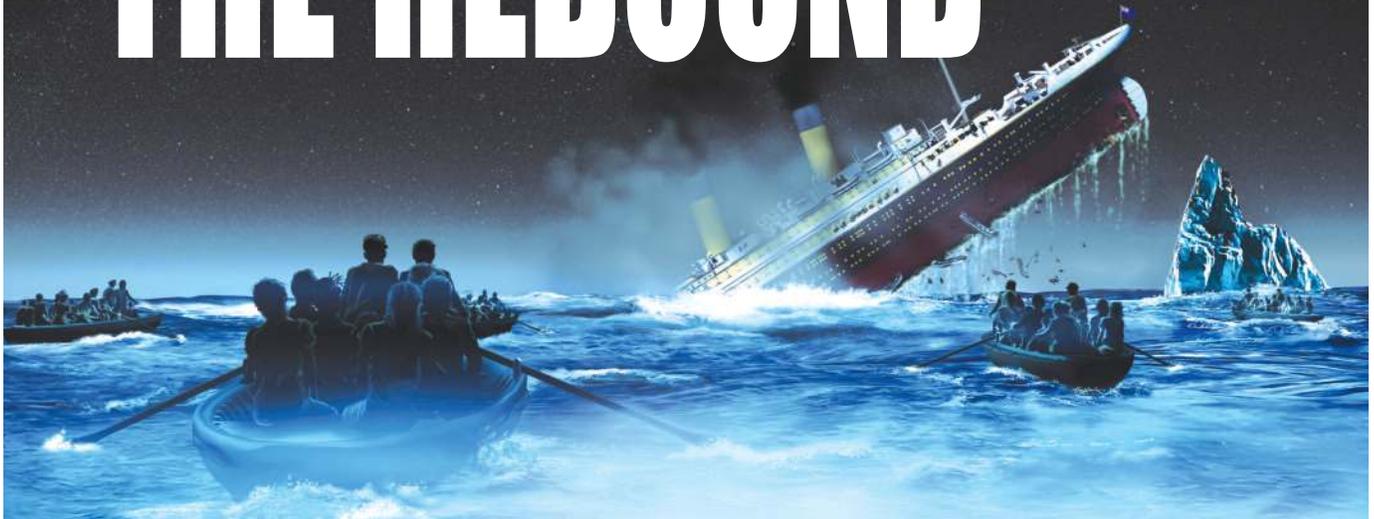


SURVIVING THE REBOUND



*Growing employment
means more workers
will jump ship.
Are you ready?*

By **CLAUDE SOLNIK**

When Anne Shybunko-Moore discovered a longtime worker was getting ready to retire, she decided to begin interviewing – and not just for new candidates.

Shybunko-Moore, president of Hauppauge-based GSE Dynamics, hired Hicksville's **Unique Business Solutions** to interview the retiring worker extensively, creating a detailed instructional guide about her job and giving her replacement a significant leg up on settling in.

"We were able to cut training time way down, by having this resource book they were able to reference," Shybunko-Moore said. "With that guide, they didn't have to have someone working next to them side by side."

As the economy improves, options open and workers age, staffing experts say companies

could see more workers exiting. Some studies suggest half to 75 percent of workers are "experiencing some level of disengagement" at their current jobs.

"I think the bad economy has masked the whole problem. There haven't been a whole lot of jobs out there, so companies haven't been doing a lot of recruiting," said Bill Bliss, a consultant who recently moved to South Carolina, but retains clients in this region. "When the economy turns around, I think there's going to be a mass exodus."

That may already be underway, as new jobs open up at a rapid rate.

The economy added 200,000 jobs over the past month and 1.9 million jobs over the past 12 months. Long Island added more than 20,000

jobs and New York added nearly 140,000 in February compared to a year ago.

"I think the economy is on the diving board for a jump. It's starting to move up," said Thomas Conoscenti, an economist. "The fundamentals are being put in place. Companies are going to start hiring."

Unique Business Solutions President Gail L. Trugman-Nikol is another who said companies should brace for departures.

"Too many people have been held back monetarily for a long time," **Trugman-Nikol** said. "I think you're going to see more people this year starting to jump ship. When you take a look at people who are overworked and haven't gotten raises in a year or two years, once they find an opportunity, they're going to think about leaving."

The improving economy, then, could bring new costs for recruitment, replacement and retraining.

Bliss said replacement costs can easily equal 150 percent or more of a worker's salary, including hiring, retraining, lost productivity and time spent supervising new employees.

"If you go through that comprehensive checklist, you'll see many items that don't even relate to the new person coming on board and learning quickly," Bliss said.

Nevertheless, executives said the biggest cost of employee turnover is the training and expertise exiting workers take with them.

"After they've been hired, we spend significant resources in training people in how to sell the way we want them to sell," said Michael Casalini, president of Bridge Capital Solutions,



ANNE SHYBUNKO-MOORE: A job manual helped GSE Dynamics slash training time.

a commercial check casher in Hauppauge. "We want to keep them, give them the skills to be long-term employees. The company benefits from the performance we get. The employee benefits from the education they get."

Trugman-Nikol said even companies that routinely back up data do little, if anything, to back up employees' knowledge.

"I've always told companies that the most important thing they can do is back up their employees' wealth of knowledge," **Trugman-**

Nikol said

Creating detailed procedure manuals for each job, documenting and explaining tasks, can help.

"It's really safeguarding the most valuable asset in the business, the knowledge of the employee who works on that task," **Trugman-Nikol** said. She said her firm sits with each employee to learn their job tasks and procedures.

Others, however, said even with manuals, new hires or promoted workers have steep learning curves.

"A new person still isn't going to be as productive, even if they have the manual that tells them how to do everything," Bliss said. "You still have the cost of losing the person, recruiting the person, assessing them."

Mentoring programs help new workers get up to speed, although they come with a price in terms of mentors' time.

"Mentoring is only as good as the person doing the mentoring," **Trugman-Nikol** said. "They must be able to convey the minutiae and the tribal knowledge of the operations."

Trugman-Nikol helped Seviroli Foods, a pasta manufacturer in Garden City, create a detailed warehouse manual, reducing employee replacement costs and helping workers learn their jobs faster.

"It was my whole receiving, shipping and production processing," Seviroli CFO Lisa Pusey said. "If somebody in that department leaves, I can hand somebody coming in the door a training manual so they can understand how the process works."

Ounce of prevention

While companies can do things that help them better train new hires, the best way to avoid replacement and retraining costs may be simply to retain workers.

And as the economy improves and positions become available, companies' retention efforts may begin to pay off.

"First, you promote from within. Foster and enhance the loyalty of the firm," said Chris Campisi, metro market manager for staffing firm Robert Half International in Uniondale. "Clients are providing profes-

sional development opportunities and staying competitive with salaries."

Others said they hire "strategically," trying to find people who will like and stay in jobs, while compensating at market rate.

"We pay very well," said Michael Casalini, president of Bridge Capital Solutions, a commercial check casher in Hauppauge. "We have good compensation packages."

But if you think most people simply follow the money, others said workers leave workplaces over other things.

"It's more personal than financial," said William Bliss, a training consultant.

"Today, people leave relationships. They don't leave companies. When a person decides to leave, nine times out of 10, it's because they no longer get along with their manager."

He said firms should recognize employees for good work and find out what they value, whether it's flexible hours or location.

"Be intentional about recognizing what your employees do," Bliss said.

"When somebody does a good job, tell them, thank them, appreciate it. It doesn't have to cost a lot of money to thank somebody for doing a good job."



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