



► Labour law update.....3



► The end of contracting?.....4

coffee corner quarterly

Staying in touch with our freelance professionals

"Persistence. Perfection. Patience. Power. Prioritise your passion. It keeps you sane"
~ Criss Jami, Killosophy

so what's your objective this year?

Are you just doing a job? Is money your primary goal? Do you feel beset on all sides, feeling that getting through each day is a battle?

Do you devour self-help and 'positivist' blogs, posting encouraging memes for others to see, when they're really highlighting your own despair?

Do you feel like offloading your angst when mere acquaintances politely ask how you are, or find yourself taking your frustrations out on those closest to you? Or are you the brunt of others' frustrations.

Yeh, me too. Life is tough, and it just seems to keep getting tougher.

So, when we see the success achieved by others, and compare it with the rocky, upward path that we seem to be on, it's really hard to remember the good fortune in each of our lives.

But the weirdest thing happened to me the other day. Driving home at 7pm after another awful day filled with bad news, challenges and an inhuman number of crises to be handled, I surprised the hell out of myself. Meaning to say a brief prayer asking for strength or a change in my life, I inexplicably heard myself instead say out loud, "thank you, Lord, for blessing me."

How on earth that came out when I intended quite the opposite, I don't understand. But it jolted me right out of the feeling of heaviness that was beginning concretise my whole being.

Since that evening I've tried to make a point of remembering that every challenge we have the courage or endurance to face is something that makes us stronger for the future, that grows us in some way. And to appreciate the multitude of blessings underlying every aspect of our lives.

This article was initially intended to list quotes from famous figures who've found that focusing on what they love doing—rather than on the money to be earned—has resulted in financial success.

But it seems so trite knowing the hardships so many of us face, with no sense of an end to the difficulties, and no hope of 'rescue'.

What I do want to say, though, is that as I listen to the complaints and problems of many of our team every day, I often have in the back of my mind the much harder battles being faced by someone else I spoke to a day or two prior. It's as if, superimposed on one conversation, I see an overlay of all the positive aspects of the person's life that are just being ignored.

Things like the fact that, despite unpleasant, tough or unfulfilling working circumstances and perhaps constant financial battles, the person still has love in their life, an income, their health, time and the means to take a break, opportunities to choose to be a better person, chances to encourage and uplift others, and the sunshine of each new day, each completely unique and beautiful in its own way.

So, at the outset of another year, we thought to offer you the reminder that life is rich with experience in one form or another, and if we can just remember to readjust our viewpoint now and then to acknowledge our many blessings, we can gain the strength to continue.

And then we thought to remind you to recognise the beauty in those around you, and that a few positive words can not only brighten someone's day but it could change their life. For mahala.



Our account management team will be spread very thinly for the next few months, for various reasons. We're committed to maintaining our service levels to you, and are juggling some responsibilities within the team to address the constraints until we're back on full steam. However, if you have any complaints or are not feeling the love, please contact Helen directly, on 083 390 8137 or helen@syncwize.co.za.



welcome



A very warm welcome to the following professionals who joined our team this quarter. We are privileged to represent you and can assure you that you are certainly in good company!

- Kavitha Palanisamy
- Zanap Poole
- Ayanda Gantsu

birthday wishes



Many happy returns to those of you who celebrated the passing of another year recently. We hope your special day was filled with joy and the love of those closest to you, and that the rest of your year will be filled with blessings.

Of course, we hope you were spoiled rotten too! Lots and lots of prezzies. Thank you, next.

January Andries Bester, Heather Botes, Carolyn Daly, Sylvia du Raan, Adrian Fish, Ayanda Gantsu, Shadreck Magezi, Mike Moore, Dick Putter, Lizelle Roos, Thando Toto

February Henk de Graaf, Ian Pye, Zintle Xakawa

March Keratilwe Rakobelwa, John Vesotzky

...And wow! There is a serious overload of January babies here. What were our parents all doing in April?

referral incentives



This quarter, Ian van Wyk received a R3000 referral incentive for putting us in touch with Carl Gordon, who commenced work on our team in November last year.

Please do remember that our preferred way of working is always through our trusted network—referring great candidates gives us a sense of the quality of the candidate right up front, and of course we always appreciate a warm introduction to new clients.

what's happening at the office



Many of you will have had the pleasure of dealing with Lientjie Ma-rais over the past 4 years. Linx has seen many changes in our office and been an unfailing ambassador for syncwize and our awesome team of contractors, for which we will always be grateful.

Linx has however made a decision to pursue other directions in her life, and will be finishing up with us at end March. We wish her the very best in her future endeavours and pray that she finds the fulfilment she has set out to find.

Some of you may have noticed that Unathi' waistline has been expanding ever so slightly over the past few months, and she recently handed over many of her responsibilities to her colleagues. We are thrilled to welcome her precious bundle of joy, baby Owakhe, into the world. Our congratulations go to Unathi, and our deepest wishes for blessings on both her and her little girl.



the shifting ground of SA labour law

If you've been keeping up with the recent changes to labour legislation, you'll know that as skilled professionals offering your services as independent contractors, all of you fall above the earnings threshold and are therefore unaffected by these changes.

That is not to say, however, that the contingent skills market has not been shaken to its roots by the changes in the laws, with an unintended backlash for independent contractors.

The biggest challenge faced by employers is the 'deeming' clause, whereby temporary staff earning below the threshold (ie true 'temps' in the Kelly sense of the word, earning a salary with all the perks, UIF and SDL included), who are assigned to a client for over 3 months except under clearly defined circumstances, are to be treated as 'equivalent' to permanent staff.

This clause has created uncertainty in the market as to whether such staff actually become employees of the client after this period, and there has been varied business reaction to this, with knock-on impact on their handling of contractors and even consultants, sometimes without consideration of the earnings threshold.

The situation will take quite some time to work itself out, and we anticipate interesting times ahead in the courts, with possible challenges to the legislation going right up to Constitutional Court level.

What does this mean for you as contractors?

While some clients may resort to stricter contractual terms conforming more closely to the rules of 'limited term' or 'deliverables-based' contracts, others may elect to rely more heavily on their permanent staff component—in some instances even offering the option of permanent employment to contractors, under the threat that contracting cannot continue.

Other clients, realising the danger of taking on an oversized permanent workforce in a world where contingent staffing is on an upward trend, may resort to utilising the more expensive option of consultants, turn-key services or outsourcing chunks of work, an option which brings its own challenges.

For most clients, although some form of risk-mitigating action is necessary, a general wait-and-see approach is being adopted.

Recent studies show that contingent resourcing is on the rise and it is undeniable that

this form of resourcing has a valid place in the context of staffing strategies globally.

What we have realised, though, is that these challenges may well take us back to the era of the true contractor: highly skilled, above-average and consultant-minded performers, willing to take a risk on 'the next assignment', knowing their skills and capabilities are always in demand.

Professionals who understand that they are offering a service, and do not view themselves as employees. Who understand that in this capacity they do not fall under labour law but under company law, that payment truly is dependent on delivery, that they are not on site to take leave and extended lunch breaks, that they are wholly responsible for their own financial management, and who are willing to deliver a body of work without expecting annual increases or bonuses unless agreed at the outset.

This is the type of contractor that syncwize has always represented, and the contracting model that we believe in. So, we continue to select and represent the best contracting resources in the business, and look forward to witnessing the coming shake-down.

take it easy



It can be hard to repress repetitive negative thoughts. That's the trouble with having a mind! But here are some strategies that may help to counter persistent negative thoughts.

Focused distraction. Try to think about something that takes your mind off the problem. However, studies have found it's much more effective to concentrate on only one other thing, rather than letting your mind wander.

Avoid further stressors. We make the mistake of thinking that keeping ourselves busy

will take our mind off the problem. However research shows that putting ourselves in such situations can actually make the negative thoughts return even stronger. So avoid stress.

Postpone the thought till later. Some studies suggest that deliberately avoiding thinking about the problem until a pre-set 'worry period' may help to ease the mind.

Paradoxical therapy. Sometimes focusing directly on the negative thought—an approach based on the principle of 'exposure therapy' - may help you face and deal with the negative thought. This is not an easy approach, though, and some believe it's best for obsessive compulsive behaviour.

Acceptance. Just observe the thoughts; don't try to challenge or change it, but don't give it any power.

Meditate. Mindfulness meditation may promote an attitude of compassion and non-judgement toward thoughts flitting through the mind.

Self-affirmation. Possibly, concentrating more on your positive traits and beliefs may increase social confidence and self control.

Write about it. Writing about your deepest thoughts and feelings has been extensively tested and shows various health and psychological benefits.



a dying breed? hell, no

The interesting thing, is that while SA businesses are preoccupied with the dilemma of whether to continue utilising non-permanent resources at all, the rest of the world is showing a strong trend in this direction. Various surveys* have recently been conducted, all pointing to a significant and continuing rise in the use of 'contingent', 'flexible' or 'non-perm' resources, and the fact that a well-managed contingent staffing approach is becoming a strategic imperative worldwide.

This tells us that, while we can in the short to medium term expect difficulties resulting from labour market disruptions resulting from legislative changes, opportunities abound for contingent staffers in the medium to long term.

The following is of interest, and supports what many of us already know intuitively:

- The increasing number of contingent employees has been found to be the most significant labour market shift impacting future workforce strategy... already. It is clear that the perception of what constitutes 'gainful employment' is about to undergo a significant overhaul.
- Enjoyment of their role was found to be the most important motivational factor behind staff performance. Part-time workers are significantly more motivated than full-time staff, and are generally more positive, motivated and engaged with their teams. Although this particular finding relates to part-time workers, we believe it speaks to some degree to the situation of contractors, whose services are secured for a piece of work with a clearly defined beginning and end.
- A growing proportion of the UK workforce is employed in part-time roles, and organisations that employ such staff are reaping the benefits of a talented and more engaged workforce.
- Financial incentives outside of the base salary package are relatively ineffective motivators. Performance-related

80% of South African companies are increasingly using contingent staff

bonuses have become largely ineffective in motivating or engaging employees. Individuals want to see the rewards for their work incrementally, and not have the elusive carrot of a bonus dangled before them. Once again: reward for work performed, not for loyalty, is the driving factor that employers need to consider.

- The workforce of 2020 – less than 5 years away – is set to be significantly different from its predecessors, in terms of increasing diversity, changing employee demographics, evolving definitions of work, factors that will motivate and engage workers, the form that effective leadership will need to take, and work culture (particularly insofar as talent development, retention of institutional knowledge and worker empowerment). The world of work is changing, and employers are going to need to review their thinking on what workers want.
- 80% of South African companies indicate they are *increasingly* using contingent employees in the form of independent contractors, part-timers or temporary or 'leased' employees, as well as seasonal or consultant employees. The use of contingent staff is the single most significant change to the composition of the global labour pool.
- Almost two thirds of South African employees indicate that competitive compensation is important, while just over one third of employers are able to offer this. In our experience, the ability to tailor and directly manage one's own remuneration is often a key driver in the preference for independent contracting over permanent employment.

Workforces are set to be increasingly flexible, as alternatives to the traditional relationships between employers and employees grow in popularity. 83% of executives across 27 countries (including South Africa) indicate the increased use of consultants, intermittent employees or contingent workers. It seems there will be no alternative



but for business in South Africa to adjust to the new labour force; they will just have to learn to do so within the strictures of our labour legislation. This will mean overthrowing existing mindsets, HR policies, compensation models, the de facto understanding of what form 'employees' can take, training and development, and other aspects of employee engagement. If you enjoy adventure, this journey is going to be something not to be missed!

What is needed right now is for independent contractors to (a) remain reasonable in their expectation for remuneration and not price themselves out of the market, and (b) ensure their performance and capabilities position them as key resources at their clients... essentially the two elements that we believe constitute the heart of genuine independent contracting.

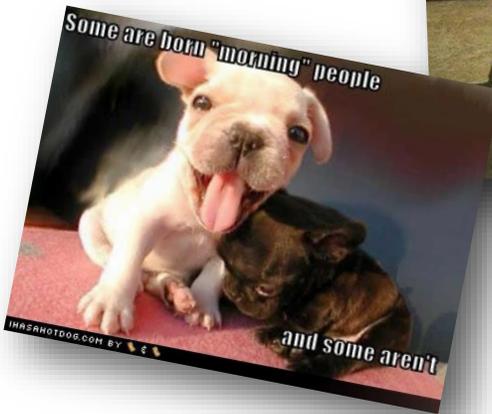
The market is tough right now, and uncertain, but this is the time when the men will be able to stand out from the boys. We say, bring it on!

*"Workforce 2020: Talent Crisis Looming", Oxford Economics, OxfordEconomics.com;

"Beyond the Bonus: Driving Employee Performance", Institute of Leadership and Management, www.i-l-m.com



must love dogs...





**Until midwinter...
Stay warm, be generous and receive gracefully, live your life in full colour, and may
you be blessed daily!**



syncwize (pty) ltd
tel: 0860 109 080 | fax: 0860 109 081
www.syncwize.co.za
Unit B16 Greenoaks Office Park | Cnr Bekker Rd & Gregory Ave | Midrand | 1685

This newsletter is intended for syncwize's contractor team, and is published quarterly as a means of conveying general information. We would love it if you'd like to contribute, place an advertisement, or have a specific request for inclusion. If so, please contact Helen.