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THE EXPERIENCE IS THE MESSAGE

THE SUIT WAITING TO BE FILED
RESILIENT NEEDS

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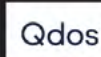
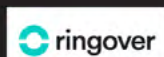
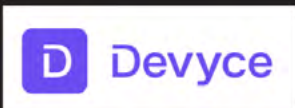
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WELCOME

SIMON KENT
EDITOR

At the end of the day the only reason why any recruitment company would want to implement any kind of technology will be for the business advantages it affords them. This might mean greater efficiency, greater value, greater likelihood of a well placed candidate – whatever it might be it is this that makes the investment – financial and otherwise – worth while.

There seems to be something almost addictive about AI use. The idea that it exists and has potential almost determines that it should be used, but as with all technology there is no point in implementing great technology on top of bad data or poor processes.

This is why implementation must come from the top down. AI isn't a side-quest, it isn't really just a bolt-on extra. It use runs deep into the heart of a business, whatever the ultimate objective. Recruiters therefore must do their ground work first. They need to get to grips with what their businesses are about, what they already do well and what they can do better. AI doesn't just wash over the business and make everything better, and it's not a same size fits all, same results for everyone, because each recruitment company is different – unique in its positioning, approach, identity.

AI, like the technology that preceded it, amplifies what the business does. And that's why you need the basics to be right in the first place, before you look to AI to make everything better. ■

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KING'S SPEECH 2026 – GREATER AMBITION REQUIRED

Despite being overshadowed by other political matters, the King's Speech brought a variety of responses from the recruitment sector. Tania Bowers, Global Public Policy Director at APSCo UK and OutSource noted that the speech led with the importance of UK energy, defence and economic security and the criticality of controlling the cost of living; raising growth, reducing prices. She noted that the cost of Government borrowing following the speech is under scrutiny, although Starmer's leadership battle will have greater impact on the City.

"Recruiters are reporting reticent client hiring intentions in light of geopolitical challenges and more recently the dramatic local election results," said Bowers. "This King's Speech is unlikely to alter the Government's trajectory. If the Government can deliver swiftly on planning

reform, green energy infrastructure, greater AI innovation and Digital IDs then there may be a glimmer of hope.

At the same time, however, Bowers said recruiters are struggling with increased employment costs, increased regulation and a skills policy that is not aligned to business needs. "Payment reforms should help SMEs, but to reduce costs, to create jobs and increase delivery then non-critical regulatory change must be put on hold, including bringing agency workers into any guaranteed hours reform," she said. "Skills policies must be co-designed with employers and workers, and the Growth and Skills Levy must support flexible training for the whole workforce, beyond apprenticeships and government-led programmes." >

Bowers went on to note that recruiters supplying to the public sector are under particular pressure with NHS clinical healthcare suppliers being “hammered” by policies to ban the use of agency workers “Following the announcement of the Bill to abolish NHS England, APSCo will continue to articulate the criticality of the temporary workforce to the NHS Trusts. In education, APSCo knows how much support temporary workers can provide to deliver SEND reforms.”

Meanwhile, Neil Carberry, Chief Executive at the Recruitment and Employment Confederation said the Government had put its confidence in business to deliver growth in the speech. “It now needs to step on the gas and turn that ambition into law quickly, so firms can invest and expand with certainty,” he said. “Cutting unnecessary regulation is the right approach at a time of rapid technological change and will help position the UK as a leading destination for investment.

“The commitment to tackle late payments is long overdue,” said Carberry. “Too many good businesses hold back growth or fail because they do not get paid on time. Small firms and the self-employed should be able to focus their time and resources on running their businesses well and government must ensure they can do so.”

Carberry also noted that the REC has consistently supported digital verification arguing

that it brings more people into work, simplifies hiring for employers and helps prevent fraud.

Ben Willmott, head of public policy at the CIPD said: “We welcome the Government’s continued focus on tackling youth unemployment and investing in apprenticeships and training opportunities for young people. However, there remains a significant gap between the Government’s ambition and action, and we need to see more concrete proposals on this. There isn’t a single mention of apprenticeships in the Government’s briefing document beyond the introduction, so it’s unclear how they will be addressing this beyond what is already planned.”

Willmott also said that while it was positive that the Government is trying to minimise the regulatory burden on organisations through its Regulating for Growth Bill, work is needed to ensure key measures in the Employment Rights Act still to be finalised do not undermine employment and growth.

“Some of the Act’s provisions, which are taking effect as employers grapple with rising costs and global instability, risk holding organisations back from the investment in their workforces that can generate the productivity and growth the economy urgently needs,” he said. ■





REC URGES 'SENSIBLE APPROACH' TO GUARANTEED HOURS

The Recruitment and Employment Confederation has warned that the government's Guaranteed hours policy risks backfiring if it does not include an exemption for agency workers. In addition, the REC says the policy could deter hiring and tempt some employers and workers toward false self-employment.

Under government proposals, companies would be obliged to offer contracts that reflect typical working patterns for staff on zero-hours or flexible arrangements over a 12-week period.

The REC is just one of many business groups that say the changes could raise labour costs and reduce flexibility in hiring and working at a fragile stage in the economic recovery – and just as the government is desperate to increase the number of young people in work.

The REC argues that agency work provides a regulated alternative to gig economy models, but

warns the reforms could accelerate a decline in flexible hiring. That, it says, may tempt employers and workers toward choosing less regulated arrangements, such as forms of self-employment, with potential implications for worker protections and competition. The REC says an exemption for recruitment firms would show confidence in recruitment agencies' ability to continue to manage the relationship between its candidates and end clients without the need for such a draconian policy in the first place.

"We need reforms that protect the benefits of flexible work without breaking what already works in giving us a dynamic temporary labour market that benefits thousands of workers and businesses every day," says Neil Carberry, REC Chief Executive. "Get this wrong and you risk undermining good jobs and compliant firms for little obvious gain for workers or employers." >

In its conciliatory response to the government's latest Make Work Pay consultation, the REC calls on ministers to allow employers to assess working patterns over a six-to-12-month period, saying a longer timeframe would better reflect seasonal demand and project cycles. Without at least a six-month reference period, the REC says the policy could raise employment costs and legal risks in labour-intensive sectors such as hospitality, retail and consumer goods, which already face tight margins, anxiety over energy costs and uneven demand through the year.

"The planned right to guaranteed hours after just 12 weeks is a blow to a fledgling job market recovery that has already been struggling with the effects of the Gulf crisis," says Carberry. "Across sectors, there is deep concern these will push firms to hire less or rely on even more casual forms of employment – potentially benefiting less scrupulous firms over those who try to do things the right way. Most employers are likely to cut hiring, restrict hours and step back from flexible roles, limiting access to work. Entry-level roles, often the first step for young people, would be among the hardest hit. Flexible staffing is essential to productivity, cost control and the basic viability of businesses. For many workers, including students, carers and those with variable availability, flexibility is what enables participation in the labour market in the first place."

This is a UK-wide policy proposal from the government and will begin in 2027.

In its submission, the REC has called for 'fundamental reform' of the 'Key Information

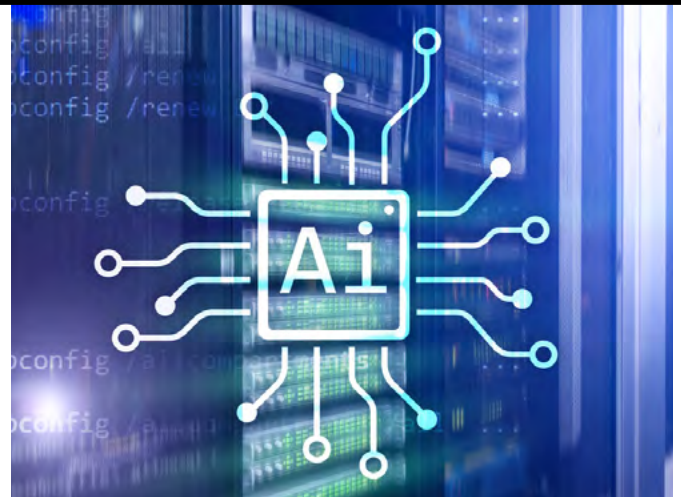
Document' (KID). Since 2020, hundreds of thousands of workers looking for temporary work every year are given a KID by a recruitment agency. The KID sets out information about the worker's relationship with the employment business and any third parties, including who will pay the salary and what the rate of pay is. But REC believes reform of KIDs is long overdue to help employees and HMRC better understand the complicated payslips that can sometimes arise when an umbrella company is involved in the supply chain.

Addressing KIIDs Neil Carberry said: "Key Information Documents are falling short in practice, with many workers struggling to understand them and facing inconsistencies with other employment documents. We need a simpler, worker-focused approach that genuinely delivers pay transparency. This makes sure workers can clearly see how headline rates translate into take-home pay. Where umbrella companies employ workers, they must take responsibility for setting out pay and deductions in a clear and consistent way.

"On umbrella companies," he added, "REC supports the introduction of direct, targeted regulation, with accountability clearly placed on those who employ and pay workers. Any reform should tackle non-compliance at source rather than placing additional burdens on compliant agencies, supported by effective enforcement through a properly resourced Fair Work Agency." ■



EXECUTIVES REPORT UNDERWHELMING ROI FROM AI



G-P (Globalization Partners)'s third annual AI at Work Report has found that while AI remains a hugely transformative force the market has moved from experimental wonder to a high-stakes reckoning. Despite 100 per cent of surveyed executives reporting AI usage, nearly 70 per cent of executives are prepared to scale back AI budgets if goals aren't met this year.

"To get AI right, you have to move past the hype and focus on where it actually moves the needle," said Nat Natarajan, Chief Operating Officer, G-P. "A smart strategy isn't about doing everything at once, it's about identifying high-impact use cases and preparing your team before you start. That foundation is what separates companies stuck in a loop of endless pilots from those that actually achieve real, transformative results."

Last year, executives leaned into AI with excitement with an emphasis on rapid adoption and experimentation. Now, the share of global executives who describe their organisations as aggressively using AI to innovate has fallen from 60 per cent to 42 per cent. With 73 per cent of executives reporting at least some of their AI investments fell short of expectations over the past 12 months, this year's report outlines the shifting realities as the market now demands tangible, ethical and accurate ROI:

- **The "bubble" split:** Globally, executives are divided on whether the bubble will burst this year, but 69 per cent of US HR executives view AI as a long-term structural shift, highlighting that their function sees this as an integral part of the future of work.
- **Rethinking the human value:** 82 per cent of executives admit AI has lowered the value they place on human employees, a trend G-P warns could jeopardise the very human-led innovation required to make AI successful.

- **Productivity paranoia:** 88 per cent of executives are concerned employees are using AI to "perform productivity" – appearing busy and meeting AI usage mandates without generating real business value. Nearly half (47 per cent) are very or extremely concerned this is already happening.
- **Micromanaging the machines:** 69 per cent of executives report the time employees spend monitoring, reviewing or updating work performed by AI has increased over the past year. This suggests a hidden tax on AI adoption potentially offsetting the very efficiency gains the technology promised.
- **The borderless talent solution:** 82 per cent of global executives would hire in a country where they don't have existing employees to secure top AI talent. Companies are now prioritising specialised AI literacy over local presence, turning the search for expertise into a global race.

"AI is increasingly being measured by trust, accountability and business impact," commented Pete A. Tiliakos, Principal Analyst, Strategic Advisor, GxT Advisors. "For global employers, that means focusing AI on navigating complexity, reducing risk, enabling better decisions, and expanding access to talent across borders. The future belongs to companies that pair AI with the right expertise, governance and operational discipline to turn opportunity into real business outcomes."

The 2026 AI at Work report is based on insights from 2,850 leaders across six global markets. Download the full report [here](#). ■



AI LEADS TO MISSED CANDIDATES

Research from CV-Library suggests more than a third of recruiters are finding AI tools are now causing them to miss out on strong candidates, as employers increasingly rely on automation to manage high volumes of applications.

The research shows 83 per cent of recruiters use AI in hiring, with 28 per cent relying on it to screen applications. But 35 per cent say it has led to missed talent, while 27 per cent believe strong candidates are being filtered out before they reach an interview.

The study, based on nearly 500 recruiters and 1,100 candidates reveals more than half (53 per cent) of jobseekers believe they've been rejected by AI without a human ever reviewing their CV.

A further 46 per cent say unfair rejection is one of their biggest frustrations when job hunting, while 63 per cent say AI-led hiring is less fair than human judgement. The technology is also changing behaviour, with 40 per cent of jobseekers abandoning or considering abandoning applications when AI is used in early screening.

CV-Library quotes a candidate, David, 37, a part-time bartender from Doncaster as saying: "Being interviewed by an AI bot felt incredibly alienating – there's no feedback or human interaction, so you have no idea how you're coming across. It feels like you're being filtered out, and with so little real communication, it's easy for the effort you put in to be completely overlooked."

Younger jobseekers are most concerned about automated hiring decisions. Nearly two-thirds (64 per cent) of Gen Z believe AI is responsible for rejecting their application in early stages – the highest of any generation. They are also the most frustrated by unfair rejection (53 per cent), followed by Millennials (47 per cent) and Gen X (46 per cent).

The rise of AI is also changing how candidates present themselves. 79 per cent say AI-generated CVs have surged in the past year – but this is creating unintended consequences. 81 per cent of recruiters cite CVs have become more standardised and less distinctive due to AI, with individuality and personality disappearing.

More than four in five recruiters (83 per cent) say they are using AI to speed up hiring, with 28 per cent relying on it to manage application volume. But it's not always delivering the benefits, with just 36 per cent say it improves speed-to-hire.

AI is strongest in admin tasks such as writing job descriptions (63 per cent) and scheduling interviews (38 per cent) but struggles with judgement-based decisions. 72 per cent say AI cannot assess cultural fit, while 55 per cent say it performs poorly when evaluating soft skills.

"Candidates have long felt that the human touch is ebbing away from the hiring process and that good people are getting screened out unfairly," said Lee Biggins, CEO and Founder of CV-Library. "This insight from recruiters in both agencies and businesses suggests their frustrations may be justified."

"It's a timely wake-up call that not everything should be outsourced to AI, especially in recruitment where every candidate is individually unique. It can add value in automating some laborious process, but good recruiters are using it to support human intuition, not replace it." ■

Full report: <https://www.cv-library.co.uk/recruitment-insight/ai-in-recruitment-survey/>.



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AI IN RECRUITMENT: THE SUIT WAITING TO BE FILED

An active member of the World Employment Confederation, Mary Seery Kearney BL is an Irish barrister specialising in employment, privacy, AI and corporate governance law. Here she address the legal implications of AI use.



There is a tribunal in your business's future, and the surprising thing is that you are not the named respondent. The named respondent is a tool you deployed. >



That is one of the key lessons emerging from the Mobley class action against Workday in California, where the Northern District of California has allowed claims to move forward on the argument that a recruitment AI vendor could, in some circumstances, be treated as acting on behalf of the employer using it.

It is the lesson of the state attorney-general and school-district [actions against Meta](#) in the United States, where the courts have allowed claims to proceed on the theory that a product was engineered to exploit human cognition, and that those who knew about it – and deployed it anyway – can be held to account.

Draw the line forward. If an employer mandates the use of an AI tool, ties it to a productivity KPI, and the result over time is cognitive overload, deskilling, anxiety and the erosion of professional judgment, ask yourself which side of the Workday and Meta line that sits on. [The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005](#) in Ireland for example, already imposes a duty to maintain a safe system of work, and that duty is not technology neutral. The same duty exists, in different languages, in every jurisdiction in which your firm operates.

The good AI does

AI is already doing measurable good in recruitment. Used properly, it surfaces candidates the old funnel missed, opens interviews to people whose talent never quite fitted the format, and gives recruiters their afternoons back. Used badly, it gives them a tribunal date.

The global rulebook is no longer as fragmented as it once was. In Europe, a single framework is taking shape through the EU AI Act, with clear duties for those deploying systems in high-impact areas

like recruitment, task allocation and performance evaluation. Timelines are still shifting, with implementation phases running towards 2026 and potential adjustments extending beyond that. Alongside this, new proposals are trying to make compliance more practical, offering organisations for the first time a workable legal route to processing sensitive personal data for the specific purpose of detecting and correcting bias.

Elsewhere, regulation is developing in a more fragmented way. The United States for example, has no federal AI Act, and instead relies on a mix of city laws, state legislation, EEOC guidance and frameworks like NIST. In Canada, direction is coming mainly from privacy and sector regulations, while national AI legislation has yet to land. And in the UK, the approach is still principles-based, but regulators are gradually adding more detail through ICO guidance. The detail varies between jurisdictions, but the moral architecture does not.

Addressing the issues

Within that architecture, four problems sit at the centre of every honest conversation about AI in recruitment. First is the Fairness Paradox: detecting adverse impact requires processing the very data the law restricts. Secondly, the Hallowed Ladder: the [Stanford canaries study](#) published last year found that employment among workers aged 22 to 25 in AI-exposed occupations has fallen by approximately 16 per cent (after controlling for firm-level shocks) since late 2022, with the figure for US software developers in that age band closer to 20 per cent. The recruitment industry is the intermediary through which most early-career workers reach the labour market; if the bottom rungs are quietly disappearing, that is not somebody else's problem. >

Third, The Black Box and the Buck: the deployer is on the hook, always, regardless of whether the model was written by the firm using it. And finally, the Cognitive Compact: a Code of Conduct that treats AI as a tool of human-centric leadership, augmenting professional judgment, supporting accessibility and lifting the burden of the unrewarding, is sound. However, a Code that allows AI to be deployed as a productivity whip is, on the current trajectory, a future suit waiting to be filed.

What does a credible AI Code of Conduct contain? It should be grounded in eight clear components, written in plain language, and designed to work in practice. First, governance and accountability, named and at the board level. Second, an AI inventory and a risk classification, because you cannot govern what you cannot list. Third, vendor and model due diligence, including the right to audit, and the right to walk away. This is where dependence must be tackled in your organisation's culture

Fourth, deployment standards and meaningful human oversight: a named human, with the time, the training and the authority to overrule outcomes. Fifth, monitoring and audit that is documented, dated and repeatable/explainable. Sixth, complaints and remedies, with a workable appeal and a named human at the end of it to review and reply.

Seventh, training and AI literacy, as now expected under the EU AI Act. Finally, transparency notices and continuous review, in plain language, on an annual cycle. Anchor those eight components of your AI Code of Conduct in [ISO/IEC 42001](#), the [NIST AI Risk Management Framework](#), [AI Act Articles 26 and 27](#), and the [2020 European Social Partners Autonomous Framework Agreement on Digitalisation](#).

Create a register

One thing the leaders of recruitment firms can do on Monday morning. Open a spreadsheet. List every AI system that touches a hiring, an allocation, a performance or a termination decision in the business. Beside each one, name the deployer. Beside that, set the date of the first audit. That is the AI register. Everything else in a Code of Conduct flows from it.

AI does not change our profession; it raises the stakes. And it gives the industry a chance, if we govern it properly, to do something it has always done at its best: to put the right person in the right role at the right moment, where they can do their best work.

For more information on the World Employment Confederation's AI Code of Conduct, visit: <https://wecglobal.org/uploads/2023/04/AI-principles-WEC-AI-Code-of-Conduct-March-2023.pdf> ■



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RESILIENT NEEDS

[Emma-Louise Taylor](#), Head of Learning and Development at [Gi Group UK](#), argues for 'resilience training' to be added to the national curriculum.



As rising levels of stress and burnout continue to impact the UK workforce, questions are being asked about how well young people are being prepared for the realities of working life. For some, the answer lies in the classroom, before the next generation even get into the workplace. Through the introduction of resilience training as a core part of the national curriculum, young people could be equipped with the right tools to thrive in the workplace regardless of circumstance. >

RESILIENCE



In recent years, there's been growing disconnect between academic achievement and workplace readiness. We continue to place significant emphasis on core subjects such as Maths and English, and rightly so as many of these subjects form the bedrock of the skills we develop, but we are not giving the same level of attention to the soft skills that underpin long-term success. Understanding how we think, how we respond to pressure and how we manage stress are essential skills.

It's becoming increasingly clear that many people are entering the workforce without the psychological tools needed to navigate challenge, uncertainty and change. But that isn't the fault of any one individual, rather it's a systemic problem that needs to be addressed. Technical capability will always be important, but the ability to adapt, recover and move forward often determines how people perform and progress over time.

Mental health causing long-term absence

The importance of teaching these skills cannot be overstated. Research from Simplyhealth highlights that mental ill-health is now the leading cause of long-term absence in the UK and the second leading cause of short-term absence. Nearly a third of employees report experiencing depression or anxiety within the past year, while a further quarter have experienced stress or burnout. On average, those affected take seven sick days annually.

What stands out even more is the impact on younger workers. Around one in five people aged 18 to 34 report taking time off due

to anxiety, depression, stress or burnout. These are individuals at the very start of their careers, and already we are seeing significant challenges in how they cope with the pressures of working life.

This isn't indicative of capability or work ethic. But it points to a gap in how we prepare people. Stress, self-doubt and emotional responses to pressure are natural human experiences. The issue is that we are not teaching people why they happen or how to manage them effectively.

If we introduced these concepts at school level, we could fundamentally change how individuals approach challenges throughout their lives. Teaching young people about the brain, about fight or-flight responses, and about how subconscious triggers influence behaviour would give them a framework to understand themselves. From there, they can begin to respond more consciously, rather than reacting on instinct.

Preparation and choice

When people understand the 'why', it normalises their experience. Stress becomes something to work with, rather than something to avoid or suppress. That shift in mindset is incredibly powerful, because it enables people to take greater control over how they respond.

Resilience is about awareness, preparation and choice rather than trying to push through something that is causing a lot of stress. If people understand their triggers, they are far better equipped to anticipate challenges and manage them before they escalate. Real resilience is built proactively, not reactively. >

It's also important to note that resilience is not a standalone concept. It intersects with how every person experiences the workplace, and the very different ways in which they interpret those experiences. Workplaces are diverse melting pots of people not just from different backgrounds and cultures, but also different stages of their life and with different challenges. One colleague may be neurodiverse, another may be part of the LGBTQIA+ community, another may be going through the menopause – they all have different needs that need to be understood by both the workplace, but also themselves as they learn about how their brain works.

We must also recognise that this is not an issue confined to younger generations. The Simplyhealth data shows that workers aged 35 to 54 are also taking time off due to anxiety, depression and burnout, often for longer periods of time. It reinforces the idea that without early education and intervention, these challenges can build over time and can last well into adulthood and become bigger challenges that are more complex to deal with the longer they go unchecked.

Resilience as a skill

This is why embedding resilience and emotional awareness into education is critical. We want to complement traditional

academic learning with education in softer skills. We need structured, age-appropriate modules that teach self-awareness, emotional regulation and coping strategies, with clear learning outcomes. There is sometimes a misconception that resilience is an innate trait that some people have and others don't. Resilience is a skill, and like any skill, it can be developed with the right knowledge and practice.

If we can equip young people with a better understanding of how their minds work under pressure, we give them a foundation that will support them throughout their careers and beyond. We also create a workforce that is better prepared, more adaptable and ultimately more sustainable.

We cannot afford to wait until young people are already struggling in the workplace before we give them the tools to cope. By bringing resilience training into the classroom, we have an opportunity to shift the conversation from reaction to prevention.

Challenges and personal struggles won't magically disappear. But with the right education in place, people can approach those challenges with greater confidence, awareness and control. And over time, that is a skillset which will benefit both the person and the workplace. ■



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THE TECH FOR COMPLIANCE

Deb Murphy, Head of Operations, FCSEA on how technology is transforming compliance in recruitment.



There are around one thousand umbrella companies currently operating in the UK. For any recruitment agency placing contractors through them, that number creates a compliance challenge that is, frankly, difficult to meet through manual processes alone. >



The spot checks, the annual audits, the spreadsheets circulated between account managers and compliance teams... these approaches were never fully adequate for a sector operating at this scale. Information existed, but it was fragmented, inconsistent, and slow to update. When HMRC or the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority came looking for evidence of due diligence, the scramble to produce it was often stressful, and not always successful.

Technology has transformed what is possible in compliance management. But using it well requires understanding both what it can do and, just as importantly, what it cannot.

The structural failure of manual compliance

Manual compliance processes share three common weaknesses. They are slow, they are inconsistent, and they depend entirely on the capacity of the individuals responsible for them.

A compliance manager reviewing fifteen umbrella companies across a busy recruitment business cannot give every company the same level of scrutiny on every review cycle. They make time-based judgement calls. They work from documents that were accurate six months ago but may have changed since. They miss things, not through negligence, but because the task

as structured is impossible to perform with total consistency by hand.

The problem compounds when information is distributed across systems. A contractor complaint sits in one inbox. A Companies House amendment goes unnoticed in another. An RTI discrepancy surfaces only if someone thinks to check. These signals are never connected, and so no one is looking at the full picture at any given moment.

The regulatory environment is making this problem more acute. The Employment Rights Act, the new Fair Work Agency, and HMRC's increasingly active approach to supply chain liability have all raised the bar on what agencies are expected to demonstrate.

Agencies that cannot show structured, current, and documented due diligence across their supply chain are exposed.

What technology actually enables

Our compliance platform, Diligence Hub, was built specifically to address this challenge for recruitment agencies. The central question it was designed to answer is a practical one – what does an agency need to know about every umbrella company it works with, and how can that information be kept accurate and accessible across the business? >



The answer involves drawing on multiple data sources simultaneously. Companies House filings, VAT registration records, HMRC portals, RTI submissions, bank statements. Each tells part of the story. Technology's strength is cross-referencing these sources at a scale and speed that no manual process can match. When a Companies House filing is amended, the platform registers it. When RTI data falls outside expected parameters, it flags the discrepancy. When documents across different companies use inconsistent structures, the platform surfaces that too.

The outcome is what we describe as one version of the truth.

All supply chain compliance data in a single, standardised, automatically updated environment. Agencies can compare umbrella companies side by side, using consistent criteria, and make informed decisions grounded in current information.

The standardisation effect matters beyond individual agencies. When different firms apply different compliance thresholds, different document formats, and different definitions of what constitutes adequate evidence, the sector's standards become fragmented. Technology, applied consistently, addresses that fragmentation and raises the floor for everyone.

The limits that technology cannot cross

We want to be direct about something that often gets overlooked in conversations about compliance technology...the tool is not the answer. It is the infrastructure through which the answer becomes possible.

Technology looks at what you give it. It processes data within the parameters it has been set. It cannot be curious. It cannot sense that something feels inconsistent even when every document appears to be in order. It cannot pick up the phone.

In practice, this matters. A platform can review a complete document set and return a clean result, because every document provided is technically in order. But a compliance professional with genuine sector experience will sometimes look at the same documents and notice something that does not sit right – a payslip margin structure that is technically correct but unusual, a director change that coincides oddly with a major contract renewal, an untaxed expense that feels 'off', a registered address that prompts a question nobody has thought to ask.

These are not algorithmic flags. They are professional instincts, developed through experience. Technology surfaces data. People decide what to do with it, and more importantly, people decide when to keep asking questions even when the data says everything is fine. >

The strongest compliance processes combine both elements deliberately. The platform handles volume and standardisation. The human brings interpretation, curiosity, and the willingness to go further when something prompts a second look. Neither by themselves are sufficient. A process that relies entirely on manual review is exposed to inconsistency and capacity limits. A process that relies entirely on a platform, without the judgement to interrogate its outputs, is only as good as the data input.

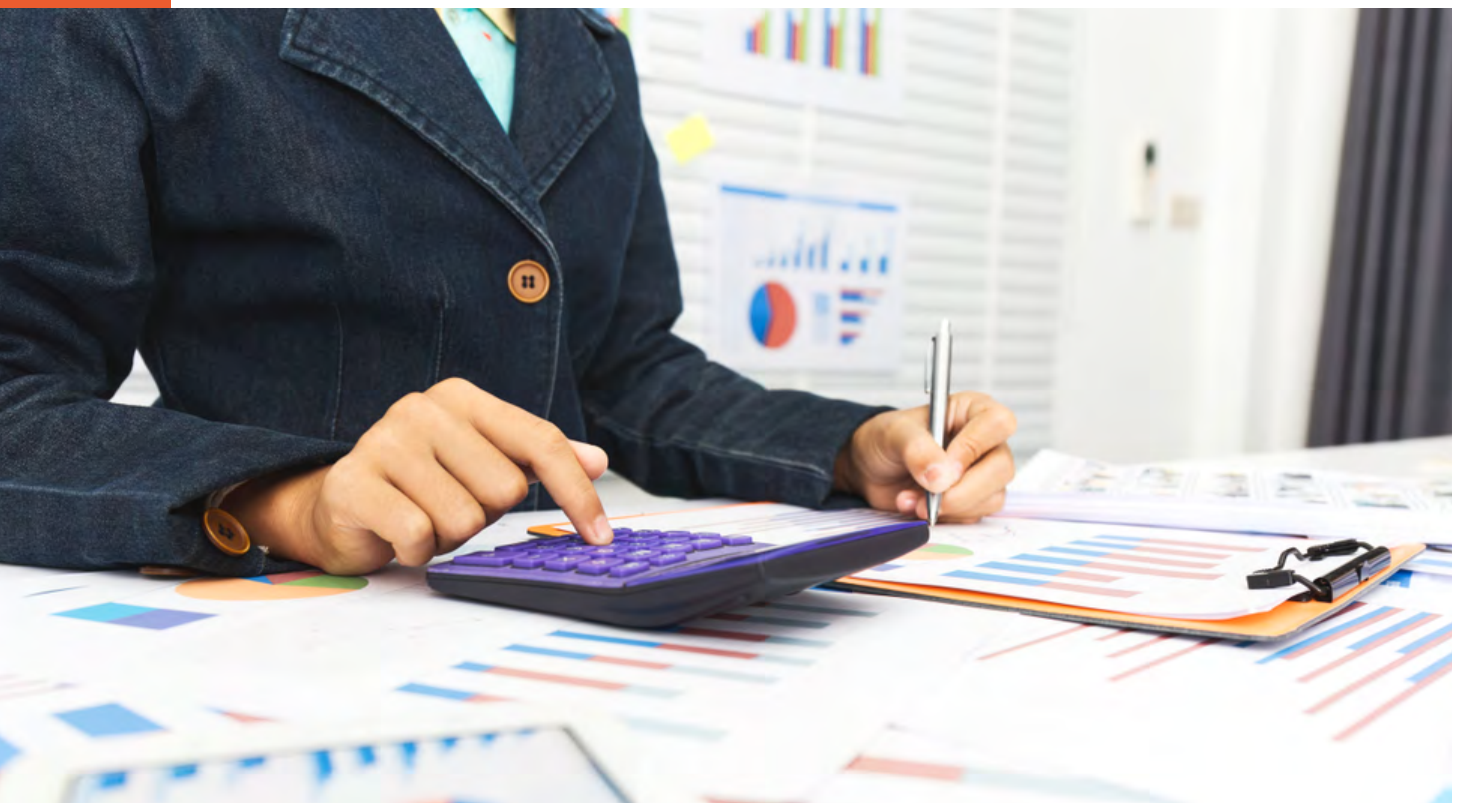
Compliance as a culture, not a checkbox

The question for recruitment agencies is no longer whether to use technology in compliance management. The volume of data involved in managing even a mid-sized contractor supply chain makes manual-only processes increasingly untenable, and regulatory expectations are moving in one direction only.

The real question is how technology integrates into a compliance culture that also values professional judgement, sector expertise, and the discipline to keep asking questions rather than accepting a clean result at face value.

We believe technology is best treated as infrastructure rather than authority. Diligence Hub gives agencies the foundation; structured, centralised, current information about every company in their supply chain. What agencies do with that information, how they act on what it shows, and when they decide to investigate further, requires the kind of human expertise that no platform replaces.

The agencies managing compliance well are the ones that have invested in both. They have the tools to see clearly, and the people to act wisely on what those tools reveal. That combination is what good compliance looks like. ■



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DON'T STAND STILL

Simon Kent reports from a Recruitment Live virtual round table exploring how recruiters can take more control of their businesses and push for best practice.



Bullhorn

The Global Recruiter hosted a Recruitment Live online round table discussion last month. Sponsored by Bullhorn and under the title: Don't Stand Still – taking control of your recruitment business, the discussion was enabled recruitment company leaders to bring light the challenges and barriers they are currently faced with in developing their businesses. Through sharing ideas, frustrations and initiatives it was possible to identify common issues and even suggest possible solutions. Attending the discussion were: >



Tony Alfieri, Managing Director, RedCat Digital
Kath Riley, Founder, Douglas Scott
James Jackson, Director, Conrad Consulting
Barry Whyte, Managing Director, Trevoze Partners
Sam Sprules, Managing Director, Aero Professionals
John Mortimer, Co-Founder, Angela Mortimer
Ford Garrard, CEO, Auto Talent
Evelin Zuahener, Co-Founder & Director, Signature
Gary Cordery, Senior Director, Bullhorn
Neelam Akhtar, Demand Generation Manager, Bullhorn
Simon Kent, Editor, The Global Recruiter
Gary King, Commercial Director, The Global Recruiter

The discussion began with a consideration of current economic conditions. Following a few years of a difficult market, some recruiters had seen brighter signs at the start of 2026, only to have their hopes compromised by the onset of the Iran war. Companies in the aviation sector have been particularly hit. At the same time it was acknowledged that doing business in the UK at the moment is expensive, and with further changes on the horizon this seems unlikely to change. Given this scenario it was felt that success depended on recruitment companies ensuring their processes and operations were arranged in the most efficient and effective way possible.

The roundtable naturally focussed some discussion on the emergence and use of AI. With some recruiters being in business for long enough to have seen the advent and evolution of computers and technology in the sector, there was an acknowledgement that AI represents a significant shift for the industry. It was also suggested that the sector and recruiters generally have yet to fully appreciate the extent of the change occurring.

Use of AI was varied throughout the group. For some it was limited to solutions such as Co-Pilot and Chat GPT, used to help with communications and general administration tasks. For others the technology is taking a more sophisticated and deeper role. Aero Professionals, for example are using AI to write software code for its own invoicing and payroll engine. Others are using it to help map out their market sector and in some cases to drive more value from their database and the candidate information they hold. Sam Sprules explained that the niche nature of the aviation sector made it difficult to use off-the-shelf IT so this was a chance to create the company's own bespoke solutions. >



There is no doubt that the recruitment industry collects a lot of very useful data, but as Gary Cordery from Bullhorn noted, this data can be unstructured, making it difficult to analyse or to access the real value from that potential treasure trove. “In the world of structured data,” he said, “automation has been really all about ‘if this – then that’, based on certain triggers and events and actions happening off the back of those triggers. But AI’s real power comes from being able to take unstructured data – CVs. Notes etc. – and find relevant data points from within”. This is where an agency’s talent pool, as unique intellectual property, has never had greater potential.

With AI still very much a work in progress, albeit with some wins, recruitment companies are also looking in other parts of their businesses to reduce costs and improve efficiency. In some cases operations have been placed with outsourcing companies, and one company in the discussion had near-shored employee roles that they considered admin heavy in order to take advantage of lower pay rates. The money freed up by this move was then directly reinvested back into the business.

The use of LinkedIn was raised and discussed by many on the call with a few complaining about the websites’ cost and potential market monopoly. However, it was suggested that investment in a business’ own data could counter the reliance on the site.

While some users resented the ongoing financial outlay required to make use of the website, and were considering alternatives others were determined to get their money’s worth by using the service as much and possible for as many opportunities as possible. The conclusion among those in the discussion was that which strategy you took depended heavily on what your business was trying to achieve. >

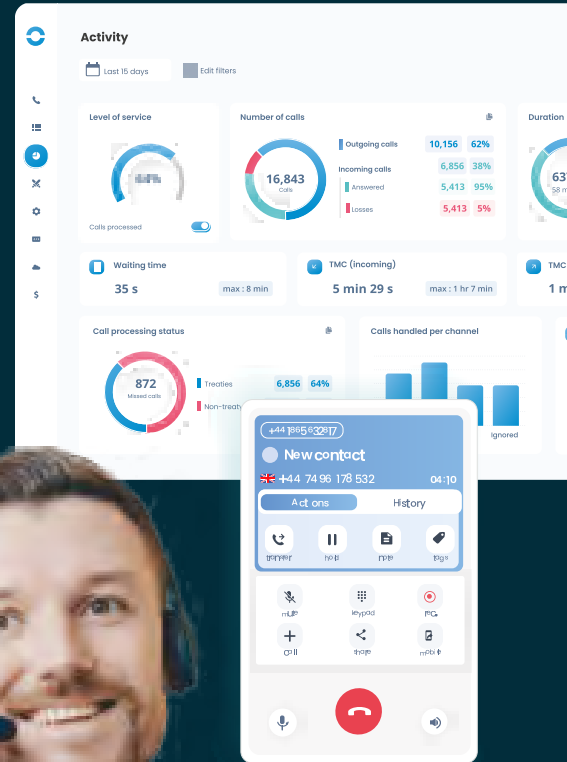
Moving away from the subject of technology, thought was given to making recruitment businesses more sustainable for the long term. One panelist observed that while technology was useful companies needed to have a good base on which to start from with staff being efficient in what they were doing across every part of the business.

James Jackson explained that he and his fellow two directors at Conrad bill for the company too and while perhaps not as tech savvy as some, they are using AI to save time. This time has then been used to invest in client relationships: “We’ve only been able to properly do that because we have found ourselves with more time to get out and see our clients,” he commented. This led to a further conversation on whether recruitment companies consider themselves to be more productive now than previously and how ‘productivity’ can be defined.

There is no question that recruitment companies have experienced challenge and difficulty over the past few years, but it is clear that the industry and its leading players are still enthusiastic for the sector and keen to do more and create more value for their clients. While AI and technology may offer benefits and advantages going forward, there is a sense that the basics still need to be covered – good, motivated personnel, excellent hygiene around data and efficient processes. With those taken care of recruitment businesses can look forward to benefitting further from technology developments and new markets and opportunities as they emerge. ■



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UPSKILLING WITH AI

Emma McDowell, Head of Client Delivery, Flex Legal discusses how the company has encouraged AI in the legal sector.



For a profession based on precedent, and one that values consistency, predictability, and stability, AI has ushered in some quite groundbreaking changes in the legal profession. The impact of AI is being felt across the board. >



And changes run throughout different levels and roles. A common misconception is that it's the junior levels that will be most affected by the rise of AI (leading to issues not just for job starters but running further up organisations as people progress through the ranks). However, in law, the potential for AI could already impact every level, from automating routine tasks, and streamlining research to contract analysis and predicting case outcome. It's no longer a case of if AI needs to be used in law, but how.

Yet AI training might not be delivering against rising demand. Our 2025 Future Lawyers report found that almost half (47.2 per cent) of respondents felt they weren't prepared or are unsure how AI will affect them, saying they "haven't been given sufficient training". And over half (50.6 per cent) felt legal experience and technical skills were the assets most valued by legal teams during the hiring process.

Working out how to use AI to its best effect – the conception of grassroots 'Champions'

As a legal recruiting platform, we connect in-house legal teams and law firms with the legal support they need, and we saw there was an opportunity to upskill the people we were representing with current, practical AI knowhow. We believed in the potential of AI, if used in the right way, to improve legal work and, most importantly, maximise time. We wanted to free up these talented people to focus their resources in the right areas. But we saw this was an opportunity for

them not just to provide legal support, but to provide additional AI support to the teams they were working with.

Quite a bit of AI training takes a top-down approach, where senior people get educated and information gets filtered through companies. Drawing on our knowledge of legal teams, we felt it would be more effective to take the opposite approach, and start with the 'grassroots'. We partnered with training specialist, First AI, to identify AI 'Champions' who would receive specialist training. These candidates could upskill themselves, to help them to improve their work, but also act as AI influencers once equipped with hands-on legal AI knowledge.

We focussed in on Copilot as the key AI tool as 2024 reports confirm nearly 70 per cent of the Fortune 500 now use Microsoft 365 Copilot, and it's widely used amongst the legal profession.

A comprehensive AI training programme

Over a seven-week programme, our Champions received weekly one-on-one coaching sessions all around responsible uses of AI in legal work. We provided inspiration around use cases and mapped out workflows that could be adapted and improved by AI. We ensured it was all practical and real-world training rather than theoretical, ensuring they could implement their learnings from day one in their roles. >



It was important to measure the effectiveness of the programme, for a potential future rollout. We did this in two ways – firstly, through live feedback, recording successful Copilot use cases and asking for estimations of impact on work and time saved. And secondly, through survey feedback, where users submitted quantitative and qualitative answers around where Copilot added value.

The results: saving time and embedding processes

The results were impressive. By the end of the programme, our Champions were 10 per cent more productive, each saving over three hours per week. All of the Champions agreed that Copilot made their document and clause drafting faster, and they rated the value Copilot's gave to their work at an 8 out of 10 on average.

The most dramatic time savings were seen in contract-heavy tasks – these are areas that traditionally take up large proportions of a lawyer's working day. Findings showed:

- Analysing contracts against GDPR checklists: 20 hours saved per month
- Red flag detection across contracts: 4 hours saved per month
- Drafting agreement summaries: 3 hours saved per month

Champions became fluent in Copilot, writing sophisticated, structured prompts averaging over 400 words. Before the training, AI was used more generically. After the course, Champions learned to give Copilot a legal persona (e.g. "imagine you are a senior solicitor"), define explicit review criteria (termination rights, GDPR compliance, liability caps) and ask for useable outputs including summary tables and flagged clause breakdowns. This structured approach was described by one Champion as "brilliant" as "it makes everything so much clearer". >

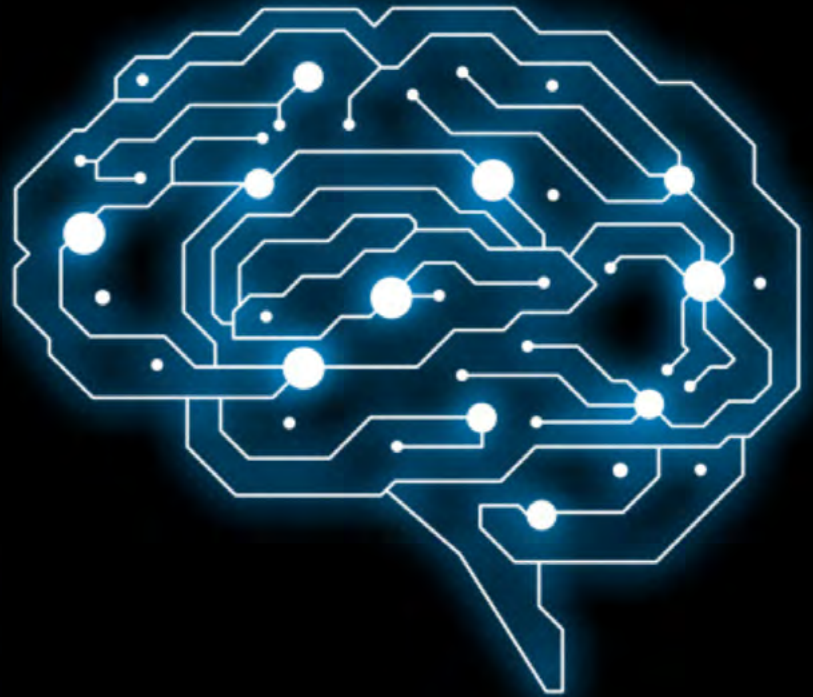
Alongside the Champions, members of the Flex Legal team undertook the Copilot training, to see how it could transform their own organisation, particularly in the sales and delivery departments. It had a quick impact on a range of bottlenecks within Flex Legal, such as the fact that two legally trained individuals needed to manually review all Terms & Conditions. Once fully Copilot-trained, team members could then perform initial term reviews against Flex's internal T&Cs themselves, freeing up the legal team to focus on higher complexity work.

Cementing influence across organisations

And, importantly, each Champion became a “multiplier”, sharing their knowledge and expertise with colleagues and embedding AI capabilities throughout organisations. A Use Case Library containing 10 ready-to-use prompts (nine legal-specific, one non-legal), beginner guides, and instructional videos were all created, in conjunction with FirstAI, which were made available to wider teams for ongoing use.

What the training really brought to light is that AI fluency in professional services isn't about replacing expertise, it's about amplifying it. And, when legal professionals are trained to use AI tools well and confidently, not only can they benefit but the whole team can. We believe that AI knowledge shouldn't be siloed. We'd like to think that the Champions model offers a blueprint for any business looking to build genuine AI capability in their sector from the inside out. ■





TECHNOLOGY

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Why Relevance (Not Just Personalization) Drives Recruitment Success



By: Matt Chambers — Founder & CEO, Loxo

Modern recruitment technology has enabled recruiters to scale outreach instantly...but we often forget to scale *relevance* alongside it. The result? Inboxes flooded with messages that feel robotic, impersonal, and easy to ignore — even with that [FIRST NAME] merge tag added on. Technology in and of itself isn't a problem, but the way you're using it *might be*.

The relevance revolution

First thing's first: Personalization and relevance are not the same thing (say it with me!). Today's candidates and clients don't want to see their names simply plugged into templates — they want proof that you understand their specific situation. This distinction matters more than ever: messages tied to specific work or behavior can increase reply rates by 2–3x, while those including contextual relevance can outperform generic personalization by 30–50%+.

Personalization simply adds a name and company. Relevance answers: "Why is this message for me?"

Consider the difference:

- **Personalized (but not relevant):** "Hi Sarah, I saw you work at TechCorp and wanted to reach out about an exciting opportunity."
- **Relevant:** "I saw your team is expanding into the Asian market — how are you thinking about scaling hiring in that region? We just placed three people in similar expansion roles."

The first uses technology to simply insert a name, whereas the second uses technology to surface context, then applies human judgment to create meaning.

In short: relevance looks like understanding what someone actually does, what that means for their trajectory, and why a specific opportunity fits their priorities. It's the difference between "I found you" and "I understand you."

Where technology and humanity converge

We humans can tend to operate in binaries: *technology vs. human touch*. But in this case, it's less about pitting the two against each other and more about technology *enabling* human judgment at scale.

With that in mind, relevance in action looks like using technology to:

- Identify genuine timing signals (tenure windows, job changes, hiring spikes, etc.)
- Surface specific achievements and context
- Manage consistent follow-ups with fresh angles
- Test and measure what resonates

From there, you can use these insights to craft outreach campaigns and content that resonates — transforming data into relevance. And those efforts compound over time into significant gains.

Here's the real competitive advantage: candidates and clients are drowning in automation. Their inboxes are full of AI-generated templates, half-baked personalization, and mass outreach disguised as one-to-one communication. They've learned to spot the difference instantly.

Relevance cuts through that noise because it can't be faked at scale: *you can't automate genuine understanding*. When a recruiter demonstrates they actually know what someone does, what challenges they face, and why a specific role matters to their trajectory...that stops the scan-and-delete cycle.

Effective recruiters build systems: templates, sequences, and feedback loops that improve incrementally through testing. But those systems exist to make relevance *repeatable*, not to replace it.

Automation is everywhere. The recruitment companies standing out are the ones using technology effectively, optimizing for *outcomes* rather than simply *outputs*.

THE EXPERIENCE IS THE MESSAGE

Richard Bradley, Commercial Director, Omni RMS, explains why candidate experience is at a crossroads, and what AI must do to help.



Ask most HR and talent leaders whether they care about candidate experience and the answer is yes, almost universally. Ask whether their hiring process reliably delivers a good one, and the conversation gets considerably more complicated. The gap between intention and reality in this space is one of the most persistent, and most commercially costly, problems in recruitment today, and the arrival of AI in the process has not made it simpler. >



We are at a low point

The market dynamic of recent years, more applicants chasing fewer roles, has created conditions where many employers have quietly deprioritised how the hiring process feels for those who do not get the job. When the pipeline looks inexhaustible, the experience of the unsuccessful candidate can seem like a low-stakes concern. The data suggests otherwise.

According to Gartner research, job offer acceptance rates fell from 74 per cent in 2023 to just 51 per cent in the first half of 2025. That is nearly a quarter of candidates completing a hiring process and still choosing to walk away. The Omni Candidate Experience Report 2026, drawing on research with over 700 UK jobseekers, found that 49 per cent would withdraw from a process that simply takes too long, and that feedback and communication remain the most frequently cited frustrations, in exactly the same position they were three years ago. The problem is well understood. It is not being solved.

“You are only ever as strong as the weakest point in your process.” - Omni Candidate Experience Report 2026

Most organisations invest heavily in attraction, in employer brand, job adverts and social content, and comparatively little in what happens once someone applies. Candidate experience functions as a system, and when one part of it breaks down, whether that is communication, feedback, decision speed or interview coordination, it undermines everything that came before.

Trust is the real issue

Beneath the operational failures sits something more fundamental. Candidates are becoming less trusting, not just of individual employers, but of the hiring process itself. Corporate employer branding has reached a point of saturation where polished careers pages and values statements are viewed with genuine scepticism. Candidates are not looking for storytelling. They are looking for processes that treat them like adults.

The Omni research makes this tension explicit. Only 8 per cent of respondents said seeing an employer’s values reflected in the recruitment process would increase their trust, which is a notable finding given how much organisations invest in purpose-driven branding. What actually moves the dial is considerably more practical: more than half of respondents (54 per cent) said transparent communication on timelines and next steps would be the single biggest trust builder. Trust is no longer earned through messaging. It is earned, or lost, through the quality of the experience itself. >



The AI question: Transparency or trouble?

AI is now firmly embedded in the recruitment conversation, and the efficiency case for it is real. It can reduce administrative burden, accelerate screening, improve scheduling and help hiring teams manage higher volumes with greater consistency. Used well, it has the potential to do something genuinely valuable for candidates: ensure that everyone who applies receives a timely response, a clear update, and where needed a thoughtful explanation of why they are not progressing.

But the trust gap is significant. The Omni 2026 report found that 42 per cent of candidates say they trust AI-supported recruitment less than human-led processes, and Gartner puts the proportion of applicants who trust AI to evaluate them fairly at just 26 per cent. Perhaps most striking, nearly a fifth of candidates surveyed by Omni were unsure whether AI had been used in their process at all, pointing to a transparency deficit that is undermining confidence rather than building it.

42 per cent of candidates trust AI-supported recruitment less than human-led processes (Omni Candidate Experience Report 2026)

When candidates cannot tell whether a machine or a person assessed their application, they tend to assume the worst, and when that assumption sits alongside a lack of communication or feedback, the damage to employer reputation is real even if it is rarely measured. The solution is not to avoid AI but to be transparent about it. Organisations that clearly communicate when AI is being used, what it is doing and where human judgement is involved will fare significantly better than those who deploy it quietly and hope nobody notices. The Omni research found that a third of candidates identified clear human involvement alongside AI decision-making as the most important confidence-builder. They are not asking for AI to be removed. They are asking to understand how the process works.

A response is better than silence

The argument that candidates do not want an automated response, that they want something personal, is often used as a reason to send nothing at all. In a world where a significant proportion of applicants still receive no acknowledgement of any kind, a timely and respectful response, even an AI-generated one, is a meaningful improvement on the current reality. The bar may not be high, but too many organisations are still failing to clear it.

Longer term, the opportunity is considerably richer. AI has the real potential to turn rejected candidates into future talent, building and maintaining engaged talent communities rather than simply discarding applicants after a single interaction. Someone who was not right for a role today may be exactly right for one in six months, and whether they come back depends almost entirely on how the first experience felt. >

A Boardroom issue in disguise

For consumer-facing organisations, the stakes are higher still. Candidates are also customers, and a poor hiring experience does not stay neatly within the HR function. The person who applies unsuccessfully for a role at a retailer, a bank or a hospitality brand walks away with a view of that organisation that shapes their behaviour as a consumer. The reputational cost rarely appears in a cost-per-hire calculation, but it sits quietly in the background eroding brand trust with every application that goes unanswered.

For organisations hiring at volume in sectors where the talent pool and the customer base significantly overlap, candidate experience is a boardroom issue. Whether the board has recognised that yet is a different conversation.

What good looks like from here

Improving candidate experience does not require reinventing how you hire. It requires honest assessment of where the process currently fails, and deliberate design of the moments that shape how candidates feel. It means being genuinely transparent about the use of AI, building communication discipline into every stage rather

than leaving it to the goodwill of an overstretched hiring manager, and designing feedback that is useful rather than formulaic.

The hiring process is no longer a neutral administrative function that sits behind the employer brand. It is part of the brand, and for many candidates it is the most direct experience they will ever have of an organisation. AI, at its best, can help deliver that experience more consistently and at greater scale than was previously possible, but only if the intent behind the process is right in the first place. Technology cannot manufacture care. It can only amplify what is already there.

The organisations that get this right will build something considerably more valuable than a smooth hiring process. They will build a reputation as an employer that can be trusted.

In a market where candidates are increasingly sceptical, increasingly vocal and increasingly selective, that trust is the competitive advantage worth investing in.

Data references: Omni Candidate Experience Report 2026 (739 UK respondents, February 2026) | Gartner Voice of the Candidate Survey Q2 2025 (2,918 respondents) ■





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STEP BY STEP

Daniel Patel, Recruitment Director, Eursap offers 10 ways AI can improve candidate experience.



Candidate experience has emerged as a distinguishing factor in specialist recruitment markets. Hiring niche technology staff, top management, or extremely competent SAP consultants, applicants are demanding more and more swiftness, conciseness, and applicability in the process. Meanwhile, recruiters are being pushed to accommodate increased amounts of applications without sacrificing quality. >

Artificial intelligence is becoming a key player in resolving this tension. When wisely implemented, AI can increase efficiency and consistency and enable recruiters to concentrate on what is most important to them: human connection and professional advice. The trick is not to oust recruiters, but to supplement them.

The following are 10 practical applications of AI in enhancing the experience of candidates during specialist recruitment.

1: Set clear expectations from the start
One of the most common frustrations candidates face is uncertainty. Questions such as “When will I hear back?”, “How many stages are involved?” and “Who is my point of contact?” often go unanswered in traditional setups. AI-driven communication workflows can eliminate this ambiguity by standardising the initial touchpoints, ensuring every single candidate receives a comprehensive roadmap of the hiring lifecycle the moment they apply.

Scheduled responses are automated, which allows mapping out the interview processes, expected feedback times, and key contacts. This consistency creates trust even at the start and particularly within the speciality markets, as the hiring processes can be more complex and lengthy.

2: Speed up candidate matching and shortlisting
In specialist recruitment, relevancy is key. Applicants do not appreciate being approached about jobs that only have some relation; precision is required.

By using AI technology, companies can sift through applicants’ resumes, profiles, and job descriptions to find the best fit in record time.

For candidates, this means fewer irrelevant approaches and faster engagement with roles that genuinely align with their expertise. The first touchpoint becomes more meaningful, setting a positive tone for the entire process.

3: Improve response times at scale
The so-called ‘black hole’ application process is still a problem in the industry. Candidates apply, yet they sometimes never hear back because hiring teams are overwhelmed and application handling breaks down. One solution lies in using AI to ensure that candidates receive an immediate acknowledgement and an update on their application status, regardless of whether the recruiter is juggling multiple applicants.

Even though AI takes care of the first contact, it also leaves room for human intervention where it counts, namely, providing updates, feedback on interviews, and making hiring decisions.

4: Personalise job recommendations
The capabilities of AI allow for a degree of personalisation that is hard to attain using manual approaches. Through skill analysis, career history analysis, certification analysis, and preference assumptions, AI can suggest jobs that suit the candidate best. >



This approach becomes especially useful in specialist job sectors such as SAP recruitment (enterprise software used by large organisations to manage areas like finance, logistics, and HR). An SAP consultant who specialises in S/4HANA Finance, for example, needs a different set of positions than someone focused on SAP Basis or logistics modules.

5: Reduce administrative delays in the hiring process

Problems with scheduling, coordination, and documentation management due to administrative bottlenecks can delay the hiring process and create frustration for the applicants. These delays typically happen not from decision-making itself, but from repetitive coordination work such as checking availability across calendars, chasing feedback, and transferring information between systems.

Scheduling tools, screening systems, and automated communication workflows can therefore reduce the back-and-forth that normally slows hiring down, making the process more efficient for both candidates and employers.

6: Consistent communication throughout the process

Consistency is vital when considering the candidate experience; however, this can be challenging to accomplish without the use of automation. AI may help create effective communication processes that ensure candidates are updated appropriately during each step.

This can include interview reminders, status updates, and notifications about progress through the hiring pipeline. However, AI should act as a supporting

layer rather than a replacement for human oversight, ensuring no candidate is unintentionally overlooked.

7: Ensure human feedback for unsuccessful candidates

Though AI could help in designing a feedback framework or analysing data collected from interviews, rejection communication must always have a human touch. Personalised and helpful feedback is highly valued by candidates, especially those applying for jobs in specialised domains, who put in a lot of effort.

It is helpful if AI helps the recruiter to structure their ideas and point out important aspects for evaluating the candidate; however, the message itself should be personalised, empathic, and educational.

8: Illustrate AI recruiting for its use in complex hiring

One example of where AI recruiting can add value is SAP recruitment. Many SAP roles require a combination of highly specialised technical skills, industry knowledge, and global project experience.

AI can help by identifying which of the required qualifications a candidate possesses and by assessing whether certain skills are transferable across different modules or industries. However, interpreting this information in context — as well as evaluating cultural fit and language competence — remains the responsibility of the human recruiter. A balanced combination of AI-driven analysis and human judgement therefore, leads to a stronger and more effective candidate experience. >

9: Be cautious with automation during candidate communication

While there are many advantages to leveraging AI, it must be used with care. Excessive automation can lead to impersonal communication that feels generic or inauthentic, which candidates are quick to detect.

Recruiters should to ensure that AI does not interfere with important communication that requires a personal touch. Key moments include making initial contact, preparing candidates for interviews, delivering offers, and providing feedback.

10: Set recruiters free for high-value personal interactions

Among other advantages of using AI, the biggest one is undoubtedly the time it returns to recruiters! By automating routine work, AI makes it possible for recruiters to pay more attention to advisory conversations, build relationships, and meaningfully engage with candidates.

These interactions cannot be replaced by algorithms, as they rely on experience, empathy, and trust. If used wisely, AI will help recruiters invest more in these processes.

Striking the right balance

Artificial Intelligence is having a significant effect on recruitment, although its effects vary depending on how it is used. When it is used to its full potential, it can add value through speed, efficiency, and relevance to an aspect of the process which has traditionally been very time-consuming.

The most effective approach is to leverage the strengths of AI while preserving the human elements that ensure a personalised candidate experience. In specialist recruitment in particular, such as SAP hiring, this balance is critical. ■



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THE AI FACTOR

Clinton Thomas, VP Practice Lead, ICEO at LHH UK&I says AI is now a core leadership responsibility – and today's leaders must adapt.



Most organisations already use AI, but the challenge has shifted. The question is no longer whether to adopt it, but how to deploy it responsibly, strategically, and at scale amid mounting regulatory, security, and workforce pressures. >



AI's impact is now transformative rather than incremental – reshaping competitiveness, innovation, and organisational design. This places new demands on leaders to govern it effectively, build internal capabilities, and support their people through continuous change.

Nearly half of all leaders surveyed by LHH identify AI and emerging technologies as their top development priority. Yet confidence remains uneven. Many leaders are still unsure how to implement, govern, and scale AI in a way that makes a meaningful difference to their organisation.

At the same time, C-suite turnover has dropped sharply. Leadership teams are becoming more stable, with 58% of later-career executives (those aged 61+) reporting that they have no plans to leave within the next three years, compared to just 11% last year.

Continuity, once hard to achieve, now seems commonplace.

But there's a clear tension emerging. The rapid pace of technological change combined with the stability of leadership teams is only raising expectations. Leaders have more time and more visibility, putting the responsibility to enact change and meet the moment squarely on their shoulders.

That's not easy. After all, stability alone cannot drive progress – and no matter the length of tenure, leaders are facing an entirely new challenge with AI. It's no surprise that a significant portion (28%) are concerned that a lack of strategic clarity is a constraint on their effectiveness.

Meaningful change starts at the top. As AI becomes more of a leadership responsibility, several questions are now front of mind. How can leaders increase confidence in their ability to implement and govern AI effectively? How can they best support their people to increase their capabilities? And how can it support with effective decision making?

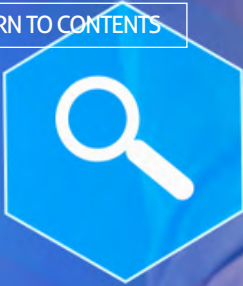
The role of succession planning

Stability at the top should be an advantage – but that only works if leaders act deliberately and decisively.

While, in the past, organisations have struggled amidst rapid executive turnover, that's no longer the case for the vast majority of organisations today. High-turnover leadership teams, or those experiencing more than 50% executive churn, have dropped from 43% in 2025 to just 19% this year, marking a significant shift towards stability at the top.

Longer leadership tenures create a window for companies to deepen institutional knowledge, invest in AI capability-building both in tech and human skills, and develop next-generation executives.

But it's that final point that many organisations risk failing to prioritise amidst the technology hype. A leadership cohort that remains in place for longer, without a corresponding investment in the next generation, risks creating a gap that is difficult to close later. >



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And while leaders are struggling to understand how to bring AI capabilities into their organisations, stalling mobility opportunities can weaken internal talent pipelines, and leave early careers talent disengaged, right when it's more important than ever to upskill people.

Without clear career mobility plans, organisations are even risking losing their pipeline of future leaders to external opportunities where progression is offered.

Addressing this requires proactive action. Business leaders know that they must invest in AI capability-building to fill skills gaps – and to meet the expectations of workers who want to develop to meet the demands of an AI-driven workforce. They also know that they must successfully retain and develop the next generation of leaders. For this to take place, clear career pathways, targeted development and upskilling, and opportunities to engage with AI-related challenges all play an important role.

Future leaders, and increasingly those of today, will be judged on their AI fluency. The aim is not simply to retain talent, but to ensure that future leaders are ready to operate in an environment where expectations are higher, and margins for error much smaller.

Leading people through the AI change

As AI becomes embedded across a variety of roles, the core leadership challenge will become less about technology uptake and more about its impact on people.

While teams are being asked to adapt quickly and work in new ways – which are often still evolving as new technologies and use cases influence behaviour across industries – leaders must recognise the impact, and lead with empathy to provide the support their teams need.

It's already led to many seeking more support, particularly in areas related to AI, where 73% of leaders are looking for more internal support options. Technological disruption has been cited as one of the top four external factors challenging senior leaders. These figures reflect a need for guidance that goes beyond tools or systems, and instead centres on people skills.

Providing clarity on what matters, setting direction that can be translated into action, and ensuring that decisions are made consistently can prove to be just as important as recognising the personal impact of such widespread change.

When direction is ambiguous, or decisions lack a strategic motivation, the effects on juniors are felt more keenly and at greater scale.

This isn't something leaders aren't already aware of, but they do need help. Nearly three in four have signalled a need for leadership support that keeps pace with today's pressures. And, for a second year running, unclear strategic priorities and ineffective decision discipline are the most significant factors limiting leadership effectiveness. >

Consistency and proactive leadership have the potential to drastically improve the way teams navigate the gap between what technology can do, and how it is applied to their day-to-day. In doing so, successful leaders can soothe anxieties, build stable relationships with future leaders, and ensure their organisations are preparing to scale AI in a way that makes a meaningful difference.

Balancing new leadership expectations

The continuity we're seeing at the top of today's organisations can make a real positive difference in the hands of leaders prepared to build trust and see initiatives through.

The consistency of support offered, and the visible commitment to developing their people, will all contribute to the success of any AI-driven innovations at work. But without a focus on the people within an organisation, stability can quickly turn into inertia, and organisations can start to lose the changemakers who could be the future leaders of their teams.

This is not an easy time for many leaders today. They are being asked to accomplish a lot; they must lead their organisation's use of AI, strategically build on a still-developing bedrock of emerging technology, and ensure that their people are prepared to evolve and move with them. None can succeed without the others.

And yet, organisations are in a good position to make these evolutions possible. Leadership stability provides the platform for positive momentum. What matters now is how leaders choose to use it, to build new capabilities, strengthen decision-making discipline, and guide their people through a period of sustained change.

Now, it's up to today's leaders to turn continuity into confident, people-first innovation. ■

