

Human resources: qualified and responsible employees missed



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The consultancy PriceWaterhouseCoopers published its survey at the recent Davos forum. This survey shows that as regards human resources, the CEOs of leading global corporations (more than 1,200 were asked) do not really intend to cut their workforce (26% of them claimed they did) and fear that they would miss highly qualified people, and therefore do not want any layoffs at all (35%). At the same time they mostly think that the demand for jobs - or conversely the supply of workforce - is principally weak, and state institutions should therefore pay more attention to education. A poll conducted by Poštovní spořitelna in Czech business a short time ago yielded very similar results.

“We don’t have people” still prevails

The findings of the survey mentioned above, which included 11,000 businessmen from 205 municipalities and 22 Prague districts - are almost surprising, given the current situation and the dominant voice of the major media. Two-thirds of the respondents are convinced that there is a large supply deficit on the workforce market in their region. At the same time an overwhelming majority of the participating businessmen opine that the situation did not change too much in this respect last year (when some companies already started laying off).

The situation, or the job market outlooks, varies largely according to regions. The workforce supply was rated the worst by the respondents in the Liberec region, and also in Třeboň and Opava, while the Vysočina region registers an increasing number of job applicants most of all. The interest to keep well-tested employees obviously results in higher wages. 70% of the contacted enterprises took this measure, in spite of the ongoing or looming recession; taking into account the data above, these measures were the rarest in the Vysočina region, where the wages grew only in 22% of the enterprises participating in the survey.

The question is how the situation will evolve in the near future. The number of enterprises that have to layoff has been increasing and in many regions, unemployment is starkly growing - for example in the glassmaking town of Světlá nad Sázavou, the unemployment rate has grown to 9%, exceeding the national average by 50%. Companies can be sure that there will be more people interested in getting jobs and the pressure on wages should be lower. However, these assumptions are only based on mere calculations, without any regard for qualifications. And in this respect the findings of Poštovní spořitelna’s survey are

alarming (and quite in line with the global conditions, as shown in the mentioned survey by PriceWaterhouseCoopers). As many as 75% of all Prague enterprises consider workers with the needed qualifications as “scarce commodity”. Even in Vysočina, where the supply is visibly the best today, only 37% of the businessmen are satisfied with the qualifications of job applicants. There is no question that the Czech Republic is not an exception within the globalized world economy. A study of the personnel situation in the construction industry called “KPMG’s Global Construction Survey 2008, Embracing Change?”, conducted by the consultancy KPMG, comes to very similar conclusions in many aspects.

Construction: “no right people”

A lack of expertise, experience and skills in the global construction industry is threatening building projects around the world, one of the key findings of the survey says. More than four fifths (84%) of the respondents think that the long-term problems with insufficient qualifications, which are very protracted and uncured, are not tackled sufficiently in the construction sector, even though 55% of them consider this problem “very serious”. It shows that almost half of all construction managers look at the shortage of high-quality workers as an obstacle to growth and a factor that increases the risks of their business, as well as their costs.

Some jobs are outright deficient in construction, while others are not so critical. Most of all, construction companies lack construction and project managers (74%), specialists and contract managers (34%) and engineers (30%). This deficit, however, does not only affect workers with better education, since the companies are also in lack of skilled workers.

According to the study authors, it is time for the whole industry to change its approach to personnel issues, and in particular to recruitment. “Construction companies should create an innovative approach to the recruitment of new employees and try to attract the best school graduates in this highly challenging global environment,” says Andreas Höfinghoff, of KPMG Czech Republic, responsible for the construction sector, adding: “On the other hand our experience from local market shows that companies are well aware of this problem and have already established intense cooperation with universities.”

The global shortage of educated, experienced and skilled workers is, to a large extent, identical with the situation in the Czech construction sector. For some time, we have heard similar laments here, recently mostly in connection with the departure of qualified workers from Russia and Ukraine. Just like their foreign counterparts, Czech builders also have to rely on imported workforce, a practice seen in 77% of the participants of KPMG’s survey. According to other surveys by the same company, a workforce deficit is a characteristic feature of the whole Central and Eastern Europe. Paradoxically, they also feel it in Ukraine, which served as a “reservoir” of construction workers for the whole region a short time ago. However, the east of Europe and its construction sector are facing a more serious problem, with an indirect personnel touch: corruption. A fifth of all domestic construction companies have encountered bribery, for example also in Ukraine; this is the highest value in the whole post-Communist Europe.

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