

Former Ibec chief launches high profile IR/HR consultancy

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A new HR consultancy business, headed up by Turlough O’Sullivan, the former director general of Ibec, includes two key former industrial relations experts from the old confederation, while a number of high profile HR and IR experts will be on ‘standby’.

The new venture, Resolve Ireland, aims to provide several interventions including mediation, investigation and arbitration and the full range of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) services, including in-company ombudsman service.

Mr O’Sullivan’s two key partners are Brendan McCarthy and Liam Doherty, whose consultancy, Ask HR Solutions, will continue as normal.

Resolve’s operations manager is Miriam Maher, a former senior HR manager, who will manage the operation on a day-to-day basis.

An ‘expert panel’ of members with the “widest experience in problem solving at national, sector and enterprise levels in both the private and public sectors” will also be on hand.

Mr O’Sullivan told IRN that he and his new partners have been individually providing these services for some time but “due to the much-increased demand we have decided to formally launch the new company with additional resources”.

Speaking to IRN about the challenges facing business today as the economy moves toward recovery, the former employer leader believes the crisis is far from over. “It’s at a delicate point. If anything, things have gone backwards since the Troika left.”

“We should remember that green shoots take time to grow”, he said, recalling that in the late 80s/early 90s, “we had a ‘jobless recovery’ at first”. He warned

that the current recovery is capable of being destroyed “if the wrong things are said”, and he cautioned against any hyping of wage demands.

“DESERVE LEADERSHIP”

The former employer leader described Irish workers – in the private and public sectors - as “responsible and restrained”, commenting that they “understood how serious things were”.

“They can read the signs as well as management. They should not be misled, they deserve good leadership at this time”.

Speaking about the launch of the new venture, Mr O’Sullivan described it as a “confidential, discreet, responsive one-stop-shop that provides all the interventions necessary to address fractures in relationships at all levels in the workplace”.

He emphasised the importance of a successful team. “The team needs to be given leadership; be firmly focused on its key objectives and committed to working together in the best interests of organisation goals and objectives”.

But he said it was inevitable that difficulties arise in relationships. “The critical factor is how these are handled and resolved. Organisations invest substantial resources in recruiting and nurturing key people into effective teams. Losing them is a costly and traumatic outcome and should be a last resort.”

OMBUDSMAN IDEA

Mr O’Sullivan promised that Resolve can handle “any issues around dysfunctional behaviour or personality clash; disciplinary appeals, reviews and investigations; job evaluation and grading; reviews of management and organisation structures”.

The idea of an in-company ombudsman service appears to be a novel offering, which could be timely in light of the current proposals on collective bargaining by Jobs & Enterprise Minister, Richard Bruton.

An Ombudsman role might provide reassurance to employees in regard to the requirement that an ‘excepted body’, which engages in local collective bargaining, should be afforded a sufficient degree of independence from the

employer. Such an Ombudsman could also, perhaps, act as a guarantor in regard to representativeness criteria.

OFFER TO IBEC CEO

Resolve says it is targeting union and non-union firms. It promises to work with the LRC and Labour Court “and not circumvent or compete with them”.

Likewise, in a letter to Danny McCoy, his successor as CEO of Ibec, Mr O’Sullivan said they were “open to discussing with Ibec all mutually beneficial and reciprocal arrangements, including commission for cases referred”.

Returning to the economy, he cautioned about the downside potential of a property bubble in some areas. This could be “toxic”, he warned, again having the potential for spread to wage claims.

A long time supporter of national-level bargaining – and a major player from the inception of social partnership in 1987 – Turlough O’Sullivan told IRN that a return to consensus-based bargaining might be needed sooner than we think.