

Always look before you leap!

With a tight economy, the employers' perspective on "doing the right thing" can get a little blurry. Headcount freezes are common place and can happen even when a vacancy has been advertised. So if you are in the middle of an interview process Michelle Lucas, Career Coach of greenfields offers a few top tips to ensure you are not left high and dry.

- Never hand in your resignation to your existing company before you have an offer in writing and a start date from your new one. An offer in writing is evidence that they are able to make a commitment to you and it would stand up in court if ever needed.
- Ask why the vacancy exists. Be careful if it is to replace someone who has left, rather than as a new role to support a growing business. When cuts are made, organisations will often decide not to replace leavers, putting your prospective job at risk. Instead they may choose to "shuffle" their existing employees around to cover the gap.
- Watch out for stalling signs – if it's taking longer than you would expect to arrange an interview or to confirm a decision this could be because the vacancy itself is being reviewed. So ensure you get reasons for any delays and think about how believable they really are!
- Be bold and ask how secure the budget is to support the role – the confidence of their answer will inform you about how safe the funding really is. Do you really want to take a role where the budget won't cover the extra support you need? Or where there's a lack of focus on forward campaigns or development?
- Clarify how your pay and benefits will be reviewed. Many organisations will not commit to future salary increases but it can be informative to ask how they plan to manage wages in the current climate. If a car comes with the job, be clear about how long you will have to wait for your new car and try to ensure your new one is ordered when you return your contract. In a tough climate, you may find you are given a battered pool car instead of shiny new one!
- If your job involves travel – make sure you understand what the policy entitles you to. Cost savings can sometimes lower the standard of accommodation and employees may be expected to pre-book tickets to get good rates. This can affect your flexibility and your quality of work life – so know where you stand before you start.
- Always do your research and find out how the current climate is affecting the company and the industry it operates in. Download the fact sheet on assessing where your prospective company would fit in a well known consultancy matrix – is it a "dog" or a "rising star"?

Finally, remember whilst some companies suffer in a recession others will thrive, by doing your homework you can increase the odds that you will be backing a winner!

For more information about Michelle and the coaching services she provides visit her website www.coachU4success.co.uk or call her on 07717 122950

Focusing you for success !

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