



My colleagues are all idiots!

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My colleagues are all idiots and there are no bl**dy jobs!

The title of this piece may sound dramatic, but they are sentiments we're hearing with increasing frequency! These are frustrating times for the ambitious executive. It's been a year now since the recession began with the collapse of Lehman's and although signs are promising that business is improving evidence suggests that this is more around companies maintaining the status quo and stemming the losses rather than launching strategies for growth. There are exceptions, as always, but by and large companies are hanging on to people they have, promoting internally and spreading newly vacated posts across existing resources rather than investing in new talent. All well and good in the short term, but business leaders across the industry spectrum continue to talk about preparing for the upturn and being ready to be busy. When the tap is turned on again, will burned out, overworked, neglected execs have been turned off by their employer?

When the tap is turned back on, will execs have been turned off by their employer?

When high fliers lose patience

We are receiving more and more speculative CVs from high flying strategic execs who are still securely employed with big name firms and under no threat of redundancy. These are the superstars – they have succeeded academically; risen steadily through the ranks of blue chip businesses; demonstrated entrepreneurial flair; delivered impressive commercial and operational results. In a normal market, they'd be well on their way to a Board appointment. But they suddenly find themselves under enormous pressure to achieve increasingly unrealistic results from a directionless Board. Their creative ideas to refocus their businesses are falling on deaf ears and they in turn are falling out of love with their employers. Worse still, when they would usually start to look around for a new challenge they're finding that there's simply nowhere for them to go. Their situation gets worse and they feel trapped. As one executive put it recently – "my colleagues are all idiots and there are no bl**dy jobs!"

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Desperate times call for desperate measures

So what are the likely outcomes of this scenario? One obvious result is frustration and desperate measures. Recently one corporate high flier we know resigned with nothing to go to. On the surface a crazy notion, in this day and age, particularly with three young children, but he simply didn't have the time to find a new job while under such tremendous pressure to deliver results – he has been working 16 hour days for as long as he could remember and his Board was showing no sign of engaging new talent to support him. Worse still, the Board had not communicated a clear strategy for tackling with current conditions and had

turned in on itself, so he had no idea what their long-term plans were. He leaves at the end of October and although he knows it's a risky decision he's probably one of the few who will be snapped up fast as he's a savvy networker and an exceptional performer. The Board is furious as they had built their growth plans around retaining superstars like him. Everyone has lost out and the only good news is that this creates an opportunity for someone else to step into the breach, although it's likely that his role will be spread across existing employees and exacerbate the problem even further. There are many other stories like this waiting to be told over the next few months as we're called daily by good people who just can't take it anymore.

The Board had turned in on itself and had not communicated a clear strategy for tackling market conditions

Ringling the changes - publicly

It may be a difficult nettle to grasp, but bringing in fresh talent at times like this is absolutely critical. It isn't just about bringing in a different perspective. A newly reinvigorated management team revitalises the workforce and helps this and the next generation of movers & shakers believe that they have a future without being forced to look elsewhere.

A Final Word

We hope you've found this piece interesting and useful, and we'd love to hear your thoughts on this subject. If you would like us to explore this subject in more detail, or if you would like to suggest other topics, please don't hesitate to contact us.

We look forward to working with you.

Best wishes

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