

The independent voice for the global staffing industry



THE GLOBAL RECRUITER

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Issue 265 | January 2025

PRODUCTIVITY TO DELIVER SUCCESS



**ALL FIRED UP
HARD MARKET, MAXIMUM EFFICIENCY**

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WELCOME

SIMON KENT
EDITOR

A lot can happen in a year. Bleary eyed and fuzzy round the edges we all stumble back to work. For some it's a welcome return with huge potential for the year ahead. You may have new targets, great prospects and exciting initiatives ready to go. For others, the prospect of a tough – or at least unenthusiastic – market may mark a less than welcome return.

However, the recruitment work never stands still. Placed at the forefront of business, the sector is faced with some serious challenges this year, not least dealing the impact of the new Employment Rights Bill. There are compliance challenges and new rules directly impacting on the agile nature of the workforce.

In this issue of The Global Recruiter, APSCo take a look through some of the details while we also explore how brand awareness may make 2025 successful for you. We're also running the first part of our Productivity Special, giving you no excuse to stand still this year. Whatever your path ahead, The Global Recruiter will be here to help you achieve more. ■

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Publisher: Gary King
gary@theglobalrecruiter.com

Business Development Manager: Taureen Hussain
taureen@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

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ISSN 2049-3401



REC WARNS MPS ON EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS BILL

Neil Carberry, Chief Executive at the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC) has warned of the threat of 'false self-employment' booming in response to elements of the government's plan on zero-hours contracts in the Employment Rights Bill. His warnings came during a House of Commons Business and Trade Committee Make Work Pay programme inquiry meeting, held on Tuesday this week. Carberry also highlighted concerns about umbrella company compliance being unaddressed by the Bill and said the need to focus on better enforcement of existing law was a priority.

The government's intention in the Bill is to tackle what it calls 'one-sided flexibility in zero-hours contracts' through a right to guaranteed hours, where the number of hours offered reflects the hours worked by the worker during a reference period. There should also be a right to reasonable notice of shifts and a right to payment for shifts cancelled or curtailed at short notice.

REC has argued for a 'carve out' for agency workers from much of the new legislation covering zero hours workers as agency workers have a fundamentally different, two-sided, flexible model of engagement. Some unions claim that agency workers shouldn't be treated differently – but they already are, with enhanced rights delivered by their own Act of Parliament, enforcement body and two separate sets of specialist regulations. Agency workers are already well protected by law – better enforcement is what they need, not to be collateral damage in the government's war against bad direct employers.

"Agency workers do not exist in a monopsony – they have choice," said Carberry at the Committee meeting at the Palace of Westminster. "They sign up to multiple agencies and each agency has the ability to place them in many places. They feed back to us the value of being able to say, 'I don't like it there', 'I don't want to go there' or 'put me somewhere else'."

"When we think about extending powers on Zero Hours Contracts to agency workers, we are talking about one million people who went to work as a temp this morning. The articulation from government as to why agency might be covered by these powers is that 'we want to avoid direct employers using agency as a loophole'. I don't think one million agency temps should be taken for granted like that. I think we need to accept that agency workers are protected by their own Act, two sets of regulations, an independent regulator – which needs some more resource – and defined statements in Key Information Documents (KIDs).

"Agency worker is largely two-sided flexibility and that is why we want to ensure agency workers have choice."

Carberry went on to say agency workers should be treated differently and put forward two suggestions: strengthening some element of Agency Workers regulations, and doing more on hours in the KIDs. ➤

“It feels like there is a real risk of, in an attempt to avoid evasion by direct employers, bringing one million temps into this regime [will be] driving some of the behaviour we have seen reported in the past months where some direct employers are using platform sites to engage people who are patently workers as self-employed. The real enemy is false self-employment, that is our primary concern about reality of the Bill.”

REC is also advocating for greater regulation and transparency in the umbrella company sector, aiming to protect workers from unethical practices.

On umbrella companies, Neil Carberry told the MPs: “The Bill has nothing to say about the primary thing that my members think the government should regulate which is the use of umbrella companies, and that is a major lacuna.

“Umbrella companies are largely acting as employer of a percentage of temps,” said Carberry. “Once

they exist in a sector, they are quite difficult for agencies who payroll their own temps to compete with. There are good standards around those who audit umbrella companies, like the FCSA, but there are examples of pretty poor payroll practice in the sector. We would like to see the kind of regulation that the Employment Agencies Act [and] the Conduct Regulations bring to employment businesses (agencies) brought to umbrella companies as well.”

REC suggest placing the burden for reasonable notice solely on the agency is unworkable, in many cases changes or cancellations to shifts occur because of client demands, or workers cancelling at short notice. In these scenarios, an agency should not be liable if they themselves have not been given reasonable notice of a shift, argues REC. Reasonable will vary according to custom and practice for different sectors. ■



EMPLOYMENT REFORM BEFORE NHS TECH



The Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCo) has said the employment crisis for clinical and non-clinical roles in healthcare needs to be addressed above any plans for using technology or AI to support the NHS.

In its submission in response to the Big Conversation, the trade body for the professional staffing sector called on the government to consider core solutions to the worker crisis in healthcare, including:

- **Boosting collaboration:** Forming a partnership with NHS employers and other stakeholders is required to deliver the long-term workforce plan in a timely manner. This should include collaboration with those that will be crucial in supplying the non-clinical staff needed to drive digital transformation in the NHS.
- **Reforming hiring practices:** Focusing on temporary staff reforms to reduce “off framework” placements without eliminating agency worker access altogether.
- **Improving compliance and standards:** Officials should mandate that NHS employer standards are in line with government requirements and compliance is consistent across providers and frameworks.
- **Developing a Digital Work Passport:** This would hold key credentials for workers to help make hiring easier, faster and safer.
- **Utilising a blended workforce:** The government must recognise the value of a blended, flexible workforce and ensure attractive pay rates and good working conditions for all.
- **Understanding the reality of costs:** The NHS and government departments need to conduct independent research to understand the true

cost of compliant framework recruitment.

- **Mandating social value in supply chains:** “Social value” must be driven across the supply chain, for example by sharing contractual risk and bearing increased statutory costs, such as employer NICs increases. All too often the SME recruitment company on-framework is expected to bear employer costs within its commercial margin.
- **Supporting skills and training:** Rolling out the Growth and Skills Levy, based around modular, universally transferable training and qualifications that are accessible to permanent and temporary or agency workers.
- **Creating flexible visas for skilled workers:** Which will provide a short-term visa route for highly skilled foreign professionals who remain critical to the running of the NHS and the provision of unique services.

“The plans to modernise technology usage in the NHS are certainly a step in the right direction for an organisation that is essentially on its knees,” said Shazia Imtiaz, General Counsel at APSCo. “However, the biggest issue that needs addressing urgently is the employment crisis.”

Imtiaz identifies number of barriers preventing some of the immediate solutions from being rolled out, including a lack of standardisation in compliance and regulation across frameworks, as well as limitations on agency or international worker usage.

“We are urging the government to consider how it can make recruitment fairer, safer and faster for clinical and non-clinical role in the NHS, without overburdening both the existing workforce and the staffing businesses that are so critical to the healthcare sector,” concludes Imtiaz. ■



WORK-LIFE BALANCE

WORK-LIFE BALANCE TOPS PAY

Randstad's latest Workmonitor has identified a new 'workplace baseline'. The research, which surveyed over 26,000 workers in 35 markets across Europe, Asia Pacific and the Americas, found that despite the challenging economic landscape, geopolitical shifts and technological advances, talent continues to have multifaceted expectations, reshaping the future of the workplace.

For the first time in Workmonitor's history, work-life balance is deemed more important than pay (83 per cent vs 82 per cent). The report shows that talent prioritises personalisation, community and future-ready skilling, and employers need to be ready to respond.

Talent are taking action if their expectations are not met, as almost half (45 per cent) say they have campaigned for better conditions at work. This is further evidenced by 44 per cent reporting they have quit a job because they thought their workplace

was toxic, a relative increase of over 33 per cent compared to last year.

The report shows that talent wants their workplace to align with their values and preferences, as a third (29 per cent) have already quit because they didn't agree with the viewpoints or stances of their leadership. Up by a relative increase of over 26 per cent, close to half (48 per cent) wouldn't accept a job if the company didn't share their social and environmental values. A similar proportion (43 per cent) have considered leaving because of their employer's stance on political issues.

Talent also wants alignment on flexible working. Close to a third (31 per cent) have left a job because it didn't provide enough of it. Younger workers are more likely to enjoy it as a benefit, with close to half (40 per cent) of Gen Zs saying they've been given more flexibility in terms of location in the past six months compared to just 17 per cent of Baby Boomers. >

Working community

Over the decades, the steady rise of individualism has led many to seek a sense of purpose and connection in their professional lives. We now see that the vast majority (83 per cent) of talent also want their workplace to provide a sense of community. Over half (55 per cent) are willing to quit if they feel they don't belong – a substantial increase from last year's 37 per cent global average.

In some cases pay is deprioritised over community at work, as a third (36 per cent) of respondents wouldn't mind earning less money if they had friends at work. At the same time, this has a bearing on talent's productivity, as a strong majority (85 per cent) believe they perform better on the job if they feel a sense of community with their colleagues.

Workmonitor highlights that learning and development continues to be essential for talent, yet there's an expectation-reality gap. Last year, 29 per cent said they would quit if they weren't provided development opportunities to future-proof their careers, a figure sharply climbing to 41 per cent this year. AI is the most sought after learning and development opportunity (23 per cent), followed by IT and technological literacy (11 per cent) and management and leadership skills (7 per cent).

Despite this demand, over a third of talent (36 per cent) report not receiving such training opportunities from their employers. This tallies with Randstad's employer data which shows that only 9 per cent of businesses offer coaching programs that are open to all employees. Compounding this, demand for inherent skills such as continuous learning, resilience, empathy, and ethical judgment has surged by 81 per cent.

RTO debate still on

The return-to-office (RTO) debate shows no sign of slowing down. Given the choice, talent were

most likely (26 per cent) to want to work in the office three days a week. However, according to their reported company policies, 31 per cent of employers want talent in full time, with less than a third (29 per cent) expecting three days or less.

Randstad's in-demand skills report showed that fully remote roles have declined by around 50 per cent, while hybrid roles surged 300 per cent. There's a breakdown of trust when it comes to flexible working, as over a quarter (28 per cent) of talent don't think their manager trusts them to maintain productivity while working from home.

In addition to the mistrust on RTO, there are broader trust gaps forming between talent and their managers. Nearly a third (30 per cent) feel they can't trust their manager to have their best interests in mind, and even more (33 per cent) believe they can't trust their manager with career progression.

As a third (31 per cent) have already quit a job because they couldn't trust their leadership team, it's a business imperative to ensure these relationships are strong and mutually beneficial as part of the new 'workplace baseline'.

"Many expected the challenging economic conditions of 2024 to temper talent expectations, but the Workmonitor shows the opposite has occurred," commented Randstad CEO, Sander van 't Noordende. "We have seen a new baseline established with talent continuing to hold multifaceted expectations.

"For today's talent, the significance of work is complex and needs to be personalised," Sander added. "They are setting the terms on what truly matters to them as individuals and within their communities. Successful businesses are those that will adapt and adjust to this new talent baseline. The solution lies in empowering our key resource: people." ■

HUNDREDS SIGN UP TO REMEMBER AN INDUSTRY LEGEND

RUN

FOR RYAN
2025

The first of the annual “Run for Ryan” 10km event is set to take place on March 8, 2025. This event commemorates the life of Ryan McCabe, the visionary leader of Odro and devoted family man, who tragically passed away on June 22, 2024, at the age of 35.

Ryan was a brave leader renowned for revolutionising the recruitment industry but ultimately was deeply cherished as a husband, father, son, brother, uncle, nephew, and friend. To honour his memory, the “Run for Ryan” event aims to bring together participants both in-person and virtually from around the globe, with all proceeds benefiting the Ryan McCabe Foundation.

The 300 places for the in-person event taking place on the **8th March at Chatelherault Country Park, Hamilton**, sold out in just a few days, but now we’re calling on people from all over the world to join us in the virtual event. So far, we’ve seen sign ups from Sydney to Boston, and independent organisers forming groups in London, Leeds, Leicester, Sydney, Cardiff, Boston and Dubai so far.

“Run for Ryan” is proudly sponsored by Odro, Bravehearts Boxing Gym, and Greenback Group. Thanks to their generous support, 100% of the £25 entry fee will go directly to the Ryan McCabe Foundation. This supports various charities that were close to Ryan’s heart, including Teenage Cancer Trust, MacMillan Cancer Support, Andy’s Man Club, Eilidh’s Rainbow, and Make a Wish Foundation.

Roisin McCabe – Ryan’s wife and organiser of the event – says: “I can’t thank everyone enough. Everyone who has signed up because they knew or knew of Ryan. Everyone who has reached out to me with words of kindness. You’re helping me and together we’ll help so many others through the charities the foundation will offer support to.”

Event Details:

- **In-Person Run:** The 10km run will take place at 11:00 AM GMT at Chatelherault Country Park.
- **Virtual Participation:** Runners worldwide can join virtually by completing a 10km run between March 7 and March 9, 2025. Participants are encouraged to share photos on social media and log their run on Strava using the tag @RunforRyan2025.
- **Donations:** Donations are also welcome from those who cannot participate in the event.

Link to event sign up: <https://www.eventzilla.net/e/run-for-ryan-2025-2138639299>

Link to donation page: https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/run-for-ryan-2025?utm_term=MjZdgQMe2 ■



INVESTIGO APPOINTS RICHARD EARDLEY AS CEO

Global talent solutions provider, The IN Group, has appointed Richard Eardley as Chief Executive Officer of Investigo, InX, and Definia. Eardley brings 35 years of industry expertise to the role, with a career spanning from rebuilding businesses post-global financial crisis, to driving cultural change in Asia. He plans on bringing this wealth of experience and knowledge to support the next phase of the business's expansion – helping existing team's achieve market dominant positions, expanding the brands into new markets and developing innovative new talent solutions.

Investigo has ambitious plans for the year ahead focusing on core sectors such as technology, finance and professional services and has significant growth opportunities in both public and private sectors.

"I am truly honoured to step into the role of CEO at Investigo, InX, and Definia," said Eardley. "Having spent 35 years in the recruitment industry, I've seen first-hand the transformational impact that great people and purposeful leadership can have on businesses, careers, and lives."

"Looking ahead, we plan to unlock the power of people by expanding our geographic footprint, innovating how we serve our clients, and fostering an inclusive, purpose-driven culture where everyone can thrive. This is an exciting new chapter for Investigo, and I'm incredibly excited to lead this as we continue to grow and make a lasting impact."

Eardley added: "Investigo is ahead of the curve in the range of value propositions it brings to market. Allied to the deep expertise and experience in the business, we are incredibly well-positioned to solve our customers' increasingly complex talent challenges. We can become more dominant in existing markets and leverage the entrepreneurial dynamic in the business to rapidly open expand into new markets. The future prospects are simply outstanding."

As part of Investigo's growth plan, Eardley will be tasked with bringing specialist recruitment services to new geographies and in new markets, developing new ways to serve customers and navigate market challenges. This vision is founded on unlocking the power of people, bringing talented industry experts to the forefront of innovation and sector developments.

Nick Baxter, CEO of **The IN Group** said: "Richard's appointment represents a clear signal of our ambition and the investment we are willing to make in evolving our business. For over 20 years, our focus has been on adapting to meet the needs of our customers, the market, and our people."

"We don't pretend to have all the answers," continued Baxter, "which is why Richard's experience is so valuable. He brings expertise we don't yet have and a proven track record of managing large, complex businesses. His leadership will help us continue moving forward and ensure we remain at the forefront of innovation and growth." ■

Did you know - 67% of Agencies have 'Strengthening Client Relationships' as the No.1 Priority for 2025?


Download the full Benchmarking Report to discover more.

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BACK TO THE FRONT

Tania Bowers, Global Public Policy Director at APSCo asks if there will be a better recruitment landscape for 2025.



As recruiters return from the holiday break with renewed hopes that the economic landscape and, subsequently, the recruitment market will bounce back in the year ahead, it's a prime time to reflect on the last few months and plan ahead for 2025. >



Addressing employment law

Employment rights and legislation will remain a hot topic for the sector over the next year as the government pushes ahead with plans for reforms. Timings of the changes will become clearer as the year progresses and implementation of the Employment Rights Bill will extend throughout 2025 and we will continue to help our members navigate the new landscape.

While we welcome change and indeed believe it is necessary given how quickly recruitment and employment are evolving, APSCo remains firm on its view that any modifications to employment legislation needs to be carefully managed. No change should be made that could inadvertently have a negative impact on one segment of the workforce in order to benefit another. That's why we believe it is so critical that recruitment businesses and all other parties in the talent supply chain are vocal on the issue over the next few years.

These stakeholders are the ones who have the intrinsic knowledge and experience in staffing to be able to highlight where there are flaws that could have adverse effects. The voice of recruitment must be heard as reforms continue and while APSCo will always act on behalf of the professional staffing sector, the severity of the situation necessitates more. I urge every company to ensure they share their views and insights on government consultations via a trade body or direct themselves.

The recruitment landscape is being reshaped and it's crucial that the final form this takes meets the needs of every worker, employer and recruiter in the country. >



A fit for purpose FWA

One area we expect to see specific focus on throughout 2025 is the development of the Fair Work agency (FWA). Having a single clear point of control and monitoring during a period of significant change is vital for the sake of consistency. However, what we do need to see as the FWA is created is collaboration between enforcement bodies and more government departments such as the Home Office, that can often work in silos. It is crucial that this is addressed to streamline processes, prevent unnecessary or irrelevant regulation and ensure there is the much-needed consistency in recruitment.

Aside from this, there are a number of other caveats that APSCo has urged the government to commit to as the FWA is developed, including:

- Implementing a comprehensive monitoring framework to evaluate effectiveness
- Enhancing protections for vulnerable workers, particularly those in low-paid sectors, without unnecessarily limiting those in the highly skilled flexible labour market
- Supporting robust data-sharing protocols between agencies
- Continuous staff development and expertise retention
- Scrutinising audits, service level agreements, key performance indicators and public responses if there are delays
- Reviewing the Conduct of Employment Agencies and Employment Businesses Regulations 2003, including the opt-out options for umbrella company workers >



Zero-hours reforms

The end of 2024 saw significant uproar around plans for zero-hour reforms, and rightly so. The proposals put to us so far aren't deliverable and will have a detrimental impact on access to critical temporary resources in highly skilled professions. This jeopardises crucial services in the likes of healthcare, education, construction and other sectors that are already facing significant staff shortages.

APSCo has advised the government that agency workers need to be excluded from these plans in order to support not only the recruitment needs of those remits where they play a critical role, but also enable more individuals to work in the flexible manner that suits their personal needs.

There isn't, in my view, a one-size-fits-all solution to this issue. There needs to be the recognition that temporary workers in the highly skilled and highly paid segment of the labour market don't need the same protections as those who are exposed to exploitative zero-hour contracts. Any future plans must account for the fact that guaranteed hours can't, and in some cases shouldn't, be offered due to the nature of the work.

We have reminded the that agreements between agency workers and employment businesses are not exploitative zero hours contracts and shouldn't be brought in to the Act as a result. There is a clear difference between exploitative zero hours contracts and agency work that is well-regulated through Employment Agency Standards, Agency Worker Regulations, the Conduct Regulations and the Employment Agencies Act.

Support through future upheaval

As the staffing sector looks set to face another year of change, having access to the right support is now more critical than ever. At APSCo we will continue to deliver the tools, advice and insights that the professional recruitment market needs to be able to best navigate whatever lies ahead. Whether that's through our legal helpdesk support, government lobbying or putting our members in the room with policy decision-makers to best drive positive change, we will continue to act in the best interests of our members and Trusted Partners.

What I will end on though is this point; it's not all doom and gloom. Yes, we have a fight on our hands to create a legislative landscape that is fit for purpose. However, it is also a prime time to really show what the professional staffing market is capable of. Recruitment is not just a 'bums on seats' service. It's a highly strategic element of business growth. With skills shortages still rife and employers struggling with the changes to employment law and rights, the value of recruiters is more evident. ■

OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE BOLD

As WilsonHCG rebrands, we speak to CEO John Wilson, and Chief Operating Officer Kim Pope to find out more about what the future holds.



WilsonHCG, the global integrated talent solutions specialist and a household name in the recruitment and RPO space, recently rebranded to Wilson, representing the start of a new era. But why has the organisation chosen now to push ahead with the reimagining of its brand, and what does the shift mean for the global talent and RPO market? ➤



The company was founded in 2002 by John Wilson, a name that will be more than familiar to many in the talent industry. Wilson helped to drive real change in talent acquisition and is seen as one of the pioneers of the RPO industry. Over the past 22 years, the organisation he started has grown significantly and now has offices in 65 countries over six continents.

John believes his company's initial success was partly due to its well-positioned offer to clients. "I launched Wilson because I thought the RPO market was too commoditised," he says. "There was a clear gap for an organisation that added true value with a human touch – and that's where Wilson really came into its own. We understood that people are an organisation's most valuable asset, but few others seemed to at the time. It was clear that not enough work was going into developing and applying a more data-backed approach to the talent market. I wanted to change that and we've spent the past two decades helping some of the world's most admired brands build sustainable workforces that really do drive business success."

Significant growth

Few other talent solutions providers have seen such significant growth in a relatively short period. According to the organisation's CEO, this rise has been supported, in part, by external investment. "In 2013, we did our first deal with a private equity firm. We're now on our third round of investment. Each step has brought its own growing pains, but it's been incredibly rewarding." For John, however, the real benefit of this success can be measured in other ways. "The best part has been seeing people grow and achieve things they probably thought were unimaginable, coupled with the impact we have on our clients," he says. "We have real data-backed insights driving our work, and the results we deliver to our clients are proof of that." >

The organisation chose Autumn 2024 to launch its rebrand. Kim Pope, Wilson's Chief Operating Officer, was heavily involved in the process. "It was something we've been planning for a while," says Pope. "The company has grown so much since it was established and the market has changed and evolved enormously. We wanted to make sure our brand aligns with the unique approach we take when helping global organisations build and maintain sustainable workforces that drive success. We aren't just advisors; we're practitioners and the rebrand showcases our evolution as a business. And, as for the name, a lot of people have referred to us as Wilson for a while now, so we decided to make it official!"

The new name and brand identity rounds off a busy 2024. Wilson fully integrated the Claro Analytics talent intelligence and labour market analytics platform into its portfolio – it acquired Claro in 2022 – and launched its AI-powered Labour Market Reports, which was named a Top HR Product by Human Resource Executive®. The company also grew its footprint in Latin America and expanded its advisory division due to increased demand. John believes that much of Wilson's success is due to a balance of culture, and hard work. "I am a firm believer that if we act like a small company, we'll grow, and if we act like a big company, we'll shrink. Every single person is valued here and is empowered to make a difference. Equally, it's also important to work hard through adversity and to get experience from it rather than running away.

We wouldn't be where we are today without that commitment and dedication from all our people."

Reflecting the talent landscape

John believes the rebrand provides a platform for further growth that reflects changes to the broader talent landscape. "The pace of change in our market has accelerated so much over the past decade," he says. "HR and talent directors are now playing a more critical role as organisations recognise the value that people add. We're seeing more organisations taking a holistic approach to talent, backed by talent intelligence, and they're reaping the rewards as a result. Taking an integrated approach to talent represents an opportunity for us as few other companies provide the range of talent solutions or level of service that we do."

As with other key players in the recruitment and RPO markets, AI is playing a key role in the organisation's future plans, however, John believes technology will never replicate the value that people can offer. "It's fair to say that AI is the future, but it will never truly replace the human emotion and judgement needed to hire someone and get it right. It will help in certain areas and can drive significant efficiencies, especially when it comes to data. AI can analyse vast amounts of data in minutes, and we've seen firsthand the benefits this brings thanks to our AI-powered labour market reports." >






Indeed, Wilson's decision to bring an external talent intelligence and analytics partner, in-house, has helped differentiate Wilson from its competitors. "The acquisition of what was formerly Claro Analytics means we now have access to enormous amounts of accurate, real-time data that helps us to make more effective decisions and ultimately boost our level of service," John notes.

The timing of this move was eerily prescient with both the UK's Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the Bureau of Labour Statistics across the Atlantic, receiving criticism for offering outdated and inaccurate data. John suggested this has been an issue for longer than many are aware. "We've recognised for some time that the widely available public labour market data isn't anywhere near as detailed as it should be," he says. "The inaccurate information has significant consequences and impacts overall productivity, not to mention business confidence. We knew we had to offer an alternative and now find that many of our clients are increasingly coming to us for talent and labour market intelligence, rather than relying on more traditional sources that are essentially built on out-dated surveys."

The organisation is continuing to use these insights to support its talent solutions while also striking a balance between technology and the human, relationship-driven side of the business. Wilson – the individual and the organisation – clearly believes the devil is in the details and is looking ahead to an intelligence-powered future for its clients and partners. ■

START FRESH

Sarah Swain, UK Marketing Director at Welcome to the Jungle discusses how an authentic employer brand can transform your 2025

A portrait of Sarah Swain, a woman with long brown hair, smiling. She is wearing a black top with a white floral pattern and a gold hoop earring. The background is a blurred office setting.

As a marketing leader, I've witnessed the rise of companies stepping up and investing in their employer brands. Over the past few years, it has become clear that businesses showcasing authentic values, transparent cultures, and meaningful opportunities are not only attracting the right talent but also driving long-term success and retention. Yet, for many companies, employer branding remains an afterthought. With the new year upon us, now is the perfect time to make a change. A fresh start awaits for businesses ready to align their employer brand with the values and expectations of today's workforce. >



The importance of employer branding

Your employer brand is not just a logo on your careers page or an inspirational tagline on your LinkedIn profile. It's the sum of everything people think and feel about your company as a place to work, formed by current employees, past candidates, and even outsiders. Whether you've intentionally curated this image or not, you already have an employer brand.

In a world where 95 per cent of job seekers research companies before applying, but two-thirds report finding insufficient information, your employer brand is often your first impression. It's a tool that can attract or repel talent, reduce employee turnover, and even impact your company's overall productivity. When your employer brand communicates effectively, it draws the right people, saving time and resources for both employers and candidates.

What makes an employer brand authentic?

Authenticity in employer branding isn't just a buzzword – it's a necessity. Candidates today are savvy and can spot when a company is sugar-coating its culture. A mismatch between the promise and reality

can lead to disengaged employees and high turnover.

Here are three hallmarks of an authentic employer brand:

- 1. Clarity of purpose and values:** Your company's mission, values, and goals are your North Star. Employees and candidates should not only understand what you do, but also why you do it. If sustainability or diversity are priorities for your company, make sure to demonstrate these values through actions, rather than just words.
- 2. Transparency:** Candidates appreciate honesty. Sharing salary bands upfront, explaining your hiring process, and being open about career development opportunities all help to build trust. In fact, jobs with advertised salaries receive at least 40 per cent more applications per job than those without, with this figure rising to 60 per cent in 2024 as candidates place more value on transparency.
- 3. Employee advocacy:** The most authentic voices in employer branding are those of your employees. Encourage them to share their experiences, whether through testimonials, blogs, or social media. Their personal stories bring your brand to life in a way that polished corporate messaging cannot. >



Why make employer branding a priority in 2025?

Attracting the right talent

An authentic and well-communicated employer brand ensures that candidates who apply are aligned with your company's mission and culture. This alignment leads to better hires, lower cost-per-hire, and reduced turnover.

Employee engagement and retention

A strong employer brand doesn't just attract talent; it keeps them engaged. When employees feel connected to a company's mission and values, they are productive, innovative, and ultimately more likely to stay.

Business reputation

Your employer brand also impacts how customers and stakeholders view your company. A business that values its people is often seen as more trustworthy and ethical.

Steps to revamp your employer brand in 2025

Audit your current employer brand

Start by understanding how your brand is currently perceived. Conduct surveys, gather employee feedback, and analyse candidate experiences. Look to identify both the positives and the gaps.

Define your employee value proposition (EVP)

Your EVP is what you offer employees in return for their skills and commitment. Beyond salary, this includes benefits, growth opportunities, culture, and work-life balance. Ask yourself: What makes us unique as an employer?

Align leadership and culture

Authenticity starts at the top. Leaders must embody the company's values and demonstrate them consistently. Decisions made at the leadership level must reflect the culture you aim to promote, and this needs to be communicated clearly throughout the organisation.

Use storytelling and content

Stories humanise your brand. Share employee achievements, behind-the-scenes moments, and celebrate milestones. These stories can be shared across various platforms including careers pages, social media, and recruitment materials. >

Commit to transparency

Candidates often complain about a lack of clarity during the hiring process. Fix this by being upfront about job expectations, growth opportunities, and even the challenges they may face. This transparency builds trust and shows respect for candidates' time and energy.

Maximise technology

With job searches becoming increasingly digital, your online presence matters more than ever. Showcasing your employer brand on platforms like Welcome to theJungle allows candidates to connect with your company. By embracing technology, you can amplify your efforts and engage candidates in new ways.

Companies getting it right!

Several UK-based companies exemplify what it means to have a strong and authentic employer brand. Brands like Ben, Perlego, Dojo, Clearscore, Klaviyo, and Wise consistently stand out by prioritising transparency, purpose-driven cultures, and employee advocacy. By staying true to their values and authentically showcasing their culture, these businesses are not only attracting top-tier talent but also building lasting reputations as exceptional employers.

- Ben: Known for its personalised employee benefits and strong focus on individual well-being including a monthly personal Ben Balance: for whatever works for you, whether that's Netflix, Spotify, or a really expensive cup of coffee!
- Perlego: Known for its commitment to learning and development, offering opportunities for growth and career progression, including unlimited coaching opportunities.

- Wise: Known for its transparency, purpose-driven mission, and open communication about pay, career progression, and company values.
- Dojo: Prioritises diverse, representative teams and a collaborative, inclusive culture. They support this through employee-led communities and partnerships to broaden talent access.
- Clearscore: Known for its commitment to work-life balance and mental health, prioritising employee well-being and sustainable careers. They have an in-house psychotherapist, coach and financial coach.
- Klaviyo: Known for its inclusive culture and diverse, innovative team, fostering a sense of belonging and opportunity for all. They are also committed to salary transparency!

Employer branding as a competitive edge


In an era where talent is the ultimate differentiator, employer branding is no longer optional. It's a strategic advantage that can help your business thrive in a competitive market. As you plan your goals for 2025, consider this: the companies that invest in building an authentic and appealing employer brand will attract the best talent, drive innovation, and achieve sustainable growth.

The start of a new year is an ideal time to reflect and realign your business goals. By prioritising your employer brand, you'll not only attract exceptional talent, but also create a workplace that inspires pride and loyalty. Make 2025 the year your business becomes the destination for those who want to thrive and make an impact! ■



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ALL FIRED UP

James Osborne, Co-Founder of The Recruitment Network, outlines key drivers for a successful year.



10.30am on the first day of 2025, and I think I have just figured it all out... >



Well, not the meaning of life, but it is certainly the meaning I have found this year that I hope will resonate with one or two of you when you reflect back on the past 12 months and as we inevitably start thinking about the year ahead.

2024 was a defining year for me as it was for many of us.

It was brilliant in many ways. There were so many highs, enjoyed with so many people I truly respect, that I look back on this year with huge pride – I love the wider network I am part of and the team I get to play with every day, for all the small and large successes they have achieved in 2024.

But, in other ways, it was challenging beyond belief, and tested everything we knew (and thought we knew) about our work, about the resilience of our businesses, about leadership in uncertain times, about what we actually truly value in life, about the people we should and need to hang out with, and most importantly... about ourselves.

In a bizarre sort of way, I love years like these.

Put the wins to one side, I see these as the moments we have been building up to. To see how we cope when the things outside of our control don't quite go the way we thought they were going to.

How to put all those skills that we have learned up to now, to the test?

Like any marathon runner will tell you, how do you push through "the wall" when you just want to stop and rest?

How do we keep scoring goals, when it feels like the goalposts keep moving?

How do we keep smiling when sometimes, we just don't feel like smiling anymore?

We have asked and been asked these questions continuously this year, and in many ways, we have answered them every time. Good job everyone. Genuinely. Good job.

But, within those questions lies the key to all of this. The answer to why we all keep going, keep pushing, keep driving for success. The fundamental thing that each of us, individually, go back to when things becoming challenging.

This is not some universal thing that works for everyone; you will have your own thing that works for you. There is no blueprint here.

But there is your thing, and you can identify that, if you can bottle it up and use it as your superpower when you need a shot in the arm, then I think we're in a pretty good place to kick start 2025.

I think I have now managed to distil my thing down to three simple ingredients that make me not only effective when I need to be, but most importantly happy when I want to be. My three ingredients are Acceptance, Experience and Impact. >



Acceptance

When we compare ourselves to others, you will always lose. There is always a better taken, sunnier, nicer view Instagram photo somewhere. You will never win.

Don't get me wrong, I have no issues with "showing off" all the good stuff on social media – in fact I love it! It personally brings a huge smile to my face seeing people doing fun things, celebrating their successes, being happy, living their best lives. It inspires me want to continuously do more, be more.

But when we compare ourselves to that, then it goes wrong.

When we compare ourselves to our own potential, however, when we accept who and where we are today and compare that against where we could be if we exercised our real potential, then that creates an opportunity (and a desire) to learn and grow... and that is a good thing.

When you learn self-acceptance, when you learn self-approval, you can't fail to win.

Impact

On Christmas Day, I genuinely prefer giving presents and seeing people's reactions when they open them, than I do receiving them. I know a lot of people feel the same.

It's that feeling that we are, in some small way in that moment, changing someone's life for the better. That just feels good.

I am convinced that one of the most direct routes to eternal happiness (OK, I am going a bit OTT here with the eternal bit, but I honestly feel this is getting pretty close to it!) is making a difference to someone else.

When you reflect back on the measurable impact you have made this year to those people around you, not for money, not for any other reason than it was the right thing to do and it just felt right, then you start to really get a sense of what real success is all about.

The late Jimmy Carter (US President) said of impact, "I have one life and one chance to make it count for something... my faith demands that I do whatever I can, wherever I am, whenever I can, for as long as I can with whatever I have to try to make a difference."

Of course, as we know within the concept of Ikigai, if you can get paid at the same time to make an impact...

Experience

Life to me is all about experiences - making them, embracing them, challenging them, living them.

When something happens to you, whether you created it or otherwise, that is an experience. The key is to fall into that experience. Taste it. Feel it. Understand it. Use it.

2024 was abundant with experiences – many new, many never felt before. New types of Highs. Lows. Pain. Anger. Guilt. Joy. You name it, it came at us.

This is just part of the colourful tapestry that makes us who we are – when an experience comes, take it in. Understand it. Enjoy the emotion for what it is.

... and then build on it. >



The addiction for me comes from both making experiences, but then the actual feeling I get from every experience itself.

So what does all these ramblings mean for 2025?

For some of you reading this, probably nothing. These are my ramblings, my experiences of the last 12 months, my translation of what it all means.

But for some of you, I hope, it will give you a nudge to not just reflect back on last year but to actually do something with it. Otherwise, what's the point?!

What am I going to do?

Well, I am convinced there are a definite number of core pillars that drive success for each of us. I have seen this day in day out across the many people we work with across our community, who every day this year have pushed and hustled and dug deep to make the best of 2024 (whatever "best" meant for them).

These are my 5, that I will obsess about this year (I know that is a strong word, but I genuinely feel that if you don't obsess about your pillars then they never really happen). I am not suggesting you follow my 5, find your own that work for you, but at the very least do find your own.

I have written these down on a note that I shall carry with me every day in 2025...

Opportunity

I have always been an optimist and with that tends to come a good dose of opportunism. As far as I am concerned, there has to be opportunity within everything that happens to me and around me.

The fun is trying to figure that out as you go.

How big is that opportunity, how possible is it and how likely is it to happen comes down to the four other pillars (see below), but without something you genuinely want to stretch yourself for, to wake up for every day, without that opportunity you strive for, we become wanderers, blown around by factors outside of our control and disengaged by the journey.

We saw a lot of that in 2024. Disheartened people "waiting, hoping for the markets to improve". Too busy dwelling on the reality to see the opportunity.

My favourite author, Dr Seuss, refers to it as the place where people are just waiting for a train to go, or a bus to come, or a plane to go or the mail to come, or the rain to go, or the phone to ring... you get my point! When that happens, when you get stuck in the Waiting Place, the days drag on, the years feel long and you may or may not be successful... but who knows?! Certainly not you.

This was for many people, one of the main stories of 2024, but I hope won't be in the new year. >

Capability

The world we live in today is very different. It's changed and is changing.

That's fine and expected, but only as long as you can accept the change that is going on around us and then respond accordingly. That means being "future fit".

That means having the right set of skills to do the job tomorrow, to future proof your capability.

The skills you have built up over the years have got you to where you are today, but they won't necessarily get you to where you are trying to go next. I have been asking myself this question all over the Christmas period – what skills do I need to have on my 2025 CV if I want to achieve my full potential this year?

I need to evolve at the same pace (if not faster) as the environment around me, and so does my business.

Potential

Henry Ford hit the nail on the head when he said, "whether you think you can or you think you can't, you're probably right."

Success is always down to our mindset.

How much do we want it? How much are we willing to go through to get it?

Later this year, I'll be taking part in Quest, a 1000km Ultra Triathlon from Glasgow to London to raise money for Great Ormond Street hospital all in the name of two amazing souls (Ryan McCabe from Odoro and TJ, my first son) who both left this planet too soon.

Physically this will stretch me beyond anywhere I have been before, but I know I have it in me as I think we all do, but it won't be my body that will determine if I compete it or not.

It will be my mind.

I have seen too many people limit their potential in 2024, because they didn't have the right mindset. They just didn't want it enough, they just didn't obsess about the opportunity enough, especially when things got challenging.

Easy to say, harder to do.

... but always the difference that makes the difference. >



Capacity

If there is one thing that 2024 has taught us the most, is the true value of time.

It is the most precious commodity on this planet and yet the one thing I think we abuse and disrespect the most. Time.

Time to enjoy those experiences. Time with the people we cherish the most, whilst we still have time to cherish them. Time to do more of the things that allow us to outperform our potential.

Time.

In 2024, I started to understand how to better protect some of my time. This was huge for me.

How to ringfence moments in my day to do the things that really mattered to me, to my business, to my wellbeing. To achieve Flowstate (if you don't know, look it up!).

Again, easy to say, harder to do!

How efficient I can be in 2025, will be the determining factor for me. I will not achieve those opportunities I am setting out, if I don't create the time to use my capability.

Nor will I enjoy the journey.

Cadence

If any of you do any form of cycling, or running, or swimming, you will know the importance of cadence. Creating a consistent rhythm in your activity. A beat.

The heartbeat that pumps the motion, that propels you forward.

It creates consistency. A greater sense of stability – two things in particular that were being challenged the most this year.

When you lose that rhythm, when you lose that cadence, your success spikes up and down, as does your mindset, your emotions, your mental resilience. They become a mess.

We spent a lot of last year talking about doing the basics brilliantly and consistently, and we will continue to beat that drum in 2025.

So there it is. That's me done for the year just gone and now fired up for the year ahead, whatever it brings.

My 2024 unwrapped into three words:

- Acceptance
- Impact
- Experience

..and my 5 pillars of success for 2025:

- Opportunity
- Capability
- Potential
- Capacity
- Cadence

I genuinely believe with the right mindset, the right skills, the right people around us and the right focus we can all achieve our goals for 2025... and that is certainly what I intend to do.

As Dr Seuss concludes:

"You're off to Great Places! Today is your day!

Your mountain is waiting. So... get on your way! ■





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PRODUCTIVITY TO DELIVER SUCCESS





Simon Kent, Editor,
The Global Recruiter

“ From tech to finance, operations to strategy 2025 is the year you can do more for everyone and get the results your business deserves. The opinions, insights and case studies here are designed to help along the way ”

PRODUCTIVITY

Productivity has been a watchword for UK industry for a while. It seems an elusive target – what does it mean to be more productive, but more important how is productivity achieved? Do you invest up front and wait for the ROI? Do you make efficiencies and look to be able to do more – or at least the same – with less?

Over the next few months we'll explore the concepts around productivity and the methods by which it can be improved. The recruitment industry presents a number of levers and potential drivers businesses can use.

From tech to finance, operations to strategy 2025 is the year you can do more for everyone and get the results your business deserves. The opinions, insights and case studies here are designed to help along the way. ■

HARD MARKET, MAXIMUM EFFICIENCY

Michael Goodwin, co-founder at recruitment investment firm Jigsaw Equity indite three areas to enhance productivity.

UK recruiters are experiencing a challenging market. As the REC reported for December, hiring has continued to slow. Businesses have been looking to cut staffing costs due to tax rises, new worker rights, and lower business confidence in the economy. >



PRODUCTIVITY

In a market like this, recruitment executives and business owners can quickly become reactive, furiously trying to keep their firms on track for their goals and growth targets. However, in down markets, it is essential to ensure that your business is performing optimally – operating at maximum efficiency and productivity so you know you’re getting the most out of the resources available to you.

By making proactive, strategic decisions in your business, such as leveraging the right technology, refining your internal processes, or outsourcing to specialists, you can unlock new levels of productivity, enhance profitability, and create a buffer for your business. Here are three things to focus on.

The power of technology

Traditionally, technology and recruitment have not always gone hand-in-hand. Beyond LinkedIn, a laptop and a mobile phone, some firms haven’t seen as much of an immediate need to invest in the proper technology and systems. But if you’re one of those firms resisting, now could be a great time to start harnessing the power of technology to make your business more productive. Many products in the market require limited upfront investment but allow

your team to make better use of their time, so they’re spending it on the things that really move the needle.

For example, automation tools can assist consultants with repetitive tasks such as CV parsing, job postings, candidate engagement, and interview scheduling. This enables them to concentrate on tasks that require a human touch, such as high-touch interactions with clients and candidates. Other systems that have seen recent improvements include analytics-enhanced applicant tracking systems. These can help track the effectiveness of sourcing channels, optimise interview processes, and even measure recruiter effectiveness, providing valuable insights into where your business can improve its efficiency.

Another area that can enhance productivity is AI-powered recruitment technology. It is a topic many are tired of hearing about, but AI has been shown to help users achieve significant reductions in time-to-hire, with time savings improving each year. Whether aiding in analysing CVs to identify the best matches or utilising predictive analytics, AI is a field you shouldn’t overlook if you are striving to enhance your business’s productivity. >

Implementing the right tools can save firms hours, improve efficiency, and enhance the client and candidate experience. Most importantly, this will contribute to a better-performing business – something every firm will be grateful for in a down market.

Refining your internal processes

When a recruitment business is in a strong market, it can perform well and grow quickly, but it can also become bloated and inefficient. A more challenging market can often lead to efficiency gains by forcing you to look internally and identify inefficiencies in your internal processes. These can then be refined and reformed into improved versions of their former selves.

There are many ways in which having detailed and specific internal processes can help a business run optimally. One of the key areas is getting the most out of your employees. By having robust KPI frameworks, firms can better understand consultant performance and identify areas for improvement. It may be that when people hit their targets, they are given a certain level of flexibility. In a more challenging market, implementing or revising your standardised, consistent, and

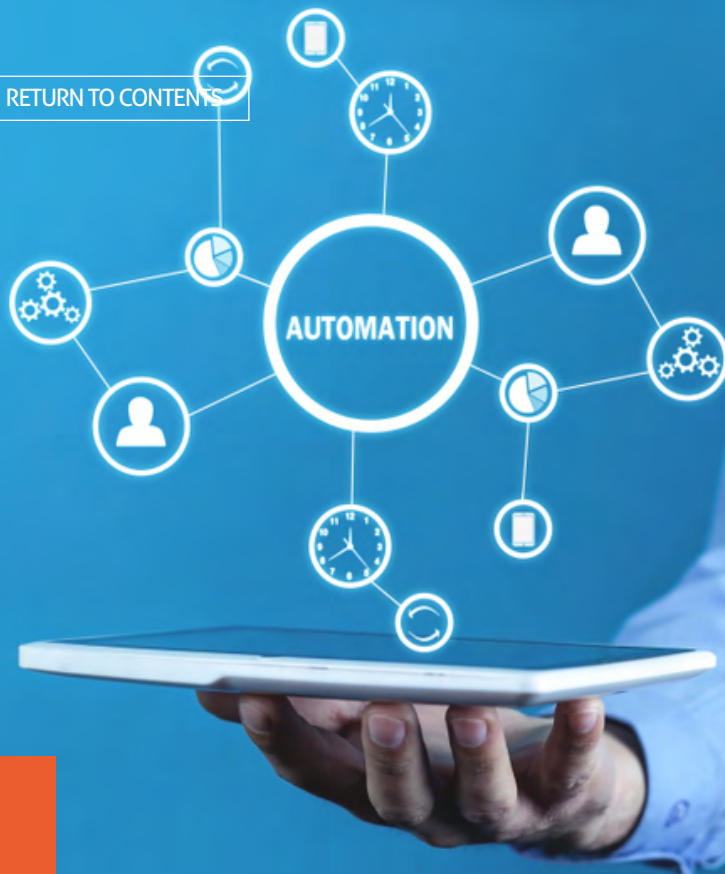
regular performance reviews and ensuring the presence of structured development programmes can help get the best out of staff that may now be struggling to perform.

Another important area for businesses to consider, especially in a downturn, is the necessity for streamlined and cost-effective internal processes while ensuring that customer service remains uncompromised. These elements can occasionally appear contradictory. Nevertheless, by establishing standardised procedures for things like candidate screening, interview assessments, and placement verification, companies can minimise costly errors and also enhance placement success rates. Additionally, creating clear communication protocols between teams and implementing systematic feedback loops with clients ensures consistently high service delivery while reducing resource waste.

Outsourcing and bringing in specialist knowledge

Many recruitment executives wear multiple hats, especially if they're working in smaller or growing firms. While this multitasking is often required and cost-effective initially, it can be counterproductive in the long term. >





Outsourcing non-core tasks can significantly improve a business's efficiency, freeing your team to focus on revenue-generating activities. Sometimes, virtual or in-person assistants can take administrative tasks away from fee earners. Other times, specialised areas such as payroll or accounting can be outsourced.

Outsourcing non-core tasks is a natural step as businesses grow, and the benefits can be vast. In addition to saving time, you can benefit from greater cost efficiencies and access to specialist expertise outside your circle of competence.

Some of the most common areas to outsource are admin tasks, financial management, legal and HR, marketing, and IT. Often, this will be done through external firms or via advisors. However, there are also other ways to benefit from specialist knowledge. If there is an area needing significant improvement – or the opposite – that is a real strength and differentiator in your business that provides a competitive advantage, it is worth considering whether there is a role for a functional specialist on your board.

For example, bringing on a non-executive marketing expert could be worthwhile if the business has always struggled with its marketing strategy. Having a specialist board member has two key benefits compared to using an external firm: firstly, they are more likely to provide a long-term perspective that aligns with the company goals; and secondly there is much better long-term accountability.

Where to focus your efforts

When navigating a challenging market, it's crucial to be strategic about where you focus your efforts. Take time to evaluate which initiatives will deliver the strongest return on investment, both in terms of time and resources spent. Every recruitment business faces different challenges, so your priorities need to align with your specific situation.

Enhancing your efficiency and productivity isn't just about surviving the current downturn – it's about building a more resilient business ready to capitalise when market conditions improve. Focus your energy on the changes that will deliver meaningful results, and tackle them systematically rather than trying to transform everything at once. This measured approach will help you drive sustainable improvements while maintaining the day-to-day operation of your business. ■

BE SMART, BE PRODUCTIVE

Aleks Szymanski, President, Scrypt, Inc., the company behind specialist job board Workarma, considers best practices to drive recruiters forward.



RECRUITMENT verb
interchangeable
1 put each of two
place. 2 exchange
interchangeable adjective
1 put each of two
place. 2 exchange
interchangeable noun (pl)
1 a person or thing that can be
exchanged. 2 a road or
passage from one place to another.

The recruitment landscape is constantly shifting. If companies are to stay competitive, they must embrace innovative strategies, especially as technology continues to reshape how talent is sourced, vetted, and taken onboard. Recruitment is no longer just about filling a vacancy, it also requires identifying the right person with the right skillset who also aligns with an organisation's culture and long-term goals. and explores how smart recruiting is driving the industry forward. Smart recruiting offers a dynamic approach to recruitment, leveraging data, technology, and strategic thinking to build a future-proof workforce. >



Prioritise data-driven decision-making

One of the most significant shifts in recruitment has been using data analytics as part of the hiring process. Traditional methods, such as relying on resumes and interviews alone, often leave too much room for subjectivity. Smart recruiting uses data to assess candidates more objectively, providing a more comprehensive view of their potential.

Tools like Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) and Candidate Relationship Management (CRM) platforms can analyse various data points - from previous job performance and skill sets, to cultural fit and career trajectory. This allows recruiters to identify patterns, and make more informed decisions about which candidates are best suited for a role.

When utilising data-driven recruiting, a useful tip is to track key metrics such as time-to-hire, quality of hire, and cost-per-hire. Doing so allows you to refine your recruitment processes and procedures. Similarly, using predictive analytics can help identify which candidates are more likely to succeed in specific roles. Plus, incorporating sentiment analysis provides an understanding of candidate preferences, while improving the overall recruitment experience.

Embrace AI and automation for improved efficiency

Artificial intelligence (AI) and automation are transforming many industries, and the recruitment sector is no different. They are making the process faster and more efficient, while also reducing human error. Using these technologies to automate repetitive tasks like resume screening, interview scheduling, and candidate follow-

ups allows recruiters to focus on more strategic aspects of their job – such as building relationships with top talent, and aligning hires with long-term company goals.

AI-powered tools can also help reduce unconscious bias in the hiring process. Indeed, by analysing candidates based on data rather than gut instinct, smart recruiting ensures the most qualified individuals rise to the top, regardless of their background, race, or gender.

There are many ways to incorporate AI and automation into your recruitment strategy. These include utilising resume parsing tools that scan job applications for specific keywords and skills. Other AI tools include chatbots that can pre-screen candidates by asking basic questions and providing initial information about the job. Plus, recruiters can use automated workflows to streamline interview scheduling and candidate follow-ups, saving them valuable time.

Enhance the candidate experience with personalisation

With so many job options available in the market, candidates have a lot of roles to choose from. As a result, recruitment companies need to work harder than ever to attract and retain top-tier talent. A positive candidate experience is essential, as it reflects your company's values and culture.

One way smart recruiting improves the candidate experience is by providing a more personalised, human touch throughout the hiring process. AI can help tailor communications based on individual candidates, ensuring that the process feels personalised even when managed at scale. >



When looking to improve the candidate experience, some best practices include using data to send personalised, tailored job recommendations and communications based on a candidate's background and interests. Remember, applicants appreciate transparency and updates, so regularly inform them where they stand in the hiring process, and what to expect next. You should also provide them with feedback, even if they are not selected for the role. This will enhance your employer brand and help candidates to improve their skills.

The power of employer branding

We now live in a digital age. Given the popularity of social media and online reviews, employer branding is now crucial. These days, candidates do their research, looking at a company's reviews, social media presence, and employee testimonials to gauge whether your organisation is somewhere they would like to work. This being the case, companies need to develop a strong, positive employer brand to attract top talent.

Employers should highlight their company culture, as well as their values, on any job postings and social media channels. At the same time, existing employees should be encouraged to become brand ambassadors, and share their positive experiences online.

Businesses can also showcase career development opportunities and benefits that set them apart from competitors. After all, building a positive employer brand can help attract more candidates, while ensuring those who apply are aligned with a company's mission and values.

Expand talent pools through remote and flexible work

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the way businesses operate has changed dramatically, with remote working becoming the norm. While some companies have returned to the office, many have embraced remote or hybrid work models. This shift has opened up new opportunities for recruiters, allowing them to expand their talent pools far beyond geographic limitations. >



Recruiting in a remote world requires a different approach. Smart recruiting focuses on sourcing talent globally, offering flexible work arrangements, and ensuring the onboarding process is as engaging for remote employees as it is for those in the office.

Popular methods for recruiting remote talent include virtual job fairs, online networking events, and digital assessments. Each of these allows companies to engage with a wide range of candidates.

In addition, job descriptions should emphasise flexibility, remote work policies, and work-life balance. This is a huge draw for today's workforce. You can also make new hires feel connected and engaged with your company culture from day one, even if they're working remotely, via a seamless virtual onboarding process.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)

Companies that prioritise diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are not only more attractive to job seekers, they also benefit from improved innovation, creativity, and performance.

Smart recruiting integrates DEI principles at every stage of the hiring process. From using AI tools to reduce bias in resume screening, to partnering with organisations that focus on underrepresented groups, smart recruitment ensures a more inclusive hiring process.

Best DEI practices include removing personal information from resumes and applications to minimise bias, as well as tapping into diversity-focused

recruitment platforms catering to minority or underrepresented groups. Training hiring managers on unconscious bias and inclusive interviewing techniques is also recommended.

Continuous learning and adaptation


Finally, recruitment professionals should commit to continuous learning to stay updated with the latest trends and technologies. Smart recruiting is not a static process; as new tools and techniques emerge, it's essential for recruiters to adapt, experiment, and refine their strategies. Being adaptable enables companies to respond to evolving market needs, and attract the best talent in a competitive environment.

Managers and recruiters can continue to expand their knowledge by attending industry webinars and conferences on the latest recruitment trends. This is in addition to engaging with professional communities and networks to share insights, and learn from others in the field. Furthermore, experimenting with new tools and strategies, and measuring their effectiveness, can also help continually improve your recruitment process.


Recruitment today is no longer about filling vacancies as quickly as possible. It's about finding the right talent that aligns with your company's values, goals, and future vision. Smart recruiting is about using data, AI, and personalised strategies to create a more efficient, inclusive, and candidate-friendly process. Companies that embrace these practices will not only attract top-tier talent, but also build more agile, innovative, and resilient workforces. ■

VALUE vs INCOME

Louise Archer, Founder and CEO of recruitment training business, Retrained Search offers a view on where recruiters are going wrong with their business strategies.

A portrait of Louise Archer, a woman with long, wavy blonde hair, smiling. She is wearing a black top and a necklace. The background is a blurred indoor setting with a window and curtains.

Following the post-pandemic surge in hiring, the recruitment industry initially appeared to be on the mend. However, last year, the sector encountered an unexpected setback, with a 3 per cent decline in hires driven by limited talent availability. However, it's not all bleak for recruiters as 28 per cent of businesses boosted their hiring in the third quarter, according to the Total Jobs Hiring Trends Index. >



However, to drive continued growth into 2025, now is the time for recruiters to refine their business strategy and focus on increasing both value and income, particularly in an industry where payment isn't always guaranteed.

How the contingency model is impacting your business

As it stands, the majority of recruitment agencies use the well-established contingency model to gain hires and generate income. However, this commonplace approach to business could, in fact, be restricting revenue and growth.

As the market continues to pick up, recruiters need to think about which business model is going to bring more certainty in income, while boosting value, reputation and commercial partnerships.

The traditional contingency model is rife with uncertainty, with recruiters only paid after a candidate has been placed and has commenced their new role. What's more, 100 per cent of that fee is only guaranteed should that new-starter remain in their role for the entirety of the initial 12-week period.

Combine this with having to compete with other agencies to secure the hire – it's no wonder many recruiters feel exasperated when resources are wasted during the hiring process and there is nothing to show for hours of hard work at the end. For businesses, this can also impact the quality of the candidate and the recruitment service, which can create a negative perception of your business and approach to market.

Interestingly, the contingency model only averages a 25 per cent fill rate, despite 100 per cent of effort going into receiving the fee. When compared to retained search, with an average of a 97 per cent success rate and a secured fee before starting the work, it is a wonder why more recruiters don't switch their business model. >

Exploring new methods of recruitment to boost value and income

As the industry rebuilds after the unexpected slump of 2023, recruiters would benefit from exploring alternative ways to optimise both value and income to enhance the growth of their business. Retained search is not discussed enough in the industry and could be the tool that not only improves revenue streams but also adds significant value to your business.

Recruiters are often nervous to take the leap, with businesses assuming retained search is only for 'high profile' hires, which is not the case. In reality, moving over to the retained search model secures you a fee, before investing time and energy into finding the right candidate for the role.

Furthermore, retained recruitment offers a higher level of financial security compared to the contingency model, allowing recruiters to step away from the constant hustle of chasing businesses and placements to secure income. Working in a retained basis ensures that you will always generate income, while building a stronger reputation for your business through the commitment of finding the best talent.

While operating on a contingent basis can come hand-in-hand with sizeable commissions for top tier talent, retained recruitment provides a much more stable revenue stream, freeing you from the uncertainty, contingency based recruitment carries. In the constantly evolving climate of the recruitment industry and wider business community, this model should be seriously considered for guaranteed revenue and increased business growth. >



The best strategy for value and income

The Coronavirus pandemic brought significant changes to the recruitment industry. After an initial boom when the pandemic ended, a decline in hires followed in 2023, highlighting the volatility the industry is facing.

With the contingency model, income is never guaranteed, especially in an industry where a sudden shortage of available positions could unexpectedly arise. Regardless of market fluctuations, retained recruitment provides a stable and constant revenue stream, which reduces financial risk and enables recruiters to build long-term and valuable partnerships with businesses.

Ultimately, in an unpredictable market, retained recruitment offers the security and stability needed for long term business growth, while boasting the potential to revolutionise the recruitment industry in the short and long-term. ■

