

NewsRelease

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WHAT IMPACT IS THE HIGH COST OF FUEL HAVING ON THE JOB MARKET?

Even highly paid workers are looking for ways to cope, says MRINetwork

Philadelphia -- Companies willing to offer transportation subsidies, telecommuting options, and virtual office arrangements may have the best shot at attracting highly sought-after candidates to fill their open positions, according to **MRINetwork**, one of the world's largest search and recruitment organizations. Now that fuel prices are skyrocketing, employees who have long commutes are often more likely to consider a job change that offers either a shorter commute or other assistance in the way of subsidies or telecommuting.

"With no relief on gas prices projected anytime soon," says Michael Jalbert, president of **MRINetwork**, "the cost of commuting is starting to concern management and professional employees in the higher income brackets. In the past, these people may not have factored long commutes into their evaluation of a job offer, but the cost of getting to work is now one of the considerations that impact whether or not they accept a job offer."

In a recent poll conducted by **MRINetwork**, 438 or 75 percent of the 584 total respondents said that they would turn down a job offer that required a long commute. "If the cost of living in an urban area is high," Jalbert says, "many candidates might still have accepted an offer and chosen to live in less-expensive suburbs, but with the high cost of commuting, more are turning down offers or negotiating for higher salaries to cover the cost."

Relocations costs are also escalating, and some job searches are falling apart in the final stages, even after the candidate has accepted the job. "The initial cost of the relocation package can jump drastically by the time of the actual move date due to rising fuel costs," says Jalbert. "Some employers simply can't afford to pay the price."

The situation is further complicated by the dismal housing market in the many areas of the country. "Candidates are sometimes faced with having to rent out rather than sell their existing homes," says Jalbert, "and that makes management edgy because new employees can more easily decide to return to their previous location after testing the waters with the new company."

Some employers, says Jalbert, are taking positive steps to attract and retain talent in this environment. The most popular tactics include:

- Company-organized car pools
- Discounted mass transit passes
- Full- or part-time telecommuting programs

"Obviously the telecommuting option is the greatest challenge for employers," says Jalbert. "It requires a different kind of management when employees are not under the daily direct control of their supervisors, and many companies are uncomfortable with that situation."

Jalbert suggests that companies can begin by offering telecommuting arrangements on a case-by-case basis. "Allow some of your trusted employees to telecommute a few days each week," he recommends, "after first ensuring that they have an adequately equipped home office so that effective communication can be maintained."

What about new employees? Jalbert says that they should be required to come into the office for the first weeks for training and exposure to the company's culture. "After that period, they should be on site on a regular basis,

maybe one day a week or later on, every other week,” he says. “It’s important that they feel connected, but the more flexibility employers demonstrate, the greater their chances of securing top talent.”

Jalbert also recommends training programs for both managers and employers on how to lead virtually, on how to work virtually, and on how to integrate the two. “Telecommuting is both a recruiting and an organizational development issue that must be planned for and implemented with care,” he cautions.

About MRINetwork:

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