

ESPECIALLY INTERESTING

Anthony Thomson introduces the Financial Services Forum's new HR special interest group.

The article by Susan Hetrick and Graeme Martin that (I hope) you have just read sets out some very clear challenges and imperatives for financial services companies, but could also stand as a manifesto for the Forum's latest special interest group (SIG).

The first four SIGs have been very successful, as they have recognized that there are certain marketing or management issues that are mainly applicable within a narrower market – such as mortgages or general insurance – and have allowed Forum members to debate these questions and share perspectives in more detail than is usually possible in our other gatherings.

The HR SIG marks a new direction, however, as it is an attempt to *broaden* the focus. It has often been said that marketing is too important to be left to the marketing department, but in practice it (or at least the really really important part – engaging with customers and delivering the products and services that meet their needs and wants) is actually done by the customer-touching staff in all other departments. The way in which these people are selected, nurtured, developed, motivated and managed is therefore crucial to the fulfilment of all the marketing dreams.

The over-riding aim of the Financial Services Forum is to facilitate and foster better and more effective marketing, and it is entirely consistent with these objectives to set up a SIG to facilitate and foster better and more effective human resource management in our member companies and more broadly within the industry.

Susan Hetrick has agreed to chair this new SIG. She has already shared some of her vision with many delegates at our conference earlier this month, and is now assembling a steering group to develop an initial programme of activities. But this is about your vision and needs, not just Susan's. So if you share our view of the crucial role of HR in marketing delivery, join in.

Anthony Thomson

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, THE FINANCIAL SERVICES FORUM

For more information about the HR SIG, contact Susan Hetrick at sh@theforum.co.uk, or Adam Park in the Forum offices. Or visit the dedicated website pages at www.fsforum.co.uk/sig_hr.asp

Our other SIGs are listed below. They provide an independent space for senior executives in a particular sector, with each group's agenda set by the steering group and in conjunction with members. Members of The Financial Services Forum can join any special interest group without charge. For more information about these, contact the group leader (in **bold**, below), or a steering group member, or Adam Park in the Forum offices.

ASSET MANAGEMENT SIG

Piers Currie, ABERDEEN ASSET MANAGERS
Robert Higginbotham, SCHRODERS
Richard Royds, MERRILL LYNCH INVESTMENT MANAGERS
Magnus Spence, THE FINANCIAL SERVICES FORUM
www.fsforum.co.uk/sig_am.asp

DIRECT INSURANCE SIG

Robert Watters, REMARK INTERNATIONAL
www.fsforum.co.uk/sig_di.asp

INVESTMENT BANKING SIG

Annie Coleman, GOLDMAN SACHS INTERNATIONAL
Robert Corrigan, MERRILL LYNCH FINANCIAL CENTRE
www.fsforum.co.uk/sig_ib.asp

MORTGAGE MARKETING SIG

Michael Bolton, BIRMINGHAM MIDSHIRES BUILDING SOCIETY
Ambrose McGinn
Bharat Sagar, MORTGAGE DIVISION INCISIVE MEDIA
www.fsforum.co.uk/sig_mm.asp