



CEO: RedBalloon's Naomi Simson

Valued staff work harder

STAFF who were unproductive cost Australian firms \$32 billion a year, according to RedBalloon chief executive officer Naomi Simson.

That \$32 billion was three times the federal budget surplus and enough to fund several layers of national infrastructure, said the award-winning entrepreneur.

She said that with the economy expected to come under significant pressure over the coming months, businesses could not afford to carry unproductive staff.

She said getting people to be more productive was much more effective than cutting back on costs such as stationery or the Christmas party.

“If you don’t catch the hearts and minds of your people, no amount of money will keep them long-term,” Ms Simson said. “When there’s no cash to splash around and bonuses are non-existent, then smart companies are looking for alternatives.”

Her company was recently awarded an engagement score of 97 per cent by human resources consultants Hewitt Associates.

Her tips for making staff more engaged and productive are:

■ **BE nice.** We all like to be noticed, to know we are doing a good job and that what we are contributing adds value to the business;

■ **USE** the right resources for the job. You’ve got to give people the tools to get the job done. By nature people want to do a good job but if they are stopped because they haven’t got the right resources they are going to be far less productive;

■ **LEADERSHIP** is critical. Research by Gallup states one third of people leave because of bad management. Most say they were simply not noticed. Listening is essential, then being decisive and aligning the whole organisation to the single purpose;

■ **SAY** thanks and mean it. People want to feel honoured and special — this is not a one-size fits all solution. Some prefer a quiet note from their direct boss, others prefer acknowledgement from their peers; and

■ **OFFER** personalised, non-monetary rewards. People want intimacy, acknowledgement and a sense of achievement. Shared experiences create conversations, memories and build emotional bonds.