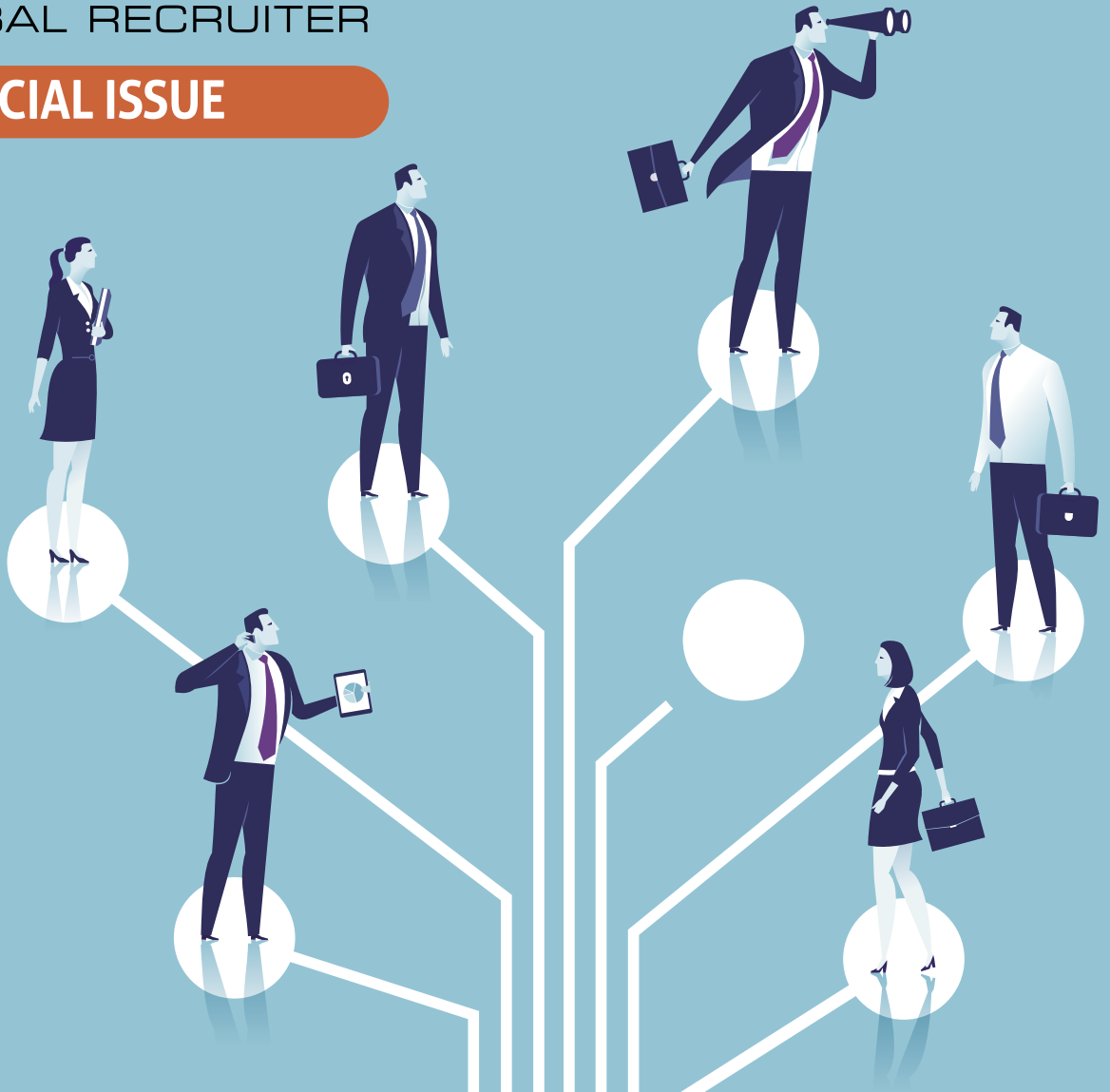


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SPECIAL ISSUE



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EDITORS WELCOME

SIMON KENT
EDITOR

This special issue of The Global Recruiter is all about the next twelve months and making recruitment the best it can possibly be. With the world dealing with the ongoing impact of the pandemic the industry has easily proved its worth, but there are lessons to be learned, implemented and built upon which will take the service to the next level.

Across this issue you'll find insights and predictions for technology, compliance and even how recruitment businesses' workplaces will measure up over the year. There's also insight into specific markets, showing how the pandemic has changed demand and client expectations, in turn showing how recruitment businesses need to be agile, prepared and energised about delivering to their equally pressurised clients.

The markets have changed, the candidates have changed, the methods and pathways by which the recruitment industry works with clients and candidates have changed. Now is the time to fully understand those changes, what they mean, and how they can be used to the best advantage for everyone.

The recruitment industry has always been innovative, always flexible, agile, persistent and, of course, successful. Brave New Recruitment marks the next step on the road ahead – one where rather than responding to the impact of world events, the industry takes the initiative and advances for the good of employers and employees.



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PAUL VOGEL
MANAGING DIRECTOR, ACCESS RECRUITMENT

As we start 2022 still with ongoing uncertainty around Covid restrictions, there continues to be unparalleled pressure across all sectors and industries. Businesses are still scrambling to find, hire and retain employees with many facing significant labour supply shortages, including recruiters themselves.

It's therefore essential that recruitment firms continue to adopt technological innovations to stay ahead of the curve. To consider and enhance their customer journeys to ensure they're engaging and interacting with candidates in the best possible way, which in the long-term will transform business performance and profitability.

Delivering positive outcomes through technology is what Access Recruitment is all about. We are laser

focused on helping our customers by developing and integrating our software right across the recruitment process, from attracting candidates and clients with a stand-out website through to paying and invoicing in a seamless, timely way. Adopting technology from one partner that operates within one ecosystem provides a continuous cycle for better efficiencies.

Whether you are looking to start-up or scale-up in 2022, having the right technology as the bedrock of your agency is a prerequisite. We are proud to sponsor this special report that aims to inform and educate about the latest thinking and innovation within the recruitment space.



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FUTURE-PROOF

Ann Swain, APSCo's CEO discusses skills shortages and creating a dynamic workforce.

As the end of 2021 nears, the recruitment sector is facing a period of immense change that is both exciting and challenging. While vacancies have been accelerating for much of the year, chronic skills shortages are also being felt across every sector in the UK. The lack of candidates has understandably put even more pressure on staffing businesses for much of the first half of next year. However, perhaps more unexpectedly the dearth of talent is also having an impact on staffing businesses themselves. Indeed, this year's edition of the APSCo UK Recruitment Index, which offers insight into the UK staffing market, found that 43 per cent of recruitment firms have concerns over a shortage of consultants. The report, which is produced in conjunction with Saffery Champness, also confirms that a shortfall of applicants remains a key concern for recruitment businesses. The battle for talent within the recruitment industry is as strong as ever and is expected to increase next year. Like so many other sectors, the staffing market haemorrhaged consultants during lockdown one, and a boom in hiring since the latest restrictions were lifted in July of this year means that the staffing sector itself no longer has sufficient talent to meet demand. This is creating a scenario where greater reliance is being placed on key consultants, which is, in turn, impacting organisational resilience. Despite this, our research found that consultants remain driven and ambitious, with recognition and the opportunity for real progression remaining strong motivators, on top of financial rewards. As recruitment businesses look to tackle this skills shortage, now is perhaps the opportune moment to re-position a career in the sector as one of incredible development opportunities, rather than a job to make a 'quick buck'.

The flexi-model

Like other sectors, recruitment has undergone a revolution when it comes to flexible working post-pandemic, with many of our members choosing to retain a hybrid working model long-term. Our Recruitment Index found that 66 per cent of firms reported that remote working had a positive effect on their business, with 93 per cent not planning to change the remuneration of consultants who will now be working flexibly. Pre-pandemic, 57 per cent of firms surveyed stated that all staff were expected to be in the office for a minimum four days a week. This has changed dramatically, with only six per cent of businesses now

expecting the same. Today, a significant 30 per cent of firms are happy to allow staff to work five days out of the office, while the majority are allowing staff to work two to three days a week at home. While we are still very much in the midst of the pandemic and things may yet change again over the coming quarter, these agile working practices, without change to overall remuneration packages, are likely to improve the morale of the workforce and lead to higher retention rates in the future. In spite of a marked shortfall of experienced recruiters, it seems that our sector otherwise remains largely resilient. In our survey of staffing businesses, all firms indicated that they believed they had sufficient cash flows compared to last year. This is despite the ending of the furlough scheme and the upcoming need to pay deferred VAT and PAYE payments post-COVID. However, while recruitment businesses may feel financially stable, concerns around skills availability – outside of their own businesses – continue to cause concern. According to the study, the biggest challenge facing firms is a shortage of candidates, with almost half (47 per cent) of those surveyed reporting this as a main concern. The market is simply over-saturated with vacancies at the moment which would normally be music to the ears of recruiters. But with skills shortages, the continued impact of Brexit and the long-lasting effect of IR35 still hanging over our heads, the recruitment market is simply struggling to meet demand. Our report indicates that larger firms are investing in technology to help battle through the sheer pressure from employers – a move that smaller staffing companies could also benefit from. Growth into international markets is also continuing to pick up pace as more businesses look to explore opportunities overseas post-pandemic, with 66 per cent of our respondents indicating an appetite for overseas expansion. As our research suggests, there are signs of real positivity and growth opportunities for the staffing sector that have the potential to translate into significant financial returns. However, it is important to note that that recruitment companies must prepare for the market 'settling down' as we adjust to the next normal. For staffing businesses operating across the UK, the past 20 months have been eventful to say the least. It is likely that we won't see the longer-term impact on the economy and inflation until the second half of 2022 - and it's crucial that recruiters plan for an inevitable hiring 'slow-down' next year. ■



FORWARD THINKING



Neil Carberry, Chief Executive of the REC says now is the time to show how vital recruiters are.

The past two years have been some of the toughest for the recruitment industry and the economy at large. But after the deep recession of 2020, and the surging bounce-back of 2021, what does 2022 hold for the sector? And how can we as recruiters make the most of it?

The first point is that the economic climate looks more uncertain than last year. The initial surge in activity is starting to taper off and shortages are putting capacity constraints on economic growth. Some of this is because of the pandemic – and for the UK, Brexit – but there are longer-term factors at play, most importantly an ageing population in many countries. So we expect the labour market to remain tight for some years to come.

That provides both a problem and an opportunity for staffing companies. Recruiting will get harder, and employers will need support in effectively managing their talent pipeline. They'll need support not just in terms of hiring and training younger workers but buying in more experienced staff and borrowing contingent workers where their expertise is needed.

This is where our industry's expertise is most valuable – supporting clients to find the staff they need, but also advising more broadly around workforce planning and talent management. This is the full service offer that clients will increasingly need and where good recruiters will be able to make their mark. When some people think about how to make their business successful, they tend to focus on the importance of technology increasing productivity – and certainly investment in tech has that power when done right. But at its core, recruitment is a people business. It's vital that we focus on providing the best advice possible and building a true partnership with clients.

Talent search

The first part of that task is homegrown talent. Recruiters should be helping their clients to find new pools of candidates, widening their search to find people with the right potential. This also has the added benefit of improving diversity and inclusion, and giving opportunities to people who are distant from the labour market. Then it's about helping both the client and candidate unlock that potential with the right support, training and development opportunities.

The second element is helping clients to bring in mid-career hires at the right time, with the experience and skills they need to grow. Clients will need to have the right offer in place – not just in terms of salary, but other benefits as well. Flexible and hybrid working arrangements in particular have become a must-have for many candidates, including in sectors where they were previously rare. These factors will be important for current staff too – fantastic staff engagement and a great offer will be vital for retention as well as attraction.

Of course, this applies to recruitment businesses themselves as much as their clients. Any business leader who has tried to recruit a consultant over the past year will know how difficult that task has become. So let's make sure we're taking our own advice and have the right offer in place to secure the best candidates.

Then we have to highlight the importance of temporary staffing as a tool for clients to ensure they have the specialist skills they need – whether that's a contractor, freelancer or agency worker. It's also essential that as an industry, we ensure that we are helping to fill these roles as efficiently as possible, with worker care at the heart of our offer. Many people choose agency work because they have the agency on their side with the client – we need to walk that walk, ensuring we maintain the highest standards.

Our role is no less important in supporting business growth. There is a huge role for the recruitment industry to play as we move into the next stage of the recovery and adapt to the new normal. No new business strategy or product plan will be effective if it does not encompass the right people plan. Leaders will need to care more about this than perhaps they have in the past.

That is not to by-pass our traditional links. In-house HR and talent teams can be our co-conspirators – they are more aware than anyone of the importance of what we do. HR directors should be pushing this agenda at boardroom level, helping to secure the right investment in staffing. We should be their biggest allies.

We've had a tough couple of years, but now is the time to show just how valuable the recruitment industry is to a successful economy. I have set out just a few of what I think are a range of huge opportunities for us. At the REC, we are here to help firms and professionals make the most of them – let's make 2022 the most successful and transformational year we have ever seen. ■



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CONSOLIDATION, INNOVATION, ROI

**Erica Titchener, Global Head of Technology and Analytics
Advisory at AMS on the future of recruitment tech.**

Recruitment technology has really shown its value-add over the course of the pandemic. We've witnessed a significant uptake of new software as employers and end clients looked to streamline the hiring process to reduce the strain on over-burdened talent teams so they can address organisation wide resource challenges quickly amidst global skills shortages. Some businesses felt more than a little battered during the pandemic as historical under-investment in their recruitment technology and lack of operational streamlining made it very difficult for them to pivot in a rapidly changing work environment. Throughout 2021, regardless of the maturity of a firm's talent acquisition tech stack, most recognised that change had to be a priority whether that's replacing or optimising core infrastructure such as an ATS, or focussing on how value add technology can automate tasks, deliver valuable insight and offer an intuitive user experience.

Over the last 12 months, significant feature enhancements have become available from tech companies either through development or acquisition that enable firms to retain their core infrastructure, but also deploy experience layers that offer a more intuitive, data rich interface for the user. Though this requires integration and can add complexity to an organisation's technology eco-system, the introduction of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) have increasingly demonstrated value in recruiting and talent management. While demand from recruiting teams for relief and greater scalability has never been higher, this rapidly changing technology landscape has created an increasingly complex and confusing market for buyers under pressure and often unclear about what to do next.

Consolidation

Looking ahead, I think what we'll really start to see in the New Year and, indeed, are already beginning to witness with some of the industry leaders, is clients looking at the transformation of their recruitment software. A lot of our Enterprise clients (those with a significant headcount and often global footprint), are still on legacy or disparate platforms across the globe, with multiple ATS's being utilised across locations. What we're already starting to see is more firms beginning to consolidate and ultimately streamline these systems so that they really work in the modern world and meet the evolving needs of the business and its talent pools.

This consolidation isn't just focused on the core infrastructure such as applicant tracking systems, though. Industry leaders are also looking at how they can appropriately invest in the experience and intelligence layers, and get more value from technology here as part of this transformation. This process will happen more throughout 2022.

Much of this consolidation is still being driven by the on-going impact of the pandemic. Working environments and hybrid set-ups vary across the globe and as we're increasingly seeing, change is still on the cards as new coronavirus variants continue to impact how organisations are asking staff and new hires to work. Firms now recognise that they need teams to be able to pivot at a moment's notice and in order to do this, they will need to be familiar and comfortable with recruitment technology and critically, how it supports their day-to-day operations. >



Investment in technology is critical, but can only truly be successful when an organisation has a strategy and has also invested in process harmonisation, clearly defined operating models, alongside well configured and implemented software, and a roadmap that ensures the tech can continue to evolve in line with business demands and changing candidate needs. Organisations that do this well, will be the ones that come out on top when it comes to finding, retaining, developing the best talent.

Adoption of AI in TA

While AI technology has arguably been one to watch for a while, as we head into the New Year it's definitely something for those involved in talent acquisition to consider in line with the recent innovation in this space. Following an initially cautious uptake from larger organisations due to the concerns around bias risk, and uncertainty as to whether it will deliver to expectations, AI in recruitment and talent management has been on the rise and we've seen a significant increase of enterprise companies considering and implementing this technology. Although a degree of caution with regards to AI in TA and HR remains, tech firms have invested significantly in validation methodologies and practices to help minimise bias risks and to demonstrate that they can support diverse hiring. In addition, AI and ML have improved the effectiveness of existing technologies. As a case in point, the chatbot went through a spate of popularity, but as a stand-alone feature, it wavered. AI has improved the experience that can be delivered through chat like features, still offering FAQs, but also delivering value through improvements in other areas. Firstly, organisations have learned a lot of lessons on how to apply automated chat, but secondly automated jobs matching features have significantly improved. For example, by replacing the traditional key word search, manual filtering and long-winded application with automated jobs matching simply through uploading your CV.

Balancing internal and external recruitment

Every organisation's dream of having visibility of the entire addressable talent market internally or externally hasn't been nailed by any one provider to date, but there's a lot of innovation happening in this space and significant advancement every release cycle.

Owing to 'The Great Resignation' as it's been called, many organisations while remaining focussed on how they bring talent in, have started to make more significant investments than ever before on internal mobility. Organisations need to better understand the skills make-up of their business faster to better inform internal talent development and external talent pooling and engagement strategies in line with business demand. This trend has been blending the historical siloes between recruitment, talent development and talent mobility within HR. Well deployed and adopted technology can help deliver the critical insights and information they need to inform more holistic talent management strategies.

Measurement will be key

Finally we're predicting a greater focus on recruitment technology ROI in 2022. Organisations want to understand the value of their investment and this is something that has often been a challenge for them. When making any investment, setting out the objectives and clearly defined success measures has never been this important. TA teams who can evidence well considered and executed business cases will have a far easier time asking for further investments. This has certainly become more prominent as technology and feature releases continues to expand at pace. Firms that invest in technology adoption roles within their organisation and who work in close partnership with the TA and tech providers to continually evolve their technology and operations will see a greater return than those who don't. We expect to see the role of the business analyst become increasingly important next year with some organisations outsourcing this expertise to their staffing providers. At the moment, many clients fail to achieve their ROI goals due to a lack of strategy and structure surrounding adoption. The potential of today's technology to help organisations thrive and evolve makes this a particularly exciting arena to watch. In 2022 I expect to see a significant drive for investments in strong people and recruiting initiatives underpinned by modern, more intelligent technologies. ■

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION FOR TEMP RECRUITMENT

Howard Hughes, CEO, Engage Technology, discusses how tech can help you get ahead in the increasingly competitive temporary recruitment landscape.

In the fast-moving, ever-changing industry of temp worker recruitment, an effective supporting framework is a must. With increased pressures due to skill shortages, reduced revenue and compliance crackdowns, ill-equipped teams are falling short of requirements and often, exposing their clients to risk. Process failures are often a matter of poor workflow infrastructure, seeing agencies working in silos within the supply chain, and running disconnected processes. In a flawed attempt to save on short term CAPEX, however, they are simply bringing on long term losses and risks.

This is where digital transformation comes in: tech-enabled collaboration can allow transparency, real-time cost/ compliance tracking, and increased productivity across the business and supply chain. Up to date and shared SaaS technology is quick and easy to implement and provides a framework to set your agency and clients up for future success.

So how exactly can tech help transform your recruitment process?

Compliance

The key to compliance in contingent working is transparency; in tech terms, that means a fully accessible single sign-in platform, centralising all parties on the cloud. This allows for real-time data tracking throughout the temporary labour supply chain and early visibility of oncoming risk.

- IR35: real-time visibility of SDS (Status Determination Statement) activity is vital in light of recent tax reforms. With this, you can instil confidence in your clients that you're shielding them from risk, preventing them from driving out your talent with blanket bans.
- Brexit: as a primary engager, cloud-enabled transparency of RTW (Right to Work) details is critical to avoid legal risk- potentially a £30,000 fine per illegal worker. Also, with the new requirement to store placement details for two years after the end date, high-capacity cloud-based storage can help maintain accurate records ready for any Home Office audits.

Cost Control

A transparent and connected process is also vital to keep a tight grip on cost control. In running processes like time & bill, procurement, and accounting on a centralised platform, you can audit your expenses and budget accordingly. Additionally, housing your temporary labour supply chain via a single login eliminates blind spots as payment info is instantly shared with all relevant parties digitally. This means early and automated detection of fraudulent or incorrect payments, allowing for quicker responses and reduced financial risk.

Agility/ Scalability

Contingent working is under constant change, so it's important that your tech partner is flexible. With ever-evolving client needs, legislation and industry trends, SaaS (Software as a Service) and DaaS (Data as a Service) can provide an agile and scalable framework, ensuring cost control, compliance, and operational efficiency- even during adjustment periods e.g., COVID-19 (Remote Working), and IR35.

- SaaS (Software as a Service): SaaS brings the advantage of being 'plug and play'. There's no large implementation to derail your normal business processes and can lead to fast and inexpensive results. In terms of scalability, this can act as a fast track to advancing your business.
- DaaS (Data as a Service): a DaaS enabled cloud-based platform, allows you to fine-tune your process as needed without interruption. With work requirements shifting, this can be used to allow third-party integrations e.g., IDVT (Identity Document Verification Technology) in tackling RTW post-Brexit.

Efficiency

Repetitive admin is an unaffordable drain on resources, especially with decreased workforces and increased workloads due to skill shortages, IR35 and Brexit. With the right tech partner, you can free up your team's bandwidth by automating your workflow. This not only enforces better overall efficiency, but overrides human error, with smart pre-set parameters and tech-driven accuracy too. The potential for automation is wide-reaching and can include geo-location, time & attendance, contract management, compliance, vacancy requisition and IR35 SDS risk management to name just a few.

A tool to get ahead

In a post Brexit, COVID-19 and IR35 recruitment industry, competition is at an all-time high, meaning it's a critical time to adopt contemporary infrastructure. With digital transformation, you can confidently take on the competition, even with reduced workforces. This means you can get ahead and ultimately help your business, not only survive but thrive. ■

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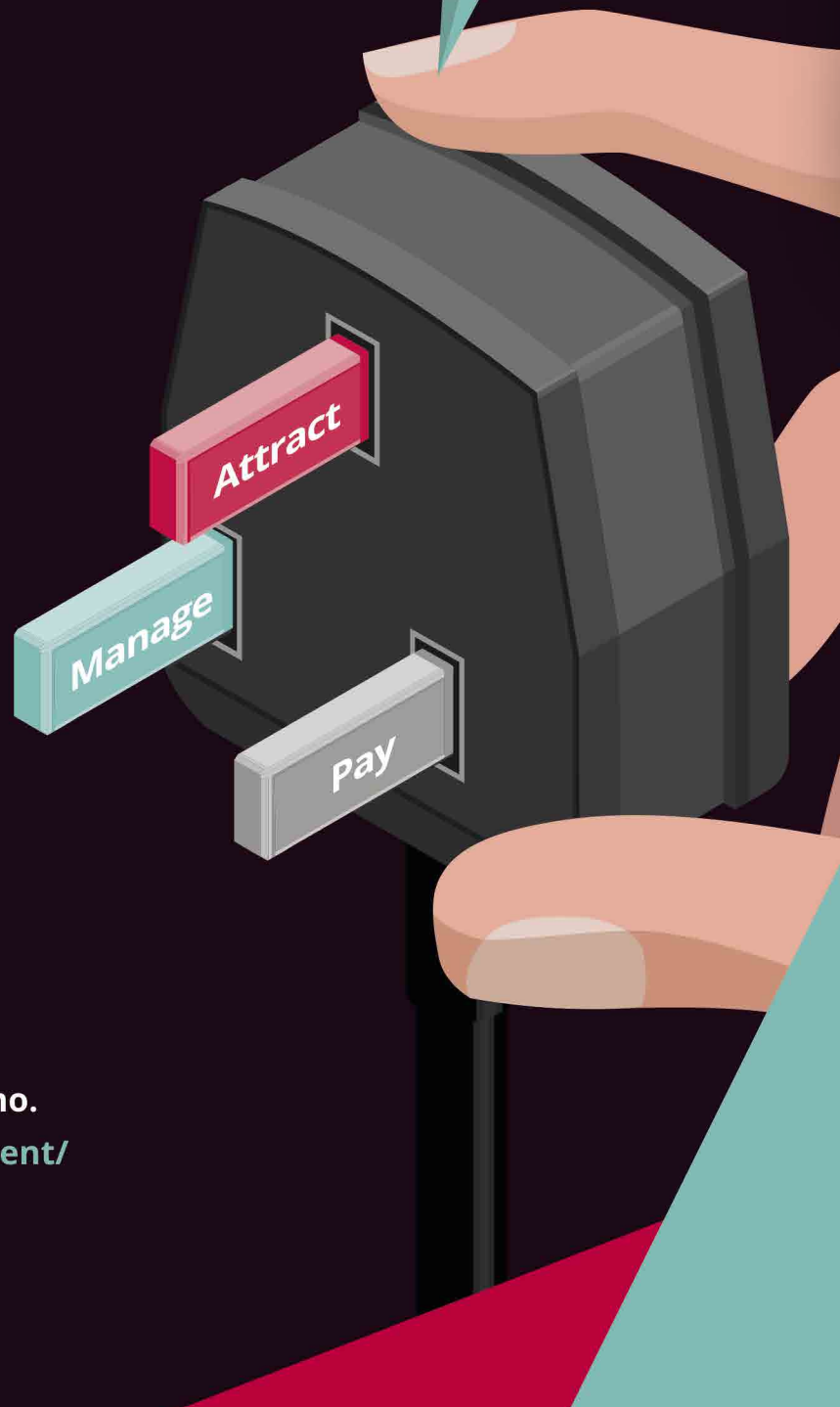
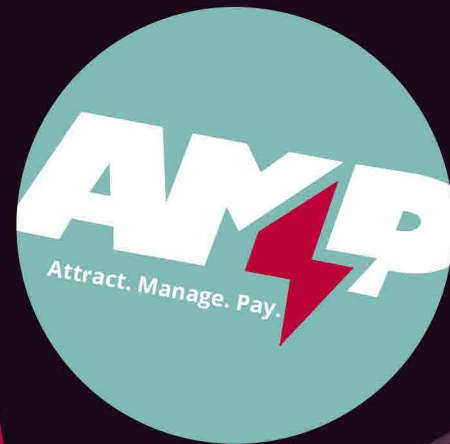
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THE FUTURE STACKS UP

Richard Steel, Head of Data and Innovation at global IT recruitment specialist, Frank Recruitment Group, reflects on how Covid-19 impacted recruitment and what developments to expect over the next year.

The Covid-19 pandemic affected everybody in different ways, altering most aspects of our lives – including the way we work. This has led to what was one of the worst job crises the world has seen since The Great Depression in the 1930s. The effects of this have been astronomical and posed many issues for the recruitment industry since March 2020, with fears that it has widened the inequalities in the hiring process and will continue to do so for years to come. It's also applied immense pressure for recruitment technology tools that shortlist and select suitable candidates in a talent pool that has significantly grown, both as a result of exponential redundancies around the globe as well as an increased demand in certain fields like technology. We're yet to see the full effects of this shift, but through understanding what has changed exactly, businesses worldwide can not only assess the progress made during this year, but be better prepared for the upcoming one. In this article, I'll be discussing the changes we've seen and my predictions going forward into 2022.

Post-pandemic effect on technology

With social distancing measures and the work from home message being spread worldwide, it was inevitable for the recruitment industry to be impacted by the pandemic. With an inability to meet with candidates face-to-face, and less opportunities for professionals to network, recruitment firms everywhere had to rely more than ever on technology to overcome the barriers that the pandemic cast upon the hiring process.

The capabilities of recruiting software are, and have been, rapidly changing to adapt to our new normal, with statistics from Unleash revealing that global HR technology investment made deals equalling at least \$100 million in Q3 of 2020 – the highest it's been since 2017. These results highlight the importance of these tools in a world where the job market was in distress.

As well as a significant investment being made in recruitment technology, we also saw some major changes for creating the most efficient and desirable recruitment technology stack. These included:

Applicant tracking systems (ATS) migrations increased

Applicant tracking systems are the biggest category of recruiting software, with as many as 99 per cent of Fortune 500 companies using at least one to help them to recruit the best talent for their vacancies (Jobscan). But since the pressure applied to hiring managers to find the right fit, and in a much quicker turnaround than normally necessary, businesses around the globe saw plenty of migration from ATS to other solutions that could help them find their perfect fit.

AI became more important

Artificial intelligence (AI) has been a focus point for technology for some years, and especially for recruitment. But with the pandemic >



applying pressure to fill job vacancies quickly to keep businesses afloat during the crises, AI became much more important to the recruitment technology stack. Sourcing candidates can be a particularly difficult and time-consuming task, whether you are unable to find high-quality candidates or are having trouble making contact with them.

By automating the search, you overcome these barriers and streamline the process even more; something that was invaluable during the peak of the pandemic and exodus of people returning to work and searching for new jobs.

Video interviewing tools became a priority

With less safe opportunities for candidates and hiring managers to meet, as many as 82 per cent of companies reported conducting video interviews in 2020 according to Tech Republic – with 79 per cent of companies now regularly relying on this interview method into this year, which is a significant 67 per cent increase in their use compared to the start of 2020 (Job Description Library). Because of this, businesses around the globe have had to make significant investments in video interviewing tools like Zoom and Teams, not only to strengthen their internal and external communication process, but also to help them build a strong recruitment stack that helps them to find and interview great talent.

Pre-hire assessment tools were on the rise

Getting the right talent has become even more important, and significantly harder to do since the pandemic started and we have seen more people seeking new jobs. So, to differentiate easier between the candidates who are suitable and those who aren't, on criteria such as knowledge, skills, and certifications, businesses are investing more and more in pre-hire assessment tools. Such pre-hire work was previously done in the form of in-person assessment centres but with more remote workers and hiring processes, the recruitment technology stack has had to be updated to include these tools. So, whether you're looking to enable tests for personality, aptitude, or assess candidate's problem-solving abilities, these are high up on the list of must-haves for recruiters now and going forward into 2022.

Chatbots are being deployed to improve communication

Depending on the aspects of your stack and recruitment team that you want to improve, there are other solutions that can operate beyond the solutions outlined above. If your team need to spend extra time on tasks other than the active communication, chatbots could be a helpful addition to your stack, as certain parts of the recruitment process can be automated, such as responding to any queries or questions in real time.

What to expect in 2022

With remote and hybrid working styles still reigning supreme over more traditional office-based work, I predict that the recruitment technology stack is not quite done with its overhaul. For one, candidates' expectations of what employers can offer is rapidly changing, with four-day working weeks and better health packages being demanded across the globe following the pandemic, so ensuring that companies you're recruiting for are marketing themselves well through the benefits they offer on job ads and their website is key – company reputation will be a massive consideration for all recruiters when going forward as we continue through this movement for better working conditions. Despite traditional benefits still being very important, culture is being focused on massively now and going forwards, so it's important that businesses are selling themselves in the interview process just as much as candidates are doing. From a recruitment perspective, that means organisations need to be using marketing tools as part of their stack in order to demonstrate to candidates that they are the right fit for them.

Your technology stack can help you to improve a number of areas of your recruitment process, whether that's to help diversify your candidates, have better communication with them or to streamline the selection process better.

Technology never stops, and neither does recruitment, and with so many people rethinking their career paths, there's never been a better time for recruitment to thrive. Paying attention to candidate feedback and taking note of emerging trends and the growing jobs market can help you stay ahead of the curve, both for 2022 and further into the future. ■

Why integrated recruitment tech is the key to efficiency in 2022

Jason Martin, Strategy Director, Access Recruitment.

The pandemic has caused stark changes across many sectors, leading to a robust job market and acute talent shortages. For recruiters it has become increasingly difficult to find candidates with the right skill set who want to switch roles amid the uncertainty of a global crisis. Moving forward, it is imperative for recruitment agencies to increase their efficiencies by making best use of technology to attract the right candidates faster than ever before.

COVID-19, combined with the fall-out of Brexit, has led us into a candidate market with a plethora of open positions for jobseekers to choose from. For recruiters, this introduces the complexity of not only needing to find the right candidate, but also how to screen and onboard them as quickly as possible.

From attracting potential candidates through to conducting background checks, poor data synchronicity is the key issue that stands in the way of staffing firms being as efficient as they could be. Typically, each step of the process creates new data that is often hosted and stored on disparate systems. When multiple products are used in tandem it can be difficult to keep a bird's-eye view of what is going on across the complete recruitment process.

So, for example, an ideal candidate could be shortlisted for a temp assignment but be awaiting their compliance checks, meaning a delay in filling the role or potentially placing a non-compliant candidate. A lack of transparency and visibility of important data reduces speed-to-hire, and potentially leads to placements being missed all together.

The good news is that the pandemic has shown us the limitless possibilities presented by technology, as companies have quickly adopted innovative new processes to make them fit for the future.

Integrated recruitment technology solutions from a single supplier

Integrated technology solutions are the key to building efficiencies, allowing visibility across multiple systems and reducing duplication of effort. When these solutions are delivered by one provider the synergies are even better, plus there's less relationships to manage. Greater integrations also offer better reporting, as well as a single sign on through one user interface.

Attracting, managing and paying candidates are the three components that underpin every agency, and making these more seamless is paramount in the quest for enhanced productivity. Access Recruitment offers solutions for every step of the way with intuitive software that takes care of all front to back-office processes right the way through to invoicing the end client. By making all aspects of the recruitment cycle as simple and streamlined as possible, recruiters can focus on what's most important to their success: building relationships with their candidates and clients.

As the central unifying solution, Access Workspace brings an organisation's moving parts together in one place – joining up people, processes and technology so they can address the challenges and opportunities ahead with confidence and certainty. With software from one provider, integrations are seamless from the agency's recruitment website that feeds into the core operating system of every agency, their Recruitment CRM, to Screening for the management of candidate compliance. Access WorkView, a mobile app to enhance how workers and consultants interact, further simplifies the process of filling jobs, submitting digital timesheets and accessing pay details and is fully integrated with both the CRM and Pay and Bill. Then layering Access NorthStar over the recruitment CRM, surfaces the data within the system into meaningful, actionable insights visualised through dashboards to help consultants perform better every day.

What's next?

As the industry continues to adapt to market change after a chaotic couple of years, these solutions will set the standard for what's to come. Embarking on a digital transformation journey to remove outdated disjointed legacy systems and eradicate manual processes is essential to avoid being left behind. Ultimately recruiters should be the consumers of functionality, rather than having to think about how to map the processes together.



AUTO-COMPLIANCE

Dave Chaplin, CEO of IR35 compliance solution IR35 Shield believes automation holds the key to achieving IR35 compliance.

Over six months ago, the Off-Payroll legislation rolled out into the private sector, affecting 60,000 businesses, 20,000 agencies, and 500,000 contractors. According to The IR35 Impact Survey commissioned by IR35 Shield, the effect on firms that rely on contracting talent was huge and damaging. At the time, the country was still reeling from the pandemic, so many firms were ill-prepared to navigate the legislative complexity, preferring to steer clear of the unknown. The lack of readiness meant that many risk-averse companies banned the use of limited company contractors, much to their detriment and forced many contractors begrudgingly into using unregulated umbrella companies. But matters are improving.

The IR35 Impact Survey findings

IR35 Shield's survey of 3,750 contractors sought to understand firms' behaviour leading up to April 2021 and how the market has reshaped itself. The results indicate that whilst firms were attempting to recover from the pressure of the pandemic, the new legislation created an additional and unwanted hurdle.

Key findings were:

- 47 per cent of respondents said that firms choose to impose blanket bans.
- 58 per cent claimed firms moved 'most' or 'some' of their work out of the UK
- 50 per cent believed firms would have some long-term damage.
- 46 per cent said firms seeking to retain contractors needed to pay more.

On the move to unregulated umbrella companies:

- 88 per cent of on-payroll contractors are now told it must be via umbrella.
- But only six per cent of contractors say they are happy to use one.
- 78 per cent said they would be unable to detect a tax avoidance scheme.

It's no surprise that contractors are not happy with the situation, which has also caused firms financial harm. Alas, this is the hidden cost of the government's drive towards tax fairness.

Ignorance was not bliss

Unfortunately, it appears many firms left things too late due to the false impression that nothing was changing other than which party conducted the status assessment. By the time they understood the facts, contractors had already started voting with their feet, and it was too late. The unfortunate 'IR35 PR wars' exacerbated the problems, making it hard for firms to get good advice on a complex topic. Newly self-crowned pop-up IR35 experts emerged in the market, armed with a rudimentary understanding of the legislation, resulting in a peppering of contradictory and confusing mixed messaging. The unclear advice fuelled the decisions of firms to issue blanket bans, the consequence being numerous acts of commercial self-harm. Many firms moved some of their projects offshore, unnecessarily benching UK workers, negatively affecting the Treasury coffers. Still, one cannot deny that a contractor who is not paying tax is paying the correct amount – zilch. Matters have improved, though, as firms are engaging more experienced specialist advice, having realised the IR35 bogeyman doesn't exist and that the legislation is entirely manageable. Before explaining how IR35 is manageable, let's have a recap of some of the challenges.

A recap of IR35 and Off-payroll

The purpose of the new Off-payroll legislation was originally to be a wholesale replacement of the longstanding Intermediaries Legislation from 2000, commonly referred to as 'IR35'. However, due to an exemption introduced during the consultation phase, the original legislation remains in Chapter 8 of ITEPA 2003 and applies to contractors working for small companies. The newer version in Chapter 10 of ITEPA 2003 now applies to the public sector and medium and large companies. Both are somewhat confusingly referred to as 'IR35', and firms need to understand the differences to avoid accidental exposures. The common element is assessing whether the relationship between the contractor and hiring firm may be "deemed employment", which is colloquially referred to as their 'IR35 status'. And this is where the complexity sits, with the rest being administration. These assessments can be a daunting challenge for firms who must establish whether a contractor is 'Inside IR35', which requires deduction of tax at source, or 'Outside IR35', meaning the relationship is genuinely self-employment. There is also a reasonable care provision embedded in the legislation designed to protect firms from tax risk if they have informed other parties in the supply chain that a contractor is inside IR35.

Reasonable care and legislative fault-lines

The Off-Payroll legislation (Chapter 10 of ITEPA 2003) in section 61NA(2) states that reasonable care must be taken "in coming to the conclusion" in a status determination statement (SDS); otherwise, it is not valid. If the SDS is invalid, then the client remains liable for any taxes subsequently due, but the provision says nothing about reasonable care after the assessment.

This omission is one of the fault-lines in the legislation. A firm can meet reasonable care in the original determination, HMRC successfully challenges, and the agency, or "fee-payer", owes the tax. So much for fairness. HMRC's reasonable care guidelines in ESM10014 attempt to patch this, but the guidelines are contrary to the statute, and can rarely be relied upon in the tax tribunal. Another fault-line is a legislative loophole that leaves firms exposed to potential misdeeds of the unregulated umbrella company sector. Suppose the client tells the agency only to hire contractors on payroll because it's been decided "the role is inside IR35", and the worker operates via an umbrella firm. Without issuing an SDS which states "inside IR35", a rogue umbrella could pay the workers' company a gross payment, bringing Off-Payroll into play. The client would be unaware and ultimately liable for the tax because of the condition in 61N(5).

Overcoming legislative shortcomings

With some of the perils highlighted, let's provide some comfort. Firstly, there is a considerable body of well-trodden case law about what constitutes carelessness or a lack of reasonable care. Given some of the subjective complexities of IR35, it's a very high hurdle for HMRC to prove that reasonable care has not been met. In our experience, firms have competent staff able to take sufficient steps to ensure they do not fall into the carelessness pit. Secondly, evidence and its quality are everything when it comes to defending cases at the tribunal. Firms should conduct robust due diligence and create an evidence trail during the conduct of the contract – however it must be remembered that this is not the same as doing reassessments. This process will help satisfy HMRC that they have made correct determinations and ensure that if a dispute arises many years later, the firm isn't scrambling around to locate corroborating evidence to back the original determination.

Robust determinations backed by corroborating evidence will be virtually impenetrable by HMRC.

Implementing an Off-Payroll regime is ultimately about accurate status determinations and collating the evidence to back it up. We have entered the world of needing to build pre-emptive tax defences.

Automation is invaluable

The carmaker Henry Ford, who delivered the Model T to the world over 100 years ago, is quoted as saying: "If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses."

The revolution in automating large parts of the legal profession is well underway, and legal robots ("Lawbots") are a movement. In a 2016 report, Deloitte estimated that over 100,000 law jobs in just the United Kingdom alone could disappear within the next twenty years due to automation.

Robust Off-Payroll compliance is an ongoing process, and to fully protect the position requires continuous monitoring of the workforce to ensure that working practices always reflect the written agreements. Monitoring is where the automated process is critical in gathering evidence should HMRC make a challenge. Conducting checks and gathering evidence every month from hundreds of workers using only humans would cost a fortune and be highly inconsistent. Automation is essential.

Time to lift the blankets?

Many firms understandably implemented blanket bans in the early days. But the blanket bans are lifting as firms realise they have to conduct an assessment regime to attract the talented contractors they need. Implementing Off-Payroll is not tricky. The hard part is the status determinations, and everything else is just admin. Many firms are beginning to enhance their in-house expertise and choose automated tools to supplement this and streamline their processes. Consultancy can sometimes be helpful at the start, but we find firms become self-sufficient after about three to six months. ■



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Know every link in your supply chain

The off-payroll working rules puts even more emphasis on the need for a compliant supply chain to ensure that tax liability doesn't pass up the chain to you or your clients. How confident are you that you're working with a provider you can trust?

As a leading provider of umbrella and accountancy services, we've always advised agencies to work with Preferred Supplier Lists.

We have robust processes and controls, audited by our own strong internal compliance team and we also invite external companies in to audit our audits.

When it comes to assessing your suppliers' compliance, there are a number of things you can do:

1. Send out compliance questionnaires
2. Check actual payslip calculations and PSC management accounts
3. Ensure the supplier has third party accreditations
4. Review the financial strength from the latest statutory accounts
5. Carry out your own site visit

For the best assessment of your key suppliers, we recommend that you use all of the above.

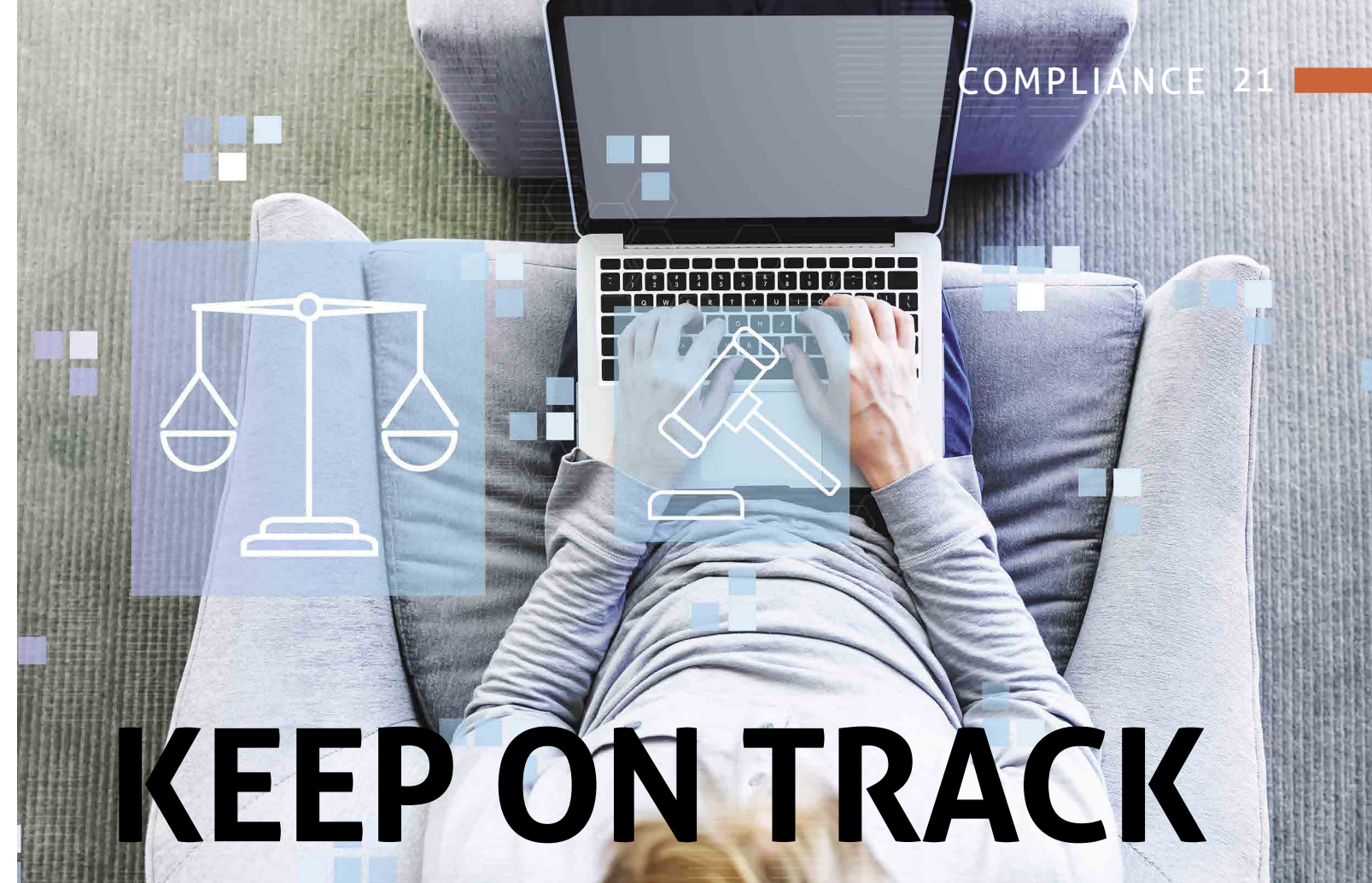


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Crawford Temple, CEO and founder of Professional Passport advises against com-placency in compliance.

A global pandemic and numerous lockdowns have been all consuming over the last two years, so it is not surprising that some policy changes that came into effect during this time have either been missed, or not fully understood. Businesses of all guises have faced some tough challenges and been forced to adapt in order to survive in the fast-changing COVID world. Those that have come through must now feel some sense of success mixed with relief. We are all still adapting to The Brave New World and we are all getting used to a new way of working. But, now it's time to reflect and revisit all the new changes, rules and processes that have been introduced by policymakers to ensure they have been properly understood and correctly implemented.

Key Information Documents (KIDs)

Key Information Documents (KIDs) became a legal requirement in April 2020 and were designed to provide transparency on how a candidate is paid, whether directly to their personal service company, via agency PAYE, or via an umbrella employer.

When a candidate first registers with an agency, that agency is required to send a KID illustrating the ways that a candidate could be paid. BEIS has provided a template for this as there are specific requirements about the information needed as well as the structure of the document.

Once a worker finds an assignment and then informs you, the recruiter, of the umbrella they have selected, an updated KID must be sent by the agency outlining the specifics for that umbrella. The KID

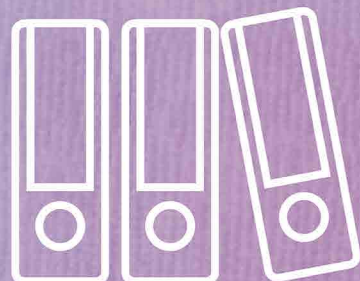
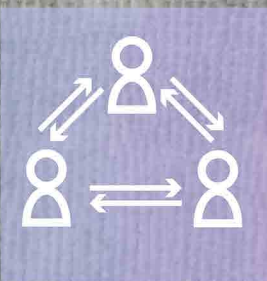
must be sent by the recruitment company and not by an umbrella on your behalf. As the PAYE calculations through an umbrella company differ from standard PAYE, it is unlikely that the recruitment company will be able to produce this document themselves. Agreeing a process for the umbrella to provide you with the correct paperwork is critical to your compliance.

An updated KID must also be sent to a worker whenever there is a material change to the worker's pay, which predominately relates to new deductions applied rather than a new assignment rate. An example of this would be when an umbrella auto enrols a worker into the workplace pension. Most umbrella companies operate their workplace pension with a deferred period of three months. This means that the material change does not occur until that time, or earlier if the worker requests to join. At this point a new KID is required.

A recruiter has two options:

1. Provide two KIDs when agreeing contracts with the umbrella with one KID showing the initial position and one showing the position after auto enrolment.
2. Provide one KID showing the starting position with a follow up KID at the point of enrolling the worker.

In many cases the recruitment company may not be aware of these 'material changes' and will need to rely on their umbrella providers to provide the updated information in a timely manner as an agency must provide this to the worker within five days of the event. >



Provider compliance

The extension of the Off-Payroll Working rules to the private sector combined with the changes to the liability chain where non-compliance occurs, means that recruitment companies must have demonstrable processes in place to verify compliance in their supply chain. There are several key steps, checks and decisions to consider:

Compliance Accreditations

There are a number of recognised compliance accreditations offered in the market, but it is important to understand what this actually means. Compliance accreditations are not recognised in the rules and will not provide a defence against a non-compliant supply chain. And, whilst they are a key step in the overall due diligence process that should be in place, recruiters would be encouraged to carry out further checks on providers.

The most important check is to request copy payslips from the workers. This allows you to check for any discrepancies between taxes applied and take-home pay. It is always surprising to learn how many workers claim not to have payslips; it is a legal requirement for an employee to be provided with a payslip on or before they are paid. In some cases, these may be provided through an employee portal, but they must still be available and visible. Alarm bells should ring loudly if employees claim not to have access to, or received, payslips. This might indicate that a provider is operating a disguised remuneration scheme and does not provide payslips so they can control and disguise any information they provide to the recruitment company.

It is also important that recruiters look for trends. Recruiters may see a sudden uptake of workers operating through one specific provider for no apparent reason. When this occurs, this should fire a warning sign and checks should be conducted as there could be a non compliant reason why so many workers are suddenly choosing them.

Off-Payroll working

A new emerging model, the Fee Payer Model, has entered the market. This model allows a recruitment company to engage with a provider who takes on the role of the Fee Payer as part of the new

rules. The recruiter is then meant to apply the deemed payment calculation, where the worker is inside IR35, and pay the net amount to the contractor's limited company.

Whilst all this seems straightforward in principle, it does allow scope for non-compliant activity.

One example is where a recruitment company believes it is engaging with an umbrella provider and therefore assumes the workers are employed with full PAYE deducted. In these situations, this is not the case, the 'umbrella' sub-contracts to the worker's own limited company and pays a gross amount after they have deducted their charge, no PAYE deducted, direct to the limited company. In the most extreme cases they are simply disregarding the Off-Payroll status knowing that liabilities will follow. Their company may have non-UK directors and so avoids liabilities and under the new legislation these could be passed directly back to the recruitment company. In other examples we see the 'umbrella' claim that a blanket assessment has been made and they carry out their own assessment and discover the worker is found to be 'outside IR35'. Once again, they are sub-contracting to the worker's own limited company and paying a gross amount after they have taken their charge, no PAYE deducted, direct to the limited company.

The final example is where the client has not provided a Status Determination Statement [SDS] to the worker, although they may have provided it to the recruitment company. If the worker has not been given an SDS, then they could carry out their own checks, which is what these providers do, and once again the assignment is found to be outside IR35 the sub-contracting method is used again.

A key principle to adopt here is not to rely on the label that a provider calls its model. You must seek to understand the actual arrangements regardless of the label. This will help determine the additional checks to carry out to protect your business from potential liabilities.

An umbrella company should always employ their workers and apply full PAYE on their earnings. The only non-taxable element of any workers pay would be where they have allowable expenses reimbursed.

The last two years have thrown up some challenges and none more so than in the contingent labour market. The message is clear: work with compliant partners that you trust and be wary of firms that seem to be aggressively cashing in on new policy changes. If something looks or feels too good to be true, then it probably is, so trust your instincts and check out your concerns. ■

ACCOUNTING FOR THE NEXT LEVEL

Martyn Price, Regional Director, Metro Bank Invoice Finance on the power of accounts.

One of the best parts of my role is how involved we get with businesses, especially recruitment companies. It's the biggest sector we fund and no matter the size or shape of the business, it's always exciting to be involved and see that business change, adapt and grow.

I often see exceptional recruiters who have been incredibly successful billers as employees decide to set up on their own and utilise their expertise and network of clients. As owner managers these individuals inevitably generate significant sales and their billing soon grows rapidly, but other areas of the business often suffer, such as the financial reporting. Recruiters will always have margins in their head when negotiating deals and will often gage their profitability based on this, and whilst it's a useful gage it doesn't cover all aspects of the business, and it definitely doesn't look forward to the future; what is the end goal of the business? Is it a lifestyle business, is it succession planning for family or employees, is it a sale?

Having a longer term strategy is an important one even if it isn't set in stone, but the habit of regularly producing, analysing and acting upon financial reporting is absolutely critical for that business to get near those goals.

Proactive thinking

Businesses often wait for their accountant to produce their annual accounts before they review them, which could be 6-9 months after the financial year has ended, and 18-21 months after the year started.

What if the business isn't profitable in month 1? It's an

extreme example and you would probably know before the accounts arrived, but the point here is to recognise that without regular management information you cannot possibly make tweaks to improve your businesses performance along the way. A regular review of the financial reporting enables you to react quickly and rectify any potential challenges or capitalise on opportunities. What if one of your customers is squeezing you to the point where your margin is sustainable, or a new consultant you have employed is generating lots of revenue but at very low margins. Having the reporting available to you and then reviewing it and taking action can make such a difference to business performance, and how much better would it be to react to that now rather than in a year, or maybe longer once you have your annual accounts prepared.

I'd always encourage business owners of any size to produce and review financial reporting, but as you grow it becomes even more important, particularly forecasting.

I see recruitment businesses that are starting to bill around £100k per week reach the point where they need additional expertise in house. It's just not sustainable for an owner manager to run all aspects of the business on their own. Either a part time FD, in house Management Account or someone similar to ensure that the business owners have the reporting they need can make a real difference. There is always going to be a cost involved but it will help you to understand what's going on in your business, it will help you to plan for any potential cash flow challenges on the way and it will help prepare for that longer term strategy, whatever that may be. It will also come in handy when you're speaking to your bank about how you fund your business into that next level and beyond. ■



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Phil Pluck, CEO of the FCSA, on the challenges ahead for recruitment compliance.

Every year we read of cases involving examples of medical negligence where patients within the NHS have been subjected to highly negligent practices or in some cases medical practitioners have been prosecuted for inflicting criminal harm or death. We are all shocked and horrified by these instances and so it is right that we demand that the medical profession is closed down and further legislation is introduced to combat such terrible behaviour.

Actually, we don't because we are measured in our view and understand that these acts do not represent the whole medical profession. But there is a different rhetoric within the outsourced worker sector. Let us agree on one thing; there are unethical practitioners within the recruitment and umbrella sectors and to a large extent both need to exist in order for both to profit from these practices. There are also a number of umbrella operators who wake up every morning with the clear intention of exploiting workers in order to get rich. But, within our world, there actually is the occasional voice demanding the abolition of the entire umbrella sector because of the non-compliant practices of a few.

We all operate in commercial supply chains and those chains do not tolerate 'nice to have' elements within them. Umbrella firms or PEO firms or whatever they may be called in the future are essential in the service they provide. If they were not, recruitment agencies would have retained these operations and simplified the supply chain. And so, a call to create outright bans is illogical and actually presents a greater risk to outsourced workers. The chaos and uncertainty this would create would represent a perfect breeding ground for further unlawful practices. Just as a ban on doctors and nurses would allow snake oil salesmen to flourish.

In the Wild West, who draws their gun first survives

Recruitment and umbrella firms are typically led by very bright and ambitious individuals who move at speed and are early adopters of technology. These people are essential to the growth of UK PLC but with these qualities, if they are applied to unlawful behaviour, then very real risks emerge.

Trade bodies such as the FCSA exist to provide independently tested standards that offer a legally compliant framework to assure the supply chain that they are dealing with wholly compliant umbrella companies. But FCSA and others cannot legislate and police the sector. That will always be the role of government. In our case HMRC and BEIS. We all know that the quickest gun here is the unlawful players who long ago gave themselves a global presence and created highly sophisticated methods of enabling tax evasion and worker exploitation.

FCSA has worked extensively with these government departments to identify both individual companies and practices that are responsible for exploiting both individuals and the taxpayer. But the response from government has been slow both in terms of legislation and enforcement. The sands are continually shifting but so far government has yet to demonstrate its ability to move ahead of these dynamic and unlawful movements.

We cannot remove the criminal element from outsourced supply chains by just doing more of the same. Let's look at different areas that might address some of these non-compliant issues: ➤



Regulation of umbrella companies

FCSA has lobbied government for over ten years now for regulation of this sector and I suspect it is only the ever increasing volume of unlawful practices that has spurred BEIS to accelerate its inception. It has to be welcomed but creating a Single Enforcement Body (SEB) to enforce this will only give us more of the same. In order to give regulation teeth, it must be backed by enforcement investment. The current resources simply cannot get ahead of non-compliant companies. In recent times we have seen organised criminal elements move into our sector in order to makes victims of agencies, umbrella firms and contractors. Cloning, fake employments agencies, Mini Umbrella firms are just some of the unlawful models that are emerging. Perhaps a government task force should be the immediate answer that would include the SEB, but also bring in the National Crime Agency, HMRC and others. As a sector we collect billions in tax and NI. Surely government can see the sense in providing the type of joined up, expert resources that will hit the criminals hard and fast. This approach would pay for itself tenfold in redirecting stolen tax revenues to their rightful home. But we only have to look at other regulated sectors to understand that regulation alone will not deter greedy criminals alone. We should not see it as the great panacea for our sector but merely the starting point for more positive change in the industry.

More legislation

Employment law has its basis in traditional, full-time employment. There are elements of current legislation that should be addressed. The freelance sector is only likely to grow in terms of size and complexity and so we should encourage government to focus on how these essential workers can be better protected. The government has indicated in the past that it would review the Agency Workers Regulations (AWR), but this has since been shelved. Holiday pay, employment status and simplified right to work rules are other specific areas that needs a clear freelance focus in order to provide enhanced protection to workers and allow movement of skills

back into the UK whilst protecting all freelance workers. However, I again highlight resources. There is already substantial legislative protection, but the question remains; is this being adequately enforced by government? So, will more drive up compliant practices? I would argue that more specific, outsourced legislation would improve compliance along with the resources to enforce it. But, government needs to make it clear that this will be a focus leading up to the next General Election.

HMRC

We continue to see HMRC being torn between the short term goal of increasing tax revenue and the long term ambition of eliminating non-compliant practices. I would argue that the two go hand in hand and the sector would applaud it if there was a clear strategy that took a non-negotiable line for promotors of tax avoidance schemes. HMRC should be applauded for their more recent stance on providing education and guidance to outsourced workers but there is a pattern of contractors being a focus of enforcement whilst promotors are often given the option of doing a deal at the court door if it gets that far. Bringing the latter to justice is hard but ultimately the long term rewards will be greater and will begin the process of reducing unlawful practice in our sector. Nothing will ever completely eliminate it but a clear, joined up approach from government will see non-compliant directors being sentenced to long prison terms rather than contractors witnessing their homes being repossessed.

A unified approach

FCSA and its members exist to promote the highest standards of compliance. APSCo, REC and other trade bodies have an opportunity to find common ground and present to government a compelling case for major investment in the sector in order to draw a complete, compliant line in the sand rather than continually allow others to keep shifting it. ■

6 Values Jobseekers Need to See Before Clicking Apply

A positive and caring working environment is more important to candidates than higher pay, say UK job seekers in a new Monster study. Quality applicants are discerning, assessing each company according to six core values, says Monster's Chief Human Capital Officer Claire Barnes. Businesses that can show they care and provide a stimulating environment have a competitive advantage. Those who fail to act, or communicate effectively, are at risk.



In a market with over a million open UK vacancies candidates have a wider choice of roles than ever before. Our study demonstrates the pandemic has changed workers' priorities. Our research carried out in November in the UK shows:

60% of employees want to know what a company stands for before applying for a role. 69% of job candidates say they would not take a job with a company with a bad reputation even if they were unemployed. 58% of staff felt employers should stay neutral on divisive social or political issues.

Pay may have been the priority in the past, today, organisational values are now most important to employees of any age. 34% ranked care their top priority and 59.5% had it as their top or second choice. This applied across generations. Older workers were slightly more motivated by economics, but care came a close second.

It is not surprising, given the pandemic, that employees have put care on top of their wish list. Employees will remember how employers treated them. There are two areas where employers may be falling short. First, living up to the values and practices that employees want to see. Second, communicating what they are doing authentically and effectively. That's where we in the recruitment industry must help our clients!

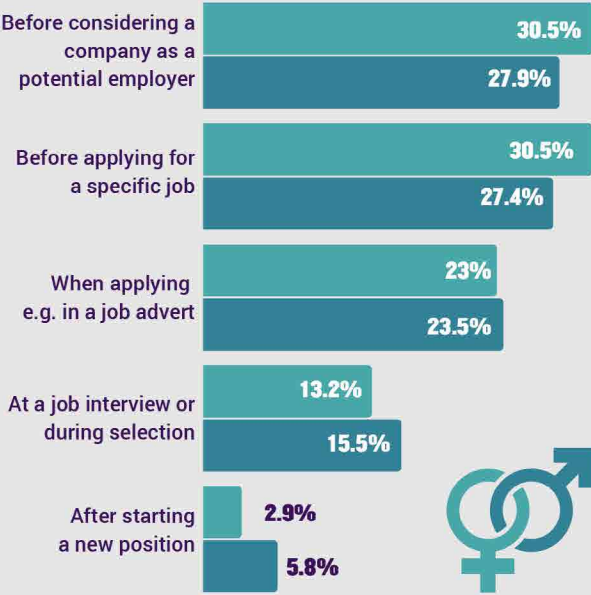
We've faced the same challenges in attracting the best talent at Monster. So we're putting wellbeing at the centre of our human resources strategy and approach. In practical terms, we're offering employees the freedom and flexibility to work how they want. We've changed our benefits and policies to support the shift and focused on the importance of self-care for everyone.

Many companies may have made similar changes, but communicating these values has become a core part of the recruitment process and a strategic priority. Candidates faced with several similar opportunities seek out brands whose values align with theirs.

Read the full research in our free guide, including steps recruiters can take to put these findings into practice. Download the report here: <https://bit.ly/GRMonster>



When do candidates expect to find out about an organisations' values?



The Core Employer Brand Values

CARE
Is it clear they care for employees? Do the benefits and culture show support and a healthy and vibrant workplace?

INTEREST
Do they offer a stimulating, interesting work environment matched with innovative employment policies and procedures?

SOCIAL
Does their culture promote teamwork and camaraderie? Does the company host social events?

ECONOMIC
More than just salary. Is the business financially secure? Is pay competitive? Do their benefits offer value?

DEVELOPMENT
Do they invest in upskilling employees, provide opportunities for career enhancement? Are there clear paths to promotion?

APPLICATION
Can candidates use their skills and knowledge to contribute to the company beyond their job description?



Demonstrate your commitment to compliant and ethical recruitment

With numerous laws governing the sector and in the absence of regulation, fit-for-purpose policing or an ombudsman in situ, compliance must be high on any recruitment agencies list of priorities. It not only improves internal efficiencies, but helps to mitigate financial and legal risk in the supply chain, not to mention the potential harm to business reputation.

With the Government failing to adequately drive compliance standards in the sector, twelve years ago, a group of leading professional employment service providers took the unprecedented step to come together to create a compliant playing field. Standards were developed for umbrella employers, limited company advisors, and self-employed/CIS contractor providers for the protection of the supply chain. The Freelancer and Contractor Services Association (FCSA) was founded.

The FCSA awards accreditation to professional employment services providers that can demonstrate the highest ethical and industry compliance standards. It exists to protect everyone in the supply chain – recruiters, end hirers and the contractor workforce.

Through our independence, stringent Codes of Compliance, and rigorous audit process, FCSA Accreditation provides a level of scrutiny and compliance testing beyond anything else available in the sector.

In an industry where compliance is now more important than ever, can you afford not to partner with FCSA Accredited Members?

FCSA Accreditation – the compliance gold standard

For an umbrella employer, limited company advisor or self-employed/CIS contractor provider to become FCSA Accredited and remain accredited is very, very difficult and it is so for good reason.

It's not uncommon for unlawful operators to enter into the market, notably umbrella companies, with their slick websites and attractive take-home pay offers, only for them to phoenix within two years thus avoiding the need to submit their first set of accounts to Companies House. It is for reasons such as this that FCSA has raised the bar in terms of pre-assessment of applicants before even considering them for accreditation.

Pre-requisites for potential applicants

In order to be eligible to enter the FCSA accreditation process, applicants must meet all of the following criteria:

- Demonstrate 2 years successful business operation for the service seeking accreditation
- Provide one year's full, independently audited accounts for the service seeking accreditation
- A minimum of 75 contractors supported by the service seeking accreditation
- Minimum financial liquidity requirement of at least 2.5% of the margin
- Undergo a thorough Fit and Proper Persons check on all company directors, associated directors, and associated companies

If the applicant company is not a properly established firm, we will know about it. If the applicant company does not have sound liquidity to pay its contractor workforce, we will know about it. If the applicant company directors, associated directors/companies are not reputable, we will know about it. No stone is left unturned and that is even before we allow an applicant to proceed to our assessment process.

"Only if the applicant is successful at the pre-assessment stage, will they be allowed to progress for FCSA Accreditation."

Recognised as the industry's compliance gold standard, accredited membership is awarded to those service providers that have been independently audited by industry experts to confirm that they adhere to the FCSA's stringent Codes of Compliance.

What makes FCSA accreditation unique?

- Members adhere to rigorous ethical standards
- Assessed against published Codes of Compliance
- Independently tested by regulated accountants and solicitors with expertise in the sector
- Members are required to demonstrate compliance annually
- Commit to the FCSA Charter
- Non-compliance by FCSA members will result in suspension or termination

"The assessment process is not a tick box exercise. EVERY aspect of the accreditation process is evidenced and sample tested."

What's more, we continuously review and update our Codes to reflect current legislation and changes in market conditions.

FCSA is a firmly established not-for-profit accreditation body. Our chief executive is appointed by the members and is independent, with no commercial conflict of interest.

We've done the compliance checks for you!

For agencies, FCSA Accreditation removes the complexity, time and cost required to implement a compliant preferred supplier list (PSL). Every FCSA Accredited Member has already undergone the toughest testing in the industry by independent, regulated assessors covering more than 540 different technical areas.

Choosing to partner exclusively with FCSA Accredited Members will provide you with the assurance that your supply chain is as robustly compliant as it can be. Now that the latest laws allow liability for non-payment of National Insurance and tax contributions to pass throughout the supply chain, this is now more important than ever.

If you would like to find out more about FCSA Accreditation or are reviewing your PSL and looking for an Accredited Member, visit our website www.fcsa.org.uk.



A YEAR AT HYPER-SPEED

Rhona Carmichael, Regional Managing Director UK North and Ireland, Harvey Nash Group discusses the technology sector.

2021 was quite a year in technology recruitment – one that none of us will forget! The first few months of the year were busy enough, but from around the second quarter things really rocketed. As the economy began to open up again and clients pursued their digital-first agendas, the demand for tech professionals to spearhead transformation was immense. It remained that way all through the year.

Quite simply, the pandemic has supercharged businesses' shift to digital channels, accelerating project timescales and deadlines. There's demand in all sorts of areas – cloud, AI and machine learning, big data, and cyber security. As our Digital Leadership Report shows, half of organisations have plans for major digital transformation in the next two to three years and almost two thirds of digital leaders expect to increase their technology investment over the next 12 months. This is the highest we've seen since we started tracking future investment 23 years ago.

And then there are skills shortages. These have been an issue for the tech sector for many years but have come to a head due to the heightened demand, all at the same time, from businesses across the piece. Our research finds that skills shortages are now at their highest levels for many years – higher than they were before the pandemic. In the UK, two thirds of organisations say shortages are preventing them from keeping pace with change, with the most acute being in cyber security (42 per cent of organisations reporting a shortage), big data/analytics (36 per cent), technical architects (33 per cent) and DevOps (32 per cent).

The implications for employers

In such a competitive market, clients need to get everything absolutely right: the value proposition, the communications and positioning, remuneration package, interview and offer process,

and flexibility around location too. This latter factor is something that has really emerged at pace. Not long ago, most clients had begun to embrace a hybrid model, perhaps requiring two days a week in the office. But already, there's a growing shift towards organisations offering a remote-first model where candidates can work nearly all of the time from home.

There are a number of themes to how employers have been adapting. Firstly, they're casting their net wider, considering candidates based further afield than they would have done before. In our research, almost half of digital leaders say they're widening their searches. Some clients are developing a hub and spoke or centre of excellence model in response to this, so they can recruit talent from a wider geographical pool and have centres where staff can come in as and when needed.

Businesses are also speeding up their recruitment and approval processes. I've seen cases of just 5-7 days from receiving a CV to offer accepted. Companies are also having to put out more offers to secure the talent they need. Whereas in the past, a good brand might expect to have three out of four offers accepted, now a 50 per cent rate is a good result. I've also noticed my clients putting more effort into building and then keeping in touch with talent pools – recognising that they need to establish a relationship and stay in contact in case an opportunity comes up later that a potential candidate might be a fit for.

Another common theme is to take a candidate who may not be a 100 per cent match with the job spec but who ticks most of the boxes and can be fairly quickly upskilled after joining. It's a case of taking a long-term view based on someone's potential and their cultural fit. Upskilling is also a big theme internally. In fact, our survey finds that over half of digital leaders have increased the amount of cross-training and upskilling for their staff. This makes sense. Investing in and developing your own people builds engagement, loyalty and career fulfilment. >

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Apprenticeships and entry-level schemes are another growing focus – not just for school or college leavers, but for more mature career switchers too. Coding programmes for example have become popular, some of them run by employers themselves. This doesn't solve immediate needs, but helps build a pipeline for the future over time.

A significant issue that has arisen out of all of these factors is, of course, salary inflation. Employers are simply having to pay more. In the remote model, we've also been seeing a 'democratisation' of pay across geographies. London-type salaries are being offered regardless of where a candidate is physically based. This then creates knock-on issues such as what to do about the remuneration of existing staff? It's a tricky balance. Salary inflation can't go on forever – this is one of the issues that we may see levelling out in 2022.

The candidate view

What of candidates? From their point of view, they've been spoilt for choice. It's a candidate's market and suitably qualified professionals can call many of the shots.

A significant proportion have a preference for fully remote working – and all are looking for a flexibility that will suit them. We're also finding that post-Covid, people have done more thinking about what really matters to them. Candidates are placing more importance on the purpose and 'mission' of an employer. Societal values, climate and environmental responsibility, the ESG agenda – these things matter more. Permanent roles rather than contract have also become more attractive to some candidates. With salaries rising and more flexibility in working models, the advantages of contract work have in some senses lessened. This is something that IR35 has also influenced, given that more contract positions now fall in scope.

This is reflected in the fact that, at Harvey Nash, we've had a very strong year in terms of contract positions – but a record one for permanent placements.

The recruiter's experience

Needless to say, all of this means that for recruiters in tech last year was probably the busiest we've ever seen. It was exhilarating, fun and lots of hard work! I expect everyone in the industry will have benefited from a well-earned break over the festive season.

It was a year I'll never forget – not least because we've all had to learn and grow and lean in. Clients have looked to us for more guidance and support – how can they get the talent they need in such a market, what are their peers doing, what insights can we give? While on the candidate side, we've had to build a deeper understanding of them as people not just technical experts – what are their lifestyle preferences, what work/life balance are they looking for, what really motivates them?

Looking ahead

As we start 2022, what should we expect? Given the ongoing digital transformation ambitions of businesses, and the fact that skills shortages won't magically evaporate, I think we can safely say it will be another year at hyper-speed. Even if it doesn't reach the levels of 2021, it's going to remain exceptionally busy. To tired recruitment professionals, that may sound like a daunting prospect – another 12 months at the same frantic pace?! But after all, that's what we all came into the business for – to support our clients and candidates and get the best outcomes for all. It's what makes recruitment so satisfying and such an exciting place to be. ■

Fostering a candidate-centric approach amid the talent crisis



Darren Curtis, Enterprise Sales Director, Volcanic, an Access company.

Following an incredibly difficult period for many industries the number of job vacancies in the UK in August to October 2021 continued to rise to a new record of 1.172m, an increase of 338k from the pre-Covid January to March 2020 level according to the ONS. This has led the recruitment industry to find creative new ways to attract talent and solve what has become known as the 'candidate conundrum'. In the midst of these unique and challenging industry dynamics, how can recruiters attract elusive 'unicorn' candidates with the right skill set who are looking for a new role?

The jobs market is becoming increasingly difficult to navigate. To solve this conundrum, recruiters need to put the candidate first, understand both the jobseeker's and the client's needs, focus on adopting new technologies to facilitate the process, as well as develop a positive digital footprint.

It's essential for consultants to really understand a client and their brief to assess their key priorities in order to be as efficient and productive as possible, and to eliminate the nice to have wish list.

Adopting a candidate-centric approach

In this complex and competitive recruitment landscape, it is not optional to put the candidate first, it is a necessity. This involves prioritising the needs and experience of the candidate before all else, with the long-term view of building positive relationships and experiences that can be shared with others as social proof points.

The speed of the recruitment cycle is also an important factor. As candidates are in a position of power right now, and often in multiple interview processes simultaneously, it's necessary to move quickly to keep their attention. From the start, it's crucial to manage expectations in terms of the recruitment process to avoid candidates ghosting or dropping out.

Video has played a pivotal role during the pandemic of facilitating and speeding up the process for recruitment businesses and jobseekers, with the ability for candidates to initiate the recruitment process from the comfort of their own homes. For an agency, being able to easily send ondemand videos directly from their recruitment CRM as an early part of the interview process helps to lock the candidate in and expediate to job offer stage.

Other proven strategies that agencies can adopt are developing a strong brand and value proposition to attract candidates, programmatic job advertisements on social media channels including LinkedIn, and mapping the candidate journey from start to finish.

Evolving the recruitment process

In the post-pandemic recruitment space, putting a job listing on a job board is simply not sufficiently proactive. We need to find new and innovative ways to reach talent in the places where they are looking.

Programmatic job adverts are one solution, but they can be a minefield. With so many ways to attract potential candidates, it's important to understand the market and know what is driving results. To avoid budget burn it's vital to measure where you are now, to see progress and gather insights on how to be successful moving forward.

Agencies will also find success by focussing time on developing their brand to resonate with potential candidates across social media platforms and on their website. As the first contact that candidates make with an agency, first impressions matter. Candidates look for a coherent digital footprint and use that to make snap decisions.

Website design continues to evolve, and good navigation and ease of job application is key in helping candidates find what they are looking for. Recruitment agencies need to create content that appeals to their target audience, as well as to optimise their site and jobs to accelerate candidate attraction to stand out from their competitors.

Solving the conundrum

As agencies seek to address the current candidate crisis technology continues to play a critical role. Alongside that recruiters need to be honest and fearless about educating their clients about the market, whilst offering the best levels of customer service to their candidates. It's not an easy conundrum to fix.

EXECUTIVE THINKING

Adam Stoleran, Partner at TritonExec, looks ahead to the challenges and opportunities in the world of executive search.

With any recession or market crash, the recruitment industry is one of the first to be affected but equally, one of the first to recover. What we have seen in our industry in 2021 is nothing short of remarkable with demand for executives at an all time high in almost every industry. This following 2020 with one of the lowest demands for executives in memory. The pandemic has forced organisations to either curate or accelerate their digital transformation journeys which has led to a huge demand in leaders who can organise, facilitate, and sell these solutions. In addition, the change in the labour force dynamic with work from home and flexible working has dramatically increased the talent pool for employers on a global scale. It has also placed a lot more power into the hands of the candidate as they also have a much broader range of opportunities to choose from. What this means is that in a vast majority of cases, executives have multiple options and offers when they decide to look outside. Competition has forced the price of talent upwards and this is going to continue. In more than 15 years, I have not seen companies fighting harder to attract or retain talent than in 2021 and we see this trend continuing to gather pace as we head into 2022. With such competition in the market added to their own clients demands, businesses are offering highly attractive and costly retention bonuses to key executives whilst offering large sign on bonuses and longer term guarantees on compensation than we would traditionally have seen. Again, with most clients' demand increasing not decreasing, we see these processes and attitudes strengthening in 2022 making hiring even more costly for corporations and more lucrative for the candidate population.

Candidate experience

Having said all of that, the biggest driver that we have seen in 2021 for the most successful hiring organisations is the experience they provide throughout the interview process. With such competition, the time a process takes, how many interview stages there are, how quickly an offer or contract is shared and how engaged is the hiring leader with the candidates throughout the process has had a bigger bearing on a company's success

than the financial package on offer. A strong balance of the two will decide the winners and losers as the war on hiring executive talent accelerates in 2022.

Zero-based budgeting

In a recent article I wrote on how the budget process has changed due to the pandemic, there was a particular focus on zero-based budgeting and its importance. This is how budgeting was always meant to be done. Rather than looking at previous results and applying sensible yet arbitrary percentage increases to revenue, earnings, cash and other measurables, perhaps we should look at every layer of the operation in a granular and macro way to more decide what teams and businesses can produce and therefore, what should be the true human capital cost. This approach can also facilitate a much better understanding of the cost base and focus the mind to a more strategic way of thinking. By collaborating and inviting multiple leaders and opinions to this approach, you are left with a much more holistic view of what is possible. It's important to also consider the link between budgets and bonus pay-outs here too. Are leaders being incentivised by long term sustainable growth or to achieve a 12-month budget number? Organisations must believe in their ability to attract and retain talent, investing ahead of time for long term success or they will be left behind. We at TritonExec, for example, invest a great deal of time working with our clients on their demand planning to ensure that we can proactively pipeline talent with a view toward the future, as opposed to reacting to needs as they arise. Never has it been harder to budget accurately for the cost of retaining and hiring talent. We have seen salaries rise by more than 20% on average in 2021 alone so HR and business leaders should be using rolling monthly budgets. Rolling budgets offer greater insight, stricter cost control and the ability to make decisions more quickly. Shortening the cycle periods and keeping a healthy centralised pot that can be called on for special situations is also a sensible approach to provide more flexibility than there has been previously in the planning cycle.

Professional Services & Technology hiring

At TritonExec, we have two distinct practices. Whilst very different inherently, there are a lot of synergies in what we are seeing when hiring at Executive level. Whether you are a multi billion-dollar global professional services firm with hundreds of thousands of employees or a VC/PE backed pre IPO fintech, we are being challenged to innovate, reduce the time to hire and provide HR transformation services to provide scalability and the best experience possible for hiring leaders and executive candidates alike. In both these markets, scale and growth are at heart of everything we are doing. With new and emerging technology, the profile of an executive is changing all the time and that provides a great opportunity for organisations to embark on a change in mindset towards executive hiring. The process no longer has to be slow and cumbersome, and it must represent the people it is trying to attract. With Europe a little slower to come out of the COVID restrictions, a majority of the growth we have seen in these sectors has come from

the US and Canada. The market in APAC, most notably in India has continued to grow and Australia's resilience has been most impressive even with COVID restrictions remaining in place for much of 2021. Towards the end of 2021, we have seen demand in Europe increasing across all markets and we see this continuing in 2022. There has also been a distinct return to face-to-face interviews in Q4 of 2021 where possible and the impact of which on the speed in which processes can be completed is yet unknown. This will be interesting to track in 2022.

The year ahead

The executive search market is growing rapidly. Pretty much across the board, the market is as buoyant as ever and there is a lot of cash on hand to firms in hyper growth mode. With the tail wind of global digital acceleration, sustainable technology, and extensive demand, 2022 is set to exceed a record breaking 2021 for many executive search firms. There is certainly a war on talent with ever increasing power in the hands of the executive. ■



ON CALL, IN DEMAND

After two high pressure years, MCG Healthcare assesses where the recruitment market lies.

When we look back at the healthcare sector over the past two years, it is clear that there have been some massive changes, some negative, and some overlooked positives. Pre-COVID, doctors and specialists would generally only see patients in face-to-face consultations. Telephone triage and e-consults were rarely utilised in the sector at all, but COVID forced their hands and ended up changing general practice for the better. The media might tell you otherwise, but this change is for the better for both healthcare practitioners and the general public. Pre-COVID, the GP workload intensified sharply in the final two weeks of September with practices delivering six per cent more consultations and a third more clinical administrative work than in the same period in 2019. Since then, patient demand has risen by over 30 per cent in the same time period VS 2019, with fewer staff per patient than ever. Peter Caven, recruitment manager at MCG Healthcare, explains how client behaviour has changed since COVID. “Pre-COVID clients were less engaged with agencies and all providers tended to be new business focused in the hope of winning maybe one new client. Recruitment agencies were seen as a necessity for clients and there was even talk within the NHS around ‘zero agency’. Recruitment was easier pre-COVID with higher numbers of applicants and new starters signing off consistently.” Peter Caven added that he has noticed that over the past 18 months price has become a much more influential factor for clients.

The current healthcare recruitment market

The NHS is facing one of its hardest winters. With the rising COVID admissions and as A&E demand climbs higher, the medical workforce is being pushed to its limits. There is a deficit of between 5,000-

15,000 general and acute beds to make sure demand is covered over this winter. The British Medical Association is looking for an extra 3,000 beds so that extra escalation beds are not needed over the winter months. Some hospitals are at 95 per cent bed occupancy. There is a backlog of elective surgery with around 4.7 million people waiting for treatment, some of which have been waiting for over a year. Despite a £10 billion scheme being introduced, the NHS hasn't yet used the private hospitals for additional support. The NHS and private hospitals are both under pressure trying to ease these issues. There are currently 38,000 outstanding nursing vacancies in the NHS England alone. Candidates have become a rare commodity and some agencies are able to charge higher amounts as a result. The healthcare industry has always been a candidate driven market, however with the winter pressures and COVID, these problems may worsen in the next few months as candidates become more over worked and disillusioned. Peter Caven added: “The staff shortages we are seeing across numerous healthcare sectors have driven change from clients who are now more focused on supply rather than just using the cheapest provider. Block bookings for Health Care Assistants have become more of a norm and clients are all managing their rotas better in order to submit requests earlier than they would normally. Recruitment is the most challenging I have seen in 15 years, low responses to all adverts which are posted, poor quality candidates and not enough younger individuals opting for a career in healthcare. This in part has helped solidify our relationships with our clients as they all want a more personal approach now.” Hayley Willingham, nursing manager at MCG Healthcare, raised concern about the impact COVID has had on the care home sector.

She posits that there may be reductions in care home occupancy as the pandemic has made families more reluctant to put their loved ones in homes. She adds that a large number of care homes have stopped taking new occupants due to the pandemic. However, the demand for care home workers may see a dramatic increase once more people feel confident in the management of the pandemic and see a decrease in case numbers.

The future of healthcare recruitment

Going forward, general practice could lose around 9,000 staff under government plans to make the COVID-19 vaccination mandatory for all healthcare workers from next April, stripping an average of more than one team member from each of the 6,500 practices in England. The government impact statement on mandatory COVID-19 vaccination estimates that 73,000 NHS staff, or 4.9 per cent of the total health workforce, will remain unvaccinated and become ineligible to work with patients face-to-face and may leave their jobs. This means that the shortages of patient-facing clinicians in Primary Care (including GPs) will heighten and the pressure will become greater than ever. Based on this, more GPs will go into Locum positions meaning more vacancies will become available UK-wide. With a number of GPs nearing retirement, we imagine the next few years will be extremely tough. However, 4,000 doctors have gone into GP training this year, a record-breaking amount, so hopefully this will help bridge the ever-widening gap. The government promised that they would give 5,000 doctors GP training per year, but we are still 20 per cent short of this figure with only a few years left to go, so there is still a long way to go, but with the current working procedures hopefully we will continue to find better and more effective ways of

working, including the use of AHP and nurses to work hand-in-hand with GPs. We asked Hayley Willingham, nursing manager at MCG Healthcare, to share her thoughts on the future of healthcare recruitment. She responded by saying; “Ultimately there will always be a need for healthcare professionals within the industry, but the finance cost will be astronomical to the industry.” She says that more meaningful encouragement and bigger incentives are needed to encourage people to join the industry. However, she believes that the media is scarring people away from the healthcare sector and the lack of positive media about the healthcare industry has not helped sell the roles that need to be filled. Fearmongering and sensationalist over reactions to problems in the healthcare industry has negative affected public opinion and swayed potential medical students to pursue other careers. Ash Higgs, managing director of MCG Healthcare gave his predictions for the industry and explained why he thinks this will be the case. “In the long term I think it will take healthcare 5+ years to begin to recover from the pandemic, if at all. Pay rates are too low for the work staff to undertake, it isn't an attractive career option for the next generation so we will continue to see huge levels of vacancies within the sector which just won't be filled. With more and more people leaving the sector this current situation could become the new norm.” The future of healthcare recruitment strongly relies on how the government and NHS react to the current situation. COVID has changed the industry, for better or worse, and every decision from here on out will affect the industry. ■

DIVERSITY, DATA AND ANALYTICS

Specialist recruitment business Harnham discuss diversity within the data and analytics sector.

The recent State of Diversity in Data and Analytics 2021 report from Harnham has revealed that the number of young women entering the UK's burgeoning data and analytics sector since the start of the pandemic is three times higher than that of the tech industry as a whole.

According to the study, which involved 4,600 respondents, more than 1 in 3 (34 per cent) of all new hires made in the 18 months to September 2021 were female compared to just 10 per cent for the entire tech sector. An upshift that points to a promising future for tech invested organisations as the business case for companies with diverse executive teams financially outperforming their less diverse competitors remains strong.

No room for complacency

The report also found that while data and analytics is clearly becoming a career of choice for young women at the beginning of their career, female representation for the sector as a whole has dipped since the start of the pandemic. Maybe as a result of the pandemic significantly increasing the burden of unpaid care, which tends to be disproportionately carried by women. Indeed, the number of women working in the sector at all levels dipped by two per cent to 28 per cent of all professionals. Across senior management and c-suite, the percentage of women in tech have almost halved.

The widening gender pay gap

While the number of young women in data and analytics has seen an upturn, concurrently the gender pay gap at entry level has fallen to six per cent versus the national average of 7.4 per cent. But across the board the gender pay gap has widened from by 3.5 per cent since March 2020 and now stands at 13.5 per cent.

In a candidate driven market, the potential for any positive increase to stall or even reverse is strong. Forward thinking businesses would be wise to prioritise their diversity and inclusion initiatives over the next 12 months to continue to attract young females with equal pay and benefit to keep things moving in the right direction.

Appealing to ethnic groups

By contrast, the future of the tech industry's ethnic representation looks bright, with 43 per cent of those in their first role in data and analytics are not from a white background, indicating that the sector is increasingly appealing to those often-underrepresented groups.

The data and analytics sector remains heavily Caucasian, with three quarters of the industry represented by white professionals. Over-representation of certain ethnicities continues to prevail – those of Indian, Arab, Bangladeshi, and Pakistani backgrounds accounting for 13 per cent of employees. Across other ethnic groups, there has been no significant change on the previous year, emphasising the need for further work at higher education level to make STEM subjects more attractive to BAME students to address the underrepresentation issue.

Disability in tech

While Harnham's report shows a slight increase in disabled representation within tech, five per cent in 2021 compared to 3.3 per cent in 2020, the figure remains significantly low when compared to the national average of 19 per cent.

Commenting on this year's report findings, David Farmer, CEO of Harnham, said: "The past few years have seen the conversation around diversity in tech move to the forefront, the last 18 months shining spotlight on the reoccurring issues that impact the industry. "Fortunately, there is silver – increased access to remote and flexible working has provided a wider range of opportunities to a broader demographic. It is now incumbent upon the industry to continue to offer flexible working to ensure that progress made in these areas isn't lost.

"Indeed, while the industry has a lot of work ahead to reach the right level of inclusion, it's important to step back and recognise all that has been done to get to where we are today. It has taken a long time and immense effort to create change and appreciating this will be the momentum that spurs us to continue this hard work."

Harnham is the global leader in Data & Analytics recruitment with over 130 consultants placing candidates across the UK, Europe, and USA. Specialising in roles throughout data science, advanced analytics, digital analytics, life science analytics, data & technology and data engineering, Harnham supports candidates and hiring managers the world's most innovative and exciting industry. To download a copy of the report, head to www.harnham.com

THE THIRD WAY

Stuart Bell, founder and CEO at Robertson Bell discusses the future for third sector recruitment.

It's been a turbulent two years for all sectors, with the global pandemic bringing uncertainty to all industries. Whether an organisation has fared well, or not so, there's no doubt that things in the jobs market have changed.

Equally, while virtually every sector is facing a skills shortage, not everyone has been impacted in the same way. So, what's ahead for charities and third sector organisations?

Increasing demand for services

Many charities and third sector organisations exist to help in a moment of crisis. Whether it's Action for Children, who protect and support vulnerable children, or Crimestoppers, an independent charity that allows people to anonymously report crime or suspicious behaviour, charities provide instrumental support to those who may have few other places to turn.

Many of these vital services are absolutely life-changing to users, and research shows that two thirds of charities have experienced an increase in demand since the beginning of the pandemic. If we are to experience another lockdown, or a second economic crash, it is likely that demand will increase again. Charities and third sector organisations will need to increase their headcounts in order to meet demand.

Changes to funding

We all know that the coffers were severely depleted by the government's financial Covid support measures. While the Chancellor delivered a cautiously optimistic Autumn Budget, the debt must be paid somehow. If growth is not as positive as anticipated, third sector organisations may see cuts to funding.

It's also possible that there will be changes to funding. Given the nature of the global health crisis, it may be that NHS charities or medical-based organisations could see an increase, while others get a reduction. Public donations should also be considered. While some organisations experienced an increase in donations at the beginning of the pandemic, charity sector income was down by £200 million in the final months of 2020. Charities are likely to be providing more, but operating with less.

Smaller teams

In August 2020, economists warned that the charity sector could see as many as 60,000 job losses due to the pandemic. Like many organisations in other sectors, several charities are working with smaller teams, with individuals taking on increased responsibilities.

This can have a detrimental effect on the employees who remain within the organisation. An over-burdened workforce can lead to stress and burnout, creating further pressure on charities, and increasing the likelihood that an employee leaves the business.

Though many charities and third sector organisations are seeking to increase their teams, it's likely that individuals will still take on more duties than they did pre-pandemic. As a result, charities will be looking for people with a broad range of skills.

Changing job descriptions

As well as looking for more skills, charities are likely to be looking for candidates with different experiences and capabilities. Tech skills, for example, are going to be in increasing demand and the base-level for IT proficiency will get higher. It may take some time for charities to truly understand the new skills and candidate profiles they need to take their organisations forward.

It will also be a challenge to operate in new candidate pools. Understanding where to find this talent, and what attracts them to a role, is not straightforward and charities will have to adjust their hiring strategies accordingly.

Automation and outsourcing solutions

Every penny spent by a charitable organisation must be spent wisely. Charities are under intense scrutiny and any wasted or misspent funds mean fewer people will have access to these vital services. This concern, plus difficulties in recruiting the right talent, is likely to mean that charities seek alternative solutions to hiring. This is particularly true for junior roles, which can be expensive to recruit and retain and yet are generally the most straight-forward to replace with automation or outsourcing.

By automating or outsourcing some finance capabilities, charities can save time and resources and we predict this will be a big trend in 2022.

Salary comparisons

There is a huge amount of salary inflation happening across sectors at the moment. The market is totally candidate-driven and those with transferable skills can have their pick of opportunities.

There is generally a perception that the private sector pays better, and at the extreme ends of the spectrum this is probably true. However, many candidates that choose to work in the third sector know that there are other benefits to be gained other than salary. If charities cannot compete when it comes to salary, they will need to market the other benefits they can offer. This is particularly true for charities who are well-known, or who have a strong purpose.

Covid CSR effect

During the pandemic, many people took the time to take stock and consider what they truly want from their lives and, particularly, their careers. McKinsey found that nearly two thirds of workers were reconsidering their current career paths, with millennials three times as likely to say they were re-evaluating their work.

This could present both a challenge and opportunity to charities and third sector organisations. Charities are just as vulnerable to the 'Great Resignation', and we predict there will be a lot of movement in 2022, particularly because many employees who were ready to move on stayed due to a fear of uncertainty.

But McKinsey's research also revealed that workers are looking for purpose in their roles. This creates an obvious opportunity for charities to appeal to an increasing number of candidates. Third sector organisations will need to market themselves carefully to capitalise on this moment.

Changes to working practices

As individuals, the majority of us have become accustomed to new working practices and – like it or loathe it – have settled into a new

routine. However, as organisations, many systems and processes which were introduced as temporary measures will now need closer inspection. The obvious example is hybrid working, and how charitable organisations will adopt the practice. The vast majority of candidates do want some degree of flexibility, so organisations will likely need to find a hybrid model that works for them if they want to remain competitive.

This also has an impact on who to hire, as it likely means there are a host of digitisation projects which have moved from 'nice to have' to absolutely essential. Charities will need people to oversee and manage these projects, as well as candidates capable of implementing such changes.

A positive outlook

Though there are several challenges ahead for the third sector, charitable organisations have reasons to be optimistic. Candidates previously unwilling to leave the security of their existing jobs will likely feel more certain as the country recovers from the pandemic and things get closer to normality.

Charities should capture the moment and highlight how the candidates that work with them can make a positive difference to society, giving them a considerable advantage over competing organisations in the private sector.

While we don't anticipate the usual January jobs rush, we do expect that 2022 will be a stronger year for recruitment than 2021 has been. More certainty and better opportunities will lead to a lot of movement in the talent market, and the opportunities are there for third sector organisations ready to seize upon them. ■

ENERGISING RECRUITMENT

Christopher Honeyman Brown, Chief Executive Officer at Petroplan discusses his business' response to the future of talent.

Petroplan is a trusted, global talent solutions partner for employers and professionals in the energy sector; our vision is to provide exceptional talent solutions to clients working in the energy and infrastructure markets. The breadth and depth of our experience reinforces our specialist industry, technical and cultural knowledge and gives our team unrivalled expertise. We bring that experience to our clients through effective relationships with key hiring managers and our candidates. Following the pandemic, we are undergoing a strategic shift to adapt, accelerate and sharpen our service offering. We're on the cusp of a major transformation that will elevate our position in the market to significantly benefit our clients and candidates. As we start to implement our strategy, we have appointed six new members to our senior leadership team, including CFO Chris Morris, regional director for EMEA Darren Brown, Dean Greenwood, recruitment director for EMEA, Darci Kruse, country manager for Canada, and Mike McKinnon, senior client director in Canada. The team will be supporting the speedy delivery of creative solutions to our existing clients, as well as winning opportunities to deliver our services to new clients across the energy and infrastructure sectors. At the same time, we are introducing a programme to build

a much more interactive relationship with candidates and contractors. We are experts in our disciplines rather than generalists. Our recent appointments and location expansions are proof of the energy and fresh thinking we bring to recruitment services.

Market impact

The pandemic has presented many challenges over the last 21 months, especially to recruitment in the energy market, where mobilisation has been particularly challenging. As the pandemic reaches its climax, we are adapting our services to meet the new challenges in the employment market as people around the world get used to new ways of working. The sector is not one-dimensional, and neither is its workforce. We must respond not only to these COVID inspired challenges but also to the rising demand of talent currently working in the oil and gas sector, as they move across to support the growth of the renewable energy market. Here, we explore some of those challenges as well as the opportunities for the recruitment sector as we (hopefully) emerge from the most unpredictable period in recent history.

The international break

It would be surprising to hear of any business that hasn't in some way been impacted by the pandemic. We too have been affected by the halt of oil and energy projects.

Most of our projects span continents and can be 'hooked up' to between five and ten locations at any time, from South Korea to Spain. During the last year, projects across the globe slowed down or even came to a complete standstill due to international lockdowns, travel restrictions and the inability to obtain required visas or work permits.

Beyond the operational side, we found many candidates didn't want to move or change careers. The huge global uncertainty generated by the pandemic drove many recruiters out of work, leaving a large skill gap in recruitment services. Many leaders in energy companies decided to take an earlier-than-expected retirement, which has led to rising demand for senior project and corporate roles as clients give increased importance to succession planning.

These are very much 'yesterday's' issues; we are now seeing light at the end of the tunnel, with many projects transitioning from engineering to commissioning phases. Alongside the increase in oil price and projects receiving Final Investment Decisions, spend is returning to the energy recruitment sector.

As a result, we have seen a general spike in activity. When we compare results to this time last year, Petroplan is seeing a 50% increase in vacancies largely driven by the bottleneck of projects coming on-stream with concurrent milestones. The market is experiencing a period of significant competition for quality candidates.

There's no doubt that it's a candidate-driven market, and the consequence of these pressures is that we currently have a wide range of higher value, higher-level opportunities.

Diversification of services

Around the world, we have seen an increase in shorter duration and less capital-intensive projects. This has been most noticeable in renewables where there has been an increase in shorter projects requiring fewer personnel.

We have always been focused on delivering solutions for our clients' talent needs, and we are once again rapidly adapting our services to meet the current pressures and influences in the marketplace.

Infrastructure around energy projects is a core service demand, alongside the steadily increasing focus on renewables. Mining is a critical sector globally and is largely driven by recruitment in Canada, alongside an increase in finance, tech, and automation roles. Nuclear remains as an alternative solution to plug the gap, while renewable energy increases capacity to steadily replace carbon-based energy.

We have seen an upturn over the last five years in investment in global energy projects, which we expect to continue at pace.

For Petroplan, we focus on those areas where we can offer our expertise to enable international oil companies and EPCs to meet their global growth targets – plugging their gaps to fill white-collar, intermediate, contract and permanent engineering jobs. Our success in bringing in new talent and leadership has allowed us to leverage our experience and build a more focused, agile, and collaborative organisation. We react quickly to market movements, balancing the weight of services where it is needed most. In short, we ask our clients what they really need and find a solution that fits.

The competition

We know our competitors seek out the major projects with international oil companies. But this is where our approach is different – our interest is in providing higher level, higher quality services and not the run of the mill, high volume, lower-level jobs. We build on relationships to understand client strategies and risks more deeply, and create solutions that deliver real value by fitting our candidates more precisely to the role specification.

In the UK, we are investing in the North West and recently opened a brand-new office in Manchester to access the rich talent pool, with plans for further expansion in the region. As new energy careers emerge over the coming years, we will look at other regional locations and respond to market geography, building our services according to clients' needs, both in technical and geographic terms.

We are not a leviathan, we are still privately owned and not driven by the pressures of private equity or public stock market investors. We are nimble, creative, and quick in our decision making, providing our clients with cost effective solutions without any of the bureaucracy. We are recovering from the impacts of the 21 months and already moving forward with renewed vigour.

The future

We are fast developing a high performing group of recruitment specialists, experts in the energy industry and very experienced in the provision of imaginative solutions to our clients.

There is something very special about moulding together a team of highly talented people in a collaborative and consultative environment and helping them to deliver a business performance which exceeds their expectations.

Changing our culture, building a new strategy, improving systems and processes, and recruiting and retaining a group of talented people are all challenging but immensely rewarding. ■

For more information, please visit www.petroplan.com ■

CHANGE FOR GOOD

Julie Jarvis, Managing Director of property & built environment recruitment specialist PRS, looks back at how 2021 reshaped their business.

While 2021 did not provide the pre-pandemic, business-as-usual landscape many recruiters hoped for, it saw fundamental changes to our industry that were arguably long overdue. An acceleration in digital transformation, the rise in flexible working practices and a fresh approach to employer branding are just some of the evolutions we saw in recruitment.

Before the pandemic hit, PRS was making moves to transform our processes to enable remote working. Not only did we see home working as a way to tap into valuable local knowledge that would allow us to expand into new geographical areas, but it was also vital in providing our employees with the flexibility to maintain a healthy work/life balance. This upfront work meant we were equipped and ready to operate remotely as soon as the first lockdown was announced in March 2020. Of course, we still had work to do to implement the ideal digital tools and processes, but the pandemic undoubtedly sped up plans that could have been months or even years in the making. Various surveys have been conducted on the productivity of remote workers, with results reinforcing that the shift has had a largely positive impact on output. It was no different for PRS, with many employees telling us their productivity levels were boosted by working at home. Video conferencing resulted in higher meeting attendance rates, digital tools simplified communication channels, and our managers were able to respond much more quickly to their team. However, it is not a case of one-size-fits-all, and some members of our team missed in-person collaboration and the camaraderie of the team environment. Plus, we recognised that while senior team members flourished at home, junior employees missed out on crucial learning opportunities gained by observing their peers and being involved in the day-to-day conversation. It meant that as soon as it was safe to reopen the office doors, our previous way of working needed a rethink to ensure inclusivity and support for everyone. Flexibility was a primary driver, which is why we introduced a four-day working week and a rota system for our offices so staff could safely social distance while still having the chance to work with colleagues. The option to work remotely has also become a permanent fixture for those who thrive in their own environment. We have seen this commitment to flexibility echoed across our clients' businesses, with leaders understanding the value of providing employee autonomy when it comes to acquiring and retaining talent.

New demands, new techniques

Such changes demand new techniques for recruiting, onboarding and ultimately, managing staff. For PRS, remote onboarding was the biggest challenge. How could we effectively communicate the values and culture of our business to new recruits? It was a common concern for our clients, too – many of whom had invested heavily in creating dynamic and welcoming workplaces designed to spark collaboration and innovation.

With focus shifting away from the physical workplace, employer value proposition (EVP) and employer branding took centre stage. Organisations, including PRS, revisited and realigned corporate visions, mission and values to ensure they were fit for purpose for the modern era. For example, collaboration and communication became essential values for businesses with dispersed teams, and the essence of togetherness and cohesion has been inserted into many revamped mission statements.

However, a strong employer brand is more than semantics. With skills shortages extending across multiple industries, remote working meant the playing field was levelled. Suddenly working for a multinational brand looked a lot like working for a startup. It presented welcome introspection into the benefits offered to employees and whether

enough was being done to attract and retain talent. Benefits that recruitment businesses traditionally relied upon, whether that was monthly nights out, office drinks on a Friday, corporate away days or even a pool table in the office, no longer made sense for a workforce that could spend most of their time working remotely.

Furthermore, the pandemic shone the spotlight on wellbeing. People want an employer who genuinely cares about their safety and health and accommodates individual needs and circumstances. The shift led businesses to reassess their commitment to staff wellbeing and explore additional ways to make current employees, and prospective new hires feel safe, valued, and happy. Such initiatives have included offering flexible working hours, increasing paid time off, providing access to health and wellness programmes and encouraging learning and development with paid tuition or training reimbursements. 2021 saw PRS boost our Candidate Care Strategy, which included launching initiatives designed to enhance the health and financial security of our people and our candidates. With autonomy and flexibility essential, we created a wellness hub that launches in January 2022 that can be accessed round-the-clock. It provides a range of resources, including mental health support and other interactive elements to help users develop the self-care and mindfulness habits they need to remain happy, balanced and motivated. In conjunction with the hub, we are launching a series of wellness seminars where health professionals provide our people and candidates with exclusive insights on prioritising their health and work-life balance more effectively.

Special response

Last year also saw the rise of the specialist recruiter. While not a revelation, the pandemic underlined the value of industry specialists when it comes to securing in-demand skills. During lockdown periods when many organisations froze hiring initiatives, specialist recruiters pivoted to take on a more consultative role for clients and candidates, providing updates and insights on uncertain and often unstable markets. Once businesses reopened their doors, the battle for talent was fierce. The rise of digital transformation across all industries called for many organisations to seek skills and attributes not previously on the agenda. Where could these skills be found? What is the market rate? Why would they work for us and not our competitors?

It meant that specialist recruiters, particularly those operating in growing markets, could leverage their skills and guide clients out of the pandemic more effectively. Our experience placing talent in engineering, logistics and data centres, in particular, proved the most fruitful for both our clients and us. The emphasis on specialist expertise reinforced the importance of continued investment in learning and development for our people at PRS. Now more than ever, clients and candidates want to engage with genuine experts who are not only skilled recruiters but possess in-depth knowledge of the markets they recruit in. We expect such demand to lead to a rise in startup recruiters and boutique agencies that specialise in distinct areas in 2022.

Almost two years later, the pandemic continues to challenge us in ways we could never have predicted. However, shining a spotlight on recruitment reveals vast advancements in the way we work and how we support our people. We should enter the new year, not with trepidation but with an air of positivity and excitement at the prospect of how we can make our industry even better. ■

A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITY

Graham Trevor, Group HR Director Randstad, reflects on the way forward within his recruitment business.

Like many businesses, the effects that the Covid-19 pandemic had on our way of work were profound and far-reaching. Whilst at the beginning of the pandemic it may have appeared that the recruitment industry would only be negatively affected; at Randstad, we saw many opportunities emerge.

It's no secret that the recruitment world has been through something of a rollercoaster ride over the past 18 months. The market has fluctuated back and forth and the shift to a candidate-driven market is complete – for the foreseeable future.

Our latest Workmonitor report has shown that 67 per cent of global respondents felt empowered by the pandemic to change careers. That's a lot of reflection going on. Our Belonging Book research digs deep around the motivating forces at play in the current market across sectors. Clearly there are more career opportunities now than ever, which has conspired to empower the candidate like never before, and so their wishes are numerous and varied and have fundamentally shifted. The most fundamental of these shifts is in the desire for flexible working.

The need for flexibility

The pandemic forced businesses to adopt a flexible working model overnight and what happened for the majority of businesses was a more productive workforce. This has led to a shift in what candidates look for in a new employer and is the reason that Randstad introduced flex@randstad, allowing our people to flex their hours and working location where appropriate. The Randstad Employer Brand Report (REBR) has shown that flexible working has overtaken compensation as the key attribute when candidates look for a new employer. Our research has shown that 65 per cent of respondents state 'flexible working' is the key driver when it comes to looking for a new role. In addition to this, our latest research revealed that 77 per cent want more flexibility in their job and career based on the experience from the pandemic. What does this mean for recruiters? Firstly, it means that the employer brand narrative and a consistent EVP is now more important than ever.

Recruiters also need to look at the compensation and benefits they are promoting in their talent attraction strategies. New candidates in our industry are now more likely to be looking for a company that has values that match their own, that are showing initiative in helping to address world issues and offer flexible working policies. Candidates are braver in their decision to change careers, which means that recruiters need to be braver in their approach too.

Courage in Recruitment

Since the pandemic, we see 'being brave' through a different lens. The market transformed from being buoyant and client-driven to erratic and candidate-centric almost overnight. For many, the combination of soaring costs, margins being squeezed, remote working and the skills scarcity caused the perfect storm. Those who successfully navigated the storm are filled with a new sense of adventure and confidence. Embracing new flexible working approaches and training recruiters on a new, more courageous way of working is essential – so how do we begin to approach this?

Training for a new world of recruitment

Like many companies, the pandemic forced us to pivot our learning and development offering and strategy overnight. This shift in approach to learning and development offers up many more opportunities to improve training for recruiters too. At Randstad, our 2022 offering will be focussed on a blended approach of virtual and in-person training, meaning we're able to reinvest the budget to support a blended learning method. This increases the experience of learning and makes this fun, bitesize and tailored to a wider audience who have different learning preferences. We've seen the results of this at Randstad already. During the pandemic, we were able to offer substantially more developmental support to individuals than a like-for-like in 2019. We saw an increase in coaching and an increase in lunch and learn sessions. We were also able to create

more formal talent development programmes for our employees, simply due to the fact that through a blended, flexible learning approach, we could scale our offering and use our resources more effectively.

The war for recruitment talent

The war for talent is now more fierce than it has ever been so how we conduct ourselves in the internal talent acquisition arena, post Covid-19, determines whether or not we successfully hire into our business. At Randstad, we set out to build a bright, bold and fun virtual engagement platform where talent interacts with hiring communities through integrated video functions, adaptive and flexible interview slots and a unique approach to personality and cognitive ability assessment. Brave move? Absolutely, but the approach has been a refreshing change to help our business – and the digital transformation does not end there. Our new virtual environment means candidates no longer need to take time away from work or their studies to meet with us, they simply need a quiet spot and access to WiFi and our virtual interaction is also very clearly laid out, which means there's no ambiguity or misunderstanding about our methodology.

Inclusion is always at the heart of all of our internal recruitment strategies, so, we embedded data gathering tools which would allow us to track (on a voluntary basis) the unique offering each candidate could bring. We also use this data to monitor unconscious bias during their engagement with our hiring communities.

Our platform also offers personality and cognitive evaluations in multiple languages and is W3C AA compliant. Our language is purposefully neutral, human and inclusive to avoid stereotyping towards any particular gender and one of our assessments focuses on talent's approach to working from home or remotely, which of course is a very useful insight in today's world of work.

In the next chapter of our internal talent acquisition evolution, in 2022, we have a number of exciting developments in the pipeline, such as:

- Introducing smart AI to address and action any questions talent has before they apply to an opportunity with us
- Our tech and touch strategy is about combining automation with human interactions. We are moving towards automation to create time for internal talent acquisition to have valuable human conversations instead of focusing on administration and compliance.
- We're introducing gamification to our recruitment methodology and building bespoke norm groups per business line and generation to reconsider the DNA of success in Randstad and the wider market.

Ultimately, our aim is to challenge the traditional status quo of the recruitment industry. Our objective is to improve our final stage conversion to 80 per cent, more accurately identify 90 per cent of high performers and high potential talent, whilst ensuring diversity balance. We've already had fantastic feedback on this, with 92 per cent of applicants who have been on this journey with us in 2021, said they found the process to be engaging. Our time to fill rate is also gaining momentum by up to 25 per cent, because talent enjoys our unique, refreshing approach, cultivating their interest in our career offering. We've confidently embraced the brave new world of recruitment and are constantly on the lookout for new talent to enable us to continue growing our market share and join the world's leading recruitment business. See <https://www.randstad.co.uk/randstad-careers/> to apply. ■

Graham Trevor has been in the HR industry for over 20 years, the past 10 years being with Randstad. He is responsible for the HR functions across Randstad UK, Randstad Sourceright and Randstad Enterprise Group EMEA. ■

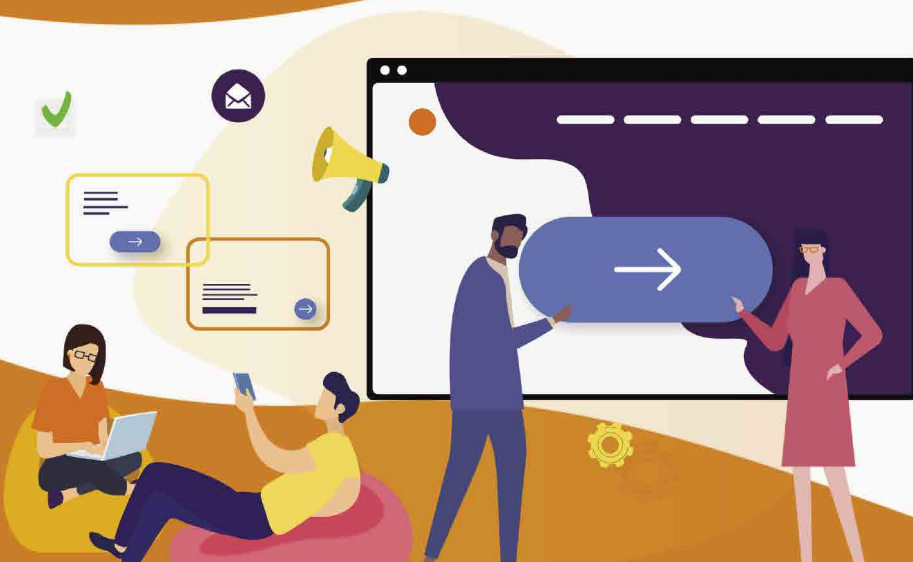
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