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THE GLOBAL RECRUITER

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PREPERATION FOR LEGISLATION

THE WORLD IS YOUR OYSTER

ADDRESSING GENDER

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WELCOME

SIMON KENT
EDITOR

The Global Recruiter has noted previously how the current government's moves in the employment space are both radical and far reaching. However, there is also an element of unpredictability to them. At the time of writing new announcements are being made about the 'overhaul' of the 'broken' immigration system. Among the measure being introduced would appear to be changes in visa laws and the ending of recruiting care workers from overseas.

The extent to which this will impact on net migration is debatable, however recruitment, once again is caught in the line of fire as the government attempt to address wider and deeper issues. Compliance in other areas is similarly being hit – the fact is that recruitment, the industry, the action of recruiters isn't actually at fault here, it is, however, being set up as a negative activity, one of the root causes of wider problems.

Recruiters and the recruitment industry needs to be able to draw a line between itself and these kind of issues. Recruiters are providing a critical and needed service. They are bringing in skills and candidates to fulfil employer demands. They will, no doubt, continue to be flexible in this delivery. They are not part of the problem and there should be clear recognition of this whatever further changes are made. ■

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Publisher: Gary King
gary@theglobalrecruiter.com

Business Development Manager: Taireen Hussain
taireen@theglobalrecruiter.com

Editorial: Simon Kent
editorial@theglobalrecruiter.com

Director: James Osborne
jamestherecruitmentnetwork.com

Advertising:
sales@theglobalrecruiter.com

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

Subscribe for free: www.theglobalrecruiter.com



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INDUSTRY REACTS TO IMMIGRATION REFORMS



The Government's initiatives to tighten up the UK's immigration system has received a mixed response from the recruitment industry. The Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCo) has welcomed the move, but has advised that careful collaboration with businesses and recruiters is needed as the finer details are agreed.

"The UK must be able to compete on a global scale for highly skilled talent in sectors that are struggling with resources, including science, technology and healthcare," notes Shazia Imtiaz, General Counsel at APSCo. "The focus from the Government's announcement suggests this will be the case through these reforms. Of course, the devil is in the detail and we will need to review the full scope of the White Paper to truly ascertain if these plans are fit for purpose and allow businesses to still access core skills that are required to boost the economy and upskill the domestic workforce."

"This major intervention in the labour market will leave many employers fearful that in tackling concerns about immigration, Government goes after the wrong target," said Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC) Chief Executive Neil Carberry. "Being open to skilled workers supporting businesses investing here is essential. And we should remember that the private sector has not been the source of the recent growth in numbers."

"It is crucial that labour market experts from business have a regular voice in the new Labour Market Evidence Group (LMEG)," Carberry added. "This group must remain open to a flexible immigration system that responds quickly to changing market needs. Employers are clear: boosting training in the UK is essential, but so is a controlled, affordable and responsive immigration system that keeps investment flowing to the UK."

Ben Willmott, head of public policy at the CIPD said the changes to the system should be considered alongside apprenticeships and training reform: "The potential changes announced today would further

tighten the rules on the recruitment of overseas workers and leave employers in some sectors such as social care and construction questioning how they will find the workers needed to keep essential services going," said Willmott.

"The idea that employers mainly recruit migrant workers because they don't want to spend money training UK workers is just wrong. Our research has consistently shown that it's employers recruiting from overseas that are most likely to be investing in the UK-born workforce, for example through apprenticeships and hiring from disadvantaged groups."

"We won't tackle the underlying causes of why employers recruit overseas workers in such numbers until we reform our flawed and underfunded, vocational education and training system and offer better careers guidance to young people. We must also address the collapse in apprenticeships which lies at the heart of many of the skills shortages employers are facing."

"As much as we agree that the UK skills market needs to be the focus for Government investment, we cannot overlook the critical role that international talent plays in remits that are facing a talent deficit," said APSCo's Shazia Imtiaz. "The plan to cut overseas care worker recruitment, for example, has the potential to only add to the resourcing headache the sector already faces unless managed appropriately."

"We are also keen to understand how the Labour Market Evidence Group (LMEG) will operate, and it will be key to ensure that this Group, like the Government, continues to consult and take feedback from the private sector and those working to fill key roles within it, including APSCo members. We will be consulting with members on the full details of the White Paper and will ensure that feedback is communicated with Government representatives at this crucial stage." ■



1 IN 2 JOB APPLICANTS USE AI ENHANCED CVS

A new campaign from specialist insurer Hiscox highlights the challenges facing recruiters and hiring managers as the use of AI tools by candidates in the job application process becomes commonplace. Their data suggests 53 per cent of candidates making job applications in the past 12 months used AI-powered tools to help create their CVs. AI CV builder tools are designed to simplify the process of CV creation by generating, optimising and customising content, as well as job matching and analysis.

In addition to CV support, the study also highlights the widespread use of AI tools to supplement remote interviews (29 per cent) and the completion of online tasks and assessments (45 per cent).

“AI can help many candidates put their best foot forward,” commented Pete Treloar, Chief Underwriting Officer, Hiscox UK. “Using tools to sharpen language, tailor experience and improve presentation helps candidates level up their application, but it needs to be used carefully and in the right parts of the process.”

According to Hiscox, 37 per cent of job applicants questioned said they would not correct embellishments to their CV that were generated by an AI tool, such as exaggerations of experience, skills or interests. This raises concerns over the integrity of the job application process and is

particularly problematic for recruiters and hiring managers who struggle to distinguish between honest applications and those using AI to embellish or deceive.

Treloar continued: “While it’s easy to understand why candidates use AI to enhance their chances of success, when it’s not used well it can hinder an application. Large language models for example, can produce content that appears generic and impersonal, and responses that don’t truly reflect a candidate’s skills, experience and suitability for a role.

“For recruiters and hiring managers, who find themselves unable to accurately judge a candidate’s ability it’s particularly problematic,” he added. “If they’re passing on incorrect information or poor recommendations to their clients, not only does it damage relationships, but it can lead to more serious claims and that’s why insurance is so important.”

Despite the prevalence of AI tools throughout the application process, opinion on their use amongst candidates remains divided. Four in 10 (41 per cent) candidates think the use of AI tools is unfair on other applicants and 42 per cent believe it’s misleading for employers and recruiters. In contrast, 59 per cent think its use is “fair game” and 46 per cent believe applicants that fail to utilise AI tools will find themselves at a disadvantage. ➤

How to manage AI use by candidates:

1. Be aware of AI misuse and know how to spot it

Large numbers of similar-sounding applications and an increasing mismatch between written responses and in-person interviews or assessments are common signs of AI misuse by candidates. Screen applications for stilted, impersonal or overly-polished language and answers that lack specificity and anecdotes. If you're unsure, follow up with a call to check for authenticity.

2. Educate your clients

Help the employers you work with improve their understanding of AI use, its risks and its prevalence. Encourage a proactive and open-minded approach to candidate use of AI, aimed at promoting fairness over forbiddance.

3. Review job application processes for AI vulnerabilities

Review your (or your clients') end to end recruitment process to understand where the unfair use of AI tools is most likely to occur. It's very easy for example, to misuse generative AI in remote interviews and verbal reasoning tests but less likely during task based assessments and in person interviews. Work with clients to improve and humanise the most at-risk areas.

4. Be clear about the policy on candidate use of AI

Guide candidates on where they can and cannot use AI in the process, and encourage employers to

be transparent about their preferences. Allowing AI tools that help structure CV content or aid interview preparation for example, but discouraging use during live interviews or assessments, may help promote more proportionate use.

5. Make sure you're covered

If it turns out a candidate is not who they seem and your client believes you've missed the signs or advised them incorrectly, they could make a claim against you. Having professional indemnity insurance gives peace of mind and can help with the costs of settling claims if this were to happen.

Dishonesty in the job application process

Overall, 38 per cent of job applicants admit to being dishonest on their CV. Exaggerating experience (53 per cent) was the most common embellishment, followed by adding hobbies that they don't have (41 per cent) a level of proficiency in skills that is untrue (33 per cent) and references that are not real (14 per cent).

The Perfect Candidate campaign

To learn more about the insurable risks that recruitment companies face from new threats like AI deception, visit hiscox.co.uk/the-perfect-candidate ■





8 IN 10 HIRING MANAGERS SAY RECENT GRADS DIDN'T WORK OUT

Resume.org has released new findings from an April 2025 survey assessing how hiring managers view recent college graduates. The survey of 1,000 US hiring managers reveals that 8 in 10 say a recent college graduate didn't work out at their company in the past year, and 65 per cent say they had to fire at least one. Managers also report issues ranging from excessive phone use and unprofessional behaviour to poor time management and a lack of initiative.

Among companies that hired recent grads in the past year, only 17 per cent say all of their hires were successful. The majority (70 per cent) say only some hires worked out, while 13 per cent say only a few did. Top reasons recent grads struggled include lack of motivation or initiative (48 per cent), lack of professionalism (39 per cent), excessive phone use (39 per cent), poor time management (38 per cent), and an indifferent attitude (37 per cent). As a result, 70 per cent of companies say some hires were placed on performance improvement plans, and 65 per cent had to fire at least one recent college grad.

Managers also expressed broad concerns about workplace readiness. Nearly 8 in 10 (78 per cent) say recent grads spend too much time on their phones, and more than half say they're unprepared for the workforce and difficult to manage. A majority say these employees are often late to work (66 per cent) or meetings (55 per cent), turn in assignments late (60 per cent), and frequently deliver poor-quality work (62 per cent). Concerns about professionalism are also common: 58 per cent say recent grads fail to dress appropriately, and 56 per cent say they don't always use proper workplace language.

Only 58 per cent of companies say they plan to hire from the class of 2025, and 1 in 6 hiring managers admit they're hesitant to hire recent graduates at all. Those open to hiring Gen Z candidates say they're looking for qualities like initiative (57 per cent), a positive attitude (53 per cent), a strong work ethic (52 per cent), adaptability (51 per cent), and openness to feedback (50 per cent).

"Colleges don't teach students how to behave in the workplace, and there is a lack of transitional support from both universities and employers," says Resume.org's Career Coach Irina Pichura. "Most students graduate with little exposure to professional environments, so when they arrive at their first job, they're often learning basic workplace norms for the first time. Colleges should have a workplace training program to support graduates' transition to the workplace."

Pichura also shares advice for recent grads on how to demonstrate initiative during and after the hiring process. "During the interview, candidates should come prepared with research and ideas. Use real examples to show how you took initiative, and follow up with a thoughtful thank-you email. Once hired, look for ways to take ownership of tasks, ask for feedback, and go beyond your role. That's how you build trust and credibility."

This survey, conducted in April 2025 via Pollfish, included 1,000 US hiring managers. Participants were selected based on demographic criteria and screening questions to ensure they hold management-level positions and are involved in hiring for entry-level roles. ■



VHR RECEIVES KING'S AWARD

Global technical recruitment specialist, VHR has been announced as a recipient of the King's Award for Enterprise 2025, recognised for outstanding achievement in International Trade.

VHR is one of 116 organisations nationwide to receive a King's Award for Enterprise in the category of International Trade this year. The accolade highlights VHR's exceptional success in overseas markets and strengthens its position as a leading provider of global recruitment solutions.

Founded in 2003 and employing 70 people, VHR delivers award-winning recruitment services to some of the world's most advanced and technical industries, including Aerospace & Aviation, F1 & Automotive Engineering, Engineering & Manufacturing, Defence & Security, Civils & Infrastructure, and Marine. Operating in over 58 countries, VHR provides comprehensive, end-to-end workforce solutions that include recruitment, onboarding, visa and work permit support, logistics, and in-country management, serving as an extension of its clients' HR departments.

"This award celebrates our exceptional growth and success in global markets, reflecting the hard work, innovation, and dedication of our entire team,"

said Danny Brooks MBE, CEO of VHR. "Winning a King's Award not only validates our commitment to international excellence but also enhances our global reputation as a trusted recruitment partner."

Formerly known as The Queen's Awards for Enterprise, the honours were renamed in 2023 to reflect His Majesty the King's wish to continue the legacy of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II by recognising outstanding UK businesses. Now in its 59th year, the King's Awards for Enterprise are widely regarded as the most prestigious business awards in the UK. Recipients earn the right to use the esteemed King's Awards Emblem for the next five years.

VHR's success in securing this award is a testament to its longstanding commitment to innovation, customer service, and sustainable international growth. ■



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THE STRATEGIC POWER OF AMBIGUITY

Ella Robertson McKay,
Managing Director of One Young
World, believes undefined roles
can build stronger teams.



There's nothing more deflating than hearing someone say, "That's not my job," or, "That's not in my remit." We've all been there, whether it's a colleague ignoring an obvious issue because it's technically someone else's responsibility, or watching a team grind to a halt waiting for direction instead of using their common sense. Of course, clear responsibilities have their place, especially when onboarding or managing risk. But in the real world of ambitious, fast-moving organisations, your job almost always ends up stretching beyond your original brief. >



Vague job descriptions aren't for everyone. Some people thrive in a tightly defined role, want their responsibilities clearly boxed in, and prefer to down tools at exactly 5.29pm. And that's absolutely fine; every workplace needs structure and stability. But let's be honest. That mindset doesn't match up with high-growth organisations, and it's rarely compatible with a high-growth career. When things are moving fast, when the business is scaling, when problems don't come neatly labelled, it's the people who step forward, not sideways, who thrive.

To need to succeed

We can't imagine, in a chaotic football match where your team is down to ten players, a defender getting the ball into the penalty box and deciding not to shoot because it's not technically their job. The truth is, all teams really have the same job description: to make the organisation succeed.

That's why high-performing organisations increasingly look for what are known as T-shaped individuals. These are people who combine deep expertise in one specific area, which forms the vertical part of the 'T', with a broad base of knowledge and transferable skills across other disciplines, forming the horizontal bar. They bring both depth and breadth. They are confident in their own specialism, but also understand how their work fits into the wider goals of the organisation. They collaborate across teams, adapt quickly to change, and help solve problems that don't fall neatly within one department. T-shaped individuals are the ones who look around, ask "What needs to be done?" and then get on with it. Their job description isn't a checklist, it's a compass.

This doesn't mean organisations should do away with structure altogether. But it does mean we should stop treating rigid job remits as the gold standard of professionalism. Instead, ambiguity in a job description can be a powerful catalyst. It creates space for intrapreneurship, initiative and value creation.

A business book I recommend more frequently than any other is Liz Wiseman's *Impact Players*, which highlights the difference between those who simply do their jobs and those who do the job that's needed. Impact Players don't wait for perfect clarity. They lead through ambiguity, take ownership and make life easier for those around them. As Wiseman puts it, "People don't want to be managed, they want to be led." >



In my own work leading One Young World, the global community for young leaders, we see this mindset in action every day. Our staff run one of the world's largest and most complex international event, which regularly wins awards such as Best Global Conference, filled with VIPs, corporate sponsors, media and young leaders from 190+ countries; only the Olympic Games is more international. It requires military-grade coordination. Yet I've found myself, as Gold Command at this event, clearing chairs off the stage when a set change wasn't happening quickly enough. Because if a ball is falling, no one is too senior or too junior to catch it.

Always take responsibility

The modern workplace increasingly depends on people who are willing to take responsibility wherever it's needed. That's why organisations are moving away from traditional linear career paths and embracing more fluid, cross-functional teams with T-shaped leaders at the helm. This shift empowers employees to step into gaps, connect dots across departments and contribute in unexpected ways.

But here's the flip side. For this to work, an organisation's culture must be open, adaptive and egoless. If someone veers into a new area or proposes a new approach, their contribution must be welcomed, not met with territorial defensiveness. In a strong culture, autonomy and accountability

are two sides of the same coin. A culture that says "you're stepping on my toes" is one that will never unlock the full potential of its people.

I know someone who runs a company that started with six people and is now worth several billion dollars. They hired brilliant senior staff, but many of them left quickly and complained their remits weren't clear. In a high-growth environment, no one is going to hold your hand. You have to put on your opportunity goggles, as Liz Wiseman puts it, a mindset that helps you look through the murk and uncertainty and spot moments of possibility. It means choosing to see ambiguity not as a barrier, but as an open door. It's about asking, "Where can I help?" or "What's not getting done?" rather than waiting for someone to tell you what to do. The people who do this are the ones who become indispensable. They don't need permission to lead, because they already are.

This is especially true for younger professionals. In an era where early-career talent wants to feel purposeful, vague job descriptions can actually be empowering. They suggest: we trust you to shape this role. Rather than fencing someone in, we give them permission to carve their own path, especially important in sectors like sustainability, AI or social impact, where the terrain is still being charted. >

Of course, this approach isn't for every individual or every organisation. It requires managers to coach rather than direct. It requires teams to share information freely. And it requires leadership to reward initiative, not just execution. But for those willing to embrace it, the results are extraordinary.

More open job descriptions invite people to look up and ask, "What could I do?" rather than, "What am I allowed to do?" They create space for ownership, creativity and loyalty. And they help build cultures where no one waits to be told, because everyone already sees the goal.

In the end, we don't need every player to just guard their patch. We need them to see the whole pitch, move with purpose, and, when the moment comes, take the shot. ■

One Young World is the the largest global network of young people who are making positive change across communities and businesses. Its mission is to empower young people with the ideas, inspiration, network, and skills they need to lead and deliver tangible positive change. Ella oversees the organisation's operations, programs, and international events, connecting and supporting young leaders from over 190 countries. She is also the co-author of How To Make A Difference: The Definitive Guide To Activism.





ADDRESSING GENDER IN STEM

Stephanie Gray, an engineering recruitment consultant from Kingdom People, discusses how she helps women get into engineering and why other recruiters need to follow suit.

When I first stepped into recruitment back in 2019, I never imagined I would become so deeply invested in addressing the gender imbalance in engineering. But through the values and experiences I had when I was younger, I knew that any recruitment role I had must be based around my drive to help people. I played football at a high level from the age of five until 18, which taught me resilience, teamwork and competitiveness that is essential for this industry, and in part time roles when I was younger I was tasked with hiring and developing new staff – which was something I took to and loved immediately. >



Following the COVID-19 pandemic, I became more aware of the significant gender imbalance that existed in the engineering industry – and the more I looked, the more I realised something had to change. The statistics were eye-opening – even with a growing interest from young women in STEM subjects, the percentage of women in engineering roles has fallen to 15.7%, and half of female engineering graduates do not go into the industry at all. Recruitment is an essential lever to help bridge this gap, and I knew I wanted to be part of the solution.

Engineering as viable career

At our base on the South Coast, I lead our Women in Engineering initiative across Brighton, Havant, and Bognor Regis, and we are hoping to expand on our work across the entire Kingdom People entity. We want to encourage women to see engineering as a viable career, and to do this we need to improve the accessibility of the recruitment process. It is essential to break the cycle of women not seeing engineering as a viable option, because they do not see people like themselves in those roles.

By collaborating closely with our clients, both highlighting the importance of fostering diverse workforces, and working to remove hidden biases, we have made several changes in our recruitment approach. For example, we start by ensuring job adverts are genuinely inclusive. This means addressing unconscious bias in language, advertising in diverse spaces, highlighting flexible working options, family-friendly policies, and development opportunities. We do not see these as ‘benefits’ but are essential ways to attract a wider pool of talent, which leads to better hires for our clients.

As part of widening the pool, we also make sure our role as the recruiter is not wasted. I speak regularly at university events – from panel discussions to STEM careers fairs – which enables me to engage directly with young women who are the future of the industry. Listening to them, and hearing what they would want from the industry, is just as important as speaking – this helps us figure out what is working, what is not, and where we need to improve. >



The candidates' voice

One of the most powerful tools that we need to use is the voice of our candidates. As part of our campaign, we seek out feedback from women about their experiences during the recruitment process. We always want to understand what encouraged them to apply, what concerns they may have had, and how they found the entire process. Their insights have shaped the way we recruit – for example, how we write job specifications and how we do interviews – so it is a huge part of refining the work we do.

For some of our clients, we have also been able to make the decision to bring in practices such as anonymised recruitment, to reduce unconscious bias, and develop clearer maternity and return-to-work policies. It is key that representation does not just end at hiring – rather, retention and progression within the business are just as vital.

The benefits of diversity

Gender diversity brings a whole host of benefits – and while many of them should be widely known and accepted, the more we discuss the benefits of diversity in recruitment and with clients, the more engaged people will be to get involved:

- Diverse teams bring a variety of perspectives, experiences, and problem-

solving approaches, which increases innovation.

- A wider talent pool means more opportunities to find the right candidate for a role.
- Gender-diverse teams are shown to make better decisions. Multiple viewpoints lead to thorough discussions and well-rounded decisions.
- Teams that prioritise culture and inclusivity and mutual respect generally leads to higher job satisfaction and employee retention rates.
- Diversity brings with it a positive brand reputation, promoting social responsibility, and attracting the top talent.

We never claim to be perfect, but we do always want to be progressing in our goals. I am proud of the fact that we have placed countless women in engineering roles over the past six years – but we also want to ensure they stay in the role, thrive and lead. We want to grow the number of women we work with every year, building relationships that support long-term careers, and not just short-term hiring. From coming from a sport such as football, which is male-dominated, I know what it feels like to prove yourself in an environment where you might not immediately feel like you belong. It's incredibly powerful when someone believes in your potential and allows you space to showcase your talents. >

Recruiters hold enormous influence in shaping the future of industries like engineering. We need to do it responsibly, and for that we need to:

- Promote inclusive hiring practices – ones that are not simply a box ticking exercise.
- Educate clients on the business-wide and cultural values of diversity.
- Challenge bias – whether that is in job descriptions, shortlisting processes, and interview panels.
- Support beyond placement – ensuring the environments we place candidates into are welcoming.

As recruitment agencies, we can move from being reactive to proactive, as we are not simply filling jobs, but we are shaping the future workforce.

Overall, we need to continue to listen to the very people we want to help – the candidate. By continuing to actively open doors, we can help build a sector that accurately reflects the diversity, innovation, and potential of the world. ■



BUILDING ON SUCCESS

Simon Kent listens in on a Recruitment Live discussion among leading recruiters where the focus is to make the most of opportunities with existing clients.



JobAdder

In the latest Recruitment Live online discussion from The Global Recruiter and sponsored on this occasion by JobAdder, leading lights from a variety of recruitment companies came together to discuss the matter of keeping and building on existing clients. In a challenging marketplace where it is hard enough to get new clients, the last thing recruitment companies want to do is lose existing business or miss out on opportunities to deliver more. The conversation ranged over the need to create and maintain great relationships and communications, investing in and managing consultants and, of course, the effective use of technology and AI. Taking part in the discussion were: >



Iain Atkinson, Director, Eden Scott
Andy Carpenter, Senior Director, Operations SMS, Gi Group
Jodie Finn, non-exec advisor at ThorThor Companies
Sasza Bandiera, Managing Director, The Oyster Partnership
Kirsty Garshong, Director, Harham
James Walker, Founding Director, BWD Search
Keith Grant, Director, Engage People Recruitment
Mark Taylor, Group Sales Director, Meridian Business Support
Laurence Abbott, Chief Technology Officer, Autotech Group
Emma Sears, Head of Client Services, Venquis
Anthony Goodwin, Group CEO & Chairman, Antal International
Matt Gallivan, JobAdder
Anna Fletcher, JobAdder
Simon Kent, Editor, The Global Recruiter
Gary King, Publisher, The Global Recruiter

The discussion started with a consideration of the current state of play in the market. On the whole it appears that the recruitment professionals felt the market was returning to a relatively 'normal state' following the years of the pandemic and the bounce back that followed. On the one hand this may seem a welcome break after the rollercoaster of recent times, however it also means some clients are being more cautious when hiring people. There are differences between market sectors and temp/perm – blue collar volume, for example, seems to be faring comparatively well – but in general the recruiters agreed their business was reflecting more wider uncertain economic trends.

Interestingly, some recruiters on the call reported their clients were now more likely to try and carry out recruitment internally offering only their hard-to-find talent to external agencies. Within recruitment businesses one knock-on effect of this has been that whereas the previous market boom was relatively easy for consultants to work in, the current scenario requires more dedication and skill. One participant noted that now consultants had to 'prove their mettle' and while some are showing they can perform well others are struggling.

Iain Atkinson was among those who felt that clients were now thinking more short term rather than being future focussed. The consideration for hiring extends only over the next three to six months – a year maximum – rather than going further. Jodie Finn agreed that the time range that companies are now considering has contracted and this seems to be due to the uncertain economic and political landscape and the concurrent challenges – an experience that is repeating on both sides of the Atlantic. >

Interestingly Tony Goodwin senses clients are open to new ways of working and different ways of accessing recruitment services. He described variants on RPO arrangements and 'mini-RPO' services. At the end of the day recruitment provision can be flexed in order to align with the outlook and demands of the client. Given this, gaining more business from clients may be a question of diversification – both in terms of what the recruiter can offer and how they deliver it.

At the same time, recruiters are building relationships with their clients by positioning themselves as market experts. Sasza Bandiera described how his business now runs networking and information events targeted at people within the sector they serve. They've brought together senior leaders, hosting events in their office where 60-80 people will come together, discuss issues pertinent to their sector and hear from a panel. This positions the business front and centre as involved in and knowledgeable of their sector, inspiring confidence in potential clients and making them a good choice for recruitment services.

Other recruiters engage in similar activities, finding value in delivering round table discussions, podcasts, market benchmarking, salary surveys and so on. The idea is always to position the business as expert in their field – an organisation that knows exactly what the trends and stresses are for their clients and therefore ready and able to key into what they need.

What also emerged from the discussion was the balance to be struck through the use of technology on the one hand and the emphasis on a personal service delivered by understanding and skilled consultants on the other. It is clear that both automation and AI are already being used by recruitment companies to bring efficiencies and cost savings to the process – particularly in volume activities. However, it is also clear that the human touch is valued by clients and is not necessarily something that today's new consultants fully appreciate or are always ready to deliver on.

It is interesting to note the for many recruiters their clients now expect AI and technology to be part of their offering and moreover to be able to pass on cost savings gained from such technology use.

But while automation can manage some interactions with clients – ensuring they are contacted regularly whether or not they are engaged in a current piece of work – the value of personal relationships is still high within the industry. Kirsty Garshong talked of the need to upskill some consultants in this area in order to help them be able to communicate effectively in this respect. The emphasis she and others bring to this is that it is not necessarily always about having a transactional conversation – sometimes just being in touch and building a relationship is important to being able to keep or build on a business relationship. >





Andy Carpenter noted that within the blue collar space there is a balance to be struck, particularly in respect of the candidate's experience. While it may be attractive to try and automate as much of the recruitment and onboarding task as possible, this may not be acceptable to all involved. There will always be a need for a face-to-face element with candidates, indeed sometimes this is because some potential workers may not use the the appropriate technology at all.

The point was made, however, that oncoming generations into the workplace, and indeed, people who will be clients to the recruitment industry will increasingly expect technology to be part of the relationship. Recruiters need to be aware of and ready to adapt to changes in technology use – both in terms of how it is used and what platforms are acceptable.

While markets may be currently slowing down, it is clear that recruitment businesses cannot stand still. There is still potential for recruiters to build on the clients they have and to secure future work, but at the moment that could mean being more flexible in how they offer their services and accepting that the work may be more challenging in terms of the talent they need to find. Despite this many recruitment businesses are engaging with the challenges and finding ways to deliver and stay ahead of the game.

Reflecting on the discussion, JobAdder's Matt Gallivan noted the importance technology continues to play in helping recruiter make the most of the opportunities ahead of them: "In today's recruitment landscape, success lies in striking the right balance between high-tech and high-touch," he said. "A powerful CRM should do more than just store data, it should create space for real, human interaction by streamlining the admin, surfacing the right insights, and enabling recruiters to act with speed and empathy. At JobAdder, we believe technology should never replace the human touch, it should amplify it." ■

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PREPARATION, PREPARATION, PREPARATION

Crawford Temple, CEO and founder of Professional Passport, on how recruiters need to be ready for April 2026 legislation



We know that change is on the way and the compliance landscape for recruitment agencies is about to undergo another significant transformation. From April 2026, agencies will become directly responsible for the PAYE obligations of their umbrella workers. This represents perhaps the most substantial shift in accountability since the Off-payroll legislation came into effect. >



While the draft legislation is expected around July 2025, agencies need to start preparing now. The implications of these changes are far-reaching, potentially exposing recruitment businesses to considerable tax liabilities if their umbrella providers fail to operate compliant PAYE processes – preparing the ground now will serve agencies well.

We recommend approaching this transition through a systematic four-stage process: Prepare, Decide, Implement, and Review. This article focuses specifically on the crucial preparation stage – what agencies should be doing right now, before the draft legislation is even published.

The Preparation Stage: Understand Your Risks

The preparation phase is about assessing your risks within both your organisation and the providers you operate with.

HMRC has made it clear that Medical, Social and Education are sectors that are experiencing high levels of non-compliance, which we fully concur with. If you operate in these sectors, then the preparation stage is even more critical in ensuring your business will remain protected moving forward.

Warning Signs to Look Out For

What we know from all our work with providers, agencies, and contractors is that some common themes can provide clues that something may not be as it appears. Understanding and identifying these will be vital to ensure a smooth transition and protect your business from potential liabilities.

Consultant Commissions

It is generally acknowledged throughout the industry that many of the non-compliant operators have developed links directly with consultants and are offering high rewards to the consultants for successful introductions to their 'schemes', which can be as much as £500 per worker. There is much anecdotal evidence that the most active of these consultants are earning more from their referral commissions than they make in their full-time job. Furthermore, these additional earnings are unlikely to be reported by the consultants to HMRC, meaning that active Tax Evasion is in operation within the agency.

We receive reports at Professional Passport from workers questioning why their recruitment consultant seems overly enthusiastic for them to use a specific provider. We also receive reports that providers are calling the workers directly, often confirming that their consultant has passed them the worker's details. >

Whilst this is often not spoken about openly, it does represent a real challenge in the move to the proposed legislation, where the agency is responsible for the correct application of PAYE on umbrella workers.

There are a number of key points that must be considered here:

1. The Agency could already be liable

If consultants are corresponding with workers and referring them to 'schemes', then if the worker suffers a loss, they could revert to the agency to seek redress. Recruitment companies have a duty of care obligation when they make any recommendation to a worker. This requires them to make checks to a level of detail way beyond a superficial review or questionnaire. A recommendation also includes any consultant recommendation, formal or not, where the consultant is clearly acting as a representative of the recruitment company. Failure to meet these enhanced checks leaves a recruiter exposed to potential liabilities through negligence claims brought by workers who suffer a loss.

2. Criminal Finance Act

Where the consultants are failing to report the 'commissions' as income to HMRC, this immediately becomes tax evasion. Under the terms of the Criminal Finance Act (CFA) and the key conditions of the test, this could result in the recruitment company becoming criminally liable for the unpaid tax and penalties of up to 100% on the commissions of the consultants.

The CFA requires a company to have 'adequate processes' to ensure compliance. Now, clearly, if there was widespread acceptance of commissions, and the company

claimed not to be aware of this, then it is likely to be argued that their processes were not adequate.

3. Data Protection Breaches

Where consultants are providing contractors' details to 'scheme providers', in many cases without the workers' knowledge, then this is a breach of Data Protection and exposes the recruitment company to further sanctions.

4. Cliff Edge Drop in Consultant Earnings
Recruitment companies must also consider how they address the issue of a significant drop in their consultants' overall earnings. We regularly hear stories of income to consultants in excess of £5,000 per month from these providers. With this generally being undeclared, that would represent a drop in earnings equivalent to around a £150,000 salary. This reduction in income pressure leaves the door open for the promoters to continue peddling their schemes after the new rules come into play and will require more than just contract updates with the consultants.

Market Pressures

This is the unspoken reality. Many recruitment company owners feel under significant pressure to allow workers to operate through providers who they think are probably operating a 'scheme'; if they didn't, workers would simply move to another agency that would allow this, causing significant commercial damage. This issue sits squarely with HMRC's lack of enforcement activity across the sector, which supports those seeking to apply the rules as intended, although this doesn't help the recruitment companies that are stuck in the middle. >





In the preparation for the new rules, it will be essential that recruitment companies understand the level of contractors operating through these arrangements and consider the timing of any moves to a more rigid regime of providers to balance the commercial risks involved.

In stating this, we must make it clear that HMRC can currently potentially seek tax shortfalls from recruitment companies where non-compliant schemes are in operation.

Mass Unexplained Migration

From time to time, we hear about a sudden migration of workers to a particular provider, for no apparent reason, which should raise a red flag.

We know that there are organised groups behind many of the schemes operating across the market, and they will seek to move workers from one arrangement to another if they come under too much scrutiny. This is a key sign that something may be awry and that a provider may be offering a 'scheme'.

Recruitment companies should put tracking in place to identify where this happens.

Professional Passport already works with many recruitment companies that share this data and allows us to assist them in managing these issues.

Drop in Contractors' Earnings

As we predicted and saw during the implementation of the Off-Payroll Working

rules, many workers were facing a cliff-edge drop in their income. This created the vacuum that allowed the non-compliant offerings to flourish. The lack of HMRC enforcement and support for the sector has resulted in a proliferation of schemes being allowed to thrive, unchecked.

The same ingredients are in place for this new rule change, particularly in the named sectors where non-compliance is prolific.

In assessing a recruitment company's current position, it is essential to understand this impact as part of your planning stage.

Fail to Prepare, Prepare to Fail

The April 2026 changes represent a significant liability shift onto recruitment agencies. Those who begin comprehensive preparation now will be well-positioned to navigate these changes successfully. Those who don't may find themselves facing unexpected tax bills, penalties, and reputational damage.

The message is clear: get your ducks in a row now. The preparation stage is about building a robust foundation of knowledge, processes and documentation that will support you through the legislative changes ahead.

Professional Passport will support and work with recruitment companies throughout the process. ■



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TURN TO THE RIGHTS

Andrew Whiteaker, Partner at Boyes Turner explains how employment law changes will affect recruitment agencies.

COMPLIANCE



The introduction of the new Employment Rights Bill at the end of last year promises to drive significant changes across employment law in the UK. With challenging market conditions compounded by the National Insurance increases, employers have inevitably become more rigorous in their recruitment processes and circumspect in their ambitions. So where does this leave recruitment agencies as they seek to navigate an ever-complex employment law landscape, meet ever-evolving client expectations while remaining competitive? >



Day 1 Rights

The introduction of Day 1 Rights will see employment protections extended to new employees from their first day. Under these proposed changes, new employees will have the right to claim unfair dismissal, rather than requiring a minimum of two years continuous employment.

These changes may encourage a more thorough hiring processes among clients, certainly starting with a heightened expectation on the quality and calibre of candidates, and also a reassessment and potential renegotiation of commercial terms with agencies, too. Even with the buffer of a reduced level of protection being afforded during the first nine months of employment, we could see clients challenge payment terms for placement fees as employers look for ways to spread the risks of when recruitment goes wrong.

I also expect to see an increase in the number of employers opting for temp-to-perm contracts on this basis as another way of mitigating risks around new hires. In this way, employers can be confident about performance, cultural and team fit before committing to a fixed-term contract.

Zero Hours Contracts

The new Employment Rights Bill will bring in a tightening up on zero-hours contracts to provide more predictability and security for workers. A key change is an obligation to offer minimum guaranteed hours to those on zero hours contracts after a fixed period, based on the normal hours worked. While individuals don't have to accept these hours, they have to be offered to them by the employer. In addition, there will be a requirement to provide workers with reasonable notice before cancelling or re-scheduling a shift. and any late notice amends/ cancellations to a shift must be compensated. Failing to do this could see a zero-hours worker bring a claim against an employer – again, inevitably leading to more rigour from your clients around how they engage with zero-hours contracts and potentially look at renegotiating commercial terms to cover themselves.

Recruitment agencies also need to be mindful that the government intends to regulate umbrella companies to close the gap on non-compliance in this area. Historically used as intermediaries to employ and pay temporary workers supplied to end client users, agencies have frequently used umbrella companies to deliver a PAYE option to workers as well as hold responsibility for NIC. In a move to drive compliance in the umbrella company market, new legislation means that PAYE/NIC non-compliance will lie with the end client or the recruitment agency closest to the end client from April 2026. ➤

The Fair Work Agency

The launch of the Fair Work Agency (FWA) is set to bring together existing state enforcement functions, eventually taking on the enforcement of a wider range of employment rights. Established to be a single place where workers and employers can turn for help, it will also have significant – potentially more aggressive – powers to investigate and act against non-compliant businesses. For recruitment agencies, this means ensuring compliance is watertight; reviewing contracts, improved record-keeping, and any business model adjustments needed to better protect workers.

Worker Status

An expected change had been a move to a single employment status, removing the distinction between ‘employee’ and ‘worker’ to create a clearer framework. Considering the challenges posed by many of the other changes proposed it is helpful that this does not form part of the Employment Rights Bill and is unlikely to be addressed until later in this parliament.

Currently ‘workers’ – who comprise many gig economy workers – qualify for national minimum wage and holiday pay but lack protection from unfair dismissal and redundancy pay. The government’s long-term goal is to create two categories: ‘employees’ with full employment rights and the genuinely ‘self-employed’, creating more clarity for individuals as well as businesses – including recruitment agencies - over employment status and rights. Precisely where the distinction between the two will ultimately be drawn and to what side of the line those currently classified as ‘workers’ remains to be seen.

The incoming ERB changes and the government’s agenda to shake up employment law represents a shift in the balance of power for employers and those working with them to support their talent and workforce needs. These changes will demand recruitment agencies to once again, raise the bar, and lead the way on compliance, commerciality and competitiveness. ■



SCREENING THE CHANGING WORKFORCE

Keith Rosser, Director of Group Risk and Reed Screening highlights the importance and practicalities of screening candidates for a diverse and hybrid workforce.



According to the Office for National Statistics hybrid working is now normal practice for over a quarter of the workforce, and this is not the only change in working practice in recent years. The UK gig economy has grown to almost two million workers, dual employment is on the rise, as are innovative staffing solutions such as statement of works. Diverse and hybrid workforces present different problems to employers and end hirers who need to ensure people are vetted and checked appropriately. >



In just the 12 years since I founded Reed Screening I have witnessed firsthand the continued development and complexity in this space. Being a part of the Reed Group brings one great advantage over all other screening firms, it means we are centrally placed to observe and understand the changing dynamics of the UK labour market.

It can be challenging enough to ensure permanent staff are vetted properly – just look at the case of Chancellor Rachel Reeves who has twice come unstuck when presenting her CV, or Business Secretary Jonathan Reynolds who stated he was a solicitor when really he wasn't. The concerns may be the same, but the challenges are different and generally more heightened when considering diverse and hybrid working.

A Bigger Challenge

In 2024 I was proud to work with Simon Fell MP, who at the time was the Prime Minister's Anti-Fraud Champion, on the UK's first ever guide to Hiring Fraud which was launched in Parliament (<https://www.betterhiringinstitute.co.uk/resources-hub/tackling-hiring-fraud>). The guide exposed many of the latest challenges in this area such as impersonating, reference houses, AI, right to work and more. Concerns aren't just coming from employers either. They can be seen in government thinking, for example UK Home Office have concerns about atypical workers as could be seen in the Home Secretary's recent announcements to expand right to work checks into the gig economy and other working models. Traditionally a right to work check is completed by an employer on an employee, but what happens where there isn't a traditional employer? I have had sight of the clauses to go into the Border Security Bill later this year and closing loopholes are high on the agenda, although this is far more complicated than it sounds.

The ways in which workers defraud companies is getting increasingly sophisticated too. AI generated deepfake candidates, AI generated fake documents, the rise of reference houses are tools all aimed at duping hirers. Rogue IT contractors organised by foreign states intent on causing harm have attacked recruitment processes in order to get on the inside at big UK firms. Reference houses are booming in popularity, essentially a platform is created online that looks and feels like an employer, candidates state that employer on their CV, and the reference house provides the fake reference – by email or by phone – for a fee to the candidate. There are thousands currently operating in the UK.

A Different Challenge

People tell me technology is the solution. Well, that is only true for half the story. Tech-only screening services fail to stay up-to-date with the latest challenge as is still seen today with many failing to identify reference houses. What employers also need are the experts behind the tech, either in-house or outsourced, who are leading on this frontier to tackle the varied and changing threats.

I remain very concerned that an unintended consequence of the Employment Rights Bill is the offshoring of platform recruitment businesses to escape UK legislation. Such as the case of Young Ones earlier this year, the platformisation of recruitment is likely to accelerate under the ERB in its current guise as a way to play in the UK market at a fraction of the cost. I have a specific amendment in the Lords currently to attempt to close this loophole which would undermine the UK recruitment sector and compliant businesses everywhere. >

Risk Management

Specific Challenges: Diverse and Hybrid Working

Impostering is getting more complex due to modern, hybrid ways of working. Essentially the person registered or hired, isn't the one who undertakes the work. It has been a focus for most ECHO Home Office committee meetings over the last 12 months. This is a well known, and well developed, issue in the gig economy but it's affected care recruitment and other sectors too. How to tackle impostering is still under debate, but essentially digital identity and right to work checks, coupled with a way to ensure the person undertaking the work is the one who registered will reduce this issue. This is often more complex than it sounds in practice, however. Who is the person in the home checking the care worker is the one who is registered by the agency? What is the cost effective tech stopping ID cards or passcodes being shared amongst groups?

I worked with the Home Office throughout the pandemic to implement digital right to work, for the first year of the pandemic the intention by UK GOV was absolutely to return to manual right to work checks, but it was clear even back then that the labour market had changed and new, hybrid ways of working were here to stay. This required digital right to work checks. This is still incomplete however, with an estimated 1 in 5 candidates needing to use a manual route due to not having an in date British passport or in date visa. Through meetings with Ministers there is commitment for further change. For now, it remains a loophole for people wishing to gain work illegally. There is plenty of evidence to show that readily available fake birth certificates are used by people without legitimate right to work to gain employment especially in complex working models.

Modern working challenges to vetting

Modern forms of work also challenge criminal record check vetting. As a Non-Executive Board Member of Disclosure Scotland since 2019 I have seen first hand the efforts to modernise, digitise, and develop criminal record checking to capture new types of work. Fundamental changes came in on April 1st in Scotland to update the system to catch new forms of work. Prior to this, loopholes existed. The same is true of the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) where I have chaired the criminal record trade body since it began in 2018. Working in partnership, the recent identity check guidelines were launched which brings the process more in line with right to work checks, still with some exceptions which continue to frustrate employers. Modern working arrangements create further practical problems such as hybrid working close to the border - two days working at home in England, three days in the office in Scotland. Which criminal record system should be checked?

Reference checking which might have identified Rachel Reeves or Jonathan Reynolds' omissions are more challenging with hybrid workers, especially those in dual employment. How does a prospective employer know it's all been declared? Reference houses are more easily concealed in complex work histories. The business I lead for the Reed recruitment group, Reed Screening, the only UK based 24/7 screening company that is family owned and works one day a week for charity, have implemented HMRC checks to validate employment histories. Any organisation that continues to rely on manual, traditional reference checking is highly exposed. The solution to reference checking is not automated reference checking, it's a more sophisticated approach which uses HMRC data, automates reference sending and chasing, has reference house flags built in, and has a way to validate referees at the same time building the reference house database. Doing only one of these things won't solve the issue. >



Increased workforce mobility poses other challenges: the availability and usefulness of international criminal record checks, the moving in and out of regulated establishments is particularly tricky for contractors who move from location to location (maintenance, electrical work, admin) who might need an Enhanced disclosure one day, no disclosure the next. How do they keep up with this? There may be issues where the location won't accept a portable disclosure (and therefore the contractor might miss out on the work).

Standards

It is frustrating all round for all workers in "high compliance" roles where DfE, Ofsted, CQC, NHS standards all have slightly different requirements. Crown Commercial Service contracts continue to require agencies to conduct face to face right to checks as they (and the NHS) believe this prevents imposter – which of course it doesn't. Not supported by the Home Office, yet a "rule" none the less which prevents streamlined supply and therefore lower waiting lists and better productivity.

A consistent set of national safer recruitment principles for all regulated roles/ establishments is needed if the UK is going to gain leadership in hiring. Time to cut ourselves from our cottage industry past. The Better Hiring Institute, proudly supported by Reed Screening, are leading on this work with the UK's first National Hiring Framework of government-endorsed, free hiring toolkits covering 80 per cent of the workforce (<https://www.betterhiringinstitute.co.uk/resource-hub/better-hiring-toolkits>).

For now, our modern ways of working pose considerable challenges for employers and workers, and the UK continues to have an incomplete response to this, but it is changing and we will get to a stage where the UK is able to lead in fast, effective, and safe hiring. ■

WHY REGULATION NEEDS TO CATCH UP WITH THE UMBRELLA SECTOR

PURGING PAYROLL PIRACY

For years, discussion around umbrella companies has been framed as a few 'Payroll Pirates' and rotten apples spoiling the bunch. But that narrative isn't an excuse. The issue isn't just rogue operators, it's the lack of a proper framework that enables malpractice to take root in the first place.

Umbrella companies play a crucial role in supporting the UK's flexible workforce, providing employment rights, payroll management, and administrative support to hundreds of thousands of contractors. Most do so responsibly. But in the absence of statutory regulation, the system remains open to abuse - and workers, recruiters, and the wider economy all suffer as a result.

The government's announcement of new regulation, set for implementation in April 2026, is a welcome step. But it must be done right. A licensing regime, as outlined in the FCSA's recent policy report, would create clear and enforceable standards. It would help end the race to the bottom and allow compliant businesses to thrive.

The challenge is two-fold: cracking down on deliberate non-compliance while also protecting workers and businesses from the unintended consequences of rushed or unclear legislation. That's why collaboration with industry is key. FCSA has long advocated for a proportionate, well-targeted regulation—one that brings certainty, consistency, and accountability to the labour supply chain.

What's been most encouraging in recent months is seeing the good 'sailors' across the industry stepping up. Umbrella companies, recruitment agencies, and trade bodies are increasingly aligning their ships together and sailing the winds towards meaningful reform. The sector knows that compliance is not a competitive disadvantage—it's the foundation of a sustainable market.

We've seen real willingness from responsible providers to engage constructively with Government and regulators, to share insights, and to lead by example. This collaboration is proof that the umbrella sector isn't resisting change—it's helping shape the future of the industry. With the right framework, our collective efforts can drive up standards, foster trust, and demonstrate the true value of compliant and ethical payroll intermediaries.

We are sailing fast towards a pivotal moment. Umbrella regulation isn't about overreach or red tape. It's about fairness. It's about ensuring that workers are protected, taxes are paid, and recruiters can trust the providers they partner with.

The time for half-measures is over. It's no longer enough to call out the Payroll Pirates. We need a system that makes it impossible for them to thrive in the first place.

Let's get this right.



THE WORLD IS YOUR OYSTER....

...but don't get clamped-down by compliance warns Tania Bowers, Global Public Policy Director.



Let's be honest, global expansion, no matter the size of your business or sector you service, has its appeals. For any staffing company looking to expand, new international locations are naturally the first step to consider. >



However, compliance on an international scale is challenging, particularly given the complex and ever-changing nature of global and local legislation, as well as the constantly evolving world of work. Here are some of the key global compliance changes that recruitment businesses need to be aware of.

Europe

The nuances in European employment compliance are significant and couldn't be covered fully in one article, however, there are recent amendments and planned changes to note. In the UK, the Employment Right Bill is, of course, the biggest news item. Having been fast-tracked through Parliament, it is set to soon go to Royal Ascent (at the time of writing, it was in the House of Lords Committee Stage).

This will be a fast moving and significant shake up of employment regulation that we will see play out for some time yet, however in its current form, the Bill isn't fit for purpose. There are elements that APSCo and other business groups are challenging, including the specifications around guaranteed hours, day one rights and the waiting period for Statutory Sick Pay.

There are other countries across Europe that are also facing significant reforms and political upheaval. In Germany, for example, there are increasingly loud discussions about a standardised inspection body for fair working conditions. There are concerns that this could lead to over-regulation in what is already a heavily regulated market – we just need to look at the complexities around contractor engagement in the country to demonstrate just how difficult the labour laws can be.

Pay transparency

For recruiters operating across Europe, the new EU Pay Transparency Directive which will come into force next year is another element to be mindful of. Under the rules, any firm with employers in a Member State will have to be prepared to disclose salary ranges to new hires as well as outlining average pay levels to current staff. Medium to large firms (any with over 100 employees) will be required to also disclose where there are pay gaps in their workforce and while it won't be a legal requirement to explain this or outline intentions to rectify this, it's likely that this will be expected.

And, of course, there is the EU AI Act which is necessitating strict regulation and transparency around the use of AI tools. For any recruitment firm operating or planning to move into EU territories, they will need to ensure any use of artificial intelligence meets the strict requirements of the Act, which includes being transparent and having safeguards in place to protect data and sensitive information. ➤

APAC

Differing countries across the APAC region have individual employment laws to be mindful of, however perhaps the most notable point that will impact recruitment is the pressure to prioritise domestic hiring and upskilling over international recruitment. A number of countries including Singapore, Hong Kong and Malaysia have restrictions in place that ensure local hires are put ahead of expats, though there are some skill-short specialisms which have fewer limitations.

There is also the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) which can help navigate some of the challenges in the domestic versus international recruitment in APAC countries. The CPTPP is a trade agreement between 12 countries; Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, Vietnam and the UK. It allows for preferential sharing of services between those member countries, which includes contract and permanent placements.

There are also in-country regulatory changes. For example, in Australia, new rules on the Right to Disconnect came into force in August 2024. This gives the rights to employees to disconnect from work and refuse contact outside of their working hours.

In Singapore, the Workplace Fairness Bill which was passed in January 2025, prohibits workplace discrimination based on age, nationality, sex, marital status, pregnancy status, caregiving responsibilities, race, religion, language, disability, and mental health conditions. Effective from April 2025, fathers of Singaporean children will receive four weeks of government-paid paternity leave, and shared parental leave will be introduced, offering six weeks for children born between April 2025 and March 2026, and ten weeks for children born on or after April 2026.

In Hong Kong the abolition of the MPF Offsetting Mechanism means that starting 1st May 2025, employers can no longer offset statutory severance or long service payment obligations using their contributions to employees' Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) accounts. A 25-year subsidy scheme will support employers during the transition. And from July 2025, the Hong Kong Stock Exchange will introduce additional diversity-related obligations for listed companies, including ensuring that the nomination committee includes at least one director of a different gender and conducting an annual assessment of the company's board diversity policy implementation. >





The Americas

It's arguably difficult to map out compliance in the Americas given the pace and sheer scale of change under the Trump administration. However, at the time of writing at least, there were a number of executive orders which look set to impact recruitment businesses that are either already operating in the States, or looking to do so in the near future.

Perhaps the most impactful one is executive Order 14173. Signed in January 2025, this order revokes previous directives requiring federal contractors to implement affirmative action programs and prohibits private organisations from conducting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) employment programmes for jobs created by federal contracts.

APSCO's stance remains that fair and equitable hiring should always be a focus for firms. Recruiters setting their sights on America should be aware, though, that they may come across differing sentiments on DEI that they will need to adapt to.

Several states, including Alaska, California, Colorado, Maine, New York, and Washington, are also set to increase their minimum wages and adjust overtime laws in 2025, which will mean that contracts will need to be renegotiated with clients.

Tackling global compliance

It's clear that there's a wealth of complex nuances when it comes to compliantly running a recruitment business across the world, and these are only set to increase as Governments attempt to regulate the modern world of work. However, the opportunities are also vast, particularly in highly skilled sectors where staff shortages are driving up demand for staffing experts internationally. Those that can navigate this landscape will be the ones that reap the rewards now and in the future. ■