

Job hunt may prove a hard sell for marketing professionals

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MEDIA & MARKETING: There are more jobs available, but applicants may have to take pay cuts or work part-time, writes **SIOBHAN O'CONNELL**

MARKETING AND SALES professionals didn't escape last year's jobs cull.

But a new salary survey from recruitment company Brightwater indicates that better times are on the way, with more job vacancies now available than last year, albeit with much reduced salaries.

According to Brightwater, in September 2008 the marketing director in a fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) company based in Dublin would have commanded a base salary of €135,000. The same role in 2010 will pay closer to €85,000.

In the information and communications technology sector, a sales manager could earn up to €90,000 before the autumn 2008 crash. Now the same role pays €60,000 per annum.

According to Sandra Lawler, managing director of Alternatives, a firm which specialises in sourcing interim marketing professionals, 2008 was marked by marketing budget and headcount freezes but only limited redundancies. But through the second half of 2009, there were significant redundancies in marketing roles.

She says: "FMCG was particularly badly hit in 2009, driven by fundamental market changes such as increased retail pressure and sterling changes. This resulted in redundancies among senior marketers in particular. Financial services companies have also been shedding jobs and this is likely to continue this year. We also noted a large number of marketing job losses in the SME and services sector – ad agencies, tourism and of course construction."

Mairéad Fleming of Brightwater says there is new hiring activity taking place for strategic senior marketing and sales professionals within the FMCG, technology, healthcare products and services categories.

"Customer retention is back on the primary agenda. Account management is no longer seen as a headcount cost to be cut."

Less optimistic about the jobs outlook for marketing professionals in 2010 is Mark O'Donnell, head of executive selection consulting in Deloitte.

O'Donnell says companies are looking for people who can effect change and individuals who can work to a sales target and deliver. "In the jobs market, the first to come back is pure sales. That will be followed by business development, then key account management, then commercial roles and then marketing."

"There are more jobs being created. People are also starting to move around again. Because what you had in the last year was the double-edged sword where no new jobs were being created and no one was moving jobs.

"The cost containment reduction has been done in companies and companies now realise they need to take remedial action and recruit specialist skills to re-engineer their businesses because everything was

taken out last year.”

But if you are a marketing professional who has lost your job, what is the best way to go about getting a new one?

One senior candidate aged in her early 40s who lost her job last autumn tells how she has received a number of job offers after her CV was read on LinkedIn, the social networking website for professionals.

She said: “When you put your CV up on LinkedIn, it is available on a global level to companies you may not even have considered in your search for a job.

“From my experience, there are plenty of senior marketing roles available in FMCG, financial services and the technology sectors. Another growing area is digital online marketing, where companies are looking for people who can combine traditional marcomms skills with digital marketing skills.”

She adds: “When you get to the interview stage, it is very important to be able to differentiate yourself from the other candidates by not only showing what you can do in the job but also what you do in your downtime by showing initiative in social entrepreneurship activities for example. Also it is important to join your university alumni if you haven’t already done so. Attending tons of seminars relevant to your professional skill set is another good networking opportunity.”

For marketing professionals on the job hunt, O’Donnell suggests they consider doing some freelance consultancy while they seek a permanent position. His view is that businesses still need marketing expertise, even if they can’t afford a full-time person.

According to Lawler, demand for marketers has shown some signs of improvement since last September. Companies that made deep cuts over the past 18 months now have to reconsider due to factors such as natural attrition and maternity leave. However, she’s not expecting any real fillip until the second half of the year.