



WZCC UK News

Career Clinic On 'Recession-Proofing Your Career'

On 24th November 2008, over 70 WZCC-UK members and Young Zoroastrians attended a packed WZCC-UK Career Clinic to get answers to the most pressing question of the day ... "How can I protect my career during the current economic recession?" The evening began at Café Spice Namaste, a delightful Indian restaurant in London's East End, owned and managed by the respected chef, Cyrus Todiwala and his charming wife, Pervin.

Shernaz Engineer, the WZCC UK Chair, kicked off the forum by introducing the Panel of speakers, before handing over to the event's Chairman, Kris Wadia, an Executive Partner with Accenture. In keeping with the highly successful "Climbing the Corporate Ladder" clinic that Kris had led in March 2007, the event had 3 guiding principles:

- First – presenters were restricted to one PowerPoint slide which would contain their top 5 tips, and each presentation was restricted to 5 minutes
- Second – during the following 60 minutes Question and Answer session, attendees would only be entitled to ask short, sharp, relevant questions
- Third – to ensure the time invested by the Panel was being respected, the event was conducted in a highly disciplined manner, beginning with all mobile phones being switched off.



Kris then explained it was worth listening to the Panel because they had all lived through at least one recession each and

Kris Wadia Partner at Accenture, Christopher Forbes of Ph.D. Search and Selection, Shernaz Engineer, Phil Nunnerley and Rustom Tata, Partner at DMH Stallard

had learned from their career mistakes – thereby helping the audience to avoid making similar errors. He then kicked off the presentation component of the session, which was designed to



Young Zoroastrians at the career clinic with WZCC UK Chair Shernaz Engineer

cover career protection during a recession from four perspectives - employee, legal, recruitment and HR. Kris began his presentation by explaining that several views held by employees during a recession were wishful thinking. These included "My company will look after me" and, most dangerous of all, "I am irreplaceable". He explained that employees would be better positioned if they were part of the team that was charged with leading the company

through the recession, and had created a personal 'brand', preferably one that bridged two or more departments, geographies, languages, etc.

Rustom Tata, Partner and Head of Employment Group at DMH Stallard, then took up the theme from a legal perspective. He focused his presentation on areas that an employee could (or could not) challenge when made redundant, and explained that early and appropriate legal advice would help with both structuring the exit deal and the resulting tax implications.

Chris Forbes, CEO of PhD Search & Selection, a leading recruitment consultancy, turned his attention to the myths under which prospective job seekers continued to operate, even during a recession. These included “I will only move if you can secure the bonus which I am due”, through to “With my skills, finding another job will be easy”. He provided tactical advice on the best timing for an exit, and how to present one’s credentials to a prospective new employer to maximise the chances of success.

Phil Nunnerley, former Director of People Development at LloydsTSB Bank, rounded off the presentations with a holistic view of what HR professionals look for when making those difficult career-ending decisions. He explained that an employee’s willingness and ability to adapt to change, as well as having skills that would be necessary for their employer’s future success, would go a long way to staving off redundancy.

Kris Wadia then chaired an extensive Q&A session, with his trademark discipline that attendees realised was both necessary and productive, given the large audience size. The ‘short, sharp questions only’ rule allowed over 30 questions to be answered within the allocated 60 minute session, with most questioners benefiting from the Panel’s multiple perspectives as part of the overall answer.

The quality of the questions reflected the real-life and practical focus of the event and could broadly be broken down into two categories. Existing employees focused on job retention, with questions such as “Is it worth switching to another department internally as a means of avoiding redundancy?” Questions from the younger members of the audience, who were trying to get their first step on the career ladder, included “How can I get my first job if the marketplace is inundated with unemployed, yet experienced, people who are now willing to work for lower wages?”

Dorab Mistry of Godrej, who sponsored the dinner, praised the WZCC-UK’s success in attracting a large contingent of younger people, and for allowing them the opportunity to ask the questions that mattered to them. Rounding off the event, Shernaz Engineer reminded the YZs that they could get immediate feedback from Panel members on how to structure their resumes for maximum impact – an opportunity which was grabbed by several attendees. She concluded by asking the audience to show their appreciation for the knowledge and experience imparted by the Panel - and for Kris Wadia, for ensuring that every minute of the session was used productively. Shernaz thanked the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe for sponsoring Young Zoroastrians to be able to attend the event free of charge. Post-session feedback, over a sumptuous buffet dinner and drinks, was overwhelmingly positive, and was reflected in the large number of WZCC-UK membership subscriptions that were handed in during the course of the evening.

Cyrus Todiwala at “A Festival of Taste”

Dubai’s hotly anticipated gathering of some of the world’s most recognised and talented chefs, A Festival of Taste, took place in November. The star-studded line-up of Celebrity chefs travelled from across the globe to showcase their culinary skills to an audience of gourmet food lovers.



Jean-Christophe Novelli, Michel Roux, Cyrus Todiwala, James Martin, Kerry Heffernan and Brian Turner

Seven chefs took centre stage at the festival, including renowned UK chef and WZCC UK Committee Member Cyrus Todiwala. Cyrus is a regular fixture on UK television and radio and he impressed guests with his trademark culinary showmanship and signature charm. During his stay in Dubai, Cyrus was also invited to make a guest appearance on Dubai’s popular cooking programme, Chef Osama, alongside revered French chef Jean-Christophe Novelli. Famed British chefs Ainsley Harriet and Brian Turner made their inaugural appearance at the festival, alongside returning chefs James Martin, Michel Roux and Jean-Christophe Novelli. Rounding off the line-up of celebrity chefs was Kerry Heffernan of A-list frequented, New York restaurant, Jumeriah Essex House.

The grand gala dinner in the ballroom of the world’s only seven star hotel the Burj Al Arab, was a fitting end to a week long tribute to exquisite food.