

Firms tempt top staff with 18pc pay rises

Company cars and gym fees on offer

By Christian McCashin

FIRMS are offering company cars, gym memberships and flexible hours to attract key employees in scenarios reminiscent of the boom, a report has revealed.

In-demand workers are commanding wages rises of up to 10 per cent – and senior executives are getting as much as 18 per cent at a time when inflation is near zero, said recruitment agency Brightwater.

Average wage hikes are between 2 and 5 per cent, way above the low inflation rate helped by falling oil prices and low food costs.

As the economy picks up, companies are offering recruits gym membership, a parking space,



Alert: Bluewater's David Bloch

specialisms that candidates may once again be more in the driving seat, reminiscent of those boom days.

And companies are willing to go 'beyond their budget' to land the right people.

At the height of the Celtic Tiger in 2007, there were 2.15million people employed in Ireland, 220,000 more than now.

Mr Bloch said: 'While we are nowhere near 2007 levels, we are growing.'

'We have noticed significantly increased recruitment activity particularly in the banking, legal and accountancy sectors.'

'We're [also] witnessing an encouraging increase in senior-level hires across industry and financial services.'

The survey also revealed an expansion in top-end recruitment at small and medium-sized

homegrown businesses. Mr Bloch said: 'This is a very positive indicator and a great boost in confidence for the domestic market.'

'Where companies have remained with either a financial director or financial controller, for example, they are now re-hiring the second post due to increased confidence in their markets and their own company results from 2013 into 2014 and beyond.'

'This is resulting in a natural chain reaction. Candidates who did not look for new opportunities throughout the recession are now beginning to look for and consider a career move.'

Finance is leading the way in new jobs, as the sector is recruiting more people to new jobs rather than replacing staff who have left.

The report said: 'Bucking the trend, executive-level base salaries have seen increases ranging from 10 per cent to as much as 18 per cent.' Bonuses are ranging from 18 per cent to as high as 55 per cent of salary.

Brightwater also warns companies will start making counter offers to retain key staff over the next year, so it advises employers to look after key staff.

Mr Bloch said: 'We are pre-empting that counter offers will become more of an issue in 2015 for niche roles with specific and hard-to-find skill sets.'

'It would be advisable and certainly very cost-efficient for companies to look after these people before they approach the market and have in place strong engagement and ongoing communications surrounding career trajectory paths for their current leaders and leaders of the future.'

More than 800 people, including employers and job candidates, were questioned for the survey.

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Dr Mark Dooley



MORAL MATTERS

Christmas and home, the only true solace this side of paradise

I AM far from home, far from those I cherish and love. I am in France and am in superb hands. However, even my wonderful hosts know how difficult it is for me to be away from home, especially at Christmas.

Home: that domain of the heart to which we all desire to return. Even in an age when people are so detached and disconnected, they still dream of venturing homewards. We still yearn to move from all the madness into a world of warmth.

As the great feast draws near, it is for this that so many pilgrims are now pining. They long to escape the 'maddening crowd's ignoble strife' and return to their place of refuge and rest. They long to make haste to that haven of love where all our cares are soon overcome.

We all know what it feels like to return home in this season of joy. As you travel, the excitement steadily builds.

You imagine the blissful hours ahead with those for whom you live and breathe. You picture the family sitting by the fire, eating and chatting their way through the day.

The journey over, you make your way towards the front door. The smoke is rising from the chimney, the lamps are lit and the old place has never looked so good. You glance across the garden and recall those magic moments playing with them in the snow.

You see the glistening tree through the window. The decorations have been on the go for years and yet, somehow, they never cease to sparkle. It is an enchanting wonderland where reality is forged from dreams that cannot die.

You open the door and there it is: the sweet aroma of home. Each home has its own unique scent that never fails to comfort and console.

As you close your eyes and take a breath, the golden memories come flooding back and a tear glides gently to the ground.

Growing up, all you ever wanted was to leave home. Now, you cherish the benedictions of belonging. Each time you have to leave, something inside you dies.

It all happens in the kitchen. It is there, in the heart of the home, that we are physically and spiritually nourished. It is there, as we gather around our little altar, that we share and care.

It is the first room that you head to. As you pass through the hallway, you notice some parcels under the tree and you smile. Through the half-open door, you see something that thrills the heart: your loved ones have

already gathered and are making merry. The roast has been in the oven for hours and your taste buds are on fire. As the pots simmer on the stove, the children are sitting on the floor giggling hysterically.

It is a scene from Heaven, a reminder that nothing matters more than roots. To know that you belong somewhere, that you belong to a place where roots run deep, is such a powerful thing. It is to know that, no matter what life has in store, there is a place where you are loved.

You linger outside a little longer. You watch as they laugh and play, sip and sing. The reflection of the candles in the window sets your soul aglow.

You can't resist pushing open the door. They drop everything and jump into your arms. Tears flow and the heart skips a beat as you cling to them for dear life.

You tell of your journey and the happiness of being home. Someone slides a glass into your hand. You sink into your favourite chair as the little ones scramble onto your knee.

Suddenly, you are no longer a spectator but a participant in the play. You have so much to say, so many stories to tell. It doesn't matter, for now you have all the time in the world.

You are back home, back in the tender presence of those you love. You sit in the midst of music and merriment, savouring every second of life less ordinary.

You stand to carve the roast and are scolded for stealing the first slice.

YOU take your place at the table as the scent of the season rises from the plates. The glass is replenished and you offer a toast to home, family and lasting happiness. You look at the beaming smiles and realise this is how it always should be.

Home: that sanctuary of the soul where each of us longs to return at journey's end. That place of peace where we can be ourselves, and where the treasure of the heart is forever stored. It is there, with those we would rather perish than live without, that we find the only true solace this side of paradise.

I am far from home, but soon I shall return. Very soon, I shall catch sight of a glistening tree through the window. I shall open the door, grip them tightly and savour again that wondrous feeling of all things bright and beautiful.

And then I shall give thanks that I am back where I belong – back to that place where the joy of Christmas is ours, not solely for this wondrous season, but forever.

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DPP to rule on Dolores 'air rage' by Christmas

By Gordon Deegan

SINGER Dolores O'Riordan will learn her fate before Christmas on three alleged assaults arising from an 'air rage' incident at Shannon Airport last month.

The Garda file on the 43-year-old Cranberries singer has gone to the DPP.

It contains allegations of assault by the singer against Aer Lingus flight attendant Carmel Coyne, a garda and an Airport Police Officer at Shannon on November 10.

It is alleged that Ms O'Riordan – who says she suffers from bipolar disorder – spat at both the garda and the airport police officer.

The file was sent last week and due to the lack of complexity in the case, Clare gardaí expect a decision before the Christmas break.

If charges follow and the case



Decision: Dolores O'Riordan

goes to court in the New Year, Ms O'Riordan's mental state at the time of the incident is expected to play a prominent role in her defence.

It is alleged that the mother of three was taken from the Aer Lingus flight from JFK by airport police and, further, that she

pushed, hit and spat at one of the police. Gardaí were called and it is further alleged that Ms O'Riordan was flailing out and hit one garda in the face and body and also spat in his face.

The file contains statements from around 12 witnesses.

If the DPP does decide to prosecute, it will be most likely for Section 2 Assault under the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act 1997, which carries penalties up to six months in prison or a fine not exceeding €1,900.

In a newspaper interview last month, Dolores apologised to Ms Coyne for stamping on her foot.

She said: 'Carmel is lovely... I really like her. She knows for a fact that it was an accident with my metal shoes. I'm sorry, Carmel. You know I love you and if there is any way I can help you, I'll be there for you.'