

The voice for the global staffing industry

GAR

THE GLOBAL RECRUITER

www.theglobalrecruiter.com |

Issue 254 | February 2024



RECRUITMENT

HIRE EVERYWHERE

**SUCCESSFUL SUCCESSION
BOOM TIME?**

VIEW THE MAGAZINE ONLINE | www.theglobalrecruiter.com/digital-magazine/



WELCOME

SIMON KENT
EDITOR

There is a nervousness in the air. A sense of uncertainty as to exactly how 2024 is going to fall. The labour market seems tight, but the need for skills is undeniable. The need for digital know-how is, in some cases, backing employers into a corner – they need to keep pace with the changes around them, but where do they go to for that kind of talent?

The recruitment industry is frequently seen as a barometer for the economy in general – a rise in activity here can forecast an upturn for employers and sectors. But in this context recruiters may need to go the extra mile in order to find the talent their clients need. Innovative practices, opening new talent pools, creating greater efficiencies in bringing personnel onboard, even looking abroad and enabling talent to contribute from wherever it may be, these are all effective steps that recruiters can take to answer the current talent challenge.

This issue of The Global Recruiter highlights a few of these innovative practices. From how recruitment companies employ and incentivise their staff to how to go abroad for talent, these initiatives can have real significance as they go forward.

Challenging times are perhaps the times that truly define a business – and success could lie in identifying and focussing on the ideas, approaches and processes that make one recruitment company different from all the others. ■

CONTENTS

- 4** NEWS
- 10** VIEW FROM WEC: WHAT WORK IS
- 13** SECTOR WATCH: BOOM TIME?
- 17** WORKPLACE: SUCCESSFUL SUCCESSION
- 20** CENTRE STAGE: FOCUS CLOUD GROUP
- 25** GLOBAL WORKFORCE: MOVING TARGETS
- 29** GLOBAL WORKFORCE: HIRE EVERYWHERE
- 33** GLOBAL WORKFORCE: STARTING WITH THE WORLD

Publisher: Gary King
gary@theglobalrecruiter.com

Editorial: Simon Kent
editorial@theglobalrecruiter.com

Director: James Osborne
jamestherecruitmentnetwork.com

Advertising:
sales@theglobalrecruiter.com

Design & Production: Ioan Lucian Sculeac
lucian@theglobalrecruiter.com

Subscribe for free: www.theglobalrecruiter.com



The Global Recruiter is published 12 times a year by The Recruitment Network International Ltd, Unit 3 Merchant, Evegate Business Park, Station Road, Smeeth, Ashford, Kent TN25 6SX

Contributions: Contributions are invited, but when not accepted will only be returned if accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope. Articles should be emailed or delivered on floppy disk. No responsibility can be taken for drawings, photographs or written contributions during delivery, transmission or when with the magazine. In the absence of an agreement, the copyright of all contributions, regardless of format, belongs to the publisher. The publishers accept no responsibility in respect of advertisements appearing in the magazine and the opinions expressed in editorial material or otherwise do not necessarily represent the views of the publishers. The publishers accept no liability for actions taken on the basis of any information contained within this magazine. The publishers cannot accept liability for any loss arising from the late appearance or non-publication of any advertisement for any reason whatsoever.

ISSN 2049-3401

EDGE PARTNERSHIP WITH DHR HEALTH

Partnership showcases how skills crisis in healthcare sector can be solved through global hiring

DHR Health, a leading healthcare system in south US, has reported significant gains in productivity and staff retention as a result of a partnership with global hiring platform, Edge.

After working for 12 months with Edge to address persistent staffing challenges across the services it provides to 1.4m patients, DHR Health has seen transformative results, including a 71 per cent increase in productivity, a 20 per cent reduction in open positions and 53 per cent reduction in time taken to hire new team members.

With the support of Edge's hiring platform, DHR Health has successfully recruited and deployed a team of 42 remote administrative personnel across 13 departments, able to carry out essential administrative tasks, including scheduling, insurance verification, and prior authorisations. The solution is capable of fostering scalability across the organisation's multifaceted healthcare operations.

The issues that DHR Health identified are challenges facing many healthcare businesses at the moment, with administrative work consuming one-sixth of U.S. physicians' working hours and lowering career satisfaction. On top of that, 34 per cent of doctors worldwide have observed increased medical errors, attributing the cause in part to staffing shortages and constant stress.

Less than 40 per cent of positions are currently being filled in the healthcare industry, leading to increased wait times, diminished patient-provider interaction and a decline in patient satisfaction.

Edge provides scalable, affordable and adaptable HR solutions that seamlessly connect exceptional talent from all over the world with businesses that need them, providing access to a broader talent pool, and addressing the skills gap that exists with 1.5 million fewer Americans participating in the

labor force. With it often taking practices 3+ months to fill an open front office position, Edge has helped DHR Health to achieve a 53 per cent decrease in hiring time.

Edge's platform allows businesses such as DHR Health to automate screening processes, implementing AI tools for efficient resume screening to ensure a fair and timely initial selection. It also ensures enhanced candidate matching, using machine learning to match candidates with job vacancies based on skills and experiences. It also enables the streamlining of onboarding, with new hires able to complete any paperwork and training online, and training able to be tailored to the specific skills and knowledge gaps of employees.

Dr. Marcel Twahirwa of DHR Health said: "We sought to partner with Edge to make it easier for patients to access the practice and to remedy the constant turnover of office based staff. Edge provided well trained professionals that were able to adapt to our clinic's needs and help facilitate communication between patients, providers and office staff which has resulted in increased patient satisfaction. Edge has been the difference that our clinic needed.

Iffi Wahla, CEO and co-founder of Edge, said: "The world of work has changed profoundly since the pandemic. Businesses and employees now realize the value of tech enabled remote and flexible working. This opens the door to the creation of global virtual workforces for companies of any size. Not only does this solve localized expertise shortages, it also enables businesses to gain access to an unprecedented pool of talent. They can build the highest caliber team to better serve their clients while reducing costs and the time taken to recruit.

"Our work with DHR Health is a prime example of how better recruitment tech can help to transform the way healthcare providers operate and ultimately improve the patient experience." ■

SALT ACQUIRES ZELO DIGITAL

Move enhances specialists and geographical reach

ACQUISITION

Salt, a global leader in digital recruitment and talent, has announced the acquisition of Zelo Digital, an independent recruitment firm specialising in digital advertising and emerging technologies based in the heart of London. This strategic acquisition enhances the Salt digital line of specialisms, with a focus on emerging tech, namely programmatic, advertising and media.

“We are thrilled to welcome Zelo Digital and their team to Salt, marking our 7th successful acquisition worldwide. This strategically enriches our geographical footprint, undoubtedly furthering our capabilities,” stated Salt’s CEO Elliot Dell. “Zelo’s integration notably strengthens our UK and USA teams, expanding our presence in programmatic, publishing, advertising, and esports. We remain committed to our mission of Creating Futures™ across the digital ecosystem.”

The integration of Zelo not only strengthens Salt’s foothold in the UK but also supports digital industries globally with further presence across the US, EMEA, and APAC regions better

connecting outstanding digital talent with competitive skillsets to progressive exciting teams. With a shared commitment to excellence and a dedication to staying ahead of industry trends, Salt and Zelo will continue to set the standard for recruitment excellence in the digital realm.

“We are excited to become part of Salt to bring even more value to our customers and candidates,” said Zelo’s Founder Gregory Mark. “As a business navigating the dynamic digital landscape, this union is a fitting embodiment of our commitment to innovation and growth. It’s a perfect coming together, propelling us towards new horizons in recruitment excellence.”

This acquisition is effective immediately. Zelo will continue to service their clients as usual while they become a part of Salt Recruitment Group.

Salt is dedicated to providing the best recruitment to companies around the world. With this acquisition, the company is poised to continue its growth and expansion in the digital talent space. ■

FINANCIAL SECTOR BOUNCES BACK

Financial services hiring rises following challenging 2023

Research from the Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCO) suggests that following a tough hiring landscape in 2023, recruitment across financial services has experienced a much-needed boost, with January data up on the latter part of last year.

The data – provided by the world’s largest network of job boards, Broadbean Technology – revealed that there was a 38% decrease in financial services jobs throughout 2023 overall, with hiring tailing off in the second half of the year in light of some notable regulatory challenges.

However, the number of new roles has climbed at the start of 2024, suggesting that the market could be turning, with 7% more new jobs listed in January than in November 2023. Applications for positions have also risen in recent months with the data suggesting that employers are boosting pay to source talent in what remains a skill-short market.

“The financial services sector has faced some notable challenges over the past 12 months with major regulatory overhauls impacting many organisations’ hiring activities,” said Ann Swain, Global CEO of APSCO. “We saw the impact of these shifts in the second half of 2023 with permanent and contract job numbers both declining. However, the beginning of this year has given cause for optimism and it will be interesting to see how the market evolves in the next few months.” ■



FAKE DBS CHECK WARNING

Top tips for jobseekers at risk of 'fake DBS check' recruitment scams

The Disclosure and Barring Service has said that persuading job seekers to pay for a non-existent DBS check is a tactic being used by fraudsters to extract cash from their victims, with January and February a peak period for scammers to pounce.

Typically referenced as 'advanced fee scams', victims are encouraged to pay upfront for 'recruitment administration' – including a supposed DBS check to progress with the recruitment offer. Text and WhatsApp messages can be cleverly designed to get jobseekers to part with their details.

Coinciding with the Home Office's Stop! Think Fraud campaign, the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) has compiled a list of top tips for job seekers to stay safe from fake DBS check scams in any recruitment search:

Eligibility criteria – not all positions require a Standard or Enhanced DBS check. These checks are typically necessary for roles like education, health and social care, and security. If your job does not fall into these categories, and you are asked for a DBS check, it might be a fraudulent request. Check the eligibility criteria or consult with DBS. Information is provided online.

Outdated requests – be aware of outdated requests using archaic terminology. In 2012, the Criminal Records Bureau (or the CRB) as it was known then was replaced by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) in England and Wales. If someone is still asking for money for a 'CRB check', it is time to investigate further. Genuine requests will reference the current DBS system.

DBS Logo – organisations that are registered with DBS are not permitted to use the DBS logo on their websites. If a website contains the DBS logo it could indicate it is not genuine.

Verification process – always enquire about who is processing the DBS check. If it's the employer, contact DBS or Disclosure Scotland to confirm their legitimacy. If it's an Umbrella Body that is carrying out DBS checks on behalf of other employers, verify their authenticity and ensure the employer is registered to use their service. A list of Umbrella Bodies is available online, so you can check and see if the organisation appears and is legitimate.

Industry Bodies – for those in the security industry, usually only the Security Industry Authority (SIA) is permitted to run checks for this line of work. If you're asked for upfront payment for a check, verify its authenticity. Stay vigilant, especially when it comes to industry-specific regulations.

Cost Consideration – the cost for a Basic check is £18 and is available for any position. A standard check costs £18, is available for certain roles and shows convictions and cautions held on the Police National Computer (PNC), subject to filtering. An Enhanced check costs £38 and is sent to police forces so they can carry out searches on their local intelligence systems and decide if any relevant information should be released. An Enhanced check with Barred Lists is also £38 for those involved in regulated activity. Organisations that are registered with DBS may charge an administration fee for the service they are providing. This is separate from the DBS fee. However, be cautious if you are asked to pay exorbitant amounts. Most legitimate organisations are looking to get you to the onboarding process and won't demand upfront payment. If in doubt, refrain from parting with any money during the recruitment process.

DBS is set to deliver a LinkedIn webinar sharing tips and sector guidance to support job seekers to stay safe throughout their employment search. The webinar will take place on Wednesday 21st February from 2pm and will last around 15 minutes. DBS will be monitoring and responding to any comments or questions while the webinar is live.

Ian Johnston, Executive Director of Operational Services at DBS, said "Hasty and decisive action is essential when combatting job scammers. By following these steps, job seekers can minimise the effects of illegal scams and make the job-searching journey safer.

"DBS' Regional Outreach team can also provide localised support to organisations and networks to offer support and guidance around all things safeguarding. DBS remains committed to providing thorough guidance and support around the importance of staying vigilant in the ever-evolving landscape of job scams." ■



WORK/LIFE BALANCE TRENDS

Amex Trendex reveals healthy work/life balance tops UK workers' list of priorities in 2024

The majority of UK workers would choose better work/life balance over higher pay (61 per cent vs. 39 per cent) in both their current and future jobs, according to the latest Amex Trendex report¹ which reveals consumer trends and priorities for 2024.

According to the global report, based on a survey of adults from the UK, Australia, Canada, India, Japan, Mexico, and the United States, personal wellness, work-life balance and the environment are seen as priorities for this year.

Looking specifically at the UK, the survey found that almost three-quarters (71 per cent) of UK workers say having a good work/life balance is the main reason for job satisfaction – the highest of all markets surveyed, trumping salary (60 per cent) and getting along with colleagues (51 per cent). Work/life balance was also the top priority when looking for a new job (77 per cent), more so than respondents from any other country.

When it comes to the factors contributing to a healthy work-life balance, UK workers rank flexible hours (72 per cent), the ability to work from anywhere (56 per cent) and more paid time off (49 per cent) as most important.

However, despite flexibility ranking as most important, UK employees are among the least likely to work from an alternative location without taking time off, otherwise known as 'workcation'; just 37 per cent of UK respondents say they are likely to take one in 2024, compared to 93 per cent in India, and 58 per cent in both the US and Japan.

“Our research uncovers some valuable insights for business leaders seeking to motivate their employees and build a productive workforce,” says Stacey Sterbenz, General Manager, UK Commercial at American Express. “From small businesses to larger organisations, those that foster an environment promoting healthy work/life balance, including opportunities to work flexibly, will boost job satisfaction and drive competitive advantage.”

Other UK survey findings include:

Physical wellness goals make the list for 2024 focus, including eating healthier (78 per cent), and participating in more outdoor activities (68 per cent) among those setting physical wellness goals.


Among those setting personal finance goals, top reasons for doing so include being financially independent and empowered (50 per cent), followed by saving for a holiday (42 per cent).

Respondents are looking to improve their personal sustainability in 2024, including improving their recycling habits at home (45 per cent) and using public transport more often (37 per cent) among those setting sustainability habit goals.

The Amex Trendex is a trend index that tracks how consumers, small businesses, and retailers are feeling about spending, saving, travelling and more. The survey does not represent Amex customer spending data or trends. ■

recruiter moves.

recruiters find
your next move.

 search postcode, town or city



search

match
your ambition

advance
your career

www.recruitermoves.co.uk

WHAT WORK IS

Viktorija Proskurovska, Labour Market Intelligence Manager, World Employment Confederation discusses the vital role of work.

Work has always played a pivotal role in shaping societies and individual lives. As we begin a new year and prepare to navigate an ever-evolving landscape, it seems a good moment to reflect on whether work will remain a cornerstone of human existence in the years ahead. >



Despite regular suggestions to the contrary, research has shown that work continues to play a fundamental role in fulfilling our basic safety needs, as depicted in Maslow's hierarchy. The impact of work extends far beyond mere income; it influences our ability to care for loved ones, contributes to our self-esteem, and provides opportunities for future growth. Yet, the evolving nature of work requires a delicate balance between progress and adaptation. The critical element in this evolving paradigm is flexibility – the ability to mould work to fit into our lives rather than the other way around.

The consequences of a world without work are profound. The intrinsic value of work goes beyond financial remuneration. It provides a sense of confidence, self-reliance, and dignity. Studies reveal a direct link between unemployment and adverse effects on physical and social health. The emotional toll is equally significant, with feelings of worthlessness and unhappiness disproportionately affecting those without work. To understand this better, a study by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation comparing the sentiments of employed and unemployed individuals highlights the stark contrast, emphasising the importance of work for our overall wellbeing. >



Purpose and more

Moreover, work fosters social interactions, introduces us to new interests, and contributes to our self-fulfilment. Finding a job that aligns with our talents, skills, and interests is crucial for achieving a sense of purpose and accomplishment. As the data suggests, most people across different cultures acknowledge the primary importance of work in their lives.

Despite concerns about the impact of technology on employment, historical trends demonstrate that technological revolutions ultimately create more jobs. However, the caveat lies in the necessity to reskill and upskill to meet the demands of the evolving job market. The fear of job loss due to automation is valid, but adapting to these changes through continuous learning is the key to securing future employment opportunities.

While the concept of universal basic income may seem appealing, it poses economic and behavioural risks. A one-size-fits-all approach may not be the solution, as work holds different meanings for different

individuals. The shift from living to work to working to live is evident in modern society, reflecting a desire for a more balanced and fulfilling approach to life.

The younger generations, particularly Millennials and Gen Z, are reshaping the narrative around work. They prioritise flexible work arrangements, social engagement, and personal development over traditional notions of career progression. The rise of the gig economy and the emphasis on work contributing to personal goals rather than corporate ideals underscore a shift in values.

As we embrace 2024 and the continued evolution of work, we must recognise its multifaceted role in our lives – from self-sustainment to social interactions and self-fulfilment. Adapting to the changing landscape of work requires a commitment to lifelong learning, flexibility, and an understanding that diverse forms of work are essential to cater to individuals' varying needs and demands. The world of work is dynamic, and our ability to embrace change will determine our collective success in creating a fulfilling future. ■

BOOM TIME?

Kris Harris, Regional Director, UK Technology Solutions at Robert Half asks if 2024 could be a good year for the tech sector.



The technology sector faced a rollercoaster ride last year. We saw staff layoffs in big tech firms following over-hiring in the sector during the Covid period. However, despite this, recruitment remained buoyant overall, largely influenced by the growing tech skills gaps that we have seen for decades across industries. >



Addressing this shortage of both experienced workers and new graduates entering the market has been a prime focus for many of the UK's employers. Technology and digital skills are in high demand across every sector, particularly with the current UK government pushing for the country to maintain and further build on its status as a global leader in the digital space.

With the country facing a tech skills shortage, recruitment in that space has somewhat bucked the national trends, particularly in the latter part of last year. Globally, 2023 was a better year for technology than many other remits, with the S&P 500 stock market index up 18 per cent in December 2023 since the start of the year, after a 20 per cent dip in 2022, largely driven by the performance of the magnificent seven. And, with the UK tech sector's combined market value of \$1 trillion, the opportunities for job creation in the IT industry are expected to be abundant going forward.

Despite the downsizing we saw, the tech market is still healthy and has

overwhelmingly positive prospects, especially in fields like cybersecurity and AI.

Resilience remains

In fact, in our Jobs Confidence Index (JCI) published at the end of 2023, we revealed that the technology industry was faring relatively well. The report – an economic confidence tracker produced in partnership with the Centre for Economics and Business Research (Cebr) – showed that while the average number of tech vacancies had fallen to 45,000, this is in fact more closely aligned with the pre-pandemic 2019 average of 44,000.

Average weekly earnings in the sector were up by 11.3 per cent on the year in Q3 2023, to £1,131. This marks an acceleration from 11.1 per cent in the second quarter of last year. Additionally, earnings in the sector were 70.3 per cent higher than average pay across all industries. Annual labour productivity growth was also robust, improving by 0.2 percentage points to 0.9 per cent, as shown in the latest JCI. >

Of course, that's not to suggest that the sector wasn't at all impacted by the uncertain economic climate that we experienced as last year came to a close. In fact, according to our data, the share of employees with a temporary work arrangement rose by 1.1 percentage points on the quarter in Q2 2023 to stand at 5.5 per cent, while the share of technology workers reporting fluctuating pay in Q2 2023 increased to 7.7 per cent. This indicates that while pay growth in the sector remained strong, job uncertainty did pick up slightly.

Hiring intentions for 2024

Recruitment in technology has clearly remained robust despite the turbulence we saw last year. But what does 2024 look like? According to our latest Salary Guide, demand is set to continue, with half (50 per cent) of technology hiring managers intending to increase their permanent headcount while 35 per cent are planning to add to their contractor numbers.

Looking at where this demand is likely to come from, the sectors with the greatest hiring intentions include Financial Services, E-commerce, Media, SaaS & FinTech, Legal and Retail. However, while we are expecting a boost in recruitment, we can't ignore the fact that skills shortages are still prevalent.

In fact, the 2024 Salary Guide revealed several areas in which staff are hard to find at the moment, with Security, DevOps and CRM / ERP topping the list. These were closely followed by .Net, Modern JS and PHP.

When we look at softer skills, communication abilities, stakeholder management and leadership attributes all top the wish list for employers.

What tech candidates are looking for

Given the planned increase in hiring and continued dearth of skills, knowing what these applicants want from a potential role beyond pay increases will be critical in the coming months. Of course, it should be noted that what candidates want is a constantly moving goalpost that is influenced by a combination of personal circumstances and macroeconomic shifts. >

```
navigation
<nav id="tf-menu" class="
  <div class="container">
    <!-- Brand and toggle get
  52
  53 <div class="navbar-header
  54 <button type="button" c
  55 <span class="sr-only"
  56 <span class="icon-bar
  57 <span class="icon-bar
  58 <span class="icon-bo
  9 </button>
    <a class="navbar-br
  </div>
```



However, our studies show that there are a range of perks and benefits that technology professionals are currently interested in. While some are financially driven – seeking paid sabbaticals and financial allowances for working from home, for example – others are seemingly influenced by the current climate in the UK.

Perhaps the most interesting is the popularity of private health insurance which was listed as the fourth most in-demand benefit for tech experts. This is certainly being influenced by the NHS crisis which is causing many individuals across the country to turn to private healthcare, with workers looking to their current and potential employers to provide additional benefits related to this.

As individuals continue to seek more personalised rewards schemes, our Salary Guide results also indicate that flexible benefits programmes are among the top five most in-demand perks for technology professionals.

Supporting the growth of tech

For the recruitment sector, the demand for tech skills is going to prevail for years to come. The challenge will lie in being able to align candidate wants with employer propositions, without hefty increases in salaries. Pay inflation may have been a focus as the cost of living was a major topic in 2023, but it's not a sustainable solution to hiring strategies.

Those recruitment firms that can successfully get businesses on board with the changing needs of the tech workforce will be the ones in the best possible position to provide competitive hiring solutions for firms across a wealth of remits. ■

SUCCESSFUL SUCCESSION

Emily Bain, co-founder and managing director of London executive support recruiter, Bain and Gray, sheds light on the company's transition to an employee-owned business.



Succession isn't limited to the on-screen machinations of The Roy Family, it's a dilemma which most business leaders will face at some point in their career trajectory, and one which requires careful consideration. Of course, there are many options on how to divest your company, not least releasing it into the hands of investors, competitors or even your children. But entrusting your legacy to the employees who work in it – through creating an Employee Ownership Trust (EOT) – is an emergingly popular option, that has a groundswell of support across many sectors. >



The John Lewis Partnership is perhaps one of the UK's most well-known examples of an employee ownership trust, and other well-known corporates include Grant Thornton, Sawdays Publishing and KPMG.

I was certainly not ready to let go of the business entirely, and one of the attractions of establishing an Employee Ownership Trust (EOT) was that as co-founders we retain an active involvement, while staff have a greater say in steering the company's present and future. The company will continue to perform at the top of its game and maintain continuity of service for our HNWI, city institutions and corporate clients.

The Way Forward

Our business trajectory has been consistently upwards ever since Claire Gray and I founded the company around my kitchen table almost 15 years ago. It was an exciting time, and looking back I had no idea that our drive to create a specialist recruitment agency would lead us to where we are today. Financially, Bain and Gray is profitable, turning over around £5 million a year and employing 20 people. More than that, the company's reputation in the London recruitment sector for sourcing outstanding executive support talent and ensuring the right cultural fit is second to none.

Research shows that employee ownership leads to a more innovative and collaborative work environment, and I'm excited to see this evolve within our dynamic team. With a stake in the company's success, it's already apparent that many of them are more motivated to contribute ideas, share insights, and actively participate in the decision-making processes. And as ownership of the Company gradually transitions to the staff, they will increasingly take a firmer hold of the reins as the new structure beds in. We already have a track-record of staff retention and longevity, and with this new, collective approach we can retain our best asset, our people. They will be at the forefront of the corporate drive towards innovation and efficiency and help foster a culture of continuous improvement.

We were fortunate that principles of an EOT marry with our corporate values of trust, integrity, equity, accountability, and inclusion. Our new status provides a platform for a sustainable culture based around teamwork, reinforces a collaborative way of working and builds on our established values. Alongside the transition, we have held onto our staff benefits which we consider another vital element in retaining and engaging employees who are the best of the best. >

Benefits for all

As well as a stake in the company that the EOT structure affords each member of staff, we offer employees a weekly team breakfast, up to 30 days holiday per year including birthdays and Christmas,

a quarterly team bonus, a 10% discount in local shops and restaurants, £50 per month wellness, fitness and lifestyle benefits, hybrid working, a home working allowance, enhanced parental leave, work anniversary rewards, a four-week fully paid sabbatical for long tenure and an annual trip away.

Our EOT will help members of the team to excel, including Alice Stevenson, who has been with the company for 8 years and has risen from Office Manager to Managing Consultant, where she remains today. Alice is enthusiastic about the future of the company and sees this as a very exciting time for the business. The EOT has effectively given her shares in a company she loves and a greater say in how it is run, which is both motivating and rewarding. She says: “We all work hard, and I can’t wait to see what the future holds for our tight-knit organisation.”

Clear and right move

As a co-founder and MD, it was a no-brainer to transition from private ownership to an EOT, thereby creating a springboard for staff stewardship of the business. That said, it was not a decision we took lightly, and careful consideration of both the potential benefits and challenges that are involved should be considered carefully. Don’t get bogged down by technical details, but keep the bigger picture in mind, and focus on the legacy you wish to create for employees and clients.

The advantages, such as increased employee engagement and long-term stability, can be compelling, but you must be prepared to navigate the complexities of governance, potential conflicts, and financial considerations too. Bain and Gray was supported throughout the process by the Employee Ownership Trust who have been a delight to work with, and have inspired us through their staunch belief that businesses that give employees a larger say thereby create a common purpose, which leaves them in a better position to adapt and evolve.

I would wholeheartedly recommend an EOT as an equitable and sustainable option for recruiters to investigate when considering the next steps for their business. Ultimately, successful transitions hinge on clear communication, effective leadership, and a commitment to fostering a collaborative and inclusive culture within the newly formed, employee-owned entity. ■





CENTRE STAGE

James Osborne, co-founder of The Recruitment Network, speaks to Lloyd Gordon, CEO of the Focus Cloud Group of companies.



Lloyd is someone I consider to be both an industry titan, as well as a close friend and someone I admire greatly for so many reasons, not least for his unwavering commitment to building an enduring business, built on strong ethics and values
– James Osborne.



Lloyd, what is the mission of Focus Cloud Group and why?

Our mission is to be the most recommended cloud technology staffing partner. That endorsement from our customers is the best reflection there is on the job we do, so we'll always aim above and beyond a level of service that makes someone say 'you should work with Focus'.

We're not a stats-driven recruitment business; we go by an ethos we call "C4Life". It's a commitment to building lifelong relationships with candidates, clients, and colleagues, prioritising respect and doing what's right for them long-term. Our core values are at the foundation of this and keep us on track to deliver the best possible service we can.

We're **Connected** – staying in touch with our networks and collaborating with each other, keeping on top of industry trends so we can offer the most valuable insights and resources. We're **Creative** – seeing challenges as opportunities for innovative solutions and pushing the boundaries to deliver outstanding results. We're **Experts** – the reason we excel in our fields is

because we understand the latest technologies deeply, so our customers get the best, most detail-oriented service.

Those three values, over-arched by C4Life, are at the heart of the business.

Throughout the last 8 years at Focus, we have seen some of the most challenging economic environments. What are some key lessons you've learned about leadership in that time that have had a profound impact on your approach to leading Focus Cloud Group?

When I started Focus, the market was crying out for specialist recruitment services in the really niche cloud technologies that were taking off at the time. I think that the decision I took back then – to begin focusing solely on Workday recruitment as a business – was one of the most important actions I've taken as a leader to date. It's about taking quick, decisive action like this, based on the market around you but also trusting your gut.

During the pandemic, many business leaders decided to strip back their teams, and I decided that the only way to succeed was to do the opposite. >



We went all-in on growth, introducing our SAP, Salesforce and ServiceNow teams and getting bums on seats in the business. It was considered risky, but you've got to trust your instincts and take a punt, otherwise your business will stagnate. We've carried on growing our service offerings and our teams since.

Survival isn't enough, you've got to be pushing forward always, and that means making tough decisions quickly. I'm always learning new things about being a leader, but it's this constant evolution and the ability to adapt your mindset as you go, and consequently your actions, that lead to success. When the conditions around you change, whether that's the economy, the ecosystems you're serving, your personal life etc., you have to be the one that leads the way and be just as dynamic as the world around you.

How would you describe your mindset when faced with challenges or setbacks along the way, and how has it contributed to your company's growth?

I've always tried to maintain a very positive mindset, and you'll see that in the Mindset moments videos I put on social media. That's a very real version of me that you get in those videos.

I think I have a mindset where I attack life, and not just sit back and let it happen to me (whatever it might be). When we face challenges and setbacks, I try and work out the positive from it, what we can learn and how we move ahead. I know that in Recruitment, and in business, nothing lasts forever, so inevitably, all we can do is move forward and stay on that upward trajectory. Why would you want to stand still over something that isn't in your control? I think >



that the growth of Focus Cloud Group has often come from challenging myself and the business, putting us in situations where we have to innovate, or we won't succeed.

What role has innovation played in your company's journey, and how do you stay ahead of the curve in an ever-changing marketplace?

As a business we have always tried to innovate and build even when it might have looked a little harder from an economic point of view. Like I said, during Covid we launched 3 brands, even though it looked like other recruitment companies were closing around us. We stood firm and did the exact opposite. We challenged the norm and I think that is often how we move forward. You know, I keep track of our peers and competitors, but I don't read too much into it. I know what the team and I are capable of achieving.

We often joke in the business that we are agile, and to be honest, that will never change. We have always worked at 100mph. Sometimes things break, when you try and move as fast as we do, but it's nothing we can't fix. In the last year or so

we have had to take stock of where we are, but it's all growing pains, and you can't grow the way we have without coming up against a few challenges.

I think we have a strong mentality of being able to get it done, whatever it might be, and get the results even if that means the occasional stress and going above and beyond.

What's next for Focus Cloud Group, and where will we be in 3-5 years' time?

We will continue to push the boundaries as recruiters and as a business. I honestly think we are only scratching the surface. We have many brands that have the potential to be bigger than Focus on WD and Cognitive (our two oldest brands), which will only offer more opportunities to those in the business to grow. We are an ambitious team, with lots of ideas on how we will grow and innovate in each space.

That might be more technologies, different solutions or geographies, but I think we can say it's going to be an exciting time for all involved. It will be hard, not easy, but I >



promise for anyone willing to put the work in, it will be worth it.

Talk to us about your LinkedIn piece: Mindset Moments – what is that and why do you do it?

Mindset moments is something that I'd been thinking about for a little while, and many people had said to me off the back of other podcasts and things like that, that I should share the things I've learned and experienced over the years.

On top of that you might have seen on LinkedIn that I share lots of motivational videos, or at least motivational to me anyway! So, I decided to finally do it. I used to go to the beach down the road from me and sit and watch the sunrise in the early hours and share that morning's thoughts. BUT I stopped doing it for a few weeks at the back end of last year.

I was going through my own challenges with Focus and didn't want to share messages of motivation or wisdom when I didn't think I had anything valuable to say at that time. But after a couple of weeks, I had people actually messaging me and asking me why I had stopped! I didn't realise the effect I'd had on some people. It's crazy.

Since then, I've tried to share my thoughts every week on the challenges I have faced. I think it's important to show that authentic side of what we go through as leaders. There's lots of people out there sharing unrealistic versions of what happens in business, and I think it's good to show that

it's not all sunshine and rainbows, you know? I'll share the good and the bad.

What advice would you give to other industry Leaders who are looking to cultivate a more resilient and growth-oriented mindset in their own professional lives?


I think the first step to getting into the right mindset is to do the things you say you're going to do. If you want to get up an hour early and go to the gym, do it. If you want to win that client, work out what that involves, and get it done today. The more you start to achieve each day, the more you'll push yourself to achieve more the next. I've always worked to the motto of 'one more' – make just one more phone call, send just one more email. It's when you do this that you realise the opportunities you create for yourself, and each day you grow more than you did the last.

If there's something you don't want to do, those are the times you really need to push through and take those actions. If you want a stronger, more positive mindset, it's when the times get tough that you'll truly test yourself, and you'll come out the other side having accomplished something great.

There's no blueprint for a perfect mindset, it's different for every person, every leader. Absolutely anyone can change their mindset, it's about taking the steps that work for you, that build into the bigger picture and give you that resilience and that growth that you're looking for. ■

MOVING TARGETS

The global staffing industry is set to face a number of challenges in 2024. Charlotte Wills, Partner at global immigration and mobility law firm Fragomen, outlines some of the up and coming immigration and mobility changes.

A portrait of Charlotte Wills, a woman with long blonde hair, smiling. She is wearing a dark blazer over a dark top. The background is a solid dark grey.

The immigration and mobility landscape is changing. Costs continue to rise, adding additional pressure on business. Borders, including the UK's, are set to become more digitised, adding another step to the process for many prior to travel. A battle for talent and skills remains amidst ongoing shortages and many are still pondering flexible work policies. All in what's likely to be a hotly contested election year ahead of us in the US and most likely the UK, as well as many other regions around the globe. >



UK immigration rule changes

Proposed government changes to the UK's immigration rules will likely cause significant difficulties for recruiters and employers. At the end of 2023, the UK Home Secretary announced a five-point plan to restrict work migration to the UK. The changes, effective April 2024, aim to deliver the biggest ever cut in net migration.

The five-point plan includes increasing the minimum general salary for occupations under the Skilled Worker route from £26.2k to £38.7k (representing a 47.7 per cent increase). Whilst health and social care visa workers are exempt from this increase, other sectors such as hospitality, which rely on the lower minimum salary, are likely to struggle. Sectors that generally pay higher salaries, such as financial services, are expected to be less affected.

Measures also include removing the 20 per cent discount of the going rate salary level for occupations on the Shortage Occupation List. The Shortage Occupation List will be

replaced with a condensed 'Immigration Salary List', retaining a general threshold discount, although details of the roles to be included in that list are not yet released.

These measures are introduced to intentionally reduce net migration levels, by making it more expensive for both employers and foreign nationals to immigrate to the UK. The plan also aims to increase the domestic workforce through its 'Back to Work Plan', which focuses on helping UK nationals get off benefits and move into the workforce.

The proposed changes will likely cause significant difficulties for recruiters and employers who are still adjusting to labour shortages post-Brexit and whose sectors have not yet reached the point of benefiting from alternative strategies to migration, such as increased grass roots training. The changes could also potentially undermine labour sector growth and reduce the contribution businesses and migration make to UK GDP. >

Businesses should assess their 2024 workforce planning with these changes in mind to ensure they know ahead of time what roles and salary levels they are likely to need and the impact the new policies will have on those needs.

Steps companies and their recruitment advisers should take now include:

- Reviewing the roles and salary bands that could be impacted.
- Seek headcount approval now to bring forward moves that require sponsorship ahead of the changes.
- Consider alternative non-sponsored visa routes moving forward where possible, for example Youth Mobility Scheme or Ancestry visas.
- Review options to recruit for the impacted roles from within the UK settled workforce.
- Communicate the impact and proposed workforce plans to key stakeholders, including the board, current sponsored population, recruiters, graduate recruitment, talent and reward teams.

This announcement does appear to be a politically driven reaction to the high net migration figures and a long-held desire by the UK government to significantly lower the numbers entering the UK. However,

there exists a real risk that these changes, along with the recent announcement to the significant increase to government application fees (making the UK one of the most expensive places to sponsor a visa), will do serious long-term harm to the attractiveness of the UK for both businesses and the 'brightest and best' individuals.

Increasingly Digitised Borders

The UK government is implementing an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) scheme as part of its ambition to make the country's border fully digitalised by 2025. It requires travellers who don't usually require a visa to visit the UK to obtain digital permission to travel or transit through the country. The scheme applies to Qatari nationals now and will roll out to other nationalities in 2024 in phases (starting in February with nationals of Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates).

The government has said ETAs will allow accurate information gathering regarding the number of people travelling to the UK and where they are travelling from. The intention is that border security will be enhanced by screening passengers before they travel and therefore allow for potential threats to be identified earlier. >





The UK is not the first country to introduce such a scheme. Most readers will be familiar with the ESTA scheme in the United States, and other countries such as Canada and New Zealand already have their own established schemes. The EU will introduce its version, ETIAS, in mid 2025.

Remote working – expanding horizons

From 31 January 2024 the UK Government will ease current visitor visa legislation to allow a form of remote working, developments that recognise changing working patterns opens 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. Updated rules will now 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.” The move represents a significant relaxation of the visitor visa rules allows an individual to, for example, tag on to a holiday a one- or two-week work window without having to obtain a work visa.

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 remains to be seen if other European countries follow suit with their own immigration frameworks in the months ahead. ■

HIRE EVERYWHERE

Neil Armstrong, Chief Commercial Officer, Tribepad discusses how to hire to reflect the communities you serve.



RECRUITMENT

Diversity and inclusivity are key to a business's success. Time and time again [research has shown that organisations](#) that have a diverse workforce and are reflective of the communities that they serve are more successful, more innovative, and more profitable. Recruiting internationally in a way that ensures diversity and inclusivity while reflecting the communities served can be hard, as many businesses have a certain format and formula for talent acquisition which may not be appropriate for different countries and cultures. Here's a guide on how to bring positive change to your recruitment strategies. >



First off, start with your board and policies. Stakeholders should be fully bought into a strategy of fairness, inclusivity and diversity, and understand the value this brings. Having a company commitment to recruiting in a representative way will make creating a recruitment strategy that represents communities and cultures an organisational priority that will get resources to execute it. Set targets and ensure that everyone is aligned to achieving them – and understands the broader vision of why it is important to be doing so.

Geographical understanding

It's essential to understand the country and context. Each community has its own cultural, social, and economic dynamics and smart companies research and understand these aspects, and then tailor their recruitment strategies accordingly. For example, in Chinese communities, relationships (guanxi) play a crucial role in business and recruitment. Networking and personal connections often influence hiring decisions. In the UK, there's a stronger emphasis on formal processes and qualifications, with a focus on fairness and transparency.

These formal processes lead to specific ways of advertising, such as via LinkedIn and job boards like Indeed. However, this limits the audiences to specific demographics who are well-versed in the ways of Western-style recruitment. If you want a more diverse workforce you need to use a variety of channels to advertise vacancies. This includes international job boards, social media platforms, local community groups, and professional networks. Engaging with local universities and educational institutions can

also be a great way to attract talent in markets you're less familiar with, as they will be tapped into enthusiastic graduates looking to enter the world of work. We're seeing a growth in organisations wanting to hire older workers, who may be more likely to see adverts in local media rather than LinkedIn for example.

Inclusive from the start

Craft job descriptions that are inclusive and welcoming to all. Avoid language that might be unconsciously biased towards a particular gender, race, or cultural background. Research has shown that words such as 'ambitious' and 'dynamic' tend to attract male candidates and as such [perpetuate inequalities](#), so really look at the language and phrasing to ensure that there is no bias being perpetuated even at this early stage of the process.

Diversity in recruitment teams is absolutely key. If your recruitment team all look the same, not only will there be a level of social conformity when it comes to making hiring decisions, potentially perpetuating bias, but candidates will question your commitment to diversity. It can be very difficult when attending an interview to see that no one looks like you, and could make job seekers nervous. There should also be training in cultural competence to understand and respect different cultural norms and practices. German culture is known for its direct communication style. Questions in interviews are often straightforward and focused on assessing the candidate's skills and suitability for the role. British culture has a reputation for politeness and an indirect communication style. Questions might be posed more gently, and feedback may be less direct. >

One thing that can be pivotal is anonymous recruitment where personal identifying information is masked, enabling decisions to be made based on skills and experience rather than personal details that might lead to unconscious bias. Coventry City Council has achieved greater diversity and inclusion seeing an impressive increase in Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic candidate applications, with a rise from 18 per cent to 39 per cent, since adopting a variety of new techniques to attract ethnic minorities, as well as Tribepad's Anonymous Applications feature which helps reduce unconscious bias in the recruitment process.

Going local

Leveraging local networks is crucial for inclusive hiring in international contexts. These networks, including universities, professional groups, and community organisations, offer access to diverse talent pools, enriching the recruitment process with candidates from various backgrounds. Local networks enhance employer branding within the region, establishing the company as an inclusive and desirable workplace. They also facilitate referrals, a powerful recruitment tool in many countries. It's also great for branding, demonstrating a commitment to the community and aligning with broader goals.

Remember to abide by local laws. Local networks can also assist in navigating language barriers and ensuring compliance with regional employment laws. The EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) has significant implications for recruitment as it places strict limits on the collection and processing of personal data. Recruiters must have a lawful basis for processing candidates' data and must be transparent about how this data is used. This affects how resumes/CVs are handled, how long candidate information can be stored, and what information can be asked for during the recruitment process. In India, however, while having data protection laws including The Information Technology (Reasonable Security Practices and Procedures and Sensitive Personal Data or Information) Rules, 2011, which governs the handling of sensitive personal data, there are no rules as specifically tailored to recruitment. As a result, Indian-based recruiters may have more flexibility in the types of data they collect from candidates, although this is also evolving with new privacy laws being proposed. >





What are you looking for?

Be flexible with requirements like language proficiency or understanding that educational and professional experiences can vary greatly across different countries. In 2022 around 53.1 per cent of the UK population had a degree. Compare this to South Africa, where just over 1.7 million people have degrees, or about 2.8 per cent of the South African population. There are moves to drop the almost ubiquitous request for degrees in the UK, and focus more on skills and aptitude. Ask yourself what the job and your business requires, and what the local community can offer.

Measure and monitor – then make changes. Data is key. You can utilise AI and data analytics tools to explore recruitment processes for any biases and revise and review as appropriate. Regularly monitor diversity metrics in the recruitment process and share these reports with stakeholders to ensure transparency and accountability. Then do something about them if they're not in line with your overall ED&I strategy.

By exploring new ideas and thinking beyond a cookie cutter recruitment approach, companies can create a more inclusive recruitment process that not only attracts a diverse range of candidates but also contributes to a work environment that is reflective of the communities they serve. A work environment that is tapped into the culture in which they exist. An organisation integrated into its environment, making the most of the talent on offer and contributing to the society in which they operate. And a business setting itself up for success – all around the world. ■

STARTING WITH THE WORLD

TritonExec had an international client from day one and so has always been ready to make waves abroad.



Specialising in executive hiring for finance, technology and professional services firms, 65 per cent of TritonExec's revenues come from abroad. The journey overseas began with the USA and most recently APAC. Today, the firm employs 67 people and has presence in all major global regions. The firm was co-founded by entrepreneurs Jonathan Morris and Ben Graham and is headquartered in central London. >



Where it all began

Close friends since the age of five, in their early 20s Ben Graham and Jonathan Morris both worked in recruitment, yet were keen to go it alone. In 2011 they teamed up and created their fledgling search firm from their parents dining room table – long before working from home was fashionable.

In such a fiercely competitive marketplace they knew they needed a big break, and soon after they launched that's exactly what happened: a contract worth \$500,000 to recruit 35 executives for a multi-billion dollar global digital transformation giant – all roles that would sit across the company's European operations.

Exporting culture

Years later, with their client base and work expanding beyond the European market, the firm would navigate the complexities of setting up branches in new regions: APAC and the USA. While geography was not a barrier to

delivering valued services to their global clients – nearly two thirds of their revenues were already coming from outside the UK – the key to success in growing their footprint, they found, was focusing on understanding the unique needs of the team in the new location while always prioritising the importance of culture.

Jonathan Morris, co-founder and managing partner at TritonExec, emphasises the significance of relocating an existing team member from their HQ in London to play a pivotal role in hiring and onboarding the US team. “By relocating leaders and culture drivers from our existing team, we knew that the core of Triton and our values would be prioritised throughout our new offices,” he explains. “As we were hiring, growing, and establishing our US team, we had individuals from our UK team travel back and forth between offices, which worked well and helped establish a camaraderie, globally.” The firm used this blueprint for a successful expansion and implemented it in the APAC region. >

Understanding each market

As was in the US, cultural adaptation was another critical aspect of TritonExec's strategy in India. The company recognised the need to align its recruitment approaches with the cultural nuances and preferences of the Indian workforce, while also having existing TritonExec leadership's presence throughout the hiring process.

Building a local team with a profound understanding of both the company culture and values, and also the APAC market became instrumental in overcoming this challenge and establishing a meaningful and lasting presence.

While the firm took a similar approach to expanding into the APAC region – they were faced with distinctive challenges in India, and choosing the right location emerged as seemingly one of the most important tasks

for success. Identifying one singular city and market was a hindrance, as the talent was spread across the region. Instead, they focused on creating a hybrid work culture, strategically hiring clusters of teams at prime or central locations in India, with the focus on having regular gatherings in major cities.

Francis Padamadan, global head of APAC for TritonExec, discussed the significance of this choice, stating: "Our team operates through their network and connections, and so a hybrid workspace allows for them to tap into their markets across India and the APAC region but also offers the ability to have the feel of an in-office job – we can have both the social and fun elements an office provides along with an accountable, results-driven culture – and also increase our reach and geographical presence. I believe this allowed us to attract the best talent across the country." >





Focusing on communication

Communication played an important role in navigating each of these expansions. Ensuring global connection through collaboration and communication tools helped aid the process of onboarding the new team. Creating proper outbound communication channels through press and outreach to the local markets – both with clients and with the local networks is important when opening a new location. Finally, successfully navigating the elements of a new regulatory landscape when entering a new market requires a deep understanding of local labour laws, taxation regulations, and legal requirements. By engaging local experts, the firm established a robust foundation for each of their new office locations and team members, ensuring communication, compliance and avoiding potential pitfalls.

Adapting and expanding

TritonExec's global expansion journey into the APAC and US markets reflects the company's ability to navigate challenges with innovation and strategic thinking and the importance of understanding and adapting to the uniqueness of the new locations. By recognising and respecting the cultural nuances of each region, TritonExec was able to build strong relationships with clients and candidates, fostering trust and credibility.

The strategic relocation of experienced leaders facilitated a smooth transition for local teams, ensuring that TritonExec's values and methodologies were ingrained in each new branch and establishing a strong unified team culture. This approach showcased TritonExec's commitment to seamless integration and knowledge transfer across borders.

"Throughout this expansion journey, consistently prioritising the significance of organisational culture and communication is what paid off in the end," notes Morris. "We understood that a strong and cohesive company culture was essential for maintaining the high expectations for delivery across services and operations and through different locations. By ensuring that the values and principles that defined our identity were upheld in each location and market, the firm could continue to remain unified globally."

The future: expanding practice areas

"While our global presence is now established in our target territories, we are now focused on expanding our service offering," says Morris. "Our finance, technology and professional services practice areas are well established. Where we are seeing progress is from the growth of our private equity-backed firms hiring needs, and our recently established HR practice." ■