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WELCOME

SIMON KENT
EDITOR

There's little doubt that we currently live in one of the most uncertain and turbulent times. (I write this on the day the UK Prime Minister is fighting for his current job, an issue which is overshadowing several international crises and following a month when the US president has threatened trade tariffs over Greenland.)

Make no mistake there are increasingly few things we can control in life, which means that having the ability to cope with uncertainty and change is probably the number one skills for all businesses and entrepreneurs. That and consistency. Advice on gaining fitness (mental and physical) frequently centres on consistency, prizing this above intensity. The same could be said for the recruitment industry.

By being consistent, steady, assured in the what, where, why and value of what a business is delivering it is possible to hold and gain ground. Clients, talent and consultants will find yours is business to rely on – a certainty in a world awash with chance.

The Global Recruiter UK Awards have just opened for entries. It's earlier this year because we want to make sure we give the industry the chance to concentrate on what they do best, to present themselves in the best way and for us to celebrate that as well. Headline sponsored again by Devyce, the Awards are gaining even more importance and meaning in an industry which continues to deliver despite everything.

So show us what you can do: the talent, determination, innovation and value delivered by the recruitment sector is undeniable – this is your chance to show how you're contributing to its ongoing success. ■



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Publisher: Gary King
gary@theglobalrecruiter.com

Business Development Manager: Taireen Hussain
taireen@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



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THE GLOBAL RECRUITER UK AWARDS 2026 ARE NOW OPEN FOR ENTRIES

As the year swings into action, The Global Recruiter are already preparing to assess, identify and celebrate the best of the best from the UK's recruitment industry. From best companies to best consultants, best services, innovations, DEI and marketing there isn't one area of recruitment practice that isn't covered by these comprehensive and highly regarded awards.

The key to The Global Recruiter Awards is that they are designed and judged by industry experts. Headline sponsored by Devyce, the criteria is clear, and the lack of entrance fee or need for pre-qualification means there is a level playing field across all categories – in some categories, the latest, newest recruitment company can go head to head with the more established organisations, judged like for like.

This year entries can be completed online so once you've logged on and started your entry you can continue to update until the deadline. There's no excuse for you not to be able to put your best foot

forward. The only thing not to forget is the deadline of April 30th for entries.

And in the usual style of The Global Recruiter, celebrations will commence on 9th September 2026 at The Steel Yard, London (<https://thesteelyard.london/>). Awards and highly commended recognitions will be handed out to the deserving. The event is always a highlight of the recruitment calendar, bringing together the great and the good of the industry with great music, a fantastic atmosphere and an unforgettable good time for all.

What are you waiting for, **Register and enter here today**

These award don't just recognise greatness they attract more attention, more great clients, candidates and consultants. If you want to give your business a wet deserved boost – start your entry today! See you in September! ■



FIND THE RIGHT PEOPLE

AGENCY WORK REGULATORY FRAMEWORK CONSULTATION OPENS

The government has opened a consultation entitled *Make Work Pay: Modernising the Agency Work Regulatory Framework*: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/make-work-pay-modernising-the-agency-work-regulatory-framework>

Commenting on this move, Crawford Temple, CEO of Professional Passport welcomed the move saying the government's intention to modernise the agency work regulatory framework was good, and the focus on transparency, security and choice broadly positive: "Proposals such as clearer information on rates and deductions, alongside giving workers greater choice in how they are engaged and paid, are steps in the right direction," he added.

"However, it is important to recognise the realities of the current labour supply chain. Responsible umbrella companies are already operating on very tight margins while carrying significant compliance and financial risk," he said. "In many cases, umbrellas have limited control over assignment rates or the behaviour of agencies and end-hirers in the chain, yet are often closest to the worker and expected to absorb the costs. Measures that improve transparency throughout the entire supply chain are therefore essential if these reforms are to be fair and effective.

"Without end-to-end transparency on rates, margins and deductions, there is a real risk that umbrellas will be pushed into increasingly precarious financial positions while agencies retain disproportionate control over workers' engagement and pay. A genuinely level playing field requires consistent responsibility on all parties in the chain, not just those at the point of payroll."

Dave Chaplin, CEO and founder, ContractorCalculator believes one key proposal is ensuring genuine choice for the contractor. "In particular, removing the ability for recruiters to make offers of work conditional on the use of a specific umbrella company is critical," he said. "Historically, this practice of forcing workers into particular arrangements is precisely why so many contractors were funnelled into high-risk, and in some cases, outright tax-avoidance schemes. The proposed approach should significantly curtail that behaviour.

"As a consequence, recruiters who currently rely entirely on third-party umbrellas will need to ensure they can offer in-house payroll, because not all contractors will want to work through an umbrella company. The rules will change so that employment businesses cannot make work-finding services conditional upon workers working through an umbrella company. The default position appears to be agency payroll, unless the contractor already operates their own limited company or has chosen an umbrella of their own."

According to Chaplin the consultation also proposes to introduce more clarity and transparency when it comes to rates of pay. "The government's own Agency Worker Survey Report in 2021 found that workers are unclear about who is paying them and at what rate they are being paid," he said. "Transparency around pay and deductions is extremely welcome, signalling the end of the "assignment rate" that has caused so much confusion in the temporary labour market and made it difficult for contractors to understand their payslips.

"All in all, the latest proposals will move the market closer to being fair and balanced." ■

HIRING DELAYS WORSE THAN ECONOMIC INSTABILITY



Data from international recruitment firm Robert Half has shown a striking shift in business sentiment for 2026: UK employers are now more concerned about slow internal hiring processes than about macroeconomic and geopolitical instability.

According to the firm's latest research, the top concern for businesses is the ability to hire talent quickly (65 per cent), surpassing traditionally dominant worries such as macroeconomic uncertainty and budget pressures. The findings highlight the extent of ongoing skills shortages across specialist functions, including finance & accounting, IT and technology, administration, marketing, and legal.

With talent remaining scarce, employers fear losing high quality candidates due to a lack of in-house resources, alongside slow decision making and inefficient internal hiring processes.

Beyond hiring speed, employers identified several other significant talent pressures. Retaining top performers, finding qualified applicants, and attracting candidates with niche skills were jointly ranked as the second-highest concern (63 per cent) among business leaders in 2026. Together, these pressures are fuelling the rise of interim and project-based hiring, as businesses seek more immediate access to specialist skills and greater protection for business continuity.

This growing pressure reflects an increasingly competitive market for specialist professional talent, with companies vying for individuals who can support transformation, regulatory compliance, growth programmes and digital initiatives.

Despite the challenges, employers are planning to boost headcount across multiple professional functions this year:

- **Finance & Accounting:**
 - 58 per cent of employers plan to expand permanent headcount by the summer (up from 50 per cent in H2 2025)
 - 43 per cent intend to increase contract or interim resources (up from 39 per cent in H2 2025)

- **IT & Technology:**
 - 56 per cent of businesses plan to hire more permanent staff in H1 (up from 45 per cent in H2 2025)
 - 39 per cent expect to grow their contract talent pools (up from 36 per cent in H2 2025)
- **Legal:**
 - 42 per cent aim to hire more permanent employees in H1 2026 (up from 26 per cent in H2 2025)
 - 31 per cent plan to expand contract or interim hiring in H1 (up from 23 per cent in H2 2025)

This data indicates that demand for talent is set to accelerate, even as organisations grapple with internal bottlenecks in accessing the skilled professionals they need.

“UK businesses are facing an unexpected challenge as we move further into 2026: the biggest risk to operational continuity is no longer economic volatility; it’s the speed at which companies can hire,” comments Matt Weston, Senior Managing Director UK & Ireland, at Robert Half. “In a market characterised by acute talent shortages across finance, technology and legal, skilled professionals often receive multiple offers and move quickly. When internal processes are slow or too complex, employers risk missing out entirely.

“This marks a clear shift in the talent landscape,” he adds. “External pressures will always influence business confidence, but right now, what appears to be limiting competitiveness most is an internal factor – namely, process inefficiency. This is why we’re seeing such strong growth in interim and project-based hiring, as firms seek immediate access to specialist skills without being constrained by lengthy recruitment cycles.

“Streamlining recruitment, empowering faster decision-making and creating a compelling candidate experience are no longer ‘nice-to-haves’ in this environment. They are essential capabilities for safeguarding growth and ensuring that organisations don’t fall behind in the race for talent.” ■



UK COMPANIES UNDER FIRE FOR PAY DECISIONS

Research from HiBob, the company behind people management platform Bob, has found a growing 'fairness gap' between how organisations make pay decisions and how they are experienced, defended and trusted.

Despite 83 per cent of people managers saying they can clearly justify pay and promotion decisions with supporting data, scrutiny of those decisions is widespread. In the past 12 months, over three-quarters report decisions being formally challenged or appealed across promotion allocation (76 per cent), setting or adjusting base pay (78 per cent), and assigning performance ratings that influence pay (78 per cent).

The 'fairness gap' has consequences beyond dissatisfaction for employees. Over nine in 10 (93 per cent) managers say a lack of timely and relevant people or financial data contributed to a negative team outcome over the past year. 30 per cent say it played a large or very large role in a high performer being underpaid or under-recognised, while 27 per cent say it contributed to a promotion being given before the individual was ready.

Others report wider business impacts, with 24 per cent saying pay spend was misallocated, and 29 per cent blaming data gaps for a decline in team engagement or morale driven by perceived unfairness or poor recognition.

Concerns about consistency underpin many of these outcomes. More than two-thirds (68 per cent) of people managers worry that similar roles are evaluated using different metrics in different teams, and 67 per cent say they cannot ensure fair pay decisions without a unified view of people and financial data.

The research shows the challenges with pay and promotion decisions are being caused not by a lack of data, but by a lack of effective data access.

While most managers have timely access to HR (82 per cent) and finance data (75 per cent), over half (61 per

cent) spend at least three hours assembling information from multiple systems before making people decisions – 15 per cent take more than five hours.

As pressure builds, decision quality erodes. Almost two-thirds (65 per cent) say when getting the right HR or finance data feels like too much of a hassle, they opt for an educated guess rather than miss a deadline. 64 per cent say role permissions or privacy rules limit access to data they reasonably need.

Only 2 per cent of managers currently have access to a unified HR and finance dashboard. This leaves most organisations to make people decisions across disconnected systems, tools and spreadsheets, without a shared source of truth.

"Bringing HR and finance together has never been an easy brief," says Toby Hough, VP of People and Culture EMEA at HiBob. "These teams work to different rhythms, different priorities, and often from different versions of the truth. But as scrutiny on pay and progression increases, that gap is becoming impossible to ignore.

"When people and financial data aren't aligned, decisions take longer, feel harder to defend, and are far more likely to be challenged," Hough adds. "Unifying that data doesn't just make decisions faster – it makes them fairer. It gives leaders the confidence that the choices they're making are in the best interests of both the business and their people, and that's going to matter more than ever as we move into 2026 and beyond."

As scrutiny of pay and promotion decisions continues to rise, the research suggests fragmentation is becoming a material risk. When decisions must balance cost control, performance and fairness, relying on disconnected systems leaves organisations exposed – to challenge, disengagement and compliance risk. ■



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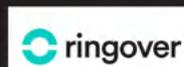
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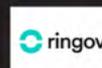
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THE ETHICAL EDGE

Julia Cames, Chief Marketing Officer, Hays explains why AI in recruitment marketing must be human led.



The rise of AI has not only reshaping work, it's also reshaping our responsibilities. Leaders must decide how to responsibly govern and carefully manage its risk, as well as protect their organisations reputation and brand trust. >



Marketing

Across every client market, I'm watching leaders experiment, pilot, and in some cases, rethink key parts of how their organisations operate. Rather than replacing human judgement, AI is deepening its role in supporting how work gets done, making our oversight more important than ever. This moment calls for intentional leadership: using AI to elevate campaign performance while reinforcing the guardrails that uphold brand credibility and trust.

In conversations with other senior leaders, a single question keeps coming up: how do we move fast without compromising fairness? When marketing influences who sees an opportunity, and who doesn't, the impact isn't theoretical, it can affect people in real ways.

This is why I believe marketing has to lead from the front. The messages marketers shape flow directly into the systems that distribute them. If we can't clearly articulate how AI influences our processes, then we risk losing credibility when trust is our most valuable asset.

Upskilling can't just mean better prompts or new platforms, it has to include ethical fluency: the ability to evaluate how different inputs influence AI-generated outcomes. AI should amplify our speed and precision but never replace fairness, transparency, or human judgement.

Bias in algorithms

All AI systems learn from historical data, which means they can reflect the patterns and gaps within it. That's why strong governance matters. In our organisation, AI is used for personal productivity, never for decision making, and controls designed to uphold fairness and transparency. Ethical fluency is about understanding how AI shapes outputs and ensuring those outputs reflect our intent.

In recruitment marketing, bias can translate into unintended effects, limiting who sees certain opportunities, reinforcing patterns that favour particular profiles, or excluding others altogether. These issues aren't always overt, they can emerge through how audiences are segmented, how job ads are distributed, or which candidates get prioritised for nurturing. Understanding that bias can stem from the dataset or the model is what makes oversight so important. And that's where strong governance comes in. >

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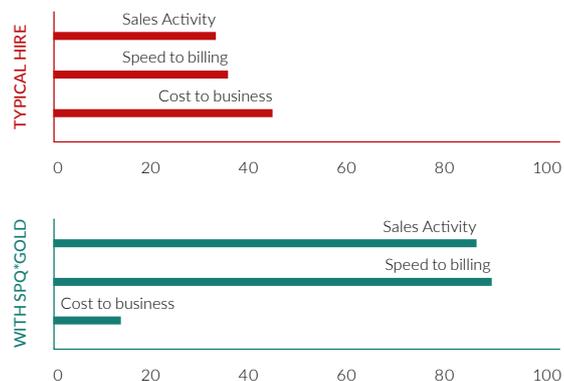
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Without intentional oversight, AI can quietly reproduce these patterns at scale. For example, if past campaigns skewed heavily toward certain groups, an AI optimisation tool may keep pushing spend and messaging in the same direction, embedding inequality rather than correcting it. The issue lies in the quiet continuation of existing patterns rather than deliberate intent. AI optimises for efficiency, not fairness, unless we deliberately guide it otherwise.

That's why marketers need clear safeguards, regular bias checks, diverse training inputs, exclusion reviews, and ethical oversight processes. These measures ensure AI-driven decisions strengthen inclusion rather than undermine it.

Transparency and trust

Trust plays a central role in recruitment marketing, and as technology continually evolves, maintaining that trust means being thoughtful about how we use new capabilities and ensuring the decisions that guide our work remain grounded in human judgement and clear ethical principles.

Data tied to someone's career is especially sensitive, as it can influence professional outcomes. Candidates want to know that their information is handled securely and thoughtfully. Clients might want clarity on how AI interprets their briefs, talent needs, or market insights.

Across many countries, transparency around what data is collected, how it's used, and how long it's retained is already a legal requirement. Treating these requirements as part of a broader commitment to fairness and respect, not just compliance, helps to build credibility. Approaching technology and data with care and strong ethical foundations aligns brands with growing expectations around digital ethics and privacy.

Human oversight

Work that shapes a person's career needs human judgement – AI can support it, but it can't replace it. Human judgement brings nuance, context, and empathy that AI cannot replicate. People will question recommendations that don't align with the brief and consider the ethical impact of a message or targeting choice. Creating workflows where humans review and validate AI-generated work strengthens accuracy and protects the integrity of the brand. >

Marketing teams are well placed to lead on this because they sit closest to the brand promise, the audience, and the communication strategy. That vantage point makes them responsible for ensuring AI enhances the experience rather than diminishing it. Ethical stewardship means setting clear principles, defining boundaries, raising concerns when something isn't right, and championing decisions that support fairness. In many ways, marketers become the conscience of AI adoption, keeping innovation grounded in human values.

Where leadership matters most

As AI becomes embedded in how we work, senior leaders have a responsibility to make sure the technology is used thoughtfully and transparently. The choices we make now will shape how candidates experience our brands for years to come. We need to champion approaches that balance innovation with integrity and encourage our teams to ask not just "Can we?" but "Should we?" CMOs sit at the intersection of data, technology, brand, and human insight, which puts them in a critical position to steer how AI influences the talent journey.

This responsibility calls for openness and cultures where accountability is expected. AI can accelerate execution, but it cannot replace the trust we build with candidates and clients. Ethical leadership becomes an advantage when we use automation in ways that are transparent and centred on people. Organisations will thrive when they treat AI as a strategic capability shaped by human judgement. Leaders strengthen this approach by examining outputs carefully, seeking input where it adds insight and grounding decisions in shared values. When AI is supported by thoughtful stewardship, performance improves and the path toward a more transparent and human centred recruitment experience becomes stronger. ■





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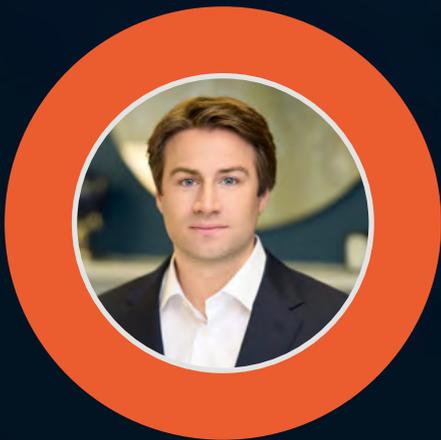


BRIDGING GAPS

The Global Recruiter talks to Trinity Bridge Founder & Group Managing Director, Sam Seigler about his journey so far and what's to come.



RECRUITMENT



Q: Trinity Bridge has established itself as a specialist executive search and advisory firm. What was the original idea behind founding the business, and what gap did you feel needed filling?

A: In honesty what sparked the idea initially was a strong desire to be independent and create something I could shape myself in the way I wanted. >



What ultimately propelled me to take the leap, though, was that there seemed to be a gap in the hospitality search market. There wasn't any firm that had deep sector knowledge but also high levels of service and international reach. That felt like a space we could fill.

Q: What core principles have guided Trinity Bridge since launch, and how do those principles influence the way you work with clients today?

A: The core principle is care – taking care of our people, clients and candidates. This is actually what inspired the name of the company. It feels obvious but I'm not sure there is always huge amounts of genuine care in the industry. We want to have a very human and personal approach.

Clearly, we're a commercial business, but the commercials alone can't be our sole reason for existing. Everything we do, at all stages in the process, comes from that same 'people first' mindset.

Q: You operate across multiple markets and sectors. How would you describe Trinity Bridge's focus, and what types of organisations tend to benefit most from your approach?

A: We work across the hospitality, travel and leisure sectors, and our main focus

is Europe. That said, our clients come in all shapes and sizes. We work with multinationals as well as privately owned businesses, and we tend to partner with CEOs, HR directors and investors.

They all tend to have a major focus on talent, and they see this as a core part of fulfilling their strategic objectives.

Q: What does a 'successful' client relationship look like to you beyond simply completing a hire?

A: A good relationship is one where we enjoy working together in solving their problems, and where there's trust and open conversations about the pressures and challenges the business is facing.

It's also about strategic closeness. We know their plans and they understand ours, and that makes the search process far more effective.

Q: How has increased economic uncertainty changed the way clients approach senior hiring decisions?

A: It's an interesting question. We're definitely seeing more caution. Decisions are taking longer and there's a bit more risk aversion. Although this year we have seen the pace pick up a little. >



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BOOK YOUR SPACE



With financial pressure, clients tend to seek those with more proven experience who they know can deliver rather than take a chance on potential.

Q: How do you see the executive search industry itself evolving over the next five years?

A: I think we'll continue to see consolidation and M&A activity. Mandates are focusing more on transformation, and this reflects the pace of change businesses face today.

AI is something I'm keeping an eye on. Right now, it mostly helps with the administrative side of the process, but in five years, I wonder the extent it will be used in senior hiring as part of candidate discovery and assessment.

Q: What trends are you seeing in leadership priorities for 2026 and beyond? Are there specific traits or experiences becoming more sought after?

A: Leaders are being asked to be hands-on and resilient, and to have a more rounded commercial perspective rather than just expertise in one function.

There's also a move towards managers who have a more people first approach. Businesses want leaders who can connect with and inspire teams while driving performance along the way.

Q: Finally, what does success look like for Trinity Bridge over the next few years, and how do you see the business evolving as the executive search landscape continues to change?

A: Success for us will be seeing our clients grow and succeed. It will also be retaining and growing our team and building our knowledge, international reach and capability.

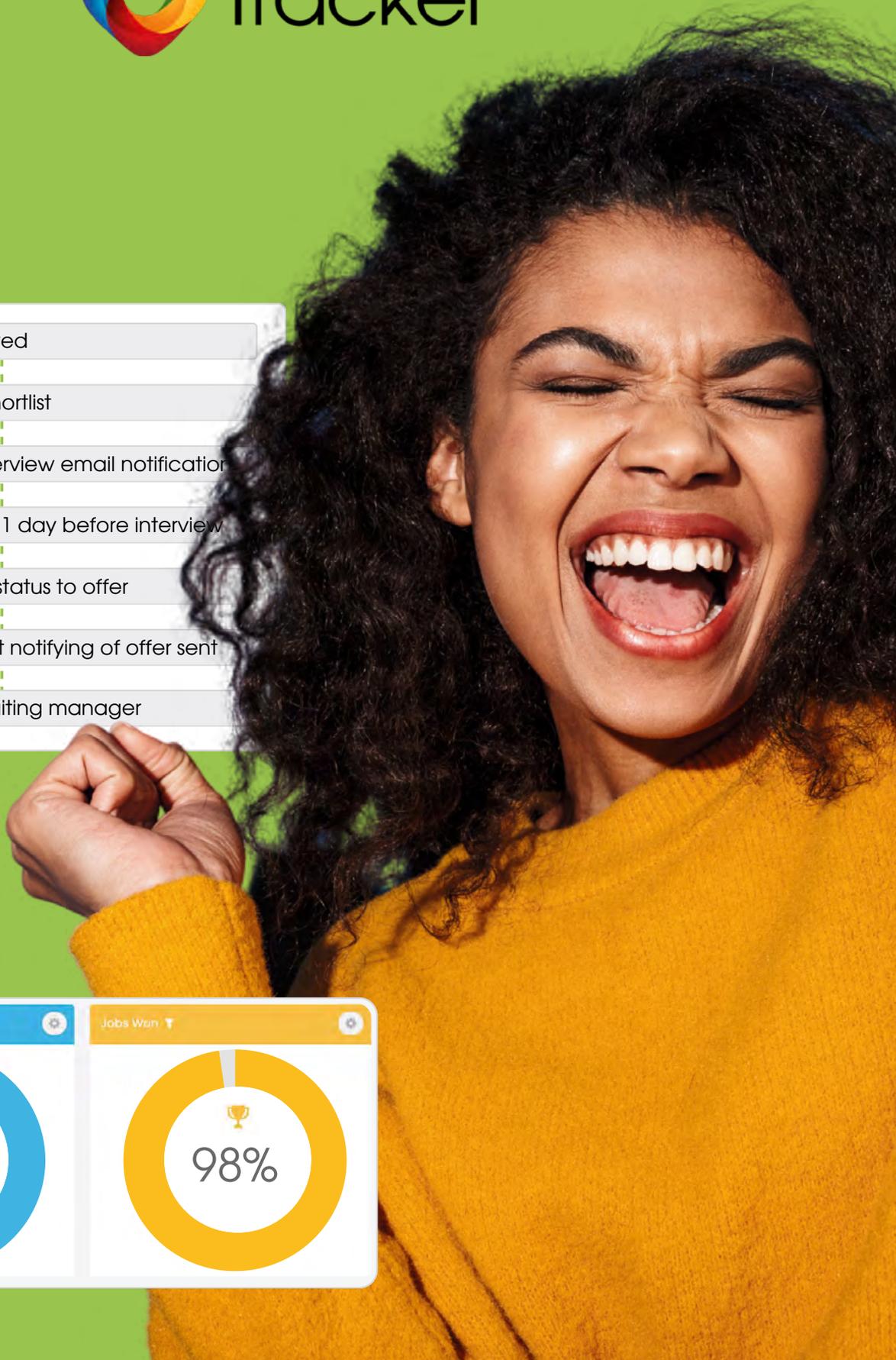
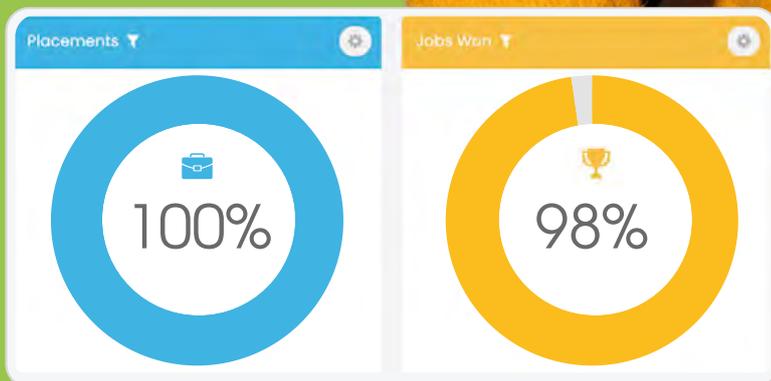
The environment is changing, and we want to change with it while staying true to our principles and helping clients work through the challenges of senior leadership. ■



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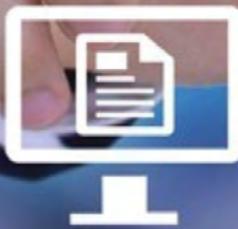


OUTPACING THE MARKET

Doug Rode, Managing Director, UK&I at Michael Page on how recruiters must adapt to an ever-evolving landscape.



RECRUITMENT



PROFILE

APPLICATION

As we head into 2026, recruitment professionals are facing a market defined by rising employment costs, cautious candidate movement, and the increasing adoption of AI. In this context, and as the market continues to evolve, the most successful organisations are those that adapt, innovate, and take a proactive approach to better serving customer needs. >



The Michael Page [2025 Talent Trends Report](#) highlights one of the key challenges the UK recruitment landscape is currently facing: despite 47 per cent of professionals actively looking for a new role, 2 in 5 businesses struggled to hire last year.

Looking back at 2025, this data underscores a growing 'wait-and-see workforce', with expectations around pay, flexibility, and purpose continuing to evolve. We're seeing this mirrored in recruitment as well, where consultants must continuously adapt how they engage with both clients and candidates – moving away from reactive hiring support, to now looking at shaping the market with foresight and insight.

With candidates evaluating opportunities in the context of not just their own career goals and priorities, but broader forces such as sector-specific growth patterns, rising living costs, and market confidence, recruitment strategies must now balance immediate hiring needs with long-term workforce planning to remain relevant and competitive.

Looking forward, the opportunity for the industry lies in anticipating candidate expectations, supporting clients in designing future-proof talent plans, and integrating human-led insights with technological efficiency.

But what does this look like?

Treating evolution as a necessity, not a choice

Recruitment is no longer about reacting to market shifts as they happen; it increasingly demands continuous adaptation. Recruitment services that refine their approach, deepen specialism expertise, and embed insight-led strategies are better positioned to navigate these shifts and meet evolving customer needs.

Our 2025 Talent Trends data shows that candidates' priorities are evolving rapidly: the proportion of professionals valuing purpose in their work rose from 29 per cent in 2024 to 45 per cent in 2025, while those feeling included and able to be authentic at work has fallen. Notably, 64 per cent of UK professionals say they would refuse a promotion to protect their well-being, highlighting the increasing weight placed on work-life balance and personal values. >



These shifts are also reflected in broader changes across different industries. For example, tech candidates increasingly prioritise career progression and innovation, while marketing professionals emphasise flexibility and purpose-driven roles.

For recruiters, these nuances are critical. Understanding these subtle differences across sectors allows recruiters to anticipate candidate needs, provide deeper market insights to clients, and align talent strategies more effectively. Recruitment professionals with specialist knowledge act as trusted advisors, guiding clients through increasingly complex talent landscapes and helping them navigate evolving expectations with confidence.

Insight and technology reshaping recruitment

AI is fast becoming an embedded aspect of recruitment, accelerating candidate matching, surfacing insights, and creating efficiencies across the hiring process. Yet human expertise remains critical for assessing cultural fit, potential, and nuanced skillsets, particularly soft skills.

With our 2025 Talent Trends Report showing that 41 per cent of UK professionals use AI tools – more than double last year's 19 per cent – we see the value of technology not in replacing human expertise, but in supporting our consultants

and creating space for more insight-led conversations. More broadly across industries, UK professionals report that AI allows them to focus on more fulfilling tasks (67 per cent), improves productivity (76 per cent), and enhances the quality of their work (72 per cent).

This evolution is not about simply integrating new tools for the sake of it; it's about using technology to identify emerging client pain points, streamline routine tasks, and free up recruitment professionals to focus on real-life interactions and strategic work, allowing recruitment to shape the market rather than react to it.

Talent planning in an era of constraint

Rising employment costs and uneven sector growth mean hiring decisions carry greater weight. Rather than focusing solely on headcount, many organisations are reassessing how work is structured – from redefining roles to rebalancing teams and capabilities.

Our 2025 Talent Trends data suggests organisations with clearer workforce strategies – including defined role design, a strong understanding of candidate priorities, and upfront communication on culture – are better positioned to attract and retain sought-after talent in a competitive market. >

Culture is increasingly critical for candidates, with 43 per cent of UK professionals saying a workplace culture that aligns with their priorities and values is the most essential factor when considering a role (up from 34 per cent in 2024), demonstrating how broader employee value propositions influence hiring decisions.

In turn, this creates an opportunity for recruitment partners to adapt the way they work alongside clients, to reflect their evolving needs. Leaders who provide the tools for their teams to guide clients with insight-led, specialist knowledge will remain relevant and trusted.

Bridging the clarity gap

One of the most striking findings from the 2025 Talent Trends report is the scale of the employer-employee “clarity chasm”. 43 per cent of employees have little trust in leadership to balance business needs with wellbeing, alongside widespread calls for clearer communication on roles, policies, and expectations.

For the recruitment industry, this is reflected in how recruiters engage with both clients and candidates. Candidates expect transparency and realistic guidance, while clients increasingly rely on recruitment specialists to interpret market signals and provide actionable insights. Recruitment leaders who can translate these learnings into clearer engagement models – from candidate conversations to internal team collaboration – will be better placed to foster trust, strengthen relationships, and maintain credibility in a competitive and challenging market.

Ultimately, recruitment services that continue to innovate, leverage data, and integrate technology alongside human expertise will lead the market. Success lies in anticipating candidate expectations, understanding sector nuances, and providing insight-led guidance to help clients shape talent strategies proactively.

Recruitment partners who refine their approach, deepen specialist expertise, and support clients in designing future-proof workforce plans will remain relevant and trusted. Equally, those who foster transparency, align with culture and purpose, and use technology to enhance human-led insights will build stronger relationships with both clients and candidates. Those that don't risk falling behind – not just in filling roles, but in retaining credibility and driving real impact for customers. ■



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RECRUITERS CALL TO ACTION

James Osborne, Co-Founder of The Recruitment Network looks at the shift in the market and the opportunities on show at Recruitment Agency Expo

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There are certain points in every market cycle where things shift. Things change. Things evolve.

This is what is happening in the recruitment space. A (r)evolution of sorts. >



It's not necessarily a bad thing, but it is a thing and it typically impacts recruitment businesses in one of three ways.

Some suffer. They struggle to adapt, to evolve, to adjust their operating models to the new demands of clients and candidates.

Some hustle. They double down on the basics and they just get on with what they know always works... in any type of market.

Some transform. They lean into what is going on around them and they use moments like this as moments like no other. To lead the market. To scoop up market share.

This is why we created the Accelerator™ framework for TRN members and why we are helping members accelerate when others around them might be slowing down.

Clients are rethinking what they actually want from a recruitment partner and recruitment companies in return need to think about the relationships they want to have with their customers.

AI is changing how we deliver our services. Automation is changing how we operate. Data is changing how we make decisions.

At the same time, and in response, we're seeing something fascinating slowly building across the market. The rise of what I am referring to as the "super agency".

They aren't necessarily the biggest, but they are definitely lean, agile and highly productive.

- Smaller teams.
- Tighter operations.
- Better tech.
- Higher margins.
- Clear positioning.
- More embedded with clients. >



They don't need 50 recruiters to bill what used to take 50 recruiters. They can do it with 10 with higher net contributions, better outputs, greater efficiency.

That's not theoretical or hope.

It's already happening.

It's a total (r)evolution and it's being discussed in the breakouts, explored on the stages, challenged over the coffees at events like the [Recruitment Agency Expo](#).

I have been going every year now for more than 10 years. Birmingham. London.

Why? Because I get exactly what I want from it, every time.

If you're thinking of going there for the free pens, the bags and swag, then don't go. Stay in your offices and get on with building your businesses.

But if you're going for the ideas, the thought leadership, the insights, the exposure to great suppliers who have been building behind the scenes and the perspectives of your peers who are also trying to figure out how to get close to these super agencies, then [get yourself a ticket](#) and make a day of it.

I'll be there again this year.

On the TRN stand showcasing what you can do to accelerate.
On the stage getting you ready for the (r)evolution.

Meeting with the industry suppliers to see who are the ones moving the needle.

Networking. Talking. Listening and learning.

This is a chance to look at your business through a different set of lenses. To challenge your thinking. To set out your stall for 2026.

Don't get caught up in the hype. Get caught up in the opportunity.

See you there. ■



ALI WALLACE, CEO, TALKS THROUGH THE DNA RECRUIT JOURNEY

DNA Recruit has been operating for 18 years. What have been the defining moments that shaped the business?

Over 18 years, we've been through some stormy waters - the financial crash, Brexit, Covid - and each one taught us something valuable. The reality is, you learn more when things don't go right than when it's all plain sailing. What's kept us resilient is the depth of relationships we've built. Having started my career in media, it's an industry I'm genuinely passionate about and can relate to, and that's helped guide us through those 18 years. We've stayed laser-focused on the creative, marketing, digital, and tech sectors, building genuine long-term partnerships rather than just making transactional placements.

You've recently brought Annika de Friend on board as Commercial Director. What does this partnership represent for DNA's next chapter?

Finding Annika has been transformative. For years, Jo (my wife and DNA Co-Founder) and I had been running the business as a partnership, but we always knew we needed that third leg of the stool to really scale. Annika brings something we simply didn't have - she previously scaled her recruitment business to £13 million, so she's been exactly where we want to go. But beyond the experience, it's the values alignment that matters. We share very similar thoughts on how to build a business, how to treat people, and what success looks like. With Annika now owning leadership, growth and development, Jo focusing on finance and operations, and me staying on the tools and driving the entrepreneurial side, we have the complete leadership team to execute our vision. >



You and Annika started your careers in advertising. How does that industry experience influence your approach to recruitment?

It's our superpower, honestly. Annika and I both have an agency background and that experience of working in agencies, understanding the culture, the pressures, the dynamics of how teams work together; it gives us an authenticity that's hard to replicate. When we're talking to clients, we're not just recruiters trying to fill a role. We understand what makes someone fit culturally, what characteristics work in different agency environments, and what clients are looking for beyond what's written in a job spec. The end result is that we place people that have genuine impact and longevity in their roles.

DNA pioneered the 'work from anywhere' model back in 2018, well before the pandemic. What drove that decision and how has it shaped your culture?

We implemented our fully remote model in 2018 because we recognised that great recruiters don't need to be micromanaged. They need autonomy, trust, and the freedom to work in a way that suits them best. We wanted to attract experienced, entrepreneurial people who had strong networks and wanted to build something for themselves. The pandemic proved we were right, but by then we'd already been doing it for two years. It's shaped everything about our culture. We're built on trust and high accountability rather than presenteeism. Our people have the flexibility to structure their day around their lives. What matters is relationships and revenue, not where you're sitting when you make the call.

Tell us about your 180 model and how you're using global talent strategically.

The 180 model is about freeing our recruiters up to do what they do best, which is building relationships and making placements. We use offshore talent in South Africa and India to handle the research, database management, and administrative heavy lifting that traditionally eats up a recruiter's day. This means our consultants can focus on high-value work like speaking to clients, engaging candidates, understanding nuances, and making the right matches. We've also invested heavily in our tech stack to support this model with everything from our CRM systems to automation tools that streamline processes. The result is a more efficient operation where experienced recruiters can be more productive, more strategic, and ultimately more successful. It's an approach that I genuinely believe gives us a competitive edge. >

You're actively expanding into the USA and Middle East. What's the strategy behind this global growth?

We've been operating in the USA for 17 months now, and we've been working in the Middle East since 2010 but we're now formalising our presence in both markets. Essentially, we're following our clients as they expand globally, and we're building local expertise in each market. In the USA, we're actively looking to hire someone to lead that market properly as we want brilliant people who understand the local landscape but who can also leverage DNA's model and values. The Middle East is similar. We've got the relationships and the track record, and now we're setting it up properly to serve that region. We're not trying to be a global giant overnight, we're building sustainable, strategic presences in markets that matter to our clients.

You've implemented an EMI scheme and talk about sharing equity. What type of recruiters are you looking to bring on this journey, and what's your vision for DNA over the next 3-5 years?

I'd much rather own a smaller part of a much more valuable business than 100% of a less valuable one. That's the mindset. Annika, Jo, and I recognise that we don't need to own the whole thing, we want to bring the right people on the journey and give them a real stake in what we're building. We're looking for experienced recruiters with strong networks who are hungry, entrepreneurial, and self-motivated.

Our vision is clear. We're building DNA into a business that operates across the UK, USA, and Middle East, with a model that's genuinely different from traditional recruitment. We'll continue to be embedded in communities like the BD100 and Mad//Fest because relationships and industry knowledge matter so much to us. And we'll keep doing what we've always done - changing people's lives through the right career moves. That's what drives me. I'll always be on the tools because I love recruitment, and I never want to be the founder sitting in a glass box looking at spreadsheets all day. We're building something special, and we want brilliant people to be part of it. ■



OUTSOURCE YOUR RECRUITMENT TEAM FROM SOUTH AFRICA!

Businesses across the globe are now turning to South Africa to build remote recruitment teams that are not only cost-effective but also highly skilled, engaged and aligned with their culture and goals. If you're reviewing how to increase delivery capacity in 2026, exploring South African talent could be a smart part of that plan.

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COMPLIANCE FIRST

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TAKING THE INITIATIVE

Deb Murphy, Head of Operations at the FCSA give her insight into what recruiter need to do for the Umbrella Regulations 2026.



It's fair to say that April 2026 is looming large for anyone in recruitment who works with umbrella companies. The Finance Bill 2025-26 introduces Joint and Several Liability (JSL) for PAYE and National Insurance, and if that sounds like technical jargon, here's what it means in practice. >

COMPLIANCE

If an umbrella company in your supply chain fails to pay what it owes HMRC, and you have the contract with the end-client, you can be pursued for the debt.

Why is this happening?

HMRC estimates that £500M was lost to disguised remuneration schemes in 2022-23, with over 275,000 workers engaged through non-compliant umbrellas in the same period [1].

The government's solution to this problem...

Agencies control who they work with, so, this gatekeeping role now comes with financial accountability.

At an HMRC webinar on 17 November 2025, agencies asked whether robust due diligence would protect them from liability. The response was unambiguous: joint and several liability applies "in all cases" of umbrella non-compliance [2].

However, whilst due diligence doesn't give you a legal defence, it should, when conducted properly, dramatically reduce the risk of ever needing one.

Understand Your Risk

Firstly, map your risk. Understand who you work with, and any risks that may carry.

Which umbrella companies are your contractors currently using? How were they selected? Who approved them, and based on what criteria? What evidence of compliance have they sent you? What accreditations do they hold?

Many agencies discover surprises when they properly audit their umbrella relationships. Historic arrangements that were never formally reviewed. Undocumented 'verbal' agreements. Multiple umbrellas with unclear approval status. Gaps in documentation that seemed fine at the time but look rather different under the new rules.

If some of these answers are unknown, that should be your first priority. You need to know every company you work with, and most importantly, you need to be able to trust them. Under the new regime, 'not knowing' becomes an expensive position to occupy.

Build a PSL that actually means something

A Preferred Supplier List (PSL) should signal independently verified compliance, not just familiarity. The industry benchmark for umbrella compliance is FCSA accreditation. Our accredited members undergo rigorous annual assessments against comprehensive Codes of Compliance, conducted by independent employment law and tax specialists. It is not self-certification; it is third-party verification of financial stability, operational compliance, and director integrity.

Working exclusively with FCSA-accredited umbrellas doesn't eliminate JSL, nothing does, but it materially reduces the probability of non-compliance occurring in the first place. >



Adding extra checks to your toolkit, such as payslip validation (veriPAYE) can provide an extra layer of transparency as it checks PAYE accuracy, employer deductions, RTI alignment, and pension contributions against live payroll data. When something doesn't reconcile, you know about it before it becomes your liability.

Centralised due diligence platforms (Diligence Hub) can also help streamline compliance, by maintaining audit trails, flagging when accreditations expire, and standardising due diligence checks across your umbrella portfolio.

Think of it as layered protection. Accreditation sets the standard; ongoing monitoring maintains it.

Document everything

When HMRC asks questions, and under the new regime they will, you need to show your working. Contracts, payment records, accreditation certificates, sample payslips, evidence of ongoing monitoring. All accessible, all organised.

That means moving away from email chains and spreadsheets on individual desktops. Your due diligence process needs to be systematic and recoverable.

Review your contracts

Your agreements with umbrella companies should reflect the new risk landscape. Do your existing contracts include appropriate warranties around

PAYE compliance? Indemnification provisions? Audit rights?

The specifics depend on your business model, but the principle is sound: more visibility and control means lower exposure.

Engage your legal team now. Contract changes take time to implement, and you want new terms in place before April 2026.

Educate Your Team

Compliance isn't solely a back-office function. Your consultants, account managers, in fact anyone who recommends umbrella providers needs to understand what's changing and why your PSL policies exist.

The temptation to cut corners becomes genuinely dangerous under JSL. Recommending an off-list umbrella because a contractor prefers it, or accepting a supplier without proper vetting because they offer better margins, are shortcuts which may carry real financial consequences.

The Opportunity in All This

Whilst it is easy to focus on the negative, it is worth stepping back to recognise what this legislation was designed to do.

It will create competitive advantage for agencies that take supply chain integrity seriously. >

Compliant umbrellas are the solution, not the problem. They ensure workers are paid correctly, employment rights are protected, and tax is properly remitted. Agencies that can demonstrate robust due diligence will increasingly be preferred by risk-conscious end-clients.

The operators this legislation targets, the non-compliant providers who undercut legitimate businesses while exposing workers to unexpected tax bills, will find it harder to access the market. And that is good for compliant umbrellas, good for agencies with proper governance, and good for the contractors caught in the middle.

Final Thought

April 2026 is only two months away, and proper preparation takes time. Mapping your supply chain, reviewing contracts, implementing monitoring systems, and training staff are all tasks that compound in difficulty if left to the last minute.

The question isn't whether to prepare. It's whether you will do it on your timeline, or HMRC's. ■

[1] HMRC statistics on umbrella company non-compliance GOV.UK, "Umbrella company market — changes to Income Tax rules to tackle non-compliance", Policy Paper, 26 November 2025. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pay-changes-for-the-umbrella-company-market>

[2] HMRC webinar on Joint and Several Liability HMRC stakeholder webinar, 17 November 2025. Reported in: Contractor Calculator, "Umbrella Tax Avoidance Legislation included in Finance Bill 2026", 2 December 2025.



real-time updates with the experts

With Umbrella Regulation and The Employment Rights Act around the corner, follow FCSA to keep on top of all legislation changes that affect you.



stay informed



PREPARING FOR FRED

Miriam Hanley, Audit Director, Menzies LLP describes how FRED 82 is transforming Revenue Recognition for recruitment firms.



The UK's proposed amendments to revenue recognition rules, set out in the Financial Reporting Exposure Draft 82 (FRED 82), represent an important development for recruitment businesses. FRED 82 will influence the timing of when recruitment firms recognise income, how much revenue can be reported upfront, and how profits are presented in financial statements. >



For an industry built on a mix of permanent placements, temporary workers, retained search and clawback clauses, understanding these changes early is essential. Firms that engage with FRED 82 now will be better prepared for discussions with auditors, investors and lenders, and can avoid unexpected outcomes when reporting results.

Understanding FRED 82

FRED 82 proposes amendments to the revenue recognition requirements within FRS 102, the main accounting standard used by most UK recruitment firms, bringing them more closely in line with International Financial Reporting Standards. Rather than focusing on billing points, invoice dates or fixed milestones, new proposals instead look at when the client receives its service.

For recruitment firms, this means stepping back and analysing what services are being provided to the client, whether these services are distinct, and when these services are delivered. In some cases, control transfers at a single point in time, and as such revenue is recognised. In others, particularly where services are delivered in stages, control transfers progressively as work is performed, and as such revenue at these stages too.

Why recruitment firms face greater complexity

Recruitment contracts often include features that complicate revenue recognition, such as contingent fees, clawback clauses, staged retainers and bundled service offerings. FRED 82

requires firms to apply greater judgement when assessing these arrangements and to support their conclusion with sufficient evidence.

The impact of the proposals varies depending on the recruitment model in question. Temporary recruitment is largely unaffected, while permanent placements and retained search arrangements require closer consideration.

Temporary recruitment: little change in practice

For temporary recruitment, FRED 82 largely confirms existing practice. Revenue arises from providing temporary workers to clients and is typically invoiced based on hours or days worked. The fee often includes the temporary worker's pay plus the agency's margin.

Under both current FRS 102 and the proposed changes through FRED 82, the service being provided is the supply of temporary labour. Revenue should therefore be recognised as service is performed - that is, as the worker completes hours or days worked on the client's site.

The timing of invoicing does not change this in principle, whether raised in arrears or in advance. If an invoice is raised after the work has been completed, revenue already belongs in that accounting period. If an invoice is raised in advance, revenue should still be deferred and recognised as the service is delivered. As a result, most temporary recruitment businesses will see no material change in the timing of revenue recognition under FRED 82. >

Permanent placements timings remain, but amounts may change

Permanent placement fees are one-off fees earned when a candidate is successfully placed into a permanent or fixed-term role. Under current FRS 102, revenue is generally recognised either when the candidate starts work or on acceptance. This approach broadly remains the same under FRED 82.

To identify the correct revenue recognition point it is important to review the contract to understand at which point the company is entitled to invoice the client and therefore has a present right to payment. This indicates the point at which control passes over to the client.

Complications arise where contracts include clawback clauses if the candidate leaves within a set period, such as during a probationary period. These clauses mean that the final amount of revenue is uncertain at the starting date.

Clawback clauses and variable consideration

Under FRED 82, revenue that may later be refunded can only be recognised if it is unlikely that a significant reversal will be required. In practice, this means agencies may not always be able to recognise the full placement fee upfront at a candidate's start date where there is a meaningful risk of a refund.

Instead, agencies must estimate the expected refund using either the expected value method (a probability-weighted average of outcomes) or the most likely amount method (where there is a single likely outcome).

Example: permanent placement with a clawback clause

A recruitment agency places a Software Engineer for a fee of £12,000. The contract includes a 100 per cent refund if the candidate leaves within eight weeks and a 50 per cent refund if they leave in weeks nine to twelve.

Based on past experience and historical data, the agency estimates a 15 per cent chance the candidate leaves in the first eight weeks and a further 10 per cent chance that they leave in weeks nine to twelve. The expected refund is therefore £2,400, resulting in an expected revenue of £9,600.

Under FRED 82, £9,600 is recognised as revenue when the candidate starts work, with a refund provision of £2,400 recorded as a liability. If the candidate remains beyond twelve weeks, the provision is released as revenue. If the candidate leaves earlier, revenue is adjusted to reflect the refund issued. This approach ensures that revenue is not overstated where refund risk exists.

Retainers and retained search: linking revenue to work done

Retainers are common in executive search and retained recruitment models. Clients often pay an upfront, non-refundable or partially refundable fee to secure recruitment services, with the total fee split across stages such as engagement, shortlist and placement.

Under FRED 82, cash received is not automatically revenue. The key consideration is whether the agreed work, or performance obligation has been satisfied. >

The first step is identifying the services included within the contract. In many retained search engagements, each stage may represent a distinct or separate service, depending on how the contract is structured and whether the client receives value from each stage independently. Where services are distinct, revenue must be allocated to each stage and recognised as each stage is completed.

Example: staged executive search

A CFO search is agreed for a total fee of £30,000, payable in three equal stages: a retainer on signing, on shortlist delivery, and on successful placement. Assuming each stage is treated as a separate service, revenue is recognised as follows:

- Stage 1: revenue recognised when initial scoping and market mapping work is completed.
- Stage 2: revenue recognised when the shortlist is delivered.
- Stage 3: revenue recognised when the candidate accepts and starts the role.

Any amounts received in advance for later stages are treated as contract liabilities until related work is performed. This reinforces the principle that revenue recognition is driven by delivery of services, not by payment dates.

Practical steps for recruitment firms

To prepare for FRED 82, recruitment firms should consider:

1. Reviewing standard contract terms to understand when services are delivered, and where a clawback clause may apply.
2. Assessing historical data to support estimates of refunds.
3. Ensuring that accounting systems can deal with deferred revenue and refund provisions.
4. Training finance teams on new FRED 82 principles and enhanced disclosure requirements.
5. Engaging with auditors early to align interpretations and reduce implementation risk to avoid issues later.

Putting FRED 82 into practice

FRED 82 represents a change in focus rather than a complete overhaul, but it is one that recruitment firms cannot afford to ignore. While temporary recruitment remains largely unaffected, permanent placements and retained search engagements require more careful judgement, particularly where fees depend on outcomes, or are paid in stages.

By understanding changes early and applying them consistently, recruitment business owners can avoid surprises, protect reported profits, and approach discussions with auditors, investors and lenders with greater confidence. Taking a proactive and practical approach to FRED 82 will help ensure a smooth transition and more robust, reliable financial reporting going forward. ■





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COMPLIANCE AS A CULTURE

Phil Beardwood, Compliance and Assurance Director at Morson Group, discusses the company's compliance challenges and the opportunity to add value with a robust approach.



As an international business that supplies both people and services around the world, compliance is not just critical to our own governance and reputation at Morson Group, but also to our clients. The compliance landscape is constantly evolving, and so are we, recently rebranding and structuring our business into four strategic business units – Morson Edge (recruitment), Morson Praxis (engineering consultancy), Morson Vital (deployment), Morson Nexus (training) – each with distinct compliance landscapes and challenges. >



It means we have a huge compliance remit, spanning data, health & safety, finance, tax and legal, both in the UK and across our international markets in Europe, Australia and North America. But we also have the advantage of being a long-established and multi-faceted business that has added expertise as we've scaled. Morson is joined-up across systems and business functions, and we have processes in place to track, monitor, update our practices, and to anticipate regulatory change and compliance requirements in order to keep implementing best practice.

For Morson Group, compliance goes beyond box ticking: it is fundamental to our commitment to adding value for clients, candidates and employees, and realising our ambition as a best-in-class partner.

Layers of oversight

Each area of compliance is managed by a specific team and departmental lead at Morson, with each of those teams responsible for due diligence, monitoring and reporting. This is aligned with our ISO standards, and we have automated systems in place to ensure any anomalies are flagged and that reporting is accurate and up to date. As our ISO certifications are regularly audited, these standards provide an additional layer of oversight to ensure that we are consistently achieving best practice compliance standards.

Compliance is a main board agenda item, ensuring oversight and strategic scrutiny at the highest level. In addition, a monthly internal legal forum brings together leaders from within the business across our finance, tax, legal, GDPR, and health and safety teams to discuss current activities and influences across markets, providing an opportunity to consider any new developments, how they affect our business, any changes to our compliance obligations or processes required, and what any implementation requirements and timelines might be. These meetings are minuted and actions are logged, ensuring that individuals have ownership of any issues that need to be addressed, and a mandate to develop any new processes or reporting requirements. They provide a clear record of compliance due diligence and create an opportunity to nurture a joined-up approach across business units, departments and disciplines.

We also recognise the importance of communicating any changes to our compliance obligations, processes or reporting across the business at all levels. Monthly operational boards attended by all managing directors provide a forum for information sharing in this regard. Our managing directors are then responsible for cascading information to their teams, using whatever combination of verbal, printed, and digital channels is necessary. Where there is a significant change, this will be supported by the development of a training module to support affected teams to comply with any new obligations. >



Removing margin for error

As a business that holds more than 1.9 million candidate records and works in sectors that are highly secure, GDPR and data protection are issues that we have to take very seriously indeed. Our approach is to deliver the standards we would want others to apply to our own personal data, and this is a whole team responsibility. All client and candidate records are managed within our databases which can only be accessed by authorised personnel with multi-factor log-ins and security protocols. Our systems have been developed aligned to ISO standards and data protection compliance is embedded in everything we do, with automation to provide prompts and prevent any non-compliant activity. Nothing at all can be viewed, updated or processed outside of the system and it is not possible to override the system.

All our teams undergo mandatory GDPR training on an annual basis and this is tracked and monitored by HR to ensure that training is fully completed and repeated within the required window. We also have online training tools and courses to ensure existing teams and new employees understand the importance of compliance and their role in delivering our obligations. All these resources are regularly reviewed and updated as required.

We have robust security in place to protect data from external threats, and also have strict rules regarding laptop, mobile phone and paperwork security, with protocols in place to mandate that no

paperwork or screens are left unattended, either in the office or in transit. A number of apps, including social media platforms, are disabled on all company devices, and a strict social media policy is in place.

In-office audits are also carried out routinely, including simple walk-throughs to check desks at random, which helps to reinforce digital and paperwork security practices and keeps security and compliance front of mind across the team.

Adding value

We know that compliance carries a high weighting for bids that we submit, and the same is true for our clients. By providing robust compliance for our clients, therefore, we not only add value in terms of the standards they can expect; we also provide them with confidence that their supply chain will withstand scrutiny.

We vet all new employees that join any part of the Morson Group business, and carry out both vetting and international sanction checks on every worker we place. Our online onboarding system ensures that all compliance, ID, and bank account verification checks are completed before onboarding can continue and creates a verifiable record that those checks have been completed.

Vetting checks, along with data sharing and data impact agreements are tailored for each client, aligned to their specific needs, and compliance is embedded in service level agreements as a measurable commitment. >

Our clients trust us to maintain high compliance standards, but compliance is also an area where we can add value beyond mandatory obligations. Thanks to the compliance requirements we work to and the resources within our business, we can offer clients guidance across a number of aspects of compliance, providing them with information on upcoming legislation, for example, and what they can do to mitigate risk. We do this both proactively and reactively. Compliance is always included on the agenda at quarterly review meetings, and where there is significant change, we can also support both clients and candidates with a more detailed approach. For example, our IR35 roadshow campaign was instrumental in helping both candidates and clients understand the legislation in more detail and mitigate risk within the supply chain.

Acting locally with global thinking

As an international business, we have put compliance systems and checks and balances in place that can be applied, adapted and scaled internationally. Some of the businesses within the Morson Group are located outside of GDPR compliance, but the level of data protection we adhere to for compliance in the UK sets the standard for best practice elsewhere in the world.

In each overseas location where we have a legal entity – Australia, USA, Italy, Canada – we have teams in place to manage compliance locally, leveraging their location-specific training, legislative knowledge and experience. The need for oversight at a leadership level remains, but our approach is to manage the risk, not micro-manage the detail.

Beyond obligations

Compliance is challenging and wide-ranging, but it should not sit alongside commercial functions – it should be integral to every aspect of how a business operates. When it is viewed in this way, it becomes a culture rather than simply an obligation, providing opportunities to add value and differentiate. ■



Your Candidates Are Asking About Umbrella Compliance.

Here's What to Tell Them.

If you work with contractors, you'll have noticed a shift.

Candidates are asking more questions – and they're better informed than they used to be. Many now research umbrella companies before accepting a role, often prompted by cautionary stories online: holiday pay that didn't add up, deductions they didn't understand, or umbrellas that failed to deliver what was promised. These conversations are happening on forums, WhatsApp groups and LinkedIn, and they're shaping expectations long before an offer is accepted.

That puts agencies in a slightly different position.

When you suggest an umbrella company, candidates don't see it as a neutral administrative choice. They see it as a recommendation. And if the experience isn't a good one, they don't just blame the umbrella – they remember where the recommendation came from.

As a result, umbrella compliance is no longer just a back-office concern. It's increasingly part of the candidate experience, and a genuine differentiator for agencies that take it seriously.

Transparency plays a big role here. When workers understand how they're being paid – and why – trust improves. Clear Key Information Documents, which show anticipated take-home pay before an assignment is accepted, help set expectations upfront rather than leaving candidates to decipher their first payslip after the fact.

This isn't just about meeting regulatory requirements. It's about worker protection and confidence. Candidates who feel

informed and treated fairly are more likely to accept assignments, stay engaged, and work with your agency again.

For agencies, that starts with working only with **FCSA-certificated umbrella companies**. FCSA umbrellas have already passed some of the toughest compliance checks in the industry and are committed to operating transparently and compliantly on behalf of the workers they support.

Beyond accreditation, FCSA's **veriPAYE tool** strengthens the conversations agencies can have with both candidates and clients. veriPAYE provides a free, centralised view of payments made to contractors and workers via umbrella companies, independently verifying that PAYE & National Insurance calculations and their reporting to HMRC are all correct and, crucially, informs you that the tax has been paid.

Rather than relying solely on assurances or paperwork, agencies gain visibility into what is actually happening on payroll. Every payment is checked using forensic validation, and agencies receive regular audit reports that can be reviewed at any time.

The result is a simple, credible answer when a contractor asks, "How do I know this umbrella is legitimate?"

With FCSA-certificated umbrellas and veriPAYE verification in place, agencies can support candidates with confidence, protect their reputation, and stand out for the right reasons.

[Find out more about FCSA](#)



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