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Issue 255 | March 2024

QUALITY MATTERS

PAY FOR RETENTION

5 MEGA TRENDS FOR LEADERS

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WELCOME

SIMON KENT
EDITOR

Whatever the impact of the Chancellor's recent Budget the recruitment industry remains one of the most resilient and innovative in the economy. In this issue of The Global Recruiter there are articles illustrating the trends, challenges and opportunities open to recruiters right now, as well as case studies and insights into how recruitment businesses can push further, extending their work and influence on a global scale.

To capture this further, The Global Recruiter is proud to announce the opening of this year's Global Recruiter Industry Awards. Entries open via The Global Recruiter website on April 4th and this is the annual opportunity for recruitment businesses of all sizes and sectors to demonstrate what they can do.

Headline sponsored by Simplicity, the award categories have been carefully designed to give every recruitment business and professional the chance to show their best – there's no entrance fee, no pre-qualification required – you just need the determination to deliver the best possible service for clients and customers, the intention to produce the very best in the recruitment industry and the ambition to do more.

Categories will be judged by professionals drawn from the industry – people who know what it takes to accomplish greatness. In this way recruiters are judged by their peers, by the people who have been there and done it and who know quality when they see it.

With a must-attend Award celebration on the horizon to give the winners the attention they deserve, make 2024 your year, mark your diary and be ready to show your best when entries open on April 4th. ■

CONTENTS

- 4 NEWS
- 10 VIEW FROM WEC: QUALITY MATTERS
- 14 OPINION: FROM SCARCITY TO STRATEGY
- 19 RETENTION: THE PERILS OF PAY
- 24 SKILLS: SKILLED UP
- 28 RECRUITMENT LIVE: TECH CENTRAL
- 33 CENTRE STAGE: HYPER RECRUITMENT SOLUTIONS
- 38 GLOBAL WORKFORCE: CREATING A GLOBAL WORKFORCE
- 43 GLOBAL WORKFORCE: EMBRACING THE WORLD
- 47 GLOBAL WORKFORCE: SUSTAINABLE EXPANSION

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AWARD REWARDS

The Global Recruiter UK Industry Awards are back and ready to recognise greatness.



The banner features a dark background with golden bokeh lights. At the top center is the 'GR THE GLOBAL RECRUITER' logo. Below it, the text 'INDUSTRY AWARDS 2024' is written in large, bold, golden letters. Underneath, it says 'HONOURING THE INDUSTRY'S FINEST' and 'ENTRIES OPEN 4 APRIL – FREE TO ENTER'. On the left, a white box contains the 'HEADLINE SPONSOR: 20 simplicity YEARS IN BUSINESS' logo. On the right, another white box contains 'ASSOCIATE SPONSORS: recruiter moves. THE RECRUITMENT NETWORK'.

It's time for recruitment businesses up and down the country to put their best foot forward and show what they can do. The Global Recruiter UK Industry Awards, headline sponsored by Simplicity, is launching, lining up the very best awards, the industry's own awards, ready to recognise the great and good of the recruitment industry.

Entries open on 4th April. The entry process is entirely online and you can register and then return to work on your entry as many times as you like before the closing date.

From best company, to best consultant, best use of social media to best marketing, best brand to best overseas operation these seventeen awards have been carefully designed to reflect the multifaceted activities of the recruitment industry. And this is part of the reason why the awards have become such an integral part of the UK recruitment industry: they are designed by those who know the industry, judged by those who know the industry and welcome all-comers in the industry. There's no fee to take part and the awards recognise greatness from new starters through to well established businesses.

This year Simplicity have chosen to headline sponsor the awards. Involved with the Global Recruiters Awards since day one this sponsorship marks their 20th year in business. Led by visionary founder David Thornhill, Simplicity was established in 2004 with a mission to provide innovative financial and back-

office solutions tailored to the unique needs of the recruitment industry. Since then, David's company has funded over £1.6 billion, processed over 3 million timesheets, and supported the growth of thousands of recruitment businesses.

With its primary focus on innovation, reliability, and customer success, Simplicity has established itself as a market-leading financial provider in the recruitment industry. Their core services cater to agencies of all sizes across all sectors within the temporary, contractor, and permanent placement market.

"Simplicity is proud to sponsor the Global Recruiter Awards," said David Thornhill. "We aim to recognise and honour outstanding achievements in recruitment while promoting collaboration and advancement within the field." Through this sponsorship, Simplicity underscores its dedication to supporting the growth and success of recruiters worldwide: "We see this partnership as an opportunity to not only honour excellence in recruitment but also to showcase how simplicity can drive innovation and success in the industry," added Thornhill.

So don't delay and grab yourself a piece of the action. Make a date for 4th April and be ready to show the world what you can do. This is a chance to impress the industry, new clients and the whole recruitment world.

Visit <https://ukawards.theglobalrecruiter.com> to register your company and choose the categories to enter. ■

E-LEARNING

APSCO LAUNCHES ONLINE LEARNING HUB

New tool enables staffing firms to provide fully tailored online access to training and development

The Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCo) has launched a new online, interactive Learning Hub to help recruitment businesses manage staff training while also putting control of development into the hands of employees.

The new platform provides a smoother experience for delegates, offering access to all training documents, activities and latest course information in one place, allowing individuals greater autonomy over their career development. The Learning Hub also enables managers to monitor and review current training programmes to ensure team members are on track with development targets.

The tool is fully customisable, allowing staffing companies to create a unique experience for employees and new recruiters, providing a personalised touch to boost engagement.

“This new Learning Hub elevates the experience of delegates, equipping them with a tool to manage everything from reminders and document submission, to course content and tailored company messaging from their employer,” says Teri Etherington, head of talent development APSCo. “As more recruitment firms build their training programmes to support attraction and recruitment, having access to a dedicated, bespoke training platform that replicates their culture and values is critical. However, not all businesses have the capabilities in-house to manage this and the external tools available are generic and often irrelevant for the staffing sector.

“This platform has been created specifically for the recruitment sector and compliments our bespoke training programmes,” Etherington adds. “We review and update our courses annually and having this Hub allows APSCo members and those utilising APSCo training to access the most recent course documents and training information.” ■

'SOFT LANDING' SAYS REC



1.8m active job ads suggest "soft landing" likely for labour market.

Midway through the first quarter of the year the number of active job postings is settling at around 1.8 million, according to the latest Recruitment & Employment Confederation (REC) and Lightcast Labour Market Tracker. This represents a robust position – but weaker than the trend we have seen over the past three years.

There were more than 1.8m active job postings in the UK, with more than 810,000 new job postings, in February 2024. Continued labour shortages driven by a smaller active workforce, skills shortages in sectors like engineering and fast changes in consumer markets are key drivers of this. The 1.8m active job postings – around the number of people who live in Northern Ireland – is a remarkable position for a time where the economy has been in recession.

"It's clear that the jobs market has slowed with the economy over the past year, and today's figures reflect that," said REC Chief Executive Neil Carberry. "But the level of hiring activity is more resilient than would be expected at a time like this, driven by the UK's tight labour supply, and forward-looking indicators of rising business confidence.

"For companies, this is a timely reminder that hiring is likely to remain challenging, especially as growth picks up. A strong partnership with professional recruiters, using the principles in the REC's new Aim Hire guide will be essential.

"Governments really need to focus on a workforce strategy that will open up growth and prosperity – yet too many politicians are ducking the issue," Carberry adds. "Talking about boosting GDP per capita is all very well, but it requires reforms to skills policies, taxation, regulation and infrastructure that have been overlooked in this Parliament. We could unlock £39bn of growth annually just by taking this challenge on."

Overall, when looking at the government region statistics the number of active job postings in Scotland grew by 1.2 per cent, whilst this is positive the rate is lower than the UK-wide figure. And six of the bottom ten areas with the lowest growth were in Scotland. This is similar to the previous month and suggests that private sector investment and growth should be a priority for Holyrood this spring.

Occupations with notable increases in adverts in February 2024 include Authors, Writers and Translators (+67.5 per cent), Window Cleaners (+38.1 per cent), and Clothing, Fashion and Accessories Designers (+28.2 per cent).

There was also growing demand for Driving Instructors (+27.4 per cent), Gardeners and Landscape Gardeners (+26.0 per cent) and Data Entry Administrators (+24.9 per cent).

Delivery Drivers and Couriers (-21.6 per cent), Optometrists (23.5 per cent) and Prison Service Officers (Below Principal Officer) (39.6 per cent) all showed the largest decline in roles from January 2024 to February 2024. ■

REMOTE RESISTANCE

Despite Company Mandates, Only 12 per cent want to Work Five Days On-Site Globally

Four years on after the pandemic, the global workforce is still debating the merits and downfalls of hybrid work patterns. Insights gleaned from Morgan McKinley's Global Workplace Guide included:

- **Preference for Hybrid or Remote Work:** 89 per cent of respondents express a strong preference for continuing in a hybrid or remote work model
- **Employee Satisfaction:** Professionals working in hybrid models express the highest contentment with their work patterns, with half willing to forego pay raises for desired flexibility
- **Remote Rewind:** Despite employee preferences, 56 per cent of companies globally are urging staff to return to the office more regularly
- **Employee Dissatisfaction:** Onsite workers show higher rates of actively seeking new employment opportunities compared to hybrid and remote workers
- **Impact on Talent Attraction:** Flexible working arrangements emerge as a crucial factor in talent attraction and retention, with 61 per cent of hiring managers highlighting its importance

The survey took in the views of over 3,400 professionals and 650 employers worldwide. It also found that 1-2 days in the office is the favoured weekly working pattern for 43 per cent of professionals, with a further 29 per cent selecting 3-4 days. Only 12 per cent are happy to be in the office for the full 5 working days. The survey also revealed that half of employees would even skip a pay raise if it meant they got their desired flexibility.

Despite employee preferences, 56 per cent of companies globally are urging staff to increase their in-office presence, indicating a disconnect between employer and employee expectations. The research also showed the potential attrition of employees with 56 per cent of respondents who work onsite five days a week being the ones most actively looking for a new job in the next six months compared to hybrid employees (41 per cent) and fully remote employees (44 per cent).

The survey also found regional differences from companies mandating for employees to return to the office with Hong Kong (91 per cent), Australia (65 per cent), Japan (62 per cent), Singapore (61 per cent), and China (59 per cent) exhibiting higher rates of return-to-office mandates compared to 40 per cent in the UK, 40 per cent in Canada and 42 per cent in Ireland.

"Four years post-pandemic, the global workforce is still grappling with the ongoing debate surrounding hybrid work models," said Paul Strong, executive director, Morgan McKinley. "Simply mandating a five-day-a-week office presence would likely encounter resistance and productivity dips. Our research underscores the resounding preference for flexibility, with 86 per cent advocating for continued adoption of hybrid arrangements.

"Companies, therefore, need to implement a strategic and mindful approach to this remote rewind," he said. "Striking the balance between flexibility and practicality calls for close collaboration through open communication channels and understanding the motivations driving employees' desires for flexible work arrangements. 2024 will be a pivotal year to see if organisations see flexibility as not just a perk but a fundamental aspect of workplace cultures creating a more inclusive, productive, and resilient workforce." ■

RANDSTAD AIDS REFUGEES

Randstad joins Tent UK, a new coalition of companies connecting refugees to jobs



Randstad UK has joined Tent UK, a new coalition of over 60 major companies that is committed to helping refugees secure employment in the UK. The business has been a longstanding member of the global Tent Partnership for Refugees – an international network of companies committed to helping refugees access labour markets. By joining Tent UK as a founding member, Randstad UK says it wants to “double down” on its refugee hiring programme in the UK.

Victoria Short, Randstad’s chief executive in the UK, said, “Since the spring of 2022, Randstad has been supporting those affected by the war in Ukraine. Globally, we made a €250,000 contribution to UNICEF and became a member of the global Tent Partnership for Refugees to help them integrate economically into their new host countries.

“Internationally, over the last decade, Randstad has supported in the region of 100,000 migrants and refugees through our programmes, either training them or helping them find work,” Short adds. “By joining Tent UK, we want to build on that success and double down on our refugee hiring programme in the UK.

“We have committed to supporting Ukrainian refugees — women in particular — by recruiting people from within our organisation to act as their mentors. These women have lost their homes, sometimes even families, and they find themselves fighting to get back into the world of work. Despite the fact that they have often had high level, professional careers, they face many barriers to entering the domestic labour market. By providing one-to-one, professional guidance, support and mentoring, we hope to help them navigate our job market. We have an

opportunity not just to do what is right, but to make use of this invaluable talent pool.”

“This initiative aligns with our global aspiration to become the world’s most equitable and specialised talent company and is also an opportunity for our colleagues to showcase the support we offer and the added value we deliver to inclusion and social impact projects in the UK.

“This is the best sort of corporate social responsibility initiative,” affirms Short, “a meaningful measure that can really support wider societal goals.”

Although the UK has welcomed more than 500,000 refugees from countries, including Afghanistan, Hong Kong, Syria, and most recently Ukraine – many have been unable to find formal employment. According to the government, while they have the legal right to work, refugees are 20 per cent less likely to be employed than Brits, with this gap widening to 30 per cent for refugee women. At the same time, the UK is experiencing labour shortages, with almost one million job vacancies, across key industries such as hospitality, food service and others including manufacturing & healthcare.

“At a moment when UK employers face significant labour shortages, yet refugees across the country struggle to find decent employment, we see an extraordinary opportunity for our work,” said Gideon Maltz, CEO of Tent. “The coalition of companies that has come together to launch Tent UK understands that we need to act at scale to help hundreds of thousands of refugees in the UK secure jobs, rebuild their lives, and integrate into their new communities. Tent is uniquely placed and ready to help companies develop ambitious programmes to include refugees.” ■

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QUALITY MATTERS

Denis Pennel, Managing Director, World Employment Confederation on working collectively to drive up standards.

A generous salary for just a few hours of work... some job offers sound too good to be true. And if you're asked for some upfront payment to get that job, you can be sure that it is a scam! For several months, reports have shown an increase in scammers posing as well-known staffing firms or job boards and contacting job seekers with such offers. They ask job seekers to pay upfront to cover a work permit or other service, with the promise that they will be repaid. Naturally, the money never comes back, and there is no job. The scam has already squeezed an estimated €100 million from thousands of victims around the world, according to AI cybersecurity firm CloudSEK. >



Jobseekers are harmed, and the scam risks the professional and ethical reputation of legal and legitimate staffing firms, many of whom are members of the World Employment Confederation (WEC). No World Employment Confederation member would ever charge directly or indirectly, in whole or in part, any fees or costs to jobseekers and workers for the services directly related to temporary assignment or permanent placement. Respect for free-of-charge provision of services to job seekers is one of the ten principles in our Code of Conduct, and it is also enshrined in Convention 181 of the International Labour Organisation, the international standard regulating private employment services.

Raising awareness of fraud

As the voice of the HR services industry at a global level and a proponent of ethical, quality and professional services, we have undertaken to raise awareness about this issue and work with our members to share best practices in responding effectively and protecting against unethical practices. With the development of technology, fraud has only become easier, and it appears that our industry and businesses in general, are somewhat unprepared to fight cybercrime.

A recent webinar organised by our Irish National Federation, the Employment and Recruitment Federation (ERF), revealed that over half of Irish businesses reported being subject to a cyber attack in the past year. In the recruitment sector, brand impersonation and WhatsApp scams were the prevalent type of fraud. More concerning, nearly a fifth of Irish businesses do not have a cyber security policy, and over a third of professionals in attendance had not received any cyber security training in the last 12 months. >

Some preventive measures can be taken to mitigate the risks of cyber attacks and fraud. These include investing in systems and technology to track the use of company logos and names, regularly checking for brand misspellings and reporting fraudulent websites, conducting logo recognition searches to eliminate false positives, and consistently monitoring social media and app stores for suspicious activity.

Committing to standards

Our industry is committed to upholding the highest quality standards, and the World Employment Confederation clearly condemns fraudulent behaviour. In addition to such cases, we also witness increasing unethical practices. Our sector is fragmented, and a small number of rogue players are not acting in compliance with the law or respecting workers' rights, which disproportionately affects the entire industry's reputation in a negative way.

We have made it a strategic priority for the World Employment Confederation to take a more proactive role as a quality standard body for the industry and to support our members in investing and developing education and qualification products for HR services professionals. We will continue to promote self-regulation among our members worldwide and clamp down on non-compliance.

Ethical behaviour is crucial for a company's sustainable growth. First and foremost, it fosters trust among stakeholders, including customers, employees, investors, and the community at large. Trust is the cornerstone of long-term relationships and can lead to increased customer loyalty, employee retention, and investor confidence. Moreover, ethical behaviour enhances a company's reputation, potentially attracting more business opportunities. Ethical conduct also mitigates legal and regulatory risks, reducing the likelihood of costly litigation or fines. Additionally, it promotes a positive organisational culture, where employees feel valued and motivated, leading to higher productivity and innovation. Overall, prioritising ethical behaviour not only aligns with societal values but also serves as a strategic advantage for the company's growth and prosperity. ■





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FROM SCARCITY TO STRATEGY

Niki Turner-Harding, Country Lead, Adecco UK & Ireland, discusses five megatrends that will help leaders make the best recruitment decisions.

Amid a perfect storm of political and economic disruption, not to mention a global pandemic, businesses have navigated the hiring market without a North Star for several years. Most recently, we've seen organisations tackling a complex and often contradictory mix of candidate-led conditions, record-breaking vacancy numbers, and spiking unemployment rates. >



Happily, there's a 'green shoots' forecast for the second half of 2024 in the UK, but global uncertainty isn't going anywhere. In the short term, lingering cost-of-living concerns and worldwide leadership races will influence employment patterns and impact workforce planning. Down the road, artificial intelligence (AI), the green transition, and evolving working practices will define a future that's speedier, simpler, and more sustainable – but significantly harder to predict.

So how can savvy business leaders adapt? The solution lies in recognising the agents of change and learning how to pivot with them. As the leader of a company that operates at the forefront of talent management and recruitment, it's become clear to me that there are five connected megatrends shaping how we source talent for today and tomorrow.

1. Economic and political uncertainty

Economic pressures are preventing businesses from meeting productivity targets – and restricting access to core skills. Our most recent Labour Market Outlook reports that the cost-of-living crisis has negatively impacted recruitment for 80 per cent of large UK organisations.

Through 2023, many businesses dealt with dual challenges to satisfy demand; offsetting rising costs and right-sizing their workforce. 2024 promises further insecurity, with a looming general election, ongoing economic upheaval, and waning candidate confidence. In fact, latest survey data by Adecco reveals that 36 per cent of large companies face resourcing difficulties because almost one-fifth (17 per cent) of staff won't leave the financial security of their current role.

When so much is in flux, some organisations find their natural reaction is to delay hiring until things settle, but not acting today could prove costly. If in doubt, talk to your talent partners for guidance in mapping out your hiring strategies – we increasingly work with our clients to help them anticipate their needs. >

2. Talent scarcity

Businesses face multiple barriers in finding the right talent. In addition to jobseeker hesitancy, cost-of-living considerations, and Brexit restrictions, widespread demographic and skill-based shifts are diminishing the pool of potential hires.

These limiting factors include the UK's ageing workforce, a rise in economic inactivity levels to 8.7 million people, and the continuing shortage of digital and interpersonal skills – an issue that 61 per cent of large recruiters view as a significant obstacle. As ambitious Net Zero objectives create the need for new roles and knowledge, the demand for green skills (the competencies, values, and attitudes required to build a resource-efficient society) is also expanding exponentially.

However, there's a growing gulf between robust climate change targets and available talent resources. Seven out of eight workers lack Net Zero skills or experience. And despite a generational desire to make a difference, only one in ten young people clearly understands what green skills entail.

Building a tech-savvy and eco-equipped workforce demands a multi-layered approach. Business and government must mobilise a coordinated training and development effort, a renewed focus on retention, and an action plan to engage both ends of the age spectrum. With five

generations in the workplace for the first time in history – from over-50s returners to 18 to 24-year-olds considering their career options – how employers attract, support, and reward their teams will be key to the UK's future competitiveness.

3. Changing ways of working

The pandemic fundamentally altered working dynamics, making flexibility both a positive differentiator and a potential dealbreaker. Research reveals that a quarter of employees can choose their hours, while 30 per cent wouldn't take a job if it didn't allow remote working. Others are embracing the freedom of gig work and freelancing, with 23 per cent of UK workers considering leaving their jobs to begin their own business.

Legislative changes in 2024 will further transform the traditional nine-to-five model, allowing staff to make two flexible working requests in each 12-month period. They'll also have the right to ask for flexible working arrangements from day one in a new job.

So, think carefully about how to offer employee-focused setups, from remote working to staggered hours and job shares. In today's competitive climate, enabling a healthy work/life balance not only boosts retention but also broadens talent options and can attract diverse, higher-skilled candidates who might otherwise be constrained by location, disabilities, or caring responsibilities. >



4. Digital transformation

While new practices are changing how, when, and where we work, digital transformation is radically redefining what we do, almost beyond recognition. Nearly half (45 per cent) of large employers believe that most jobs they'll be hiring for in 2030 don't exist today. And with swift tech advancements come talent shortfalls.

Two-thirds (67 per cent) of large businesses are experiencing substantial IT skills shortages, particularly across data analysis and AI. While it's imperative for organisations to remain in step with emerging technologies, the overall solution will involve widening the talent net through flexible working practices – and organising work around skills rather than job titles.

Companies that invest in core 'human' skills, including creativity, adaptability, and problem-solving, will develop workers poised for upskilling and reskilling, and ready to respond as roles shift and change. Futureproofing staff skillsets means businesses can strengthen resilience and target talent deficits, even during political and economic instability.

5. The rise of the purpose-led business

Your company's purpose – what it stands for and contributes to wider society – is an increasingly crucial attraction and retention component. Recent McKinsey research found that 82 per cent of workers think it's important for their organisation to have a purpose.

Similarly, 93 per cent of employees would recommend a purpose-driven business to others.

Companies are certainly hearing the call – almost three-quarters of large businesses acknowledge that their purpose bolsters retention rates – but employees are searching for further fulfilment. Our research warns that 22 per cent of staff expect to change jobs in 2024 because they want their professional life to mean more.

An authentic corporate purpose is something we've worked hard to establish at Adecco (in our case, it's 'make work mean more') and we've learnt that it requires ongoing dialogue, with extensive employee involvement, accountability, and ownership of a shared goal. Having an objective to strive for and experiencing the pride of achievement drives higher levels of positivity and wellbeing – all critical factors for a successful, loyal, and future-facing workforce.

One last thing to consider: our latest survey revealed that almost half (46 per cent) of large UK employers are planning to increase headcount in the coming year. This means competition for talent is only set to increase and underlines why not acting strategically today could be a mistake. An inside view of the market – and adapting accordingly – provides a vital edge, so keep pace with the five essential drivers outlined above to plan ahead and futureproof your workforce in a quickly evolving climate. ■

For more information, follow Niki Turner-Harding on LinkedIn, visit <https://www.adecco.co.uk/talent-insights/> and download Labour Market Outlook





INDUSTRY AWARDS 2024

It's time. Time for you to show what you can do. Time to show how the recruitment industry delivers excellence in everything it does. It's time for The Global Recruiter Industry Awards.

Headline sponsored this year by Simplicity, The Global Recruiter Industry Awards are regarded as the industry's own awards. They are unique in providing a level playing field for all-comers in the recruitment industry. Free to enter, with clear criteria and judged by a panel of industry experts who know what it takes to succeed and thrive in the recruitment industry, these awards seek out the very best from the industry and celebrate it in style.

The Award categories have been specially designed to reflect all areas of the recruitment sector. As well as covering recruitment businesses and consultants. In short, if it's important to the recruitment industry, it is recognised and rewarded by The Global Recruiter Industry Awards.

The Global Recruiter Industry Awards 2024 – honouring the industry's finest.



Entries open: 4 April

Entries close: 28 June 2024

Shortlist announced: 2 August 2024

Awards Ceremony: November 2024

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THE PERILS OF PAY

Sarah Heron, principal consultant and career expert at Right Management UK, weighs the evidence of pay for retention, against a strong company culture.



With 80 per cent of employers reporting difficulty in filling roles, as found by ManpowerGroup's 2024 [Talent Shortage Survey](#) (TSS), it's no surprise that employers are resorting to increasing salary offerings to attract talent. >



However, an unhelpful cycle will inevitably form if remuneration is leaned upon as the only strategy to attract and retain employees. Doing so sets a standard whereby employees expect consistent salary increases and rewards, while their employers miss out on adding real value by exploring other benefits and support they can offer, to ensure a truly positive working environment and culture is created.

Money does matter

We recently surveyed more than 2,000 employees in the UK on their professional motivations. The findings show that a significant majority of the workforce would be willing to compromise their personal values for increases in their salary, with nearly three quarters (72 per cent) of British employees saying they would compromise on their values for better pay.

While this may not come as a huge surprise, the amount that people are willing to compromise for may raise the eyebrows of many employers. For an annual increase of just £1,000-£2,000, 17 per cent would be willing to compromise on their values, while more than a quarter (26 per cent) would do so for a salary increase of more than £5,000. Clearly, financial incentive is more important to a lot of workers given the ongoing cost-of-living crisis.

However...

The financial package a role offers is only one element of any successful retention strategy.

Focusing on remuneration as a primary method to attract and retain talent will only ever lead to short-term wins. It should go without saying, but if money is the singular factor deployed to keep an employee within an organisation, they will be retained only on a surface level. An unintended consequence is that they will then have little reason to immerse themselves and truly engage in the organisation's culture, values, and strategy. >

When an employee feels connected and engaged with an organisation, and its values, they feel empowered to be positive representatives of that organisation. By having a stake beyond just a transactional relationship, people will likely work harder and achieve better results. This doesn't mean those who are attracted to an organisation by a handsome base salary won't achieve good results, but if they haven't bought into all aspects of the business and its culture, it's unlikely they'll go the extra mile when needed.

In essence, using money to keep employees in post will only work if a business continues to increase salaries in line with, or beyond inflation, and reward employees financially for success. This approach isn't going to be sustainable unless the financial value that an employee offers their organisation in terms of monetary gains continues to outpace the remuneration being provided.

Building a culture

Instead, organisations should look to foster a positive workplace culture and environment that employees feel connected to and actively want to be part of.

A strong culture is formed by establishing shared values and behaviours and forming a trusted work environment where employees feel encouraged to grow and learn. Our latest data highlights that 61 per cent of employees believe that 'honesty' is the most important value an employer should possess.

Job satisfaction is another key factor when it comes to retention. Research shows that 41 per cent of employees said they left their current role due to a lack of career growth ([McKinsey](#)). Introducing a clear career pathway along with added training benefits will build both happiness and loyalty within an organisation. Employees want to feel both nurtured and challenged within their role, and offering packages such as skills training, talent accelerator programmes, stretch projects or team coaching facilities, will better engage employees in their day-to-day work and enable a greater sense of satisfaction, therefore supporting retention.

The bottom line is that employees want to enjoy their work and know that they're valued. By implementing a healthy work-life balance, considerate employee involvement and empowerment along with a positive work environment, a loyal workforce will be formed. >



The way ahead

Undoubtedly, money is one way to attract staff to an organisation – and this can work well in the short-term. However, it is in no way the only lever organisations should be pulling on, with a large majority of those we surveyed citing a company's values as important when considering a potential employer.

Businesses must consider the consequences of focusing too heavily on remuneration as part of their retention strategy, particularly as paving over more complex cultural issues with increases in salary could impact business performance in the long run. Whilst salary may attract employees in the short term, flexibility, career development and fostering meaningful connections with employees will generate a loyal, productive workforce that's willing to stay.


On reflection, this well-known adage comes to mind; 'Good pay attracts staff. Good culture is what retains them.' ■

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SKILLED UP

Craig Sweeney is EVP of global strategic talent solutions at WilsonHCG explores skills-first hiring.



It's no secret that almost every major industry is facing significant and ongoing skills shortages, with no immediate fixes in sight, at least not in the short term. On top of this, the pace of change in skills requirements is accelerating, making it increasingly difficult to plan for future resourcing needs. One method that a growing number of businesses are adopting to ensure they are working effectively is skills-first hiring; but why does this approach make the difference for recruitment? >



SKILLS

What is skills-first hiring?

Skills-first hiring essentially means prioritising a candidate's skills and potential to develop new competencies over their qualifications or experience, but in reality, there's a lot more to it. It puts the emphasis on assessing professionals based on their ability to perform within the parameters of often-flexible role requirements, and on their potential to operate in other departments or business functions in the future. In practice, this means looking past the surface-level indications of talent and looking deeper into their abilities, softer skills, and growth potential.

Why it matters

This approach is growing in popularity amongst employers for a variety of reasons. It benefits organisations to develop a workforce with broader skill sets, both individually and collectively. Focusing on recruiting people who can develop competencies that enable them to operate in different functions and who can understand the full breadth of the organisation, will only be beneficial. Hiring in this way can also help to tackle skills gaps that arise with little notice, or in hard-to-fill areas of the workforce.

Indeed, tackling the lack of available talent in the market is a priority for businesses. We recently launched a survey of talent and hiring leaders in major EMEA-based businesses to better ascertain their motivators and the issues they are expecting to face over the next 12 months. The data revealed that 44% of respondents listed combatting skills shortages as their number one priority for 2024, placing it as the second-highest answer after modernising employer brands.

It's clear that, in such a challenging environment, adopting a skills-first approach to hiring should be a priority for organisations and recruiters alike. As we all know, the world is shifting at pace, and the adoption of new advanced technologies, like generative AI, will likely have a major impact on future skills demand, meaning many professionals will have to adapt, and quickly. Recruiting on a skills-first basis places the focus on recruiting talent with the ability to continuously learn and develop, helping their employers to build workforces that are agile, resilient, and capable of thriving in the face of technological disruption. >

And it's not only recruitment where the value of a skills-first approach can be seen; it can also boost retention and encourage employees to remain with their employers. If employees grow fatigued in their existing positions the opportunity to upskill and operate in other departments will boost loyalty.

While for recruitment, there may be the need for a level of staff turnover to keep talent pipelines flowing (with 10% attrition considered an expected rate in most instances), this shift in mindsets will only open up more opportunities for internal recruitment support. More organisations are waking up to the fact that recruitment isn't all about external hires, but rather a total talent focus, underpinned by skills-first tactics, with robust talent mobility programmes.

A skills-first hiring approach also boosts diversity, inclusion and social mobility policies. By moving the focus away from traditional markers like background, education and qualifications, employers will develop a more meritocratic approach. And once the approach is embedded into hiring processes it will help to attract more diverse candidates with varied backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. This not only fosters a more inclusive work environment and expands talent pools, but also enhances creativity, innovation, and problem-solving capabilities within teams.

However, operating successfully in a skills-first way can't start with hiring strategies; instead, it must begin with an organisational approach that's led from the top of the business. Asking employees to begin recruiting on a skills-led basis when they don't have the right context, tools, or understanding of what it means for internal hiring, promotions, development opportunities and more, will only end in failure. Instead, it needs to form a part of a much broader agenda with results solely based on business-driven outcomes. >





It's also about more than just identifying softer qualities in candidate pools, and it can require a lot of work to develop internal processes that align with this approach. Recruiters need to consider how they need to adapt their job specifications to focus on skills, rather than other criteria, and candidate assessment models will require a significant shift to be more competency-led, which requires buy-in from other parts of the business. As you may imagine, this can require a degree of change management, particularly within more traditional organisations where legacy hiring approaches are more deeply embedded.

Skills-first and the future

Our understanding of global hiring markets has shown us that there are still a number of businesses that – for whatever reason – aren't strategically assessing future skills demand and how socioeconomic and political shifts, as well as the rise of technology, could move the needle in terms of what's required. Recruiting in a skills-first way helps to naturally create forward-thinking strategies, however, many employers are put off because of the adaptations it requires to operate successfully. Moving away from traditional hiring strategies and thinking more about the competencies required for specific roles can not only help to attract a broader pool of talent, but also boost the overall strength and resilience of an organisation's workforce. As more employers begin to recognise this, recruiters are going to face a shift in consultative requirements that we all need to be equipped to tackle. ■

TECH CENTRAL

Simon Kent reports from a Recruitment Live round table which examined the value and challenges of the CRM.

 **TARGETRECRUIT**

The latest Recruitment Live virtual round table discussion held by The Global Recruiter in association with TargetRecruit put the CRM under the microscope. In doing so the event showed that while some aspects of technology in the recruitment industry remain the same as ever, it is clear that recruiters are being proactive about getting the most from their technology and are putting steps in place to make sure their systems perform better than ever. >




On this round table were:

- Jonathan Ellerbeck, Group Chairman, Gravitas
- Lloyd Cremer, CRO, Halian
- Anna Cooper, Group Shared Service Director, Marva Group
- Sara Burton, Global Operations Director, Cobalt
- Mike Chapman, Managing Director Clients and Technology, Phaidon International
- Neil Curry, Director, TargetRecruit
- Gary King, Publisher, The Global Recruiter
- Simon Kent, Editor, The Global Recruiter

The discussion began by making clear that switching CRM solutions is not a task to undertake lightly. The disruption that can ensue means that any potential improvement has to be significant for the business. But where is that tipping point to make the leap, as the current status quo of using spreadsheets and other outdated technologies and processes presents clear disadvantages for the business. Reasons of functionality featured strongly among the motives for companies switching solutions, sometimes moving away from systems that did not harness currently available tech options, such as cloud provision, AI or proper communications between applications. Others found that while their solution seemed to be 'good on the surface', some of the functionality actually created more headaches – not least from a compliance point of view. Overall, a change of CRM was viewed as crucial for a recruitment company if the current solution did not meet expectations or if there were significant advantages to be had by changing up.

Given this background, the selection of a CRM generally follows an extensive review of the business and therefore their specific requirements from a system. Anna Cooper had come to Marva Group and carried out a review of all their systems and procedures before identifying the significant wins that could be made by switching CRMs. "Healthcare recruitment is very heavy work in terms of shift scheduling," explained Anna, "and we needed something that could deal with all the different timings, rules and rates." Having made clear what was required and having surveyed what was available on the market, the company chose to go with TargetRecruit. >



Interestingly, many of those in the discussion said their decision around continuing with a particular CRM rested less with the technology and more with the attitude and direction of the provider. For many it was important to have an ongoing conversation with their provider to ensure that the solution they'd bought into would continue to be relevant and up to date with the potential of technology. They were looking for a 'roadmap' that demonstrated how the solution would move forward and not just be a static tool. In order to facilitate this, some recruiters organise a regular quarterly check-in with their provider to understand how the solution would develop and what the provider believes should be their priorities.

In some cases the functionality offered by recruitment technologies could stray into complicated areas for recruiters. Sara Burton and Lloyd Cremer both made the point that systems which boasted that they could scrape information on candidates from other online sources sometimes presented challenges in terms of compliance with GDPR regulations. Some recruitment leaders felt that perhaps it was important to maintain an informed distance from the cutting edge of technology, benefiting from more tried and tested solutions.

One area that does appear to have changed since last time this kind of technology was debated at a Global Recruiter Recruitment Live discussion is that on the standing of LinkedIn as a source of candidates and sometime as the main preference for consultants when trying to find talent. From one point of view it seems recruiters using LinkedIn can mean that everyone is effectively trying to fish from the same talent pool. However, there was also the recognition that LinkedIn can seem too impersonal. The power behind the correct configuration and use of a CRM is that the service offered to candidates becomes more unique and tailored. This in turn means clients can benefit from a better service because they're likely to get better engaged candidates who are not being hunted down by several other businesses.

Indeed, Jonathan Ellerbeck made the point that the CRM, as a central piece of technology, can stand as the unique selling point of a recruitment business. "For me the CRM and the data are your USP," he said. "It's about getting data – candidates – who are loyal to you and being able to work with them efficiently. Technology can drive that aspect of the business."

For many years the recruitment industry has stood by the mantra of data hygiene, facing the challenge of ensuring everyday consultants carry out good data management. Too often the value of a recruitment company's database and wider technology is compromised by the data it is built on. In short, consultants take short cuts, do not put in the right data and thereby make it difficult for records and candidate information to be retrieved. >

Interestingly, while The Global Recruiter round tables have long heard exasperated cries from recruitment leaders as to how difficult it is to get and maintain clean data, in this session there were at least two companies who had engaged in making this a reality. Ellerbeck explained it had taken his company two years but the business was now enjoying the benefits of a 'hand-coded, tidy' database. Not only that but Ellerbeck himself was taking an active role in seeing that the business valued and looked after this data correctly. Each office is given a score for their data accuracy and expected to achieve 100% over a given time. Each employee knows their own score as well and Ellerbeck is undertaking a tour around the business to raise awareness and promote more tips and techniques for good data use. The fact that data is owned from the CEO level downwards triggers, he says, a behavioural change and recognises the importance of data in the adoption of future technology. "The fuel of AI is good data," he notes.

Mike Chapman from Phaidon International has also embarked on a data cleaning mission. "We've just reindexed our database for search purposes," he says, "so hopefully that will work better, and we can apply Cognitive AI searching to the CRM and Machine Learning to the data in the data lake."

Looking to the future the recruiters on the call were interested to see whether AI would start to play a part in determining the most effective work of recruiters in order to achieve success. Given the information and data available would it be able to help recruiters decide who to chase, which CVs to send to whom, who to call next and so on. But to a certain extent the CRM could even start playing a part in delivering this already simply by enabling an effective to do list to be drawn up together with ongoing reminders for consultants to complete tasks. Overall however the discussion agreed that while technology could collect and process data, the decision on what to do and how to react to that data would probably remain a human one.

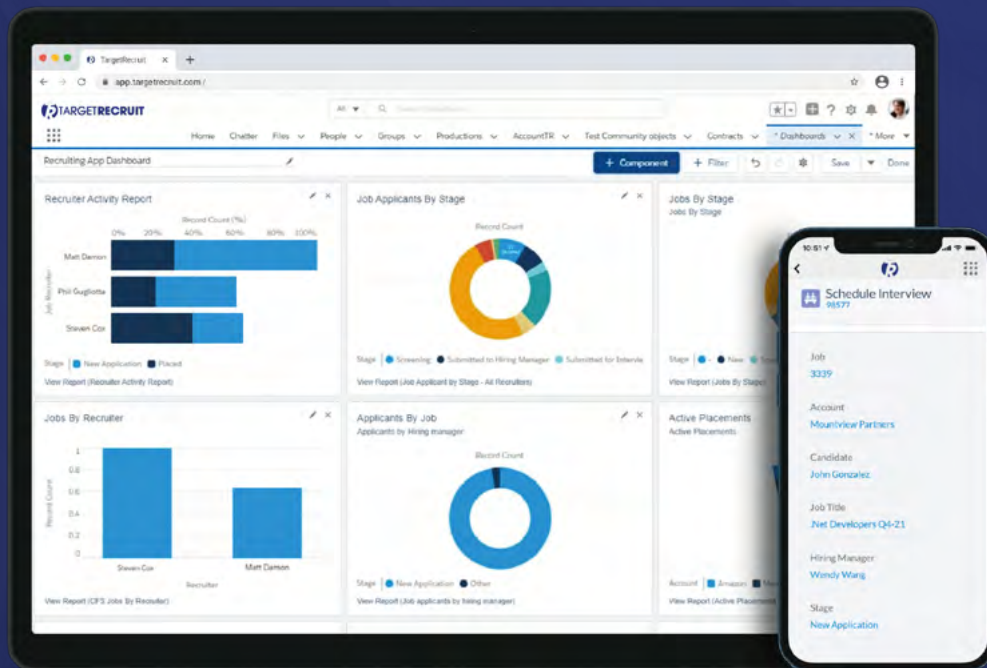
Neil Curry from TargetRecruit closed the roundtable by saying "If recruitment companies are to make the most of the technology that's out there – be it CRM or the constantly evolving AI applications, data must be ready to deliver." Many on the call acknowledged the influence of LinkedIn on consultant's work, but there was a general feeling that a good and effectively used CRM was still highly desirable for recruitment businesses. With the right solution and placement within a business, the CRM can provide a solid base for recruiters, a crucial tool that means they can deliver exceptional service to candidates and clients alike. ■

For more information on TargetRecruit please contact: neil.curry@targetrecruit.com





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HYPER RECRUITMENT

James Osborne, co-founder of The Recruitment Network, speaks to Ricky Martin, Founder of Hyper Recruitment Solutions

“Ricky’s story is as fascinating as it is inspirational. He’s genuinely a great guy doing great things, so I am pleased to be able to give you an insight into his world and the work he is doing through Hyper Recruitment Solutions.” – James Osborne >



1. What is the mission of Hyper Recruitment Solutions and why:

The core vision of Hyper Recruitment Solutions (HRS) is to “change lives”. As a life sciences consultancy made up of STEM professionals turned recruiters, our big picture is to deliver an outstanding service which supports life-saving medicines and life-changing technologies get to patients. Who would not want to live a fitter, longer and better life and we strive to provide the talent to make this happen. As a Biochemist, and member of the Royal Society of Chemistry, this vision is entrenched in my DNA and the reason the company was born.

2. Throughout the last 8 years at Hyper Recruitment Solutions 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 Hyper Recruitment Solutions?

What a last 8 years the world has been! We have had Brexit, a pandemic and a recession all in the mix to make our worlds exciting! This has challenged the way we work, where we work from, and how we engage, before we even overlay the rapid advances in technology and AI on top of this. As such the last 8 years for me has been one big classroom.

Some key learns for me have certainly been to be patient, to remain positive and I have certainly learnt to be unshakable on my beliefs and authenticity.

If you ever ask me how the business is going I will always provide a “we are doing ok” response. This is because I am someone who is always looking forward, as opposed to backwards, and always keen to get to whatever is next. Never fully satisfied. With the market being the most unpredictable I have seen since 2008, sometimes taking a breath, celebrating the small wins and being proud of how hard everyone is working has been critical. >

I judge myself with a firm brush so being reflective on what is going well, as opposed to frustrated on occasions on what is not, has been a gamechanger to be as a leader. If I can reflect and stop to recognise how proud I am of what is happening, I can definitely be a better version of myself to everyone around me. It has taken a tougher market for me to do this more consistently, however being a little impatient and holding high standards is never a bad thing also.

From a beliefs and authenticity perspective it has been very easy over these “interesting years” to start morphing into something which is not you. Both as a leader and a business. What I mean here is the workforce has evolved, the expectations of it towards you as a leader too. At times I have tried to be as flexible and accommodating to the needs of the workforce as possible, so they know I am here for them.

I have certainly learnt that while listening and evolving should be whatever leader does without question, doing everything and anything to keep people happy is not progressive. Being clear on what you stand for, what your expectations are of the business (within reason of course) creates a less confused environment and in turn a space for everyone to know what they are part of and how to win within it. Naturally I remain as open as can be to the workforce, the reality is I have a set vision, it is unshakable and the DNA of this business. And this will not change as we want to “change lives”.

3. 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?

My mindset is positive and I take challenges head on. Life would be boring without obstacles to smash past! So while occasions I can feel the frustrations of things not happening soon enough, and I have learnt over the years to keep these confined, they will never hold me back. I am always up for a good challenge and this is what every business faces almost day to day. Being up for the challenge no matter what is in front of you, is what allows your company and those within it, to grow. And being open when you win, and more importantly when you lose, allows everyone around you to know you are human and it won’t stop you going.

You need to remember I set HRS up off the back of a very public investment process of The Apprentice in 2012. I had the weight of national pessimism thinking it would never work. Not to mention I had just moved to another part of the country I had no roots in, within a week of getting married and initially moving away from my wife. I had every reason to have my mindset challenged and every reason why I would be lonely, it would not work and it would be what people said it would be. The honest answer is, when challenged it is you against you. Fight of flight. And as an ex wrestler I chose to fight :) >





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

Innovation is an interesting word when it comes to recruitment. How innovative is any company in the space? How much innovation is in the services being offered to our customers across the industry? The honest answer is I don't think there is that much innovation in most recruitment companies. What there is however is the ability to recognise unique needs, identify solutions and to adopt technologies new to market which can streamline processes, maximise efficiencies and enhance experiences.

So while I am going on record to say I think there is not tons of innovation in most recruitment companies, that is not to say we should not be trying to evolve. Innovation is something I am always keen to explore and drive, and a lot of this is driven via networking with other like minded leaders, sitting on boards of businesses both in and more importantly outside of recruitment, and by consistently looking at new technologies. Sometimes the best innovations are in our mindsets. Being open to how others do things outside of our space, looking at the same problem with the same solution with a different outlook, but most importantly, listening deeply to what our customers actually need and not doing things we think they may like.

5. What's next for Hyper Recruitment Solutions, and where will we be in 3-5 years' time?

What is next for HRS is very much globalization. We have had an exceptional journey to date working with the UK market and whatever location a client has then asked us to support them in. And this has both worked well for us and enable us to get very deep in to our space. However what is next is how we specifically land and expand in to new countries and regions and how we keep the core DNA of the business intact, but evolve it around other similarities and differences each locations culture will present. For me I cannot wait for this evolution of the company and cannot wait to see how our service progressions from national, to regional to international. If we really want to change lives, then we need to make sure that patients from all over the world, get the benefit of the medicines our customers develop. >

6. 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?

Great question and one which is very much horses for courses. For me I think every leader if they are thinking of growth need to consider how they professional live and personal live collide. Something which will always happen and requires a leader to find lines of separation and sanctuary between them. I say this as I productive and progressional personal live, will always allow a growth oriented professional live.

So it has to be considered. My simple rule I have had since starting HRS here as been the business has me Monday – Friday, but the weekend is mine. This has enabled when it comes to a Monday, I am the best version of me refreshed and ready for what is to come. And when that week comes, to allow growth you need to forever remain a student of the game. The moment you think you know it all, or you have nailed it, or even you have set out what you were there to achieve, is the moment you retract and go backwards. So

invest time in to your learning, the learning of others around you, and the future.

7. How do you approach failure and setbacks from a mindset perspective, and what role do they play in the learning and growth process?

As somebody who is never afraid of a challenge, and happily takes them head on, I in turn have to face setbacks and failure often. Yes this is me who once said on TV that I was “the reflection of perfection” admitting he fails. In fact I probably fail at something every-day. And I am fine by that. Fail fast are two words I was introduced to many years ago. Words I remember every day. Learn from it. Allowing yourself to fail, and allowing others around you to make mistakes, as long as they are learnt from, creates the most powerful environment for growth. And this is how I approach failure. Tomorrow is a new day baby!

Or in the words of Ricky balboa “it ain’t about how hard you hit. It’s about how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward; how much you can take and keep moving forward. That’s how wining is done!” ■



CREATING A GLOBAL WORKFORCE

Sohan Sidhu, Partner, Solicitor and Head of Immigration at Ellisons examines the challenges and steps to securing a global workforce.





It is often said the world is a small place. It is also often said the United Kingdom (UK) is a service economy and is no longer known for having strong manufacturing sectors. Consequently, many businesses in the UK struggle to recruit suitable workers and hence have to look beyond the UK's shores to secure the appropriate talents. Arguably, Brexit has not helped the situation because no longer do European Union (EU) nationals have the right to free movement to the UK. All of a sudden, EU nationals also require visas to live and work in the UK just like any other overseas nationals. We are constantly hearing of the challenges which the National Health Service (NHS) is experiencing what with the lack of doctors and nurses. Many other sectors including hospitality and catering are struggling.

If a business is looking to recruit foreign workers, then it needs to be in possession of a Home Office Sponsor Licence. The application is document heavy and very much front loaded. The Home Office position is that being in possession of a sponsor licence is a privilege and not a right. It needs to be borne in mind however that the ability to employ foreign workers also attracts many responsibilities and obligations on sponsor licence holders. They have to ensure they have robust HR systems in place, undertake appropriate right to work checks, and ensure they are abreast of Home Office rule changes (of which there are many).

For businesses which fall foul of the regulations, the consequences can be very serious indeed. For those with a sponsor licence, they can find their licence is revoked or downgraded, in which case not only will they be under the radar of the Home Office but their sponsorship ability will also be reduced. The Home Office also has the power to issue civil penalties against businesses which are deemed to have employed workers unlawfully. The Government announced last year that employer fines for illegal working were to be increased from £15,000 to £45,000 for a first breach where an employee is found to be working without a valid visa or working in breach of their visa conditions. For subsequent breaches, the Home Office has now tripled the fine from £20,000 to £30,000 per employee and the increased fine applied to breaches occurring after 13 February 2024. Furthermore, employers are required to pay either a minimum salary of £26,200 or the salary noted in the occupation code, whichever is higher. From 4th April 2024, the salary threshold for new sponsor applicants is increasing from the current level of £26,200 to £38,700 gross per year. >

Shortage occupation list

Currently, the Home Office operates a shortage occupation list and any job detailed there allows employers to pay a lower salary, subject to meeting the requirements of the rules. However, the Home Office has announced that from 14 March 2024, the shortage occupation list will be replaced with a new immigration salary list and this will remove the 20% going rate discount to the minimum salary for those roles contained within the shortage occupation list. Furthermore, currently, employers are allowed to pay a lower salary to new entrants i.e. recent graduates and candidates who are under the age of 26 at the time of application. At the time of preparing this article, the UK Government has not confirmed if the new entrant salary thresholds will continue to apply.

It also needs to be borne in mind that sponsoring foreign workers is an expensive business. For each sponsored worker, an employer needs to assign a Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS). This attracts a fee of £239.00. However, this is only the start of the journey. When assigning a CoS, an employer is also required to pay an Immigration Skills Charge and this can be up to £1,000 per year for large businesses. A visa fee also needs to be paid and this can be up to £1,500 if sponsorship is sought for 5 years. In addition, the Home Office also requires a contribution towards the UK's NHS. This is by way of an Immigration Health Surcharge. From 6 February 2024, broadly the rates increased from £624 per year to £1,035 per year and the lower rates for students and applicants under the age of 18 increased from £470 per year to £776 per year. The cost therefore can be quite significant.

It is not however all bad news. Once a licence has been granted by the Home Office, it is valid for a period of 4 years. However, the Home Office has now removed the need to renew a licence and it is extending eligible licence expiry dates by 10 years. >



Fast-changing law

Immigration is no doubt, a fast-changing area of law. Whilst there are many challenges for businesses, there are also many opportunities which flow from sponsoring foreign workers into the UK. However, bearing in mind the many changes on the horizon including from 4 April 2024, employers would do well consider the impact that the changes will have on their recruitment plans and especially in some sectors where salaries are traditionally lower, they may wish to consider bringing forward hiring practices for roles which potentially may not meet the increased salary threshold of £38,700.00. Sponsorship can be for a period of up to 5 years. Thereafter, a candidate can apply for indefinite leave to remain provided all of the requirements of the Immigration Rules are met. Employers may wish to sponsor candidates for the maximum duration possible and in this way, they can be safe in the knowledge that any changes which the Government bring into effect, will not retrospectively affect existing sponsored workers.


The reality is that what with the shortage of skills in the UK, employers will need to continue sponsoring workers into the UK despite the challenges which may be inherent in the immigration system. ■

For more information, please do not hesitate to contact Sohan Sidhu at sohan.sidhu@ellisonssolicitors.com



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EMBRACING THE WORLD

Quentin Debavelaere, GM UK, Benelux and Middle East at freelance platform Malt puts forward a roadmap for expanding internationally.



The term 'global' in business is a beacon of opportunity and growth. It allows companies to tap into different markets, offer new services and expand their customer base whilst building an international footprint. Start-ups and new business models are built for scalability, with significant upfront technological investments that need to be offset in the long term by growth. >



Expanding in new markets requires, in theory, little additional investments, so it's often perceived as a no-brainer. It's also sometimes a vanity metric for the founders to be present in many markets. However, the venture to expand an organisation is a nuanced art that requires cultural insight, adaptability, and precise planning. From the human capital to legal intricacies, the path to building an international team is as challenging as it is promising.

There's no one-size-fits-all strategy, and the plans keep evolving in response to shifting conditions. However, a set of principles can be applied in any situation.

Local expertise in operations and communications

Central to the expansion strategy is the incorporation of local expertise. A sound understanding of local market conditions, consumer behaviour, legal regulations, and cultural nuances is non-negotiable. Local talents do not just bridge the linguistic gap; they embody the socio-economic and cultural fabric of the region. Attracting and integrating these invaluable assets into the company requires a deliberate and sensitive approach, recognising the vast differences in employment cultures and practices globally. For example, a local talent acquisition manager (even on a freelance basis) is essential to recruit a local team. They will have a better knowledge of the academic ecosystem, the expectations of candidates, and the implicit rules of interview/recruitment.

Although English may be the lingua franca of global business, specific communication styles, non-verbal cues, and local dialects can significantly alter the meaning of messages. Misinterpretations can lead to inefficiency and frustration among team members. Moreover, translating documents and marketing content word-for-word might lead to inaccuracy in messaging and missed targeting opportunities. Therefore, companies should invest in language and communication training and employ multilingual team members to serve as cultural liaisons. For example, the word 'freelance' has a very different connotation in different countries, and we have introduced the concept of 'independent consultant' in Spain or 'IT contractor' in the UK to position our community in the appropriate way to our local audience. This is especially important in new markets where a company has no brand awareness and cannot benefit from the personal network of the founders and management team.

In addition, each country has its regulatory environment that dictates how businesses must operate. Notably, data privacy, labour laws, taxation, and corporate governance vary dramatically. For example, when it comes to freelancing, UK rules, such as IR35, might significantly impact their ability to find customers – something other European countries won't necessarily consider. The challenge for international teams is to abide by these laws without overburdening the business processes, which requires ongoing education, vigilance, and the aid of local legal experts. >

Cultural integration: a multifaceted challenge

Cultural fluency goes far beyond the surface-level assimilation of language; it delves into the ethos of communication styles, hierarchical structures, decision-making processes, and more. For example, Spain is very hierarchical, and it's important to respect the reporting line and convince at the highest level; France is more open to a 'test and learn' approach with pilots and deployments, while Germany is very detail-oriented when analysing a solution and then deploys everything on a large scale when trust has been built.

To embody cultural integration, organisations must invest in understanding and adapting to new territories' societal values and work ethics. It's a task that demands attentiveness, respect, and willingness to modify the company's operational blueprint. It cannot be prepared in a room before launch. It can only be achieved on the ground by confronting ideas with reality.

However, with teams spread across multiple time zones, finding a common meeting time can be a logistical puzzle. This can lead to delayed communication and decision-making slowdowns. With remote and hybrid ways of working, people might have different preferences and schedule 'focus times' that are misaligned with international timetables.

Therefore, organisations must create flexible work policies that acknowledge these challenges, employing asynchronous communication. Similarly, recognising cultural holidays and working hours contributes to an inclusive and engaging atmosphere.

Make your best talents travel

Guidelines, procedures, Zoom calls and planning can never replace the effectiveness of proximity and face-to-face problem-solving. One of the best strategies to launch a new market is to send some of your ambassadors locally – entrepreneurial employees from other existing markets. It goes beyond a knowledge of the processes or the product. It's about attitude and drive. Send culture champions who can spread the company's culture and assist new joiners in navigating a sometimes complex organisation with a foreign culture.

One of the mistakes an organisation can make on its first expansion is to start with the top, hiring a country manager and then their team. Instead, they should open several positions and be pragmatic in the order of arrival. Finding a good senior candidate can take nine to 12 months, and organisations can't afford to lose this time. So, it's best to be pragmatic in their recruitment plan and consider starting with existing team members. >





The nuances of local entrepreneurial leadership

Localisation does not merely refer to translating content or adjusting the product to match local expectations. Organisations should refrain from implementing a Go-To-Market (GTM) strategy directly derived from the headquarters - what worked in the country of origin will probably not work in a new environment. Instead, they should place trust in the entrepreneurial mindset of the local team. Leverage their unique perspective and understanding of consumer behaviour to devise a tailored GTM strategy.

A company's international employees must benefit from a work environment based on respect and empowerment. There is a profound need for workplaces where differences are seen not as barriers but as pathways to innovation and growth. Balancing the empowerment of local decision-making authority with respect for the company's overarching mission and values encourages trust, dedication, and, most importantly, a degree of forgiveness or acceptance of failure. It's essential to provide some 'red lines' to set clear boundaries on what is mandatory (ex., pricing guidelines, salary grids, HR policy) and what can be adapted (GTM, pitch, client segmentation, product).

Failure: a catalyst for refinement


Expansion efforts are inherently met with risks and the potential for setbacks. Yet, within these challenges lie the catalysts for growth and innovation. A failed market entry can unravel invaluable insights, provided it's dissected and understood correctly. Building a culture that encourages experimentation and learning from mistakes can transform potential failure into a strategic advantage.

An organisation that leverages such lessons paves the way for a more refined strategy in subsequent ventures, optimising GTM strategies and ensuring higher effectiveness in execution.

The successful expansion of a team across international borders is a transformative journey that requires a harmonious blend of strategy, cultural intelligence, and operational finesse. Each stage – recruitment, integration, and operational execution – must be approached with a fine-tuned balance of structure and flexibility, strategy, and empathy. Yet, businesses that thrive in global markets will be those that see international expansion not just as a business strategy but as an ongoing dynamic process. ■

SUSTAINABLE EXPANSION

Samual Knight Energy took an international solutions-focused approach to establish a strong service provision to US based customers.



At Samuel Knight Energy they understand the importance of having the right talent in place to support their clients' Renewable Energy projects that align perfectly with their objectives. Samuel Knight's strategic global office locations now include Newcastle HQ, London, Bristol, Spain, and USA sites with Dallas HQ, Chicago & Boston. >



In 2019 after a successful VCT fund raise Samuel Knight launched their US operations in Dallas and over the last few years have expanded into Chicago and Boston, having created long-term partnership relations with their clients to facilitate Renewable Energy projects.

Samuel Knight USA was established remotely from the UK in the middle of the Covid lockdown which came with many challenges however senior management was confident the opportunity within the USA was going to be rewarding so persevered with a strategic growth plan resulting in a record-breaking first-year result achieving \$10.7 million in sales and \$3.9 million NFI.

Samuel Knight USA's mission mirrored that of the EMEA business across Renewable Energy markets, solar, wind, BESS, and transmission & distribution. With their combined expertise and proactive attitude, they knew they could add real value to the USA market sector as one of few specialist Renewable Energy recruiters and they weren't wrong.

In the year 2021, Samuel Knight Energy established an exclusive partnership with a major operator/developer that was purely focused on providing permanent recruitment services throughout North America. Fast forward to 2024 and Samuel Knight Energy now works with three different parts of this global player throughout North America as well as 24 companies throughout their US supply chain.

Leading from the top

Samuel Knight Energy USA is led by Steve Rawlingson, founder and CEO of Samuel Knight Group which turns 10 years old in March 2024. Steve has created a world-class USA leadership team to support him in his mission of becoming North America's market leading Renewable Energy staffing solutions provider. Kenzie Morris is co-founder and VP of Client Relationships, Dave Allen is SVP who relocated from the UK to help lead the business, Jack Roberts is VP of Strategic Partnerships and Carl Moffett acts as Group CFO each playing an integral role in the growth of Samuel Knight USA.

In 2021 Samuel Knight Energy successfully obtained E2 investment status. This milestone enables them to facilitate the smooth relocation of highly skilled specialists from the United Kingdom to the United States which their clients see as a major USP. Their E2 status has secured them long-term contracts with the likes of EDF, Vestas, Siemens, Orsted and Avangrid to name just a few.

Samuel Knight Energy's focus remains on bolstering the Renewable Energy sector, addressing critical skill gaps that currently exist throughout North America. With this achievement, they are poised to contribute significantly to the advancement of sustainable Renewable Energy solutions on a national scale. >

Bespoke and innovative

Creating bespoke, innovative solutions for their USA clients was the key to the successful launch of Samuel Knight Energy USA, not to mention their extensive experience and knowledge of the Renewable Energy industry.

Their clients benefit from a consistent, proactive approach from a globally recognised specialist team, who all work closely with their clients to understand the challenges and needs, giving them access to both in-country and global talent pools.

Over the course of 10 years, Samuel Knight Group has created a global following and CRM database of nearly 2,000,000 Renewable Energy experts which gives them a global reach to support clients with finding the very best candidates possible for their projects across solar, wind, BESS, and transmission & distribution.

“We are only just getting started in the USA,” says Steve Rawlingson. “The last three years we’ve been focused on building a specialist brand that stands for Renewable Energy excellence. Fast forward to the present day and we are now achieving economy of scale working with over 50 renewable energy clients who all have a significant pipeline of Renewable Energy projects reaching nearly 100GW of power across the East Coast, West Coast, and Central US. Our time for US dominance is now and I can’t wait to see what we achieve in 2024 and beyond.”

Anyone trying to scale a business will understand the challenges that come with growth especially when you’re trying to launch internationally, but with a clearly defined strategic growth plan, the right financial backing, and a team of individuals all rowing in the same direction, you can dominate any industry, in any market, against any competition, at any time. ■

