



▶ RETURN ON INVESTMENT FROM OUTPLACEMENT SUPPORT ..... 3



▶ HDA CAREER TRANSITION CASE STUDY..... 4



▶ WHAT HDA CLIENTS ARE TELLING US..... 5

○ ISSUE: 8 | ○ EDITION: OCT | ○ YEAR: 2008

# hda Review

**hda** DELIVERING BUSINESS SUCCESS THROUGH PEOPLE SOLUTIONS

## Recession-proofing HR – harsh times, and the survival of your employer value proposition (EVP) and reputation

(Abbreviated version – see longer version at: [www.hda.co.uk](http://www.hda.co.uk))

**Clayton Glen, Commercial Director – HDA**

### Survival and focus

It's a number of months now since the Chamber of Commerce predicted that the UK will enter a recession within the next year. Since then we have all learnt rather rapidly what a house of cards our financial systems are, as stocks continue to tumble and banks and governments fight for solvency. In this struggle for solvency in the face of limited credit and shrinking markets, it is even more crucial than normal for businesses to be fleet footed in the austere battle for revenue assurance, cost containment and business survival.

It's beyond challenging being an HR professional at the moment. Current times would *seem* to require a shift from strategic HR business growth and future-proofing considerations like talent attraction, leadership development, team engagement and corporate culture to the short-horizon cost base reduction motive, key to cash savings and business survival. This is only a partially sound strategy.

### Speed and switch-ability

The HR community is currently broadly split between the short-term transactions of change, including business rationalisation projects, redundancies, severance payments, comp and bens cost reduction / rationalisation projects and so on, (and hence of immediate savings-generation value to the business), whilst placing longer-term programmes, projects and initiatives on hold, reducing them in scope, or cutting them along with other non-essentials'.

Continued on page 2...



## The demands of the future...releasing the latent potential of the entire workforce

Over recent months HDA has noted a rise in the number of organisations requesting information on our [Employee Engagement Consultancy Services](#) and we believe this increase reflects reactions to changes in the economic climate.

Successful organisations are consistently looking at new and improved ways to attract and retain key talent, however less focus has traditionally been placed on enhancing the engagement levels of staff that are effectively 'inert' within the organisation. This is set to change.

Extraneous factors have a considerable impact on levels of staff inertia. Over the coming year,

unemployment is expected to rise to its highest level for almost a decade as the economy continues to deteriorate (TUC, 2008); consequently so too will the number of staff remaining in roles and organisations where they are unhappy and demotivated. So, moving forward, a critical strategic focus will be to incorporate into current talent management strategies an understanding of how these employees can be engaged to succeed and thereby continue to add value to the organisation.

Through our experience of providing support in this area there are 5 key factors that organisations should consider upfront when focusing on

engagement as part of their Talent Management strategy:

- Have a clear understanding of what you are trying to achieve and why.
- Recognise the role that line managers play in enhancing engagement levels.
- Be realistic about what you can and will do to enhance engagement levels.
- Gain buy-in from senior management.
- Be committed to acting on the results of any engagement survey

## Continued from page 1 - Recession-proofing HR – harsh times, and the survival of your employer value proposition (EVP) and reputation

Where to spend time now, where to focus medium-term, and where to maintain continuity of purpose? If you think too hard about these things at this time, you run the risk of being branded as too slow, or out of touch. Obviously these are short-sighted views, but nevertheless, are very likely to be held in jittery organisations.

### Reputation will be key

A crucial area requiring medium to long-term focus by HR (collectively) during current times is business reputation both at the CSR and the employer branding levels - ensuring that the business arises in the future, from the current down market conditions, with its character intact, regardless of the tough choices it may need to make now to survive and set itself up for success in the next upswing. Focus on reputation *now* will have positive implications for relationships with key talent currently within the organisation, with future candidates, with customers, and the broader community; especially in an era where disgruntled staff and those who have left the organisation are able to share their opinions with the world via the various online channels available to them.

Organisations and HR teams would do well to encourage business leadership to consider and communicate any tough but required short-term decisions in terms of the organisation's values and / or Employer Value Proposition (EVP), and, most importantly, to then act in accordance with these values, regardless of how tough any actions need to be.

### Securing reputation now needn't cost much

Even where limited funds place a low ceiling on what organisations can do to honour their EVP during difficult times; a few small efforts can be beneficial to support the wellbeing, rewards and careers of all staff – either those who will ultimately lose their roles as a result of the current market difficulties, or those who will survive the downturn but are indirectly affected. Some of these efforts can include:

- **Coach HR colleagues** to recognise the raised importance of their business partnership role at this time of commercial difficulty. Effective business partnership is crucial in difficult times, and HR professionals need to be brave in challenging leadership behaviours and policy decisions that negatively impact business reputation.
- **Coach managers** to recognise the importance of upholding the organisation's values and EVP to ensure that business reputation is maintained, or possibly even strengthened during difficult times. This needn't cost much, or anything either, but does require a step-up in HR's *bravery, its willingness to challenge, and its willingness to shape leadership behaviours*.
- **Elicit regular feedback from across the staff base using a sensible feedback mechanism**, both to identify developing engagement issues for contingent management, and to create a consistent basis for regular, thematic feedback. Staff surveys, feedback mechanisms and focus groups give people voice at a time when people are worried, and it is crucial to reduce information vacuums.
- **Hold regular career reviews and career development centres** to show an interest in individual careers, and to develop contingencies for both the business and the individual. Showing a strong commitment to the development of individual marketability during these difficult times is crucial to staff engagement and trust. At its most refined, this process can give people confidence that the organisation cares about their future career leverage, *whether their future is inside or outside the organisation*.
- **Make a tangible commitment to support the career transition needs of those whose roles no longer fit the organisation** via the provision of professional outplacement support. As author and blogger, Bob Sutton says, *'If we part, we will do all we can to ensure that we part in friendship'*. Again, this commitment needn't cost a huge amount. Whilst full outplacement programmes can often cost a few thousand Pounds per person; a high level of professional external career transition support comprising online and telephone-based resources can be purchased for under £100 per person these days for larger groups. Not a major investment, but if communicated well, its perceived value can be very high, both to leavers and 'survivors'.

### Reputation today becomes competitive advantage in the future

Assuming that redundancies will form a core component of the business landscape during the coming period; it could be argued that this is a key area for gaining *'reputation advantage'* by demonstrating a real interest in the wellbeing and future of laid-off staff who could go on to become valuable *'alumni'* in the future. These *alumni* will either add positively to your organisation's message to its various stakeholders, or will add negative noise (whether justified or not), which impacts future reputation. Laid off staff represent a key community for ensuring future reputation.

For more information about this article, please contact Clayton Glen at [cxg@hda.co.uk](mailto:cxg@hda.co.uk)

## HDA Events



### Challenging Conversations Event

26th Feb 09

Speaker: Paul Jones

An event for all HR Professionals and Business Managers likely to be in the 'tough message' frontline.

This event will assist you to gain a better understanding of the dynamics involved in challenging workplace conversations and will give you practical tools to have successful conversations.

This interactive learning session/workshop combines insight from other professions, role-play scenarios performed by actors, forum theatre and focused discussion to develop a practical preparation strategy and tools to become proficient in delivering difficult messages. Roleplays performed by actors will address issues likely to arise within conversations around: change, performance and redundancy.

### Employer Branding Event

12th Nov 08

Speakers: Chris Miller & Clayton Glen

Theme: To understand the behavioural and structural components of an effective employer brand strategy.

### Engagement Event

03rd Dec 08

Speaker: Briony Lalor

Theme: To understand employee engagement and what it means for your organisation.

### Coaching Culture Event

28th Apr 09

Speakers: Fiona Eldridge

Theme: To learn how 'doing it for yourself' can harness the potential of coaching to manage talent, improve management and communication and contribute to the success of your organisation.



# Outplacement Support – Measuring the Return on Investment

*The trend for providing outplacement support is growing; with nearly 85% of organisations indicating that they now provide outplacement support (HDA Outplacement Survey, 2008) – but why?*

*When choosing to offer outplacement support to employees, the benefits to the individual are often clear but what is known of the real benefit to the organisation – in other words, why offer outplacement support? What return on investment can your organisation expect?*

Over the last 30 years, HDA has supported many organisations, across various industries, to restructure their teams – ranging from large scale to small team changes. Through our experience we have gained valuable insights into the potential benefits that organisations providing outplacement support can expect to realize. This short article summarises some of our main findings.

## The Benefits

As professional career consultants, HDA would always argue that investment in outplacement delivers a return in a number of ways:-

Providing outplacement support **enhances the ease with which changes are implemented and accepted** – through the provision of outplacement support organisations believe they manage the change more effectively; employees appear to accept the changes more readily and the organisation can move forward with minimum disruption. This also supports findings which indicate that the 'survivors' within the organisation, or those indirectly affected, adapt better to major organisational changes when outplacement support is provided. Reed Consulting (2007) found that 'the provision of outplacement support helped the employer to retain and motivate those not directly affected'.

Post restructuring, where outplacement support has been provided, organisations regularly observe **enhanced levels of employee engagement and improved morale**. Engaged employees tend to show a greater commitment to the organisation and committed employees are 87% less likely to leave the organisation and perform 20% better (The corporate Leadership Council).

In a recent HDA Survey over 70% of organisations maintained that providing outplacement support should be a consideration for organisations wishing to create **a successful employer brand**.

Providing outplacement support fosters positive post-employment relations, which in turn enhances the **employer reputation** in the wider community. Arguably, the more positive the perception of your organisation is to the external world the wider your pool of potential recruits becomes; thereby minimizing future recruitment costs.

## How HDA supports 'Return on Investment'

HDA partners with our client organisations to ensure that we provide the most appropriate level of support, based on the requirements of the impacted employees and budgetary constraints. This results in varying size of programmes where ultimate settlement can never be guaranteed. However, what HDA can guarantee is that with whatever level of support, the 'client' will be given the opportunity to maximize on their 'settlement potential' be that within new employment, self employment, or early retirement.

**End of programme surveys** allowing measurement of individual satisfaction are a key source of success measurement and the results of analysis performed on surveys completed from Jan – Sept 2008 reflected that 93% of respondents had achieved settlement.

In addition to end of programme surveys HDA utilizes the following methods to measure success; all reporting being available to the 'sponsor' when required:

- Regular monitoring and reporting on programme activity
- 'Mid- programme' survey
- Workshop/seminar evaluation forms
- End of project reviews with HR partners

This final point allows for collation of feedback such as the example below and noted within the case study included within this review (page 4).

*"....just wanted to say thank you very much for your time and support throughout my dealings with HDA, you have been flexible and responsive when ever we've needed it and it makes the whole experience of redundancies easier for us, HR and the people affected"*

**Senior HR Manager of  
an Investment Bank**

## Summary

During these challenging economic times where there are increased financial constraints, it can be all too easy to see those employees whose roles have been made redundant as outside the remit of your organisation's corporate responsibility once they have moved on. Whilst it could be argued that the 'return on investment' for outplacement provision is subjective to the investor, and lacks any true bench-marking, feedback from both Human Resource managers and clients being supported by an outplacement provider favors the benefits outlined above.

Ultimately, the investment in outplacement support plays a key role in ensuring that the employer brand is maintained, the 'surviving' workforce remain engaged and motivated, and those experiencing a career transition are able to move forwards, thanks to comprehensive support provided by their employer.

The case for providing Outplacement support is strong in the area of risk mitigation and reputation.

**Joanne Simpson,  
Managing Career Consultant –HDA**

For more information on any of the above please contact Sweta Patel, – HDA, at:

+44(0) 207 820 9199 or alternatively  
[exp@hda.co.uk](mailto:exp@hda.co.uk) / [www.hda.co.uk](http://www.hda.co.uk)

# Specialist Engineering Sector Restructure

The UK arm of a US headquartered Engineering Company was transferring skills and functionality to the USA, impacting UK staff.

HDA worked closely with the European HR Manager to design a career transition programme that would assist with the smooth shutdown process by enabling the staff to successfully make an optimal career transition, whilst at the same time maintaining goodwill and seamless product handover to the parent company. The majority of staff were asked to participate in a shutdown process phased over eight months.

The work team was highly skilled in state of the art software development, operating at the forefront of the profession. The average length of service was in excess of 14 years and as such staff had difficulty benchmarking themselves. They were exceptionally skilled but needed help in accepting this and in transmitting this to prospective employers.

**Joanne Simpson – Managing Career Consultant , HDA**

## Design and Delivery of the Career Transition Programme.

Historically, staff from the company had been supported via the modular HDA 'Versatile Support Programme' (VSP) and allocated 10 modules to select options from a programme menu, subject to their specific needs.

The agreed programme for the site shutdown ultimately incorporated both structured components via a group approach and the flexibility to cope with the individual needs of the staff, resulting in support equivalent to the 10 module VSP Programme. HDA delivery was at the company's site, with the co-ordination of events managed jointly by an appointed on-site HR representative and a nominated HDA staff member.

## Components of the programme:

1. HDA Overview to promote the career transition support provided by the company
2. 1:1 Career coaching meetings
3. HDA workshops
  - Job Search Workshop
  - Interview Preparation
  - Financial Planning and State Benefits
5. Further support available selected by the employees according to their individual needs, from the HDA Versatile Support Programme Menu.
6. Access to HDA candidate website for six months
7. Telephone/email support from the Online Consultants for the six month period.

## Communication

Details of timings and content were circulated for each group activity, and proactive calls were made to individuals around their projected programme start times. The on-site HR representative contacted each person and timetabled each event.

## Results

All staff took up the programme and feedback has been very positive. They have found the workshops very useful, in particular interview skills and gaining an idea of what questions to expect in an interview.

*"The advice from all of the HDA consultants has been invaluable. The consultants have always been available - I've always got advice in a timely manner when I've needed it (by phone and by email). The independence of the advice and its 'general' nature (i.e. not bogged down in the specifics of our particular industry) enabled me to focus on what I needed to"*

*"Workshops were very professionally run, and highly interactive so it kept one interested throughout. Provided me with information that really helped, which surprised me as I thought that I knew a lot about recruiting."*

The 1:1 career coaching sessions have played a major role in focusing activities and boosting the 'personal ability' perception of staff. A number of staff chose to take advantage of the HDA Assessment Tool 'Strengthscope' as a way of understanding their significant strengths and thus ensuring that any future position allows them to utilise these.

Planned phasing of staff leaving has worked well and they settled into new positions that will continue to challenge their skill level, many at enhanced terms and conditions.

HDA enjoyed an extremely positive working relationship with the HR team, working closely together to ensure the needs and best interests of each employee were met. The company was committed to HDA and the support provided to the affected staff.

*"The ultimate measure of whether outplacement has worked or not is if people get jobs in a timely manner. This has certainly been the case with the closure of the UK office and I attribute a lot of this success to the way outplacement was managed. The program we devised with HDA was flexible enough to cope with individual needs and timely so that people got thinking about their future, quickly enabling them to make clear decisions. The team at HDA have always been responsive, flexible and professional; it has been a pleasure working with them in this difficult time."*

**European HR Manager, June 2008**

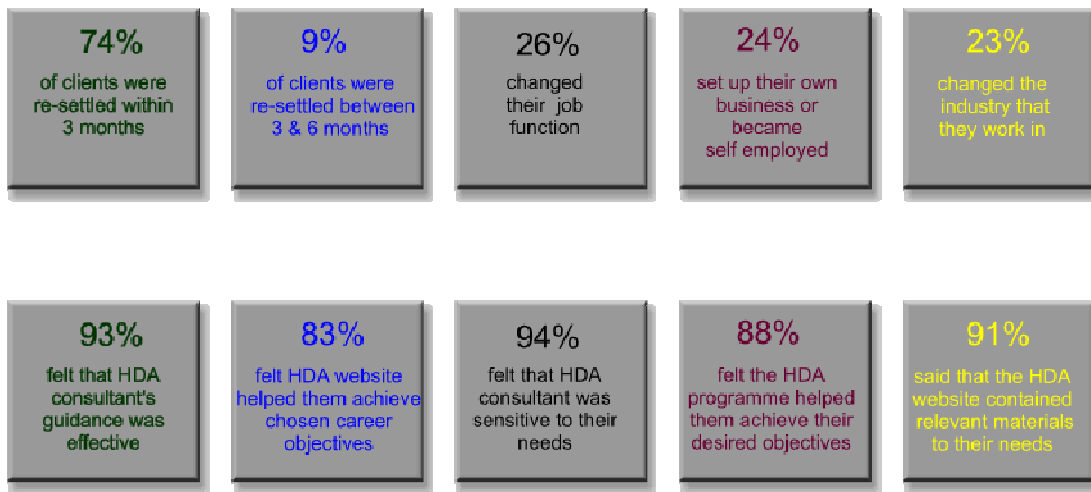
For more information on any of the above, please contact **Sweta Patel**, HDA Campaign Manager - +44(0) 207 484 5065 / [sxp@hda.co.uk](mailto:sxp@hda.co.uk)

# What HDA Career Transition clients say about us



As part of HDA's sustained commitment to refining and developing our programme capability and ensuring we continue to meet our client needs, we regularly obtain feedback from those who take up a HDA outplacement programme.

Recent analysis of our 'end of programme' client surveys reflected the following key trends:



The HDA Career Management team has significant experience managing large and complex multi-site outplacement projects across the UK, and globally.

Client comments on their assigned HDA career consultant:

*Very useful in terms of getting my thoughts together at a time when they were running all over the place, and in providing some structure and focus to what my next steps were.*

*Her support and encouragement was invaluable during my job search. I am incredibly grateful to her for everything, in particular the time she spent nurturing and building my confidence which has enabled me to realise my full potential and significantly progress my career.*

*I found my meetings with him very productive and helpful. He was very encouraging and supportive during what turned out to be an extremely difficult year following my redundancy. He was always available to e-mail or talk through any issues or queries I had regarding my job search or crises of confidence! I'm not sure that I would have got through the first few months of my redundancy without his help and guidance and his well-intentioned nagging to ensure I did my homework and followed up on leads!*

*She was really friendly and helpful. She provided me with some great advice, was very easy to talk to and guided me through the whole process from creating the perfect CV to interview advice and how to approach looking for a new job. She was a perfect guide and I would highly recommend her to anyone seeking advice in any of these areas. I couldn't have found my new job without her!*

For more information on any of the above or to understand how HDA can add value to your organisation, Please contact **Joanne Simpson**, Managing Career Consultant – [jxs@hda.co.uk](mailto:jxs@hda.co.uk) / 01202 481 811

## Contact Details

[www.hda.co.uk](http://www.hda.co.uk)

Golden Cross House  
8 Duncannon Street  
Strand  
London  
WC2N 4JF

Phone: +44 207 484 5065

Fax: +44 207 484 5100

### Offices:

#### International

Argentina  
Australia  
Belgium  
Brazil  
China  
Finland  
France  
Germany  
Hong Kong  
Italy  
Ireland  
Malaysia  
Netherlands  
New Zealand  
Portugal  
Singapore  
Spain  
Switzerland  
USA

#### Regional

Birmingham  
Bournemouth  
Bristol  
Edinburgh  
Leeds  
London  
Manchester  
Swindon

### Key Contacts

**Tricia Dicks**  
CEO

Email: [phd@hda.co.uk](mailto:phd@hda.co.uk)  
Phone: +44 (0) 1202 481 811

**Clayton Glen**  
Commercial Director

Email: [cxg@hda.co.uk](mailto:cxg@hda.co.uk)  
Phone: +44 (0) 20 7484 5065

**Melissa Nealon**  
Client Partner & Project Manager  
Email: [man@hda.co.uk](mailto:man@hda.co.uk)  
Phone: +44 (0) 20 7484 5065

**Luke Bennett**  
Senior Account Manager  
Email: [llb@hda.co.uk](mailto:llb@hda.co.uk)  
Phone: +44 (0) 20 7484 5065

**Sweta Patel**  
Campaign Manager  
Email: [exp@hda.co.uk](mailto:exp@hda.co.uk)  
Phone: +44 (0) 20 7484 5065

**Jo Simpson**  
Managing Career Consultant  
Email: [jxs@hda.co.uk](mailto:jxs@hda.co.uk)  
Phone: +44 (0) 1202 481 811