FLEX APPEAL

Changing work to work for recruiters

Managing in hard times
Creative company
Connecting your workforce
Recruiters know the power of flexibility in the workplace. They know the key to a successful, more agile and productive workplace is having the right skills in the right place at the right time. But what of the recruitment industry itself. Surely this business sector is ideal for flexible work – do consultants need to be in an office all day? Given the talent they need to contact and the considerations they need to make should they really be tied to office hours?

In this issue of The Global Recruiter we find a mixed picture with some recruiters heading down the flexible route while others are finding the sector behind the times, still playing catch-up with the flexibility on offer in other companies and sectors. Challenging though it may be, the same arguments apply here as in other industries: without flexibility it is unlikely you’ll attract and retain the very best talent on offer. Bringing this subject full circle, this issue also has a number of pieces examining the candidate experience. With a Recruitment Live discussion held on this very subject, again this is an area where recruiters can not just learn to apply best practice for their candidates and clients, they should apply those practices for their own consultants too.

WELCOME

SIMON KENT
EDITOR

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LONDON'S ROLLERCOASTER

Morgan McKinley’s Autumn London Employment Monitor has shown how 2019 has continued to provide a rollercoaster ride for employment in the City. In the first half of the year jobs spiked, nosedived, levelled off, and threatened to head back down again. The third quarter (Q3) followed a similar trajectory: job numbers were up by 20 per cent month-on-month in July, only to go back down by 11 per cent in August and resurface with a five per cent increase in September. Meanwhile, Q3 saw the political climate go from uncertain to historically chaotic, as the underlying these trends: "Considering sales were sky high, you’d expect profits to also peak," he says. "However, when we analysed the results of 104 Australian recruitment agencies, this wasn’t the case. Despite market conditions being the best in recorded history, only 1 in 5 recruitment agencies increased their profit in FY19. That means around 80 per cent recorded a decrease in profit." The company points out that productivity is a huge determinant of profitability for recruitment agencies. Productivity can be measured by calculating how much gross profit (or net fee income) is produced by each staff member. Sadly, for many recruitment firms, the increase in work in FY19 didn’t equate to increased productivity. On average, productivity declined by four per cent over the course of the year, falling from $216,894 per staff member in FY18 to $207,814 in FY19. While the top 10 per cent of performers increased productivity, the growth was a negligible 0.1 per cent. The final two quarters were especially expensive with staff and management costs blowing out to an alarming 80 per cent of gross profit.

ANZ RECORD BREAKING SALES

Australian recruitment agencies had an outstanding year in FY19 in terms of sales according to Nigel Harse and figures from Staffing Industry Metrics. The company says the first two quarters delivered record breaking sales across both the permanent and contract/renewable revenue streams and this growth continued throughout the year despite some major challenges, including the federal election. However, Harse has also pointed out some discrepancies underlying these trends: “Considering sales were sky high, you’d expect profits to also peak,” he says. “However, when we analysed the results of 104 Australian recruitment agencies, this wasn’t the case. Despite market conditions being the best in recorded history, only 1 in 5 recruitment agencies increased their profit in FY19. That means around 80 per cent recorded a decrease in profit.” The company points out that productivity is a huge determinant of profitability for recruitment agencies. Productivity can be measured by calculating how much gross profit (or net fee income) is produced by each staff member. Sadly, for many recruitment firms, the increase in work in FY19 didn’t equate to increased productivity. On average, productivity declined by four per cent over the course of the year, falling from $216,894 per staff member in FY18 to $207,814 in FY19. While the top 10 per cent of performers increased productivity, the growth was a negligible 0.1 per cent. The final two quarters were especially expensive with staff and management costs blowing out to an alarming 80 per cent of gross profit.

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Morgan McKinley UK. “As a result, professionals remain reluctant to move, thus failing to generate new positions and growth opportunities for others, and businesses continue to put off all but essential hiring.” Enver continues: “The fact that job seekers are being given added time to get their residency in order, hard Brexit or not, is helping offset some anxiety. But fear of the unknown is rampant and we’re continuing to see employees clinging to existing positions. “We are witnessing a political circus taking place in Parliament, and a political circus on the global stage,” he continued. “Between Brexit, international trade tensions, and opposition politicians pushing for anti-business policies, we are suffering a real leadership deficit. Because financial services businesses have been preparing for a hard Brexit for over two years, they are proving remarkably resilient. They don’t want a hard Brexit but they’re ready for it.” Remuneration, training and recruitment will always be costly and money spent on keeping a high-performing team together is usually money well spent,” says The Metrics report, “However, these costs should be proportionate to profit, and 60 per cent is an unacceptably amount for any recruitment agency.”

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Gravitas will remain focused on its high standards of delivering hard-to-find talent and building long-term partnerships.

**HONG KONG DEMANDS**

An industry survey carried out by Michael Page Hong Kong has found 95 per cent of respondents believe Hong Kong is in need of fintech talent. According to Natalie Lau, managing consultant at Michael Page Hong Kong, the fintech ecosystem in the city will grow significantly in the next three years placing further stress on talent and skill resources.

The growth, says Lau, “will be spurred by initiatives from Hong Kong’s regulators ramping up efforts to attract fintech investments into the region.”

**DIGITALISING BRAND**

An independent survey carried out by Aptitude Research on behalf of Alexander Mann Solutions has revealed a staggering low number of companies incorporating employer brand in the digital transformation of talent acquisition, limiting the successful impact of this investment. According to the 2019 Talent Acquisition survey, just 29 per cent of businesses believe brand plays an important role in digital transformation. With the integration of technology having a direct impact on the candidate and employee experience, the global talent acquisition and management firm warns that failure to align employer brand with digital transformation in talent acquisition could be damaging to a firm’s competitive skills attraction.

“Digital transformation provides opportunities to show candidates and employees more about an organisation and, crucially, establish trusting relationships and partnerships,” said Padua, global head of technology and operations consulting at Alexander Mann Solutions. “In many cases, this tech integration will have an impact at almost every talent touchpoint. Without a direct correlation between this and your employer brand, it’s almost impossible to ensure consistent messaging, which in turn could damage the candidate experience.”

“Without a shared understanding of digital technology, companies need to align their strategy with employer branding efforts and organisational culture,” Padua added. “As well as consider the role of branding throughout the entire candidate journey, organisations need to ensure that their online presence on social media is consistent. Consistency of messaging is critically important in not only successful digital transformation, but also a candidate-led environment.”

**LOVING IT**

The RCSA has developed and launched their #LoveYourWork campaign designed to educate, celebrate and raise awareness of the important role agency work plays in modern society and modern economies. With agency work delivering $30 billion to the Australian and New Zealand economies, the industry is still overlooked for the diverse opportunities it offers. The campaign launched at the start of October and through storytelling looks at the reality of agency work for those who choose to work this way. From the individual who is looking to keep engaged, to those who use agency work to transition to another sector, from those at university exploring their career options to those who enjoy the freedom and flexibility a career as an agency worker offers, the #LoveYourWork campaign showcases real stories about real people proving real value from agency work. Just as importantly, the #LoveYourWork campaign shows what’s possible for truly innovative businesses who source staff through agencies.

The survey also shed light on the digital transformation of talent acquisition, highlighting the critical impact of technology in talent acquisition. It revealed that 38 per cent of organisations have shared their stories about the #LoveYourWork campaign.

**FRANK OPENING**

North East staffing giant Frank Recruitment Group has opened its latest office in Charlotte, North Carolina, creating up to 90 jobs. The launch follows the news that the recruitment company has come out on top of a list of Best Companies for Growth, following a global survey carried out by San Francisco-based Datadest Business Journal. The results of the review, set up to help employers understand what adjustments need to be made to support their workforce, were revealed in September.

The company has enjoyed a period of accelerated growth for the company, which started life on Wellington Place, Newcastle in 2006. Since launching their first American office in New York in 2010, they now have eight offices across the United States, and 19 in total around the world.

“With this growth, we’ve invested over $1 million on infrastructure to be here, and we plan to recruit workers from the local talent pool, offering highly motivated individuals the chance of a fantastic career in sales with incredible opportunities in front of them,” said Charlotte has rapidly become known as a tech hub in the East Coast state, with a 90 per cent increase in the amount of tech industry workers over the last five years. The surge in demand for cloud specialists has been a key driver behind this. The cloud market in the US has exploded in recent years, with a 17.5 per cent increase predicted in 2019, and technology experts Gartner forecast it to grow at three times the speed of any other IT service between now and 2022.

“We’re delighted to be here,” said president, Zoe Monis. “Charlotte is one of the fastest-growing cities in the United States and has quickly become a key technology hub, attracting some of the area’s best talent in what is an incredibly vibrant place to live. We’ve already worked with over 2,000 clients in North Carolina, without having a permanent base here,” said vice president, Paden Simmons, who will be leading the Charlotte office. “We’re excited to be able to engage with existing and future customers even further.”
APSCo and backdoor hire and fee dispute expert, introPROTECT have launched a new debt recovery toolkit in order to better support APSCo members in collecting outstanding monies swiftly and effectively. The toolkit is a starting point for debt recovery in recruitment and is designed to assist members through a staged approach, providing the tools required to speed up the payment and recovery process. These include step-by-step practical advice around possible solutions as well as template documents for letters before a claim, settlement agreements and statutory demand forms. introPROTECT is founded by Barry Cullen, an ex-recruiter turned solicitor and is an APSCo Affiliate member.

“APSCo is always striving to enhance its service offering, and we are delighted that we are able to support our members by sharing this new toolkit,” commented Tania Bowers, General Counsel at APSCo. “Debts seldom unfold in a straightforward manner and choosing between various approaches to recovery, and managing these effectively, can be challenging for any business, particularly SMEs. “Our member satisfaction surveys consistently show that our legal services are a well-utilised and highly respected element of our wider service offering, and we are continually responding to feedback to expand our legal support,” she added. “For recruitment firms that are looking for a starting point for debt recovery, I have no doubt that this toolkit will be invaluable.”

Barry Cullen added: “Recovering disputed fees can be a fine balancing act for business owners and finance teams and it can sometimes be hard to know where to begin. We are delighted to be working with APSCo to share our specialist expertise with its members and I hope many take full advantage of the resources we have shared.”

Fircroft has strengthened its human resources team with the appointment of Nicola Ferraby as head of HR operations. The company say this vital role supports their vision in providing best in class workforce solutions to the global technical engineering industries.

An experienced and knowledgeable professional, Nicola adds a breadth of multi-national experience gained across the retail, business services, wholesale, recruitment and engineering sectors.

On the new appointment, Leonie Williams, Fircroft’s HR board director said: “Nicola’s experience, specifically within the international recruitment markets will help strengthen our position as a world-class provider of global workforce solutions. This role is vital as we drive to become an employer of choice and I am delighted to welcome Nicola to my team and the business.”

Resource Solutions has welcomed Sarah-Jane Walker to their senior management team as their global operations director. Sarah-Jane’s more than 20 years’ experience in the recruitment industry include a decade with global banking giant Barclays, where she was most recently director of early careers. Commenting on Sarah-Jane’s appointment, Norma Gillespie, managing director – EMEA & Americas at Resource Solutions, said: “Sarah-Jane’s years of operational experience in the recruitment industry, leading diverse functions and teams for one of the world’s largest and most successful banking brands, speaks for itself. Our global leadership team and I are thrilled to welcome Sarah-Jane to our Resource Solutions family as we continue to focus on operational excellence globally.”

Samuel Knight International has welcomed four new hires and promoted two senior team members to support increased demand in its energy and rail divisions in the US. Founding team member Dave Allen has been promoted to associate director of Energy for SKI Corp, Samuel Knight’s US division. Dave will be developing the American team on the ground and will be supporting business development across Chicago and Boston.

Daniel Kerr, also a founding member, has been promoted to managing director of energy, following three years in his previous role of divisional manager for power generation. There are also several new team members who have come onboard across the Newcastle, London and Bristol offices. Robert Turnbull joins as a new power generation consultant; Lloyd Meyer as rail consultant; Mara Bonacasa as power generation consultant; and Matthew Young as renewables consultant.

Green Umbrella offers a variety of digital marketing services for recruitment agencies and suppliers to the recruitment sector. These services include training and coaching, social media management and a variety of design and print.

To find out more visit: www.green-umbrella.biz/recruitment

www.green-umbrella.biz/recruiterguide
KEEPING UP WITH CHANGE

Charles Cameron, CEO of RCSA gives an exclusive Q&A to The Global Recruiter.

Q: What are the main challenges and opportunities currently facing your labour market?

A: Australia and New Zealand are very much subject to global economic trends and face the same challenge as our peers overseas of finding suitable candidates in markets where there is a significant shortage of skilled talent. Unemployment in both countries is low – 5.1 per cent in Australia (ABS) and 4.3 per cent in New Zealand (Stats NZ) – and while mobilisation of talent continues to be one of our biggest friends, it is also proving to be one of our biggest challenges. Both Australia and New Zealand need to remain desirable destinations for skilled staff, including international talent, while ensuring the rights and opportunities afforded to the local workforce are maintained.

It’s our role to walk this fine line and continue these open discussions with all key stakeholders.

Q: What is the diversification of HR services in your country?

A: Australia and New Zealand have not experienced the degree of advocacy for managed services which has been seen in the US however increasingly we are seeing third party managed services playing an influential role in our HR services. As a consequence, we are seeing more focus on the organisation of work which presents increased opportunities for third parties to promote better outcomes in Australian workplaces. This is also leading to a greater willingness of businesses to consider using third party HR services.

Additionally, I believe there is a greater willingness to examine the way third party HR services can improve business solutions in Australia and New Zealand and this is only expected to grow in the future. While large-scale or workforce services may be challenged by ideological or political interests, the talent management solutions being developed have been buoyed and promoted by an increased offering of digital and online HR solutions. Agency work will remain a constant into the future, as will recruitment placement solutions, but now we are also starting to see rapid adoption of talent management solutions in conjunction with agency work and recruitment placements.

Q: What are the main issues related to the future of work discussion?

A: It’s my opinion that it is time to stop talking about the future of work because the future is here now! We need to move forward and stop examining what the future of work will be rather than working to understand what is happening in the workforce today, how technology is changing the way we work today and how we should be working to accommodate and integrate it. The evolution of Artificial Intelligence has been happening for a long time and is no longer new – though the advancements obviously are. In the same ways we have adopted these changes as they have evolved, business will continue to do so. Again, this is not new. The biggest challenge facing the future world of work isn’t around the tech, it is how we address, from a political and social perspective, the increasing polarisation of work.

We are seeing more opportunities being created for those who are highly educated or work in technical fields while those in manual or service-based work are increasingly facing the threat of automation of their jobs. It is incumbent on our sector to work with government, business and social organisations to address this growing divide to equip more and all people for different opportunities to those they have traditionally sought. This requires our sector to play a far greater role in workforce planning and management to assist this.

The problem in Australia, and increasingly so in New Zealand, is that some political parties are ideologically opposed to intermediaries demonstrating their leadership because it undermines their traditional roles. They are shackled to the old economy and old way of thinking.

Q: What actions are you taking to support your client companies and workers lead in a changing world of work?

A: We are working to assist our client companies and members to help guide them through the process of transitioning to the changing world of work. This means helping new member clients to better understand the potential for working with an existing workforce to identify new opportunities or work skills across a multitude of different companies. It also means helping jobseekers to sustain new ways of working understanding we are moving towards a gig economy where traditional ways of working are becoming obsolete in some industries. We achieve this through comprehensive L&D and events calendars providing opportunities to learn, share, network and collaborate our sector and those working within it.

Q: How prepared is your market for the changing world of work?

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SOLUTIO’S EXPANSION CONTINUES...

Following a successful series of event sponsorships throughout the Autumn, Solutio’s profile in the temporary recruitment sector has reached a new zenith. Exhibiting at the two ‘How-to Guide for Off-payroll’ seminars co-hosted by Professional Passport and IR35 Shield, provided the Solutio team with the opportunity to meet with numerous umbrella providers and recruitment agencies many of whom instantly requested a live demo of our cloud and app-based payroll platform.

It was fascinating to listen to their frustrations regarding existing payroll systems which neither connect to their contingent worker supply chain partners, or have the capability to calculate accurate payroll runs due to limitations with regards to statutory deductions, expenses and multi-assignment contractors.

The fact that most of these antiquated systems only operate on expensive in-house servers was another major concern as they only allow for manual software updates and do not integrate with back-office CRM networks, let alone support a cutting-edge worker app.

The commercial advantages of deploying a software platform which can automatically produce comprehensive reports to prove a worker’s status, and generate the requisite two-page KID document demanded by the new regulations; thankfully, Solutio does both.

Visit solutio.com

Launching a new company website is not something that justifies editorial comment, but the new solutio.com is worthy of this shameless self-promotion. The site provides enhanced details of Solutio’s capabilities, in addition to highlighting the specific benefits it provides to all businesses active in the supply of contingent labour be they payroll providers, recruiters or hirers.

The site also incorporates the Solutio blog which features articles not only regarding Solutio’s activities but also insights gleaned from the global tech landscape. We encourage you to take a look.
In a talent short market, the candidate experience has never been more important. Recruiters operate in a world where the best candidates apply for multiple jobs and receive offers from several organisations, and the difference between a good candidate experience and a bad one could be the deciding factor in their choice of employer. That’s why now, more than ever, we need to pay critical attention to the collective experience each candidate receives across all the assessments, interactions and engagements of the hiring process. This includes maximising the potential of new and emerging technologies to make improvements. It’s easy for us in the recruitment world to second guess what candidates want when it comes to technology. That’s why we’ve conducted research from both the HR and the candidate perspective, to support recruiters to make more informed decisions when it comes to their priorities for using technology to deliver a great candidate experience.

**Mind the gap**

One of the most important ways to deliver a good candidate experience is to ensure that candidates are able to take online assessments on the device they feel most comfortable with. While 58 per cent of candidates told us they feel comfortable or very comfortable using games consoles, just 36 per cent of HR professionals thought they would be. Similarly, 45 per cent of candidates are comfortable or very comfortable using Virtual Reality (VR) headsets, compared to only 31 per cent of HR believing they would be. There is still some wariness around candidates around VR headsets and games consoles for online assessments, with 20 per cent and 25 per cent of candidates respectively saying they would find it uncomfortable or very uncomfortable to complete an online assessment using these tools. However, far more candidates responded positively. As with all emerging technology, if it enhances the candidate experience and aligns to the company’s brand, then HR should seriously consider adopting it. AI is already used in recruitment for candidate sourcing, screening and matching, as well as in chatbots and tools such as facial expression analysis. It is going to become more prevalent. Our survey highlighted that HR has a significantly more negative view of AI than candidates themselves. Only 28 per cent of candidates were very uncomfortable with AI taking a role in assessment, but 11.3 per cent of recruiters thought that candidates would hold this view. While there could be debate about how exactly AI is used in recruitment, with issues already emerging around data quality and bias, these results show that HR may be electing to avoid AI methods under the mistaken belief that candidates will react negatively.

**Comfort with technology**

Our research focused on two key questions. The first was what exactly do candidates want from technology in the assessment process? And second, what might improve the experience? We had a specific focus on emerging technology and device preferences, as well as opinions on the role of social media and artificial intelligence (AI) in the candidate experience. In addition, we wanted to understand whether candidate views differ from those of HR and recruitment professionals. To that end we surveyed two groups. Nearly 300 demographically representative candidates who had recently completed an assessment process, and 186 HR professionals who are responsible for recruitment decisions in their organisations. The research highlighted some important differences in opinion.

**Social media snooping**

Technology can be used informally within the assessment process, and social media in particular is reported as being commonly checked by recruiters. We were interested to find out how candidates feel about this, and how frequently it was occurring. The findings clearly show that candidates are far more comfortable with organisations viewing their social media profiles than HR believe them to be, even when it comes to more personal accounts such as Twitter or Instagram. Where 54 per cent of candidates are comfortable or very comfortable with HR checking their Twitter account, only 26 per cent of HR professionals believe them to be. Equally, just 33 per cent of HR professionals believe that candidates are comfortable with their Instagram account being viewed as part of the assessment process, but 57 per cent of candidates are actually comfortable or very comfortable with this. Interestingly, the research also found that only 55 per cent of HR professionals had actually accessed candidates’ profiles during the application process.

**Similarities revealed**

The survey results weren’t all about difference. We did find some similarities in opinion. For example, HR does reflect candidates’ views on technology where it is most commonly used. This was particularly in relation to devices that have been established for use in assessment for several years, such as smartphones and laptops. It is also significant that nearly a third of candidates are most likely to complete online assessments on a smartphone. While recruiters do recognise this, it further emphasises the need for assessments to be available on smartphones. HR professionals also had a very accurate reflection of candidates’ views on accessing LinkedIn profiles – this was the only social media profile where a significant difference between groups was not found. However, there is a clear disconnect with less established technology such as VR, games consoles and AI. Serious outcomes for poor candidate experience

Research by the Talent Board shows that improving the candidate experience is the top goal for recruiters in 2019. Technology continues to play an increasing role in this area. If businesses need to demonstrate the importance of a great candidate experience, then they only need to look at what can happen when it goes wrong. It goes far beyond just missing out on high potential talent and can substantially impact the financial bottom line. In 2014, Virgin Media estimates they lost £4.4 million in revenue due to poor candidate experience. Why is this figure so high? It’s all down to the behaviour of rejected candidates. About six per cent of 123,000 unsuccessful applicants went on to switch media providers, which equates to 7,500 subscription cancellations. Multiply this by £50 per month for 12 months and the result is shockingly high. This knowledge and further consultation allowed Virgin Media to turn around a poor recruitment experience to retain and attract more customers – even if they weren’t offered a job.

**What this means**

In order to deliver a great experience, recruiters need to constantly review their approach to technology and maintain an ongoing dialogue with candidates. When it comes to comfort levels with new and emerging technology in particular, recruiters need to be aware that their perception of candidate preferences may not always be aligned with those of their candidates. Ultimately we all want to deliver the optimal experience for candidates, and the best talent for our organisations and clients. This research shows that recruiters may need to play catch up with digital savvy candidates to get top marks for tech-led assessment experiences. Technology provides the key to achieving this goal and if we understand the views and preferences of candidates, the more likely it is that we will be able to attract, assess and retain future talent.

*The full Emerging technology and the candidate experience report can be downloaded here: [https://content.psionline.com/technology-and-the-candidate-experience](https://content.psionline.com/technology-and-the-candidate-experience)*
Lucy Cheatham, Head of Marketing, Hive360 Ltd argues for a new model of employment to benefit employees and employers alike.

As the gap between inflation and wages widens ever further, and the country is swamped by Brexit uncertainty, the impact on the labour market is acute. Add into the mix pension legislation and the ever-increasing HMRC spotlight on umbrellas and offshore models for temporary worker payrolling, then it’s clear that now is the time for change and innovation particularly in the recruitment payroll and candidate management arena.

Innovation in employment, is that possible? Well we only have to take a leaf out of the US labour market book to see that yes, absolutely, this is possible – and potentially revolutionary.

In the US, a model of ‘co-employment’ has been operated by the Professional Employment Organisation (PEO) market for over three decades, now reaching values in excess of $156 billion in gross revenues with 3.4 million workers being employed through this model. The PEO was born out of the challenges faced by smaller businesses competing with global brands to attract from the same labour pool. The PEO model is now servicing thousands of businesses, allowing them to compete for the best talent by being able to offer market leading benefits and welfare support to employees and streamlining their payroll – all serviced by the network benefit power of their PEO partner business. The results put this challenge high on their agendas, if not right at the top.

Today’s trends show that job seekers are rejecting higher paid roles for more fulfilling ones, where they’re more likely to find inspiration and employees who can show they care about their people, about their welfare and their livelihood are the ones who are winning in the war for talent. It’s fast becoming clear that taking employee engagement seriously is no longer a choice for successful businesses. It’s no surprise we’re seeing more business leaders putting this challenge high on their agendas, if not right at the top. The Hive360 solution delivers a complete employment support service to businesses of all sizes and across temporary workers, permanent employees and apprentices. At the heart of the solution is a sophisticated pay, perks and pension portal that delivers world class employment services, and access to welfare support and money saving benefits at the fingertips of employees.

Debt funding involves securing a loan which is repaid over time, with added interest payments. This funding might be supplied by a bank, a specialist debt fund or an alternative provider.

The equity option

The benefits of equity funding are that the investor assumes the risk. If the agency fails, the owner does not have to pay back an equity investor. Third-party investment does not suit every sector, business or owner manager, however. It also dilutes ownership immediately and over the longer term it dilutes the reward if the agency is sold.

Our own research of 300 SME business owners shows they do not want to issue equity in their business to fund growth. Indeed, more than half (53 per cent) would be unlikely to do so. When looking at all the reasons why, it’s clear that business owners feel they don’t need someone else telling them what to do. Charmaine Vincent, CEO of recruitment agency Baltimore Consulting, a firm Caple has supported, explains her thinking. She sought £1.5 million in funding to complete a management buyout.

“I didn’t want to pursue private equity because it would have meant giving away a sizeable amount of equity in the business in return for funding,” she says. “This would have meant I diluted the ownership and simply swapped one third party for another. I wanted full control of the business.”

The debt route

Debt funding, especially from traditional banks and specialist debt funds, often requires security – or a physical asset against which the loan is secured. Such physical assets might include property, stock or machinery. However, getting such secured funding can be a problem for recruitment agencies. As a service-based industry, many recruitment firms simply do not have necessary physical assets to use as security. Charmaine Vincent explains: “I wanted to take full ownership of Baltimore Consulting to grow independently and establish ourselves as a market leader in our core sectors.

“While we have a very good relationship with our bank, it couldn’t lend up to the value that we needed for a number of reasons. This meant we needed to look further afield.”

Banks can provide funding that reflects the value of the assets in a business, but they can’t help if a business has no further assets to borrow against. Where a physical asset isn’t available, banks or funds may ask the agency owner to agree to a personal guarantee. Often these personal guarantees can be as high as 20 to 30 per cent of the loan value. If an agency is borrowing £1 million or more you can understand why the owner might not want the personal risk.

As a result, ambitious agency owners must often consider the difficult choice of scaling back their growth, diluting their ownership or agreeing to onerous personal guarantees. However, asset-light businesses, such as those in the recruitment industry, can now benefit from unsecured lending. Unsecured lending is based on an understanding of the future cash flows generated by the business. Such ‘cashflow’ lending provides the finance recruitment agencies need to grow while removing the need for security and personal guarantees.

 Crucially, it means agency owners do not need to give up ownership or control.

Charmaine Vincent, CEO of Baltimore Consulting, concludes: “Taking control with the support of Caple has meant I can do what’s best for my people and give everyone a chance to flourish.

“We know it’s working,” she adds, “we’re on track for our best year yet and our consultants will deliver nearly double the revenue of the industry average.”

With more than 30,000 recruitment agencies in the UK employing around 150,000 people, we need them to be able to secure the finance they need to grow. There is now an option for doing this without being pushed towards diluting equity or losing control.”

HOW TO GROW

Dominic Buch, co-founder and managing partner, Caple weighs the difference between debt or equity for recruitment companies.
Clare Moore, head of marketing at people first, on how employee engagement can be helped with technology.

From financial services to firefighters on the front line, teams play an important role in creating a collective sense of belonging. They provide a ready-made network for support, feedback, collaboration and socialising and improve all-round performance. Indeed, compared to the traditional hierarchical system, Deloitte’s 2019 Global Human Capital Trends report highlights how 74 per cent of companies enjoy improved performance when implementing a team-based approach.

In most cases, employees sitting alongside teammates are more likely to feel connected but without the everyday face-to-face interactions that take place in offices, it’s naturally more challenging for those who work remotely. How then, can businesses that employ remote or dispersed workers create a sense of togetherness and community to help avoid them becoming disengaged from the business? How can workers create a sense of togetherness and community to help them feel part of a team with regular contact and avoid them becoming disengaged from the business? How can businesses that employ remote or dispersed workers create a sense of togetherness and community to help avoid them becoming disengaged from the business?

The answer lies in the technology we hold in our hands. In most cases, employees sitting alongside teammates are more likely to feel connected but without the everyday face-to-face interactions that take place in offices, it’s naturally more challenging for those who work remotely.

How then, can businesses that employ remote or dispersed workers create a sense of togetherness and community to help avoid them becoming disengaged from the business? How can workers create a sense of togetherness and community to help them feel part of a team with regular contact and avoid them becoming disengaged from the business?

Solo performance, team effort

Smart businesses understand that, keeping employees motivated is key to engagement and performance. Whether in the same building or working alone, employees who continually lack support or feel isolated from the business and its common objectives are likely to become demotivated and disengaged, potentially harming the work they do and their overall productivity. At a time when working patterns and employee expectations are changing, efforts to improve engagement should recognise different types of work and working environments, along with the different types of challenges employees face. For example, those working from an office environment may lack flexibility or autonomy, or be held back by an overbearing line manager. Meeting the personal and professional needs of remote workers that have little or no face-to-face contact with the organisation can be especially tough: from sales executives to healthcare workers, while employees working in the field often enjoy more flexibility and autonomy compared with office-based workers, they may not always feel ‘part’ of a team, resulting in disengagement with colleagues and the wider organisation.

Working in the same building or miles apart, a sense of community and shared purpose among colleagues is always important. Yet, without a medium for making connections and sharing ideas, employees working in the same team and even physically sitting in the same room can easily feel disconnected from their neighbours. To boost engagement within a team and the wider business, employees need to feel empowered to approach colleagues and share information and ideas. They should also feel connected to the organisation itself – its goals, mission, values, and news. When people feel like they belong to something bigger and are working towards a common purpose, they often become more motivated and find it easier to make sense of their work.

A go-to network for support, feedback, collaboration and socialising, successful teams play an important role in supporting this collective sense of belonging. Whether it’s reassurance from a trusted colleague to a well-oiled department hitting a team target together, the positive interactions they support can be key to improving all-round performance. In many cases however, access to this support and shared workload is harder for those who work remotely – which is where business social technology can really come into its own.

Social technology

From video calls to social media and instant messages, the ability to connect and communicate with anyone, instantly and regardless of location has brought many friends and families closer than ever – even when they live miles apart. From sharing special photographs with family to engaging with like-minded people about favourite hobbies or sports teams, more and more of us have embraced the potential of technology in our personal lives. Which begs the question, why do we still feel isolated at work, and why isn’t this technology available to us in that environment?

To truly engage and connect employees, workplace technology should be intuitive, secure and – just like social media – fun, easy to use and mobile. Designed to improve teamwork opportunities, support and knowledge sharing, business social platforms create a forum to connect across teams, departments and locations. As well as helping to encourage a culture of collaboration, from a teamworking perspective, having a secure space to connect can help keep everyone part of the conversation and ensure information flows freely yet securely throughout the organisation.

Keeping everyone up-to-date and in the picture, there are spaces for employees to catch up on company news, see what other people are working on and to give and receive recognition – all via their mobile phones – regardless of where in the world they are. Whether it is extending a virtual arm out to a colleague in need of support or sharing success and good news as it happens, when it comes to social technology, businesses shouldn’t overlook the opportunity to reach out and get everyone in the same room.
Flexible work is everywhere, but is there enough in the recruitment industry, asks Simon Kent.

Flexible work may not be new, but it is becoming increasingly important for many workers. There can be few recruiters who are not aware of the value now being placed by candidates on work/life balance, on being able to see your children grow up, taking time to care for elderly relatives, to take breaks when it suits your timetable or needs. There can be few recruiters who have not turned to the employing organisation and asked whether the role in question can be made flexible in order to maximise the number and quality of the candidates who might come forward.

But how many recruitment companies are actually taking flexible work to heart themselves and operating it within their businesses?

According to San Sunner, founder and entrepreneur behind social media company REC-Social, the recruitment industry is behind the curve on this issue. Indeed she wonders whether the reason behind so many new recruitment business start-ups recently is the realisation that, armed with a laptop and a phone, recruiters can make a decent living for themselves, wherever and however they want. Deploying this kind of flexibility for consultants within a recruitment business, she argues, comes down to trust and: “Recruitment businesses don’t seem to have enough trust with their own candidates,” she says. “Compared to the flexibility being shown by consultancy firms, they are way behind.”

But flexible work is no longer a nice to have. In some cases it is a deal breaker: “If you don’t offer flexible work you’ll lose your talent,” asserts Jason Downes, MD at Powwownow. “We have examples where people have started their business and they’ve stated they will not have offices – they don’t want that cost. They’ll spend money on networking events or on workplace technology but not on physical office space.”

Space race

Office space is not a straightforward issue, however. A recent report from offices.co.uk suggested that compared to their office bound colleagues, home workers ran the risk of increased mental health issues and could suffer from loneliness and anxiety. There has certainly been a rise in the use of (trendy) shared space for businesses, recruitment companies included, and a general acknowledgement that meeting a candidate/client at a hotel or coffee shop is as appropriate as any other location. And then there are recruitment businesses who have invested in creating unique workspaces. These are often designed to reduce the ‘workspace’ feeling of the usual location and come complete with hanging out areas, recreation rooms, chill out spaces, bars and so on. But what are the implications of coming to work in a location designed to be not like coming to work? Are recruitment companies are making their offices less like offices so their consultants stay on site?

“If it is solely because it’s so hard to get the right level of motivation?” asks San Sunner. “You need people on site in order to generate that competitive nature?” But then again as she says, other companies have highly effective and competitive sales teams who are geographically dispersed.

There are some recruitment businesses who have embraced flexibility and appear to have gained success by doing so. David Stone, CEO, MRL Consulting Group believes his business was the first recruitment firm to introduce a four day working week, without reducing pay, benefits or targets. “It’s worked incredibly well so far,” he says. “We’ve seen a marked improvement in sick days taken – from 13 to eight per cent – and the team are happier and more productive.

“The biggest part of my job is to consider how to improve the eight hours per day my team spend at the office.” Stone continues, “and how they are using those hours in the first place. That’s when I started thinking about the four-day week again, because if you can cut out the time spent scrolling, socialising and procrastinating and still get the same amount of work done, then why spend any more time at the office than you need to?”

The biggest part of my job is to consider how to improve the eight hours per day my team spend at the office.
Some may argue MRL are simply offering different working hours rather than being flexible as such, and as Stone points out, any type of flexibility needs to be understood clearly by candidates when they are taking the job. Flexibility covers many different things and if it just means being able to take an hour off to go to the dentist but then needing to make that time up elsewhere that should be made clear. "Most candidates now expect this degree of flexibility as standard, so if an organisation is going to make this part of their unique selling point, they really need to go the extra mile," he says.

Stone also warns against introducing flexibility simply because it's a trend. "There are some environments and businesses where flexible working is more difficult than others, meaning that organisations should seek another benefit to gift their employees," he says. "Really, it’s about finding what works for you."

According to Tom White, MD of Paratus People, their flexible work offering is target based. "Like most in the industry, we have targets for the month to ensure we are hitting relevant benchmarks, not only for us, but for our clients as well. Unlike others however, when our consultants hit six deals in one month, they will be allowed every Thursday and Friday in the subsequent month off – reducing them to a three-day working week with absolutely no change in pay." Four deals secures a four-day week for consultants, so the idea here is that flexibility is being offered as a reward for good performance. As White notes, this goal is wholly achievable: "We have some real superstars who strive for the three-day working week each month," he notes.

"Flex for a reason"
The initiative grew with the fledgling business and it is interesting to note that during this time White felt work still needed to be on-site: "We needed to build a positive company culture, and this can be lost in a fully remote-working job," he says. "I’m proud we can offer this alternative model and it’s with the genuine hope that people can hit it – if not every month but at least three or four times a year in order to really benefit."

"For an incentive as extreme as ours, it’s important for it to be target-based," he adds. Upon announcing it to the team they were immediately engaged and excited for the opportunity to navigate their own schedules."

Alexander Mann Solutions have made a commitment that every single role in the company has the potential to flex to some degree and, reports Paul Modley, global talent acquisition director and head of diversity and inclusion, 66 per cent of colleagues now choose to work 'non-typically'. The company has even created fully flexible roles to appeal to specific types of candidates such as military spouses who are dealing with a great deal of uncertainty in their lives. The company also employs champions across the organisation who ensure flexible options are deployed and managed as smoothly as possible.

"A lot of this flexibility has been a natural progression for our business," says Modley. "For any organisation that manages the flow of talent for other firms, responding to the changing demands of candidates is a must."

As Modley notes, Alexander Mann’s own approach reflects the concerns of their candidates: “These individuals will be working closely with candidates who are demanding flexibility in their potential jobs and businesses that are willing and eager to provide this – so why shouldn't those in the talent attraction field have access to it as well?"

Flexibility is already a reality across the global workplace and as technology – and even government intervention – develops it is certain the physical location of work will decrease in importance compared to deciding how and when to work. But as all these examples demonstrate, there has to be a point to flexibility: it cannot be implemented for its own sake, because at the end of the day, work still needs to be done, targets still need to be hit and employees still need to understand what is expected of them.

“I think the biggest pitfall is when employers just implement flexible working for the sake of attraction, and then get annoyed or make employees feel uncomfortable when they take advantage of it,” says Tom White. “Only introduce flexible working if you’re going to commit to it, otherwise there is no point. I also think that having a flexible working scheme with no structure or measurement of success can be a little bit misguided. There are a lot of trustworthy workers in the world, but there will always be one that will take advantage, and this is the first step to a toxic company culture."
Being your own boss is easier with the right support.

Ever dreamed of being your own boss? Have you felt as if all your hard work goes, perhaps not unnoticed or unrewarded, but without the true recognition it deserves? The recruitment industry is notorious for being fertile ground for new businesses, and as a mark of this the current rate of new recruitment companies being created is around the highest it has ever been. So what does it take to grasp your own inspiration and turn it into a fantastic business? Whether you’re considering going it alone, taking on a Joint Venture or Franchise there is a wealth of support out there for you to realise your best business. From financial support to marketing and web presence management if you can get the right suppliers for your business you’ll reap the rewards quickly and efficiently. There’s help to build and maintain your profile and brand, through marketing, web presence management and a communications strategy. If you’re looking for guidance and inspiration along the way, check out some training, or gaining strategic and business advice that will help your decision making from the early days through to the days of greater success.

With the right suppliers and the right idea, plus energy and enthusiasm, the sky is the limit for great recruiters to build great recruitment companies. You may be targeting a specialism or seeking to fulfill general positions, aiming for permanent talent placements or looking to run a fast paced temp business, the advice, support and resources are ready for you. Blast off.

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GETTING IT RIGHT FROM THE START

Stefan Sosnowski, director, uComply Ltd on getting down to business.

As a business in the UK you are expected to know everything required to run one. For a new business venture this may at times seem overly onerous. As the owner and/or director of a business you have a responsibility to ensure all is in place before your ‘fledgling’ is ready to fly.

From my experience in forming a new business venture, you should focus on several areas; company, staffing and operations. If you are creating a recruitment agency/business, you need to get your ducks in a row.

Company

Choose the right name and ensure it is available. As quick as you can claim the domain name and register it at the same time as you register your legal entity. There are many internet-based operators who actively look for newly registered companies and will buy domain name to resell at an inflated price. Once you establish the type of entity for your business set it up in the appropriate way i.e. at Companies House. This is important as you will quickly find that end user clients and businesses will not trade with you unless you have a registered company number. Also, you will need to ensure you have the correct insurances and levels of cover. There are quite a few other steps to take. The government has guides that can help you on your way. https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/companies-house is a great source of information to help with these first steps.

Staffing

If you employ staff/workers, you need to:
- Check their Right to Work
- Depending on the type of work you may also need to do a DBS check
- Capture and know their HMRC details
- Comply with Equal Opportunities and Disability Discrimination Laws
- Ensure you are paying the national minimum wage and know whether you must enrol your staff/workforce for a workplace pension scheme
- Have robust staff contracts of employment and terms of engagement for temporary workers
- Protect the personally identifiable information you store to comply with GDPR

Again, the government has simple advice https://www.gov.uk/get-ready-to-employ-someone on what you need to do.

Operations

Getting everything in place before this point will help massively. Have you created a strategy/business plan?
- What is your intended market? – who is your client base broken down by sectors/regions
- What do you expect to earn? – even a guesstimate at this point is useful

Getting this in place enables you to fly. It gives you a simple document that you can share to give your company’s vision; demonstrates a clear understanding of where your business is and where it is going. Provides confidence to your bankers/financiers. Furthermore, it gives you a benchmark to measure your success.

From my experience in forming a new business venture, you should focus on several areas; company, staffing and operations. If you are creating a recruitment agency/business, you need to get your ducks in a row.

Technology

Technology can enable you to be more efficient, provide a consistent process and demonstrate a higher level of control. If we start with Right to Work the government gives guidance on what to do:
1. You must see the applicant’s original documents.
2. You must check that the documents are valid with the applicant present.
3. You must make and keep copies of the documents and record the date you made the check.

With Brexit on the horizon how comfortable are you that your process will stand up to scrutiny? Will you comply with the changes coming into effect, remain GDPR compliant and have a consistent approach across your business? There are solutions available that can help you with this.
YOUR START-UP SOCIAL STRATEGY

Christina Robinson, MD at Green Umbrella Marketing Ltd on how to start-up a social media strategy.

The time is right for you to start-up your recruitment business. You’ve got a business name, some prospective clients and candidates and possibly even premises to work from. So far, so promising.

How much thought have you given to your marketing strategy though? More specifically, how much thought have you given to your social media strategy?

You are probably savvy enough to know that you need an online presence and that this needs to stand out if you want your start-up to grow into an established recruitment business.

The key to a successful marketing and social media strategy is planning. A simple three-step process to keep in mind is Plan, Document, Measure.

Plan ahead

Let’s focus on the planning and documenting stage, what is your social media strategy? Think about your Ws.

- What are you going to talk about?
- Who are you talking to and with?
- Why are you doing this (what do you want to achieve?)
- Where are you going to be active?
- Why are you doing this (what do you want to achieve?)

You should be able to brief them on your personality and style so they then don’t do it. It’s better to do a couple well and generate leads, than managing several channels poorly with no results.

If you are wondering which social media channels are worth investing your energy in, Facebook is still by far the biggest social network with 1.74 billion active monthly users on Facebook Mobile. YouTube comes in at second place, followed by WhatsApp. Instagram follows, ahead of Twitter with LinkedIn languishing behind them, albeit still with over 260 million monthly users on the latter.

Open channels

Decide which channels suit you and your start-up best and focus on these initially.

- Define your personality and conversation style
- Are you formal or informal, funny or serious, factual or more casual and enthusiastic?
- What do you want people to think or feel after they have engaged with you?

What sort of topics do you want to have conversations about and where will go for your sources of news and content?

Ideally if anyone else picks up running your social media channels, they openly offer credits for life experience. Legitimate institutions will not give a student a degree based on work history alone. The majority of a degree is earned in the classroom. This will be especially relevant if there is no coursework as part of the final qualification.

There is no physical campus. It should be easy to find an address for an accredited university, even if they offer online correspondence. If this cannot be sourced after extensive searching, it may be a diploma mill.

The name sounds familiar. Diploma mills are known to pick names that are very close to accredited institutions in hopes that the student or employer will confuse the two. For example, the University of New Castle, operating in Manchester, provided fake diplomas to individuals.

Here are some tell-tale signs you are dealing with one:

- They openly offer credits for life experience: Legitimate institutions will not give a student a degree based on work history alone.
- The majority of a degree is earned in the classroom. This will be especially relevant if there is no coursework as part of the final qualification.
- There is no physical campus. It should be easy to find an address for an accredited university, even if they offer online correspondence. If this cannot be sourced after extensive searching, it may be a diploma mill.
- The name sounds familiar. Diploma mills are known to pick names that are very close to accredited institutions in hopes that the student or employer will confuse the two. For example, the University of New Castle, operating in Manchester, provided fake diplomas to individuals.
- Students are charged a flat fee to earn their degree. Real qualifications require a lot of work to earn. This will be especially relevant if there is no coursework as part of the final qualification.
- Criminal Background Check – Lastly, while not directly linked to identifying fake qualifications, a critical step in any comprehensive background screening program can be a criminal record check. These will help identify any red flags or individuals who may be willing to submit fraudulent information. There are three levels of criminal record checks available in the UK: a Basic Disclosure, a Standard Disclosure and an Enhanced Disclosure.

Due diligence is key

Ultimately, the only way recruiters can know if they are dealing with candidates with ‘real’ qualifications is by undergoing the necessary due diligence. The cost of a bad hire is huge, and being duped into hiring, or putting forward the wrong candidate for a role, could result in a whole host of negative consequences. These are not only financial concerns either, as employee brand and reputation can take a huge hit from these incidents. The truth is that businesses are deceived by diploma and reference mills on a daily basis. By taking time to invest in comprehensive background screening programs, this can be avoided.
The volatility of what we are seeing in today’s world is having an unprecedented impact on taxation, trade, immigration and employee mobility. These changes are posing historic challenges for businesses everywhere and is certainly true for employee mobility and HR teams pursuing effective, efficient and predictable movement of much-needed talent for today’s global organisations. Changes in the global environment – and the pressures being created both for businesses and their mobility leaders – are wide-ranging. The UK’s proposed exit from the European Union is expected to profoundly affect how businesses in the UK and outside abroad will structure and conduct cross-border businesses. In the US, its changing stance on global trade and the introduction of more restrictive tax and trade policies are affecting future business prospects both for US companies and those looking to invest in the market. The structure of future work assignments may be impacted by these changes in the US and other countries, in addition to the diminishing influence of multinational projects and institutions.

The rise of populism is exerting a significant impact on domestic immigration policies around the world. Immigration rules have tightened in a bid to increase local employment levels, making it harder for global organisations to move talent to some countries, particularly concerning their less-experienced workers. Furthermore, a rise in civil interest in taxation of large corporations and the global project to curb tax-base erosion and profit shifting have sparked a wave of worldwide tax reforms, as countries seek to shore up tax bases and improve their ability to compete for foreign investment. Organisations are increasingly moving significant employee populations to demonstrate substance as compliance moves to the top of the C-Suite agenda, with reputational erosion and profit-shifting having sparked a wave of worldwide tax reforms, as countries seek to shore up tax bases and improve their ability to compete for foreign investment.

Dennis McEvoy, partner, KPMG in Singapore on managing talent in a turbulent geopolitical environment.

The benefits of ‘location traps’

Location traps will likely continue to offer potential advantages to businesses and their employees. This is particularly true in today’s current climate, where macro pressures continue to exert pressures on global businesses. But to consider the benefits of location traps today will require companies to look more strategically at how they manage deployment of workers to these locations. Doing so can reveal advantages that make deployments to these countries potentially more productive and predictable.

An effective strategy to navigate the challenging global conditions includes addressing employers’ needs to optimise talent recruitment and deployment, creating more flexible work assignment policies, moving from short- to longer-term planning, and developing more structured timelines for assignments.

Here is a brief overview of some best practices that can deliver a more strategic approach to talent management and ultimately make the best use of location traps in today's challenging environment:

Candidate selection: Finding the right candidate for each assignment or wider mobility opportunity has never been more important. Increasingly, organisations are utilising data analytics tools to cast a wider net and identify talent possessing the right background, language skills and professional skillset to best serve the needs of each assignment.

The 2018 KPMG Global Assignment Policies and Practice (GAPP) survey showed that 27 per cent and 32 per cent of participants view mobility analytics as positively contributing to both the selection and retention of assignees, respectively.

Increasing the flow of talent: Home countries are still incentivised to send talent to “location traps” but are beginning to put more thought into articulating the experience that will be gained by the employee, and how this will prepare them for future roles.

The most progressive organisations now already know the specific future role that the employee may be asked to take on and communicate this as part of relocation discussions. This encourages employees to invest in their careers by working abroad while also understanding that their time in any specific location may be limited. We found in the GAPP survey that only 7 per cent of organisations are currently planning an assignee’s return or next deployment one year prior to repatriation.

Flexibility in approach: There is no longer a one-size-fits-all mentality to mobility. Many organisations are offering more flexible assignment policies, setting policy frameworks containing core and optional provisions and expanding the range of choices for either the business or the employee. This can ensure that the golden packages of the past are typically only seen for very senior or strategic moves and that employees have the flexibility to prioritise the assignment support that is most important to them.

Localisation: Building finite timelines for long-term assignment policies has proven effective in reducing the financial motivation for assignees to remain in location trap countries. Where individuals have been chosen to remain in a location for personal reasons, it has created the added benefit of reducing the cost of mobility, which remains a key objective for many organisations. The GAPP survey showed that only 39 per cent of organisations have a formal process for localisation, including clear timetables, under the relevant assignment policy.

The mobility spectrum: The average assignment period to such locations has been decreasing for some time due to factors such as the rise of dual-career families, increasing immigration challenges in select locations and greater focus on assignments’ cost. This trend will continue as organisations increasingly rely on remote working and shorter assignments including extended business trips, short-term assignments and training assignments. The GAPP survey discovered that more than 60 per cent of organisations expect an increase in extended business trips, short-term assignments and developments’ training assignments.

In contrast, 28 per cent of organisations expect the use of long-term assignments to decrease.

Conclusion benefits for everyone

To maintain competitiveness, global organisations are focusing on the comparative benefits of location traps, looking for potential regional hubs for their mobile workforce. Ongoing geopolitical volatility make destinations with favourable and flexible approaches to mobile employees and their organisation more attractive.

Today’s mobility challenge is to adopt a more strategic and well-defined approach to work assignments and overall deployment policies. Ultimately, global organisations that prosper from a mobility perspective as the wider storms rage on will be those that follow the right strategy. They will make the best use of location traps to deploy talent into surrounding growth markets. They will effectively communicate how each cycle of global experience benefits their employees at the respective stages in their careers. And they will provide employees with the flexibility to choose the specific assignment benefits that best suit their personal needs.

However the future unfolds, mobility and HR teams need to maintain a close eye on geopolitical trends so that they remain ready to face and effectively manage any new strategic and operational challenges in the weeks, months and years ahead.

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CHANGE YOUR PERSPECTIVE

Javad Juma, talent acquisition manager, EMEA at Cornerstone OnDemand considers what it takes to be a talent acquisition professional.

Some of us working in the talent acquisition industry may have recently taken the time on Global Talent Acquisition Day to give ourselves a small pat on the back. But alongside this recognition for what is becoming an increasingly challenging and complex field, also came the opportunity to sit back and reflect on what exactly 'talent acquisition' now means?

With many years of experience working in the field myself, I know that it can be unpredictable. From candidates showing off their magic tricks in an interview, to forgetting it's not just a call, as they casually sip a glass of wine or conduct the interview in their boxers, it certainly can't be accused of being dull either. But there is no denying that the recruitment landscape has shifted and as a result, how we work is also having to drastically change.

Drilling down to what's important

Previously, talent acquisition was a slightly simpler exchange. You had a job role to fill, someone wanted a new job (because maybe they wished to re-locate or wanted to earn more money) they happened to have the required skills and experience and that was it, done. Now, it’s a little more complex, to say the least. While skills and experience are still important criteria for finding the right candidate, particularly when you’re looking for someone with niche knowledge, they certainly aren’t the be-all and end-all they once were. The focus is increasingly moving towards finding that person with the right attitude, approach to working and most importantly, the desire to keep learning and develop. The skills they have to offer with the right attitude, approach to working and most importantly, what are the opportunities this will provide those new hires to grow, develop and progress through your company? We’re no longer just providing people with a new job but helping them to build a career. Someone you hired being successful in your business is the best indication of a job well done.

Indeed, it’s a misconception that talent acquisition stops once that new person has joined. Quite the opposite. Having worked so hard to build up a relationship, most likely over months, even years, with this candidate, you shouldn’t just then break ties. Part of our role is to also help further nurture talent. Who knows, when another role opens up or a new position is created at your company, the person you hired a couple of years back may well be the perfect candidate – and you already know that they fit into your company culture. Not to mention, the time saved by not having to go through onboarding and bringing them up to speed with company protocols. The importance of internal talent and internal mobility should never be overlooked. While so many still may associate talent acquisition with external recruitment, this is only half of the story.

Competition for those great candidates is fiercer than ever and just hoping for the CVs to role in is certainly not going to cut it. Now, talent acquisition means we need to cover an employee’s whole career life cycle, keeping up a personal connection, helping their development and to progress – that is how you will attract and far more importantly, retain the best talent. As talent acquisition professionals, we’re only as good as the people we help hire, so make sure you’re helping yourself to hire great people.

Moreover, you cannot afford to overlook the importance of employees sharing the same values and goals held by your company, seeing that they will embrace and be happy in their new work environment. Not to mention matching well with how their colleagues work too. However, this certainly does not mean that they should come from the same background or have the same experience, but rather that they hold similar principles and work attitudes. For example, if a prospective employee prefers a company where roles are clearly set out, but your company promotes a culture of sharing and picking up tasks, even taking on jobs that are from another department, there will inevitably be a clash. In this case, culture fit trumps having the perfect skillset and you may have to walk away. From the candidates’ perspectives as well, their motivations for looking and taking a new job are not as clear cut as we can mistakenly believe.

There are so many potential reasons for why someone will and won’t take a role or work at a certain company. Don’t fall into the trap of grouping people by generation either, just because they’re a millennial or from Gen Z, don’t think their interests will be the same as their peers. Never assume – it’s vital to discover and truly understand the unique interests and motivations of each individual candidate.

Switching up your mindsets

As well as almost having to work like a psychologist, drawing out people’s true wants and motivations, talent acquisition professionals also need to be able to predict the future, or at least, we need to be forward thinking. Talent acquisition is no longer a numbers game. Far from just trying to push new employees through the door, we have to also be considering the consequences and impact of that new hire. For example, working out what that does to the career paths in that team. Here, it is vital to be fully aligned with the rest of your business, understanding the company’s overall aims and goals and how that will affect recruitment needs and the required skills. More importantly, what are the opportunities this will provide those new hires to grow, develop and progress through your company? We’re no longer just providing people with a new job but helping them to build a career. Someone you hired being successful in your business is the best indication of a job well done.

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Simon Kent discusses the STEM sector and SThree with CEO Mark Dorman.

Having just passed his six month anniversary as CEO of SThree, Mark Dorman is clearly excited and aware of the potential for his company with the sector it serves. Pivoted at the cutting edge of STEM talent (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths) and with operations worldwide he is highly motivated to build on the current success of SThree, for candidates, for the clients the business serves and for the wider good of industry as a whole.

“As a business we have a really great purpose,” he says. “Building the future is really at the centre of how our 3,500 employees think and they want to be a part of that. They want to do a good thing.” Essentially this means Dorman’s business is not simply driven by the bottom line or financial targets. It is about contributing to “how the world works and helping it work for the better.”

As Dorman remarks, it is SThree’s fourth CEO and given his predecessors were either company founders or drawn from in-house talent, he is the first ‘outsider’ to take the lead. With a background in law and more immediately education, through his position as President of Higher Education at McGraw Hill Education, he has a strong background in the US – handy for SThree’s current global ambitions – and great familiarity with the STEM sector: “Talent is in high demand for mathematics and critical thinking problem solvers,” he says. “The STEM sector is facing up to the biggest challenges it has ever had and we need to deeply understand the niches where we operate and align the business with those.

“I’m very lucky as a CEO as you don’t often come in to a business with those. That’s about getting the right people in the right place.”

Owning this point Dorman is clear that he is driven by the need to build on the success and focus on where we perform well. “We are in a supply constrained market,” observes Dorman. “If we’re going to supply the right candidate we need to think about how we get close to those candidates, how we nurture them, help them to grow and make sure we’re placing them in the right programmes and projects where they can succeed.”

Doing this means consultants must make the right relationships with their candidates and be present within the candidate pool. They need to understand the dynamics of the talent space and engage with the right community whether that’s life sciences, quality assurance or technology development. The company needs to understand what makes these people tick and understand what the customer needs from the project. The pressure is on for SThree in this respect because when a client wants talent to work on a project they need someone who will contribute from the moment they walk through the door.

The approach to delivering this, argues Dorman, varies from industry to industry and skillset to skillset. SThree is big enough to strength. For Dorman if the business is to continue to go from strength to strength.

Part of this means focussing more on the data and analytics the company produces and responding to the lessons produced from there. “The core job at the end of the day is how do you curate that data to become something for the business to respond to,” concludes Dorman. “How do we then feed that down to the individual consultant so they can be valuable to the people they serve?”

This task may not be straightforward, but it is clearly key for Dorman if the business is to continue to go from strength to strength.

We need to think about how we get close to those candidates, how we nurture them, help them to grow.
Candidate experience was the focus of the most recent Recruitment Live industry debate, hosted by The Global Recruiter in association with Access Group. Surprisingly this was the first time we had invited recruitment industry professionals to discuss this aspect of the industry but with an acknowledged candidate driven marketplace, the timing of the discussion was pertinent. In attendance were: William Geldart, Marketing Manager, BPS World, Sophie Allison, Principle Consultant, Interim Finance, Cobalt Recruitment, Karen Lancashire, IT Recruitment Consultant, Eutopia Online, Anna Cooper, Director, Coyle Personnel, Joshua Bromage Smith, Digital Marketing Manager, Coyle Personnel, Gwyneth Barrett, Permanent Nursing Team Manager, HCL Workforce Solutions, Greg Western, Divisional Head, HCL Mental Health, Felix Wetzel, Director, Serocor, Adam Walker, Director, Redline, Kirsty McIntyre, Delivery Manager, Venquis, Catherine Broome, Executive Search, Odgers Berndtson, Tony Goodwin, Founder & Executive Chairman, Antal, Tony Gale, Enterprise Sales, Access Group, Craig Howard, UK Sales Manager, Volcanic, Adam Povall, Sales Consultant, Volcanic, William Geldart even outlined that his business seeks to incentivise the right behaviour towards candidates specifically to increase and maintain the business’ NPS score. He reported that they had had some success in this area, although tying down what ‘the right behaviour’ was not always straight forward. Each case illustrated in some way the management of expectations: informing a candidate clearly of what the opportunity was, as well as their candidates – can be reluctant to engage with people by phone or face-to-face, preferring technology led methods – email, text or WhatsApp. Some suggested that it was a relatively easy matter to ask each candidate how they’d prefer to be contacted at the start of any relationship, but others believe that ultimately talking to someone is the only way to discover that person is right for the job. Felix Wetzel believes getting the candidate experience right begins before the candidate have even approached the recruiter. He drew comparisons with the automotive retail sector arguing that in the same way BMW buyers are a particular type of car-buyer with particular expectations and properties (including the finance to buy one), recruiters need to get their shop window right in order to attract the candidates they need – and only the candidates they need. This way the recruiter can spend time working with the talent they want rather than trying to manage the experience of a huge number of unsuitable applications. Wetzel and Tony Goodwin suggested that creating an ‘overly competitive’ image isn’t necessarily a bad thing. People both admire and disdain dogged determination in equal measure so you can still target the people you need. Making sure you appeal to the right people – both candidate and client-wise – regardless of what that means to others can still result in success. Technology can help in this,” asserted Wetzel. “Automation can screen CVs, you can find the right people and send out automated messages to each candidate.” “Technology does not replace the human recruiter,” said Tony Gale, “rather it raises the performance bar and supports minimum professional standards, whilst freeing us up to focus on value-adding behaviours and activities. It is effectively working silently in the background to support today’s research-first job seeker approach and post-appointment talent pooling for unsuccessful candidates.” This then can at least go some way to answering the question of what to do with the B and C candidates who may have ended up feeling they had a bad experience at the hands of a recruiter. If it is clear from the start precisely what roles are being offered by a recruiter and what the reality of that work is, then candidates can select what they apply for with greater accuracy. Along that journey, technology can help support those candidates, giving human recruitment consultants the time they need to be hands on with candidates where necessary. For this reason, Tony Goodwin suggested that even with the introduction of technology, AI, chatbots and so on, it was unlikely that recruitment consultants would be out of a job for another hundred years at least. “Process can be automated, but not service,” he observed. “That’s the difference – you will still need the service. Technology can suggest a way to respond to a particular situation but what makes it work best is the person behind that technology.”
THE CULTURE CHECKLIST

Chris Griffiths, author of The Creative Thinking Handbook, founder of Ayoa.com asks if you're doing all you can to make your team creative.

Co-author: Caragh Medlicott.

The Cambridge Dictionary defines culture as: “The way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time.”

Though we may typically associate ‘culture’ with the traditions that come with different countries and backgrounds, it’s actually much broader than this. A place of work has a way of life, complete with customs and beliefs; ergo, it has a culture. It’s important that business leaders understand this, because work culture has an integral impact on the ethos and output of the overall workforce. In our competitive workplace, a creative culture is more important than ever; it is creativity that keeps employees progressing and achieving. Without creativity, the most theonostable structure will ultimately crumble.

Below is a creative culture checklist for teams and leaders seeking to make every part of their culture foolproof, and for an effective workplace. That results in:

1: Embrace your mistakes

Failure is creativity’s number one killer. Well, actually, not failure itself – but fear of failure. Of course, it’s pretty normal for people to be scared of making mistakes. Unfortunately, this is especially common in the workplace. If your culture looks down on mistakes then it also looks too quickly – letting reaction, rather than strategy, guide the subject/area you’re looking to ideate in and then doing something too quickly – letting reaction, rather than strategy, guide the next steps. Assuming thinking – this is when we uncompromisingly accept beliefs, especially ones that abide by convention, as unwaveringly true (even when we have no evidence to back it up). Ensure your team know and are aware of these errors so they can take steps to avoid them; that way no one is unwittingly falling into a thinking trap.

2: Beware of thinking errors

It may come as a surprise to some, but the way we typically think – individually and as a collective – has a big impact on the decisions we make and the ideas we come up with. The assumptions and values we unreasoningly harbour hold mere sway over our decisions than many of us would really like to acknowledge. The good news is that being aware of our thinking errors is the first step to combating them. The three key thinking traps are selective thinking, reactive thinking and assumptive thinking. Selective thinking is the tendency to favour certain ideas – especially those we have come up with ourselves – over others. Reactive thinking is the human tendency to react to something too quickly – letting reaction, rather than strategy, guide the next steps. Assumptive thinking – this is when we uncompromisingly accept beliefs, especially ones that abide by convention, as unwaveringly true (even when we have no evidence to back it up). Ensure your team know and are aware of these errors so they can take steps to avoid them; that way no one is unwittingly falling into a thinking trap.

3: Make space to daydream

Yes, this is as wonderful as it sounds. While some may find this idea hard to swallow at first, daydreaming can be productive. Especially when it comes to matters of creativity. Of course, this doesn’t mean sitting around thinking about what you’re going to have for dinner. Instead, it’s getting yourself (or others) to read up extensively on the subject/area you’re looking to ideate in and then doing something else entirely. By mentally stepping away from the subject, this process allows us to tap into our subconscious where all our best ideas are formed and incubated. The first and most obvious way to get this into your culture is to make sure your employees know they’re allowed to take time away from their desk to daydream. Encourage healthy habits like taking walks or doing yoga. Build an environment which provides an escape from the traditional office atmosphere. This doesn’t have to be extravagant, just a small room or corner with some comfortable chairs, books and pens and paper will do the job. A team that practices focused daydreaming is a team that finds real, inventive solutions.

4: Instil a positive attitude

As Henry Ford said: “Whether you think you can, or think you can’t – you’re right.” Our attitude may not be a physical thing, but it has a very real impact on how we approach tasks. This is especially important for leaders – the outlook of managers and senior staff has a knock-on effect for the rest of the workforce. Positivity spreads easily, so leaders who expect the worst lead their employees to do the same.

Really, what this all comes down to is having a growth mindset versus a fixed one. Bosses with a fixed mindset operate on the basis that people’s basic qualities are unchangeable. But this is at odds with innovation, which requires teams to be in a constant state of self-improvement and enhancement. Alternatively, those with a growth mindset recognise the ability of each individual to grow and improve. A company that innovates with optimism is far more likely to be resilient to mistakes, while also creating a happy and motivated workforce that keeps pushing forward.

5: Have a mission with purpose

Lost in the daily grind of work, it’s easy for employees to lose sight of what exactly they’re working towards. This, in turn, leads to demotivated teams and individuals who can’t see the wood for the trees. Yes, this is as wonderful as it sounds. While some may find this idea hard to swallow at first, daydreaming can be productive. Especially when it comes to matters of creativity. Of course, this doesn’t mean sitting around thinking about what you’re going to have for dinner. Instead, it’s getting yourself (or others) to read up extensively on the subject/area you’re looking to ideate in and then doing something else entirely. By mentally stepping away from the subject, this process allows us to tap into our subconscious where all our best ideas are formed and incubated. The first and most obvious way to get this into your culture is to make sure your employees know they’re allowed to take time away from their desk to daydream. Encourage healthy habits like taking walks or doing yoga. Build an environment which provides an escape from the traditional office atmosphere. This doesn’t have to be extravagant, just a small room or corner with some comfortable chairs, books and pens and paper will do the job. A team that practices focused daydreaming is a team that finds real, inventive solutions.

6: Commit to the change

You have your checklist, you know what you need to do – and now is the time to do it. Changing company culture is hard. Habits are ingrained for all of us, but altering those habits is essential. The reason culture has such a big impact on your organisation is because of the way collective behaviour reinforces daily actions and outlook. It might not be easy, but with your company mission as a guiding light, you can get your team to commit to the change. Remember, practise makes perfect – slip ups shouldn’t mean giving up, but instead motivate you to keep trying.

The potential of an innovative culture knows no bounds. So, get to work on adjusting your culture and see the power of creative change for yourself. After all, innovation is a process, not an event.

The way we typically think – individually and as a collective – has a big impact on the decisions we make and the ideas we come up with.
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