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THE GLOBAL RECRUITER

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Issue 260 | August 2024



WHERE DO YOU FIND YOUR BEST CANDIDATES?

**BOOMER ALERT
EQUAL, NOT THE SAME**

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SIMON KENT
EDITOR

WELCOME

The summer can sometimes feel like a slower time for recruiters, but it can also be a time for review and reflection – and that can be just as practical and important as growing a business or placing more talent. If there's less pressing immediate business, this could be the ideal time to take a look at processes, technology and more, asking questions about the way your business operates – exploring ideas and initiatives that simply don't get a look in when business is full on.

In this issue of The Global Recruiter we continue our deep dive into recruitment technology and alongside the challenges of what technology should be used, there's the question of how it should be used. It is too easy to fall into repetitive – and perhaps not the most productive – habits with technology, and too easy to miss the new or more innovative approaches that could make the difference for your business.

This month we have also announced the short list for The Global Recruiter awards. Each of the businesses involved have demonstrated how to do something different, better and more effectively for their clients and candidates. It's an exciting time, and the build up to our celebratory event has begun! Congratulations to everyone involved – it's been a highly competitive year and shows how the industry continues to thrive. ■

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Publisher: Gary King
gary@theglobalrecruiter.com

Editorial: Simon Kent
editorial@theglobalrecruiter.com

Director: James Osborne
jamestherecruitmentnetwork.com

Advertising:
sales@theglobalrecruiter.com

Design & Production: Ioan Lucian Sculeac
lucian@theglobalrecruiter.com

Subscribe for free: www.theglobalrecruiter.com



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A promotional banner for the GR Industry Awards 2024. The background is dark with a bokeh effect of golden lights. At the top center is the 'GR THE GLOBAL RECRUITER' logo in a gold box. Below it, 'INDUSTRY AWARDS 2024' is written in large, bold, gold letters. To the left, a white box with a gold border contains the text 'HEADLINE SPONSOR:' above the '20 simplicity YEARS IN BUSINESS' logo. To the right, another white box with a gold border contains the text 'ASSOCIATE SPONSORS:' above logos for 'Magic Umbrella', 'recruiter moves.', and 'THE RECRUITMENT NETWORK'. At the bottom, the text 'FINALISTS ANNOUNCED', 'BOOK YOUR TICKETS', and 'AWARDS CEREMONY: 20 NOVEMBER' is displayed in white and gold.

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FINALISTS ANNOUNCED
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AWARDS CEREMONY: 20 NOVEMBER

GLOBAL RECRUITER AWARDS SHORTLIST ANNOUNCED

It's time. After weeks of consideration, assessment and judgement, the shortlist for The Global Recruiter UK Industry Awards 2024 is ready. The result of an incredibly strong field where each category was fiercely contested by those at the top of their game, this shortlist provides a guide to where innovation, best practice and maximum value has been demonstrated by the recruitment industry. Make no mistake – getting this far marks an amazing achievement.

One of the more remarkable features of this year's shortlist is the sheer diversity and number of outstanding recruitment businesses. This year has not seen one business dominant multiple categories – the diversity and range of recruitment companies making an impression on the judges is clear.

And this is extremely encouraging for the sector more generally – there is a clear determination from many businesses to do well, to do better and to exceed. The industry attracts and supports outstanding ideas and work, rather than run-of-the-mill acceptable performances. If you've made the shortlist – make some noise – this is something of which to be proud. And get ready for the Awards themselves – 20th November 2024 at The Steel Yard, London. We're looking forward to seeing you there!

[Too see this years finalists and to book your tickets to celebrate with the best of the best click here](#) ■



Job vacancy

VACANCIES INCREASE

Data from the latest [UK Job Market Report](#) by job search engine [Adzuna](#) saw UK job vacancies rise +1.1 per cent in July. This is the first rise this year, up to 862,043 compared to June, bringing the first sign of an improvement in prospects to those seeking a new role. Following [positive growth figures](#) and the election of a new government, [business confidence](#) rebounded in July which has translated through to increased hiring.

Compared to July 2023, vacancies are still down -17.69 per cent, which demonstrates that the market still has a long way to go to achieve a full recovery. Meanwhile, average advertised salaries are higher compared to last year, up +2.95 per cent to £38,863 whilst month-on-month average advertised salaries increased marginally, up +0.08 per cent.

In a sign of further contractions in the job market, there are now 2.09 jobseekers per vacancy, the highest it has been since May 2021 during the Covid-19 pandemic. Jobs are filling at the fastest pace this year, with an average time-to-fill of 35.6 days in July, down from 36 days last month.

While prospects for jobseekers may have improved, salary transparency hit rock bottom in July. The proportion of job adverts with salaries fell to 46.3 per cent in July, the lowest recorded figure since Adzuna started tracking this metric in 2016. Over half (52.3 per cent) of job adverts do not include any salary information.

James Neave, Head of Data Science of Adzuna, commented on the figures saying: “Optimism about the UK economy following higher than expected growth figures and a new government has extended into the jobs market with the first monthly rise in job postings this year in July. An increase of +1.1 per cent may seem small but we’re used to seeing job postings fall during the summer months as companies put hiring plans on pause because of holidays. Confidence is even extending into junior-level hiring with Graduate roles up +3.7 per cent compared to June which is great news for those leaving university. We’ll have to see if this optimism extends into August but it should bring some respite to job hunters for now.” ■



VIQU INVEST IN CONSULT ENERGY

Birmingham IT recruitment agency [VIQU](#) has announced an investment in fellow Birmingham recruitment company, [Consult Energy](#). With a 15-year reputation supporting the renewables and utilities sector, the UK arm of Consult Energy will now sit under the VIQU group, positioning both businesses for further future success.

VIQU has focused solely on supporting the IT sector for the last decade, with an additional office in Southampton giving them the scope to service clients across the UK. Yet, recent government announcements regarding significant future investment in the UK energy sector, combined with the renewable market being valued at £23 billion in 2023, meant that the prospect of investing in Consult Energy complemented both VIQU's strategic growth plans and its ethos to operate in a green and sustainable manner.

With VIQU recently completing their 3 year green pledge, which saw them reduce their emissions to net zero and invest in producing their own renewable energy, investing in Consult Energy is a fantastic opportunity to further their commitment to sustainable business practices and aim to operate as one of the UK's greenest recruitment agencies.

"I've known of Consult Energy since I launched VIQU in 2014," [Matt Collingwood](#), Managing Director of VIQU Limited, "and have always held the brand and their team in high regard. I am really excited about the opportunity to bring two of the strongest professional recruitment brands together, to share knowledge and resources, which will positively impact their respective sectors and ultimately grow both businesses."

As part of the investment, the Consult Energy team will relocate to VIQU's recently redeveloped offices in Edgbaston, Birmingham, giving colleagues from both businesses the opportunity to come together under one roof.

"Bringing Consult Energy and VIQU together will create a remarkable synergy and open up exciting opportunities for our colleagues," said [Richard Bartlett](#), Managing Director of VIQU Energy Limited t/a Consult Energy. "I'm thrilled to be working with the team at VIQU, and we are enthusiastic about this collaboration, which will enable us to offer even more to our clients." ■



HR SEEKS FLEXIBILITY

Data from Michael Page suggests HR professionals are prioritising flexible working in their prospective job searches more than any other industry. While salary and career progression have traditionally been the most important workforce drivers, the company's [2024 Talent Trends](#) report shows HR workers are seeking flexibility above all – signalling a significant shift in priorities in the sector.

In fact, 73 per cent of HR professionals cite flexible working as the most important factor when considering a new job – well above the UK average of 52 per cent. Salary remains a crucial consideration for 58 per cent of HR workers, while just a fifth (22 per cent) prioritise climbing the career ladder when looking for a new role.

According to the report, today's HR professionals are focusing on personal satisfaction and work-life balance over securing more senior positions that may increase their workload. As attitudes shift from traditional 'linear' career trajectories, HR professionals remain receptive to change, with 90 per cent open to new opportunities and 50 per cent actively seeking them. Notably, 38 per cent of those in HR who have started a new job within the last year are already contemplating further moves.

As the talent landscape in HR continues to be highly competitive, it is essential that business leaders find a way to balance fulfilling their business needs with meeting employee ambitions for upward mobility, and, crucially, maintaining a flexible approach.

"Our Talent Trends data reveals a rising trend of 'job hopping', where workers shape their own career paths to better achieve their goals," commented Lucy Spencer, People & Culture Director at PageGroup. "Where loyalty may once have been the most widely accepted route to progression, now 'job hopping' can be an effective strategy for accelerating career growth, often resulting in quicker promotions and pay increases.

"Anyone in a leadership or HR position will know the power of a competitive salary and the opportunity to grow your career," she added. "But what needs to become more engrained, especially when it comes to HR professionals, is an openness to new ways of working and embracing flexibility. Working models that cater to salary demands and personal development while protecting work/life balance will be the most successful. This approach is what today's HR professionals are crying out for, helping to secure talent for a long-term future."

To explore more insights from Michael Page's 2024 Talent Trends report, read more [here](#). ■

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BOOMER ALERT

Beatrice Miano, Public Affairs Advisor, WEC on why the world of work needs to catch up with the young.

Demographics in the workplace are undergoing a significant change. Gen Z is expected to surpass the Baby Boomers in the full-time workforce, with Millennials set to dominate the labour market for years to come. It's clear that the future of the workforce lies with the younger generation, and it's crucial for employers and policymakers to recognise and address their needs and priorities. Let's look at which barriers still hinder youth employment and how HR services professionals can help young people acquire the skills they need to have the work they want. >



One significant issue is the disconnect between the priorities of younger workers and the policies created by older decision-makers, whether legislators or employers. This disparity is often caused by a misconception of the values and preferences of younger workers.

Flexibility fundamental

Amongst those preferences, flexibility is raised as a top priority. A 2022 [LinkedIn survey](#) found that Gen Z workers were the cohort most likely to have left a role owing to a perceived lack of flexibility (72 per cent fell into this category, compared with 69 per cent of Millennials; 53 per cent of Gen X; and 59 per cent of Boomers). As a US [report by McKinsey](#) found, the desire for flexibility is also part of the reason why 18-24-year-olds are more likely than other age groups to work multiple jobs (25 per cent, compared with 16 per cent across all other age groups).

Offering diverse forms of work is, therefore, a must if employers want to be attractive to a younger workforce. The conversation around employment, however, often presents a false choice between traditional full-time roles and flexible temporary work. McKinsey found that young people with multiple jobs chose to do so because they enjoy the variety of work (28 per cent). Similarly, [research by Deloitte](#) found that, while money was the primary driver for Gen Z and Millennials taking on second jobs, substantial numbers also did so for other reasons, including to monetise a hobby or pastime; to provide them with a change in focus; and to expand their networks.

Companies are increasingly recognising the value of offering diverse forms of work as well as providing benefits and development opportunities to all employees, regardless of their contract type. [A survey we conducted with FT Longitude amongst more than 700 senior executives](#) shows that 59 per cent of employers offer training opportunities to agency workers while 46 per cent offer job-rotation opportunities. Such considerations can help meet young people's appetite for self-development and dynamic career paths.

Mind the Gap: Stepping from School to the Workplace

Another critical point of disconnect is between the world of education and the world of work. Employers often mention that certain soft skills are not being sufficiently developed in young people when they arrive in the labour market. Travi, the training fund established by the social partners of the agency work sector in Belgium, developed the "[Test Your Selfie](#)" online tool. Through a gamified format, it enables young job seekers to test nine soft skills that employers consider essential and helps them identify their strengths and weaknesses so that they can work on developing further. Travi's training tool is now even available to schoolteachers for classroom use. It was recently presented as a best practice for training through social dialogue in [a workshop with trade union representatives](#) from all across Europe. >

A recent research by the International Labour Organisation and the World Bank on youth-focused active labour market programmes found that key design features of effective programmes include soft skills training and certification. That research also says that youth entrepreneurship and training programmes have the largest impact. These programmes deliver the skills, work experience, or financial support needed to enter employment.

What young talents often miss is simply some guidance. The HR services sector has a long track record in supporting young people on the employment pathway. 50 per cent of agency workers are under 30 years old, and 20 per cent, on average, are students.

Temporary work offers ideal experience

Working through a temporary work agency is a great way to gain first work experience and the essential 'on-the-job' skills. A study quoted in a comparative study by Gi Group on youth and work demonstrates this by showing that young temporary agency work employees, compared to young people with the same individual characteristics but directly employed by a company, reach a higher probability of remaining employed than those not recruited through an agency (+6.8 per cent). Moreover, from a long-term perspective, the positive effect also emerges in the greater probability of being employed with an open-ended contract (+3.9 per cent).

Employers are waking up to the mindset changes of the young people they are trying to attract, but they are still bound to operate by legal frameworks that sometimes feel ill-designed to accommodate the preferences of younger workers. Policymakers around the world could do more to meet those needs, and bring forward rules that support the development of more flexible job markets. This could help younger workers to find the diverse and rewarding opportunities that they seek. ■





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Awards Ceremony: 20 November

The Steel Yard, London

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Principal Recruitment
Technology Ltd – T/A
Principal Education
VHR

Best Employer Brand

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Amoria Group
Oliver Sanderson Group Plc
SONDR
Source Group International

Best Marketing Campaign

Buchanan Staffing Group
Core Recruiter
Male Childcare & Teaching Jobs
Placing Faces
Source Group International

Best Permanent Consultant

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Chambers
Steve Maples of Alchemy
Global Talent Solutions
Alex Alves-Khan of Metric
Search
Regan Downes of Nexus
Search Ltd
Mark Sitton of TPF
Recruitment

Best Temporary Consultant



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EarthStream Global
(Xcede Group)
Kris Braakensiek of ersg
Alex Roberts of Hunter
Gatherer AHP Resourcing
Jennifer Pike of Jameson
Legal
Alex Waterhouse of V7
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Pivotal Partners
Recflex Ltd
Spartan Recruitment Ltd

Best Newcomer

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RF Recruitment
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Kite Human Capital
Talent Drive Ltd
Vetted Recruitment
VHR

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BLUEPRINT FOR A COMPLIANT ECONOMY

Crawford Temple is CEO and founder of Professional Passport, discusses Labour's promise to tackle tax avoidance and level the playing field.

A man in a pinstripe vest and white shirt is holding a circular sign that says "OUR VALUES". The sign is black with white text. The man's hands are visible, holding the sign from the sides. The background is a light, neutral color.

OUR
VALUES

The new Labour government is facing many challenges but one critical challenge that has long plagued the UK economy stands out from the rest: widespread tax avoidance. Tax avoidance not only drains billions from the public purse but also creates an unfair playing field that penalises compliant businesses and honest workers. >



During the election campaign, Labour said it would take action to stamp out abuse of the tax system with the aim of recovering £5bn in unpaid taxes within the next five years. Before being elected, Labour also said it would provide up to £555m of new funding for HMRC as part of its tax evasion crackdown, set out in a document entitled Labour's Plan to Close the Tax Gap.

The Chancellor also recently announced plans to invest in HMRC's compliance work, hiring around 5,000 additional staff to recover more tax revenues. It's all promising stuff with good intentions but action speaks louder than words.

The Conservative government's sticking plaster approach has proven woefully inadequate in addressing this complex issue over the years. Labour must now develop a robust, multifaceted strategy to combat tax avoidance and foster a compliant market. This isn't just about plugging holes in the public finances – it's about creating a fair and sustainable 21st-century workplace that benefits all.

For too long, successive Conservative governments have relied on piecemeal reforms and half-measures to tackle tax avoidance. This approach, characterised by reactive policies and temporary fixes, has failed to address the root causes of the problem. High-profile cases of corporate tax avoidance continue to make headlines, while sophisticated schemes targeting individual contractors and gig economy workers persist. The result is a system that remains riddled with loopholes, allowing unscrupulous operators to skirt the system while compliant businesses and workers bear an unfair burden.

Strengthening HMRC's Enforcement Capabilities

Labour's first priority should be to significantly bolster HMRC's ability to identify, investigate, and prosecute tax avoiders. This means not just increasing funding, as they've already proposed, but also fundamentally transforming how HMRC operates. The creation of specialised task forces focused on high-risk sectors and complex avoidance schemes would allow for targeted, efficient enforcement. These teams would be equipped with advanced data analytics and AI systems to detect patterns of avoidance that might escape human notice.

Moreover, establishing a rapid response unit within HMRC would enable swift action against newly identified schemes, closing loopholes before they can be widely exploited. This proactive approach should be coupled with a zero-tolerance policy for repeat offenders, featuring severe financial penalties and potential criminal charges. By demonstrating that tax avoidance carries real, significant consequences, Labour can begin to shift the risk-reward calculation for those considering such schemes. >

Targeting the Architects of Avoidance

To truly level the playing field, Labour must focus on those who design and promote tax avoidance schemes. This means introducing personal liability for directors of companies that promote or facilitate tax avoidance. By holding individuals accountable, rather than just corporate entities, Labour can create a powerful deterrent against the creation of new avoidance schemes.

Creating a publicly accessible register of individuals and companies involved in designing or promoting avoidance schemes would add an element of public accountability and make it easier for businesses and individuals to avoid working with known bad actors. This could be coupled with lifetime bans from financial services for repeat offenders, effectively removing them from the industry altogether.

Collaboration with professional bodies is also crucial. Labour should work with organisations representing accountants, lawyers, and financial advisors to strike off members who assist in creating abusive schemes. This approach recognises that tackling tax avoidance requires a whole-of-society effort, not just government action.

Reforming the Umbrella Company Sector

The umbrella company market has become a hotbed of non-compliance and avoidance. Labour must implement a robust licensing system for umbrella companies, with strict compliance requirements. This should be backed by regular audits, with swift action taken against those found to be non-compliant.

To protect workers, Labour should mandate clear, standardized information for contractors about their pay and tax deductions. This could take the form of a standardised 'pay and deductions' statement that all umbrella companies must use, making it easier for workers to understand their financial situation and spot potential irregularities.

One new form of potentially fraudulent payment practice known as 'Ghost Payroll' has recently been identified. This scheme, which attempts to circumvent proper tax procedures, poses significant risks to unsuspecting contractors who may inadvertently become involved. >





Ghost Payroll schemes typically manifest in two forms:

1. A contractor's apparent employer funnels payments through a secondary company, often undisclosed in the employment contract.
2. The employing company operates a separate, hidden payroll to conceal the true taxable income of its contractors.

Red flags include discrepancies between contract details and actual payment sources, or payslips showing taxable pay at or near the National Minimum Wage despite higher assignment rates. Many contractors are introduced to these schemes through 'umbrella brokers' marketing themselves as providing access to the highest returning umbrella providers. In the majority of cases, they are no more than a front-to-market disguised remuneration scheme on behalf of promoters. As one scheme gets shut the contractor receives a call and is told to move to a different provider, typically also operating a disguised remuneration scheme.

It is essential to remember that all umbrella companies should provide around the same returns and fluctuations in take-home pay should be minimal. If a contractor is offered higher returns this should be a warning sign to get out of the scheme.

Labour should also consider introducing joint liability for end clients and agencies using non-compliant umbrellas. This would incentivise companies throughout the supply chain to ensure they're working with reputable, compliant umbrella companies.

Leveraging Technology for Compliance

In the digital age, technology must be at the forefront of efforts to combat tax avoidance. Labour should fully utilise Real Time Information (RTI) and Intermediary Reporting data to identify discrepancies and potential avoidance. This could involve creating advanced analytics systems that can flag suspicious patterns in real time, allowing for rapid investigation and action.

Implementing blockchain or similar technologies could create an immutable audit trail of financial transactions, making it much harder to hide or disguise avoidance schemes. Labour should also consider developing APIs that allow for real-time verification of a company's tax compliance status, making it easier for businesses to ensure they're working with compliant partners.

Conclusion

The time for half-measures and delayed action is over. If Labour is serious about building a truly compliant economy, they must be prepared to take bold, decisive steps from day one. Only through a holistic approach that combines robust enforcement, smart legislation, and supportive measures for compliant businesses can we hope to create an economy that works for everyone, not just those clever enough to exploit the system's weaknesses. ■

THE CHALLENGE OF BUSINESS

Graham Goodwin, founder of boutique recruitment investment specialist Jigsaw Equity says being a brilliant recruiter doesn't mean you can run a great recruitment firm.



Many high-performing recruitment consultants have thought they could go it alone. The temptation to see your financial contribution to your firm as evidence that you can do better outside its parameters is hard to resist. I know – I've been there – and I did make the transition from consultant to successful firm founder, but the path was littered with tripwires and hazards. It took a long time to get the shift right from business development and delivery to strategic leadership and business building, and plenty of lessons were learned along the way. >



STARTUP

There's a world of difference between being a stand-out recruiter and running a successful firm. Being your firm's top performer doesn't mean you'll thrive if you go it alone. So, what elements did I find are vital for growing and running a great firm?

1. A nose for business

Having a nose for business is not the same as having a nose for placements. This was one of the first lessons I learned. Without business know-how, you will struggle to make the decisions that can propel you from solo enterprise to thriving business founder.

Getting the business basics in place is fundamental. You should start with the building blocks – good financial advice, commercial insight and an understanding of your brand identity and sector differentiation. With these in place, you are in a stronger place to build upwards.

Recruitment is all about people, and building your own team of trusted employees is vital. By bringing great people on board, you can turbocharge your rate of success, but ramping up your resources comes with a risk. Get the balance wrong, and you can quickly end up with a spiralling salary bill that can put an end to your burgeoning business.

Business forecasting is the most important tool for avoiding a staffing catastrophe. Learn how to forecast your income properly so that you can allocate and reallocate

resources accordingly to minimise risk and manage the inevitable peaks and troughs in your income.

2. Managing through adversity

Adversity is something of a constant in business. Over the past three decades, we have seen war, recession, Covid, inflation, turbulent politics and – of course – Brexit. Calm waters are something of a rarity, and you will need to learn to weather the storm regardless of what's causing it.

I was four years into my search firm, GatenbySanderson, when the 2008 recession started. It could have been curtains for us, but instead, we were able to pivot to rise to its challenges and emerge from the recession stronger and more profitable than when it started.

Keeping a business in good financial shape is important. You should always have cash reserves to cover crises and listen to the advice of those around you. More important is the ability to recognise what's happening in a timely way – do not bury your head in the sand. It's vital that you take action promptly and decisively.

Economic challenges present an opportunity that few businesses seize. Grasp the chance to be creative, get ahead of your competition and take advantage of clients' new needs. >

3. A solid dose of humility

Running a business requires you to recognise your strengths and weaknesses. If you recognise your weak areas and then find outstanding people who thrive there, your weaknesses will start to disappear. Doing this requires you to have the self-awareness to spot your gaps and the humility required to leave the ego at home.

When you're starting out, getting the right people alongside you is one of the most important first steps you will take. Hire the best people you can find, give them confidence in you and your firm and excite them about the future. You need to trust these people to do the day job so that you can take charge of the long-term security of the firm.

Working with external partners and experts is a great way to teach yourself about business. Understanding your pitfalls as you move from fee-earner to MD is a big lesson in humility, and taking advice from trusted external parties is one of the fastest ways to see where your gaps in knowledge lie.

4. Resilience and gumption

All burgeoning new firms have ambitions to succeed, but often, people underestimate quite how tough it is at the top. The change in pressure can be unprecedented – think about the worst pressure you feel as a fee-earner and quadruple it! You will need to find ways to manage the stress so you don't burn out.

Find support. Mentors can help, and trusted family and friends can lend a sympathetic ear. Exercise and fresh air are hugely valuable and can help you keep a sense of perspective – more so than a glass or two of red wine, anyway! The pressure you will face over years of growth and natural economic cycles will be enormous, so building your healthy coping strategies is important.

Be honest with yourself and with your team, but you must also retain a sense of calm. Panic at the top levels is contagious and can run rampant through a business. As a leader, all eyes will be on you to provide the strategy and direction.

The most significant shift you'll need to adjust to when moving from fee-earner to MD is the changing mindset. If you are serious about building a firm for the long-term, you will need to accept help, bring on other fee-earners to do the leg-work and switch your mindset to one of long-term leadership. ■

EQUAL, NOT THE SAME

Sheri Hughes, Global DE&I & Social Impact Director at PageGroup on how PageGroup prioritises gender equality in the workplace.

At PageGroup, we're honoured to have recently joined the prestigious ranks of The Times' Top 50 Employers for Gender Equality 2024 for the third time, recognising our ongoing commitment to making gender equality a priority in the workplace. PageGroup has long prioritised gender equality, inclusion, and belonging, however, as a result of some of our more recent policy updates, we've been able to supercharge our ability to create positive change for our colleagues from all walks of life. >



What is the background?

As Global DE&I & Social Impact Director at PageGroup, I'm passionate about ensuring our business approaches gender equality conscientiously and that DE&I policies are enshrined within our overarching company policies.

To do this, we must first lead by example. PageGroup stands at the forefront of the global recruitment industry, and we challenge ourselves to use that position to drive positive change. Gender equality has been a dedicated focus for our internal DE&I teams, as we strive to exceed expectations and create equity and opportunity for all.

With over 8,000 professionals worldwide, PageGroup is committed to helping create environments where every individual is empowered, and diversity is celebrated. Our core mission is to change lives by matching great talent with great opportunities, thereby driving the success of businesses and fulfilling the career aspirations of job seekers.

Here in the UK, we take pride in achieving gender parity, with more than half of our workforce and managerial positions held by women, reflecting our dedication to equality and representation at all levels.

How did we get here?

Transparency is vital for any business if gender equality is the goal. Since 2018, we've publicly reported on our gender pay gap at PageGroup and we engaged in the UN Global Compact Target Gender Equality Accelerator Programme in 2022, which saw us achieve Leader status in 2023. Our efforts have led to significant achievements in increasing female representation in management and leadership roles, as well as improving maternity return rates.

In early 2022, we signed up to the UN Sustainable Development Goal for Gender Equality, committing ourselves to the goal of an even gender split (50:50) at the leadership level by 2030. Since then, we have seen a 3 per cent global increase in our female representation, from 42 per cent to 45 per cent. >

In 2021, we established the Wellbeing Group internally to assist line managers in addressing their teams' challenges, with a focus on health, lifestyle and financial wellbeing. This initiative works alongside our gender equality goals by promoting a supportive work environment for all. This effort is crucial when it comes to retaining talented female colleagues and closing the gender gap, particularly in supporting women returning from maternity leave through flexible work arrangements.

We continuously evolve our approach to parental leave policies, in the knowledge that non-inclusive practices in this area can have a serious impact on employees' professional and personal lives.

In doing so, we are setting industry-leading standards at PageGroup for maternity, paternity, shared parental and adoption leave so that we are inclusive to all genders who care for others. These improvements support all parents and carers to have more choices when it comes to being a working parent.

Our recruitment processes are consciously designed to be intersectional. We address disparities across levels and functions so we can better build a workforce that reflects the diversity of gender, LGBTQ+ identities and ethnic backgrounds. This commitment is demonstrated via programmes such as

our #IAmRemarkable workshops and the establishment of cross-regional Senior Female Leaders Networks. We have also worked with social media creators to attract a diverse range of candidates to our business by using various channels.

What are the results?

The success of our gender diversity strategies is evident in the increased representation of women in leadership roles, with female Operational Managers rising from 50 per cent in 2021 to 57 per cent in 2023, and female Operational Directors from 44 per cent in 2021 to 46 per cent in 2023. Additionally, our board composition is now 46 per cent female, and we boast a 92 per cent return rate for maternity leave, highlighting our success in creating a supportive environment for career progression.

Our approach to combatting non-inclusive behaviours is integral to our DE&I strategy. By focusing on leadership behaviours and training, creating a culture of safety, and implementing responsive policies, we ensure that inclusivity is not just a policy but a lived experience. Our dedication to this cause is evident in our achievements and ongoing efforts to exceed inclusivity standards, positioning us as a leader in promoting a respectful, diverse, and inclusive workplace. >





Advice to others

Gender equality isn't a 'nice to have'; it's a must for any modern business, but getting there can be confusing, with conflicting reports on best practices and steps to take. At PageGroup, we have the benefit of being a global company with large teams ready and able to take on the responsibility of championing and executing gender equality activity. However, our efforts can be replicated by any business looking to be more inclusive.

Remember, there isn't a magic wand, and trial and error will be part and parcel of any internal processes aimed at improving gender equality. One area I take pride in at PageGroup is the continuous feedback we receive from colleagues. If you aren't speaking to your employees, you'll never really understand where the challenges are and what they need from you.

Feedback doesn't have to be a daunting email or a formal sit-down meeting. At PageGroup, we have had Shadow Board and reverse mentoring programmes since 2020, facilitating safe spaces and open dialogue to understand employee grievances and respond promptly. Post-training evaluations can also help identify weak spots in policies and practices, and regular (ideally quarterly) surveys offer insight straight from the source.

The crux of my advice here is to be open to feedback – and be ready to accept failings and shortcomings as you work towards a more equal workplace. Change doesn't happen overnight, but not listening to or disregarding negative comments will only lead to a widening gap between what leaders and employees want and need. ■

GO WITH THE FLOW

Leigh Anderson, Managing Director of Bis Henderson Recruitment discusses streamlining recruitment through Integration and communication

When recruiting in today's extremely competitive job market, bottlenecks and poor communication could mean losing your top applicants and building a negative reputation among candidates. In other words, it could mean only hiring the candidates who will 'take what they can get', which will ripple negatively throughout your organisation, as employees are the heart of any business. >



This makes a seamless, efficient recruitment process crucial. In 2024, modern solutions are needed to get this right, as there is simply too much data for recruiters to go through to [find top talent](#). Effective communication and modern integration are, therefore, needed.

Recruiters often face frustration when systems fail to integrate, leading to inefficiencies, increased workloads and various slips through the cracks. So, let's explore the importance of communication, the role of technology, and what an integrated recruitment system can do for your business.

The Impact of Communication on Recruitment

Clear and consistent communication in recruitment ensures that all parties involved – candidates, recruiters, and hiring managers – are on the same page. It's about more than just letting the candidate know whether they're moving on to the next step or not; communication makes the entire recruitment process efficient and transparent to everyone involved.

For example, timely feedback keeps candidates engaged and reduces the likelihood of losing top talent to competitors. When candidates feel informed and valued, they are more likely to have a positive perception of the company, even if they are not actually selected for the position. This positive experience, which will likely be discussed with their network online or in person, can lead to a stronger employer brand and a larger pool of high-quality candidates for future openings.

Simultaneously, clear communication between recruiters and managers ensures that job requirements and candidate expectations are aligned, minimising mismatches and speeding up the decision-making process.


The Use of Tech to Streamline Recruitment

There is no need to gather candidates in a room or type up individual rejection emails. Technology can now simplify all the relevant processes. With AI, machine learning, and language processing, repetitive tasks can be a thing of the past. That includes job posting, candidate screening, management, and more.

How, you ask? Here are several tools that can facilitate the enhanced communication we're after:

- 1. Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS):** ATS platforms streamline the recruitment process by centralising candidate information and communication. Recruiters can track application statuses, schedule interviews, and send automated updates to candidates, ensuring everyone is informed at each stage. >

RECRUITMENT

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- 2. Candidate Portals:** These portals provide a dedicated space where candidates can check their application status, receive messages, and access necessary documents. This transparency keeps candidates engaged and informed, reducing anxiety and improving their overall experience with your company.
 - 3. Chatbots:** Even with the seamless technologies mentioned above, real-time communication is still important. Chatbots can answer common candidate queries, schedule interviews, and provide instant updates, ensuring that candidates receive timely information without the need for direct human intervention.

Candidate Sourcing and Assessment with AI, ML, and Language Processing Integration

These technologies aren't only useful after you've found your candidates – they can help your organisation gain access to top talent in the first place. Digital job boards, social media, and candidate databases can help recruiters reach a much broader audience. Data-driven methods such as pre-employment testing, video interviews, and skill tests also provide a more accurate evaluation of candidates' abilities than a biased recruiter, ensuring a better fit for the role.

Also, in the fraction of the time it would take a person, AI-powered tools can scan vast amounts of data across multiple platforms, including social media, job boards, and professional networks, identifying potential candidates who match the job requirements. These tools can analyse candidates' online presence, work history, and professional endorsements/references to create a comprehensive profile, making recruiters' jobs far simpler and likely more successful.

AI and ML improve candidate assessment by providing data-driven insights, instead of relying on human opinion. Pre-employment testing platforms use AI to evaluate candidates' cognitive abilities, personality traits, and **job-specific skills**. These assessments are more reliable and less biased than manual reviews, offering a more accurate picture of a candidate's potential. >

For example, as intimidating as this may be to some, AI-driven video interview platforms can analyse candidates' facial expressions, tone of voice, and word choice to assess soft skills and cultural fit. These platforms use natural language processing (NLP) to evaluate responses, ensuring that candidates are judged consistently and objectively.

NLP is also useful in parsing and understanding large volumes of text data. In recruitment, NLP can be applied to scan resumes, cover letters, and even social media profiles to identify keywords and phrases that match job descriptions. This automation speeds up the initial screening process and ensures no qualified candidate is overlooked due to human error or bias.

Moreover, NLP-powered chatbots can interact with candidates in real-time, answer queries, provide updates, and even conduct preliminary interviews. These chatbots use sophisticated language models to understand and respond to candidates, offering a personalised experience that keeps candidates engaged and informed through the recruitment process, which can otherwise become disheartening.

Achieving the Ideal Flow of Data and Information

Despite its benefits, an integrated system can cause recruiters some difficulty. Getting the flow of data and information right means ensuring all parts of the recruitment process are seamlessly connected. This can be a significant challenge when systems don't talk to each other or require extensive work to integrate. Double-entering details into a system is time-consuming and increases the likelihood of errors.

Fortunately, integration platforms can connect disparate systems, allowing data to flow freely between them. For example, integrating an ATS with other HR tools ensures that candidate information entered into one system is automatically updated across all platforms. This not only saves time but also reduces the risk of errors and inconsistencies.

Using APIs can also facilitate integration, enabling different systems to communicate and share data seamlessly. This gives recruiters a holistic view of the process, making it easier to track candidates, schedule interviews, and manage communications.

In summary, integrating modern technologies into recruitment processes can eliminate inefficiencies, reduce manual work, and ensure a smooth flow of data and information. By embracing these advancements, recruiters can enhance their processes, improve candidate experiences, and achieve better hiring outcomes. It's a win-win-win situation.

Bis Henderson Recruitment can be found here: [Bis Henderson Recruitment](#). ■

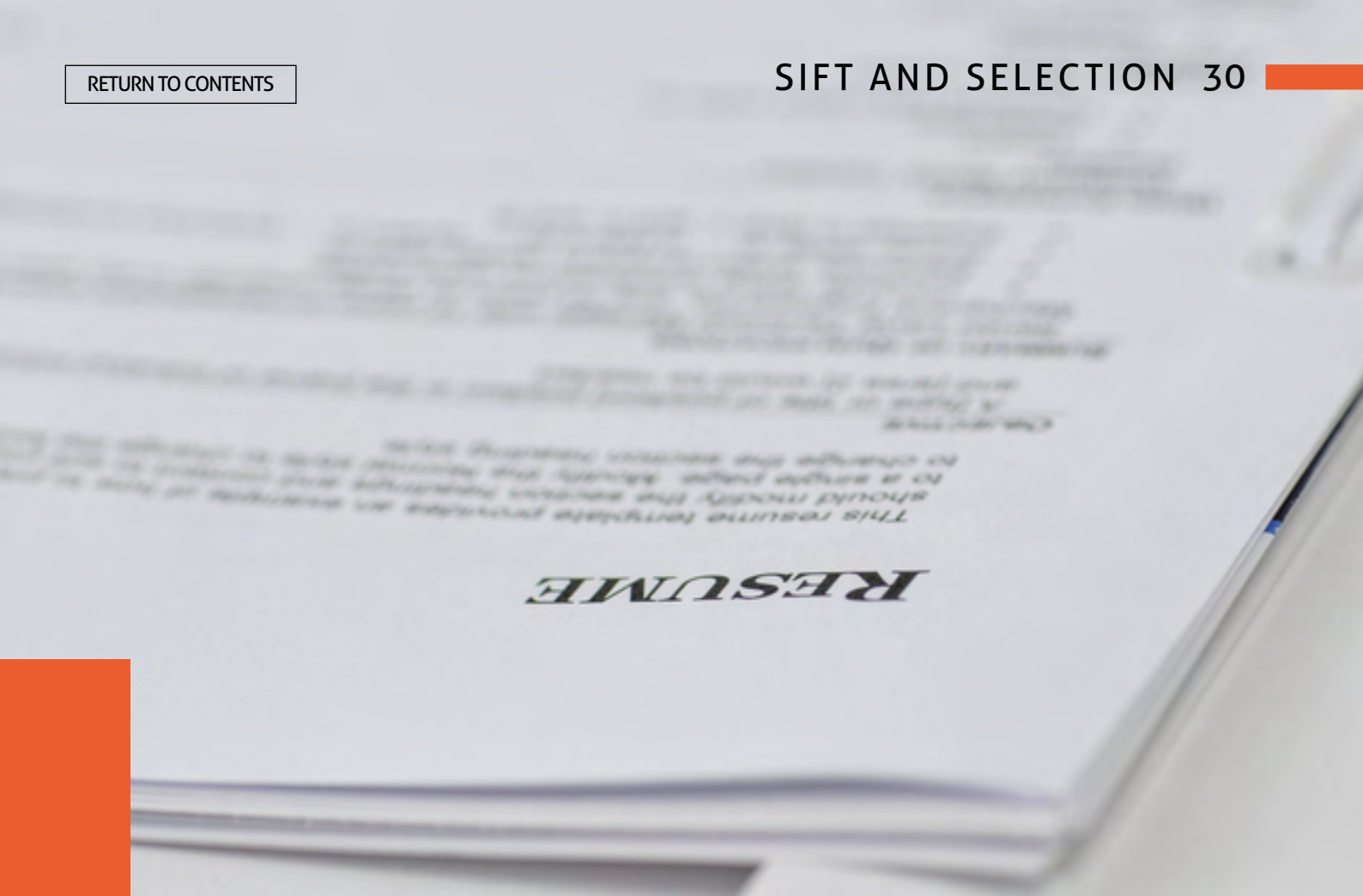


UNLIMITING CHOICE

Kelly Tucker, Founder of HR Star, shares insight into the role of technology in modern recruitment, and how to effectively sift through and select the right candidates.



In today's fast-paced business environment, the recruitment process has significantly evolved, integrating sophisticated technologies to improve efficiency and accuracy. Leveraging technology for sifting and selecting candidates has become a cornerstone of modern HR practices, allowing companies to identify the best talent quickly and effectively. Using my experience of heading up a HR and recruitment consultancy, I'm sharing insight into how far technology can forecast a candidate's readiness, the most effective ways to test and sift candidates, and how recruiters can balance technology use while addressing concerns about bias. >



RESUME

Predictive analytics and readiness forecasting

One of the significant advancements in recruitment technology, and one that we're seeing a lot, is the use of predictive analytics. By analysing historical data and applying machine learning algorithms, companies can forecast a candidate's success in a role based on their past performance, educational background, and relevant experience. This approach offers a data-driven prediction of how well a candidate might perform, reducing the guesswork traditionally associated with hiring.

Automated skill assessments are another powerful tool in predicting readiness, evaluating both technical and soft skills, in order to provide a comprehensive view of a candidate's capabilities.

AI-driven behavioural analysis further enhances this process by examining candidates' responses during interviews, body language, and communication styles to gauge cultural fit and overall readiness.

Job matching algorithms take this a step further by aligning candidate profiles with job requirements. These advanced algorithms consider factors such as skill sets, experience, and career trajectory, ensuring that the candidates who make it to the interview stage are highly likely to be a good fit for the position.

Sifting and testing candidates

When faced with a large volume of applicants, traditional methods of sifting through CVs can be time-consuming and inefficient. Technology provides several effective solutions to streamline this process.

Automated CV screening tools, powered by AI, can quickly scan and shortlist resumes based on predefined criteria such as skills, experience, and education. This not only saves time, but also ensures that no potentially good candidate is overlooked. ➤

Online assessments are also invaluable in the initial stages of candidate evaluation. These assessments can include technical tests, aptitude tests, and even personality assessments, giving recruiters a clear picture of a candidate's suitability before they are invited for an interview. By filtering candidates through these assessments, companies can focus their efforts on the most promising applicants.

AI chatbots are another innovative tool, capable of conducting preliminary interviews and answering candidates' queries. This interaction helps streamline the initial screening process, ensuring that only those candidates who pass this stage are considered for further evaluation.

One human aspect that is highly effective over an AI implemented approach is employee referral programmes. Employees can recommend candidates from their network, often leading to higher quality hires as referred candidates typically align well with the company culture and expectations.

Addressing bias

While technology offers numerous benefits in the recruitment process, I do have concerns about bias remaining. It's crucial for recruiters to ensure that the AI algorithms they use are transparent and explainable. Understanding how these algorithms make decisions allows recruiters to identify and mitigate potential biases.

Regularly auditing AI tools is essential; by continuously monitoring and adjusting algorithms, companies can reduce discriminatory practices and promote a fair selection process. Combining AI insights with human judgement ensures a balanced approach, where technology supports human and manual processes but does not entirely replace intuition and decision-making. >

A photograph showing a hand with a pointing finger directed at a white rectangular sign. The sign has the word 'HIRING' in large, bold, white capital letters inside a dark rectangular border. Below the word is a thick horizontal dark line. The sign is placed on a dark, textured surface, possibly a table or wall.



AI perfect employee

At HR Star, we've recently been exploring the idea of an 'AI employee' and challenging the perceptions of what it defines as the 'perfect' candidate.

Whilst AI provides a framework for identifying traits that are broadly desirable in the workplace but expecting any individual to show all of these characteristics is an unrealistic expectation. Each person brings their own strengths to a role, and it's about finding the right balance of qualities that fit within the culture and needs of a business. A holistic approach to recruitment ensures inclusivity in the workforce and is reflective of the real world.

We utilise AI tools such as ChatGPT to enhance productivity, but maintain that a human touch is irreplaceable, especially in people management. AI can draft communications, but it cannot convey the empathy or appreciation that human interaction brings. For instance, while ChatGPT can draft a probation completion letter, it lacks the personal touch needed to deliver such messages effectively.

Our experiment with AI-generated imagery to depict the 'perfect employee' revealed underlying societal biases. The generated image presented a stereotypical view, underscoring the need for human intervention to avoid pigeonholing and stereotyping. AI has been developed by people, so biases, whether conscious or unconscious, are innate. It's important then to take people as they come, not on a pre-established definition

While AI can provide valuable insights and streamline processes, the human touch remains irreplaceable in creating a supportive and empathetic workplace. By using technology wisely and ethically, recruiters can build a workforce that is not only technically competent, but also culturally aligned and emotionally intelligent, reflecting the diverse and dynamic nature of the real world. ■

THE NEW HABIT

James Osborne, Co-Founder of The Recruitment Network, casts his eye over the possible and the impossible of AI.



To understand how this whole AI (r)evolution is taking shape across the recruitment sector, you need to first take a step back and look and what's been actually been going on. >


```
ted abstract void doMoreStuff(X x, Y y);
```

```
c void execute() {  
    RETURN TO CONTENTS
```

```
    x = getX();  
    doStuff(x);  
    y = getY();  
    doMoreStuff(x, y);
```

```
    cX(), getY(), etc...;
```

```
ASM_VMX_VHREAD_RDX_RAX    ".byte 0x0f, 0x78, 0xd0"
```

```
_always_inline unsigned long vmcs_readl(unsigned long field)
```

```
unsigned long values;
```

```
asm volatile ( __asm_clear(ASM_VMX_VHREAD_RDX_RAX, "%0")  
               : "=a"(value) : "d"(field) : "cc") ;  
return value;
```

```
ution loc_nalval... 3a, const string...
```

```
olution resu...
```

```
sign, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000
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Let's start with the playing field we've all been working in for the last 18 months.

For many, it has been full of volatility and uncertainty. Not everywhere, and to varying degrees, but nevertheless, it has been a challenging market for the majority. In fact, the only thing we can really be sure about these days is that volatility is now the new norm (the certainty of uncertainty!), so recruitment business owners, recruiters, have to learn how to continuously adapt how they work to whatever the playing field is like.

They have to learn how to both survive and thrive in any market conditions. This is what I refer to as the 'hustle'.

This last year or so, there hasn't really been a choice. I call it a 'backs against the wall' moment, and whilst it can be tough, the resulting outcome tends to be better quality recruiters, more focused processes and more optimised businesses.

Smaller? Perhaps. More efficient, more profitable? Typically yes.

We've reduced unnecessary resource and removed ineffective headcount. We stuck to our guns with our pricing, but we increased our value proposition to drive up margins. We've pivoted our market focus where we had to and got closer to the clients we wanted to keep whilst walking away from the clients who showed no loyalty.

We refocused our attentions from the top of our P&Ls down to profit and cashflow and we changed our expectations of what good should look like in this current market and what high performance should look like. We delivered nothing but celebrity service to our clients and candidates to generate more loyalty, and we made strategic BD and Account Penetration a cross-company obsession.

With that in mind, we built and sold solutions that really made a difference to our customers, not regurgitated products that look good on a brochure, and we put a whole new value on our time.

But most importantly, we ensured our businesses can thrive in unpredictable conditions by optimising our processes and embracing (new) technologies... including AI.

We had to. >



Where does AI fit in?

But the real question now, with markets turning and far more positive sentiment across the industry, is whether AI really is just another new fad, a new shiny thing, that will come and go like so many before.

An industry disruptor? That might just be a bit over the top (for now), but a market enabler? I very much think so... and this is exciting. Really exciting.

Across TRN, we been running with the mantra that recruiters will not be replaced by AI, but they will be replaced by other recruiters who are using AI properly, for two fundamental reasons – necessity and habit.

It has become a necessity for many, because our businesses quite simply have been running at a sub-optimal level for too long – fine when the markets are running hot, you can get away with it, but when they turn and soften, then the cracks and inefficiencies become exposed.

It's like that in all our businesses, but the effect is greater when the markets are hit harder and more suddenly.

But why now are we all latching on to AI? This all down to new habit formation.

New habits

The major tech firms, who are responsible for dictating new trends and influencing our daily behaviours are recreating our everyday user habits.

AI is now no longer a bolt-on to the things we use but is embedded into just about every activity we do, so the new reality is you are now using AI all the time.

Think just how many times AI is in play when you commute to work, or you go on holiday, or when you're at home watching TV, or you go shopping. New habits forming around you, that you didn't even realise.

Your Microsoft computer will be Copilot Plus PCs with built-in AI hardware, your new iPhone will have Apple Intelligence running every action you take as soon as the AI face recognition lets you in and you will never search for anything again in the same way once Google's Project Astra is released later this year.

All habits. The new norm... whether you like it or not. >

The road ahead for recruiters

In a recent poll we ran across the recruitment sector, over half the recruitment leaders we surveyed do not have a clear plan on how they intend to use AI and automation and only 7% actually feel like they are fully utilising the tech they have invested in.

We are in the 'maggie' part of this new dawn in how we work – playing with a bunch of shiny new AI tools that (AI generated, of course!) adverts are subtly dropping in front of us, building disjointed AI tech stacks and actually creating more confusion than clarity. More cost than ROI. More inefficiency.

I am sorry, but downloading the free version of ChatGPT on your phone doesn't automatically make you an AI pro! In fact, when I spoke at a recruitment event the other day, most of the people in the room hadn't even used the 'clone' function of ChatGPT yet, let alone were able to build proper advanced prompts.

So, if you want this to be an enabler for your business, not a distraction. stop all the playing and start by building a well-defined AI and automation strategy before you do anything.

Remember, if there are any rule-based, manual tasks that you currently do in your business that are either high volume or repetitive, then it is more than likely that AI can now do that for you.

Project Automate

This is why we launched Project Automate™ across the TRN community earlier this year – a simple process that builds an AI strategy for a recruitment business from the ground up.

It has a very clear focus, and so should we all, around using Generative AI to reduce wastage in our businesses whilst driving up productivity, to significantly amplify what a recruiter can do in a typical working day and to align the candidate and client user experience to those new habits we talked about previously.

Here are four questions from Project Automate™ to get you started on that journey:

- How can I engage with both active and passive candidates, more regularly and in a way that is more aligned to how they want to be engaged with?
- How can I get closer to my target demographic of customers with greater frequency and most importantly, with more human interactivity (a recruiter's USP in this market)?
- How can I increase the efficiency, outputs and therefore my performance expectations of our recruiters within the business?
- How can I make my business more efficient and more streamlined whilst elongating your delivery capability (think a 24/7 business, always on)?

Let's be clear. AI will not replace recruiters, but it will play a big part in managing the heavy lifting that recruiters have to do every day and implemented correctly, it will supercharge our ability to do more of the human side of recruitment. That's exciting.

Let's also be clear. AI is not a fad, it is now a habit. ■



recruiter moves.

recruiters find your next move.



search postcode, town or city



search

match
your ambition

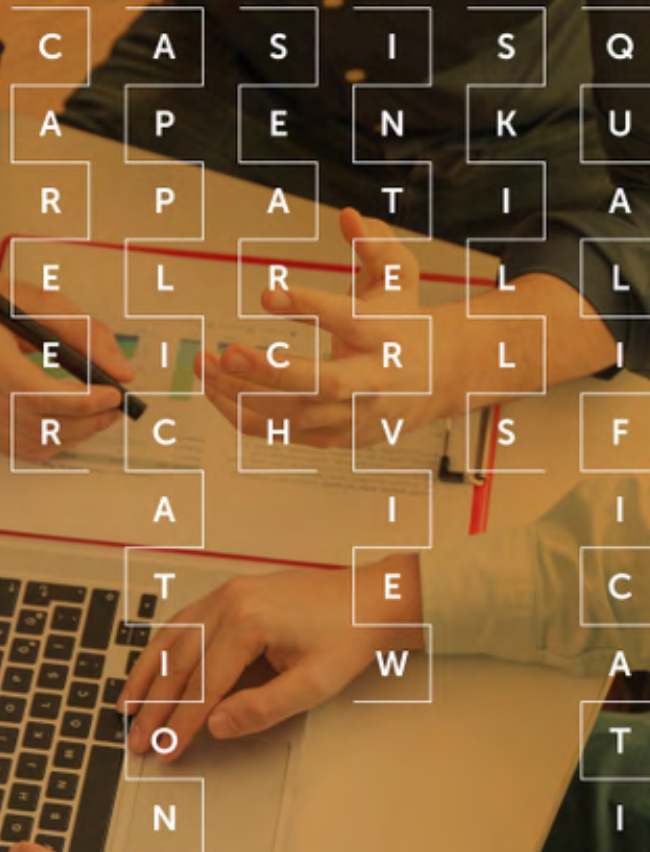
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ON THE ASCENT

Ascent Group uses more than 16 tech tools to enhance client and candidate satisfaction, streamline consultant tasks, support internal hiring, and save time. Shayne Simpson, Group Managing Director, Ascent Group has overseen this approach.

JOB SEARCH



Shayne Simpson, Group Managing Director, has been diligently expanding Ascent's tech stack since the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on the company's future direction, and responding to what works for the business and what doesn't.

By collaborating closely with tech partners, Ascent Group has built a customised suite of technologies that drive efficiency and success. Now extending their network of technology in new areas for 2024 and beyond, we look closely at their journey, including initial motivations, identifying gaps in existing practices, and exploring innovative DE&I tools.

Additionally, they address potential challenges, strategies to overcome them, and share insights on the future direction of technology at Ascent Group. >



Ascent Group's technology & how they use it

Ascent Group leverages a mix of AI and automation to deliver a comprehensive service to consultants, candidates, and clients. Their technology works seamlessly in the background, performing tasks like data cleansing every 90 days and automatching candidates to roles, even when consultants are away from their desks.

Beyond these functions, Ascent Group employs technology to promote diversity within their internal team and support their clients in achieving the same. They use A/B testing to identify the most effective methods for attracting and hiring a diverse workforce. This approach allows them to analyse the gender distribution within a business and provide detailed Recruitment Activity Reports. These reports highlight the diversity of a business and offer actionable insights for improvement, extending Ascent Group's recruitment services well beyond the average offering.

Using AI, the RIGHT way

Speaking of AI, many businesses hesitate to use it, often because they don't know where to start or fear they might use it incorrectly. However, with Shayne's leadership, Ascent Group confidently embraces AI, integrating it into many of their tech practices while still valuing traditional recruitment methods.

Rather than removing the human element from the hiring process, AI enhances it by

giving consultants more time to make phone calls or visit clients in person. This approach ensures that AI supports their work rather than replaces it, a balance that many businesses struggle to achieve.

By relying on AI to handle routine tasks, Ascent Group maintains the essence of their work and avoids the common pitfall of depending on AI to perform tasks poorly.

Exploring DE&I tools

In 2024, Ascent Group is enhancing its DE&I efforts by exploring new AI-powered tools and platforms that integrate with their existing CRM system. These tools provide insights for informed diversity decisions, helping Ascent Group and their clients move beyond verbal commitments, identify improvement areas, and make strategic hiring decisions.

Ascent already collaborates closely with clients to address unconscious bias and support their DE&I journeys, leveraging tools to gain a competitive advantage in fostering diverse teams.

"Implementing tools with diversity in mind aligns with our goal of diversifying our team and assisting clients in doing the same," says Shayne, "while also seeking efficient ways to streamline our efforts, particularly through AI. DE&I initiatives often involve extensive data gathering, and these tools help simplify this process, saving valuable time and resources." >



Predictions of implementation

Expecting to see improvements in cultural fit, Ascent Group aim to continue to retain top talent. As a group of six brands, these tools are essential for staying focused on what truly matters and for evaluating cultural fit beyond traditional metrics.

They also anticipate to further save time and costs. Currently saving about 15 hours per consultant per week with the existing stack, Ascent expect to see these savings increase as they streamline their data gathering processes.

Concerns of implementation

When it comes to implementing any type of technology, resource allocation is a common worry for businesses, particularly in terms of training. However, Shayne reassures that this isn't the case for Ascent Group.

"While implementing such technology may initially require significant time and resources to train our staff, we are well-prepared for this task," he says. "With our robust tech infrastructure and support from senior management, we have the capability to provide thorough in-house training. This challenge is one we are fully equipped to handle."

Creating new opportunities with technology

Ascent Group is always looking for new ways to boost efficiency and free up time for more valuable tasks. However, they don't just add the newest innovation indiscriminately; they focus on identifying areas with growth potential and tailoring solutions to fit their unique needs.

Shayne, with over 17 years of recruitment experience, brings a unique edge to the table. His background in recruitment gives him a comprehensive understanding of both the daily challenges recruiters face and the goals business leaders aim to achieve. This balanced insight helps him make smart tech choices that consistently benefit Ascent Group. >

Instead of simply piling on more technology though, Ascent Group seeks out the right solutions for specific problems, ensures the team receives proper training to maximise the utility of these tools, and invests in developing their own in-house solutions.

One example of this being 'Content Swarm,' a home-grown marketing tool and employee advocacy app introduced to the Ascent brands in 2022. It quickly became the group's secret weapon for boosting engagement on LinkedIn, encouraging recruiters to actively share brand content and strengthen their personal branding efforts.

Shayne has enhanced the app to not only boost his business but also provide a straightforward, innovative marketing solution that saves time and effort on LinkedIn for others seeking similar benefits. In fact, many of their customers are reaping the rewards of Content Swarm.

Ascent Group is always forward-thinking, and the business is excited about using technology to continue growing, help clients and discover new talent.

We look forward to seeing what they do next! ■



WHERE DO YOU FIND YOUR BEST CANDIDATES?

Vanessa Raath, Head Cheerleader @ The Talent Hunter, advises going further online to find talent.



As a Global Talent Sourcing Trainer, I always kick off my training sessions with this question: “Where did you find your successfully placed candidates over the last 12 months?” I’ve had the privilege of training teams from Auckland to Seattle and a lot of places in between, and the responses I get are almost always the same:

Number one is always LinkedIn but this is closely followed by local job boards, like Indeed, Seek, Monster etc. This never fails to blow my mind because there are so many other ways and places to find the best talent for your clients or your business. >



NEWSFLASH: LinkedIn Isn't the Only Place to Find Talent

LinkedIn is a fantastic resource for recruiters – it's like Christmas every day. However, if you're a software developer, logging into LinkedIn every morning isn't your first thought. Recruiters need to understand where their target talent pools spend their time online, as it is different to where we are spending our time.

For instance, Java developers are more likely to start their day by checking out their coding repositories on GitHub or diving into technical forums like Stack Overflow to get answers to their burning questions from developers worldwide.

Beyond LinkedIn: Diverse Sourcing Strategies

Recruitment isn't a one-size-fits-all game. Relying solely on LinkedIn is a common mistake. A quick look at stats from a site like [NapoleonCat](#) will show you that not everyone has a LinkedIn profile or if they do, how regularly do they actually log into the site? Recruiters might be on LinkedIn all day, every day, but this is not the case for the talent they're looking for. This is why response times to connection requests and InMails can be painstakingly slow.

Pro Tip: Think differently about where you can find talent. For those in third-party agencies, differentiating yourself from your

competitors is crucial. Are you telling your clients that you're searching the same places as everyone else and hoping to connect first? That turns recruitment into an unnecessary race.

Exploring New Horizons

Consider this: Facebook has 3 billion users compared to LinkedIn's 1 billion. I'm not suggesting you add everyone on Facebook to your private network and start messaging them, but you can certainly find them there. Be resourceful in your search. Conduct thorough research to discover where else your target talent has an online presence.

This extra effort will also help you craft better outreach messages. If you find that someone has been a guest on a podcast or made a YouTube video, mention it when you reach out to them. This shows that you've done your homework and helps you stand out from other recruiters.

The Power of Boolean Search

I implore you to use the entire internet and learn how to craft laser-focused Boolean searches to X-ray different platforms. This approach will help you find candidates who aren't suffering from 'recruiter fatigue' – those who aren't already inundated with messages and interview requests from other recruiters. These candidates might be a better fit than the ones you're finding through the usual channels too. >

TALENT

A hand holding a smartphone over a laptop keyboard with a cup of coffee in the foreground.

Leveraging Social Media for Recruitment

Let's not forget the power of social media in recruitment. Platforms like X (formerly known as Twitter), Instagram, and even TikTok can be gold mines for sourcing talent. Many professionals showcase their skills and projects on these platforms, and by engaging with their content, you can build rapport and open up new recruitment channels.

On X, for instance, you can follow industry-specific hashtags to keep up with the latest trends and discover potential candidates. Instagram is another great platform where you can follow company pages, industry leaders, and even specific hashtags related to your niche. Engage with posts, leave meaningful comments, and you might find that people start reaching out to you instead.

TikTok, much to my horror, while often seen as just a platform for fun videos, is increasingly being used by professionals to share their expertise and projects. Don't underestimate the potential of these platforms for finding fresh talent.

Utilising Existing Communities and Forums

There are numerous niche communities and forums tailored to specific industries and roles already. For tech talent, sites like Dev.to, Kaggle, and AngelList are fantastic resources. These platforms are frequented by individuals who are deeply engaged in their fields and are looking for opportunities that match their skills and interests.

For creative roles, consider platforms like Behance and Dribbble, where designers and artists showcase their portfolios. Engaging with talent on these platforms can lead to discovering candidates who are probably not on traditional job boards. >

Crafting Personalised Outreach Messages

A well-crafted outreach message can make all the difference. Personalisation is key. Referencing something specific about a candidate's work, like a project they've contributed to or a blog post they've written, shows that you've taken the time to learn about them. This personal touch can significantly increase your response rates.

For example, if you're reaching out to a developer who has contributed to an open-source project, mention that project in your message. Highlight why you think their specific experience and skills would be a great fit for the role you're offering. This level of detail can set you apart from other recruiters who send generic, templated messages. Yawn!

The Importance of Continuous Learning

The recruitment landscape is constantly evolving. To stay ahead, it's essential to keep learning and adapting. Attend industry conferences, webinars, and workshops.

Investing in your own development as a recruiter not only enhances your skills but

also keeps you informed about the latest trends and technologies in talent sourcing. This knowledge can be invaluable when advising clients and candidates.

Building a Community: The Future of Recruiting

I believe the future of recruiting lies in building a community, or network of talent specialists in your niche. Where is your network? Do you have a community you can tap into at the drop of a hat? Building these communities and maintaining trusted relationships is crucial. It ensures you can get the attention of top talent quickly when opportunities arise.

Final Thoughts

Recruiting is both an art and a science. It requires creativity, persistence, and a willingness to explore new avenues. By diversifying your sourcing strategies, leveraging the power of social media, and continuously learning, you can stay ahead in the competitive world of talent acquisition.

Remember, the goal is not just to fill a role but to find the best fit for both the candidate and the organisation. Happy sourcing! ■

