



Ralph Shreeve, Group Managing Director

I'm delighted to have this opportunity to communicate directly with our broad base of clients both in Australia and in our international locations through Asia-Pacific and Europe. As you may have read in last month's edition of RossNews, we have implemented some changes in the internal management structure of Ross Human Directions, a key one of which is that Julia Ross, whom many of you know, is now in the role of Executive Deputy Chairman of the business and I have stepped from my previous role as Global Managing Director, into the role of Group Managing Director.

My new role engages with all our services and stakeholders across both of our Julia Ross and Ross brands and my intention is to work closely with many of our clients both directly and through our existing service teams, to deliver what we understand to be your key requirements and add value to your organisations.

Some of the ways I believe that we can add that value include:

- ensuring we take the time to get to know you and understand your business;
- always delivering on our promises;
- being innovative and working with you strategically, not just transactionally.

These will be just some of my areas of focus in the role of Group Managing Director and I look forward to receiving any ideas, thoughts or input that any of you in our client organisations may wish to contribute to our continuous effort to reach higher standards of excellence.

Meanwhile, I hope you enjoy this May edition of RossNews. Any feedback is welcome to marketing@rosshumandirections.com

→ macro economic update

by Glenn Meekin, Chief Financial Officer

The global economy continues to be strong, although the US economy is slowing and will act as a drag global growth. Global growth was 5.4% in 2006, but is expected to expand at slightly less than 5% in 2007. The worse than expected US economy remains a risk for global growth this year.

China is expected to continue to grow solidly in 2007 but not at the same torrid pace as in 2006. The Peoples Bank of China raised interest rates by 27 basis points on 18 March 2007 to reduce the threat of inflation. The lending rate is now 6.39%. The authorities are of the view that the inflation risk is due to excess liquidity rather than capacity constraints. The lift in interest rates has been effective as the rate of growth in the economy is continuing to slow, although the decline has been gradual. Fixed asset investment growth and industrial production have declined in recent months.

Competitiveness in Hong Kong has rebounded due to local price deflation and improved labour productivity growth and efficiency. Relative prices have fallen considerably whilst wages levels are now below those in Singapore.

In the US, recent data suggests downside risks to growth have intensified, while upside inflation risks have increased. Consumer sentiment and durable goods orders have weakened and employment growth has slumped. US growth is expected to come down to 2.2% this year, down from 3.3% in 2006. Despite this, inflation has reaccelerated in recent months. Price pressures have firmed, capacity utilisation is high, the labour market remains tight and unit labour costs are rising.

Growth is expected to ease in the euro sector due to the impact of rising interest rates. Inflationary pressures in the euro zone have resulted in the increased interest rates. The IMF has counselled that the imminent inflationary pressures justify raising interest rates to 4% by the European summer.

The New Zealand economy is still expanding. The housing market has remained resilient whilst business confidence and consumer spending are strong. The Reserve Bank lifted interest rates by 25 basis points to 7.5% on 8 March and further rate increases are expected. There are ongoing pressures on medium term inflation, particularly from the robust housing market.

Sources:

1. ANZ International Economics Monthly March 2007.
2. Australian Financial Review, 12 April 2007 – "IMF Warns of Global Slowdown" pages 1 and 14, author Tony Walker.

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→ ergonomics

by Paula Spencer,
OHS & Injury Management Officer

As more of us spend increasing time at our computer workstation, we need to be aware of how the design and arrangement of our equipment can impact our comfort, health and productivity.

Below are some helpful tips to ensure that your workstation is setup correctly to minimise the possibility of injury to your hand or wrist.

- Change the sensitivity of the clicker on you mouse and select single rather than double click. You can make these changes via the software commands in the control panel of the main menu.
- The mouse must fit your hand – so if you are left-handed, use a mouse specifically designed for left-handed people. If it is a hand neutral mouse – ensure your mouse is set up correctly. You can check this by accessing the software controls and changing the button functions for the correct hand.
- Ensure your desk is set up so that commonly used items such as the mouse and phone are within easy reach.
- Your keyboard and mouse should be kept at the same height.
- Keep your mouse trackball and socket clean so it moves smoothly, thereby placing less stress on your wrists.
- Use your index finger for the "0" key when using the numerical pad.
- Limit the time using hand held devices such as mobile phones and blackberries.
- Taking short 'ergo breaks' should form a normal part of your workday.

Ergo breaks can include exercises for the wrist and hand such as:

- Rest forearm on edge of the desk – bend fingers back for 5 seconds.
- Press hand against desktop, stretching fingers and wrist for 5 seconds.
- Tightly clench hand and release, fanning out fingers five times.
- Rotate the thumbs clockwise and counter clockwise.

Room Layouts

Selecting an appropriate room layout plays an important role in the success of your presentation. Ask yourself what kind of communication you want to take place, then plan your room arrangement accordingly. Let's look at several possible room arrangements

Theatre/Classroom

If you will be speaking in an amphitheatre with fixed seats, you will not have much choice. However, if the location is to be in a room with movable chairs and tables or desks, you will have a choice in room layout. A standard classroom arrangement fosters communication only between the presenter and the group, whilst an altered classroom arrangement (with the desks on an angle towards the presenter) improves the opportunity for eye contact between participants and makes things feel less regimented. This arrangement may also allow you more room to move 'into' the group, if you are so inclined.

Conference Table and U-Shape

In a U-shape configuration, participants lose the sense of being part of a large, anonymous group. This layout can be used for groups of 18 or fewer. Making the three sides of the U roughly the same length will increase communication and participation

Small-Group Style (Rounds)

By seating people at only one side of a round table, you allow seating for approximately four to six people, with the open part of the round facing the visual aids and the presenter. This plan allows participation in small groups, sharing with the larger group, and interaction with the presenter. If you do not have round tables available, a similar arrangement can be accomplished with rectangular tables with two or three chairs on each side of the table.

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Theatre Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good for large groups • Maintains control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limits discussion • Not good for all visual aids
Classroom Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone can see visuals • You are the focus of attention • You can move into the groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a "lecture" atmosphere • Not conducive to group interaction
Conference Table Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes a formal atmosphere • Structured 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitable for small groups only
U-Shape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone can see presenter and visual aids • Presenter can walk amongst audience • Encourages dialogue with the presenter • Good for use with all types of visual aids 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult for small group work • Limits number of participants
Small-Group Style (Rounds)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages discussion • Creates an informal feeling • You are the focus of attention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to manage side conversations • Takes more time because of interaction within the group

Source: "Delivering Effective training sessions" McArdel, Geri

personal coach

Overcoming Obstacles

"It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled, or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes short again and again, who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself in a worthy cause, who at best knows achievement and who at the worst if he fails at least fails while daring greatly so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat." Theodore Roosevelt, 1910

Many of us encounter obstacles in attempting to achieve our goals and objectives, whether at work or in other parts of our lives. But take a bow for trying. This quote from Teddy Roosevelt is all about stumbling and getting back up again to find another way around the obstacles that may have tripped you up. Being one of those prepared to put yourself out there in the first place means that you've already been more successful than many others who can only find it in themselves to criticise the efforts of others.

Some years later in 1959, President John F. Kennedy said "In the Chinese language, the word 'crisis' is composed of two characters, one representing danger, and one representing opportunity.... let us make the most of our opportunities. For if they are lost now, they may never come again."

Sometimes, when unexpected obstacles arise between our objectives and us it can seem like a crisis, but a critical part of overcoming obstacles is learning to see the opportunity that the obstacle presents.

Catherine Livingstone who is a director of Telstra and Macquarie Bank as well as President of Chief Executive Women told the Financial Review recently that her motto is "to go with the green arrows." She says "if there is a red light blocking your way, you can sit there and hope it changes or you can find the green arrow that takes you around it don't get stuck on what you can't do." A positive attitude supported by simple but powerful mantras such as this can help you regain your focus on your objective rather than becoming preoccupied in obstacles that may confront you.

From time to time, you or your team members are likely to face obstacles in achieving goals and objectives that cause a stumble. Often, the commitment to return to the fray can be affected by fear – fear of blame by the company or team if they don't succeed; fear of failure being a black mark against their future; fear of not being trusted with a future opportunity to contribute. In this way, fear-based work cultures can stultify creativity, smother a solutions orientation and stifle innovation.

Workplaces that support and reward a creative culture encourage innovative thinking and original problem solving, rather than focusing on risk, failure or blame. In such an environment, new ideas are encouraged whether they result in success or failure. In such an environment, obstacles and problems are more readily identified and once identified, are more likely to be effectively solved.

A further benefit of such a culture is that team members are significantly more likely to feel engaged with their job and the company and therefore are more likely to show up each day, be easier to retain and be more productive. All benefits that are highly relevant in today's high-demand skills environment.