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By Jeff N Ross, Managing Director, Hospitality Graduate Recruitment, www.h-g-r.com, and Executive Director for Middle East, Europe & Russia HES Global, www.hesglobal.com.

A large part of our business involves maintaining regular contact with the major international hotel chains, with senior Human Resource Management (both corporate and at hotel level) and with hotel General Managers and Head of Departments. It has been absolutely frightening to experience the ease to which global hoteliers have adopted and accepted the 'recruitment freeze' strategy over the last 4-6 months, and especially recently within many Middle Eastern countries, and particularly within the large corporate hotel chains.

Do not underestimate the speed with which an employer and company becomes labeled as 'not recruiting', from internal word of mouth, following a senior management directive to this effect. This has a far reaching market impact, sending a very strong signal to all business stakeholders, including potential employees, customers, and investors.

It is an understandable and proper course of action to manage and control recruitment costs, however it must be considered that poorly planned and executed recruitment freezes are very likely to seriously harm the organization in the medium to long term. Dr John Sullivan on ERE.net identifies the following risks:

- loss of certain key revenue impacting roles, which ultimately decreases revenue beyond any cost savings;
- increases in employee burnout and turnover;
- serious decrease in organisational morale and productivity;
- missing out on new talent opportunities;
- decreasing an organisation's capability to innovate; and
- damaging the employer brand, making hiring much more difficult when the economy improves.

How true all of these points are, and I would like to touch on points 4 and 6 in more detail. h-g-r deals with some 7000 hospitality students and alumni every year, via it's network of over 250 international hotel schools. Currently there is a great fear amongst students that are soon to graduate that there simply will not be any good job opportunities in the industry. Consequently, many will seek and find employment outside of the industry, and many will take the option of pursuing further education at a stage of their career where perhaps it is not the best course of action. Organisations that are not currently marketing themselves as leading hospitality employers are going to miss out. This is undisputable. What is probably not considered though, is the extent to which this will impact upon their reputation in the long term, and it should not just be assumed that when times are better, that the top applicants will come flocking back. They will



not; they will continue to be loyal to the employers that have been marketing opportunities and career development throughout the tough times, and whose name they remember and recognise.

We are not yet seeing evidence of many hospitality organisations that are taking an exceptional approach in recessionary recruitment, but it is clear that opportunities are there to be taken for those companies that are truly strategic in their organisational and Human Resources strategy. It will take much more than just advertising the fact that a company is still recruiting however. Rather, the organisation needs to demonstrate and market its commitment to employment and development of human resources, and in nurturing talent. Those that consider this only once times are better, will be playing catch up and will pay the penalty.

About Hospitality Graduate Recruitment (h-g-r)

h-g-r helps hospitality employers globally to find hotel-school students and alumni for entry level, trainee, supervisory and junior management positions. h-g-r works with over 250 international hotel schools and universities, producing a diverse database of fresh talent. Visit www.h-g-r.com for more information or contact Mr Jeff Ross, Managing Director, Hospitality Graduate Recruitment, Luzern, Switzerland, Tel Direct: +41 41 370 6759, jeff@h-g-r.com.

About Hospitality Executive Search (HES Global)

HES Global is a leading senior executive search firm serving the hospitality industry exclusively, providing worldwide, industry-wide reach in finding and recruiting quality candidates for all key hospitality management positions. Visit www.hesglobal.com for more information or contact Mr Jeff Ross, Executive Director HES Global Middle East, Europe & Russia, Tel Direct: +41 41 370 6759, jross@hesglobal.com.