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GLOBAL WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

MOVING TARGETS

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WELCOME

SIMON KENT
EDITOR

Welcome to the first edition of The Global Recruiter for a new year. 2024 promises to be a time of change. Economically, uncertainty remains, which will mean recruitment could be in a similar state. This year will undoubtedly be a case of examining the possibilities on a sector by sector basis rather than relying on a general economic trend to power things forward.

Technology, too, promises change with positives and negatives emerging in equal measure. Certainly there may be benefits for those investing in automation and AI, but at the same time there's much work to be done to truly understand how, why and where such technologies should be implemented. Recruiters are very much on a learning curve here, a case of trial and error, of implementing a solution and ensuring the overall impact is measured.

Recruitment is also becoming a more international affair - a point reflected by our supplement articles for the next few months. Recruiters can now tap into a global marketplace for talent, and do this with relative ease with an understanding of the technology and legalities required to enable people to work anywhere for businesses who can also bene anywhere.

Finally, the year will undoubtedly see a lively debate around compliance. With employment law changes on the radar for the next 12 months this topic may prove even more contentious than it did during our Recruitment Live discussion at the end of last year. The write up is in this issue and is well worth a read. Despite the uncertainty ahead, whatever happens it's clear recruiters will be ready to face the challenges. ■

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THE GLOBAL RECRUITER ACQUIRED

The Recruitment Network strengthens global industry presence and service offering with acquisition of The Global Recruiter



The Recruitment Network (TRN) announced that it has acquired the highly respected recruitment industry stalwart The Global Recruiter. The move further strengthens the company's position as a leading force in the recruitment industry and underscores its commitment to bring together the ultimate community of recruitment business leaders, suppliers and industry experts.

Widely known as TRN, The Recruitment Network provides recruitment business leaders and their teams access to peer-to-peer learning & support, industry leading strategies and best-in-class training and development. The Global Recruiter is publisher of the magazine of the same title and runs some of the industry's most known and sought after awards. The new acquisition enables TRN to integrate The Global Recruiter's suite of products and thought leadership, including awards, magazine, and CEO roundtables, into its existing infrastructure, further enhancing its ability to empower recruitment businesses and create the ultimate recruitment community.

James Osborne, Co-founder of TRN, said:

"This marks another significant milestone for TRN as we look to widen and deepen the support we give to our members. The Global Recruiter is a phenomenal publication and a recognised voice of the industry. Our mission is to empower recruitment businesses to maximise their performance, productivity and profitability and this merger with The Global Recruiter gives us the opportunity to take things to the next level on that mission."

"This creates numerous synergies and leverages our collective strengths to better serve TRN members and the industry as a whole, and this enables us to go into 2024 now with some real momentum behind that. It's an exciting time, for sure!"

Established over twenty years ago, The Global Recruiter's magazine and website have a loyal following amongst recruitment industry leaders. Its highly sought-after industry awards recognise outstanding achievements and innovations within the recruitment sector.

"We are absolutely delighted to now play our part in the growth and development of the magazine, which is a household name in the industry," Osborne continued. "In addition to the highly successful CEO Roundtables they host, we're also very excited to have the opportunity to strengthen the awards side of the business even further and ensure that it continues to elevate excellence in the industry and inspire and reward recruitment professionals for their commitment to exceptional service and commercial success."

Gary King, Publisher of The Global Recruiter, said:

"I've known James, his co-founder Gordon Stoddart, and their great team at TRN for many years, and have a huge respect for what they have built as a community. I've seen first-hand the very measurable impact they make to their members. Coming together enables us both to do so much more with what we already have and make an even bigger impact to the industry." ■



LEADERSHIP CHANGE FOR MANPOWERGROUP

ManpowerGroup UK Announces Leadership Transition

ManpowerGroup have announced the appointment of Michael Stull as Country Manager of ManpowerGroup UK. Stull will take on leadership responsibilities and drive innovation for the business, including its industry-leading brands, Manpower, Experis, Talent Solutions, and Brook Street.

“I am excited by the opportunity to lead ManpowerGroup in one of the major markets in the world and to build upon the successful foundation laid by my predecessor,” said Stull. “By aligning talent with demand, we can carry forward ManpowerGroup’s mission of connecting people with meaningful work. Through skills-based matching, we can help the UK foster more engaged, inclusive workforces and achieve increased economic participation.”

Stull’s journey began at ManpowerGroup’s global headquarters in Milwaukee, WI, in global marketing where his role expanded to include leadership of global and North America Marketing. In 2017, he moved into a brand role, leading Manpower in the US. In September 2022, Stull was appointed talent solutions leader in the UK and moved with his family to London. More recently, his leadership responsibilities expanded to include overseeing Manpower and Brook Street.

In announcing this leadership transition, Riccardo Barberis, ManpowerGroup President, Northern Europe Region, said: “I’ve worked closely with Michael for the past couple years since he joined us from North America. Aside from being a great people leader, Michael’s diverse experience spanning marketing, brand, operations, and finance will be a great asset as we chart the next stage of growth for the business connecting even more candidates to meaningful work and clients to skilled talent.”

Stull takes over from Mark Cahill, who is stepping down after more than 19 years leading the UK business. Cahill will remain in the organisation supporting Stull and the ManpowerGroup UK senior leadership team during the transition.

“I would like to thank Mark for his decades-long commitment to ManpowerGroup,” added Barberis. “Over the years, he has made a significant impact on the business, our industry, and people. Mark’s inspirational leadership, mentorship, and genuine care for his team have played a crucial role in our success as we navigated a dynamic and rapidly evolving industry.” ■



SOCIAL VALUE SCORES HIGH

Big Issue Group's specialist recruitment service reports more than £755,000 of social value

Big Issue Recruit (BIR) has released its first impact report, which details more than £755,000 of social value in its first year of operation.

The report from the Big Issue Group's (BIG) specialist recruitment service, designed for people facing barriers to work, has revealed that in its first year of trading, BIR has registered and supported 109 candidates. 80 candidates have so far been put forward for vacancies, with 43 securing employment.

BIR has established a social value framework which can be used to demonstrate the monetary social value of its work using financial proxies. These proxies have been influenced by previous Social Return on Investment work carried out by BIG.

In its first year of trading to September 2023, BIR is estimated to have delivered more than £755,000 in social value. With a total cost base of £278,000, this means for every £1 spent on operational costs £2.72 of social value was delivered.

This comes at a time when the rate of unemployment in the UK was 4.2%, and 1.45 million people aged 16+ were unemployed. Unemployment levels increased by 206,000 on the year and were 77,000 above pre-pandemic levels. However, with nearly one million job vacancies in the UK and 531,200 skill-shortage vacancies in 2022, more than twice the corresponding number in 2017 (226,500), the reported success of BIR, shows that, with the right approach people can be moved into sustainable employment.

BIR Job Coaches work closely with all candidates to ensure they are upskilled in appropriate areas and equipped with the tools required to successfully move into, and sustain, employment. When Job Coaches are confident that candidates are ready to successfully take the next step, the candidate will be deemed to have achieved 'Work Ready' status. To date, 75 candidates have achieved Ready to Work status.

BIR has achieved its success in social impact and social value generation with just two Job Coaches supporting candidates. As BIR moves into its second year of operations it is aiming for each Job Coach to be supporting at least 75 candidates into employment. That means for each additional Job Coach employed by BIR, an additional 75 individuals can be supported into sustainable employment, generating an additional social value of approximately £1.4 million.

There is a huge opportunity to get more people into work and generate an enormous amount of social value in the UK through services like BIR. As of July 2023, there were 520,000 individuals facing unemployment in the UK for periods exceeding 6 months, this represents 35% of all individuals facing unemployment. It is these individuals who are facing long term barriers to re-entering the workforce that BIR exists to support.

If those 520,000 individuals could all be supported into employment opportunities through services like BIR, it could generate a potential, total social value of more than £12 billion for individuals, communities, and the UK economy.

Katy Wright, Programme Director at BIR, said: "We launched Big Issue Recruit in September 2022, with a very clear objective: to give marginalised people the same access to job opportunities as everyone else. We seized an opportunity and launched in a job market where there were as many people seeking work as there were vacancies. We worked alongside our wonderful founding partners C&C Group and Permira, placing candidates in great roles.

"We have shown that, with the right approach we can get the right people with the right skills into sustainable employment. However, we are mindful of the growing skills gap in the UK. In 2024, we will be tackling this issue head on by furnishing candidates with the right skills for the current labour market and seeking partners who want to work in innovative ways to fill their vacancies and enable people with barriers to employment to find the jobs of the future." ■

VISA EASE

UK government to ease visitor visa legislation to allow remote working

The UK government will from 31 January 2024 ease current visitor visa legislation to allow remote working. According to global immigration law firm Fragomen, this regulation recognises changing working patterns and will open the door to ‘work-cations’.

UK legislation has not previously made any reference to remote working, however guidance notes that those visiting the UK can, sensibly, respond to work emails, participate in remote meetings and calls. Guidance to immigration officials has been to “check that the applicant’s main purpose for coming to the UK is to undertake a permitted activity, rather than specifically to work remotely from the UK.”

From 31 January 2024, updated legislation will specifically allow visitors to “undertake activities relating to their employment overseas remotely from within the UK, providing this is not the primary purpose of their visit.”

“This is a significant relaxation of the visitor visa rules and will allow an individual to, for example, tag on to a holiday a one- or two-week work window without having to obtain a work visa,” says Charlotte Wills, a Partner at Fragomen. “It recognises that since the Covid pandemic working patterns have changed with many overseas visitors to the UK wishing to combine vacation with work. It is also perhaps recognition that working from home patterns are here to stay.”

“The rules will be welcomed by the many thousands of visitors to the UK each year including those from the EU, opening the door to remote working, albeit in a limited way. It will be interesting to see if other European countries follow suit with their own immigration frameworks.” ■

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LIVE OR DIE

By Denis Pennel, Managing Director,
World Employment Confederation on
how regulation is shaping the future of
the staffing industry.



As labour markets are shifting faster and more frequently than ever, the staffing industry plays a pivotal role in connecting talent with opportunities, and clients with economic growth. As we peer into 2024, our Staffing Executive Regulatory Outlook (SERO) provides a reassuring perspective, indicating a stabilising regulatory landscape for the industry after years of turbulence. >



REGULATION

Effective regulation is crucial in fostering a healthy and sustainable staffing sector. Twice a year, we survey top executives among our National Federations members to assess the likelihood and potential impact of regulatory changes on the staffing industry. For this year's second edition, 23 federations replied and about half of them deem the situation to remain neutral in the period from November 2023 to March 2024.

However, in a handful of countries – including Belgium, Romania, Australia, and Chile - the circumstances are headed in a downward trend. Yet, despite the challenges, the industry and our members in those countries know that they can count on the support of the World Employment Confederation (WEC) and their network of peers around the globe to share best practices and provide advocacy support. In fact, it's through the collective power of membership that in recent years, we have seen success stories in Italy, Spain, Mexico and India despite regulatory challenges. Our shared knowledge enabled us to engage with policymakers in a constructive way in those countries and avoid disproportionately restrictive regulation.

In addition to our forward-looking regulatory monitoring, we also conduct an annual survey to build a 'picture' of the regulatory landscape for the agency work sector over time. Those findings also reveal that in reality the staffing industry is far from the negative myths that too often surround agency work. Now, it's time to reset the reality based on the data we collected from WEC members.

Dispelling myths and resetting reality

The myth propagated by some, that the staffing industry is a 'Wild West', is firmly dispelled by our Regulatory Report 2023 which showcases a well-regulated sector. In fact, 82 per cent of countries surveyed mandate government registration or licensing for staffing agencies, demonstrating a strong commitment to accountability and transparency. >

Moreover, 85 per cent of countries require periodic reporting from employment agencies, ensuring ongoing compliance and ethical practices. The staffing industry's commitment to quality and compliance is further evidenced in the 65 per cent of countries where self-regulatory initiatives are in place. Such initiatives focus on areas such as the quality and compliance of employment agencies, training, and the promotion of occupational health and safety.


Contrary to the misconception that agency workers lack job security and social benefits, the data show that the majority of countries, 85 per cent, have regulations in place to ensure equal treatment and pay for agency workers. These regulations extend to social security benefits, including unemployment insurance, maternity benefits, and labour-related sickness or disability. The reality is that agency workers enjoy formal, secure, and decent working conditions.

Busting the myth that agency workers can't stand up for their rights, our report shows that in 76 per cent of countries, there is some form of social dialogue between the agency work sector and trade unions. Almost half of the countries surveyed, particularly in Europe, engage in sectoral collective bargaining, covering essential topics such as wages, occupational health and safety, and industry quality.

Striving to thrive

In a world where the nature of work is evolving rapidly, the staffing industry is a cornerstone for labour markets, facilitating employment opportunities for all. As we navigate the complexities of 2024, it is clear that good regulation is not merely a safeguard, it is the foundation upon which a resilient and thriving staffing sector stands. By acknowledging the realities and dispelling the myths, we demonstrate to policymakers that balanced and appropriate regulation can unlock the potential of the agency work sector and enable staffing companies to deliver better labour market outcomes for all. Even through the ebbs and flows of economic and regulatory fluctuations, our industry aims to not only stay alive but strives to positively thrive. ■





TECHNOLOGY - BUY, BUILD OR BORROW

Anthony O'Neill, founder Clarity Locums & AER Temp

28% of staffing firms plan to implement a platform within the next 2 years with the majority favouring a SaaS licensing model.

When I originally looked at implementing technology in 2016, I was shocked at the lack of options available that would work for my temp agency. It seemed no one really understood the unique challenges that face temp recruitment, so I had very little choice but to go down the road of building it myself.

Thankfully there are more options available today when looking to implement technology. You can choose to either Buy, Build or Borrow. New hybrid options of buy + build or borrow + build are also growing in popularity. Choosing the right option depends on a lot of factors, and it's important to have your long term strategy and priorities nailed down to help make the best decision.

Let's look at the pros and cons of each model:

Buy - This is a relatively easy model as it's an off the shelf product that you are buying and implementing. The main benefits of this model are speed and lower costs.

As soon as the software is purchased, it is ready to be accessed and deployed, so it can be quick to get started. As you are purchasing the software, the costs are front loaded and can be the cheapest in the long run.

Things to look out for - additional fees for training or onboarding and potential updates. Some companies bundle these in and others charge additionally.

Downsides of buying include the level of customisation available, future upgrades, potentially a large upfront cost and long term maintenance. There will need to be a certain level of IT competency within your company who can manage the implementation and maintenance of new software as well which may increase the overall costs. >

Build - Building your own software gives you much more control, so you can develop the solution exactly as you want, the hybrid of buy + build can also work here if the core of what you are buying works for you. Building your own also means you own that software. The main downside of building really are time and costs.

Building your own software and especially apps can be very time consuming and very costly. You would want to factor at least 12 months to develop. You also need to keep in mind the creation of additional features, upgrades, maintenance. Costs will be very high at the beginning but will continue to play a part moving forward.

A hybrid model of buy and build can offer some cost savings. By purchasing core technology, you save money in the long run and time to build from scratch.

Borrow - Licensing models are becoming more prevalent and can offer the best options. With either buy or build, you tend to have large upfront requirements. A borrow model differs in that upfront costs can be zero or a relatively small implementation fee. Fees are usually based monthly and linked to the size of your company, so for smaller and mid size companies this can be a really great way to get started. Other benefits include - no maintenance costs, access to all new features, less requirement to need an IT specialist in-house.

Downside is that with a pure borrow model, you have the same restriction in the amount of customisation available.

Things to look out for - additional fees for training or onboarding. Some companies bundle these in and others charge additionally.

The hybrid of borrow + build is growing in popularity now. This provides all the benefits of a licensing model plus the ability to develop bespoke features. One of the main benefits here is that the cost to develop is usually much lower as features developed specifically for you will be made available to their other clients, so the cost is usually a lot cheaper than a traditional build element.

Research is showing that 65% of companies looking at implementing a temp recruitment platform are favouring the SaaS licensing model over buying or building. Having built the AER Temp technology from the ground up, I can see why this model is preferred. AER Temp solution is based off the borrow + build model which we believe offers clients the best options when looking to implement technology.

If you want to learn more about how you can partner with AER Temp and drive efficiencies, increase revenue and allow your agency to really scale, you can set up a demo here - [DEMO](#). ■





COMPLIANCE

MOVING TARGETS

John Mayes, Legal & Governance Director for Randstad UK & Ireland on how compliance will evolve in 2024.



2024 is poised to usher in significant changes to the UK's political landscape, which in turn is likely to see a mix of pro-business and pro-worker commitments which the recruitment industry will need to digest.

Firstly, I think that gaps in workers' rights — and their enforcement — will come under increasing scrutiny.

A private members' bill giving temporary workers a right to request predictable hours became law earlier in 2023. The Workers (Predictable Terms and Conditions) Bill was brought forward by the Conservative MP Scott Benton to address the party's manifesto commitments. Employees, agency staff and casual workers on flexible contracts now have the right to request predictable working hours, but the details of exactly how this will work are yet to be determined. If the Government does not listen to the concerns of the industry and instead persists in trying to apply the square

peg principles of permanent employment to the round hole which is temporary labour, this has the potential to achieve little but all-round frustration.

The bill was one of several private member's bills addressing workplace rights that went through parliament, following the same recommendation in the independent Taylor Review, carried out in 2017, which looked at ways to redress the "one-sided flexibility" between employers and casual workers in the gig economy. Unfortunately we're having to rely on this piecemeal approach to regulation in the absence of the Employment Bill promised in the 2019 Queen's Speech. Many of us were hoping that would simplify the regulatory landscape, but instead the steady drip-feed of regulatory change means recruitment businesses have to constantly be on the lookout for consultations, regulations, guidance — great for lawyers, not so for business. >

Zero ban?

Labour also promises to ban zero-hour contracts entirely if it wins the anticipated 2024 general election, despite there being a place for such flexibility in the labour market. In my opinion, the focus should be about banning exploitative practices rather than zero-hour contracts themselves (a term which isn't actually defined in law in any event). Labour's long list of pro-worker policies, dubbed the "New Deal for Working People", consists of a package of measures that will address "the imbalance of power in Britain's workplaces". It will focus on workers' rights and will likely involve the introduction of more protections for workers. The party has also said it will bring forward a new employment rights bill within the first 100 days of a Labour government. I hope that Labour will continue to engage in meaningful dialogue with recruitment industry bodies, hopefully allowing delivery of manifesto promises which at the same time fully appreciates the position of employers and agencies.

The Conservatives on the other hand seem intent on taking on the trade unions again in 2024. Earlier this year we, along with many other recruitment agencies, opposed the lifting of the ban on use of agency workers to replace staff participating in industrial action. That legislation was overturned after a judicial challenge, but I understand the current Government will try to reintroduce it again in 2024. This is not a reform that either business or the recruitment industry is calling for, and I for one would prefer we were left out of this political points scoring exercise.

Holiday pay continues

Another area that has dominated legal updates in 2023, and looks set to rumble on into 2024, is holiday pay. We've recently seen case law, consultations, disputed guidance from regulators, draft legislation, all in the space of a few months. Things like rolled up holiday pay look set to become legalised, while holiday pay legislation looks set to paper over the cracks of an area of law that is in desperate need of ripping up and starting again. What's for sure is that we'll all be busy trying to apply yet another layer of new legislation and pro-cesses when what we need is a practical, properly thought through, comprehensive reform of the law in this area to reflect the world in which we now operate. >





AI rights and wrongs

Moving away from workers rights, I predict that we will see further guidelines emerge on the ethical use of AI in recruitment. Striking the balance between innovation and responsible use of technology is never easy. We all want the efficiency and simplicity which technological advances bring, but we must all ensure that we do it without unfairly impacting our key asset - people. It's not the British government who are likely to lead this change, no matter how many times the PM interviews the likes of Elon Musk. The EU has wanted to regulate AI for years, with the European Commission proposing the first EU regulatory framework for AI back in April 2021. The European Parliament has said its priority is to make sure that AI systems used in the EU are safe, transparent, and non-discriminatory. Like with data protection, I predict that we will see regulation of AI led by Europe, and businesses based outside the EU will end up complying by virtue of either their own international footprint or that of the companies providing the technology solutions. One thing I'm pretty confident of though is that the law will always lag behind the ability of businesses to try something new, so legal and compliance teams will need to get comfortable working in the grey and being the voice for the moral and ethical considerations, not just the letter of the law.

One welcome development is set to be the reform of the Apprenticeship Levy, something everyone appears to be in agreement with now after many years of campaigning by our industry. Anything which makes it easier to upskill staff and candidates to match the skills gap we're facing has to be a welcome development. Likewise there is hope too that umbrella companies will be the subject of proper regulation in 2024, but my prediction is that it will fall into the 'too difficult' box and any legislation will be tweaks rather than proper regulation which is long overdue. >

Being sustainable

Also looming on the horizon is the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive. The legal and compliance aspects of sustainability are here to stay, will be the next GDPR, and anyone with European operations will need to get to grips with this sooner rather than later.

While this one is high-up on my wishlist, I am not confident it will happen: I would like to see any government create a single-source of truth for recruiters and employers through which they can onboard a worker. Imagine a one-stop shop which allowed us to check an individual's right to work, tax position, criminal record, and employment history. The government has all this information, but it's employers and agencies that have to piece it all together when hiring someone even for a single day's work. While the pandemic forced urgent changes in how right to work checks were done, it's still not perfect. The reality is that the days of running a business when everyone worked in the same office are a thing of the past. Far better, in fact, would be a central digital portal linking someone's national insurance number, their ID, their tax code and the results of the usual pre-employment checks.

The challenge with compliance in the recruitment and employment sector is often not the principles of worker rights, rather the complex patchwork of legislation, case law, guidance and licensing conditions which make it difficult for both business and workers to align. What this country desperately needs is a simplified regulatory landscape, with clear and concise legislation fit for the future of work not the past.

While challenges persist, I hope we are set to see the world of work in 2024 become fairer and more equitable. ■



COMPLIANCE

DO THE RIGHT THING

At a round table discussion sponsored by PayePass, Simon Kent listens in on the concerns of recruiters faced with ever increasing compliance challenges.



Compliance continues to be a challenge on the front line for recruitment companies. At a Recruitment Live round table discussion held online towards the end of last year, and sponsored by independent auditing company PayePass, leading compliance experts from some of the country's high profile recruitment businesses gave their views on the current state of play and why doing the right thing in recruitment is not a straight-forward matter. >

COMPLIANCE

On the call were:

Lucy French, Head of Compliance, REED

Roger Clements, CMO, Matrix

Tracy Evans, Group HR and Quality Director, Pertemps

Paul King, Chief Operating Officer, Gattaca PLC

Edwina Wickham, Director - Contract and Freelance, Major Players

Yulia Khrenova, Group Compliance Manager, Major Players

John Mayes, Legal Director, Randstad

Tania Cummins, Head of Compliance, Acorn by Synergie

Julia Kermode, Chief Executive, PayePass Solutions

Simon Kent, Editor, The Global Recruiter

Gary King, Publisher, The Global Recruiter

The discussion kicked off with Lucy French highlighting that the reaction of diverse recruitment companies to compliance demands meant that the industry did not present a level playing field. Put simply, while some businesses act diligently to ensure all compliance needs are met, others are intent on cutting corners and competing through the cost difference that non-compliance can bring.

Gattaca's Paul King said the balance between competitiveness and compliance has never been harder with compliant agencies having to work hard to meet the terms of agencies who take a more liberal approach. It is also the case that while some client CEOs may take a strong view on following the rules, this isn't always reflected throughout the business where the emphasis can be on simply filling a vacancy as soon as possible.

Lucy French commended the work of some government agencies in heightening awareness of compliance, however there was a shared recognition among those in the discussion that very often it was the larger, more high profile recruitment businesses who would be under most pressure to comply, with smaller outfits able to operate with less scrutiny. What this means in reality is that compliant businesses spend more time, money and resources on auditing activities than their smaller contemporaries.

It was interesting to hear from Tania Cummins and others that training consultants to follow compliant procedures can also be challenging. To begin with the nature and amount of change within compliance presents a challenge simply in terms of creating the educational resource. It can feel as if there are new or changed compliance requirements almost every week, creating an ongoing task of understanding the implications and communicating this to front line consultants. This issue also highlights the inconsistency present across recruitment companies, as Cummins noted sometimes new recruits question why certain compliant practices are followed since, they claim, they did not have to do it that way in their previous business.

This can put pressure on recruiting and retaining consultants as many consultants simply want to make a sale and move on. Moreover, in markets where candidates are scarce and clients want talent quickly recruitment consultants may simply go to the company that lets them fill those positions in the easiest and quickest way. Consultants can argue they are not compliance experts and simply want to get on with their job. >

Underlying the inconsistency across the compliance landscape is the ambiguity of the legislation itself. There is always a huge amount of discussion around compliance legislation - trying to nail down what it means and what recruitment companies have to do as a result. It is this ambiguity that enables recruitment companies in the same field to do different things and therefore incur different costs. In some instances this ambiguity can even result in the same phrase meaning different things depending on the industry or the context in which the phrase is used. In other instances it is clear that agencies are taking a different approach to interpreting the rules, with the larger more high profile companies taking a more strict approach than others in order to protect their reputations.

Roger Clements explained how he felt recent years has seen an increase in ambiguity around compliance legislation, adding that this issues was compromising the use of technology in streamlining compliant processes. There have been some significant steps forward made in technology around the recruitment process and administration, but if compliance requirements are open to interpretation the idea of creating a piece of technology that can automate checks and ensure rules are followed becomes impossible.

That said there are some instances where technology does make a contribution to better compliance. Dashboard reports which track candidate's paperwork, for example, or internal automation to help track the demands of the Agency Workers Regulations were both cited as good examples.

John Mayes was not alone in voicing frustration in the way compliance regulations seem to be simply added to in order to try and make them better, rather than being ripped up and rewritten from the start. He argues that doing the latter would present a far easier approach for recruitment businesses and simply applying yet more layers of complexity over issues makes the situation unnecessarily complicated. Those on the call felt that if you were to create a compliance framework for the industry you wouldn't start from the current scenario. A new framework would certainly mean there were winners and losers in comparison with the current situation but at least it would offer the chance to have meaningful unambiguous regulations to follow. >





COMPLIANCE

Ultimately good recruiters are caught in the middle of a scenario that has poorly framed legislation on the one side and competitors who are not following the legislation on the other. Recruiters are following the rules as best they can but they also know that comes with a cost to their company and possibly an opportunity cost in terms of picking up more business.

Moreover, the compliance situation is, if anything, becoming more complex and challenging. Those on the call highlighted the need to keep up with new forms of fraudulent activity, misleading claims made in CVs, references and more. At the same time AI is adding further challenges for recruiters to identify what is 'real' and what isn't. And as businesses which hold lots of people data, protection against hacking is always going to be important. Ultimately, being compliant isn't just about following the rules, it's about keeping safe.


"As someone who has consistently campaigned for the workers' perspective to be prioritised, it has sometimes felt that few people in the recruitment supply chain actually care about the people who do the jobs," comments Julia Kermode. "However, through this discussion I was pleased to find myself completely wrong! In fact, it was very clear that recruiters and even the c-suite within client businesses do care about compliance and how they treat their workers.

"Having said that it seems that the operational reality of recruitment can sometimes get in the way. In particular, the cost of doing the right thing can deter some businesses from following compliant procedures and ensuring their people are looked after properly from every perspective.

"Many recruiters are doing the the right thing, but we need a culture change," Kermode adds. "Cost isn't everything and recruitment should be about people – it's their job and livelihood so is really important to them. People should never be a commodity." ■

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GLOBAL WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS



Simon Kent, Editor,
The Global Recruiter

“Within this global marketplace of talent, the savvy recruiter can expand their search for candidates and give their clients the prime selection.”

GLOBAL WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

The world is your oyster. In today's electronically linked workplace, the idea of employing the workers you need in another part of the world has become a reality. Indeed, in some instances exploiting the global workforce is the one sure fire way companies have of securing the skills they need when they need them. The priority for bringing in new talent has little to do with location and a great deal to do with how much an individual can contribute to a business. Put simply, employers no longer care where someone is, they just want to know they can deliver.

Within this global marketplace of talent, the savvy recruiter can expand their search for candidates and give their clients the prime selection. But doing this requires new skills, knowledge and approaches to ensure the arrangement works for everyone and remains compliant whatever the circumstance.

Over the next few issues The Global Recruiter will explore the global workforce. We'll be examining the legalities around arrangements, the possibilities and the potential for recruitment businesses who want to go the extra mile - or even an extra few thousand miles - to please their clients.

Alongside this we'll be talking to recruitment companies who have undertaken their own international expansion, identifying new markets to target and establishing offices overseas. In this way we hope to resolve some of the complexities around employing people in other countries, as well as offering the chance for your own business to take the step at going international. ■

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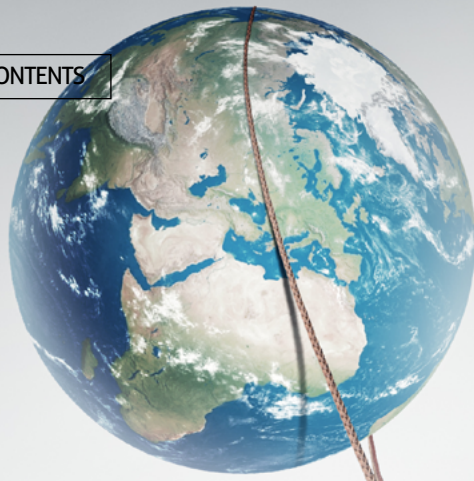
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GLOBAL STRENGTHS

Sally Hunter, Executive Vice President - Commercial Markets at Cielo, on why building a global workforce benefits business.

We're currently in an age that's witnessing rapid technological advancements. In fact, it's fair to say there's never been an era where technology has moved so fast. However, how our workforce is changing and adapting is not moving as fast as our tech is advancing. >





As markets have expanded worldwide, and some barriers to growth and cultural exchange have come down, companies have increasingly spread across borders, whether through intention or necessity. This shift has seen the world's workforce become truly globalised, opening avenues for innovation and diversity of opinion that have helped to further fuel company growth.

While there are many upsides, establishing and managing a global team is complex and involves more than just hiring from different geographical locations. It calls for a comprehensive strategy for attracting, training, and retaining international talent. To truly create and manage a global workforce, you first need to understand what one actually looks like – and then you can take the right steps to bring it to life.

What is a global workforce?

There's nothing essentially new about global workforces: many companies have employed workers across the world for years. However, in many cases, the businesses that implement this strategy have established offices where working in person is the norm, rather than working virtually or in locations where there may have no physical presence. The number of businesses operating a global workforce has undoubtedly changed – as has the way these teams are organised and maintained.

At its root, a global workforce means the international employees of a company, who are connected through the company network, no matter where they are located. International workers exist in all industries and within companies of all sizes, so global workforces have become the norm in many sectors.

As multinational and multicultural teams become even more common, businesses must be prepared to navigate the hurdles that could crop up. For instance, employing staff in new geographical locations without solid infrastructure presents a significant risk. HR teams need to stay aware of the potential stumbling blocks that intercultural differences can bring. This means being alert to any divisive elements within the organisation while nurturing those bringing strengths to the business. By handling intercultural differences in a proactive, open way, you'll be able to create a global workforce that's more interconnected and positive.

Expanding on an international scale requires a business to think globally, which may not be as straightforward as it sounds. For example, crafting a truly effective virtual on-boarding process for an employee whose team leader and other team members are located in a different country, or across various countries, is just one of many factors to consider. Managing a disparate workforce comes with its own unique set of complex challenges, ranging from navigating different time zones and varying employment laws in different countries to creating communications that transcend language barriers. >

The global challenges

While multinational firms will have to get to grips with internal challenges, there are also broader issues to consider when establishing a global workforce. First and foremost, consideration should be given to the pace of change and the stability – or lack thereof – of global markets.

This unpredictability was highlighted most obviously during the pandemic, but the aftershocks have been just as impactful in many ways. The seismic supply chain challenges created are only now being ironed out, while many countries have had to deal with spiralling inflation ever since.

Indeed, macroeconomic forces continue to vary by country and industry, resulting in widely differing patterns of labour demand. You only have to look at the zero inflation rate in Singapore as of May 2023 in contrast to Argentina's skyrocketing inflation at 115.6% as of June 2023 to see this huge difference in reality, as found in Cielo's Innovation in flux and the future of HR report.

This can have a big effect on a company and may potentially highlight a leadership capability issue if workers are spread across different regions, with employees in high-inflation areas potentially demanding higher pay. Have businesses considered that their leaders should have experience leading team members who earn more than they do?

Looking forward, are the current members of these teams equipped to be the managers and leaders of future employees? These are all challenges that need to be considered.

The benefits of a global workforce

In its ever-evolving landscape, the work of today will not be the same as that of tomorrow. To bridge the gap, companies must leverage diverse sources of talent by embracing a variety of skillsets, backgrounds, and perspectives. This way, businesses can tap into the skills and capabilities necessary to keep up with the ever-changing demands of the digital age. The hurdles might be concerning, but the benefits of a global workforce more than make up for them. Here are just a few of the advantages:

Choosing from a wider talent pool: By expanding your candidate search across the globe, you could have access to the world's best. This makes it far easier to find candidates with exactly the right experience and expertise for each role.

Fostering cultural diversity: The advantages of having a diverse workforce range from improved creativity and innovation to better decision-making. Companies tend to be more resilient to fluctuating business environments and market changes, while employees will also learn global perspectives and cross-cultural communication skills. >





Expand into new markets: By going global, businesses can drive growth and expand market reach. Having employees across the world provides businesses with local insight and knowledge of that region.

What should your strategy look like?

Inevitably, globalising a business brings a range of challenges along with numerous benefits. To deal with these highs and lows, you must implement a plan to ensure your global workforce succeeds. But what does that plan look like?

First, you should have an overarching vision that defines what your company aims to achieve with a global team from the outset. As part of this, you need a detailed talent-acquisition strategy that includes globally announced job vacancies, partnerships with international recruiters, and a geographically diverse hiring approach. Make sure you have a culturally sensitive hiring process in place as well. Like any other strategic plan, this should be coupled with a detailed analysis of local labour laws, taxation, and regulations.

When developing your plan beyond acquisition, consider building a robust orientation, training, and development process, accounting for diverse learners and formats that work across time zones. Also include employee-retention strategies, such as providing competitive compensation, growth opportunities and recognition programs.

At Cielo, we recommend a face-to-face visit or video meeting with new colleagues early in an employee's tenure to ensure strong working relationships and onboarding processes.

Acknowledging differences is essential, as is clear communication that everyone will be respectful of diverse backgrounds and perspectives. Here, having a message from the CEO, which you can broadcast to team members around the world, can be helpful.

Conclusion

The journey towards globalising a workforce is multifaceted – a mix of promising opportunities and formidable challenges. It stretches beyond the simple premise of hiring internationally to learning more about different cultures, becoming more adaptable and planning strategically. It also requires a close analysis of global macroeconomic and geopolitical trends.

But despite the challenges, the rewards of a global workforce are undeniable. As the future of work continues to evolve at a rapid pace, the skills possessed by today's employees may not always meet the needs of tomorrow's tasks. Embracing a diverse and global workforce allows businesses to access the skills and capabilities of the future. You'll have access to diverse talent and be able to build a multicultural team while expanding into new markets. This not only boosts creativity and innovation but also improves decision-making and gives your company a physical worldwide presence.

For it to work, planning and execution are crucial. You need considered recruitment strategies, effective orientation and training, leadership skills, and strong communication as core components. Balancing these elements with an inclusive work culture and a sensitive approach to diversity will give you the desired results. ■

CLEARED FOR WORK

Chris Harber, Head of Immigration at Boyes Turner outlines the legal challenges that come with recruiting abroad.

From economic and geopolitical pressures to shifting legal landscapes, global recruiters are anticipating new headwinds and uncertainty as we head into 2024. At the same time, the war for talent means that international hiring is essential for global organisations looking for growth and expansion in 2024- and beyond. >



As with all things recruitment, the market outlook for international recruitment shifts from sector to sector. Let's take the hospitality sector industry. It will be irretrievably hit by the government's recent decision to increase the minimum salary required for a skilled worker visa in a bid to slash migration targets. At the same time, the tech industry - always reliant on highly skilled candidates - remains confident when it comes to experienced hires, however the increase in the minimum salary threshold means that accessing younger talent is going to be difficult going forward.

Regardless of industry, however, it's a tough market, as the costs of recruiting continue to rise. As an example, a five-year Skilled Worker visa has increased from c£9,500 to c£11,900 in a little over three months. Yet in a country like the UK, which is increasingly poor at developing and growing vocational skills, most sectors will struggle with a huge talent gap, making international hiring their best solution to ensure a competitive and diverse talent pipeline.

Global hiring landscape

- The rise of the digital nomad – Post-Covid the trend of the digital nomad, location-independent talent, using technology to enable their profession, continues to rise. This will give more flexibility for recruiters and open the talent pool.
- Climate urgency – The climate agenda is going to massively drive recruitment patterns over the next few years. This goes beyond paying lip service to minimising air travel and carbon footprints to transparency demanded in ESG reporting within organisations. At the same time, it will open a whole new category for candidates with climate experience.
- Changing patterns in the global workforce – A few factors are at play here, as the global mobile workforce matures. Much of this is rooted in geopolitical elements, with politics (let's say, hypothetically, Trump America) gradually giving people the desire to choose where they want to live. Elsewhere, events such as the war in the Ukraine has flooded the market with candidates looking to leave both the Ukraine and Russia.
- Remote working here to stay – Despite RTO strategies being put into play in 2023, the rise of remote and hybrid working has made it easier for companies to attract and accommodate talent regardless of geography, particularly when it comes to more specialised skills outside of the local talent pool. Recruitment agencies with networks and presence in emerging talent hubs such as Poland, parts of Latin America and India, can play to their strengths this year.
- The long-tail of Brexit – The true impact of the UK leaving the EU sits deep in the fissures of our economy, our competitiveness, and our talent pool. Europe now has a single fair immigration system that caters for everyone regardless of where you're from and ensuring a great flow of talent. Meanwhile in the UK, businesses are still navigating the aftershock, with a massive catch-up on upskilling locally as the government continues to make it harder to access global talent. >

● New immigration measures – Last year, the Home Office announced its immigration targets, with measures to reduce net migration by 300k a year. Some exceptions have been made, for example the care sector which is overwhelmingly dependent on international employees. And despite these moves – and a potential dip in net migration in 2024 – we now live in a globally mobile economy, with organisations and their people wired and open to working internationally. I believe this essentially will prevail in the future.

Hiring into the UK internationally

So where does this leave global recruitment agencies supporting clients hiring into the UK?

First off, accessing talent will be straightforward enough. Despite the picture above, the UK remains an attractive place to live and work for candidates, with London frequently polling at the top of global cities. Our stable political and legal system and the accessibility of being English speaking, makes the UK super-attractive for candidates with a globally mobile outlook.

Our geography helps us too as the UK sits in the centre of the world from a time perspective. This makes relocation adjustments easier for a candidate moving from the Far East, for example, as the time difference is easier to navigate in terms of staying in touch with friends and family.

This is true at all levels, starting with graduates, often already in the UK talent pool because of our (still) globally recognised education system. And while immigration and global recruitment tends to be skewed towards the big cities, the UK is an attractive location for established employees too. >



Visa Application

The agency view

Agencies will keep cost and complexity top of mind in 2024. Because clients, particularly those with ambitious global mobility programmes, will be focusing on finding great talent and placing the right people, considerations such as tax and payroll issues simply aren't priorities.

Understandably, when you're trying to encourage a candidate into a huge life decision like taking an out-of-country role, factors such as logistics and relocation packages take priority. The legal part – visas, tax arrangements and so on – are often an afterthought.


My take-away is always start the visa conversation as soon as you can in the hiring process. Where required, this also means ensuring your client has a sponsor license in place before they need it, ideally at offer stage. Last minute complications can ultimately leave your candidate, client and agency exposed to a lot of risk, not least missing out on great talent.

As a final thought, when it comes to the UK's immigration system it's always important to remember that consistent change is very much the norm. Since 2008 there have been at least six fundamental course corrections from the Home Office, quite often in response to the political mood music at the time. Considering that we have a General Election coming up later this year, expect more change to come. For global recruitment agencies, adapting to change is par for the course. Staying ahead of incoming changes, adapting to curveballs, and responding in a way that best serves your clients will keep you agile, relevant and competitive. ■

If you would like to discuss how the upcoming changes to the salary thresholds, or indeed any other aspect of the immigration system, affects your clients and candidates, please feel free to email me at charber@bovesturner.com.

NAVIGATING THE GLOBAL WORKFORCE

Sim Hall, Managing Director of Populus Select Recruitment discusses the importance of taking a strategic approach to expanding operations around the globe.

A portrait of Sim Hall, a middle-aged man with grey hair, wearing a blue blazer over a light blue shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and foliage.

No matter where in the world you are hiring, recruitment is a balancing act of negotiating the requirements of the hiring organisation and the candidate. This applies across all borders and industries, but those requirements do require you to do a bit of homework on the expectations, regulations and cultural practices of every side. >



Managing a global workforce requires embracing cultural diversity. Before hiring, it's crucial to understand and respect the target country's cultural norms, communication styles, and work ethics. This goes beyond avoiding mistakes; it's about recognising what motivates people and showing genuine respect for their background. Embracing this principle fosters a collaborative and effective team.

In an era where international borders become increasingly porous in the corporate world, the challenge and opportunity of managing a global workforce has never been more pronounced. Populus Select, a leader in international recruitment and specialising in highly-skilled science and engineering-based roles, stands at the forefront of this dynamic, navigating complexities with a unique blend of expertise and innovation. This comprehensive exploration delves into its strategies for recruiting, managing, and retaining global talent, shedding light on successes and the lessons learned along the way.

The language to grow

Populus Select's team reflects the global tapestry of the workforce it manages. With operations spanning from the USA to the Far East, and from India to the Middle East and Europe, its recent expansion into Central America marks another milestone in the global journey. This geographical diversity is complemented by an impressive array of language skills within the team, including Mandarin, Korean, Japanese, German, Italian, French, Spanish, Ukrainian, and Russian. Such linguistic prowess is not merely a functional tool but a cornerstone of the

strategy, enabling deep cultural understanding and effective communication across borders.

However, it's important to know that effective communication in a global setting goes beyond language proficiency. It involves understanding the nuances of non-verbal cues, the significance of context in different cultures, and the adoption of technology to bridge time zones and geographical barriers. Mastering effective communication is a continuous process and requires a deliberate, thoughtful approach.

Identify, attract, hire

The essence of Populus Select's recruitment philosophy lies in its research-driven approach, encapsulated in the 'Identify, Attract, Hire' model. This methodology is consistently applied across all regions but is adapted to respect and leverage local cultural and economic nuances. This balance ensures that its recruitment process is not only effective but also culturally sensitive and respectful. The process extends beyond hiring, with onboarding and partnership playing critical roles in ensuring long-term employee engagement and retention.

An acute understanding of local contexts is vital which means recognising the economic and labour dynamics of each country. It is important to delve into how geopolitical shifts affect job security perceptions, compensation expectations, and candidate motivations. This insight allows the recruiter to navigate complex employment landscapes, advising clients on intricate issues such as benefit structures and taxation in different regions. >

Among the challenges faced by global recruiters is managing varying time zones and coordinating activities across continents. These logistical hurdles need to be met with flexibility and commitment to client service that transforms potential obstacles into opportunities. This approach is crucial in providing seamless, high-quality service to both burgeoning start-ups and established global entities.

Legal and regulatory

Navigating the myriad legal and regulatory landscapes is a significant challenge in global workforce management. From employment laws to data protection regulations, organisations must ensure compliance to avoid legal pitfalls. This requires not only an in-depth understanding of local laws but also a proactive approach to stay abreast of changes and updates in these regulations.

The global market is ever-evolving, and so are the challenges in managing a global workforce. Organisations must commit to continuous learning, staying ahead of trends, and being adaptable to change. This agility is what sets apart successful global enterprises.

Working globally with candidates and clients across borders can make providing consistent service a challenge – especially when expectations vary from culture to

culture – and even industry to industry. There isn't a one-size-fits-all approach; instead, embrace the need for local market understanding, economic awareness, and cultural sensitivity. For instance, strategies in the Far East differ significantly from those in Central America, taking into account differences in business etiquette, communication styles, and regulatory environments. In both of these regions it is customary to provide thirteenth month bonuses, not hugely different from the British Christmas bonus. But it's important to know that in some countries it is just a standard benefit that employees expect, whereas in others, employment laws dictate the minimum amount and timing of payments – falling foul of the regulations could see clients landed with a hefty fine and a reputation which may pose as an obstacle to future recruitment drives.

It is the recruitment firm's responsibility to act as a translator for the client, interpreting laws, best practices and culture to ensure that everyone's expectations and understanding of the hiring process is clear.

A critical aspect of managing a global workforce is developing leaders who are equipped to handle the complexities of a diverse team. This involves training in cross-cultural communication, ethical leadership, and conflict resolution. Global leaders must be adept at balancing local concerns with the overarching goals of the organisation. >





In a world marked by rapid geopolitical and economic changes, Populus Select prioritises continuous engagement with clients and candidates. Understanding their changing motivations and priorities is crucial, especially in the face of the mixed economic outlook for 2024, with concerns of stagflation in Europe and other global markets. This ongoing dialogue is not only about staying informed but also about being a proactive partner in navigating these changes.

A cornerstone of Populus Select's success is their emphasis on listening. They engage in deep conversations with clients and candidates, understanding their unique needs and perspectives. This process goes beyond mere information gathering; it involves educating and guiding both parties, fostering a mutual understanding that is critical in successful placements and long-term partnerships.

Wellbeing priority

Employee wellbeing has taken centre stage in recent years, and it's even more crucial in a global setting. Ensuring that employees feel equally as valued and included, regardless of their location or cultural background, is key to retention and productivity. If one country or nationality feels it is getting the raw end of a deal, they will be quick to look elsewhere. This includes providing support for mental health, fostering

a sense of belonging, and recognising the unique needs of a diverse workforce – and of course taking a relaxed view on local working times and holidays. For example, a business with workers in the US and Belgium might see some tension develop around working time practices and the availability of colleagues. American employment laws are known as some of the most pro-employer in the world, with some of the least paid time off and sick leave allowances in the developed world, but Belgians working more than 40 hours - rather than the standard 38 per week - legally require a 'rest day' a month.

As Populus Select continues to expand its global footprint, the commitment to a research-driven, culturally sensitive, and adaptable approach remains steadfast. It stands as a model for how businesses can successfully navigate the complexities of a global workforce, turning challenges into opportunities and diversity into strength.

Overseeing and growing a global workforce is an intricate mix of cultural sensitivity, legal diligence, effective communication, and technological integration. It's about building bridges across cultural divides and fostering an environment where diversity is celebrated, and global collaboration thrives. As the corporate world becomes increasingly globalised, these principles serve as beacons, guiding organisations in their journey towards global excellence. ■