

Thinking outside the square to beat recruitment crisis

MONICA Godfrey was caring for a three month old baby on maternity leave from Leapfrog Travel when her home phone rang. It was a former colleague asking if she would like to work from home.

Godfrey, who had been supervising Leapfrog's call centre and ticketing before having her baby, jumped at the chance. She resigned from Leapfrog, and began working 15 hours a week for Travelscene American Express via remote access doing database testing for a new reservations systems.

Her story is one that is becoming increasingly common as the travel industry turns to innovative employment solutions in a bid to overcome staff shortages.

Godfrey gradually returned to working in the office, firstly on a part time basis, and eventually full time. But life was changing again. Unhappy that she was seeing so little of her son, by now two, and that she was commuting three hours a day and getting home at 7.00pm, it was time to think again.

"My husband and I decided that it was important for me to be around for my son more and we also decided that we did not want him growing up in the western suburbs but rather in Culburra Beach, a lovely coastal town 2.5 hours south of Sydney," Godfrey explained.

She approached the company with a proposal outlining why she believed her head office marketing role could be fulfilled via remote access within 20 hours per week, without any disruption to the company or the role which had altered because of changes to the company's organisational structure.

"In fact I felt it could be more efficient," she said.

The new work situation began under a contract system in August last year, and within two months became a permanent part time position.



Wendy Hyde ... mature age worker providing two days a week corporate account back-up

Then, in November, Godfrey discovered she was pregnant with her second child.

"The working situation then became even more ideal for me," she said. "I suffer a lot of morning sickness with my pregnancies, and this time I did not have to take any time off work as I could simply fulfill my role during evenings/weekends and whenever I was not feeling ill - thus my work did not have to suffer at all, and of course that was a huge benefit to me.

"With the flexibility of the role I will also be able to return to work much quicker after the birth than I would if I had to return to the office."

Wendy Hyde is another success story for those who believe in a flexible approach to work, re-entering the workplace at "over 50".

Hyde arrived in Australia from the UK, where she had worked for Thomas

Cook, in June 2006 to join her two sons who had emigrated earlier, and firstly took three months to drive around Australia.

"However, I decided I had to get back into the work force for my brain," she laughed. "I didn't want to be working full on, but I just wanted to be involved."

She approached InPlace Recruitment and now works these two days a week for Spencer Travel, handling corporate business.

"I'm only doing back up," she said, "which is exactly what I want because I can't give the commitment to customers if I'm only working two days."

Executive officer of the Travel Industry Careers Association (TICA), Amanda Van De Klundert, said, "Businesses really have to consider all options if they want to get employees and, if they are considering the mature

age market, one of the things they want is flexibility.

"It's not totally about salary any more, it's about job satisfaction, and work-life balance."

Innovative employment solutions will be part of TICA's activities over the next few months as the group starts to spread its message about careers in the industry. One event will be a panel on internships, and another will feature traineeships, while in May there will be a speaker event on the mature age market.

TICA will also be participating in an exhibition entitled "Re-Invent Your Career" at the National Careers and Employment Expo.

"Another of our workshops later in the year will be on flexible working hours," said Van De Klundert.

"We will look at the mature age market." - Alistair Smith

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