

There are reasons to be happy

Gavin Walker | December 1, 2011

**says Michelle Kearns, Commercial Manager,
Brightwater Recruitment Specialist**

It's no secret that good economic news has been difficult to find in recent months, but in spite of some gloomy predictions there is still plenty of good evidence from the recruitment sector to suggest the recovery is still underway in Northern Ireland.

In the last 12 months there has been returning optimism and gradual improvements in a wide range of sectors. Many companies remain cautious with recruitment plans resulting in a higher number of temporary and contract roles, but there is no escaping the fact that companies are still recruiting, albeit smartly and strategically.

Unemployment in Northern Ireland has long been the great fear for employers, employees and recruitment firms like Brightwater. We can't lose sight of the fact that unemployment in Northern Ireland currently stands at 7.4%, but that is still considerably better than the US (9), the UK as a whole (8.1) and the Republic of Ireland (14.2).

The fact remains that the quality of our talent pool is highly sought in the global marketplace and represents an attractive investment opportunity for international firms. As a relatively small regional economy, Northern Ireland attracts a disproportionate amount of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and the UK Trade and Investment Department identified Belfast as the second most attractive city in the UK for FDI.

Furthermore international powerhouses, like PWC and Deloitte, have confirmed intentions to integrate a significant number of high calibre graduates into key areas of their global operations. But it's not just large firms that are seeing an upturn in Northern Ireland.

Brightwater was amongst the first to feel the cold wind of recession and suffered as a result of the slump, but we're also now seeing the early signs of recovery as firms across a range of sectors continue to invest in people.

Without a doubt IT has been one of the strongest sectors in 2011 and other corners of resilience include Sales, Engineering, Accounting and Food Manufacturing. That's good news for everyone.

To some quarters it will come as a surprise to learn that the Northern Ireland economic landscape is yielding strong signs of progress. Of course that is no guarantee that the good times are just around the corner, but it does underline that this slow recovery is exactly that: a recovery.

