



# CIARAN SHEEHAN...

## AN OPTIMIST IN OUR MIDST

As the Managing Director of a company specialising in top-end executive recruitment, Ciaran Sheehan could be forgiven for feeling a little gloomy as 2009 rolls to a close.

**A**fter all, it has been a tough calendar year for all of us, and the recruitment marketplace is certainly no exception.

Yet the normally upbeat Sheehan sees no reason to have changed his outlook.

"I think there are quite a few reasons to be optimistic," he says. "Yes, we've been through one of the worst years most of us can remember. But reality checks have kicked in for all of us. We're coming out the other end having trimmed off the fat but not the muscle...."

"It's all about confidence at this stage. Our business sector depends on confidence. People don't change jobs if they don't have confidence. And it is also a major factor for a lot of other sectors. But I really do think that confidence - and movement - is returning."

Uncertainty, of course, doesn't just affect business. It also hits home in the public sector, where plenty of questions are outstanding.

"There is a lot of fat in the public sector and we've all known that for years," adds Sheehan. "Government has to become more efficient and effective."

"Some of the statistics are frightening. For instance, absence cost the government sector here £20 million last year. That's a lot more than the annual budget for an organisation like the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. That puts things into stark perspective...."

"The bottom line is that public sector chiefs have to be challenged and that tough decisions have to be made. It's as simple as that."

Back on the other side of the public/private fence, Ciaran Sheehan sees some clear signs of hope. He singles out the work of Invest NI in building what is now a very significant financial services software sector here in Northern Ireland...built around the likes of AllState, CitiGroup and now NYSE Euronext.

"We still need to be very careful about having so much bureaucracy and legislation floating around that it puts inward investors off this place," he continues.

"Anyone involved in human resources these days will be all too

"We all have to keep managing costs, and we all have to look for diversification opportunities. And we have to keep working hard. But that's hardly rocket science, is it?"

The Stormont administration could help, he reckons. "We were all delighted when the economy was placed firmly at the top of the government's agenda. But now it has been replaced by issues like justice and policing and that's not good enough."

"If one element is top of the agenda, then it has to stay there. These things can't shuffled around all the time."

"The economy has to be restored to its rightful place at the top of the pile."

"And then we've got to get on with the job of being positive about what the future holds for all of us in the private sector."

---

**"We are still witnessing a steady stream of professionals across a range of disciplines coming back to Northern Ireland to work. To be honest, it's a bit of a penalty kick and we should all be encouraging more of it."**

---

aware that there is too much red tape around the whole environment."

Clarendon Executive will be running its airport-based campaign to attract more professionals back to Northern Ireland for the fourth Christmas this year.

"We are still witnessing a steady stream of professionals across a range of disciplines coming back to Northern Ireland to work," says Sheehan. "To be honest, it's a bit of a penalty kick and we should all be encouraging more of it."

Looking into 2010, Ciaran Sheehan says that he remains 'bullish' despite the challenges of the 12 months just past.