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## **HR as economic bellwether** *Those who hire (and fire) weigh*

By MARY SUE IAROCCI

Allison Madison of Madison Approach Staffing does not quibble about the economic climate: “The recession is certainly here, but it will pass. The long-term opportunities in this country are enormous.”

The White Plains-based company was started by her mother in 1988; Madison started working for her in 1996. Two years ago, her mother retired and Madison took over the company, which started as a temp agency, and has now grown to full-service staffing.

Madison said as early as 2010, the U.S. will have 165 million job openings and only 145 million people to fill them – a 20 million-worker deficit.

Two-thirds of those jobs will require college degrees, but only one-third will have the education necessary to fill those positions.

“I don’t think there is going to be a long-term joblessness in this country,” Madison said.

“There will be a shift in what we need, and a huge change in companies’ paradigms.”

Madison said the U.S. will continue to lose lower-scale positions, which make more sense to be outsourced.

“I think that there’s a growing trend toward outsourcing,” said Joel Greenwald, an employment lawyer at Greenwald Doherty L.L.P. based in New City. “One of the things that I see many employers aren’t prepared for is the idea that when they outsource functions to different outsourcers, that they remain technically also as an employer under the joint employer doctrine, which may make them jointly liable for the actions of the employer that they sub-contracted to.”

Greenwald also said another big trend is wage and hour lawsuits – companies being sued for not paying their employees overtime.

“A big part of that is the companies are not defining who in their organization is entitled to overtime and who is not,” Greenwald said.

Madison said in order for the U.S. to retain intellectual capital, “we have to put the focus on educating our youth.”

Also, “companies must change to provide employees flexibility that life demands.”

Madison, a mother of three children under the age of 7, said a vast majority of caregivers of children are the mothers.

That also is something that companies need to address – the work/life balance.

“I think companies are going to start having on-site childcare,” Madison said. “It’s a win-win situation. I think women ultimately win and I think companies win because they’re retaining valuable employees. I would love it if that happened tomorrow, but the reality is that’s more long-term. Small and mid-size companies may not have the resources to implement that change quickly.”

Flexibility is also important for 75 million baby boomers coming into retirement age.

“It’s very important for companies to be measuring the efficiency of the human capital,” said Shafiq Lokhandwala, president and CEO of NuView Systems, a human resources company based in Wilmington, Mass.

The company provides a human resource information system, which includes tracking services such as employee records, benefits and payroll, as well as recruiting and performance management, compensation planning and global work force management.

Lokhandwala said there is a realization that HR is no longer only about compliance management; it’s much more about staying competitive.

He said in today’s economy corporations are global.

“Successful companies are able to align corporate goals with jobs,” Lokhandwala said. “There is a strong focus on talent management and employee retention.”