



# The Year 2006: A Review and Reflection

*Hindsight is a wonderful thing and it is therefore easy to reflect on 2006 and determine that the reason VWA had such a successful year is down to our consultant's hard work, integrity and determination to find you the 'right calibre' of staff! Nearly 18 years on, we are brave enough to admit that "being good at what you do" isn't enough, and that each year a combination of factors will determine how fat the goose feels by year end!*



In 2006 these factors included a strong economy, a bullish London market, an increase in salary levels for graduates and senior level PA's, and most important to us, a huge increase in the number of **clients recommending new clients to us**. New client business is something we value highly of course and take time to analyse. It is interesting, year on year, to evaluate the activity in different industry sectors as well as the level of client contact we are dealing with.

In 2006, we averaged nine new clients per month, 54% of which were within **Private Equity**. It seems that 2006 saw a huge growth in this sector, similar to what happened in the Fund Management sector four years ago. Whilst we would not go as far as comparing this to the dot-com era and our diversification into the new media sector, it has had a fairly significant impact on our client base.

The **permanent team** saw clients moving forward and offering candidates far more quickly than last year, as the market has picked up pace and key decision-makers are involved in the interview process. We found that often, only one or two interviews were required and the candidate was being offered the role within two days of first interview. This has changed significantly compared to even last year when the average recruitment duration was three weeks.

Our **temporary business** experienced steady growth month-on-month and yet again, temp-to-perms proved to be a preferred method of recruiting for some of our clients. A shortage of highly experienced PA's, especially those with specific industry experience, resulted in clients offering higher hourly rates. We have no doubt that this highly competitive area of recruitment relies on our clients' trust in our knowledge of 'cultural fit and skills'. I believe our good relationships with some extremely loyal clients is the reason for our success in the temporary area – and we value this greatly.

**VWA Consulting** experienced a significant increase in client demand, with a 50% increase in coaching activity at Director-level; a rise in 360° feedback, and generally more emphasis on development of senior level talent, rather than assessment. This reflects our clients' interest in developing and retaining their top people. It seems that it is no longer a taboo to 'be coached', nor does 'auditing top talent' in your organization need to be threatening. This commitment to investing in your staff assures me that 'succession planning' is firmly on the HR Map and is something that my Occupational Psychologists, Consultants and myself will continue to specialise in.

So what are my predictions for

2007...? I have many, but let's keep them relevant to business life! We are delighted to be starting this year with real evidence that most of our clients experienced a buoyant 2006 and expect continued growth this year. We feel confident that you value our approach to recruitment and retention, and understand that we are able to assist you in your search for a broad range of roles from PA's to HR professionals, from marketing staff, Project Managers, Researchers, Analysts to recent Graduates seeking their first career move.

We firmly believe that our specialism in the area of career development, and the professional advice we can offer that is not provided by our competitors, makes us unique in our service to clients and candidates alike. My prediction is therefore that we will have a busy 2007; we will continue to work closely with our valued clients, who in turn will further expand the use of our services. Thank you for your loyalty and we look forward to another successful year in 2007!

VISIT: [www.vwa.com](http://www.vwa.com)

# VWA Consulting website sports a new look

You might remember the success we had when we re-launched the VWA website with the nature theme, which has since helped to portray our image, features and benefits to existing and new clients and candidates.

We are now launching a similarly attractive and informative site for our Consulting business, which has continued to expand and diversify its client base. Our consulting clients draw on our expertise to add value to their businesses through our assessment, development, coaching and training services. Having had a successful year of growth in 2006 we are poised for an even busier year in 2007!

Look out for an email with our launch competition, in which we will be giving away a glamorous dinner for two at a Gordon Ramsay restaurant, a complimentary personal development programme, as well as flowers and wine for six months.

VWA Consulting - <http://www.vwaconsulting.co.uk>



## Are you aware of the New Employment Equality Age Regulations?

***The new Employment Equality (Age) Regulations make it illegal for employers to discriminate, directly or indirectly, against employees, trainees or job seekers because of their age, since 1 October 2006. They ensure that all workers, regardless of age, have the same rights in terms of training and promotion.***

Companies who have not as yet taken any action to adapt will need to review their HR policies to ensure compliance. Equally important is the recognition and awareness of age diversity and discrimination amongst staff; a good practice guide is a helpful tool to ensure best practice and to avoid employers being held responsible for the actions of their employees.

We have identified a number of helpful hints to avoid potential recruitment pitfalls:

### **Job Descriptions and Person Specifications**

These should clearly state the tasks that will need doing along with the skills and relevant experience required to do the job. Stating on a Job Description that the position requires "3-5 years experience" or "a dynamic individual" is now illegal.

### **Job Applications**

These can no longer request a date of birth. Only ask for the minimum of personal details. Moreover it is prudent to avoid unnecessary questions about periods of time and dates.

### **Advertising**

It is now illegal to use hidden messages connected to age in a job advert and age limits should be removed. Expressions such as "energetic" may be interpreted as being discriminatory against an older applicant as would "a bright, young graduate", "second jobber" or "only candidates with GCSE's as a minimum need apply". Likewise, it is unlawful to use phrases such as "mature", "an experienced, senior-level individual" or "a minimum of x years experience" which discriminates against a younger applicant. The quality and relevance of experience is important, not the number of years.

### **Interviewing & Selection**

When interviewing for a position, certain questions should not be asked, either directly or indirectly, and these include whether a candidate is married, a

partner in a same-sex partnership, or whether the individual plans to have children. Questions about a person's sexual orientation or their religion should also not be asked. The new age discrimination legislation makes it unlawful to ask about a person's age in an interview.

### **Avoiding Problems and Vulnerability to Law Suits**

Using selection criteria will assist with decision making and formally record the fairness of a company's interview process. Moreover, by involving employees of different ages in the interviewing and selection process will avoid a bias towards a particular age group and aid the selection of candidates on their skills and abilities.

Staff involved in the interview and selection process should all be trained in equal opportunities to avoid discriminating unwittingly against candidates and to avoid assumptions being made about an individual's capability based on age.

Avoiding age discrimination should be followed through into the induction, training and development processes of a company.

The British workforce is ageing and along with it, historical prejudices and stereotyping in the recruitment and selection processes will undergo radical modernisation. Breaking through these attitudes is fundamental and a challenge that we all face to eliminate age discrimination in the workplace.

