



Christine Khor is director of Carrera Partners, a national marketing and sales recruitment consultancy. You can contact her on (03) 9698 8788, email [chris@carrerapartners.com.au](mailto:chris@carrerapartners.com.au) or visit [www.carrerapartners.com.au](http://www.carrerapartners.com.au).

# A recovered job market

**T**here is no denying that 2011 has followed a tough couple of years. Fortunately, it is looking like a good year so far – the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported in January that unemployment had dropped to 5.3 percent and job advertisement series rates are telling us that employment ads are up two percent.

But what exactly is happening in the world of marketing and sales recruitment? As recruiters specialising in these two sectors, we enjoy a vantage point that allows us to comment on both candidates and clients. So we thought we'd report on what we are hearing on the ground.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING MONEY

If 2010 was the year of recovery, then 2011 is the year of results, with many of our clients telling us that this is the year that they are expecting a return on their recent employee acquisitions.

In fact, it has never been more clear-cut what clients are looking for. Clients are now looking for people who understand money and how to make it.

Many organisations have told us that they will no longer hire someone purely for their creative ability; they are seeking candidates who also understand the bottom line and the dreaded concept of 'return on investment'.

For many, 2010 was a year of consolidation. Companies took the time to get back to

the basics, getting both their people and planning right with the view that 2011 was going to be the year for big results.

And what I am hearing on the ground is that many businesses now believe that these big results will only happen if they have a team that is as creative minded as they are business savvy.

As a result, there continues to be more emphasis placed on proving capabilities. It is no longer enough to develop a great strategy; it is now all about delivering. Employers want evidence and they want proof. They want numbers. There are many great strategists out there, but if you are a marketer that can't execute and deliver a ROI then you may struggle. They want to see strategies that result in growth – share, margin, value – not just volume. They want to see costs savings and increases in efficiency. They want marketers to understand the impact of their advertising spend and the rationale for advertising. 'Because we always advertise in summer' is not a reason.

What does this mean for the industry? Are we entering a new era of marketing conservatism? Are we going to end up with a generation of 'bean counter' marketers more concerned with budgets than the big idea? We hope not. And time will tell. The global financial crisis (GFC) was a stark reminder of the importance of fiscal responsibility and fiscally responsible marketing but hopefully, as a profession, we can continue to grow, innovate and inspire.

## FLEXIBILITY IS KING

Businesses are now searching for marketers who are flexible and willing to get their hands dirty. Our clients want people who are down to earth, who have the right attitude. They are looking for people who will roll their sleeves up and get stuck into it, who'll help out and be loyal to them during good and bad times.

They are seeking candidates who have resilience, who are prepared to go outside their usual scope. Let's face it, there are times when you may have to attend an unscheduled presentation, or perhaps undertake a mundane activity that is outside your usual job description. And it is those who demonstrate flexibility that are being sought after by the very best businesses across the country and indeed around the world.

## CANDIDATES ON THE MOVE

While it has been an interesting year for clients, there have also been some significant developments on the candidate side.

The most notable development has been the sheer amount of, or interest in, movement. Like never before, we have had a surge of candidates telling us that they are ready to make a career move.

Many of these candidates held their jobs throughout the GFC and witnessed significant amounts of change, whether it was a restructure, senior management movement or a company merger. And these staff movements or restructures resulted in cultural change,



“Businesses are now searching for marketers who are flexible and willing to get their hands dirty.”

so many are finding that they are no longer aligned to their organisations.

For others, they tried to leave their roles last year, but they couldn't. There simply wasn't anywhere to go. So this reinvigorated market is enticing them to explore new and exciting opportunities.

Another key development relates to due diligence – we are now seeing a great deal of deliberation and research taking place before a career move, a luxury that candidates could not afford to take in previous years due to the lack of available roles. Many candidates are now looking at the total opportunity: the location of the company and whether there is a clear vision, the executive team, the management, the company culture and career opportunities, and seeing whether these resonate with their current lifestyle.

#### THE NEVER-ENDING PRESSURE OF RESOURCES

Resources are (again) top of every marketer's mind. There never seems to be enough money or personnel to do all the things that need to be done. But this is not a new problem. What is new is the additional dynamic of social media. Our industry has fallen in love with the idea of social media, but there is a misconception that it's cheap (which is only partially right). So, now marketers are expected to incorporate social media activity into their existing marketing budgets. But budgets don't seem to be increasing. The marketing dollar simply has to go further.

So there seems to be endless internal discussions going on about how best to use available resources – many are debating the merits of taking money away from traditional media and investing it into social media. Marketers are responding to this challenge with both enthusiasm and trepidation.

While there is a flurry of digital activity, there seems to be a level of confusion being felt in the market with regards to social media – many of the candidates that we are meeting with are unsure how to leverage available opportunities such as Twitter, blogs or Facebook, without access to additional funds.

And while there are many people out there who think of social media as a low-cost resource, experienced marketers know that

to manage these resources successfully, there must be substantial investments of time and money. It's simply not enough to have a Facebook page or create a blog, someone has to manage and nurture them, which, in itself, is creating a new type of marketing role.

#### WHAT IS AHEAD OF US?

If recent events are anything to go by, we are going to continue to see some new exciting roles come onto the market. These roles will mainly be forward-planning roles, roles focusing on insight and innovation as organisations are now looking firmly towards the future.

The marketing sector was hit harder than many others during the downturn, but thankfully all signs are telling us that there are great opportunities ahead. Rather than the peaks and troughs experienced in years past, it looks like there is steady growth ahead of us and this stability will surely be a comfort to the sector.

It is also expected that clients will continue to invest additional time on each placement to ensure they are finding the right candidate.

#### OUR ADVICE?

It is a great time to assess what it is that you want. Is your current employer going to give

this to you? If not, then it may be time to talk to your manager or HR manager. And if after discussions with them, it still doesn't look as though you are aligned, then it may be time to look elsewhere.

To ensure you make the most of the opportunities, take the time to write a business plan for yourself. Write down what it is that you want to achieve. It may be something major, like a new role at a new company, or it may be something minor, like developing a relationship with a manager or peer.

Take the time to ensure your CV is up-to-date. Even if you are not planning on moving immediately, it is a smart idea to keep it updated.

Finally, build a relationship with a recruiter that you trust. You don't need to talk to them every week, it may be every two, three or even six months, but a relationship with a specialist recruiter is going to ensure you are alerted to the opportunities. There are still a large percentage of jobs that don't get advertised and your recruiter will be able to keep you informed about these and provide regular market updates.

With many organisations and candidates currently putting the feelers out, you never know just what, or who, is around the corner. **M**