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THE GLOBAL RECRUITER

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Issue 264 | December 2024



GROWING WITH PURPOSE

AWARDS REACTION
A BUDGET FOR UNCERTAINTY

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THE GLOBAL RECRUITER



WELCOME

SIMON KENT
EDITOR

It's been a year. Elections, economics, conflicts, technology, lay-offs and more – there has been little certainty in 2024 and much to understand, adapt to and sometimes make the best of for employers, and therefore recruiters. And yet the sector is still strong. It's still innovative. And it's still ready to do it all again next year.

Indeed, against the backdrop of uncertainty, the recruitment industry makes its own rules and builds its own confidence. This year has demonstrated how, whatever the circumstances, recruitment companies can build, expand, open new ventures at home and abroad. If the usual rulebook doesn't apply, the recruitment industry is ready to do it differently – concentrate on where the value lies and build something new for the good of clients, candidates and consultants.

The dynamics of the industry are unlikely to change in the New Year. 2025 will herald significant changes in the employment market and changes in compliance demands for the recruitment industry. New legislation may go up against market demand in a struggle to create and maintain the agile workforce many see as key to success. It's by no means a straight-forward path into next year, but then, have recruiters ever depended on calm and predictable markets? Perhaps we always need a challenge, a bit of fire fighting, a bit of radical thinking to drive the sector on to even greater success. ■

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The Global Recruiter is published 12 times a year by The Recruitment Network International Ltd, Unit 3 Merchant, Evgate Business Park, Station Road, Smeeth, Ashford, Kent TN25 6SX

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ISSN 2049-3401



SThree

STHREE LEADERSHIP TRANSITION IN EUROPE

SThree has appointed Rakesh Patel to the role of Managing Director – UK, France, and Belgium. This follows Tom Way stepping down after more than 20 years of dedicated service.

Rakesh has been part of SThree for 21 years, starting with the business as a trainee recruiter in 2003. Since then, he has held leadership roles including senior business manager with Huxley, and partner with Progressive before leading SThree's Customer Success, MSP and Project Services business in the UK, France, and Belgium. He brings a wealth of experience, a deep understanding of STEM sectors and of the markets in the UK, France, and Belgium.

“Stepping into the role of Managing Director for the UK, France, and Belgium is an incredible honour.” Rakesh commented. “I’m proud to be part of a team that is truly all in and consistently sets the bar for excellence. I am eager to harness our collective strengths, build partnerships, and drive initiatives that will elevate SThree across these key markets. This is a chance to think big, build on our achievements and carve out new paths that inspire progress and positive change, with a focus on deepening connections that create lasting value for our clients and candidates.”

Jelte Hacquebord, Chief Commercial Officer, SThree added: “Appointing Rakesh Patel is a crucial step for our team. His extensive experience – spanning 21 years – across multiple sectors and regions, including the UK, Europe, India, and the Middle East, along with his passion for ensuring our customers and our people remain at the heart of everything we do, position him perfectly to drive success.

“On behalf of all at SThree, I express gratitude to Tom Way for his contributions over the past two decades. We wish him the best in the next phase of his career,” added Hacquebord. “This is a time of great opportunity for SThree as we continue to evolve as a business, in line with our driving principle of being Game Changers in STEM.”

With Rakesh Patel’s appointment, SThree says it has reaffirmed a commitment to innovation and excellence in the UK, France, and Belgium. ■

GEN Z APPLY FOR TWICE AS MANY JOBS AS OLDER WORKERS

Research from Totaljobs suggests Gen Z applicants are applying for twice as many jobs as older workers before landing work. The average number of applications for those aged 18-28 is 24 compared to just 13 for Gen X and only 11 for Baby Boomers. This is in addition to research indicating that half (52 per cent) of respondents feel they are perceived as less reliable or loyal to employers due to their age.

As a result of this age-related bias, over half (56 per cent) of younger applicants have considered taking positions they are overqualified for. Totaljobs' latest report, *The Age Advantage: Overcoming Age Bias to Hire Experienced Talent*, underscores the critical need to harness the skills and knowledge of younger workers and nurture their potential.

Despite the significant skills shortage in the UK, a third (34 per cent) of young people worry they won't be able to secure a job because they are considered 'too young'. Consequently, nearly half (46 per cent) have adjusted or removed age-related information from their applications. Additionally, two-fifths (44 per cent) of Gen Z candidates report being explicitly rejected for a job due to their age, which is almost double the rate for older generations (24 per cent). This underscores the real impact of age-related bias on young people's career development.

Natalie Matalon, Chief People Officer at Totaljobs – part of The Stepstone Group – said: "Younger workers are the future of any business. Ensuring they have opportunities to gain experience and develop their skills is critical for the workforce's future. However, our research indicates that unconscious biases still prevent many businesses from fully accessing this vital talent pool.

"Businesses that embrace training and onboarding the fresh perspectives of younger workers will be better positioned to address



talent shortages and nurture a skilled workforce for the future. While it's promising that many employers already recognise the value of Gen Z, accelerating efforts to build more inclusive recruitment practices will unlock even more growth opportunities for both businesses and individuals."

Nearly three in five (59 per cent) HR decision-makers admit to making assumptions about candidates based on age, with 51 per cent agreeing that younger candidates' applications are often dismissed due to perceived lack of work ethic. Additionally, nearly half (47 per cent) believe that a candidate's age influences their 'cultural fit' within an organisation.

For those aged 35 and under who have changed jobs in the past three years or are currently job hunting, significant challenges have emerged: 46 per cent have faced inappropriate age-related questions, and over half (58 per cent) felt that workplace culture favoured more experienced applicants.

As a result of these challenges, almost a third (30 per cent) of under-35s hesitate to apply for jobs because they believe they are too young.

"Businesses have the tools to tackle these biases and create more inclusive hiring processes," Natalie Matalon added. "Whether it's using AI to identify biased language in job ads, forming age-diverse hiring panels, or shifting from 'cultural fit' to 'cultural add' when assessing candidates, there are many positive and proactive steps businesses can implement to tackle this issue. The organisations that act now will not only gain access to a broader, more diverse talent pool, but also take an active part in developing workers' essential skills and experience. Giving opportunities to younger workers also makes businesses more attractive, improving retention, creating a stronger long-term workplace." ■



ASPIRE APPOINTS NEW HEAD OF TALENT

International recruitment agency Aspire is thrilled to announce the appointment of Meg Rayner as Head of Talent focussed on early careers and office support. This addition to Aspire's leadership team further underscores the company's commitment to providing unparalleled recruitment expertise while fostering a culture that attracts top talent in the industry.

Meg brings with her over 21 years of experience at the Adecco Group, where she held multiple roles, including UK Operations Manager. During her tenure, she was responsible for a quarter of Adecco's UK business and led award-winning branch networks across the East Midlands, East of England and the South East, showcasing her ability to drive large-scale recruitment success.

"We are delighted to welcome Meg to Aspire," said Terry Payne, Aspire's Global Managing Director. "She joins a growing number of experienced recruitment professionals who see Aspire as their next step, largely due to our distinctive culture. Meg's expertise in large-scale recruitment makes her the perfect leader to grow our Aspiring Talent and Office Support divisions. I'm excited to see the incredible impact she will undoubtedly have in helping us shape the careers of countless individuals."

Aspire, which launched its graduate recruitment company in 1993, has been a passionate advocate for helping people start their careers. Over the decades, the agency has supported thousands of individuals, not just university graduates but also those who took alternative pathways into the workforce. This broad focus is a defining characteristic of the Aspiring Talent division, ensuring inclusivity and opportunity for all emerging talent.

"Joining Aspire feels like the perfect fit," said Rayner. "The company's culture and reputation drew me in, and I'm thrilled to work alongside Terry and the talented team here. My passion has always been about helping people take their first steps into the world of work, whether they've been to university or not. The opportunity to grow the Aspiring Talent as well as Office Support divisions and make a difference in people's lives is incredibly exciting."

Aspire's dedication to nurturing talent at all levels reflects its ongoing mission to bridge the gap between opportunity and ambition. The addition of Meg Rayner to the team signifies an exciting new chapter for the company as it continues to lead in connecting businesses with new talent. ■

MANPOWERGROUP ANNOUNCES 'CHRIMBO LIMBO'



UK employers are holding the line on their hiring plans for the New Year, according to data from the ManpowerGroup Employment Outlook Survey. The report suggests overall hiring intentions for Q1 (January – March) 2025 have become stagnant.

The Net Employment Outlook, a measure of business hiring confidence, stands at +28 per cent – unchanged since last quarter and has decreased by one percentage point on the year. The Outlook is calculated by surveying 2,000+ UK businesses about their recruitment plans for the next business quarter.

“Businesses have been paralysed by the recent Budget announcement, just as they were post-COVID,” commented Michael Stull, Managing Director, ManpowerGroup UK. “There is a strong appetite to grow, but the new government’s actions have thrown the labour market into yet another period of uncertainty. Businesses have been waiting to see signs of the economy kicking into gear, but the government has yet to give business the confidence to go ahead with plans for growth.

“Our analysis shows the increase in National Insurance contributions could cost employers as much as 33 per cent more for each lower wage worker from April next year,” added Stull, “With dissatisfaction rising on this issue, we’re expecting wage growth to decline next year as the changing costs are indirectly passed onto employees.”

ManpowerGroup’s data shows of the businesses who plan to hire, the volume of employers intending to hire for business growth has been almost static across 2024. While employers’ appetite to hire remains strong, their confidence to actually go ahead and make new appointments is stalling and not translating into action.

“Combined with changing workplace policies, we’ve raised concerns alongside the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC) that proposed changes to zero hours contract rules for agency workers will negatively affect employment opportunities and protections for agency workers. While we’re fully supportive of maintaining strict regulations for employment businesses, we believe this proposed policy will severely impact the flexibility of our labour. The impacts will lead to a further slowdown in hiring with knock-on consequences for productivity and the economy,” Stull added.

ManpowerGroup’s survey of employee perspectives, Global Talent Barometer, recently found that one in four UK employees feel at risk of unemployment in the next six months; 24 per cent believe they are likely to be forced to leave their current job in the next six months, and 25 per cent are not confident they could find another job that met their needs in the next six months.

“The needs of employees and employers are diverging, with clashes around flexibility and wage negotiations. But they also share common ground in holding their nerve; both sides standing still before making any definitive plans for the New Year.” Stull continued.

“Our recommendation for both parties is to keep investing in skills. If you can diversify your own personal skills by joining a training course or upskill within your current role, make sure you take advantage. For employers, it’s worth being aware that one in three British workers are telling us they don’t feel they have sufficient opportunities for promotion or movement to achieve their career goals. It’s really important to act on this feedback and not become fully consumed by the shifting sands of cost increases and skills gaps – not doing so will only create a more challenging situation.” ■



RECRUITERS SOUND ALARM ON EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS BILL

As key consultations on the Employment Rights Bill end, the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC) has warned that the Employment Rights Bill is 'undercooked' and needs changes. With businesses already struggling with rising costs, the REC urges further change to avoid the measures stifling opportunity.

The REC comments come as MPs continue to scrutinise the Employment Rights Bill at Committee in Parliament next week. And as a recent report from the Regulatory Policy Committee (RPC) rates the government's impact assessment of the Employment Rights Bill as 'not fit for purpose', The Employment Lawyers Association (ELA) suggesting the Bill could 'swamp business' and may not achieve better conditions for workers, and The London Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) survey showing firms predicting the upcoming Employment Rights Bill would have a significant impact on their operations

"At a time when our research shows that the flexible labour market really works for Britain, especially when times are uncertain, it is worrying that some of these proposed changes put those benefits at risk for both businesses and workers," said Shazia Ejaz, REC Director of Campaigns and Research. "A dynamic labour market is the best way of keeping the labour share of income high, as the relatively stronger performance of the UK by comparison to UK competitors shows.

"Recruiters across the country are keen to work with the government to protect our jobs market, but this Bill is undercooked. Major revisions to the Bill are necessary to ensure that the Plan to Make Work Pay will succeed at protecting workers and growing the economy."

The government is introducing measures to tackle one-sided flexibility in zero-hours contracts through a right to guaranteed hours with a contract that reflects the number of hours regularly worked, and a right to reasonable notice of shifts with payment for shifts cancelled or curtailed at short notice. The REC appreciates the reasons for greater protections for directly employed workers but applying it to temps working through agencies is wholly unnecessary given their separate framework of rights under the Conduct of Employment Agencies and Employment Business Regulations 2003 and the Agency Workers Regulations.

Ejaz commented: "Government wants to apply these rights to agency workers to avoid evasion by a few rogue employers switching away from direct employment. We are more concerned about the million temps who went to work this morning and protecting their opportunities. The plans are using a hammer to crack a nut. Agency workers are well protected by law already and choose to work flexibly; exempting agency workers from the new rules is a simple way to make the law changes work without unnecessarily upending the temporary labour market. Fears of a loophole created by such a carve-out for agency workers are exaggerated, as businesses will still need to maintain a pool of directly engaged staff to effectively manage their resources and staff workloads.

"When someone chooses to work through an agency, they understand the temporary nature of their role. Guaranteeing their hours after 12 weeks on assignment, or to provide 'reasonable notice' of shifts isn't within the gift of an agency. There are alternatives to this that could be delivered within the framework of existing agency regulations, and the REC is ready to work with government on this."

Fire and rehire

The government is seeking views on measures to strengthen the collective redundancy framework and protections for employees against fire and rehire practices. REC strongly supports the principle of the government's reforms in this area, but it has concerns about the method and detail of the government's proposals.

"Fire-and-rehire practices are not an appropriate way to manage staff outside the most extreme scenarios, but it is important that dismissal and re-engagement remains available in some way as a necessary tool for businesses," said Shazia. "The government should focus on strengthening the existing Code of Practice rather than pushing through rigid primary legislation that could present a higher bar to essential business restructuring than they intend. The previous government worked in close partnership with businesses to develop this Code, ensuring it reflects real business needs. It offers clear, practical guidance for managing significant changes in a way that works for both employers and employees." ■

A BUDGET FOR UNCERTAINTY

Crawford Temple, CEO and founder of Professional Passport, looks at what the budget could mean for recruiters.



Faced with a black hole of £22bn in the Treasury's coffers, the Chancellor made some sweeping announcements in the Budget last month in a bid to fill the gap – and the temporary workers market didn't get off scot-free. The Autumn Budget brought with it a raft of significant changes that are set to reshape our industry, although many details remain unclear and are little more than headlines and attention grabbers at this stage. As recruitment agencies grapple with these developments, several critical areas demand careful attention and strategic planning. >



The Immediate Impact

The increase in Employers' National Insurance contributions will directly impact umbrella workers' take-home pay, as these costs are built into the uplift rate provided to umbrella companies as their income. As employment costs rise, the amount available for workers' pay naturally decreases. This creates another cliff-edge scenario for workers' income, reminiscent of what the sector experienced during the Off-Payroll Legislation implementation. Despite industry warnings about potential consequences, including a proliferation of tax avoidance schemes, the legislation was passed.

And the warnings and predictions also came to pass. The industry is still reeling from an explosion of schemes offering workers significantly smaller income reductions compared to legally compliant arrangements. HMRC acknowledges the problems, consistently highlighting concerns about tax avoidance in the market, particularly regarding mini-umbrellas. So, the announcement in the Budget to increase the employment allowance threshold is, in my opinion, counterintuitive. It is this change that actually provides greater incentives for mini-umbrella schemes at a time when HMRC's enforcement activities in this sector have been notably lacking. The floodgates are set to open once again.

A Shifting Landscape

Perhaps the most significant headline to hit the Budget headlines is that recruitment companies and end clients will become responsible for ensuring correct PAYE application when using third-party intermediaries like umbrella companies. However, the devil is always in the detail, and currently, that detail is not yet clear and we are engaging with policymakers to share our views. >



One concerning trend that is emerging is where HMRC and the Treasury, struggling with compliance and enforcement, are shifting responsibility onto the market itself. This approach essentially forces the sector into self-regulation thus providing HMRC with a route to recover debts where direct enforcement has failed.

This strategy is, in my opinion, very dangerous as it once again empowers those willing to flout the rules and design schemes that HMRC struggles to monitor. The result? Compliant companies suffer commercially while rule-breakers flourish, creating a race to the bottom.

HMRC already holds all the intelligence it needs to identify schemes operating in the sector. Employment Intermediary reports combined with Real Time Information (RTI) data provide the perfect solution to identify schemes and shut them down. The fundamental question remains unanswered: If HMRC already possesses data but struggles to utilise it effectively, how can transferring this responsibility to the general market possibly lead to better outcomes? It is a worrying trend for all UK businesses.

The suggestion that actions such as these are needed to achieve compliance in the market does no more than confirm HMRC's incompetence in fulfilling its primary mandate to collect the taxes due. For years we have had changes underpinned by statements suggesting that they will 'level the playing field' when in reality they have done the absolute opposite.

What's particularly concerning is the apparent lack of learning. New announcements continue to emerge, seemingly divorced from any recognition of past failures or understanding of what actually works in practice. The focus appears to be on creating new rules and penalties rather than improving the efficiency of existing systems. >



Looking to the Future

Previous attempts at market regulation offer valuable lessons. Consider the Supervision, Direction and Control tests in the construction sector, where agencies held liability for falsely self-employed workers. Despite these measures, enforcement cases have been virtually non-existent, rendering the rules meaningless over time.

Whatever fine details emerge about the recently announced changes for 2026, one thing is clear: without proactive enforcement and swift action for non-compliance, compliant businesses will again bear the burden. Meanwhile, promoters of disguised remuneration and tax avoidance schemes will likely continue to outmanoeuvre HMRC, generating significant profits while leaving others to deal with the aftermath.

For these changes to achieve their intended impact, HMRC must modernise its approach and significantly enhance its enforcement capabilities. Without such improvements, we risk repeating past patterns where well-intentioned reforms inadvertently penalise those operating within the rules while failing to catch those who deliberately circumvent them.

Only through balanced regulation and consistent enforcement can we create a truly level playing field that rewards compliance.

HMRC needs to wake up, enter the 21st Century and up its game. ■



BEST SMALL RECRUITMENT BUSINESS

THE GLOBAL RECRUITER INDUSTRY AWARDS

An event to remember and an event to inspire

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20 simplicity
YEARS IN BUSINESS

At an exciting, uplifting and inspiring awards ceremony on 20th November at The Steel Yard, London, The Global Recruiter shone a light on the best of the best in the recruitment industry for 2024. A packed and excited venue heard from host, The Global Recruiter's Gary King, about the achievements of the industry, before getting stuck into the handing out of trophies marking the great, the good and the exceptional from all parts of the recruitment industry.

Perhaps it was a mark of the tough year just gone, perhaps it was the significance of the event, but this years' winners were clearly elated and moved by the recognition afforded to them by these awards. After all, The Global Recruiter Awards are like no other and bring particular satisfaction with them: these have been created by the industry, for the industry, judged by industry leaders and set on a level playing field, where newcomer can go head-to-head with established business, where innovation, value, and quality always wins out.

"Winning the Best Marketing Campaign award at The Global Recruiter Awards is a significant moment for us at Buchanan," said Harry Pledger, Digital Marketing Manager at the company. "It's a reflection of our team's creativity, collaboration, and commitment to delivering impactful campaigns that resonate within the legal sector." >



Pledger said their winning campaign had been a true team effort, combining industry insights, innovative ideas, and high-quality content to drive engagement and elevate their brand's presence.

"This recognition has energised us to continue innovating and striving for excellence in our marketing efforts," he added. "We're excited to see what next year holds and look forward to returning to the Global Recruiter Awards – hopefully to win some more!"

Hayley Pugh, Director of Oakley Recruitment was also keen to demonstrate how their award for Best Newcomer has been the result of a great team effort: "Winning this award fills us with immense pride and gratitude," she said. "It's a reflection of the passion and heart we've poured into building Oakley Recruitment, driven by our vision to create something truly special. This achievement is a testament to our incredible team their dedication, talent, and shared commitment to fostering a culture where people thrive and grow. This recognition not only validates our journey but inspires us to aim even higher as we continue to blossom together."

"We are incredibly proud and honoured to be recognised as the Best Start-Up Agency at the Global Recruiter Awards 2024," said Annalisa Girgenti, Operation and Strategy Manager at Pivotal Partners, "especially within our first year. From day one, we set out with a bold vision to become the leading GTM partner to build the best sales and technical teams for the best software vendors globally."

"It's great to see our hard work and dedication celebrated on such a prestigious platform," Girgenti added. "This recognition fuels our passion to keep pushing boundaries and redefining what's possible in recruitment. Here's to the journey ahead!" >

"We're ecstatic to be named the Best Employer Brand for 2024 by The Global Recruiter," said Rebecca Lauder-Fletcher, Head of Marketing at SGI Group. "This award is an amplification of our team, our culture and the tech community that we proudly serve."

"At SGI, we are committed to unlocking the full potential of our team members and pushing beyond the ordinary in everything we do. It is an honour that means a lot to every individual here that collectively makes SGI the amazing place it is."

Adam Marsh, CEO, of Best Client Service award winners, Xcede Group said their award highlighted the trust and collaboration the company had built with their clients. "It reinforces our commitment to going above and beyond in everything we do," he said. "This recognition belongs to every member of our team who works tirelessly to deliver excellence."

Danny Brooks MBE, CEO of VHR was particularly proud having received two award wins and a highly commended – for Best Innovation, Best RPO and Best UK-Overseas Operation respectively. "It reflects the hard work and dedication of our team in connecting skilled individuals with opportunities across the world," Brooks said. "At VHR, we're passionate about making a positive difference for our clients and candidates, and this recognition inspires us to keep doing what we do best – creating opportunities and building lasting partnerships globally."

Finally, Adam Tobias, Cofounder, Inventum Group said everyone at their business were thrilled to win the Best ED&I Strategy in a Recruitment Company Award. "This is recognition of a huge amount of hard work from the whole team who are absolutely dedicated to our inclusive recruitment mission," he said. "For us, inclusive recruitment is about ensuring ethical recruitment practices, helping our clients to mitigate business risk, and support the development of a high-performance culture."

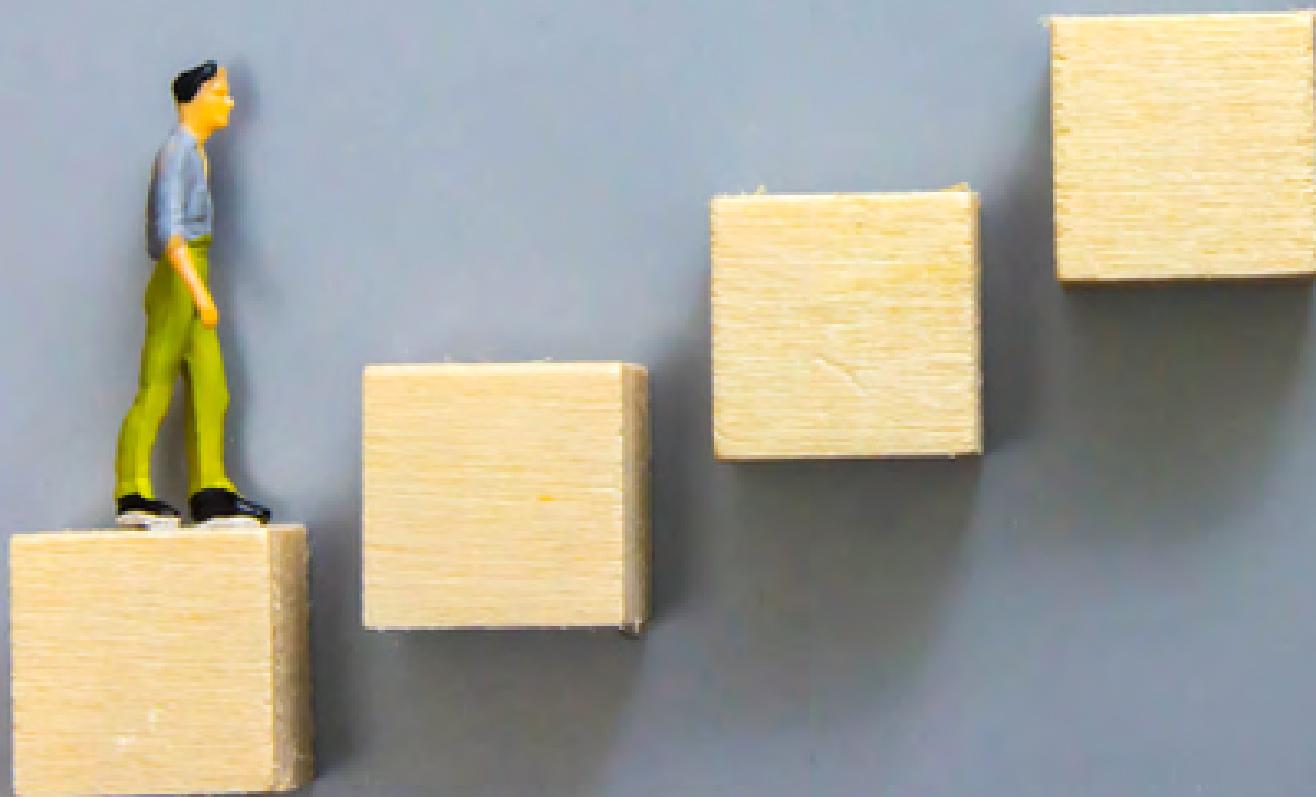
"We have dedicated significant resources and effort over a long period time to develop our inclusive recruitment processes, and we're so proud of them that we actually train other recruitment companies with our CPD accredited Inclusive Recruiter Training program," he said. "We don't see these organisations as rivals, rather as collaborators in changing antiquated processes and helping job seekers and clients to benefit from the power of inclusive recruitment."

While identifying and rewarding outstanding practice among recruiters in the industry, The Global Recruiter Awards have the effect of bringing the industry closer together. It's a chance to understand exactly the value of all recruiters and recruitment businesses, to share achievements and ideas, and drive the industry further in the future. ■



GROWING WITH PURPOSE

Miles Lloyd, Co-Founder, Northstar People discusses building enterprise value through profitability and sustainability.



The recruitment industry has always been a fairly accurate barometer for the bigger economic picture. As such recruitment business leaders are well used to responding to the ups and downs of market conditions and have the resilience, tenacity and fortitude to deal with volatility. >



However, the current and continued downturn and challenging uncertainty led market conditions of the past 12-24 months has started to get many reflecting and really starting to question themselves about the suitability of their current recruitment agency business model.

Reflective practice is great learning, but it's what we do about these lessons learned beyond reflective words and emotions which matters. So looking ahead we have a very stark choice in front of us:

1. Carry on doing it pretty much the way we have always done it, work hard and hope that it pays off – and that the wheels don't come off when the next big downturn comes.
2. Find a way to build the business with clear focus on creating wealth in the shorter term, building resilient enterprise value for the medium and longer term.

It's not just about the above though, it's the impact and benefits of the approach you take that really matters to all the stakeholders in the business – owners, managers, employees, clients, candidates, suppliers, and so on... what do I mean by this?

Well, a business that is without clarity of purpose, no clear destination, no plan, no structured approach, lacks consistency on its processes, is always busy being busy, encouraging people to do more to drive increase in results... is a business that often feels to many in and around it that the business is not in control as it lurches from opportunity to opportunity and problem to problem. It's often an environment with lots of ideas and initiatives that aren't executed well or fully with lots of loose ends and things that start but seems to disappear, leaving people scratching their heads wondering what happened to that last big important thing that now been replaced (and likely to be replaced by something else every few months).

So what does good looks like? What is good growth and what are some tools and techniques that can be deployed to enable recruitment leaders and their agencies to be the very best versions of themselves?

A Good Place to Start - A Clear Purpose, Vision, Strategy & Plan

- Firstly: We always work to understand drivers and motivators of the individuals of where they've come from, where they are now and where they want to be down the line. This is true for them as individuals, so that when we approach the task in hand, we have an approach tailored to meet their needs. >

Secondly: We need to know what we want success to look like financially at the end of the journey, so we need a clear success destination anchored back to and enterprise value we are going to build the business to. It's not about deciding now what the exit will be but let's make sure we are aware of what our more likely exit options might be and what we will need the business to look like financially and on financially to maximise that enterprise value.

- There are several factors that will contribute to enterprise value, but let's be brutally honest, it's going to be predominantly about history of and future underlying profitability, sustainability of revenue from products that produce recurring revenue, management and project fees, long term contracts with a spread of quality clients, good remaining management team and quality infrastructure.
- Thirdly: We work with businesses via our 4-step approach to Strategy & Planning to then bring together everything into one simple and powerful output, which we call the 'Business Trajectory Roadmap'.

Now we are clear on what success needs to look like, now to - How do we plan to grow?

We can just have organic growth and keep doing what we've always done and where we've always done it, or we can think about maybe expanding, but where, when and

how? We can look at innovating products and solutions, but again, what first and how?

We like to break this down into two aspects, as both are critical and NOT mutually exclusive:

- Buyers, Clients/Prospects, Markets
- Products, Services, Solutions

Why do we unpack the business in this way? Well, it's a case of unpacking it to understand it, and once we understand it fully and have explored both Area's for Improvement and Opportunities to Explore, then we can repack it in a meaningful way with a clear Go To Market approach.

As I said earlier, if you can't honestly reply with certainty around most of these then there is serious work to do to give yourself real focus on BD for 2025. Give BD structure with SMART target and objectives that are outcome focussed as oppose to activity focussed, and then with such a plan and approach it can be executed, reviewed, tweaked and follow that Plan/Do/Check/Act approach and you have a nice circle of continuous improvement around BD for 2025.

Products, Services, Solutions

Recruitment agencies need to become regarded by businesses not as simple suppliers but as value adding partners. The industry needs to do more to be consultative in its approach and become more solutions provider and business enabler than putting a bum on a seat and maybe getting paid for it. >





Contingent placement models are not great to build a business on, enterprise value is suppressed and the recruitment agency built on a virtual no-win no-fee feast or famine model has super high highs but God damn dreadful low lows and is a victim of its own model.

So, start to think about building products and services and solutions that genuinely add more value and deal with your client's pain points. Did you know that 'perm recruitment' can and should be way more than contingent and retained? There's contingent, committed, retained, subscription and RPO!

Other than contingent all these have varying levels of guaranteed fee income, recurring revenue, management fees and you can build a business and enterprise value with a proper suite of perm products. If you don't offer these someone else will and is and you'll lose opportunity and maybe your client. So think about innovating now!

Building a non-perm revenue stream is always advantageous, with white collar contract business a lot more attractive to the recruitment agency enterprise value than temps is but a good solid temp revenue stream is not to be sniffed at, with the ideal natural progression of both of these being a Managed Service Provision (MSP) for clients due to the long term contracted nature of an MSP solution.

It's not about doing all these things at once, but thinking about what we do now, what could we do going forward and why? What's the cost and risk of doing anything, but also NOT doing anything? So a little bit of cost risk analysis always good before jumping in on anything that is change, as change done well is transformational but change done bad is a disaster.

Do more than just more of the same for 2025. ■

For more info: <https://northstarpeople.com>.

Or book time in Miles' diary at: <https://zcal.co/mileslloyd/40minteams>

EFFECTIVE PLANNING

Vickie Collinge, Associate Director, BlueSky PR says if you're after world domination, get your marketing in order first.



Let's address the elephant in the room; 2024 has been a bit of a disappointing year for far too many reasons. But, it's almost over and the recruitment sector waits with bated breath for what many commentators suggest will be a more positive 2025 (a sentiment I agree with for the time being). Indeed, we're seeing a growing number of recruitment businesses planning for growth next year, whether that's geographically, moving into new sectors or expanding current ventures. Effective marketing and communications will be critical to cementing these plans for the New Year. Here are a few crucial tips to getting this right for 2025. >



Get your strategy in order

The lead up to the New Year is a perfect time to reassess your marketing and communications strategy and set clear goals and targets for the year ahead (though today's agile world will necessitate regular reviews and updates of this). With any recruitment business growth plans, it is vital to get marketing – either in house teams or an external agency – involved from the get go. There's absolutely no point putting plans on paper to expand the business, then bringing marketing in at the last minute, only to discover that delivering against these new goals will require investment in new webpages, additional advertising streams, new databases, extra content and more that hasn't been budgeted for.

Rebuild your personas

Building on this point, it is critical to rebuild your target personas, whether that's for candidates, prospects or investors. Given how much the corporate and consumer landscapes have changed this year and are likely to in 2025, what motivates and engages these audiences and, indeed, what communications channels resonate with them will have undoubtedly changed.

As we continue to see HR and procurement teams collaborate more, there's also likely to be a shift in which of these groups you need to proactively engage with. This is going to be increasingly pertinent as the Employment Rights Bill progresses over the next few years, which will only increase the variation of stakeholders you'll need to get buy in from.

Given how much the legislative landscape is changing in recruitment, the messaging that will land well with each group is also adapting. What this all means is that even if you're planning to expand your business through current revenue streams, you will need to reassess what marketing and communications will work best with your existing networks. As already alluded to, change is the norm now, and your marketing needs to adapt to this.

Be vocal, be opinionated

Several years ago, sales messages worked well for recruitment agencies. Now, though, more savvy audiences that are overwhelmed with too much information from a plethora of channels are ignoring anything remotely promotional. That means that the power of advertising is, to some extent, diminishing.

What is breaking through this noise, though, are opinions, views and advice. This article is, itself, a prime example. I'm giving away knowledge for free, rather than boasting about what I can do. This thought leadership style of content will make people stand up and listen. That's not to say that advertising is dead, though! But rather that as a standalone, it can't deliver against all of your growth plans. >

Pick your platforms wisely

This is a recommendation that has come up in conversations for far too long in my view, yet we still see some staffing businesses taking the “spray and pray” approach to communicating. Putting messages out on every platform you can think of, in an array of formats is, quite frankly, a waste of money and resource.

If there's one thing you focus on for 2025, make it quality over quantity. One truly hard-hitting piece of content will deliver far better ROI than posts on every conceivable social media channel, a blog, a newsletter, a web post, a press release, a video and a webinar.

Yes, repurpose content that you can when it makes sense to. But don't try to do everything at once (are your prospects likely to be on Tik Tok, for example?). This is particularly pertinent when you're looking at raising your profile in new remits to support expansion plans. Going all guns blazing with marketing and communications activity for a new sector, for example, will have two core impacts. First, it looks desperate and will likely draw attention to the fact that up until now, your brand was a relative unknown in that remit, raising questions around your capabilities. Secondly, it detracts resources from your ‘bread and butter’ clients, potentially damaging strong relationships and reputations that you've built your business on already.

Get the team on board

Corporate marketing and communications activity can arguably only do so much.

Recruitment is a people business, and it's your recruiters and consultants who will be able to elevate your brand into new realms. However, getting buy-in from teams has always been one of the biggest struggles for recruitment marketing. Pressure from the top down can help, but the reality is, business leaders need to educate their people on the importance of personal branding, not just for the company's benefit, but also their own career development.

And I'm not just talking about getting them to share something on LinkedIn. They are fundamentally the connection your firm has with prospects. What they have to say beyond the sales message really does matter. As you're developing your growth plans for 2025, consider who you can lean on in the team as subject matter experts. Remember that this doesn't have to come with seniority. I've seen division heads claim they are industry experts, only to swiftly discover that is the middle managers and delivery teams who have the knowledge and the connections that are needed to build strong, meaningful content for marketing and communications.

I won't deny that the next 12 months are likely to be full of new and emerging challenges, but the tides have seemingly started to turn for recruiters. There's a wealth of opportunities still out there to capitalise on, but doing so needs the right marketing and communications approach. ■



LIFE ACROSS THE POND

Ann Swain, Global CEO of APSCo discussing making the move into the US market



The United States has long been seen as the bellwether of the recruitment market. The trends we see across the pond tend to indicate the direction of travel for the UK's hiring landscape, which gives staffing companies the insight to be able to react swiftly. But the US itself is also a prime location for recruitment businesses. >



Aside from the obvious opportunities given the sheer number of States to operate in, setting up operations in the US makes absolute business sense for a vast number of firms. In fact, in our recent trade delegation to Miami and Austin – where we were joined by multiple APSCo members, all looking to move into the US – we were privy to multiple statistics that simply make it a no-brainer to launch a recruitment business in America.

Tapping into the opportunities

In fact, Amy Davies, Managing Director of APSCo Trusted Partner, PCG Group, shared a number of interesting comparisons between the US and the UK (based on data from PCG Group and Staffing Industry Analysts), that were eye-opening to say the least. If we look at the saturation of the recruitment market, despite the size of America, there are fewer staffing businesses in the country than in the UK (27k+ versus 33K+).

The size of the staffing market in the States is naturally far greater than the UK (\$184.6 billion compared to \$58.2 billion). Perhaps more importantly for recruiters, though, the margins are significantly larger as well. While on average you'd expect to see 15-20 per cent margins in the United Kingdom, for the US, 25-45 per cent is the norm.

Prepare for the complexity

However, while the US is a prime market for growing recruitment businesses, it is also hugely complex, and firms shouldn't go it alone when making the all-important first steps. The nuances in tax and employment legislation across federal, state and local levels, for example, are extensive, which creates a level of risk that staffing firms cannot ignore. Then there's the vast cultural differences in each State that can create language and recruitment barriers for staffing companies. >



The sheer scale of some States is also so significant that it creates additional challenges. In fact, we had a member of the Bush family, George P. Bush, provide an insight on the Texas economy and its employment law. Given that the “Texas Triangle” consists of three major metro areas (Dallas–Fort Worth, Austin–San Antonio corridor and Houston) and is 2.8 times the size of the UK, it’s geographically challenging for any firm planning to go into the market.

But Texas is also one of the locations growing in popularity for relocation for both people and businesses. The State is seeing domestic migration increasing from California, Florida and Illinois to name just a few examples. Data shared by the Department for Business & Trade during the trade delegation also showed that Texas has now overtaken New York in terms of the number of citizens employed in finance and insurance. Indeed, the Texas Stock Exchange is set to begin trading next year.

What to consider

From the conversations during the trade delegation and the data shared, it’s evidently clear that the question recruiters are asking isn’t ‘if’ they should expand into the States, but rather how and where they should go. Now, this isn’t the first time that we’ve taken our members across the pond for such an event. That means we’re able to track and monitor how the market is changing.

What really stood out in this latest event is the nuances in the locations that are growing in appeal as base locations for staffing firms. Historically, New York and other metro centres were the target areas for headquarters. Now, though, there’s been a significant shift in the market. People are moving out of metropolitan areas and into the suburbs of Charlotte, Austin and Florida, for example.

That means that there are not only a growing number of candidates and clients to target in these new popular destinations, but the recruiters that firms will want to hire on the ground are also less likely to be found in some of the more traditional locations. This latter point is arguably more crucial for staffing companies than identifying where clients are primarily based. Without the right people on the ground to get the business up and running, businesses will fail. >

As such, firms considering launching operations in the US should be asking themselves, in order of priority:

1. Where is your leader going to be happy living?
2. Where can you hire and retain people to grow your business?
3. Where are most of your target clients headquartered?

It may seem unusual given that the hybrid conundrum still hangs over the US market, however the shifts that have been noted in domestic migration make it far more critical for staffing companies to first consider where they can find their own talent, before looking at their client base.

Making an informed decision

It's impossible to condense everything recruiters need to know about the US market in one article, however what should be evident is that America is a prime location for growth. With the right approach in terms of location and talent attraction for the business itself, recruitment leaders can really thrive and capitalise on what is a prime location. ■



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THE TECHNOLOGY TO EXPAND

Ankur Anand, CIO, Nash Squared, owners of global technology recruiter, Harvey Nash discusses how technology can be configured to support growth.



It's often said that all companies are technology companies now. It's an organisation's technology systems that enable it to operate efficiently, interact with customers, connect and collaborate internally, and track and monitor progress against key targets and goals. >



Technology can also be crucial in helping a business expand – whether that's organic growth as business volumes increase, or growth through acquiring another company in a different region or country.

Certainly, this is something we have experienced ourselves at Nash Squared, which consists of a number of different businesses in the technology and talent space, including our technology-focused recruitment company Harvey Nash. Through acquisition and organic growth, the group continues to expand.

We couldn't have done this without a strong focus on developing a coherent and consistent technology strategy. The same will be true for recruitment businesses across specialisms and geographies.

A playbook of key principles

My advice is to start by creating a playbook for technology that covers all the core functions of the recruitment business – marketing, sales, operations, finance – articulating the strategic approach and establishing key principles. The first principle should be a commitment to investing in best-in-class solutions, taking a cloud-first stance, and utilising software as a service (SaaS) platforms.

The playbook should also establish a second fundamental principle, which is that the default position is to take a standardised approach. Key activities in core functions should be managed through common technology systems, processes and delivery models.

This is the approach we have taken at Harvey Nash. Across the business, there is one CRM, one candidate ATS (application tracking system), one common digital platform, and common middle office and back office processes too (such as for timesheets or contract management or financials).

A third principle is that there should be a centralised technology capability in the parent location that owns the technology strategy, controls and drives the development of the technology stack and builds a common delivery model. This in itself helps drive standardisation and will lead to far-reaching benefits in the future as the business scales and becomes more complex in its structure and constituent parts. >

Then there is data. It should be a priority to invest in high-quality data and analytics tools and capabilities, as having robust, accurate and timely data is key to decision making. Businesses that don't invest in good data and analytics are setting themselves up to fail.

Fixed vs flexible components

As I have already outlined, standardisation is a key principle – but that doesn't mean that absolutely every aspect of every function must be handled the same way from a technology point of view. Rather, it is about establishing a fixed vs flexible model. This clearly articulates which processes and features are non-negotiable (fixed) for everyone to follow, and which processes there can be some flexibility over.

Flexible components are most likely to be where there are local regulatory or compliance requirements that need to be met. A good example of this is data privacy and confidentiality where, in addition to respecting the GDPR, there are often local country requirements. Another example is the pay bill (paying contractors) – there may need to be flexibility over which payroll provider is used as there are varying regulations surrounding payroll in different jurisdictions.

A further area might be aspects of sales. Whilst there should be one CRM, one ATS and common sales dashboards, flexibility may be prudent in terms of how sales teams engage and build relationships with clients and prospects (face-to-face vs email/remote, for example) due to the differing customs and preferences in different parts of the world.

Another aspect where flexibility can be accommodated is in network support. In our experience, it is most effective to give local operations the leeway to choose their 'hands and feet' support provider due to differing market conditions and relationships. A centralised approach here is unlikely to provide the agility and responsiveness needed.

Investment in people

A further principle – and a critical differentiator in maximising results – is investing in people. This can be the difference between success and failure. Implementing comprehensive upskilling and reskilling plans ensures that employees are equipped with the necessary skills to leverage new technologies effectively. This not only enhances productivity but also fosters innovation and adaptability within the workforce. >





Pitfalls to avoid

If these are the principles behind a technology strategy that supports and enables business expansion, there are also some common pitfalls to watch out for.

The first of these is to make sure that your business KPIs are defined in the same way across the board. It is easy for some 'definition creep' to work its way in. But if KPIs are defined or interpreted differently in different countries or offices, they can quickly become almost redundant. Be vigilant to ensure consistency in your KPIs: how they are defined, how they measured, and how they are reported.

A second common pitfall is to overlook the importance of change management. The technology journey is not only about technology – it's about communication and engagement, too. Make sure you have a thorough change management strategy that considers the human elements of the transition at hand. People will understandably become resistant if they don't see the benefits of a change and in particular how it will make their own life better. Put sufficient time and effort into a change management and communication plan, especially for major parts of the transformation journey.

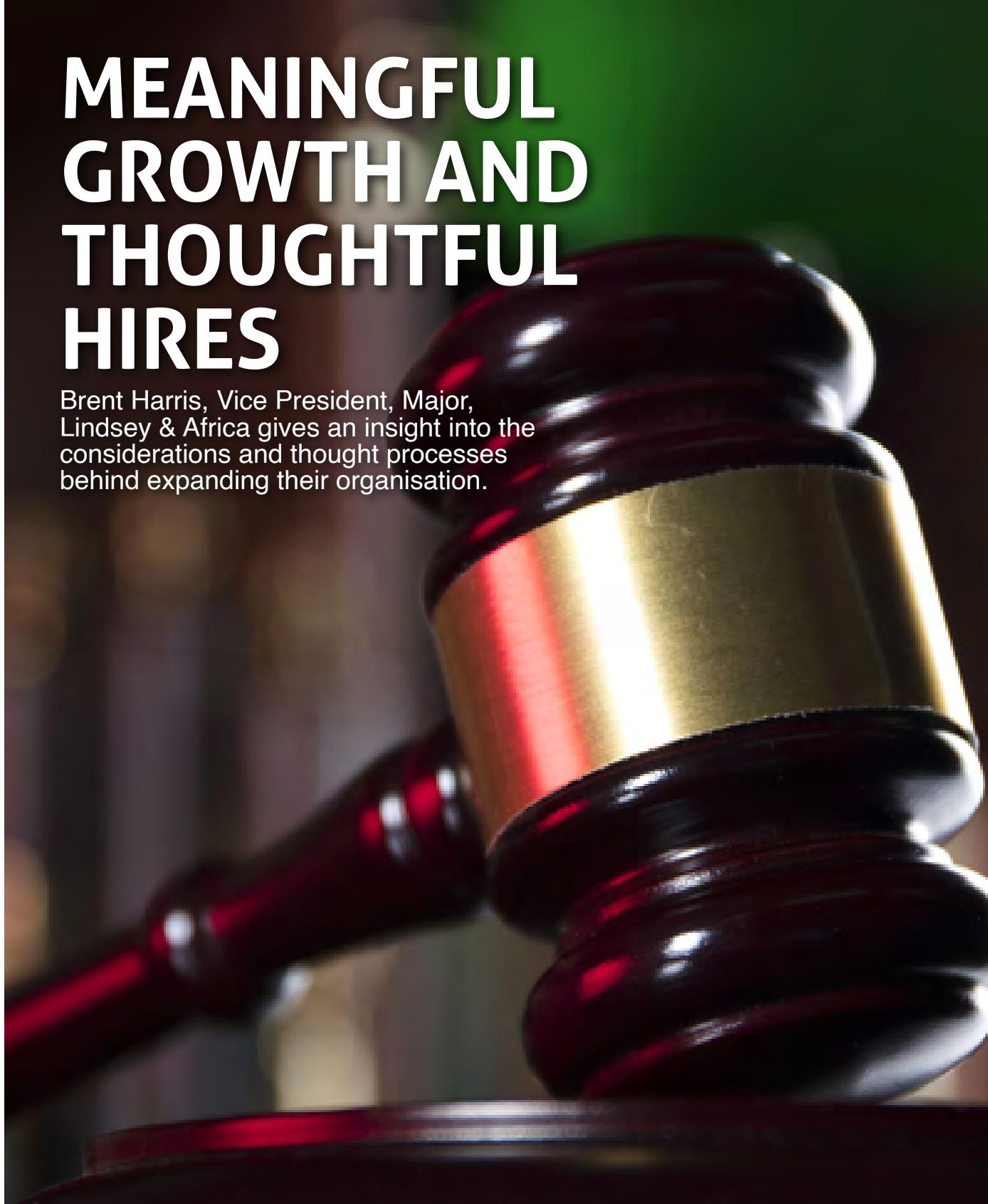
A more technical pitfall is to overlook the importance of maximising integrations between the different components of your technology stack. Integrations can be complex and take up some time, but where systems are properly integrated and talk to each other automatically, the productivity benefits are huge. Nothing frustrates and demotivates people more than having to follow cumbersome workarounds for systems that don't connect to each other. It also significantly increases the likelihood of errors and inaccuracies – undermining that all-important data quality, on which so much depends.

For the journey

My final piece of advice is: take a long-term view. No business can transform its technology overnight. It takes commitment, focus and investment. But the rewards are there for those that adopt clear principles and then follow them through. You will see increasing benefits as systems and processes become more standardised and the component parts interlink. This facilitates and underpins company expansion, whether organic or inorganic. We're all technology companies now – technology is the enabler that no business can do without. ■

MEANINGFUL GROWTH AND THOUGHTFUL HIRES

Brent Harris, Vice President, Major, Lindsey & Africa gives an insight into the considerations and thought processes behind expanding their organisation.



At Major, Lindsey & Africa (MLA) in EMEA, we have been fortunate to enjoy some major milestones in 2024 – perhaps most prominently celebrating 20 years since we first opened our doors in London. Against the backdrop of this proud marker in the firm's history, we've been delighted to announce several other landmark events this year, from ushering in Spring with the opening of our new Dublin office, to the more recent expansion of our London Partner Practice Group in the Autumn. >



The legal recruitment market, much like the wider talent and search landscape, remains a competitive, yet buoyant one. As we enter the final months of the year, now is a time when many businesses in the executive search industry will be reflecting on the last twelve months and looking ahead to consider what they would like to achieve in the coming year.

The business of expansion

At MLA, we recently welcomed six new members of the team to our Partner Practice Group in London: all fantastic additions to the firm. This was a significant expansion for us, especially in such a competitive market.

Large-scale hiring can feel intimidating, and it has made us reflect on one of the most important things when looking to expand a business: no matter the size, do so meaningfully. By this, I mean considering what the expansion will mean for your firm, your team and your clients; an exercise that we found both absolutely necessary and highly valuable in assessing our own growth strategy. Does this expansion come with a potential risk of future uncertainty, or unjustifiable costs? Will your teams be disgruntled or disheartened by the decision, potentially causing your top talent to vote with their feet?

Our biggest consideration when implementing growth plans is whether this will truly add value to our teams and the firm. At our core, we focus on quality, service, and client outcomes – which is facilitated by meaningful hires that match our ethos. We spend time with candidates and seek to understand their strengths, hiring only when we feel the match is right. Not only is this valuable from a business perspective, but it's also vitally important to ensure the firm's culture is not adversely impacted.

Money, time and reputation is the potential cost of hasty growth plans, so take time to consider whether this is the best decision for your team at the time, before going ahead.

Another big factor when considering expansion is how the current market looks and being on top of any trends that may affect the outcomes for your clients, and the way your team may work. There are a few that we have consistently seen over the last year or so in the legal search space and being privy to these was invaluable. >

The next generation of talent

There is increasing rhetoric surrounding Millennial and Gen-Z lawyers, and how their generational preferences are being translated into the profession. We recently conducted a survey on this, which highlighted the differing priorities between these age groups and previous generations. Whilst law firms are often unique places to work, with distinctive business structures and workplace environments, the prospect of integrating a new generation of talent and leaders is very much a universal phenomenon that businesses in all sectors are facing.

We have found the most prevalent priority for Gen-Z lawyers in particular is work-life balance, and Gen-Z talent is highly conscious of the amount of time they spend working. The survey results showed that, more often than not, the Gen-Z cohort would consider leaving their role if hours were too high, or if they were consistently expected to work nights and weekends. This is even true if they were being well-compensated, as two-thirds of respondents also noted flexible working and increased time off as their two top incentives, beating higher salaries.

Whilst this has at times attracted criticism of this generation as not working 'hard enough', what it really indicates is that they are a group that value their time, their wellbeing and their extracurricular activities as much as their professional role. They know that they achieve better results when they have an improved balance in their lives. This has had profound impacts on the world of talent search, as candidates are taking the time to understand the culture and expectations from a potential employer at the outset. In response, firms have rightly looked to improve internally.

Whilst law firms cannot always be as flexible as companies in other sectors, due to the nature of client work and needs, they have become more mindful of time and more accommodating of flexible working arrangements. Firms are also more attentive to fair compensation and there is a far greater awareness and focus on mental health. >





The rise of interim roles

Interim hiring has grown in popularity within the legal sector over the last ten years. Hiring lawyers on a flexible basis to service projects, large bodies of stand-alone work or to provide short-term staff cover has proven to be very cost effective for corporations and increasingly law firms. It is arguably a more streamlined way of working, and many candidates are able to get stuck straight into the role as soon as their contract begins.

It is unsurprising that these roles are gaining a greater interest, as the shorter-term contracts allow for greater flexibility; both in terms of time (with some taking breaks in between interim roles) and also in terms of the roles and projects one takes on.

It can be a great opportunity for legal professionals to test the waters of sectors they may not have worked in before and puts them in front of clients they may not have otherwise known. This greater insight into the multi-faceted legal profession is invaluable for many, and some may find a particular fondness for an area and decide to pursue that longer term. As noted above, this particularly aligns with the preferences of the Millennial and Gen-Z cohorts, so we do expect to continue this uptick in interim roles.

Looking ahead

The landscape of legal search is evolving and adapting to the new needs and preferences of the next generation, a positive change in a buoyant market. Looking ahead, I hope to see more expansion for MLA, be that in new sectors or geographies, where it matters most to our clients and candidates.

We, like many of our peers in the global search community, are excited to enter 2025 pursuing our mission to organically develop through a meaningful and considered growth process and continue working hard for the sake of positive client and candidate outcomes. ■