

ISSUE 13 - JULY 2008

THE RUELLA JAMES
Recruitment

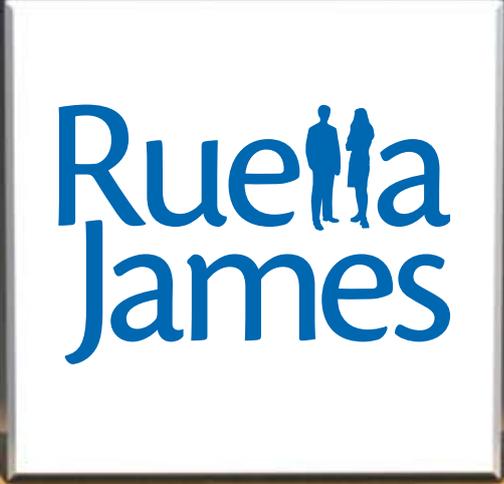
JOURNAL

**Economic
forecast**

Building a
Superbrand

**Building
your personal
brand**

Summer
reading book
reviews



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James

**PREMIERING
OUR NEW BRAND**

Welcome to the new look, Ruella James...

When we set up the company nine years ago our aim was '... to become one of the most respected providers of personnel within the Recruitment to Recruitment sector ... whilst working to the highest standards of recruitment practice...'

Overall we feel we've been successful in fulfilling these aims, and our awards and positive testimonials clearly endorse this. However in a market that has never stood still, and in a sector that still receives huge amounts of negative publicity, we felt that the time was right to clearly re-articulate our original vision and values with a new website, and to re-emphasise our brand, through a new logo, clearly indicating that ultimately our business is about people. We have also updated our colour and overall look with a more contemporary selection of tones and typefaces — we're forward thinking and our palette needed to reflect this.

Over the years, we've always been pleased to receive feedback, whether positive or negative, and we've incorporated many of our client and candidates ideas and requests within our new website.

For the first time we have a vacancy search facility, which should give you a flavour for the numerous roles that we're currently recruiting for. However as we've seen no signs of a slow down within our client base, please bear with us while we attempt to upload as many of our current roles as possible. We'll be updating the site on a daily basis, in particular we have an excellent selection of roles at the senior end of the market.

We have recently recruited a Business Manager to focus 100 per cent on pro-active candidate generation. To date 70 per cent of our placements have come through recommendation but the diversity and huge influx of roles on a daily basis means that we need to be more pro-active and creative than ever!

Laura Graham, who has experience within both mainstream recruitment and HR within the Investment Banking arena, will be joining us on the 18th August to develop this role, which we feel is fundamental to our business moving forward.

We hope you enjoy our new look newsletter, website and logo. This quarter we have focused on branding and staff retention, both important issues in a tighter market.

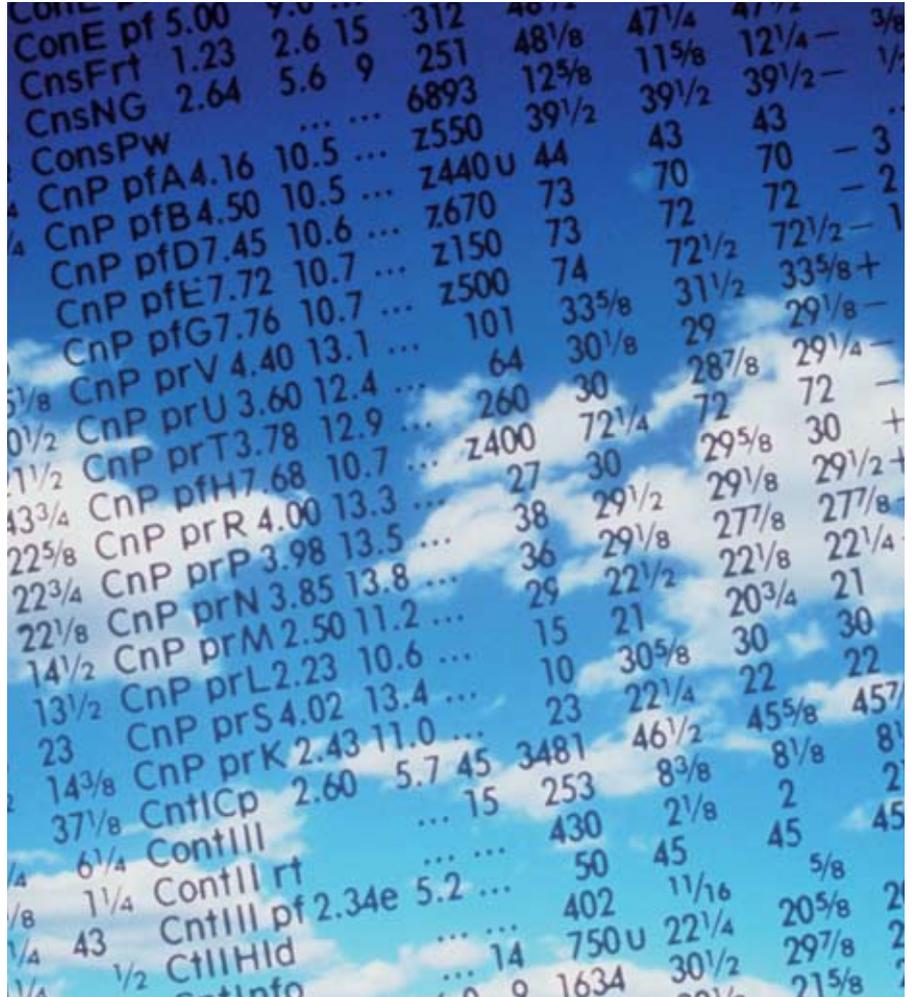
We look forward to receiving your feedback. Comments can be posted to our website www.ruellajames.com in the comments section.

Kind Regards,

Ruella.



Tough times ahead?



Everyone knows that the fortunes of the recruitment market are closely tied to the fortunes of the economy as a whole. After all, if businesses are not making money they will not want to hire new staff. The economy has rarely been out of the news over the past few months; from the subprime mortgage crisis to news of falling house prices and rising inflation, it is clear that UK Plc is going through something of a rough patch. Add rising fuel and food prices – admittedly a global rather than a local problem – and it's beginning to look very much like we are destined for a downturn, a return to the bad old days of the early eighties or nineties. But in our own sector are things as black as they are painted or are we in danger of talking up the problem to such a degree that it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy?

The good news is that, so far, the labour market is holding up remarkably well under the continued pressure. Let's have a look at some facts and figures. The last quarterly Labour Market Outlook, published by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) and KPMG, found that the job market is performing much better than

might be expected given the general economic backdrop. 37 per cent of employers said they expected to increase staffing levels over the next quarter, actually up 2 per cent on the previous three month's figures. The CIPD's analysis of the stats is that employers are adopting a cautious 'wait and see' approach rather than giving in to wholesale panic. If you work in the temporary recruitment market the news is even more positive. Research by industry body the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC) found that a quarter of employers expect to increase the number of temporary staff they use over the next six months. The reason cited by many was that they did not want to make permanent recruitment decisions in a period of such instability but still wanted their business to remain competitive.

So the truth is that the situation in the recruitment market is not as negative as you might have been led to believe. The big test now is what will happen after the summer in Q3. Of course there is always the chance that conditions could get a lot worse. But on the labour market evidence so far there are still reasons to be optimistic.

Building a superbrand

For recruiters – like all businesses in the service sector – a strong brand is key. Unlike firms selling a tangible product, recruiters are selling their expertise and a strong brand can really help to build reputation with both clients and candidates. That is particularly important in current market conditions. But what's the secret of a good brand? That's a question that businesses spend millions of pounds in consultants' fees on every year but which still has no definitive answer. Branding is definitely big business. A good brand embodies in some way the values and personality of the company which it represents. Think of the companies with strong, successful brands operating in the UK; Virgin, Mars, Coca Cola – they all have strong identities which produce a positive emotional response from consumers.

So how do you create a strong brand for your recruitment company, what is the secret of making that emotional connection with clients and customers? A brand should convey carefully thought out values, impressions and signals. As the condensation of your company's ethos, it must support your promise, story and spirit. When your brand can inspire, motivate or persuade the people who matter to your business's success, you can compete successfully.

Not only should a brand have some meaning behind it, it should be suitable for your clients. If you are known for professionalism, precision and expertise, your branding should be elegant, classic

and stylish. If your business model is stack 'em high, sell 'em cheap, you'll want something entirely different. But unfortunately there is no single foolproof way of coming up with a strong brand – the truth is that it is more art than science in getting it right.

In the staffing space only one recruitment firm made the 2008 list of UK Superbrands – Michael Page International. The company bases its image around what it calls the 'four C's' – consultants, candidates, clients and care. Note that consultants come first in the list and listen to what the Superbrands research team say about the firm: "The quality and expertise of its consultancy and support staff are the best expression of the brand values of Michael Page International. The company's policy is to recruit and train its staff to be the best in the business – to be passionate about their work and make the best matches possible between candidates and clients." Praise indeed.

It is clear that your brand needs to reflect the reality of your company – Michael Page could not make the brand claims it does if it had the same levels of staff turnover as some other large recruitment companies.

In the final analysis though branding is a delicate process; it's much easier to say what is wrong than what is right – just ask the team who tried to rebrand PricewaterhouseCoopers as 'Monday'. Today, a few million pounds later, the firm is called PWC. www.superbrands.com

Developing and retaining our people post recruitment

A recent Blessing White report regarding employee engagement highlighted the scary statistic that a mere 20 per cent of the average workforce are engaged or fully committed to their jobs. That is a worrying statistic when businesses need to be at the top of their game to perform well in the current difficult economic situation we face.

When recruiting team members, much effort is focused on finding talented candidates and placing them in the right roles but then organisations face the challenge of retaining and engaging their people.

Talent toolbox is an award winning talent management system which allows companies to measure and manage engagement levels, communicate with their people and create personal development plans to assist in the achievement of personal and organisational goals.

The online system was developed based on the results of a survey to find the key factors which make employees feel engaged with their organisations:-

1. **Communication** - is there a culture of two-way communication?
2. **Leadership** – people leave people not companies, so do the team members report into people who they admire and can learn from? When we look at ourselves, how do we appear in terms of inspiration to our team members?
3. **Career development** – do team members feel that they have a clear path for their career progression?
4. **Development** – people need to feel that the organisation is investing in them, helping them learn and grow both within their role and also with skills that are relevant for them personally.
5. **Values and aspirations** – it's important for employees to feel they are working in an organisation that values the same things that they do, that cares about their aspirations. How do we find out what's important to our people today?

Talent toolbox is an independently hosted, web-based managed software system. Managers at all levels use it to develop and retain their people by structuring and recording the review of all staff members while exploring their personal aspirations and improvement ideas for the organisation.

The way to build a successful business is to build the people that we recruit. It is important to remain focused on developing the team and to ensure that they are engaged with their role and the organisation. Talent toolbox is a key tool in this pursuit.

Mark Jacobs of Mdina Partnership Ltd

For more information please visit the web site www.mdina.co.uk/talent_t.htm



A personal approach to branding

Consultants working in the business know that it's a tough recruitment market out there at the moment. You know all about differentiating your service from your competitors, concentrating on a consultative sales approach and making sure you get the very best candidate for your client's role – the things you need to do to succeed in difficult market conditions. But have you thought about what else you could be doing to differentiate yourself from other recruiters either to win business or maybe even to get that promotion or move to another firm?

What about the concept of personal branding? An idea from the US (where else?) personal branding is about taking the idea of branding used by companies and large organisations and applying it to your own life. Your personal brand can be defined as your total perceived value relative to your competitors. It is made up of a number of discreet elements which taken together make up the brand you wish to project.

- **Personal Appearance** - Including how you package yourself in terms of presentation and deportment.
- **Personality** - Your values, goals, identity and behaviour.
- **Competencies** - These are cognitive, business, communication and technical skills that enable you to perform your job responsibilities.
- **The Differentiator** - Offering a unique value proposition or benefit to your target audience

Constructing a brand with a mixture of these elements will have a positive effect on the people around you and your future. After producing a personal brand, with these elements, you must weave them into a story or message that can be consumed by your audience. Let's take a small example. Say you are working on a high-level role for a new client. You go to meet the MD to get a job spec and find out about your client's company culture. You are taking notes while the MD explains his requirements. Which is more likely to



Presentation is key to the personal brand

project your brand values of professionalism and competence? Taking the notes with a biro and some loose leaf paper or getting the spec with an expensive silver pen and a hard-backed notebook? It's not a huge difference, you are essentially doing the same job whichever method you choose, but the impression you leave with your client will be vastly different if you take trouble to concentrate on the little touches which emphasise what you want to project as your brand values.

Personal Branding is an ongoing development that exists throughout an entire lifecycle. As your experience, competencies, physical and emotional attributes grow, your brand will enhance, much like in a product-lifecycle. Creating, maintaining and evolving your brand will help you command your prospective audience and positively communicate your perceived and unique message.

Corporate branding and personal branding are very well connected. The only apparent difference is that instead of marketing a product or service, a person is being promoted. So why not treat yourself as the product and sell, sell, sell?

www.fastcompany.com

Summer reading recommendations

With summer here again, chances are you will be heading off on holiday some time over the next month or two. Why not take the time off to read a business book to improve your skills while you get some much needed R&R; here are some recommendations for great summer reads which may help you to your first million.

Good to Great by Jim Collins

ISBN 9780712676090 Hardback - 324 Pages

Five years ago, Jim Collins asked the question, "Can a good company become a great company and if so, how?" Collins and his team of researchers began their quest by sorting through a list of 1,435 companies, looking for those that made substantial improvements in their performance over time. Peppered with dozens of stories and examples from the great and not so great, the book offers a well-reasoned road map to excellence that any organization would do well to consider.

Freakonomics by Steven D. Levitt & Stephen J. Dubner

ISBN 9780141019017 Paperback - 336 Pages

Cult bestseller, new buzz word... "Freakonomics" is at the heart of everything we see and do and the subjects that bedevil us daily: from parenting to crime, sport to politics, fat to cheating, fear to traffic jams. Asking provocative and profound questions about human motivation and contemporary living and reaching some astonishing conclusions, "Freakonomics" will make you see the familiar world through a completely original lens.

How to Get Rich by Donald Trump

ISBN 9780563522140 Hardback - 272 Pages

In his new wealth rule book "How to Get Rich", the real estate tycoon and multi-billionaire explains to us how to make a fortune, Trump style. Packed full of candid wisdom, advice and quirky rules such as 'Avoid the handshake whenever possible' and 'Get a prenuptial agreement', Trump offers insights into all aspects of business from investing wisely and impressing the boss, to maintaining your brand identity and hiring and firing your staff.

The Wisdom of Crowds by James Surowiecki

ISBN 9780349116051 Paperback - 320 Pages

James Surowiecki explores a seemingly counter-intuitive idea that has profound implications. Decisions taken by a large group, even if the individuals within the group aren't smart, are always better than decisions made by small numbers of 'experts'. This seemingly simple notion has endless and major ramifications for how businesses operate, how knowledge is advanced, how economies are (or should be) organised and how nation-states fare. With great erudition, Surowiecki ranges across the disciplines of psychology, economics, statistics and history to show just how this principle operates in the real world.