

The voice for the global staffing industry

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THE GLOBAL RECRUITER

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#THANK YOU

Impact of COVID
Remote Mental Health

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WELCOME

The Global Recruiter salutes all of the front line workers that are currently fighting the Coronavirus Pandemic.

As all businesses face this period of uncertainty, we are here to support you by broadcasting information and advice enabling you to gain a better understanding of how the staffing industry is working together to support the UK workforce. Keep up to date via our news service on www.theglobalrecruiter.com

STAY SAFE, STAY HEALTHY, STAY HOME

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Subscribe online: www.theglobalrecruiter.com

Publisher: Gary King [E gary@theglobalrecruiter.com](mailto:gary@theglobalrecruiter.com)
 Editorial: Simon Kent [T +44 \(0\)1923 723990](mailto:simon@theglobalrecruiter.com) [E editorial@theglobalrecruiter.com](mailto:editorial@theglobalrecruiter.com)
 Advertising: Trevor Dorrell [T +44 \(0\)1923 723990](mailto:trevor@theglobalrecruiter.com) [E sales@theglobalrecruiter.com](mailto:sales@theglobalrecruiter.com)
 Digital Communications: Leigh Abbott [T +44 \(0\)1923 723990](mailto:leigh@theglobalrecruiter.com) [E leigh@theglobalrecruiter.com](mailto:leigh@theglobalrecruiter.com)
 Design & Production: Julie Harris [T +44 \(0\)1923 723990](mailto:julie@theglobalrecruiter.com) [E julie@theglobalrecruiter.com](mailto:julie@theglobalrecruiter.com)
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Why choose JSA as a preferred partner?

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"We would love to work with more recruiters and ensure JSA Services are the provider of choice. It has been my personal mission for over 10 years to make a difference and give confidence to anyone I partner with that they get nothing but the very best service."

Del Williams - Sales Director, JSA Group

FURLOUGHED ENGAGEMENT

In response to the increasing number of recruitment companies furloughing consultants due to COVID-19, APSCo has provided access to a number of free licences for its 'Essential Compliance for Recruiters' course, in an attempt to help firms keep furloughed consultants engaged and continue their professional development. The course, a joint venture between APSCo and Recruitment Juice, is a first for the professional recruitment sector and enables recruiters to gain the Compliance+ Recruiter

accreditation, a best practice quality standard for recruitment consultants. The course consists of a series of videos, downloads and multiple-choice quizzes that cover a range of compliance topics including equality, diversity & discrimination laws, preventing unconscious bias, GDPR, and changes to off-payroll working. The course also contains a final assessment which will give consultants the Compliance+ Recruiter accreditation. Moya Rylands, Membership Director at APSCo, commented

"In these testing times, APSCo is doing everything in its power to support recruiters and consultants during COVID-19. We understand how difficult it is to keep furloughed workers engaged and motivated, and therefore we wanted to provide something that would add value to individuals and businesses." "With the large number of furloughed consultants that will be

keen to carry on their professional development, increasing access to the Essential Recruitment Compliance Course was a no-brainer. The course will not only keep recruiters engaged and provide them with information that will limit future risk, but also allow them to display the Compliance+ accreditation on all their correspondence – a real differentiator for businesses."



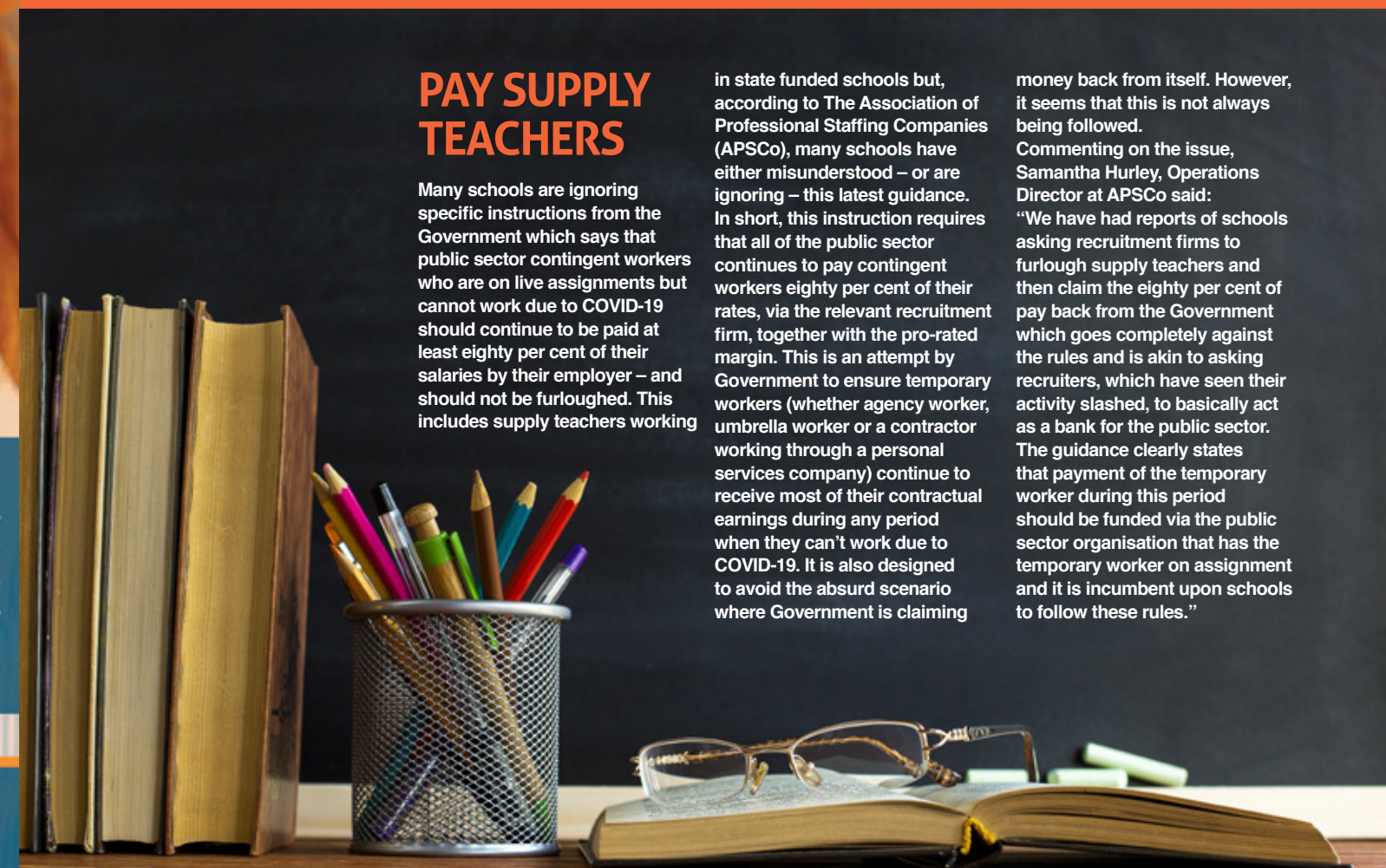
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PAY SUPPLY TEACHERS

Many schools are ignoring specific instructions from the Government which says that public sector contingent workers who are on live assignments but cannot work due to COVID-19 should continue to be paid at least eighty per cent of their salaries by their employer – and should not be furloughed. This includes supply teachers working

in state funded schools but, according to The Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCo), many schools have either misunderstood – or are ignoring – this latest guidance. In short, this instruction requires that all of the public sector continues to pay contingent workers eighty per cent of their rates, via the relevant recruitment firm, together with the pro-rated margin. This is an attempt by Government to ensure temporary workers (whether agency worker, umbrella worker or a contractor working through a personal services company) continue to receive most of their contractual earnings during any period when they can't work due to COVID-19. It is also designed to avoid the absurd scenario where Government is claiming

money back from itself. However, it seems that this is not always being followed. Commenting on the issue, Samantha Hurley, Operations Director at APSCo said: "We have had reports of schools asking recruitment firms to furlough supply teachers and then claim the eighty per cent of pay back from the Government which goes completely against the rules and is akin to asking recruiters, which have seen their activity slashed, to basically act as a bank for the public sector. The guidance clearly states that payment of the temporary worker during this period should be funded via the public sector organisation that has the temporary worker on assignment and it is incumbent upon schools to follow these rules."



UNPRECEDENTED LOW

New data from the Recruitment & Employment Confederation (REC) collected between 1 April and 9 April shows that business confidence in the economy has plummeted to record lows since the coronavirus crisis hit the UK. The latest JobsOutlook report shows that employer confidence in the UK economy has dropped to a net figure of -62. This is 39 percentage points lower than in March, and the lowest confidence figure recorded since the JobsOutlook survey began in 2016.

Employer demand for permanent staff has also fallen to a record low. Forecast demand for permanent staff in the next three months fell by 26 percentage points to a net figure of -9. This measure has never dropped to a negative before. Demand for temporary workers is down by less, at net: -4. Despite these measures being at record lows in early April, when employers think longer-term, it's clear that a recovery is on the cards as the

lockdown eases. Businesses said that in the next 4-12 months they would be looking to hire permanent staff, with medium-term demand sitting in positive territory at net: +8. Neil Carberry, Chief Executive of the REC, said: "We all know that the jobs market has taken a hit, and this data supports the story I am hearing from businesses all over the country. The short-term picture is weak, and that has fed through to hiring – especially for permanent

staff. But recovery is possible – it's clear that companies will be looking to hire as soon as the economy opens up again. "Making sure government support is effective will help businesses bridge the gap. Right now, speed and clarity matter most on the Business Interruption Loan Scheme and on how furlough works – more support on Statutory Sick Pay is also urgent. This support from government now will position recruiters to help Britain recover from COVID-19."

FURLOUGH EXTENSION

New CIPD survey of 1,000 employers highlights need for furloughed workers to be able to work reduced hours. Employers want to see the Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (JRS) made more flexible to allow furloughed staff to work reduced hours and for the scheme to be extended to at least the end of September. This is according to a new survey of more than 1,000 employers commissioned by the CIPD, the professional body for HR and people development. The CIPD is warning that without these changes, the current JRS could prove to be a waiting room for unemployment and fail to protect significant numbers of the jobs it set out to save. The CIPD's survey shows that almost half (forty six per cent) of employers have already furloughed staff, while another ten per cent plan to do so. However more than three quarters of employers that have already furloughed staff (seventy six per cent) or plan to furlough staff (seventy eight per cent) said that making the scheme more flexible to enable furloughed staff to work reduced hours would be useful.

Seven in ten employers (seventy per cent) that have already used or are considering using the furlough scheme, said that up to half of furloughed staff could potentially work reduced hours, while sixteen per cent of these organisations reported that more than fifty per cent of furloughed staff could work reduced hours. The CIPD says that changes to the scheme to allow short-time working would enable hundreds of thousands of furloughed staff to work in some capacity, helping to protect jobs, support businesses and reduce the burden on public finances, as many employers would require a lower wage subsidy from the Government. In addition to greater flexibility, employers would also like the JRS extended by three months, to the end of September, with sixty per cent identifying this as the most important labour market policy change that would help them deal with the impact of COVID-19. This is crucial given that the CIPD's survey suggests that the JRS has played a vital role in protecting jobs to-date, with just seven per cent of employers having already made redundancies in response to Covid-19 to-date, with a further twelve per cent planning to. CIPD Chief Executive, Peter Cheese, commented: "The Government has worked



hard to get the job retention scheme up and running so quickly. However, urgent decisions must now be taken to make it more flexible and to extend it so employers can continue to protect jobs. "Letting furloughed staff work some hours, where possible, will enable organisations to bring back workers from furlough gradually while rebuilding their business. This will be vital as lockdown measures are eased over a number of weeks or months, and will reduce the risk of large-scale redundancies in this next phase of the crisis. "The Government must also consider extending the scheme to at least the end of September.

This will provide more certainty for employers and ensure that there is no 'cliff edge' exit from furlough straight to redundancy for hundreds of thousands of workers at the end of June. "The Government has shown its prepared to adapt and improve its rescue packages for businesses and workers as this crisis develops. It needs to do so again here. Equally, businesses must play their part. We need to see employers weigh up the ethical, legal and financial considerations of using the scheme, to act openly and responsibly to ensure that a more flexible system is not abused, and that public money goes to the businesses that need it the most."

HIGHER EXPECTATIONS

A new wave of an ongoing study conducted by Toluna and Harris Interactive, two leading providers of consumer intelligence, assesses how UK employees are coping with working life amidst the COVID19 pandemic and analyses their attitudes about the future. It reveals employers are likely to face challenges rebuilding employee engagement with the business and ensuring a healthy organization when lockdown ends. The study was carried out on April 23, 2020 as part of a global study which surveyed 607 employees from the UK. The first wave was conducted on April 01, 2020.

Key findings

UK employee engagement remains significantly below normal levels, while commitment, motivation, and general satisfaction with their job and employer have declined.

Toluna Analysis: "Employee engagement has taken a major hit as a result of the pandemic, even more so than the financial crisis of 2008. This week's results indicate that it could be some time before organisations see employee engagement bounce back to pre-pandemic levels. It's critical for organisations to keep an ear to the ground and understand shifting sentiment so they can swiftly take action to support their workforce. Engagement enhances business performance and competitive advantage, so rallying employees is paramount to survival today and success in the future as the landscape begins to normalize," said Vijay Mistry, Head of Employee Experience Research for Harris Interactive and Toluna.

UK Employees are optimistic and excited to get back to work

- 46 per cent of UK employees feel they will return to their normal place of work within two months, as compared with

only twelve per cent more than three weeks ago

- 57 per cent of UK employees are either enthusiastic or relieved about the thought of returning to their normal working arrangements

Toluna Analysis: "It's clear that UK workers have adapted well to their new remote working arrangements, but there is a growing appetite for structure and routine. Although employees have accepted their current situations as the 'new normal' and hope to see greater flexibility in working arrangements when they return to an office environment, they recognise the current work-life situation is not a permanent one," said Vijay Mistry, Head of Employee Experience Research for Harris Interactive and Toluna.

Pressures on employees will be heightened upon return to work

- 25 per cent of employees expect pressure to be much higher, while half of respondents think workloads and job demands/pressure will return to at least similar levels
- 36 per cent believe there will be salary, promotion, or recruitment freezes
- 30 per cent are expecting more redundancies

Toluna Analysis: "Employees are under no illusion that work-life after the pandemic will return to where it was. Employers can rest assured that workers recognise there will be major adjustments as businesses attempt to get back on track. In fact, employees expect they will have to work harder with fewer resources than before the pandemic. They also understand career opportunities and rewards will be limited by comparison, signalling their acknowledgement of their role in the recovery of the wider economy and future success of their employer," said Vijay Mistry, Head of Employee Experience Research for Harris Interactive and Toluna.

Expected changes in workplaces will centre on hygiene and flexibility

- 67 per cent of respondents believe hygiene and cleanliness will improve
- 51 per cent think there will be increased flexibility around working hours and schedules
- 47 per cent expect to see improvements around home working arrangements, enabled by the increased use of online collaboration tools

Productivity at home increases

- Only 35 per cent of respondents report they feel less productive working remotely, in comparison with forty per cent in Wave 1 of the study
- Though a large proportion (44 per cent) of employees state their workload is lower than normal, five per cent more employees feel their workload is higher than normal

Toluna Analysis: "Businesses have made excuses for years to limit people from working remotely, despite increasing employee calls for flexibility. The excuse of impossibility will no longer hold up. Employees are not only comfortable working remotely but have demonstrated they can be just as productive at home. As a result, increased flexibility will be an inevitable expectation that employers will have to manage when work-life starts to return to normal," said Vijay Mistry, Head of Employee Experience Research for Harris Interactive and Toluna.

Employees want increased communication and teamwork

- 51 per cent want regular team meetings
- 44 per cent want work to be distributed evenly across their team
- 41 per cent want regular updates on the company (e.g. financial and performance updates)

Toluna Analysis: "Our results show employers have continued to

provide the necessary support to remote workers and communicate well throughout the pandemic, but employees still want more support to help them work effectively and bridge the productivity gap. Managers in particular must ensure fairness and transparency, which can be particularly difficult when managing remotely," said Vijay Mistry, Head of Employee Experience Research for Harris Interactive and Toluna.

Mental and physical health status

Mental health has increased from 39 per cent reporting bad mental health in Wave 1 to 32 per cent in Wave 2. The driving factors of mental health challenges are general anxiety about the pandemic and anxiety over health of friends and/or family. Surprisingly, the lowest contributors were anxieties about their day-to-day job or job security. **Physical health has increased.** 36 per cent of UK employees in Wave 1 reported bad health, which has reduced to 23 per cent, and nine per cent more now say it is good or very good compared to normal (39 per cent). Where health is reported as lower than before lockdown, employees stated they have adopted some bad behaviours, most notably eating less healthily, taking less exercise, and drinking more alcohol.

Toluna Analysis: "Although our results demonstrate a slight improvement over the last three weeks, the current and returning workforce will likely not be as mentally and physically well as they were prior to the pandemic. Employers must recognise employees returning to work will have adopted some bad habits that could have an impact on their effectiveness. Organisations that have a strong focus on wellbeing should be well prepared to deal with the long-term effects of employees' fluctuating mental and physical health," said Vijay Mistry, Head of Employee Experience Research for Harris Interactive and Toluna. ■

NEED TO PROTECT ALL

Denis Pennel, Managing Director, World Employment Confederation on the COVID-19 crisis.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 virus poses a major and unprecedented challenge to economies and societies worldwide. Needless to say, the outbreak of the COVID-19 has severely impacted the private employment services industry, like many other sectors across the economy. As a core HR service provided by private employment services, agency work has been particularly hit by the virus crisis, for two main reasons. Firstly, because the level of activity of agency work is directly connected to the evolution of GDP (which has faced a strong decrease due to the much needed containment measures adopted by governments around the world). Secondly, because agency work is a highly intensive labour service, employing millions of workers across the globe. In some countries, the COVID-19 crisis has cut down the number of agency workers by fifty per cent to seventy per cent over the past couple of weeks, which is an unprecedented situation. Private employment services have been working around the clock to re-allocate workers across the economy. While in many sectors the use of agency work has been reduced dramatically due to lock-down measures (manufacturing, hospitality, construction, culture & arts, non-food retail),

some other sectors are desperately looking for agency workers to make up for the unexpected surge in activity: healthcare, retail (supermarkets), transport and logistics, food processing. In these sectors, agency work is being used to replace sick workers, those working from home or unable to work because they need to take care of their children. In the Netherlands, the industry has developed an on-line platform to share job vacancies and reallocate workers suddenly out of work to assignments in urgent need of workers.

From the industry's point of view, the priority issue is, of course, the impact on people's health and wellbeing. Therefore, in countries affected by the virus, measures have been adopted to protect agency workers as well as the staff being employed in branches. Information about health and safety at work has been actively disseminated (dedicated websites have been created in most countries) and teleworking has been facilitated where possible, thanks to digitalisation solutions that the industry has been investing in for several years (job vacancies available on-line, possibility to e-sign labour contracts, video-interviews, etc.). In Belgium, the industry has asked the public authorities to close down the

services-to-individual sector as the only way to protect the health and safety of its 140,000 workers (cleaning and ironing services organised via a service-voucher system).

A second priority is to ensure that agency workers are being protected against and compensated for the loss of work assignment. At national level, WEC members have been liaising closely with governments to ensure that agency workers are included and covered by short-time working schemes, have the possibility to benefit from paid leave to take care of their children and are being covered by sick leave measures like any other workers. In the UK, the industry has been calling on the government to fund statutory sick pay for every worker (including agency workers), with quicker access to state support. In the Netherlands, the agency work trade body has secured that agency workers will benefit from all the COVID-19 relief measures that the Dutch government is putting in place. The principle promoted by the World Employment Confederation is that agency workers should be covered in the same way as other workers when it comes to access to support measures adopted by public authorities.

Last, but not least, the industry has implemented some specific initiatives to protect agency workers. In Italy, a collective labour agreement has been signed by social partners from the agency work sector: ten million euros have been allocated from a solidarity bipartite fund to protect the continuity of employment and pay of agency workers. In France, agency workers have the possibility to take on-line medical examinations (thanks to a partnership between the sectoral social fund and Mediaviz).

All these measures illustrate that private employment services act as a responsible and solution-orientated industry, in order to ensure that all workers, particularly those in diverse forms of work, have the social safety nets and protection they need in this unprecedented situation. As in ordinary times, the private employment services industry stands for its people and will do its utmost to support workers navigating a stormy world of work. ■



ENSURE YOUR CONTRACTORS ARE SUPPORTED THROUGH IR35

It's no surprise that contractors are nervous about IR35. It is a complex piece of legislation which will have a direct effect on the take-home pay of many private sector contractors when it is introduced from April 2020. A lack of government guidance and negative media coverage has contributed to continued uncertainty amongst freelancers. This uncertainty has also made it incredibly difficult for recruitment agencies to confidently provide contractors with the right advice.

Our research shows that contractors are more likely to work with recruiters and hiring businesses that manage IR35 well, so here we've detailed the five things agencies need to do to ensure contractors feel supported, through April 2020 and beyond.

1. Become a trusted partner - Recruiters can position themselves as contractors' go-to resource on IR35 compliance, by helping them to understand their employment status assessments, secure specialist support when necessary and keep open communication channels with hirers.

This will build trust with their existing contractor base but also set themselves apart from competing agencies who are not taking a proactive approach.

2. Seek specialist support - The biggest concern for many genuinely self-employed contractors is that they will be wrongly caught inside IR35, which would not only lead to a cut in take-home pay, but also leave them concerned about the risk of further investigation by HMRC.

Assessing employment status is a complex skill based on a deep understanding of case law, which most recruiters and hiring businesses are unlikely to have inhouse.

Partnering with a reputable, specialist law firm can give all parties peace of mind by ensuring that end clients take reasonable care and that their contractors are treated fairly.

3. Invest in training - Even within recruitment, there is still much confusion about how IR35 works and what the changes will mean. In-house training is hugely important for agencies that want to be able to face questions from contractors and clients alike.

Contractors will value clarity and recruiters' ability to engage in open and honest conversations on how it will impact them. Don't be surprised if contractors choose the team that they feel can offer them the right level of guidance and support.

4. Protect against non-compliance - Recruiters also have a role to play in helping contractors navigate the currently unregulated umbrella market. Intermediaries posing as compliant umbrellas companies are aggressively targeting contractors caught inside IR35, offering a 'too good to be true' percentage of take-home pay, often up to 90%, or an aggressive view on the employment status of disguised employees.

Some of these intermediaries are, in fact, tax avoidance schemes and often operate from outside the UK, while paying contractors through loans or offshore fund.

This carries a risk for the contractor if they are investigated by HMRC, but could have serious repercussions for the agency if the non-compliant supplier goes bust as the liability and therefore debt will be transferred up the supply chain to the agency or end-client. To avoid this, recruiters should be carrying out due diligence on their supply chain and any third parties they choose to partner with, ensuring compliance and asking for reputable accreditation.

5. Take reasonable care - HMRC has been clear since it announced the IR35 changes that it expected all involved to take reasonable care in making determinations related to off-payroll working rules. If recruiters take the time and effort to make accurate employment assessments, engage in open and honest dialogue and proactively protect against non-compliance, they can ensure contractors feel supported, negate tax risk and even gain a competitive advantage.

Speak to the experts!

EMPLOYING AT A TIME OF CRISIS

James Simpson, head of employment at Blaser Mills Law, considers the staffing issues behind COVID-19.

With the number of coronavirus [COVID-19] cases continuing to climb, the spread of the virus is so fast and wide-reaching that it will likely affect most, if not all, employers around the world at some stage.

Knowing where you stand legally during these times of uncertainty can be overwhelming, but it's crucial that you take the right steps in order to lessen the potential for disputes. Here are some of the main requirements you need to consider in order to protect yourself.

Understanding how to pay your staff

Any of your employees who are still working are entitled to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) if they need to self-isolate. This applies not only if they have been diagnosed with coronavirus, but also if they have any of the symptoms, for example a high temperature or new continuous cough, or if someone in their household has coronavirus symptoms. New measures mean SSP is now payable from day one instead of day four for affected individuals. If an employee or worker cannot work, they should inform you as soon as possible with the reason.

It's worth noting that, currently, employees may not be able to provide you with a sick note as usual, and you should be flexible about this. They can self-certify for the first seven days, following which a notification via NHS 111 will need to be enough.

Reducing staff numbers

Many firms are experiencing a drastic decline in business as a result of COVID-19. Customers socially distancing may lead to a fall in sales and employees self-isolating could slow production. As a result, you may need to consider reducing working hours or staff numbers.

You must decide between short-time working and lay-offs, and it is crucial to understand the difference between both and what they could mean for your business and staff. 'Short-time working' is when employees are provided with less work and less pay for a short period. 'Lay-offs' are when employees are not provided with any work or pay for a short period but are kept on as employees.

These are both temporary cost-cutting measures you may use when there is not enough work to go around. Short-time working

and lay-offs can help you avoid dismissals or permanent redundancies, whilst reducing the burden on your business. It's important to note that if there is no clause permitting lay-offs or short-time working in an employee's terms, using these measures will be a breach of contract, and the employee will be entitled to resign and claim constructive dismissal.

Utilising government support

The Government Job Protection Scheme was recently announced by Chancellor Rishi Sunak in a bid to protect jobs in the UK. It means the government will reimburse up to 80 per cent of 'furloughed workers' wages to a cap of £2,500 a month, per employee, with payments being backdated to 1st March 2020. As an employer, you can top up the 80 per cent if you wish, but you do not have to do so.

Furloughed workers are employees who you have asked to stop working as you cannot cover their salaries, but who you have not made redundant.

Your employees will not automatically be designated as furloughed workers - you still need to comply with employment law and contractual provisions when 'laying off' the relevant employees. This means that you cannot just impose the change on an employee unless there is a right to vary in their employment contract. You may need to go through the normal redundancy procedures of identifying and consulting with at risk employees, including the collective consultation requirements where more than 20 employees are affected.

Seeking expert advice

This is a highly unusual time affecting businesses and working practices considerably, but by taking the right steps and performing strong due diligence, you can minimise liability issues. If in doubt, seeking expert guidance can help ensure you are approaching things in the right way, as well as save time and money in the long run. Make sure you choose a respected lawyer who understands employment law and the many nuances of your obligations. The correct legal counsel can go a long way in ensuring that once the worst of the pandemic is over, you come through the other side unscathed. ■

Next Generation Payroll Software

for Umbrella Companies & Recruiters...

10 Benefits of Solutio

Solutio's cloud & app-based platform is transforming how the contingent worker supply chain manages data, assignments and payments.

The cutting-edge interface shares information with all entities including the worker, hirer, recruiter and payroll intermediary to guarantee transparency, accuracy and total compliance.

Our clients benefit from automated processes that accelerate every facet of the 'gross to net' operation while simultaneously improving commercial performance, reduced overhead and enhanced customer loyalty.

- 1. New - SolutioAcademy.com**
Online training & support via the Solutio Academy.
- 2. Cloud & App-based Platform**
Independent operating system with automatic updates.
- 3. Industry-leading Worker Mobile App**
Workers manage assignments & transactions in real-time.
- 4. Interactive Desktop Portals**
Dynamic interface minimises administration & manual tasks.
- 5. The Golden Source of Data**
Information shared across the worker supply chain.
- 6. Customised User Profiles**
Control staff access with advanced permissions settings.
- 7. Proven Compliance Credentials**
Transparent 'pay & bill' calculations linked to HMRC.
- 8. Whole of Market Provision**
Compatible with umbrella, CIS & joint employment models.
- 9. Instant Forensic Reporting**
Solutio Analytics generates reports, insights & audit trails.
- 10. Choice of Payment Plans**
Range of beneficial finance options to suit your business.

The Time for Solutio is Now...

Writing in the midst of the distinctly dystopian lockdown, one cannot help but be forever grateful for the integral role that technology is playing in maintaining a degree of normality in both our professional and social lives. What with notions of human contact dissolving in a new world that will be eerily familiar to readers of JG Ballard, the significance and influence of tech platforms, internet connectivity and mobile devices have reached an unprecedented zenith.

Suggestions that we will all return to so-called 'normal' once the pandemic has passed are little more than whimsical musings with little substance. By default, people now wholly rely on their broadband speed to connect with the rest of the world be it for commercial, social or entertainment purposes.

In the recruitment and payroll space, changes to the way

the industry conducts itself will be seismic. Chatbots and screening will replace face-to-face interviews with largely unqualified consultants; commission-hungry umbrella salespeople turning up at agencies unannounced armed only with a box of Krispy Kreme's will be (rightly) consigned to history, as will the cash and time-draining exhibition programmes and 'not to be missed' seminars which have consistently failed to deliver any value if truth be told.



The big flash office is already synonymous with staff inefficiency and unnecessary overhead; clunky servers whirring away in darkened cupboards overseen by ultra-protective IT managers are now as obsolete as the fax machine and symbolic only of an old broken system.

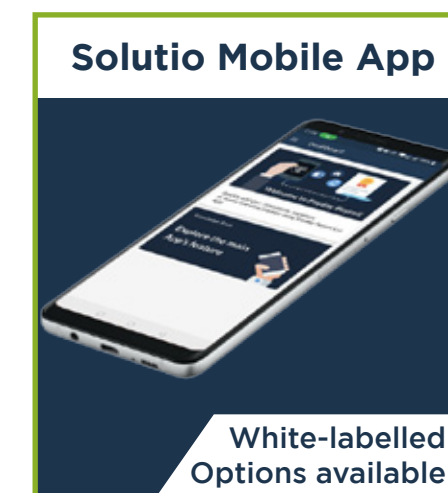
It almost seems as if all these macro factors are paving the way for Solutio's continued advancement. Being cloud-based, the system operates independently with automatic updates eliminating any physical



interaction. With data entered in a single instance and shared across the contractor supply chain, teams can manage the platform from home by sharing information, authorising payments and running 'one-click' payrolls negating the need for that flashy office. Workers are empowered by Solutio's industry-leading mobile app which facilitates, timesheets, expenses, payments and real-time communication.

The newly launched online Solutio Academy helps educate staff to master the system at their leisure rather than via costly in-house training sessions. Featuring over a hundred video tutorials and a vast PDF library, the Academy is a self-serving resource that provides an interactive learning platform for all departments.

Add to this new features including cash-matching, joint employment module, scheduled and consolidated invoicing, plus auto-file format mapping ensures the moment to find out more about Solutio is now.



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EMAIL TRIAL

Stephen Taylor, Dispute Resolution and Insolvency Partner at Aaron & Partners on how the High Court found binding contract could be created by emails.

Whether an exchange of emails between parties amounts to a binding contract is often a source of dispute. In a world where we are all sending emails daily, it's vital that we understand the implications an email exchange can have.

This is even more crucial given the circumstances the UK finds itself in now be-cause of the COVID-9 pandemic. There has been a surge in businesses wanting to pause or even back away from goods or services they were previously committed to from their suppliers, so understanding how the courts interpret the law around what constitutes a binding contract has arguably never been more important.

An exchange of emails can easily contain all the elements required to form a legally binding contract and therefore any parties negotiating via emails need to be aware of what these are.

A contract requires the following elements:

- Offer;
- Acceptance;
- Consideration;
- Intention to create legal relations; and
- Certainty of terms.

This was recently at issue in the case of Athena Brand Ltd v Superdrug Stores Plc [2019] EWHC 3503 (Comm). The Court concluded that an email exchange between the two parties formed a binding contract, despite the objections from Superdrug.

Extracts from the emails in question are below:

[Email from representative of Athena]

"Hi Iain

...Just to confirm, you are placing orders and committing to the yearly quantity against all lines detailed below based on the ROS you have provided... We have agreed that you will call off stock, in exactly the same way as HiGlow, on an ad hoc basis within a 12-month period... If you could drop me a note to confirm all of the above ASAP that would be great, I shall then be in a position to push the button this end..."

[Email from representative of Superdrug]

"Hi Steph

Please go ahead with the below, happy on Nature's Alchemist..."

Superdrug took first delivery of the products in October 2017 but they did not sell as well as originally anticipated. As a result, Superdrug emailed Athena in February 2018 to inform them that it would be unlikely to place any further orders for that product.

Athena argued that the emails demonstrated a clear agreement that committed Superdrug to purchase minimum quantities of products at specified prices over a 12-month period. Athena calculated that to be a cost of just under £980,000.

Superdrug's defence was:

- The emails did not give rise to any agreement. Superdrug was not committed to purchase any products until it issued a purchase order. No purchase order was issued and therefore it was not bound to purchase the products for the minimum quantities;
- If there was an express agreement, there was no intention of the parties to create legal relations; and
- The buyer (a Mr Sissons) acting on behalf of Superdrug at that time, did not have actual or ostensible authority to commit to any such contract in any event.

The Court stated: "There is nothing in the history of the negotiations capable of showing that Athena or an objective observer would have understood that his apparent agreement to a minimum quantity was not or could not be taken as being what it seemed or that in making it he did not intend to bind Superdrug.

"There is no doubt that Athena relied on Mr Sisson's confirmation as binding Superdrug, and nothing in this evidence adduced is capable of showing that it acted unreasonably in doing so."

This ruling was a very important decision and the case demonstrated that everyone should take care when corresponding with another party, whether that is verbal exchanges, or seemingly informal exchanges in writing including emails or, increasingly, other means of electronic communication.

People often treat emails as an informal method of communication. This judgment should act as both a reminder and a warning to businesses and their employees or agents with the authority to negotiate agreements that emails must be carefully considered and they can have far reaching legal consequences. ■

It's vital that we understand the implications an email exchange can have

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GAMIFICATION IN TECH

Damon Culbert from Cybersecurity Professionals, cyber security jobs worldwide looks at methods in the recruitment process.



With technology constantly advancing and cybercriminals finding new ways to compromise computers every day, cyber security professionals are finding it difficult to keep up. As a result, the global tech industry is short around 4 million specialists and it's predicted that the UK alone will see a shortage of 3.5 million by 2021.

As more and more office chairs sit empty, recruiters are having to come up with increasingly attractive ways to draw in the best candidates for their roles. One strategy that a number of leading businesses have tried their hand at is gamification.

With businesses using VR for immersive office tours or simulated challenges and mixed reality experiences to make job applications seem more attractive, gamification is having an interesting effect on the recruitment industry.

Traditionally, the tech shortage has been characterised by inflated wages and social culture innovations to ensure promising candidates are kept in much-needed roles. However, as the skills gap grows ever wider and new technology emerges every day, recruiters are facing an uphill battle against diminishing candidate numbers.

Why are we so short of tech skills?

These emerging technologies are of particular concern for cybersecurity professionals. With every new interconnected device comes new opportunities for vulnerabilities so businesses must be aware of the more robust security needs of their offices. However, as this technology is still new, there are fewer and fewer security professionals with the necessary skills, further expanding the shortage.

In addition to the complex technical skill requirements of most businesses, many recruitment professionals find tech vacancies, particularly at management levels, difficult to fill due to a lack of soft skills. Where tech professionals can evidence their technical ability, many lack skills in problem solving, organisation and people management to progress into much-needed management roles.

Many businesses claim that recent graduates in cyber security or computer science are unprepared for work

Are graduates ready for the workforce?

A concern that plagues most workforces, many businesses claim that recent graduates in cyber security or computer science are unprepared for work. For cyber security, this is especially significant thanks, in part, to the rapid growth of the industry. Higher education institutions may already be providing training which is nearly obsolete while new technologies which are barely years old are leading business decisions around hiring. Some universities may see this disconnect and conclude that to change their curriculum to align with industry will only result in further obsolescence in the near future. The biggest challenge facing the industry right now is matching talent development with the rate of product innovation to ensure that businesses can remain competitive while still being able to confidently protect themselves and their clients.

Neither higher education institutions or businesses can do this alone so collaboration will be essential in tackling the ever-widening gap both in the UK and globally.

Why gamification?

Gamification is being used by recruiters as an alternative way to tackle the skills shortage. By making the application process as interactive and cutting-edge as possible, recruiters can draw in large numbers of candidates to help boost their talent pools. Additionally, by engaging candidates in unexpected ways, recruiters can gauge their skills more completely before they enter the position. This could reduce the chances of hiring a candidate who may have been more confident in a traditional interview session but less competent in the actual role.

In the past, Jaguar used a mixed reality public code-breaking challenge hosted on their website to find new engineers. The challenge was designed to test creativity, lateral thinking and problem solving by asking candidates to assemble an electric Jaguar sports car. This challenge would have been completely impossible without VR and enabled the team to assess candidates' soft skills before placing them in a work situation, improving the quality of candidates that were then considered for the role.

The issues with gamification

However, recruitment strategies like this are unlikely to bring any improvements to the skills shortage being felt from top to bottom across the digital sector. If recruitment professionals believe the issues are a lack of skills and experience, investing huge amounts of money and time into specialist projects doesn't bring much enrichment to those candidates who need experience to develop their employability. Additionally, while it might be beneficial for large organisations, the prohibitive cost means it would be almost impossible for small businesses. With almost half of all cybercrimes targeting small businesses security skills need to be developed everywhere to avoid those at the bottom suffering the harshest consequences.

How can we start to close the skills gap long-term?

Integration between businesses & education. The most in-demand high-level technical skill in the UK is penetration testing, with 53 per cent of organisations saying they aren't confident in undertaking the test. In contrast, only one higher education course listed on the UCAS website includes the word 'penetration testing'. New technology fields like cloud computing and IoT are only featured three times and twice respectively. Businesses and educational institutions will need to work cooperatively to tackle the most vulnerable areas of expertise and start finding solutions for the skills gap.

Emphasis on soft skills training

In the same vein, graduates should be prepared with the necessary soft skills to immediately enter the workforce. This could be achieved through more focus on soft skills training in higher education and further opportunities for work experience during study. Businesses could also work together with universities to run competitions or challenges which could even introduce gamification strategies to get students involved in cybersecurity before they have even graduated.

Prioritising training in entry-level jobs

Additionally, not all entrants into the cybersecurity industry come from higher education. The onus, therefore, is not entirely on universities to develop workers. Businesses who find that they are unable to secure candidates with the relevant professional and social qualifications should focus on in-work training. Whether that's encouraging entry-level staff to gain professional certification for specialist fields or by implementing management training to develop staff members' workplace skills.

Improving gender imbalance

Another glaring issue with the cyber security industry which could be having a direct effect on the skills gap is its lack of diversity. In the UK, only seventeen per cent of the UK's tech force are women and cyber security staff make up a small percentage of the tech force as a whole. Making STEM fields more welcoming for women and encouraging women to explore career prospects in cyber security could offer an advantageous opportunity to reduce the skills gap over time.

The issue of the cyber security skills gap is highly complicated and a straightforward solution is unlikely to emerge any time soon. The introduction of gamification to source the most competitive candidates for roles is unlikely to be an effective strategy for any business to develop their security resources. On the other hand, using new technology to identify skilled candidates outside of the traditional interview process could be an effective way of recruiting workers who may have the skills but are less able to demonstrate them in conventional interviews. With gamification often being cost-intensive and focused on spectacle, its use in recruitment is still uncommon and is mostly for the benefit of major organisations over small businesses. At a time of such profound need for some of the world's most advanced industries, businesses of all sizes should be working to nurture talent as much as possible rather than making employment even more competitive. ■

ARE MILLENNIALS REALLY DIFFERENT?

Duc V. Trang of Major, Lindsey & Africa discusses a generation of workers in the legal profession.



The eyes roll. That happens often when I speak to law firm partners or general counsel and the topic of “Millennials” comes up in the conversation.

Much has been written (and spoken) about the generalised, and unique characteristics, attributes or character of millennials —often incorporating the suspicion that millennials are somehow genetically different from other generational categories. Millennials often are described, only in slight exaggeration, as either optimistic, socially conscious digital natives or self-entitled, fragile, indulgent layabouts, who are prone to switching jobs. These stereotypes in turn have prompted many studies focusing on millennials—their views, aspirations, inclinations, proclivities, etc.

A recent study by MLA and Above the Law—2019 Millennial Attorney Survey, New Expectations, Evolving Beliefs and Shifting Career Goals (Millennial Attorney Survey)—examines the perspectives of what currently is the largest cohort of the legal profession, and how their “unique” working style has shifted workplace dynamics. Some key findings include:

- Work-life balance remains the top priority for millennial lawyers. Nearly seventy five per cent would trade a portion of their compensation for either more time off, a flexible work schedule, or a cut in billable hours;
- Commitment to work-life balance, compensation and commitment to training and professional development in evaluating an employer;
- While seventy per cent of millennials self-described as loyal, over seventy five per cent were either open to new job opportunities or actively seeking them;
- Dissatisfaction with compensation (twenty nine per cent) and management/firm culture (twenty two per cent) were the top two reasons cited by those seeking new opportunities;
- Fifty one per cent agree that the law firm business model is fundamentally broken;
- Sixty six per cent agree that law firm partnership is less desirable than it was a generation ago, while forty per cent of millennial lawyers view partnership as their long-term career goal
- Sixty two per cent agree that millennials are transforming law firm policies and culture for the better

Millennials often are described, only in slight exaggeration, as either optimistic, socially conscious digital natives or self-entitled, fragile, indulgent layabouts, who are prone to switching jobs

- Forty five per cent of women strongly agree that law firm culture is sexist, compared to fourteen per cent of men.
- Fifty six per cent of women strongly agree that there is a gender pay gap, compared to eighteen per cent of men.

At first blush, one may interpret these results to confirm the thesis that millennials are somehow different from the older generations in the legal profession – Generation X and the baby boomer generation. However, as we don’t have information on how different generational groupings would have answered the same questions at the same corresponding age, we shouldn’t jump to conclusions too quickly.

Let me offer another perspective. Even if millennials are somehow “different”, does it really matter? From the perspectives of talent acquisition and talent development, are we even asking the right question?

What is important to organisations is the challenge of fostering “employee engagement”. Employee engagement can be described as the emotional commitment an employee has to the organisation and its goals, resulting in focused deployment of discretionary effort. An employee’s discretionary effort triggers a chain of consequences that create positive economic results. Kruse has catalogued multiple research and studies confirming that a high level of employee engagement correlates directly with metrics of success. When employees care more, they are more productive, provide better service, and stay longer in their jobs (ie., more loyal). Engaged employees lead to happier customers, who buy more and become advocates of the organisation, which drive sales, profits and ultimately shareholder returns. >



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What does employee engagement have to do with millennials?

The problems underlying employee engagement pre-date the emergence of millennials as the dominant workplace cohort. The characteristics for which millennials are often criticised correspond with the consequences of a disengaged workforce: disloyalty, lack of resilience, switching jobs, hard to please, slackers, etc. These attributes reflect long-standing problems present in many companies and professions that have low

employee engagement, across generational classifications. Perhaps millennials are “different” in that they are less willing to remain with one employer and accept what they view as shortcomings in the law firm or legal professional environment, as described in the Millennial Lawyers Survey. Or, perhaps Gen X-ers and baby boomers have a higher tolerance level or willingness to put up with non-ideal work environments. Although how millennials respond to those problems may differ from other generational groupings, identifying those generational differences – real or perceived – does little to

address underlying employee (dis)engagement found in many industries, including the legal profession.

Let's return to the Millennial Attorney Survey. Many of the findings in the survey reflect observations that are familiar when discussing the challenge most companies have in sustaining an “engaged” workforce. For example, the desire for work-life balance (e.g., reflecting the law firm's focus on maximising billable hours); belief in the organisation's purpose (e.g., viability of law firm business model and purpose); the fit of the individual in the organisation's future (e.g., commitment to training and professional development and desirability of law firm partnership); and dissatisfaction with an organisation's management and culture (e.g., viability of law firm business model and sexism/pay gap, respective).

In the law firm context, all of these challenges concern not only millennials, but Generation X and baby boomer lawyers. Further, these concerns have been identified long before the emergence of millennials as a sizeable work force.

Instead of focusing on millennials, law firms and organisations would do well to focus attention and investments on what they can do to increase the engagement of its entire workforce, irrespective of where they fall in generational groupings.

What can law firms do?

Law firms should consider investments in two key areas: Organisational Purpose and Individual Growth.

Loyalty and engagement come directly from (1) working for an organisation that has a meaningful purpose, and (2) when the employee has both the skills and opportunity to engage in work that is engaging and purposeful. In attempting to define these concepts, it is useful to consider this—multiple recent studies (i.e., Lexis-Nexis/Judge School, ALM Intelligence, AdvanceLaw) confirm that clients perceive real value when lawyers (and law firms) deliver not only legal expertise, but help clients solve the underlying business problem, only one component of which may be legal. This notion of client-centricity and lawyers playing the role of a “trusted advisor” (beyond technical, legal expertise) have long been identified, but many firms continue to fare poorly in developing in their lawyers.

- **Culture, Purpose & Trust:** Employees are more engaged when they believe that their organisation exists for a meaningful, positive purpose, and that management is committed to such purpose. Law firm management will need to craft and deploy an organisational purpose and culture that go beyond the firm's and the partners' monetary success, and one that is intimately tied to the success of their clients. Beyond the communication of such messages, developing a law firm purpose capable of inspiring and cultivating employee engagement will need to be reinforced by actual practice. For example, a firm's purpose of achieving success for clients will often come into conflict with the primary success metric measured by the partner's profitability, or where lawyers are rewarded for billing more hours. That tension will need to be resolved.

- **Individual Growth:** Law firms, consistent with the findings of the Millennial Lawyers Survey, will need to rethink learning and development. Most firms historically have focused the early years of a lawyer's training on technical legal expertise. The commercial intelligence and judgment that clients demand is often left to experiential training, which learning theory suggests is highly inefficient and leaves significant gaps. As a result, many smart young lawyers are saddled with non-complex, menial work. Is it a surprise then that many are disenchanted, bored, etc.? Law firm training will need to be re-imagined and designed so that younger lawyers can learn quickly the commercial and real life-context of their clients' problems. This will allow them to accelerate the ability to exercise judgment on when to apply certain legal skills to help solve their clients' problems. Those skills will enable younger lawyers to work directly with clients earlier in their careers—much more meaningful (and, more profitable for firms) than simply working on documentation.

Both of these changes are hard. And not because of the trope that lawyers are pre-disposed to resist change. It takes real leadership and commitment from law firm management, which is often missing. On the other side of the coin, lawyers are smart—they don't resist change; they resist “bull—-it”. The changes the legal profession is undergoing have multiple causes, one of which has been (mis)identified as the role of millennials. Instead of focusing on generational stereotypes, law firms will generate greater returns on investments by focusing on the very real and difficult task of cultivating and nurturing employee engagement. ■

Sometimes things aren't always quite what they seem



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SOFTWARE AS A SERVICE

Being an effective recruitment company means being efficient, agile and forward thinking. As the demands on talent in general and within specific markets change and evolve the recruitment companies who will benefit and thrive are those who can swiftly match their clients' expectations with their candidates' aspirations. Under-pinning this level of service has to be excellent technology, provided in a way that will adapt and reflect the requirements of the company.

Software as a Service offers precisely this level of flexibility. With the solution hosted externally and access delivered to users across whatever device they want to use and wherever they may be, it means a recruitment agency is always operating using the latest up-to-date data and in a connected way. Diverse recruitment related solutions can be delivered this way offering recruitment businesses the chance to gain the best options for their particular businesses. Updates and improvements to the platform can be made centrally ensuring everyone is working on the same solution at the same time. In addition to this, compliance issues, whether process based or through GDPR can be automatically handled by the solution. Recruitment systems can be designed in such a way as to ensure consultants always follow the correct procedures and that dealing with and sharing information around the business

is done safely and securely and to everyone's expectations. As the technology world become more mobile, more data rich, and more integrated into everyday life, using Software as a Service solutions will mean recruitment companies can offer their consultants a level of technology use they experience in other parts of their lives.

Sourcing your recruitment technology through Software as a Service offers recruitment companies the flexibility and functionality their consultants need, wherever they are working. With the right solution, the recruitment business can benefit from:

- the very latest solutions with updates delivered automatically
- access to the data and functionality your recruitment consultants need wherever they may be
- potential for real-time updates removing any time lag on data and keeping everyone up to date
- strategic reporting to direct business leaders, motivate consultants and improve services

With the solution hosted centrally, Software as a Service means your business will always have access to the latest solutions and the latest data. It means you are offering your workers access to the latest solutions, reflecting technology use in the wider world. ■

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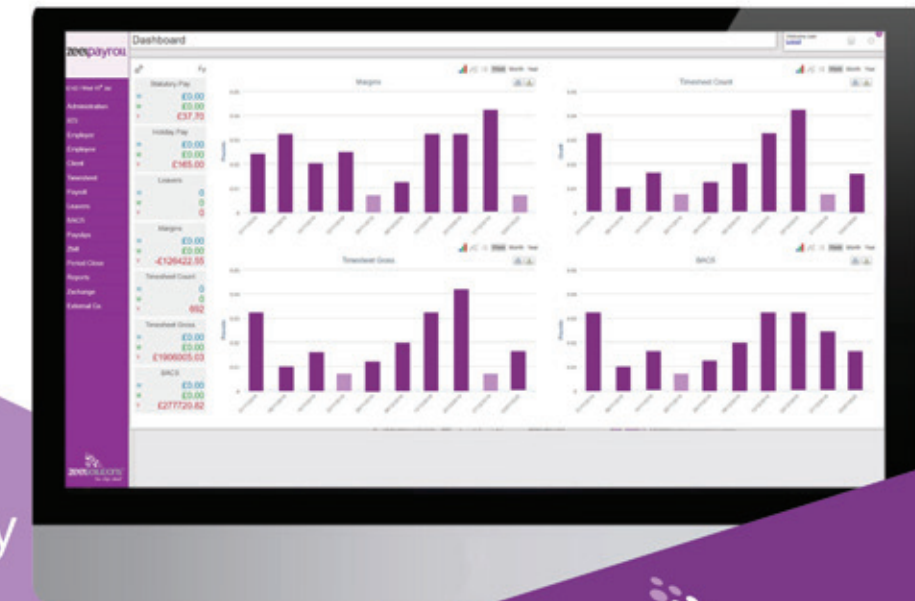
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TO SAAS OR NOT TO SAAS

Martin Snyder, Co-Founder and Principal of PCRecruiter / Main Sequence Technology weighs up your options.

When our company started producing recruitment software over twenty years ago, there was still a distinct occupational separation between software developers, internet service providers, server technicians, and database administrators. Our programmers would create the software and then it would be distributed to the users (often via mail on CD-ROM) to be installed and maintained by a technical professional on individual PCs or a centralized office server. In the best cases that tech person was retained after the setup, but often the management of the technical aspects shifted to the company's managers or to the account executives, wasting valuable recruitment time on troubleshooting, database backups, software updates, and hardware upgrades.

Over the years we've seen the roles of developer, tech, and administrator converge into roles called DevOps, merging with massive public cloud offerings from Amazon, Microsoft, and others to form the everyday SaaS model we're all familiar with, where the vendor is responsible for writing the code, managing the infrastructure, securing the data, and supporting the users. This model is certainly more sustainable for providers like us, as our days of managing a patchwork of hardware configurations and multiple software versions are in the past. We also enjoy the economic benefits of a recurring revenue stream, which makes predictable long-term development planning and steady maintenance possible.

The advantages to recruiters are also substantial, including time saved on technical tasks, the flexibility to access the same system from anywhere, and a much higher quality software at a lower price. The growth of APIs over the past decade has led to an expansive network of integrated services that would be impossible to implement over thousands of individual local networks, but which a SaaS provider can plug into to offer more powerful capabilities at minimized cost. Nonetheless, our company is one of a limited number of vendors still offering locally-installed versions of our solutions. Why? Because every recruitment firm, staffing agency, or sourcing team has distinct needs and capabilities, and for some a licensed installation offers important advantages. While the scale increasingly tips toward SaaS (and we've seen several of our traditionally self-hosted clients pack up their data and move to our hosting service in recent years), certain business cases point the other way.

For example, a recruitment firm or HR department that has a large number of users, a pre-existing database / server infrastructure, and a

fixed-cost technical team may realize major lifecycle cost reductions. Beyond the cost savings, there are also those for whom security and connectivity / integration needs may tip the scale. With our solutions, each SaaS customer gets their own private database on our private cloud, which is operated with constantly-evolving control objectives for security and availability. However, it is not uncommon for government agencies or certain organizations to have a similar level of secure infrastructure. Furthermore, some clients have legal or contractual requirements to keep candidate and position data on private hardware, a need for direct access to the data rather than connecting via an API, or networking limitations that make it difficult to connect to cloud services.

The choice of a recruitment CRM/ATS is a critical one for any business. It may take research to decide whether the product's abilities and the company behind it are a good fit for your business. But when it comes to the choice of whether to go with a SaaS, remember that while the SaaS model is overwhelmingly favoured, there are still valid reasons to choose a local option. ■



ESSENTIALLY SAAS

John Hetherington, UK Sales Manager, Practical Software on the importance of accepting the service model.

From desktop clients and communications to business applications, Software as a Service (SaaS) is starting to become essential to businesses in every sector. But why is it important to recruitment and why now?

SaaS is a huge part of business, with an estimated growth rate of eighteen per cent annually and global SaaS workloads are expected to reach 380 million by 2021. These figures show that cloud-based platforms are here to stay. In fact, SaaS spending per employee is higher than the average annual spend on IT equipment for employees alone.

With an increasingly mobile workforce, the ability to access data remotely, is more important than ever. With thirty per cent of the UK workforce working from home at some point in 2019 (and as much as sixty percent globally) and over five million UK workers self-employed, access to software like timesheets, invoicing and reporting through a web portal removes reliance on specific operating systems and is crucial, especially where non-furloughed workers are increasingly working remotely. There are great savings available in not relying on complicated IT systems, end-to-end security testing, and costly roll-out periods. With cloud-based applications, developers can carry out security and maintenance work without disrupting day-to-day business.

Traditionally with web-based systems you can add and reduce user licences, making the software as flexible and agile as your business needs to be. This benefit can be greatly increased when you can scale your platform based on end-users, data usage, and storage. Paired with the reduced risk of human error and inevitable faster processes, using a flexible SaaS just makes sense.

"It's great to see SaaS benefitting agencies. Flexible platforms that scale based on your contractors means you potentially see huge savings without the burden of monthly costs and unnecessary recurring fees" says John Hetherington, UK Sales Manager of Practical Software. He's aware that expensive in-house systems and non-agile platforms can harm a businesses' bottom line and stop them from expanding with their market. "Having a scalable system, especially in uncertain times, means there is less risk for the business and savings can

potentially be passed on to clients. Businesses that are scaling down due to the virus are seeing these benefits."

While the impact of coronavirus is felt in a lot of industries right now, recruiters are most likely pausing permanent hiring plans and seeing a drop in contract and temp placements. Having an expert support system can reduce a huge amount of concern over unnecessary costs while things are in a constant state of flux. But the appeal of modular systems goes beyond this. Increasingly, businesses are picking software tailored to them and their industry. With white labelling becoming more common as well, suppliers can offer something that provides a more holistic user experience that maintains and even increases brand equity.

John firmly believes that now is a great time to review software requirements "we're still seeing a lot of interest in moving to platforms that fit the customers' business as opposed to the other way around. It's important to recruiters that whatever system they use, it can fit to their workload and contract requirements" He feels strongly that there are cost benefits to be had from the adoption of systems like Practical Software. "It's not just the ability to fit the software to the business, but the reduction in staff training which can all be done on an ad-hoc basis, rather than relying on costly in-house sessions." Ultimately SaaS offers a whole host of benefits, to suppliers and users. Although prohibitive to SMEs, larger businesses can implement their own systems with their own cloud services. Removing the cost of these services by moving to a third-party hosted platform, especially for smaller businesses, can create greater value for the business, and a better user experience for both staff and customers. ■

Software as a Service (SaaS) is starting to become essential to businesses in every sector

FROM JOB POST TO OFFER

Niraj Patel, SVP for Artificial Intelligence, DMI gives four ways AI expedites hiring.

As the Coronavirus impacts businesses across the globe, many organisations will be forced to review their hiring plans and processes. Early impact of the pandemic has already been felt in travel, tourism and manufacturing, with implications set to spread further before the economy rebounds.

And when it does, hiring managers will be under pressure to quickly staff offices, factories, services and teams. In this high-stakes recruitment landscape, artificial intelligence (AI) software solutions offer more opportunities than ever for companies to expedite hiring and reduce time-to-fill on vacancies.

From Job Post to Offer

On average, time-to-fill – the number of days from posting a role to a candidate signing a contract – is around forty two days.

For senior and executive roles, highly-skilled occupations such as engineering, IT and science for example, this timeframe can increase by twenty or more days.

Factor in notice periods and businesses can face gaps of more than six weeks between outgoing and incoming employees. This can significantly impact a company's productivity, customer service, internal resources and – in the current economic situation – the ability to keep business moving.

Recruiters are facing a fundamentally altered recruitment landscape, with a larger pool of candidates applying for each role, as well as increasing pressure on hiring managers to attract, identify, engage and attract world class talent.

Coupled with this is an increased reliance on remote working to keep operations running during emergencies like the Coronavirus pandemic. Thus, the net for candidates is spread across a broader geography and is likely to prompt more widespread use of video interviewing, as seen among companies [DS1] such as Twitter, Google, Amazon and Target.

Expediting the hiring process

Utilizing AI to filter resumes and schedule interviews is quickly becoming more mainstream. But here are four additional ways in which AI can be applied to expedite the hiring process:

1. Talent Pool Expansion

AI can tawl and assimilate millions of data points across both a company's own internal documents (e.g. recruitment databases) and external information, such as social media networks (e.g.

Linkedin and Facebook), as well as niche organisations for particular sectors (e.g. a lunch club for engineers).

That means it can not only sift through a higher influx of applications per job post, but also track past employees and previous applicants to re-engage promising talent.

Powered by AI, "candidate rediscovery" is also becoming more widely recognized as a way to reduce time-to-fill, as it re-engages with people already familiar with, and familiar to the organization. Such candidates move through the introduction and familiarization stages quicker and, with the right algorithms, can be a lower risk hire. AI is now making candidate re-discovery less cumbersome, costly and demanding of human time.

AI can also search colleague and candidate affiliations through someone's career history – for example, by trawling professional networks and alumni groups – to flag passive candidates that are potentially suited for a role.

2. Chatbot communications

AI offers heightened opportunities to automate routine communications and provide an "always-on" chatbot for frequently asked questions, freeing HR professionals to focus on more strategic work. Depending on the program, AI can handle queries by phone, email or online chat.

Online thrift store, ThredUp, deploys SMS-based chatbots to hire 100 to 200 employees each month. When fast, high-volume hiring is the priority, automation of rote tasks offers a chance to greatly enhance efficiencies. In this case, AI handles everything from scheduling a phone screening to providing new hires with directions for their first day on site.

Not every company can automate such a large proportion of the process, but there are key areas where chatbots can speed time-to-hire. For example, chatbots can scan calls and

communications to identify actions such as 'send letter' and 'schedule interview', with automated activation. Chatbots are also a 24/7 resource for routine inquiries, such as driving directions to an interview, benefits packages, dress code and other frequently asked questions.

Equipping chatbots to handle routine tasks also lowers cost per hire, another critical KPI for hiring teams, as well as providing an opportunity to reduce email traffic.

3. Interviewing

AI is most commonly applied at the screening stage, with many companies running skills and psychographic tests to filter applications. Even prior to the Coronavirus outbreak, fifty percent of US firms utilized AI to screen resumes and shortlist candidates. Though it's unlikely that AI-powered interfaces will entirely replace humans, there are plenty of interview phase opportunities where AI can speed processes and deliver analysis to support faster, better informed decision-making.

Already – and increasingly – AI technology will be applied in early-stage interviews where facial and linguistics analysis programmes can augment human assessment, reduce bias and also identify soft skills – such as communication, leadership, creativity and decision-making – that are increasingly prized by U.S. employers. In concert with an expectation that video interviewing will rise as the net for employment is cast wider and remote work is more prevalent, AI will gain traction in analyzing the language, tone and facial expressions of candidates to indicate suitability for a role and predict future performance. Real-time analytics and comparison reports provide unprecedented levels of insight into the character and skills of candidates, which can be matched against an 'ideal employee' profile.

On a related note, AI, when correctly maintained, is an effective

tool for reducing bias in recruitment and promoting diversity and inclusion. In early screening and throughout interviews, AI analytics can ensure diverse representation and avoid human bias.

4. Personalized engagement

In 2020, candidate engagement will be a key focus for employers to convert quality candidates into quality hires. The millennial generation makes up about half of the American workforce and early Generation Z'ers are also well into employment age. Generation Z in particular is said to crave connection and prefer person-to-person contact, so it is important that AI is applied with that in mind to enhance the recruitment process, rather than remove those vital touch-points connecting a candidate to their potential employer...and vice versa.

AI offers a chance to deeply analyze a candidate using millions of data points across the web – including professional networking profiles, social media activity, work or reviews published online and the resume – to draw out information on what motivates, incentivizes and excites candidates.

It also can identify a candidate's personal traits, such as preferences, values and ambitions, which provide rich insight on their 'persona'. Armed with this information, hiring teams can apply advanced principles of personalized marketing to construct more compelling candidate engagement – from wording of the job posting and initial candidate outreach, to preferred modes of contact, interview structure and salary discussions. Furthermore, a common frustration for candidates is a lack of feedback on the status of their application. AI-powered chatbots and communications enhances the candidate experience with real-time feedback as the candidate progresses through the recruiting pathway.

Is your business ready for AI-powered recruitment?

AI is set to further transform the hiring process, becoming more widely and creatively implemented within packaged software solutions. It will enable more businesses to create an intelligent and analytical approach to handling vast quantities of data, in search of higher quality talent.

Reducing time-to-fill is – and will remain – a key performance indicator for hiring managers, since vacancies remaining open for the long term is costly. Further use of AI is a wise investment to reduce time and cost, but also to de-risk hiring through examination of candidate personas and elevated levels of personalized communication, from job post to requisition close. ■

NEW EXPECTATIONS

Martin Wainman, Managing Director at Omni Resource Management Solutions, discusses the impact of the current situation.

We've seen the COVID-19 pandemic quickly change how organisations attract, recruit and retain their employees, with virtual events, fully-remote recruiting and digital collaboration tools rapidly becoming the 'new normal'. However, what's been the effect on human behaviour and attitude towards work? We keep hearing that it's 'business as usual' from organisations, but is this the case when it comes to recruitment? While recruitment has continued throughout the nationwide lockdown, it's been sector or skills specific. The NHS and care sector, along with food retail and the grocery supply chain, has seen unprecedented demand for permanent and contingent labour. Additionally, forward-thinking businesses with greater financial resilience are using this time as an opportunity to onboard the best talent. Those public and private sector organisations still hiring have had to adopt a new mindset and transform existing processes. Just a month ago, the prospect of remote interviewing and onboarding would have been a topic for debate, whereas now it's the only option. Such a shift has required faster decision-making from leadership teams to ensure they don't miss out on talent and, crucially, still deliver an excellent candidate experience.

What's been the biggest challenge employers have had to face?

Of course, those businesses that were not previously technology-enabled have encountered the significant obstacle of mobilising their teams and enabling secure cloud platforms that allow for remote working. Another massive challenge for organisations has been building a culture of trust. More than just trusting that employees remain productive and keep delivering results while working remotely, this extends to placing trust in suppliers to continue putting forward quality candidates.

Additionally, workplace culture has suddenly come under the spotlight. After all, how can a candidate's cultural fit be assessed remotely? Video conferencing and collaboration tools mean employers can 'e-meet' candidates, but those who previously relied on an office tour and an intro to colleagues as a means of communicating culture find themselves reassessing the nature of what workplace culture really means.

With the workforces operating remotely, is culture important right now?

It's vital. A robust culture is imperative for ensuring the team is working towards a common goal. For a long time, there's been confusion around the meaning of culture, with too much emphasis placed on the working environment. Author and business coach Tony Robbins sums it up best: "Organisational culture is the core belief system of a business and its employees, covering how they interact with each other, with their product and with the clientele. It ties into a company's values and is the basis of their brand." Indeed, culture is directly linked to a company's values and, now more than ever, it's up to organisations to bring these values to life. The COVID-19 pandemic means people are thinking differently and gaining a renewed perspective on what truly matters in life. So, for business values to resonate, they need to be personal, not corporate. At Omni, we live by our values which were created by the team and are continually assessed to ensure they still apply to the modern world. These values have been crucial in navigating our business through the current situation, more so than we could have predicted. Staying agile, collaborating and always taking responsibility are just some of the messages we live by and, in turn, are the direct result of a culture that encourages us to pull together, no matter what life throws at us.

What about businesses that weren't closely aligned to their values until now?

First and foremost, it's not too late to get reacquainted. Revisit your values to make sure they still apply. It's not about spending hours redrafting them but perhaps considering adding new ones that pertain to creativity and collaboration. Provide examples to your team as to how the values have guided the business through this time, explaining how that translates to individuals and the ways they can embed them into everyday tasks. Already, we're seeing the culture of our clients improve thanks to a renewed focus on values, especially when it comes to new starters. Initiatives including appointing mentors, holding virtual inductions (both company and team level) with different team members (not just HR) and developing dedicated collateral for attraction and onboarding have been successfully introduced.

What about the effect the pandemic will have on the attitude of jobseekers?

There's no doubt that both candidates and current employees will retrospectively hold employers to account by how they behaved throughout the pandemic. Whereas previously, questions regarding loyalty and ambition were solely aimed at candidates in a recruitment process, employers are likely to find similar enquiries fired back at them. We fully expect (and will actively encourage) candidates to ask prospective employers about how the company and its senior team managed during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as what measures were in place to protect employees. We've seen large employers publicly reverse decisions that although protected them in the short-term were quickly identified to be damaging to their brand as well as their ability to recruit the best talent in the future. Sports Direct, for example, found itself on the wrong side of popular opinion following attempts to keep its stores open, arguing that exercise equipment counts as an essential service. Following public backlash and a YouGov poll that revealed eighty eight per cent of Brits did not class sports equipment stores as a key service, Sports Direct closed its doors. Additionally, Liverpool FC performed a stunning U-turn after announcing it was going furlough non-playing staff and subsequently facing fierce backlash from fans. Both moves demonstrate the changing employer/employee dynamic and a heightened sense of social conscience. It goes further than putting a positive PR spin on things too. The likes

of Glassdoor, Indeed and Google Reviews will have more eyeballs on them than ever as people seek to gain the inside scoop on what's really going on inside businesses right now. In other words, poor or unfair treatment can't be brushed under the carpet and, for some, will stay around for many years to come. While securing a good salary will always be paramount for candidates, it will be equally important that they work for an employer that's demonstrated compassion, been transparent in their communications and, crucially, treated its people well throughout this challenging time.

Which businesses will be successful in attracting and retaining staff when doors re-open?

It's difficult for any business to set a clear vision for the future right now, but knowing the direction you want to head in and putting a plan in place for your new normal is crucial to gain employee buy-in. Those being transparent and delivering regular communications will more likely retain their best people. Even if you've made tough decisions where employees have had to take salary reductions, be furloughed or made redundant, you can still emerge positively on the other side as long as you've communicated with care and clarity. From a practical perspective, employers must ensure they implement the right technology and selection processes to handle the predicted increase in applications when the lockdown lifts. Remember, having more candidates to choose from isn't always easier than none at all, as there's a greater chance of the best talent falling through the cracks. That's why it's essential that proper screening and selection processes, coupled with a robust infrastructure, are in place to support all future hiring. The current situation has highlighted weaknesses in traditional recruitment methods. Going forward, it's critical that businesses can scale up or down based on demand and be in a position to continue operating if a number of key workers are out of the office. As a result, we'll see a rise in outsourced and hybrid recruitment solutions that enable businesses to remain agile and flexible in any circumstance.

One major thing we can take from this is that 'business as usual' no longer applies. This is just the start of our journey to a new world of work. We previously had a choice whether we embraced technology or decided whether employees could be trusted to work from home. That choice has been taken away, which we should try to embrace as a potentially exciting new era for everyone. ■

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REMOTE MENTAL HEALTH

Darren Hockley, MD at DeltaNet International on looking after your mental health whilst recruiting remotely.

Separated from their usually vibrant teams, many recruitment consultants are reporting feelings of loneliness and isolation

Recruitment is a business rooted in human interaction. Anyone that's ever worked in, or even visited, a recruitment office will know this. Workspaces are usually filled with the noise of phone calls and candidate interviews, and recruiters themselves are often in and out of the office getting to know new clients and getting a feel for their workforce.

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, it seemed unlikely that the recruitment industry would ever catch up with other sectors in normalising remote working practices. Indeed, many recruitment leaders felt that consultants benefited from the office buzz and atmosphere of healthy competition. Others believed the job simply required a hands-on approach, with consultants conducting face-to-face interviews, coffee meetings, office viewings, and so on.

Fast forward to today and this has all changed.

Government-issued instructions to work from home in order to contain the spread of coronavirus and help hospitals cope mean that recruiters need to adapt quickly.

Like many businesses in March 2020, the recruitment industry has undergone a swift switch to online communications. Using comms tools such as Skype, Slack, and Microsoft Teams, or task management software like Asana, Trello, and Hubstaff, the industry has risen to the challenge, allowing many firms to continue to recruit new talent.

The challenge of mental health

Still, separated from their usually vibrant teams, many recruitment consultants are reporting feelings of loneliness and isolation.

As well as being bad news for the mental wellbeing of staff, over time, isolation can cause employees to feel disconnected from the company and its larger goals.

Below are some easily actionable tips to aid boosting morale and productivity for recruiters during this time:

Stay focused

Rightly or wrongly, many business leaders are concerned about productivity whenever staff work from home. This is particularly true for recruitment firms where it's not the norm. However, the good news is, you can prove the stereotype wrong!

Ultimately, your monthly sales figures and billing will speak for itself, so staying focused is key as staff continue to self-isolate.

At the moment, one of the biggest distractions you'll face is the news. Checking for COVID-19 updates, or clicking on alerts as and when they pop up, is going to be hard to resist.

Recruiters should be wary of scrolling themselves into despair, however. Relying on un reputable sources for news about the outbreak can fuel anxiety, making it difficult to concentrate and putting your mental health at risk.

Remember, many news sources rely on click-bait and scaremongering for views, so schedule "news breaks" – maybe 1 or 2 a day – and stick to them. Turn off news alerts and choose your outlets carefully, ensuring they are quality sources (try the World Health Organisation).

Inspire your candidates

During times of global business disruption, it can be easy to feel concerned and uncertain about the future. Your candidates may feel now's not the time to be job-hunting or that there's no point in even trying.

This is where recruiters can help! Communicating frequently with candidates and offering positive feedback is one of the best ways to inspire and motivate them to stay on track (and it will help you to keep positive and forward-thinking too).

Keeping your contacts informed about the work you're doing on their behalf and the progress you're making is a surefire way to keep the future looking bright. Keeping clients and candidates 'in the loop' of recruitment means they're far more likely to work with you as you implement alternative recruitment measures, video-interviewing for example.

Communicate effectively

... On that note, communicating effectively whilst away from the office is suddenly very important for businesses – possibly even more so for a humancentric occupation like recruitment.

Remember, video calls are far more effective than email and even phone calls when it comes to avoiding miscommunication. Video chat is a way to humanise virtual communication.

Seeing your clients and candidates face-to-face in this way is important, as it allows you to pick up non-verbal communications and character cues from your interviewee, e.g. their environment, facial movements, and clothes.

These aren't things anyone would think to email you about, but they allow you to get to know people better, in an intuitive way, and make judgement calls.

Maintain a work/life balance

For recruiters used to going into the office, blurring the lines between work and home can feel stressful.

There's suddenly no need to dress smartly or stick to a routine, and even the lack of commute (a time we use to enter into one mindset or another) can mean it's hard to switch off at the end of the day. Sadly, this can mean bad things for mental health.

Since recruitment is so reliant upon constant communication, it's going to be very important to 'go off grid' after your workday is complete. Try to stay offline and relax in other ways, e.g. cooking, watching a movie, or reading a book.

Another tip is to integrate a 'transition' period between work and leisure time – a sort of symbolic commute, if you will.

Perhaps you will walk the dog every day at 5pm, search the internet for a new recipe to try, or go upstairs and change into leisurewear. Whatever it is, developing this habit over time will signal the end of the working day for you, helping to begin your evening wind-down and maintain your wellbeing. ■

OPEN COMMUNICATIONS

Simon Kent reports from an industry discussion in association with CloudCall on the subject of recruitment business communications.

As the coronavirus crisis continues with huge repercussions across the recruitment market and in terms of how recruitment businesses operate, the issue of communications – cross company and along supply chains – is undoubtedly a crucial one. At The Global Recruiter's UK summit, held before the outbreak delivered such a severe impact on the country, a number of recruitment business leaders came together to discuss communications within their companies. Held in association with CloudCall, this was an opportunity for recruitment leaders to reflect on their current practice, how they had ended up using the channels they did, and what they might do in the future. In attendance were:

Anthony Goodwin, Chairman, Antal

Yvette Cleland, CEO, Clinical Professional

Greg Western, Divisional Head, HCL Mental Health

Nicola Phillips, Permanent Nursing Team Manager, HCL

Workforce Solutions

Sam Seehra, Client Services Director, Korn Ferry

Mark Mitchell, Non-Executive Director, Meridian Business Support

Holly Addison, Partner, Head of Digital & Communications

Technology, Odgers Berndtson

Ben Batten, Senior Vice President and Managing Director, Europe

and Asia, Volt

Jeanette Barrowcliffe, Finance Director, Meridian Business Support

James Wakefield, CEO, Cobalt Recruitment

Christopher Hauge, Enterprise Manager EMEA & APAC, CloudCall

Simon Kent, Editor, The Global Recruiter

There was a general appreciation around the room that the recruitment industry had evolved its communication practice alongside the changes and innovations made in the way people communicate in general. Having moved on significantly from the idea that 'bring your own device' into a recruitment business had the potential to wreck a carefully designed IT infrastructure it is now more than acceptable for consultants to be using WhatsApp for communicating with colleagues, candidates and clients – a channel over which recruitment companies have practically no sight. It was also noted that while it had been commonplace to tout certain platforms, job sites and online social/business networks as heralding the end of the recruitment industry, none had actually done so and indeed some had even been bought out by recruitment businesses along the way. WhatsApp and LinkedIn were certainly uppermost in the minds of these recruitment leaders. WhatsApp seems to be the communication

method of choice among a lot of consultants, but provides recruitment business directors a corporate governance issue with the challenge of firstly ensuring the communication carried out through that platform is appropriate for the business, and secondly the challenge of monitoring and measuring successful use, given that the solution is encrypted and will not integrate with anything.

There was a discussion over the links between communications, networks and a recruitment business' CRM – and on top of that, the true value of a recruitment business' candidate database. In the age of LinkedIn it was asked whether an in-house database actually was important, given instances where consultants clearly go straight to LinkedIn to find talent and to the company's database at a later point, despite the fact that the same candidates may exist on both.

The worth of a CRM system was also challenged if it cannot integrate with all methods of communication being used by a recruitment business. Is it ever going to be possible to understand how a business works and how it works most effectively if there are elements and activities which simply can't be recorded and so don't show up?

Waiting for proof

James Wakefield suggested that with all technology and communications there was always the need to wait before investing to ensure it really was a solution which had value rather than jump first and regret it later. "All too often recruiters fall into two categories, those who are keen to embrace all technology and those who are instinctively resistant to it," he said. "The simple reality is there is good and bad tech, the trick is filtering one from the other and that's best done by networking with peers and finding out what works and what doesn't".

Ben Batten also gave a revealing example of the need to keep up with new communication channels. His company in Singapore carried out a leaflet drop outside a train station to advertise opportunities. Having received a disappointing response the leaflet were redesigned to include bright colours, emojis and a WhatsApp contact instead of a landline. A second drop with this design produced a far higher response rate. It was interesting to find that even in this international business world where recruiters and their businesses work across borders there were examples where a network or platform used in one country did not have

acceptance by the business in another. It was felt that the UK market is one of the most competitive and forward thinking markets where technology is required in order to keep in touch with clients and candidates and to keep ahead of the competition. In less competitive markets this isn't so much the case. Therefore the emphasis on technology and communications is less and the methods used more 'traditional'.

At the same time, it is clear that voice to voice and face to face contact is still very much valued by candidates and clients. Greg Western reflected that while WhatsApp could provide a useful first point of contact, a phone call was still valued and appreciated by contacts. Meanwhile Yvette Cleland explained how her company now arranged events and dinners where leaders from within the life sciences industry they serve could meet peer-to-peer to discuss leading industry issues or innovations with blue sky thinkers and researchers from the industry. While these discussions are not a direct sell of their recruitment services they can give exposure of the company to more than a dozen leaders within the sector where the business works, a task which if it were left to booking separate meetings would take a considerably longer time.

Interestingly both Jeanette and James told of recent experiences of letter writing – Jeanette receiving letters from candidates and James sending letters out to potential contacts. In both cases this seemingly 'old school' approach gained impressive traction. It's a very personal touch, demonstrating care and intention and therefore much more likely to get a response from the receiver.

Across every platform and network however it was clear that the skills of a recruiter are still highly important. Empathy was highly prized among consultants by these recruitment leaders and there was a debate over whether this facet could be demonstrated through each communication method. Can an email or message actually hit the right note – the same note as an in person or phone conversation? It was also felt that the good, empathetic recruiter is able to do this, deciding which communication method is the most suitable for the person and circumstances in question. Around the table there were many examples of when the correct communication method had been selected for the right scenario and achieved positive outcomes. Sometimes a channel such as WhatsApp is the only convenient way for someone to be contacted – due to current work or personal circumstances. Sensitivity around the method of delivery as well as the message itself will always deliver gains for recruiters, but it is clear that whatever means are used recruitment companies must never

lose sight of delivering the personal touch.

"The biggest take away from the discussion perhaps unsurprisingly was the increasing use of social, particularly WhatsApp and LinkedIn for connecting with candidates, but there were universal concerns over control, reporting and ownership of that relationship," commented CloudCall's Christopher Hauge. "It was unanimously agreed that although traditional communication methods are in slow decline they cannot be discounted. The ability to build relationships is paramount to any successful relationship and there were legitimate concerns that the younger generation may lack the personal soft skills to communicate – both in writing and verbally – effectively. Recruitment training needs to be developed to include personal communication skills. Hague concluded: "The key point is that there is no one size fits all and a combination communications strategy is vital to ensure all channels are utilised to their fullest and controlled to enable effective activity intelligence." From the perspective of a few weeks after the event, and with the impact of COVID-19 permeating business, 'virtual connections' are now becoming the new normal. Businesses are therefore relying heavily on technology to facilitate communications, both internally and externally, and are embracing new platforms.

Holly Addison notes that in a recent online forum her company hosted for business leaders to share thoughts on communicating effectively through this difficult time, people and wellbeing were top of the agenda.

"There is a danger that people are 'always on' when working from home and that can be stressful – particularly when juggling home schooling and other family commitments – we need to be mindful of that," she said. "Leaders also need softer skills now to keep people engaged and motivated," she continued. "There is an opportunity to keep people connected when they need it most. Try to keep doing things you'd usually do in the office – call someone when you make a cup of coffee or have a zoom call with a colleague over lunch.

"In the current climate, maintaining the human connection is vital and when all this is over, that's what people will remember." ■

In association with

CloudCall 

THE PROMISE BEFORE THE SHUTDOWN

The Simplicity Margin Index: Q4 2019 Vs Q1 2020.

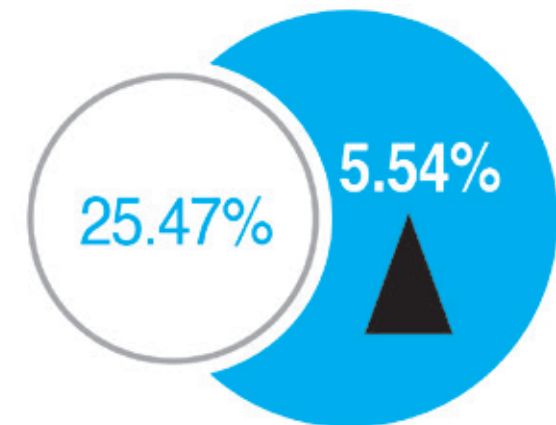
To say that the last quarter has been a turbulent time for recruiters would be something of an understatement. With a firm mandate for the Conservative Government delivered at the end of last year, Brexit was finally given the go ahead by Parliament in January 2020, and followed by the promise that negotiations would not go beyond this year. With that, certainty seemed to enter many sectors.

Alongside this, however, other employment related legislation promised disruption. A points-based immigration policy with limited room for overseas casual workers and the introduction of IR35 legislation to private sector firms both brought new challenges. However, these issues were swept away by the impact of the emerging COVID-19 pandemic. As businesses shut down almost 90 per cent of recruitment firms reported to an APSCo study that up to 50 per cent of their contractors had been terminated. Hiring was described as 'falling off a cliff'. The REC's concurrent JobsOutlook report found employer confidence in the UK economy had dropped by 22 percentage points with confidence in hiring and investment decisions falling 21 percentage points.

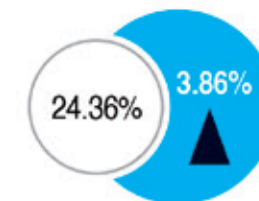
The figures from this quarter's Simplicity Margin Index therefore reflect the beginning of the end of what was a promising time. The early confidence that comes with a (traditionally 'pro-business') Conservative Government can clearly be seen in the upswing in the Commercial sector – rising by 3.86 per cent – and to a lesser

extent engineering at 2.01 per cent as decisions pending Brexit were made, encouraging investment and headcount. It is likely that the Construction sector experienced the same trend prior to lockdown, with a slight rise of 0.42 per cent over the quarter. Equally unsurprising given the time of year and growing compliance concerns, the Accountancy sector built on its growth in the last quarter, to deliver a margin growth of 5.54 per cent. This sector is likely to continue positively with more demands being made of the function through the management of Government COVID-19 related support, not to mention negotiations with financial backers in order to keep businesses afloat. The downturn experienced in the Hospitality market would not have been helped by the end of the festive period, an active time for the sector. However, the decrease of 0.31 per cent is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the impact the lockdown will have on the sector. Meanwhile the uptick in both the Driving sector and Healthcare – 1.16 per cent and 0.5 per cent respectively – may herald a positive time for both. The clampdown on 'unskilled' migrant workers is an issue for both these sectors where potential overseas candidates are now unlikely to meet the Government's criteria – drivers and nurses not meeting the required salary threshold. However, as both sectors are active at the frontline of managing the impact of the current pandemic it is likely that these sectors will see continued strong demand over the next weeks and months. ■

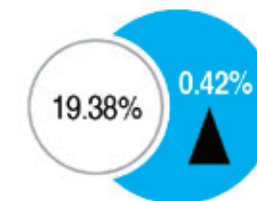
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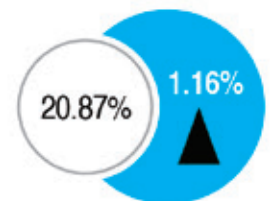
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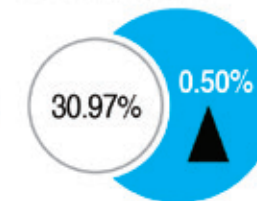
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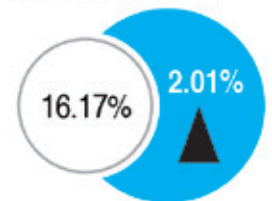
HOSPITALITY



HEALTHCARE



ENGINEERING



Margin = Sales less payroll cost, which is made up of contractor/temp wages, including NI where applicable.

Percentage figures shown = margin/sales x 100

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