are placed at the top of the queue back to full salary or hours by continuing to work your regular hours regardless. After all, if you are on a 4 day week, what are you really going to do with that extra time? Look on it as an investment in your long-term future with the company.

Under no circumstances should you harp on about your “rights as an employee,” or be seen to be complaining about changes to the status quo. It is vitally important that your boss regards you as someone who is on their side. Standing around the water cooler having a good old whinge about how badly you are being treated will upset and aggravate your employer, and will not stand you in good stead when redundancy selections are being made. Keep your head down and work hard. Sympathize with them when they are having to make cuts, rather than criticizing, and offer to buy them a drink at the end of the week. You may hate your boss, and what they are doing may seem outrageous and unfair, but now is the time to grit your teeth, and grin and bear it – that's the marketplace, so adapt or die!

Women – avoid pregnancy. I know that this is a hideously non politically correct thing to say and that you will be horrified that

I am daring to say such a thing, with all the legislation that is supposed to protect working mothers, but the fact is that maternity leave is an annoyance for employers on every level. Much as they may express their delight at your happy news and even contribute to the purchase of a cute baby gift, they are facing the budgetary burden of maternity pay, not to mention covering your work whilst you are on leave, and accommodating the flexible working hours required by many working mothers. Whilst the law is there to protect you from unscrupulous employers who use false reasons to get rid of you, you need to be aware that in the minds of management you may have just become a ‘problem’ that needs to be solved. Expect to be under the microscope. Any non pregnancy related cock-ups that may previously have resulted in just a slap on the wrist may be used as an excuse to remove you.

Finally, don’t worry too much about redundancy. If you go around with a black cloud over your head, foretelling gloom and doom, it will impact on your general demeanor and performance at work, thus making it a self-fulfilling prophecy.

If the worst happens and you do get made redundant, suggest to your boss that you continue to work for free for a couple of weeks to “tie up some loose ends” or “sort out any unresolved issues.” This shows the depth of your commitment to the company

and the job, and once everyone else has gone, it may be easier to have a quiet chat about getting your old job back.

Being a boss in a recession

In the current climate, let's face it; you are going to end up being the bad guy more often than not – I am sure I am. You will be the one announcing cutbacks, informing your staff that they face redundancy, freezing pay rises, and abolishing bonuses. So here are a few pointers to help you to minimize redundancies, keep your workforce motivated, and hopefully to stop everyone from hating you!

So, at last, finally the market turns, and rather than having to cow tow to frankly second rate staff, now your time has come. The worm can finally turn! It's your chance to kick some serious butt, and get people working harder. Because if they are worried about their jobs, they are going to work harder – right? Or not? Research shows that the stick is actually not a very effective motivational tool. If your method of management motivation is to threaten the sack every five minutes, then you can be sure that although your staff may seem to be playing ball, in reality they will be slacking off at any opportunity, and looking around for alternative employment to boot. It is important that you are seen to be the good guy, doing his / her best under challenging circumstances. The offer of a reward, however small, for good performance will get a far more positive reaction from your staff than any amount of dire threats and warnings.

Also, recognition is always more important than a prize, so do not forget to praise people for doing well. If you constantly hint at the possibility of redundancy for those who do not perform well, you risk ending up with a workforce that is anxious, distracted, and ultimately unproductive. After all, what incentive is there to perform well if they think they are unlikely to have a job at the end of the month?

If you are looking to cut costs without making redundancies, then you should consider revising your pay structure. Impose salary reductions across the board – which will not be popular - but introduce performance related pay incentives at the same time. This will not only motivate staff to work harder in order to earn more, it will sort out the wheat from the chaff, as it will quickly become apparent which staff are unwilling or simply unable to go the extra mile. Productivity will increase as the hard-working and talented amongst your employees raise their game, and any future decision about redundancies is made that little bit easier as you will have identified the dead wood and therefore know who to get rid of first.

If you have to make large scale redundancies, it is best to have a quick cull. Don't spread the process over several months or into several rounds. This simply prolongs the agony for all concerned. Get it over with as quickly as possible, or you face dealing with a distracted workforce who collectively waste a good part of the

working day standing round the water cooler discussing the redundancy process, or surreptitiously surfing the internet at your expense, looking for new jobs!

If you are keen to avoid making redundancies at all costs, then you should consider asking if your staff would be willing to accept a reduction in hours or salary. It is worth knowing that, in a survey recently commissioned by TipTopJob.com, it was revealed that nearly 40% of job seekers would consider taking a salary cut of up to 20% in order to secure a job. If you present your staff with this piece of information, it may serve to remind them how lucky they are to still have a job and make them more willing to acquiesce. This is not to say that you should bulldoze changes of this nature through. Instead, invite staff to vote either for this option or redundancy – this will empower them at a time when many are feeling vulnerable to the whims of their employer.

Ensure that those whom you are intending to keep on know that their job is secure. Make sure that you present this in terms of it being a reward for hard work, talent, and loyalty – nobody should be allowed to rest on their laurels and assume that they can sit back and relax. Impress upon them that they have to keep working hard and delivering excellent results, otherwise you may have to review your decision. Job security is a big motivator in today's uncertain market-place.

Celebrate successes. Although they may seem like unnecessary expenses, incentives such as Commission and Bonuses are what drive businesses forward, and removing them will leave employees de-motivated. Even small, less costly incentives (bottles of champagne or even Cava) can work. And even a public verbal recognition of individual success or a round robin email to the company congratulating an individual (“employee of the week”) will give staff a boost and that is especially important in today's market-place. On balance recognition is probably more important than a prize.

Encourage group activities to boost team spirit and morale. Encourage staff to get on and have fun whilst working as this helps to motivate them, and subsequently increases productivity levels. With the relentless conveyor belt of bad news, it is easy to imagine just how down your staff may be. Try to introduce group activities that are cost effective, uncontroversial but at least help to lift some chins. For example – bring your own food extended lunchtime picnic, dress down days, quizzes. It doesn't hurt to show your human side in all this, so take the initiative in organising a few such activities, and take the lead in participating.

Encourage your staff to develop new skills. Ensure that information about training / development opportunities is readily available and allow your staff the time to attend. If your company

can no longer afford to fund training courses, why not offer to subsidize the cost of them instead?

Whilst the world may appear to be caving in, within a short time the situation should have improved. Not back to the heady days of the early noughties, but we will certainly emerge out of the crisis zone. With this in mind, think long term. Some very good people may have lost their jobs. People who, if you are smart, you may be able to pick up at just the right price and at just the right time.

Beware of the 'overqualified'. Whilst in the short term it may be that your company will reap the benefits of recruiting someone with higher qualifications; ultimately they will strive for job satisfaction and a more suitable position. Thus leaving you high and dry. If you are happy to accept the fact that this position is short term and a merely a brief boost to staff quality then the situation can be advantageous.

About the Author



Mike Dauncey has built one of the UK's largest recruitment websites, growing his business through 4 recessions. Mike is a key recruitment industry player.

Having left school at the age of 16, Mike decided his talents lied in the incredibly young business of IT support. Landing a position in the Thomas Cook IT support team Mike learnt his trade with such enthusiasm that on his 19th birthday, within three years of

being in the industry, he accepted a role as a lecturer, teaching IT solutions to students twice his age.

It wasn't long before large companies realised Mike's potential and when Altergo offered him the opportunity to develop and market IT communication software products, he decided it was time to move on from lecturing.

In 1975 Mike began his own business venture, MDA resources.

Applying his extensive knowledge to the growing market of IT recruitment, within a few years the company had grown at a phenomenal rate.

In 2000 Mike realised the potential of the online recruitment market and began to develop the framework for an online job board. Using his understanding of IT systems he created Tip Top Job.com in 2002.

To date the website has amassed over 1,000,000 registered users and 800,000 positions advertised from hundreds of companies. In 2004 Mike made the decision to create specific industry recruitment sites under the umbrella brand of 'Tip Top Job' named theINDUSTRYjob. Tip Top Job now has over 35 specific industry sites ranging from fashion to engineering, science to legal. In 2008, the local-job.com site was added to the stable of sites that help job hunters search for local jobs.