

## Comments on the unemployment figures released Nov 2011

The latest unemployment figures from the Office of National Statistics for Yorkshire and the Humber showed that 51,000 had become unemployed in the three months to the end of September. This means that just over 10% of the working population of our region is now unemployed, the highest rate of any region in the country.

As many of you may have seen I appeared on BBC Radio York, ITV Yorkshire Calendar, BBC 1 Look North and BBC 1 Yorkshire late bulletin in what was a flurry of media interest in this particularly bad news.

It is not all bad news every recruitment website I look at has at least 6,000 vacancies, but competition for those roles is stiff, and with Christmas approaching many people are adopting the point click apply approach to getting a new job and it appears applying for absolutely every vacancy they can find no matter how unqualified they are for it.

I know that many of our members have been affected by the round of job cuts that is affecting the public sector and continues to be a feature of the private sector as well, as it continues to adapt to the restrictions created by the changing economic climate.

Receiving a stream of rejections can be a disheartening experience, for even the most confident of job hunters. It is a subject that featured prominently in all the media interviews I have done over recent weeks and was the focus of my fortnightly HR slot on the Drive Show on BBC Radio York on 28<sup>th</sup> November.

My advice for job hunters is to read the job adverts carefully and dispassionately, looking for key phrases that mean you are unlikely to be invited to attend an interview. This will reduce the risk of an immediate rejection and allow you to focus on creating jaw-droppingly good applications for the jobs that you are more likely to get.

Another issue that has come up recently is the number of employers who do not acknowledge applications or inform candidates of the outcome of their application, sometimes even after an interview.

I can remember back in the eighties during a similar recession when budget cuts meant that we had to stop acknowledging the receipt of applications. Nowadays it seems just a simple decision, but at the time it was something over which the whole team agonised. The cost of postage simply made it impossible to continue. But still it seemed somewhat unprofessional.

Now the advent of email communications means that this cost is not a major issue. Neither is the issue of time; it used to take hours to produce all those letters, check them; stuff them into envelopes etc. Now you can adopt the point click paste approach and every candidate knows the outcome of their application.

So much of what we do as HR professionals is about communication, and so much of getting that right is doing little things that show we appreciate the work our employees do. I wonder if the right thing to do is to make more of an effort to communicate with candidates in the same way.

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