

A CAREER FOR LIFE

Only a decade or so ago people had joined some organisations with the idea firmly embedded that they had a job for life. In fact in some cultures around the world that still remains true. Indeed in some cultures if you hire the person the family responsibilities come with it.

In the economic crisis the notion of job for life has been blown out of the water and many people left organisations that had become part of their identity and their family. It was during this time that outplacement services really came into its own. People were sometimes distraught when they lost the job they had been doing for 20 or even 40 years. Unable to comprehend what they had done wrong, how they would even begin to think about finding a new job, the companies who let them go because they had to or go bust, did absolutely the best thing possible for their exiting employees and invested in outplacement services for them.

I spoke to many people during this time who came through our doors and were met by a coach who spent time with them focused solely on helping work out where next to go in their career. For many people this was the first time in years they had given much thought to what they really wanted to do and all the skills they have to help them get there. Workshops were full of people realising they were not alone and that it was economic circumstances that found them unemployed not their ex employer no longer valuing them. People supported each other in the workshops and outside of them. There have been so many great stories emerging of new career paths, new jobs, new companies being started up, gap years and sabbaticals being taken.

Because of the economic crisis and the large numbers of people who benefited from outplacement specialists there are now many people who have discovered that instead of a job for life they now have a career for life. Better equipped to understand their skills, how they can be transferred to other roles and companies, more confident in their self-worth and value, they are able to take more control over their career choices. I believe that a positive consequence has been born out of economic misery. There are now many more people who have been equipped to choose their career, not simply to stay in a job. There will also therefore be a much happier workforce, more engaged and productive taking positive and well informed decisions.

The outplacement industry was always valuable, now it is priceless.

Bev White

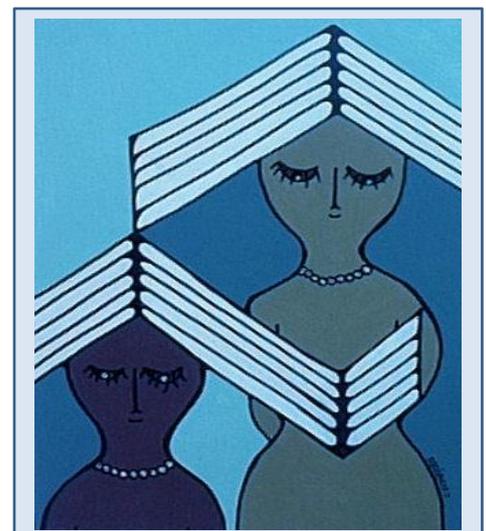
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Bev White

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The December ACF Europe Newsletter
will feature an article by
Henry Armstrong (Director London at
CDL Consulting, UK and Board
Member of ACF Europe)



ACF EUROPE - Industry Survey 2013

Executive Summary of Key Findings

The survey provides a snapshot of the outplacement industry in the summer of 2013, and indicates the key challenges faced by outplacement professionals and the opportunities for the future. This survey is a follow-up to a similar initiative by the ACF Europe in 2011. Where it is useful, comparison figures and commentary from the 2011 survey have been included in the data presented in this report. A total of 20 ACF Europe members took part from, Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, The Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

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COMMENTARY

London, November 2013

When we carried out our first survey of the European outplacement profession two years ago, we weren't completely surprised by the results. There was a clear mantra being chanted by the clients we were trying to serve, "great service and great quality - for less money." Two years later, that mantra is still a dominant factor in how the business world buys outplacement for those it has seen fit to discard in these tough economic times.

Indeed, "price", "quality" and "content of the service" are at the very top of the client wish list, practically to the exclusion of all else. This means that the outplacement profession has had to dig very deep to maintain the kinds of service our clients expect of us.

However, there is a very real danger that competitors from other sectors (like the recruitment industry) will be most responsible for driving down prices. And doing this to such an extent that the quality of service the outplacement profession offers cannot be delivered to a client base who need it the most. So, I would urge all our members to do their utmost to maintain the quality of service and client support that has distinguished the real outplacement professionals from the rest over many years. Although times may be tough, we still have a job to do providing effective and timely career transition advice to our clients, whether corporate or individual.

Finally, I'd like to thank all of the firms that took part in our study. Once again you have helped to put the outplacement industry of 2013 into perspective.

Beverley White
President, Association of Career Firms Europe

A QUICK GUIDE TO THE OUTPLACEMENT WORLD IN EUROPE IN 2013

- A continuing trend for clients to ask for more service at a reduced cost
- In addition to price pressure, the move to shorter outplacement programmes continues
- But some early signs of some recovery in certain industry sectors of unlimited programmes, particularly at senior levels...
- ... and use of outplacement to support terminations has stabilised
- Social media and personal networking are the two key routes to new employment, while recruitment agencies, job boards and print adverts see a further decline in use
- Time taken getting candidates into a new job still increasing, but pressure from clients for speed is undiminished
- Increasing number of candidates opt for interim, consulting or self-employment, reflecting limitation of mainstream job market
- No significant increase in self-funded clients, but they do get better jobs and find them quicker
- Fears for new players from other sectors in the market decreases, probably because those that could compete have already tried
- Practical industry experience, an active network and geographic knowledge are mandatory skills for outplacement professionals today
- Equally, the emergence of coaching in outplacement is a growing trend and has a direct impact of the consulting profile.

LOW-COST TREND CONTINUES

In our 2011 survey we were emphatic. “There’s no doubt, it’s the issue of the year – price.” And we went on to predict that, “there may be all sorts of reasons why prices are being driven down, but there does not appear to be an end to this.” According to our respondents that trend towards low cost has continued and shows no signs of abating.

Indeed, while back in 2011 a small percentage (10%) said they had experienced no change at all, in this year’s survey, no one reported things staying the same. Fully 70 percent of those surveyed said that there was still “clear or strong tendencies to purchase lower cost outplacement programmes.”

So, there is no indication whatsoever that the industry will face easier times in the coming year. Apparently there is a “permanent trend” in the outplacement industry, clients want to get the best service they can and pay as little as they can for it.

As part of our ongoing commitment to researching and reporting on our profession, ACF Europe will keep monitoring developments in this area in future industry surveys and in discussions with ACF members, employer organizations and individual clients.

SHORTER PROGRAMMES

Over half of those in the survey (55%) reported that there had been “clear” or “strong” trends towards purchasing outplacement programmes of a shorter duration than in previous times. Sadly, this shows no sign of improving and has, in fact remained the same as in the ACF Europe survey of two years ago.

But there were still some blue skies amongst the grey. “Most of our programmes do not have time limits,” reported one UK firm. Another, from France, added, “we still manage to sell 70 percent of our programmes as an unlimited service.”

BEST ROUTES TO GETTING HIRED

Social media sites like LinkedIn, Google plus, Facebook and Yahoo! continue to increase their influence as the job-getter places of choice. This seems to be the way to go, no matter where you are, what your profession or trade is and what you want to do next.

Asked what were the most used channels in getting a job, 95 percent of the respondents listed “social media” sites at the top. This was closely followed by “networking” at 90 percent. For this year’s survey, we also added another category “friends and family” which was recommended as a route to a job by 35 percent of those polled.

What are the trends in successful routes to new jobs ? (*)

	<u>2013</u>	<u>2011</u>
Social Media Sites	95%	71%
Networking	90%	87%
Recruitment Agencies	35%	43%
Family and Friends	35%	n/a
Job Boards	30%	20%
Print Adverts	10%	20%

(*) respondents were asked to tick all that apply



PLACEMENT TIMES

The time taken to getting outplacement candidates back into employment is still going up. Indeed, over 20 percent reported that it was taking up to a third longer for outplacement candidates to secure a new job. Two thirds of the sample reported yet more people choosing different job routes like interim management, self-employment or consulting as a way back into the marketplace.

PRICE IS THE KEY

Price is the dominant factor in client buying decisions - closely followed by quality. It would appear that outplacement agencies that can fulfil that price/quality equation are ensured of success. But there is no doubt that the pressure is still on and buyers are eager to drive down prices still further if they can.

Those two criteria apart, all the other criteria that were listed in the survey questionnaire took a very back seat in terms of importance.

Key criteria used by customers to select outplacement services

(1 = most important, 9 = least important)

Price	2.1
Quality	2.3
Content of the service	3.8
Outcomes (resettlement time)	4.2
National coverage	5.3
Online capability	6.1
Access to job vacancies	6.6
Multi-country coverage	7.3
Office facility	7.5



RENEWING CONTRACTS

Forty-four percent of the sample say that outplacement contracts are “regularly” rewarded automatically and a further 42 percent say that this happens but the client is looking to renegotiate the fee downwards - the price issue just doesn’t go away. A third also report that clients often put the contracts out to tender rather than just re-signing with the same agency.¹

¹This adds up to over 100% as respondents may put contracts out to tender, but where also looking for a new price.

COMPETITION

According to our sample only a few recruitment firms and other consulting organizations are proving to be anything like a “significant threat” to the traditional outplacement agency. However, there is no getting away from the fact that bidding on outplacement opportunities in the current economic climate is a tempting way for other types of firms to try and broaden their portfolio of services.

Executive search and recruitment firms are known to tout their “one-stop-shop” for all a company’s people-related needs - something that can be seen as an interesting idea for cash-strapped businesses. However, in the UK, at least, “one of our respondents reported that “recruiters seem to be retreating.” But they also explained that there had been, “an emergence of more localised (regional) providers.

OUTPLACEMENT COACHING

Hiring experts to provide outplacement coaching means just that - they need to know the business. While coaches should have a formal coaching qualification or belong to an accredited organization, the one thing that they need it to really have practical experience in the outplacement process and how to deal with individuals.

A GOOD NETWORK

Asked what qualities were essential for a coach to possess our sample was eager to stress that the ability to have a very well developed network in the area they operated in was paramount. "A good network, an up-to-date knowledge of industry trends and a real understanding of the job market," were the talents and qualities most often cited.

Amongst the soft skills most often listed in the ideal outplacement coach were, humanity, a people-centric approach, passion, and a really good listener. A respondent from Ireland suggested, "A good listener, strong at networking, knowledge of non-traditional employment." The non-traditional employment was, "experience of running your own business or not-for-profit sectors, to bring a different perspective to the job search."

CONCLUSION

"Do it cheaply, do it fast and do it well." That's the demand from our customers across Europe. And that is just what we have been doing. But there is a very real sense out there, that to maintain an acceptable level of service, we must quickly begin to re-educate and re-state the role of our profession. We are not recruiters, we are not job placement experts. We exist to help individuals losing their jobs find new, fulfilling careers. We must continue to make it clear to our customers that this is a vital role and that, while price is an obvious issue, there are also standards to be maintained.

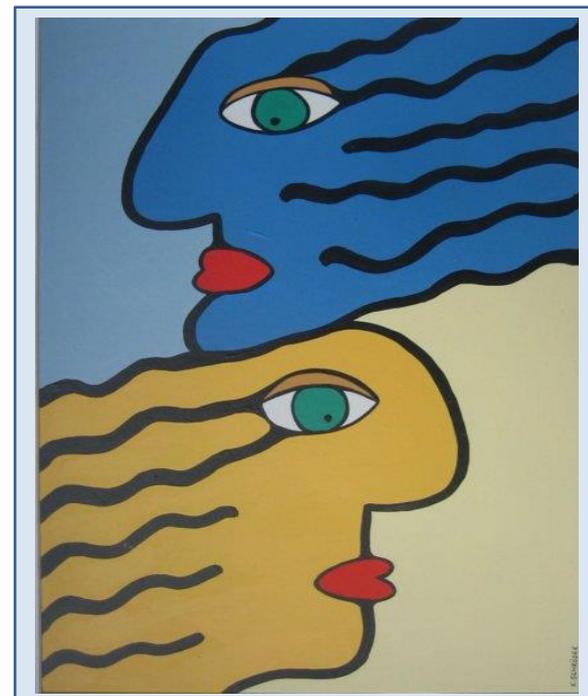
The word "creative" most usefully sums up this survey. We are all having to be more creative on our pricing structures, on how we operate, on who we use as consultants. Most of all we have to be more inventive in the services we offer. If we do that, then the outplacement profession will move forward and evolve, doing what it always does best – helping people achieve the best in their careers.

E-AUCTIONS FAIL TO ATTRACT MANY FANS

As in the past, many of the survey sample have no experience of E-auctions. Indeed, participants from Austria, Ireland and Switzerland say that it is not at all a feature of the outplacement industry in their countries.

The UK reported that there have not been as many in the past 12 months. And this was backed up by reports from France that the only time it appeared to be being used was in the case of contracts for mass redundancies. In those cases the danger is that the vast numbers involved reduce the people to the level of a commodity to be traded, rather than individuals to be assisted.

It would seem that this is not a developing trend and would appear to be confined mainly to the Anglo-Saxon world, most probably initiated in the U.S. and exported by U.S. firms operating overseas.



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