



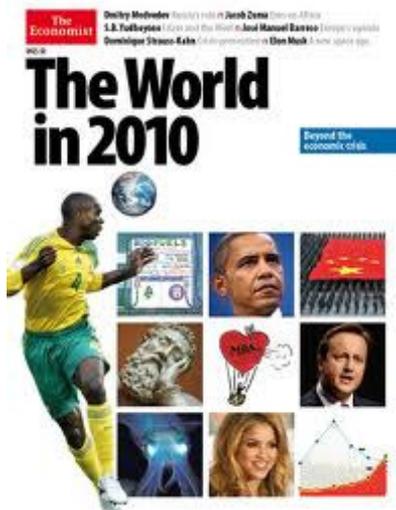
NEWS DIGEST FEBRUARY 2011

Annie Panton

A very belated Happy New Year – I know it's now February!

I've had writer's block lately – what with Christmas and the New Year festivities and a rather long journey to South Africa – a wedding and a wonderful trip into the Kruger Park. I mention this as the bride is in the relocation industry in Johannesburg – what connections I have!

I had hoped to interview Peter Bolton King of the ANEA, ARLA and the NFOPP this month but unfortunately he has not been available so I am afraid readers will have to wait a little longer for his opinions on the property industry in the UK.



The Economist World in Figures gives you a chance to consider what is likely to happen economically over the coming year which doesn't make very exciting reading as far as Europe is concerned – the Euro-zone growth is negligible and Eastern European economies, with the added value of oil, seem to be the winners in terms of growth.

Our own economy has a GDP potential growth of 1.3% for this year which is less than quite a number of other Western European nations. But the overall picture is quite simple – Qatar's gas sector pushes them to the top of the world growth table – GDP anticipated at 15.9% but in the same league table Haiti is there simply because it will benefit economically from the reconstruction post earthquake. I find this really difficult to understand! I am not an economist but I do feel we should be aware of 'the world in figures' as the Economist calls it!

I'm also keen to draw your attention to the cost of both utilities and petrol at present – we are warned that a gallon of petrol could go as high as £6 and I think that this, combined with the rise in gas and electricity will be something our assignees will mention when they arrive in the UK and become our customers. It will certainly be worth directing them to the relevant websites to check prices and to make

sure they know they can change suppliers.

As far as fuel prices are concerned, one of the websites I use is www.petrolprices.com which will direct you to the most economic garages in your local areas. I am sure most people are aware of these sites but I am just reminding everyone that this year we shall probably have to pay more attention to this kind of detail in respect of cost.

An interesting piece in Management Today caught my eye – it was about how others see us – a series of interviews with senior personnel who are foreign-born observers of the UK – we emerge as entrepreneurial and creative but could be more positive apparently. One respondent said 'quite simply the UK offers a skill-set, business culture and perspective unlike any other market.' This and other comments made me more conscious of our world value.

In the same issue, the winners of Britain's Most Admired Companies for 2010 were published and included some of our long-established customers including Unilever (the winner) and the rest of the top 10 below:

2. Serco Group
3. Royal Dutch Shell
4. BSKYB
5. Whitbread
6. Berkeley Group
7. Rolls-Royce
8. Tesco
9. BG Group
10. Aggreko

Do look on the MT website for further information. I hope some of these are your clients! It was interesting for me to see that Frank Chapman had become Chief Executive of BG Group as I remember meeting him years ago when we were managing BG moves all over the place.

The best bit of gossip lately was, of course, WikiLeaks – and I hope it reminded everyone that what you write down, in emails, memos and even tweets, could come back and slap you in the face. As someone indicated 'if you lose the communication, you lose the control to deliver information and what you will end up with is a



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Facebook group of people where things can get out of hand – where people listen to the grapevine rather than the official communication.'

Blogs

I've had some time to spare lately and with my writer's block at its highest level, I've been reading some of the industry blogs that I haven't had a chance to do before. I must say I was impressed with some – and horrified by others but for your benefit, I would strongly advise a quick read here and there as it's rather like someone chatting to you, if written really well. Or create your own blog – which is something I shall consider doing this year! Mind you, this news digest is a bit like a blog – do you agree? See me on LinkedIn and Facebook if you want to comment or chat!

Property Crystal Ball Gazing

All of us wonder what this year will have in store for us – what should we recommend to our clients in terms of housing budgets etc. There is a variety of opinion as to whether or not prices will fall and whether 2011 will remain a buyers' market.

The lettings market was buoyant in 2010 and it looks as if this will continue to be the case in 2011 with prices in some locations (like London) rising again. A comment I read indicated that more buy-to-let investors will emerge this year because of a growing demand by tenants. This will suit our purpose in terms of assignees moving into the UK. Another comment I found said clearly that tenant demand is likely to remain high and outstrip the supply that will be available.

The UK housing market generally saw a surge in the level of enquiries, both for buyers and sellers in the first two weeks of January, according to estate agents.

The buoyant start to the year was recorded in a poll of almost 700 estate agents conducted by the National Association of Estate Agents (NAEA).

No doubt we shall hear more on this as time goes on and January is a tricky month to make any sound judgements.



Just one other thing I've been looking at today is the Google Translate tool – it is quite amazing so it may be of some help when you are handling awkward nationalities where their English is lacking somewhat! I took a look at the headlines in one of the Italian newspapers – and while the translation is not quite up to scratch, I don't think it will be long before we are able to access and translate information from the weirdest places.

And finally, the end of the 'free lunch' may be in sight as the Bribery Act 2010 comes into being in April. This is likely to signal the end of some lavish corporate hospitality and will apply to any commercial organisation which operates in the UK. Read more about this on the web!

The 2011 Corporate Relocation Conference and Exhibition

This took place at the Hotel Russell in Russell Square, Bloomsbury yesterday and was not only well attended by a wide cross section of the relocation community, but was organised beautifully by Helen Elliott and her colleagues. I think I can honestly say that everyone was on good form with conversations taking place on a wide variety of topics!

I attended two of the seminars, one hosted by Mercer which concentrated on their surveys of trends and development in global mobility and the other hosted by Tad & Dominic who were in fine form discussing the most cost effective ways of moving people but proposing that care should be taken not to ignore the cultural differences between countries and using some funding to ensure that training in this field is as crucial as providing all the other services that spring to mind – like housing etc.

The exhibitors were a wide cross section of both providers of relocation services and some ancillary organisations like Red Recruit, Lloyds Bank, the ARP-EuRA, Humphrys Education and a number of others whose names I didn't make a note of. Our thanks should be extended to Helen for organising a very good day, without cost to delegates!