

It's **time for action** to keep up with competitors



Ana Maria Pop

In the last few months, many companies have concentrated on short-term actions to minimize the economic crisis and have lost their focus on long-term strategy. Much time and money was spent debating how this situation can affect the business, while important decisions about development, growth, expansion, and innovation have been put aside. Some of us got stuck in this environment of indecision.

Being in constant contact with the market, through our business partners on one side and job seekers on the other side, we have noticed that in the beginning of the year most companies were basing their actions on a common fear: Who will be next? Will it hit us?

Not knowing when it will hit, or how long it will last, companies started to take immediate short-term actions to prepare for hard times, such as reviewing budgets, cutting costs in detriment of research and development (R&D), decided on stopping staff increases or even laying off employees, paralyzing the business. Such actions put a tremendous amount of pressure on the management, creating stress in the organization and demotivating productive employees. Taking a step aside from this, I can't help thinking whether we are conscious of the effects of such measures, and if by doing so we are the ones attracting a crisis just by focusing our energy in that direction.

Flexibility of choice and resources

You now have basically two options. The first is to keep a low profile and see what others are doing before taking a course of action. The other option is to revise your budgets and move forward, taking advantage of current market opportunities. Based on recent market research done by our company we have noticed that while some companies are still in frozen mode, others opened their eyes and saw the opportunity to fast forward the development process and overcome the losses of a less-productive quarter. Companies have revised their budgets for development and expansion, started hiring again and in-



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vesting in those people that have a vision of the future and the know-how to drive the business in that direction.

There is a big change though in the way companies are hiring now. We have observed that many of our clients are now focused on increased quality rather than quantity compared with the previous period when they were massively hiring what was available on the market without having the choice to select the right candidates. Companies are now more aware and motivated to attract talent on their side in order to outgrow competition and gain market share even during a recession. No more hiring "on sale," it's the right time to hire highly productive employees.

One major change brought by the troubled economic situation is a more diverse and dynamic candidate market, which for companies means the possibility of hiring exactly those people they were targeting for years but were unavailable.

In troubled times, companies are in need of transformational leaders, those who can develop the vision, sell it to the team

and lead the way out into the future. These leaders cannot perform in companies that don't want to change, don't allow room for creativity, and don't invest in development and innovation. This is the main reason these leaders, who are now working for such companies, are more open to change and willing to take on new challenges that are not allowed in their current job.

It will not be easy to attract such candidates, but you will increase your chances if you are well-prepared. Find out what your competitor's strategy is, what their international financial situation is, and their management style and company culture. If people are not motivated in their current job, the chances of gaining them on your side are much higher.

Compared with the previous two years, when candidates were changing jobs to get a better salary or a better position, now they are motivated to change jobs by the company's strategy, vision and style of management. On the top of their preferences is also the financial stability of the company in the region and their reputation as a responsible employer.

To reach such candidates, there are many options to choose from depending on how much time and budget you have. The more it takes to find the right people, the higher the cost. To optimize your search you can use a mix of channels at once such as highly targeted social networking, strong employer branding, Internet, executive search and human capital companies.

Weakened competition, more market share for you

Another positive change that we observed is that companies, even if they were not planning to invest in development and expansion, now are contacting executive search companies to hire senior development specialists and other key positions because now they see the opportunity to increase their position on the market and even expand its operations on new markets due to weakened competition.

Before you start acting make sure you have an answer for the following questions:

- Are we ready to accept that change and flexibility are needed to succeed?
- How can we optimize existing resources to bring increased profits and market share?
- Do I have the right people to develop and implement new ideas?

If there is a time for opportunities and changing of roles, it is now. Take advantage of what the market is offering now, and maximize your results by investing in your company's future. ■

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