
PRESS RELEASE

Employment: ABI, high quality employment in banks, despite low economic growth

Italian banks at cutting edge for human resources management.

A summary of employment market prospects in the sector, from the viewpoint of acknowledging merit and competence during the two-day ABI "HR 2008" event. Mr. Faissola said, "Merit and competences are the levers for strengthening workers' motivation, as well as development and reputation of companies"

The Chairman of the Italian Banking Association, Mr. Corrado Faissola, during his opening statement at the two-day ABI "Hr 2008 – Banks and Human resources: competence and merit to grow in the changing world of banks" annual convention, stated, "The unimpressive performance of Italian economy during the past years, and the recent European Union forecasts for the low growth of our Country (0.5% in 2008) do not prevent the Italian banking sector from being able to maintain high quality employment levels". Mr. Faissola emphasized that, "Italian banks were able to offer highly professional employment opportunities to a growing number of employees notwithstanding the ever-changing situation, due to amalgamation and reorganisation processes, as well as early retirements": in the past ten years the percentage of graduates increased from 18% to 33%, while, 4 out of 10 employees of the total work force are women.

In the credit sector, as a matter of fact, generational turnover is a very common phenomenon: in 2006 alone, 19 thousand new employees were hired, thanks to well-thought and focused policies. According to the General Manager of ABI, Mr. Giuseppe Zadra, "The remarkable technological progress of the system did not limit employment offer, especially owing to the significant development of demand of financial and banking services. This is the positive result of a ten-year process of concentration of the credit sector, which combined growth of efficiency, and competitiveness, with greater attention to the quality of "human resources" as driving force for development. Our challenge at present is to innovate human resources management models within the context of evolving international corporate organisation".

Merit and competence are the core values of the convention, identified as fundamental levers for increasing employee motivation, productivity, and strengthening the reputation of companies. They become even more important if analysed in the current picture of market globalisation and internalisation, of evolving trade union relations and labour law, of growing attention to corporate environment, to professional qualification, to work safety, to reconciling work time and free time, to equal opportunities, to employee remuneration and incentive systems. A healthy management of human resources fully coincides with the organisation strategies of credit companies that are increasingly directed towards enhancing their performance and reinforcing consumer confidence.

All the above objectives were central to the recent sector contract renewal, where the question of human resources is viewed as a priority for banks, as they are complex organisational structures, strongly influenced by the professional level and quality of their employees. Banks and trade

unions have directed a great deal of attention to innovative and adequate retribution and management policies, in order to have an impact on employee motivation, and enhance human resources: the solutions adopted, such as corporate bonuses and an incentives systems, are going in this direction, as does further improvement of apprenticeship periods, which were limited to a single level of training that represents the real “entryway” to bank employment, in order to encourage flexible, but not irregular, work.

Rome, Palazzo Altieri, 8 May 2008