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THE GLOBAL RECRUITER

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THE END OF ONE-SIDED FLEXIBILITY

SCALE RIGHT

THE NEET QUESTION

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THE GLOBAL RECRUITER

WELCOME

SIMON KENT
EDITOR

The summer months can, for some in the recruitment industry, signal a slower time. Annual leave kicks in, businesses seek to ease themselves through the hottest months, and few new projects are established or given the momentum they need to require new resources.

If this is your experience, the summer also offers a time for reflection and preparation. Depending on your sector it might be time to review processes, contacts and clients in order to ensure you're ready to exploit whatever chances emerge as the market picks up again. It's a great time to extend your network, seek out new clients and potential candidates. Have conversations with people in order to be ready for what happens next rather than trying to make something happen right now.

In this issue of The Global Recruiter we start our special view across expanding recruitment companies. How can you drive your business forward, do more, satisfy more clients, candidates and grow your ideas to reach their full potential? Some recruiters start their businesses in order to feel they fully benefit from the work they do. Some start it in order to achieve a 'lifestyle' business – something that delivers enough turnover for their own personal requirements.

But what does it take to go further, and how much more satisfying can that be? Perhaps this summer is the time to find out – to be more active and to get ready for the next big step forward. Naturally The Global Recruiter is here to help you every step of the way and to celebrate your achievements as they happen. ■

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RECRUITMENT MARKET GAINS MOMENTUM

Data from Robert Half suggests that after months of caution, employers are showing renewed confidence in hiring. While economic uncertainty continues to weigh on hiring decisions, Q2 data points to a more resilient recruitment market than at the start of the year. According to the data, professional hiring across core UK sectors increased between Q1 (January to March) and Q2 (April to June), despite annual declines.

IT recorded the sharpest quarterly increase, with vacancies up 42 per cent between Q1 and Q2 2026, despite a 20 per cent year-on-year fall in June. Manufacturing was one of only a handful of sectors to report both quarterly and annual growth. Vacancies increased by 18 per cent between Q1 and Q2 and were also up 21 per cent year-on-year in June, suggesting stronger and more sustained demand for talent across the sector.

Logistics and utilities also reported positive movement on both measures. Logistics vacancies rose by 24 per cent between Q1 and Q2, while utilities increased by 21 per cent over the same period. Both sectors also recorded 6 per cent year-on-year growth in June.

This more positive quarterly performance suggests that confidence is returning in some areas of the market, even as annual comparisons remain subdued.

"While year-on-year vacancy levels remain lower across many professional sectors, the quarterly data points to a more resilient recruitment market than earlier in the year," Phil Boden, Market Director at Robert Half commented. "Employers continue to navigate economic uncertainty, but increased hiring activity across a number of sectors suggests demand for talent remains present where organisations have critical skills needs.

"The rise in IT vacancies during Q2 is particularly notable, although activity remains below last year's levels. Manufacturing, logistics and utilities also recorded stronger demand over the quarter, highlighting continued recruitment activity in sectors that play an important role in supporting day-to-day operations and infrastructure," added Boden.

SAMSIC GROUP AND SELLICK PARTNERSHIP ACQUIRE GLEESON

Sellick Partnership, a wholly owned subsidiary of Samsic Group, has acquired a majority shareholding in Gleeson Recruitment Group, one of the UK's leading independent recruitment and talent solutions businesses.

The move forms part of Samsic RH's UK expansion strategy and will build on Sellick Partnership's existing presence in the market, broadening the Group's geographical coverage and specialist recruitment expertise.

Founded in 2011, Gleeson Recruitment Group has built a strong reputation across Executive Search, Interim Management, Transformation and Specialist Recruitment, supporting clients across Accountancy & Finance, Technology, Legal, Human Resources, Marketing, Procurement & Supply Chain, Sales, Property and Life Sciences through its Pharma Partners business.

With their head office in Birmingham and an additional 4 offices across the Midlands and South of England, Gleeson Recruitment Group also operates dedicated brands including GRG Executive Search, specialising in the appointment of C-suite executives and senior leadership talent, Gleeson Futures, focused on recruitment solutions for growth phases, and Pharma Partners, dedicated to the pharmaceutical industry. **>**

The investment brings together two highly complementary businesses within the Samsic Group portfolio. Gleeson Recruitment Group and Sellick Partnership share a relationship-led approach, specialist professional services expertise and a commitment to exceptional client and candidate experiences. Together, the businesses create a significant UK specialist recruitment platform, offering national reach, enhanced capabilities across executive search, interim management and professional recruitment, and a shared ambition for continued growth.

“This majority stake marks a new milestone in our development in the UK,” Gilles Cavallari, President of Samsic RH, commented. “Gleeson shares with Samsic RH a common entrepreneurial culture, based on operational excellence, agility, and commitment to clients and candidates.”

Jason Blakey, Tony Gleeson and Jason Granger, Co-Founders of Gleeson Recruitment Group, commented: “From our very first conversations, it was clear that we shared the same values, culture and long-term outlook. We are proud to join a group that understands our business and respects Gleeson’s DNA.

“We have built Gleeson through strong relationships, specialist expertise and a commitment to doing the right thing for our clients, candidates and colleagues. With the support and ambition of Samsic RH and Sellick Partnership, we can continue to grow while retaining what makes us unique: a personalised, transparent and sustainable approach to recruitment.”

Co-founders Jason Blakey, Tony Gleeson and Jason Granger will continue to lead Gleeson Recruitment Group alongside the existing management team. The Gleeson brand and operating model will remain unchanged as the business continues to pursue its growth ambitions across the UK.

Hannah Cottam, Chief Executive Officer of Sellick Partnership, added: “From the outset, what stood out about Gleeson Recruitment Group was the similarity in our business models. Both organisations have been built by passionate founders, place people and relationships at the heart of what they do, and share a commitment to delivering outstanding outcomes for clients and candidates.

“Over the years, we have developed a great deal of mutual respect for the Gleeson team. While each business will continue to operate under its own brand and leadership, we are excited about the opportunity to work alongside colleagues who share our entrepreneurial spirit, commitment to excellence and long-term approach to growth.”

The acquisition reflects Samsic RH’s commitment to strengthening its presence in the UK market, bringing together strong local brands, expert teams and the synergy between Sellick Partnership and Gleeson Recruitment Group to build lasting relationships with businesses and talent. ■

MANPOWERGROUP APPOINTS LEE CHANT AS MD UK & IRELAND

ManpowerGroup have announced the appointment of Lee Chant as Managing Director, UK & Ireland. Chant will lead the UK and Ireland business, driving commercial growth across ManpowerGroup's industry-leading brands, Manpower and Brook Street.

"It is a privilege to take on this role at such an important moment for both our business and the wider workforce," said Chant. "The UK labour market continues to evolve rapidly, creating new challenges and opportunities for employers and job seekers alike. As technology and AI reshape the world of work, we have an important opportunity to help organisations build the workforce they need for the future while connecting more people with meaningful employment. I look forward to working with our talented teams across the UK and Ireland to deepen our partnerships with clients, accelerate growth and continue delivering the expertise and innovation that sets ManpowerGroup apart."

In announcing Lee's appointment, Riccardo Barberis, President, Northern Europe & France, ManpowerGroup, said: "Since joining ManpowerGroup, Lee has made a significant commercial impact, strengthening our market position, accelerating growth and building deeper relationships with our clients. He is a collaborative leader with a strong customer focus and a clear passion for our purpose. Combined with his deep industry expertise, these qualities make him the ideal person to lead our UK and Ireland business into its next phase of growth."

Chant succeeds Michael Stull, who has led the UK team for two and a half years, successfully driving transformation across sales, operations and technology. Stull is returning to the US, to take on a new position as Global Strategy Leader, based at ManpowerGroup's global headquarters in Milwaukee.

Stull comments: "It has been a privilege to lead the team in the UK, helping to drive growth and innovation in what have been unprecedented times. The UK is a complex, competitive market and I am proud of what we have achieved. That said, there is still so much potential in the UK and I look forward to watching Lee and the team take the business from strength to strength." ■

AMBITION APPOINTS LORRAINE TWIST AS DIRECTOR

Specialist professional services recruitment firm Ambition has appointed Lorraine Twist as Director of Professional Services Accounting & Consulting firms. In this position she will lead teams across Audit, Advisory, Consulting & Tax in the UK & Europe.

Lorraine joins from Hays, bringing a strong track record in professional services fee earning recruitment.

“I’m delighted to be joining Ambition at such an exciting time for the business,” Lorraine said. “Professional Services is a sector I’m genuinely passionate about, and one where I’ve had the privilege of building long-term relationships with both clients and candidates.

“Leading and developing high-performing teams has been a consistent highlight of my career,” she added. “I enjoy helping people achieve their potential, supporting clients with their growth ambitions, and creating career opportunities that make a real difference. I thrive in growth-focused businesses where collaboration, innovation and exceptional client service are at the heart of what we do.”

She adds that she was drawn to Ambition by its high-quality reputation, people-first culture, and the opportunity to contribute to the next phase of the business’s growth. “I’m excited to be working alongside such a talented and supportive team, building on the firm’s strong foundations and continuing to deliver outstanding outcomes for our clients, candidates and colleagues. I’m looking forward to getting started,” she said.

Matthew Gardner, Managing Director at Ambition, said: “Securing someone of Lorraine’s calibre is a significant addition to our UK team at such an exciting time, following a record-breaking 18 months for the business. We have seen our clients’ people and growth challenges become increasingly complex, nuanced, and varied, creating a growing demand for deeper expertise and more tailored recruitment and talent solutions.” ■

Best Large Recruitment Business

La Fosse
Morson
PageGroup
(trading as Michael Page)

Best Medium Recruitment Business

Select Offshore
Source Group International
VHR

Best Small Recruitment Business

Fintelligent
Fox and Cubs
Hunter Bond
Leaders in Care
Prism Digital
Trinity House Group

Best Newcomer

Greenbridge Energy
Invecta Group
Kenkotech Futures
Scout Global
Station

Best Specialist Recruitment Business

BRG
Capstone Recruitment
Leaders in Care
Talent Locker
Xpertise Recruitment

Best UK Overseas Operation

Amoria Group
Antal International
NRL
Penta Consulting
VHR

Best Temporary Consultant

Oakley Recruitment: Joanne Adams
Autotech Recruit: Ollie O'Dell
Vantage Consulting: Joshua Hughes-Johnson

Best Permanent Consultant

Acorn by Synergie: Kristy Potter
Addition: Hannah Clarke
Capstone Recruitment: Jemima Ralph
Heads Resourcing Group: Rosie Jenkins
RedLaw: Amy Hambleton

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BOOK YOUR TICKETS

THE NEET QUESTION

Moving young people into work requires government to avoid pricing them out of the job market says Shazia Ejaz, REC Director of Campaigns.

Getting more young people into work is an economic necessity as well as a moral one.

Only a few years ago, REC's Overcoming Shortages report estimated that labour and skills shortages could cost the UK economy up to £39 billion annually through lost productivity and growth. Against that backdrop, more than a million young people being outside education, employment or training represents not only a challenge for those individuals, but a major drag on economic performance. >

This is why having more than a million young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), alongside a youth unemployment rate of 16%, is a disaster for the recruitment industry, UK businesses and the government's growth ambitions.

We need to help the government unblock the talent pipeline so employers have the people and skills they need to fuel productivity and growth.

Support Guaranteed

Undoubtedly the government now see tackling the NEET crisis as a priority. Recent initiatives include the Youth Guarantee, which includes enhanced work coach support as well as Youth Hubs across the UK that support young people with CV and interview preparation, as well as mental health support, which has become a significant barrier to work for many. This is on top of existing schemes such as the Restart Scheme which are designed to help get people of all ages into work. Former Health Secretary Alan Milburn is leading an independent review into the causes of rising youth inactivity from which we have had an initial diagnostics report and await the policy recommendations from later this summer.

What we need to hear from Milburn's final report is recognition that temporary work supports many young people, especially those without significant employment experience, to enter the workforce. We need to make it easier for employers to hire young people, expand access to short, job-focused training, and bring recruiters into the heart of employment support, if we are serious about cutting NEET rates. Recruiters know where the jobs are, what skills employers need, and how to get young people into work quickly.

There are too many misconceptions about non-working young people that need clearing up by setting out the facts. According to the latest ONS data, only 39% of young people who were NEET were unemployed. The remaining 61% were economically inactive, meaning they were not working and not looking for work. Over the year to January to March 2026, more young people became NEET because they were unemployed, and more also became NEET because they were inactive. In recent years, men have generally made up a larger share of the NEET group than women.

Entry Level Ops

In the meantime, opportunities for young people in the labour market remain a critical concern. While government is investing significant effort in reducing youth inactivity, those efforts will be undermined if employers become less willing to create entry-level opportunities.

Rising labour costs are having a disproportionate impact on young people and those entering the workforce. Employers are increasingly favouring candidates with existing skills and experience, showing a reduced ability or willingness to take on and train new entrants. >

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As a result, entry-level opportunities are being squeezed. This makes it harder for young people to access the labour market in the first place, increasing the risk of longer periods out of work and a cycle of inactivity that the government is already spending significant resources trying to address.

Labour Costs are Only Part of the Picture

It is worth looking at what the government can do domestically within the uncertain geopolitical strains and the ideological framework of the Employment Rights Act (ERA) that has seemingly tied their hands to policies that will likely impact the agency model and thus reduce opportunities for flexible entry-level roles.

The Low Pay Commission is an independent body that advises the government about the National Living and National Minimum Wage rates. They have been under instruction by the government to move the rates so they converge and younger people have the same rate as the National Living Wage. Recently however there has been guidance from government that the pace of convergence can be slowed. We will continue to push for that to be the case.

We know that National Living Wage rates are squeezing the gap between entry-level and more skilled roles, increasing pressure on employers to raise wages across wider pay bands. As pay differentials narrow, incentives for progression, upskilling and taking on additional responsibility can weaken, creating recruitment and retention challenges in sectors such as health and social care. Giving businesses time to absorb recent increases will help maintain clear career pathways, support skills development and ensure sustainable workforce growth.

Our May 2026 survey of 237 UK employers found that higher labour costs are already affecting business decisions. More than a quarter have reduced recruitment or headcount (27%) or scaled back investment (26%), while one in five have cut training or held back wider pay rises. Responses vary by region and business size, but the overall trend is clear: rising NMW costs are putting pressure on hiring, skills investment and growth. Effective enforcement is essential to ensure compliant employers are not disadvantaged. The message to the LPC from UK business is clear that they must adopt a more cautious trajectory for NLW increases.

We would expect the LPC to explicitly account for youth labour market impacts when considering the NMW. That will show the LPC incorporating indicators such as vacancies, hiring demand, recruitment activity and employer investment in training, alongside earnings data. >

The Role of Employers

But labour costs do not exist in a vacuum. Employers' willingness to recruit, train and develop young talent is shaped by the wider operating environment, including taxation and regulation.

A key challenge for the recruitment sector is helping government match its Make Work Pay ambitions with the pragmatism needed to support hiring, investment and growth.

After all, employers are facing a scale of challenge that is unprecedented in recent times outside of the pandemic, with rising business costs, additional regulatory changes, including an increase in National Insurance and forthcoming Employment Rights reforms such as guaranteed hours provisions.

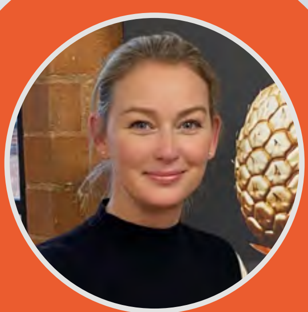
Guaranteed hours proposals, if implemented as they stand, threaten the flexible work pathway into the labour market for young people as they could dissuade clients from using agency workers if they feel burdened by the prospect of having to offer permanent contracts after 12 weeks without having the work to sustain the offer. Excluding agency workers from these provisions altogether would be the best route, or a 52-week reference period to establish working patterns could also help avoid client jitters. But if implemented incorrectly, the reforms risk becoming one of the most disruptive labour market interventions in recent years.

The government have overstepped the intention around guaranteeing hours for those deemed to be in insecure work by including agency work where flexibility is already a two-sided equation, and where agency work operates within a well-established regulatory framework that offers worker protections.

The risk is that well-intentioned reforms, combined with rising employment costs, inadvertently reduce employers' willingness to create the entry-level opportunities that young people need. Government must work closely with recruitment businesses and employers to ensure reforms are operationally workable, support labour market flexibility and avoid unintended consequences for hiring, investment and growth. ■

FINANCIALLY RECRUITING

Joanna Pennell, Divisional Manager (Finance & HR), Pineapple Recruitment discusses how the financial sector needs new approach to solves its talent crisis.



If you're struggling to fill finance and accountancy vacancies, you're not alone. Put simply, the commercial industry is facing a recruitment crisis, driven by critical skills shortages and a dramatic mismatch between traditional candidate skillsets and the evolving expectations of a modern, tech-driven workforce. >

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The figures are stark. Around 78 per cent of CEOs report a critical talent shortage, while almost three quarters of accountancy firms admit to turning away clients because they lack the internal capacity to take on more work.

Meanwhile, employers are simultaneously battling an ageing and burnt-out workforce, while younger talent is choosing careers in technology, AI and other sectors where they can command considerably higher salaries. The industry must rethink how it attracts and retains talent in a rapidly changing world.

Changing long-term thinking to retain employees and attract future talent

Firstly, accountancy firms and commercial finance departments face a range of recruitment challenges, from technical deficits to rapidly changing regulatory frameworks. While these pressures affect in-house corporate teams and public practices slightly differently, several themes are common across the industry.

Burnout is significant. Staff are being stretched to their limits, with the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants' Talent Report warning that mental health progress has flatlined across the profession, as heavy workloads place teams under pressure.

Capacity issues are taking considerable toll on wellbeing, with the AdvanceTrack Accounting Talent Index noting that practitioners are suffering visible stress and anxiety.

Recruitment alone will not solve this problem. While it's true some organisations excel at attracting talent through smart recruitment marketing, development and retention must become a greater focus.

Modern technology and AI transform finance careers rather than killing them off

We must look at IT innovation. Companies which embrace technology are often more attractive to candidates. However, this shift has triggered a cross-industry salary war. While rates for routine transactional roles remain relatively flat, systems-savvy accountants and data-literate commercial analysts can easily command premium salaries. With the pressures of inflation and the cost-of-living soaring, it's no wonder highly skilled candidates are jumping ship for better pay packets and incentives.

Conversely, companies that fail to modernise face increasing difficulties recruiting for entry-level and process-driven roles, particularly as younger professionals look for careers that offer development, purpose, and exposure to modern technology. >

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Demand for technology, software and data specialists within finance remains fierce, forcing traditional employers to compete directly with agile, technology-led businesses. Four in five UK employers report an ongoing skills gap within their finance teams, particularly where investment in modern accountancy technology and automation has lagged.

Despite the challenges, people still want to work in finance – but they want to be treated as people

Aside from all this, the accountancy and finance sector continues to offer stability, career progression and growing opportunities to develop technology and AI expertise. However, the ACCA Global Talent Trends Report highlights increasing concern among applicants about AI-driven recruitment processes and automated screening tools that make it harder to secure an interview.

At the same time, generative AI has made it easier than ever for jobseekers to submit large volumes of applications, creating challenges for employers and genuine candidates alike.

Hiring managers face a frustrating paradox: overwhelming application volumes alongside a shortage of candidates with the commercial, strategic and technical skills needed to perform the role.

Shifting focus and investing in in-house training pathways, providing structured development and flexible working conditions is the key to closing this gap.

Forward-thinking firms are securing talent early by offering qualification-linked pay increases, modern benefits packages and clearly defined career pathways.

Smart companies currently implementing automation processes are immediately reinvesting any saved capital straight back into their people, funding highly competitive compensation packages, offering robust study support, upskilling tech programmes and mapping out accelerated career progression to prevent their best talent leaving.

Demanding strict 9-5 on-site working is guaranteed to have a negative impact on recruitment

The ACCA Global Talent Trends Report notes that while younger professionals value in-person collaboration, rigid attendance policies remain a major deterrent, even when accompanied by competitive salaries. >

At the same time, salary growth across accountancy and commercial finance is outpacing many other industries due to ongoing talent shortages. With almost a quarter of employers increasing salaries by more than 5 per cent to retain staff, expectations around flexibility, wellbeing and career progression have all risen sharply.

Apprenticeships are becoming an increasingly valuable talent pipeline

While companies might be fighting over tech-savvy and time-committed graduates, forward-thinking operators are busy building their own talent pipelines.

A staggering 359 per cent surge in modern finance apprenticeships over the past five years highlights a major, sector-wide shift in thinking, and commercial accounting teams are reaping the rewards. More than 70 per cent of UK firms employing these pathways state that apprenticeships are far more cost-effective for onboarding new staff, while actively fostering genuine employee loyalty and driving cognitive diversity. For commercial companies and practices in particular, it’s a proven, stable way to bypass the graduate bottleneck and train accounting staff to fit your exact business needs.

It’s no use pretending that financial recruitment will get easier. It won’t.

Above all else, and taking what I’ve discussed here into account, it’s clear that success will require targeted strategies, fresh thinking, honest conversations and the ability to adapt quickly to changing market conditions.

At Pineapple Recruitment, we recruit across the entire finance lifecycle, specialising in sourcing transactional and strategic talent from Finance Assistants, Management Accountants through to senior-level roles such as Finance Directors and CFOs.

For more information or help with this market call 0330 0705981 or email info@pineapple.recruitment.co.uk ■

THE END OF ONE-SIDED FLEXIBILITY

Katharine Gibson, Parnter at Morgan Lewis discusses how the UK's new guaranteed hours regime will reshape workforce models.

With the Employment Rights Act 2025 now on the statute book, attention has turned from the Government's promise to end 'one-sided flexibility' to the practical reality of delivering it. The Act introduces three significant rights for workers on zero-hour contracts and similar arrangements, including guaranteed hours, reasonable notice of shifts, and compensation where shifts are cancelled, curtailed or moved at short notice. >

While the rights themselves are now established in legislation, many of the key details remain subject to consultation, including eligibility criteria, reference periods for calculating guaranteed hours, the allocation of responsibilities in agency worker arrangements, and the notice and compensation framework for cancelled or amended shifts. The Government released its consultation paper for comment on these matters on 2 June 2026, entitled “Ending one-sided flexibility: reforms of zero hours and similar contracts”.

The reforms are often viewed through the lens of retail and hospitality, but will have significant implications for sectors that rely highly on flexible workforce models, including technology, life sciences, and professional staffing. However, despite being in its early stages, the proposals set out in the consultation paper offers valuable insight into the direction of travel and the potential implications for gig economy-style arrangements, temporary staffing models, and workforce planning.

Beyond Zero-Hours Contracts

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the reforms is that their impact may extend well beyond traditional zero-hours contracts. The consultation paper suggests a broader focus on workforce models that allow businesses to maintain a predictable labour supply while offering workers limited certainty over their future hours. Therefore, organisations that do not use zero-hours contracts may be underestimating the reach of the new regime.

Implications for Gig Economy and Flexible Talent Models

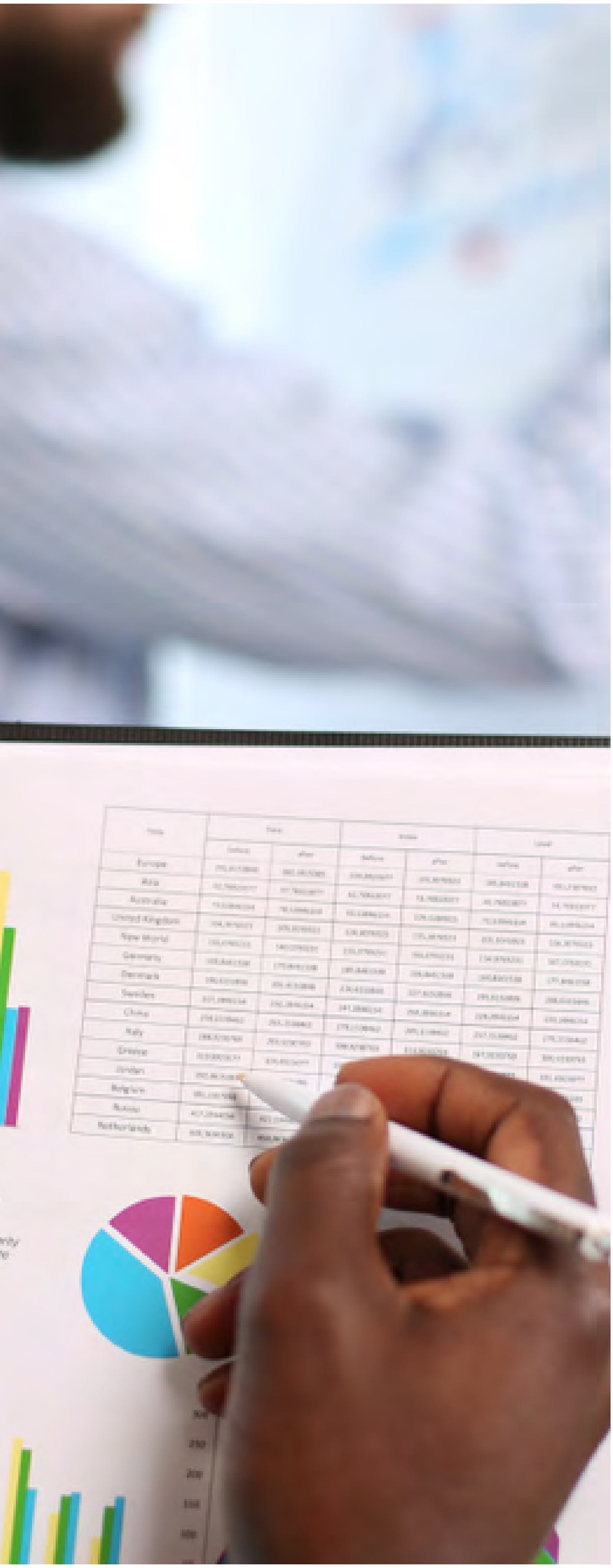
Technology and life sciences businesses frequently rely on specialist talent engaged through contingent labour, project-based teams and platform-enabled models.

The proposed regime raises important questions about when genuinely flexible arrangements begin to resemble regular working patterns. Organisations that engage individuals on nominally flexible contracts but, in practice, work consistent hours over an extended period may find themselves facing obligations to offer guaranteed hours.

This could affect a range of roles, including:

- Technical support and customer operations teams;
- Research and clinical trial support functions;
- Data and content moderation services; and
- Long-term project resources engaged through contingent labour models.

The consultation paper suggests that the Government is not only concerned with traditional zero-hours contracts, but how working arrangements function in practice. >



One unanswered question is how the guaranteed-hours regime will interact with platform-based work. Some platform workers could fall within scope where they regularly provide labour according to a predictable pattern. If so, platforms may have to absorb additional workforce costs, invest in workforce planning technology or redesign their operating models to preserve flexibility.

Agency Workers and Project-Based Staffing

The inclusion of agency workers in the scope of these rights may prove to be one of the most significant aspects of the reforms. The key question is how these rights can be applied in a workforce model where responsibility for engagement, scheduling and workforce planning is split between agencies and end hirers.

For sectors that regularly use temporary staffing and project-based teams, the implications could be substantial.

If workers engaged through agencies become entitled to guaranteed-hours offers based on established working patterns, organisations may face increased labour costs, additional administrative burdens and reduced flexibility to scale teams up and down quickly.

The reforms may also challenge the "just-in-time" workforce model that relies on staffing levels being adjusted in response to changing demand. Whereas the guaranteed-hours regime would require employers to absorb more of that demand risk themselves, creating a stronger incentive to forecast labour requirements more accurately.

Businesses may also need to revisit how they access specialist talent, potentially placing greater reliance on independent contractors, outsourced service providers or SOW arrangements. While it remains to be seen whether such a shift materialises, it highlights the possibility that the reforms could reshape workforce models in ways not originally anticipated by policymakers.

What Recruiters Should Be Telling Clients

For recruiters and workforce solutions providers, these reforms are likely to make workforce planning a key part of client conversations.

Recruiters should be encouraging clients to focus on four key areas. >

1. Workforce Segmentation

Businesses should identify which roles are genuinely temporary, project-based or seasonal and which involve recurring labour needs.

2. Contract Review

Agencies and staffing providers should review worker contracts, supplier agreements and client terms to determine how risks and responsibilities relating to guaranteed hours, notice requirements and cancellation payments are allocated.

3. Workforce Forecasting

The ability to predict labour demand is likely to become increasingly important. Organisations that rely heavily on reactive staffing models may find it more difficult to manage compliance and control costs.

4. Contingent Labour Strategy

Clients may need to reconsider the balance between permanent, temporary and contingent workers. In some cases, businesses may conclude that longer-term resource requirements are better addressed through alternative engagement models.

As regulation increases, recruiters may be valued more as strategic advisers helping clients design sustainable workforce models.

Will the Reforms Accelerate Investment in Workforce Technology?

The new rights will require businesses to track hours worked, monitor eligibility for guaranteed-hours offers, provide appropriate shift notice, and calculate compensation where required. For organisations managing large numbers of workers, these obligations could quickly become difficult to administer manually. For platform businesses in particular, investment in forecasting and scheduling technology may become increasingly important if predictable working patterns begin to generate additional legal obligations.

As a result, many employers may accelerate investment in:

- Workforce management platforms;
- Scheduling and rostering software;
- Demand forecasting tools;
- Labour analytics systems; and
- Contingent workforce management technology. >

Therefore, increased regulation could act as a catalyst for digital transformation as businesses invest in workforce planning technology to reduce compliance risks and gain better control over labour costs and operational efficiency.

The reforms may contain a paradox. While they are often criticised for restricting labour market flexibility, they may spur employers to invest in more sophisticated planning, scheduling and forecasting processes. The result could be not less flexibility, but flexibility that is more deliberate, data-driven and sustainable.

Looking Ahead

Although important details remain subject to the results of the ongoing consultation, the direction of travel is clear. The Government intends to reduce the use of arrangements that provide flexibility primarily for employers while offering limited predictability for workers.

The most affected businesses may be those that rely on flexible labour without fully understanding how that labour is being used in practice. The proposals set out in the consultation paper signal a future in which workforce patterns, rather than contractual labels, will increasingly determine legal risk.

For gig platforms, the key challenge may not be whether platform-based work can continue, but whether businesses can maintain large pools of ‘available’ workers without assuming a greater share of the cost and risk associated with workforce planning.

For recruiters, staffing providers and employers alike, the challenge will be maintaining agility while adapting to a framework that places greater emphasis on predictability and planning. The organisations that emerge strongest may not be those that resist the reforms, but those that use them as a catalyst to invest in better workforce forecasting, scheduling and contingent labour strategies. ■

EXPAND YOUR BUSINESS

Simon Kent, Editor,
The Global Recruiter

"The recruitment sector tends to reward the brave. The entrepreneurs with the clearest ideas, the ideas that burn brightly across their sector. With careful planning and lots of energy and commitment it is possible to achieve growth even in what can seem the most challenging markets."

EXPANSION

Sometimes it can feel hard enough just to have a recruitment company that stands still – a business that can still hold its own against the diverse challenges and uncertainties of today's business world. But why should it be like that? There's no reason why a business can't go for expansion, even at what can seem the most challenging time in the market.

The recruitment sector tends to reward the brave. The entrepreneurs with the clearest ideas, the ideas that burn brightly across their sector. With careful planning and lots of energy and commitment it is possible to achieve growth even in what can seem the most challenging markets.

The opportunities are always there: take your successful model to a new country, to a new sector, to a new audience. As long as clients are looking for great talent – and they're always looking for great talent – the chance is there for you to reach further, go faster and expand.

In the next few months The Global Recruiter will explore what it take to build and sustain meaningful growth within a recruitment business. We'll explore specific regions highlighting the opportunities and finding out what it takes to deliver. We'll look at the finance, the people and the processes which can power your business forward, and we'll be talking to the recruitment leaders who have made it happen.

Buckle up. Scream if you want to go faster. And keep your eyes on the prize.

THE APAC PROMISE

Stuart Feest, Global Enterprise Director, APSCo, discusses what recruiters need to know to open in Southeast Asia.

For recruitment firms looking to expand internationally, APAC represents some of the most exciting market opportunities available today. However, Asia markets are crowded and competitive and the Asia-Pacific region is often viewed as a complex, so it's important to think carefully about your goals and what you want to achieve. >

If you do make the move, here's just some of the benefits you can expect:

- Access growing markets – Benefit from strong demand for talent across a range of expanding sectors.
- Support global clients – Help existing clients with international hiring needs and build new relationships across the region.
- Tap into new talent pools – Access skilled professionals in sectors facing persistent talent shortages.
- Diversify revenue streams – Reduce reliance on the UK market and create opportunities for long-term growth.

Why APAC is attractive to UK firms

While economic conditions vary across the region, many APAC markets continue to benefit from long-term investment, business growth and demand for specialist talent. Established hubs such as Singapore, Hong Kong and Australia continue to attract international recruitment businesses, while emerging markets across Southeast Asia are creating new opportunities for firms looking to expand.

One of the main reasons APAC offers opportunities for recruitment firms is the skills shortages that continue to challenge employers across many Asia-Pacific markets. This is seen particularly in areas such as technology, engineering and healthcare.

For specialist recruiters, this creates opportunities to support organisations struggling to access critical talent. For example, In Singapore, 71% of employers report difficulty finding the skilled talent they need, according to ManpowerGroup's 2026 Global Talent Shortage Survey.

Opportunity, however, doesn't always mean easy growth. Singapore remains one of the region's leading business hubs, but hiring activity has become more cautious over the past year. Employers are taking longer to recruit, vacancy volumes have eased from their post-pandemic highs, and competition among recruitment firms has intensified. These challenges have been compounded by higher salary thresholds for foreign hires and tighter work pass requirements, meaning expansion is more complex than it was a few years ago. Talent scarcity now sits alongside tighter hiring conditions, meaning demand is increasingly concentrated in niche, high-value roles rather than broad-based hiring – favouring specialist recruiters over generalist models. It's a good reminder that even the region's most established markets require careful planning and realistic expectations. >

So, what should firms be aware of before making the move?

- Competition is fierce – You'll be competing against established local firms that already have strong client and candidate networks.
- Every market in APAC is different – A unique business strategy is needed in each location. A one sized Singapore centric approach won't work in Malaysia, Vietnam, Japan or Hong Kong.
- Regulation can be complex depending on where you are – There are licensing requirements, employment laws, corporate ownership and visa rules to consider.
- Expansion takes patience – It can take longer than expected to build a brand, win clients and generate consistent revenue.

Relationships come first

Whether it is Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, or Laos – relationships matter in Asia. You may have the best candidates, you may have the best delivery, you may even have the lowest fees but that won't matter if your client only wants to work with someone they have known for years.

Recruitment leaders expecting instant results in Asia are underestimating the amount of time needed to establish credibility. The western businesses that succeed in Asia are usually the ones who invest in client relationships without expecting immediate return and and recruit a diverse mix of local talent and expatriates (from other Asia Pac countries and beyond).

The individual leading your expansion will have an outsized impact on your success – and that is rarely your highest biller or the recruiter with the highest tolerance for humid climates. Hire on trust, on reputation, and local knowledge.

In the old days, the common route into Asia was through existing client relationships. For example, Robert Walters keeps an office in Standard Chartered's Six Battery Road (the first client which brought them to Singapore.) However, if you are building an entire regional strategy around a single client, remember that in today's volatile environment that client, if they are wise, has formulated a Plan B. Probably even a Plan C.

A strong expansion strategy should leverage existing relationships while simultaneously building broader market relevance.

Is it the right time to expand?

One of the biggest mistakes recruitment firms make is expanding too early. Speaking at APSCo UK's recent International Forum, Charles Daw, Managing Director of Giant Group, emphasised that firms should avoid opening an overseas office simply because they can. Instead, businesses should look for clear indicators that the market is pulling them in. >

As a rule of thumb, Daw suggested firms should look for 3 – 5 active clients, 20 – 30 contractors in-country and a gross profit opportunity of at least £500,000 before committing to a new office.

The message from the forum was simple – not to rush into opening an office. The strongest expansion strategies are driven by proven demand rather than pure ambition.

Your next steps to consider:

1. Don't assume Asia is one market – Singapore, Japan, Australia and Malaysia to name a few all have very different business cultures, hiring practices and regulatory requirements.

2. Build relationships before expecting results – In many Asian markets, trust and long-term relationships play a significant role in winning business, which means growth can take longer than firms initially expect.

3. Test the market first – Many successful firms start by supporting clients remotely before investing in a local office, allowing them to validate demand before committing significant resources.

Final thoughts

Asia Pacific is very exciting. It has bubble tea, synchronised K-Pop dancers, and some of the most compelling growth opportunities available to recruitment businesses today.

The region offers expanding economies, significant talent shortages and increasing demand for specialist expertise. It also requires humility, preparation and a willingness to abandon assumptions.

The good news is that businesses that get it right can build highly successful and resilient operations. The bad news is that Asia has an extraordinary ability to expose overconfidence.

So, if you're considering expansion into APAC, be ambitious, but be realistic too. Build relationships, test demand, invest in local expertise and remember that success rarely happens overnight. The firms that thrive in the region are often the ones that take the time to get it right.

Visit APSCo's International Hub for more guidance on expansion. ■

PULLING BACK TO SCALE-UP

Jack Hayes, CEO and Founder of H&P Executive Search on how he has built and continue to build H&P.

When I started H&P Executive Search in 2019, I didn't have a grand plan, a five year strategy, or even a clear sense of the business I wanted to build. I had a sky-high ambition and a belief that if I worked harder and learned faster than anyone else, I could create something big that would challenge my industry's status quo. >

Seven years later and we are comfortably into an accelerated scale-up stage. We are operating out of the eighteenth floor of Heron Tower, constantly increasing revenue, and I am personally on the cusp of relocating to Miami with a team to have boots on the ground in the US and keep expanding globally.

Looking back now, the journey has been anything but linear but at every stage the mistakes and the breakthroughs have shaped the business we are today and I believe in being honest about the journey.

Building from the ground up

When I first set up H&P Executive Search I had two years of recruitment experience, no database, and no management experience. But I learned quickly and carved out a niche in the legal sector, where I've specialised ever since.

Legal search is a candidate led market. That was an important lesson. You can't rely on job boards or inbound roles because the best lawyers aren't looking. They're busy, successful, and often perfectly happy where they are. Conversations are the only way to get round this. So, I built my desk one conversation at a time. I called people who didn't need me yet and built relationships before they were ready to move. I learned their practice areas, their ambitions, their frustrations.

Those early months taught me the foundation of our entire model, that if you own the candidate relationship, you own the market, and the only way to achieve that is to spend most of your time on the phone talking to people.

If you walk into H&P's offices today, you'll hear phones ringing and a buzz of conversation. We are a phone first business because relationships are built through dialogue, not DMs.

Creating a hybrid model that works

I knew even before H&P began to take shape that I didn't want to run a traditional contingency agency, but I also didn't want to be a slow, overly traditional executive search firm. I wanted the urgency of contingency combined with the rigour of retained search.

So, we built a hybrid model that is fast, relationship driven, high touch, and high value. Clients get speed and depth, candidates get honesty and longterm support, whilst consultants at the firm have a framework that rewards their performance and expertise. The sky's the limit. >

The pitfall of expanding too fast

At a key juncture, I made the classic founder mistake of trying to scale too quickly. I had carved out legal search and thought 'let's replicate this across other sectors', but in retrospect it was a misstep. We launched six new verticals, which on paper looked ambitious. In reality, it was unmanageable.

We spread ourselves thin and lost focus. It made me realise that growth isn't about doing more, it's about doing the right things better, which means having a clear strategy and structure, and a laser focus.

As a result, we pivoted and returned to our core of legal executive search across Europe, UK and the US, in both legal private practice and in-house. We rebuilt our structure around depth, not breadth: inch-wide, mile-deep. Within six months, we added £5 million in revenue and that was an important lesson in the value of ruthless focus.

Taking a step back

It is not unusual for the founder of a business to become the bottleneck. I am still one of the top billers, but I was involved in everything from deals, training, operations, and hiring. It was unsustainable.

At this time of pivoting, I invested in myself and leaned into career coaches and sought mentors. I learned how to lead and built a strong leadership team around me, with Chief Operations Officer Harry Elkington and UK Managing Partner Ricky Roy, who were employee numbers one and two. We took a step back to work through where we wanted to be and what we had to do to get there. This initiated the shift from being founder-led to being system-led, which was critical.

We invested time in building a clear team structure with a pod system, each with a focused remit and leaders. This is held up by a strong performance management structure. Everyone is targeted and knows what they are working towards and what their pathways are to progression.

We have heavily invested in the infrastructure of the firm and built up a strong back office, with finance, marketing, operations, and HR. Alongside this was a renewed focus on Learning & Development. We realised that just hiring people doesn't fix things. It's all about having clarity and structure. We had an L&D function previously, but now it's aligned with a clear performance management structure that is bespoke to us, and it is making a real difference. >

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We're only as good as our people, so investing in them and doing all we can to train them up and help them fly is to everyone's benefit. Feeling valued also helps to attract and retain the best people. We also have an outstanding reward and incentive system in place.

Overseas expansion and boots on the ground

The US legal market is the biggest in the world and has been a core driver of H&P and my personal specialism since day one. We have always worked international markets, with deep specialism in Germany, Benelux as well as the UK. International markets have largely driven the business and expansion into different markets is a core part of our strategy, done with discipline, not ego.

It was only a matter of time before we looked to have a physical base in these markets. We're starting in the US, with an imminent office opening in Miami. We are beginning on the East Coast to remain in closer contact with the UK in terms of time zone, but Miami is just the first step and the 'proof of concept'.

Growth from now on

My ambition is unchanged from where it was, but the next phase of H&P isn't just about me or rushing to exit. It's about building a company and a legacy where the best people can build long-term, life-changing careers, create wealth, nurture lasting client and candidate relationships, and shape the future of the firm.

We're developing equity structures and reward schemes. We're building leadership pathways and investing in people who want to run teams, own markets, and grow something bigger than themselves.

We're still early in our journey but if the last few years have taught me anything, it's that growth is a discipline and we're just getting started. ■

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SCALE RIGHT

Nick Gordon, Founder, Meraki Capital says growth isn't about getting bigger. It's about building something worth owning.

I see recruitment businesses every week that should have survived, but didn't. They didn't fail because they couldn't bill, because they lost clients, or because recruitment is broken. They failed because every pound the business generated was taken out instead of being invested back into it. >

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That is an uncomfortable truth, but it's one our industry doesn't talk about enough.

Everyone talks about growth and creating value, yet too many founders treat their business like a cash machine rather than an asset they are trying to build. When the market tightens, there is nothing left to absorb the shock.

Having spent my career building recruitment businesses, selling them and now acquiring them, I've had the opportunity to see the industry from both sides of the table. One lesson stands out above all others: growth has very little to do with getting bigger. Real growth is about creating a business that is valuable, resilient and capable of succeeding without depending entirely on its founder.

One of the biggest misconceptions I encounter is around risk. Every founder wants exceptional returns, but very few are prepared to make the decisions that often create them. The reality is that higher returns usually come with higher levels of risk. Markets change, clients reduce hiring, economies fluctuate and businesses fail.

That doesn't mean every founder should pursue the highest-risk strategy possible. It simply means you need to understand the trade-off you are making. If you choose a lower-risk approach, accept that growth may take longer. There is absolutely nothing wrong with that. The mistake is expecting exceptional outcomes without making exceptional decisions.

Where Does the Money Go?

From misconceptions to the biggest mistake, this isn't a lack of ambition, it's a lack of investment. Recruitment businesses can be highly profitable, and understandably founders want to enjoy the rewards of years of hard work. However, when every pound of profit is extracted from the business rather than reinvested, growth slows, resilience disappears and the business becomes increasingly vulnerable.

I'm seeing recruitment agencies enter administration today because they have spent years taking money out instead of putting it back in.

Growth requires investment. Hiring experienced recruiters costs money. Strengthening your leadership team costs money. Investing in technology costs money. Expanding into new markets costs money. If you want to build a business worth £20 million, you can't continue operating as though you own a £2 million business. That requires founders to delay gratification. Not forever, but long enough to create something significantly more valuable in the future.

Another uncomfortable truth is that many founders become the biggest obstacle to their own growth – ego! Many entrepreneurs are exceptional recruiters. They have built their businesses through hard work, determination and outstanding sales ability.

I'm not knocking that. But, the mistake comes when they believe they also have to be the best finance director, operations manager, sales leader and strategist. >

No one excels at everything.

The most successful founders I've worked with recognise their own strengths and, just as importantly, understand where they need help. They surround themselves with people who are better than they are in specific areas. An experienced finance director will manage cashflow and protect the business. A strong sales leader can build new markets and develop consultants. A capable operations director creates the infrastructure that allows growth to happen consistently.

Founders should never be afraid of employing people who are better than they are. In fact, that is exactly how great businesses are built.

I also believe our industry has an unhealthy obsession with owning 100 per cent of everything.

That may sound self-serving coming from someone who acquires recruitment businesses for a living, so it's worth addressing the obvious point. Yes, I believe selling can create enormous value, not because founders should cash out and walk away, but because owning 40 per cent of a business that is growing rapidly can often be worth considerably more than owning 100 per cent of one that has reached its ceiling.

Too many founders see selling as giving something away. I see it as creating the opportunity to build something much bigger than would otherwise have been possible.

Getting Investment Right

The right investment partner brings capital, operational expertise, stronger leadership, shared infrastructure and access to opportunities that many independent businesses simply cannot create on their own.

Of course, not every recruitment business should sell. Independence is absolutely the right path for some companies. However, dismissing investment purely because you don't want to own less is often an emotional decision rather than a commercial one.

Founders should ask themselves one difficult question: if your business only works because you are there every day, what exactly are you selling?

The recruitment industry changes too quickly to build businesses around one individual. Markets fluctuate, hiring demand rises and falls, and entire sectors can slow almost overnight before recovering again just as quickly. The businesses that survive these cycles are rarely those that have simply grown the fastest. More often, they are the ones that have built the flexibility to adapt. >

Cost Control

One mistake I regularly see is businesses allowing their fixed costs to rise at exactly the same pace as their revenues. Larger offices, growing support teams and increasing overheads all feel justified when markets are strong. The problem comes when conditions change and those costs become difficult to reduce.

Sometimes paying slightly more for flexibility is the smarter decision. Flexible workspaces, scalable support functions and a sensible cost structure provide businesses with the resilience to respond when markets inevitably change.

Cashflow also deserves far more attention than turnover. Growth consumes cash long before it creates profit. Every consultant you hire, every office you open and every acquisition you complete requires investment before any financial return is realised.

Businesses rarely fail because they lacked ambition. They failed because they ran out of cash before their strategy had time to deliver. Therefore the biggest lesson I've learnt throughout my career is that growth takes patience.

From the outside, acquisitions, expansion and successful businesses often appear to happen overnight. The reality is very different. Behind every deal are years of learning, setbacks, difficult decisions and constant adaptation. My own journey started when I was 21. I'll let you do the maths. There are no shortcuts.

Building a valuable recruitment business requires time, calculated risk, financial discipline and the confidence to make decisions that create value over the long term rather than chasing immediate rewards.

The businesses that create lasting value aren't always the biggest or the fastest growing. They are the ones that consistently make better decisions, invest in their people, remain financially disciplined and have the patience to allow those decisions to compound over time.

In my experience, that's what sustainable growth really looks like. ■

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