Reed Talent Solutions

Thinking forward:

How to build an effective and efficient talent acquisition strategy

TIARA TALENT SOLUTIONS AWARDS

WINNER
THE TALENT SOLUTIONS
PROVIDER OF THE YEAR AWARD

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Introduction

Job vacancies in the UK are rising to record levels. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimates that there have been as many as 1.3 million openings in recent times, while the Recruitment and Employment Confederation believes that these openings have led to the creation of three and a half million job adverts.

ONS figures show that 400,000 more people are now classed as 'economically inactive' than prior to the pandemic, while the Institute for Employment Studies estimates that there could be over one million fewer workers available in the UK compared to pre-pandemic, with a combination of Brexit and the pandemic leading to many EU workers leaving the country and not returning.

These challenges have also been impacted by the acceleration of labour market trends, including:

→ People wanting to make changes in their lives following the lifting of pandemic restrictions, with moving jobs one of the areas this impacts.

→ With home or hybrid working becoming the norm, companies are struggling to retain their cultural identities and losing emotional engagement - leading to an increase on staff turnover.

→ Inflationary pressures are driving urgency for people to look for higher paid work.

→ Skill shortages in the labour market as companies embark on the fifth industrial revolution, balancing the combination of humans and machines.

Against this backdrop, those responsible for talent acquisition across organisations are struggling to attract the best people in the right numbers to their vacancies.

A recent survey of 1,000 business leaders and hiring managers, commissioned by Reed Talent Solutions, revealed that almost half of businesses with over 1,000 employees are finding it hard to recruit professionals in the current climate.

In addition, 50% of those surveyed said finding the 'right' people was their biggest challenge when looking to attract new talent to their organisation.

With the market extremely tight for candidates, employers need to reassess and adapt their talent acquisition strategies. This eBook explores the key factors which make up a successful talent acquisition framework – outlining the steps you can take to give your organisation the best chance of sourcing the talent required for continued success.

Lee Gudgeon
Managing Director,
Reed Talent Solutions

400,000 more people are now classed as 'economically inactive' than prior to the pandemic.

Adopting a sourcing methodology

Before building a talent acquisition strategy, you must reconsider how you approach talent sourcing. In an environment where workers with the 'right' skills are hard to come by, talent acquisition teams must go beyond the notion that they can find the resource they need simply by posting job adverts and waiting for applicants.

By capturing valuable data across your workforce, we provide you with bespoke reporting and quality monitoring to ensure you're making informed and intelligent strategic decisions.

To successfully source talent in a limited market, organisations must fundamentally realign their processes. The best way to do this is to develop and follow a consistent talent sourcing methodology like the one above.

Research & analysis

Build

Deploy

Measure
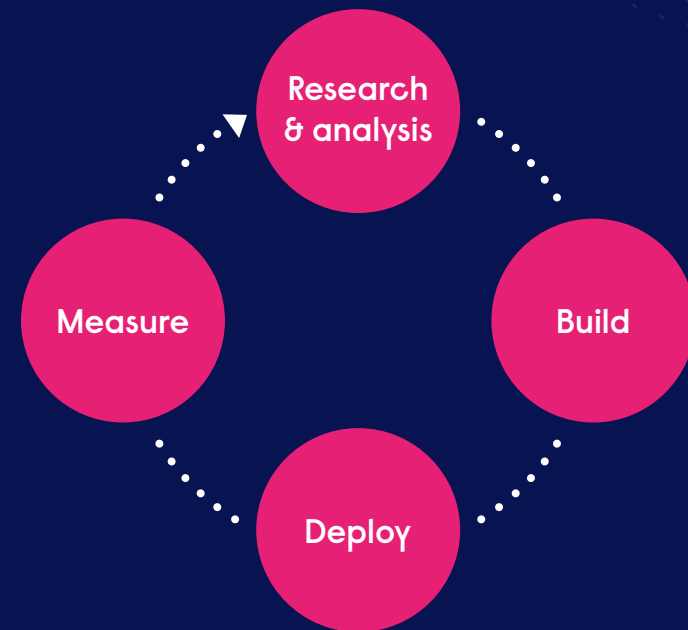
This cycle should underpin each stage of talent acquisition by using a rigorous, repeatable process. It encourages talent teams to consider the hiring process as something which is ongoing, prompting the use of data collected from previous hiring cycles to inform the next cycle through continuous improvement.

When used correctly, this cycle will support teams in delivering a talent attraction strategy that identifies the best talent quickly and efficiently, ensuring a positive experience for hiring managers and candidates – with human interaction where it adds most value.

Each stage in the cycle covers specific activities to support talent acquisition.
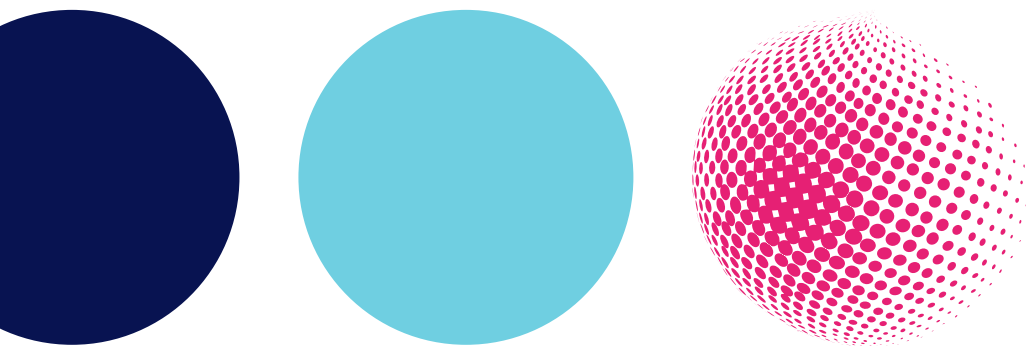
Cycle stage 1:
Research and analysis

This stage of the cycle can involve numerous activities – particularly if your organisation has not undertaken any strategic workforce planning before or recently.

It will encompass an investigation of workforce trends and needs, examining short, medium and long-term resource requirements based on expected demand and historic data.

You should also undertake market research at this point in the process, not only to define your company's offering, but ascertain who you want to reach and how to do it.

This should include an internal audit of current processes and attraction strategies and external competitor analysis for both the tangible (salary and benefit offerings, use of technology) and intangible (brand, employee value proposition (EVP), recognition, candidate experience).

Cycle stage 2: Build

Once you have created a strategy for your organisation through the research and analysis part of the cycle, you must next decide on the tactics needed to carry out successful talent acquisition campaigns.

In the build phase, you should use the data collected to determine the types of professionals you would like to target – active, passive or engaged candidates – and the best channels to use.

You should also determine how you will implement the recruitment technology (rectech) identified in the prior stage to ensure an exemplary candidate experience – and whether this involves talent pooling and community management.

Finally, this is the point in the process at which your teams should receive any training and guidance on processes and systems which they will be using as part of the tactics you deploy.

Cycle stage 3: Deploy

The activation of everything you have planned and created in the research and analysis and build parts of the cycle.

Those responsible for execution, whether this is you or your team, should ensure that they drive activity, quality and consistency across all messaging which supports talent attraction and engagement. They must also make any changes to the campaign based on the data and feedback gathered in the measure stage.

Cycle stage 4: Measure

The final stage in the cycle is measuring the results of deployment.

Ideally, you should collect and analyse key data as quickly as possible to support your continuing recruitment efforts – maximising the use of tools to track marketing intelligence (MI) data, such as Microsoft's Power BI.

Having quantitative and qualitative measurements of the effectiveness of ongoing talent acquisition campaigns is critical not only to inform strategy and tactics around future talent sourcing activity, but also to assist continuous improvement of existing hiring cycles.

Following the methodology outlined in the wheel of talent will help you to craft a talent acquisition model which you can rely on whenever you encounter a resourcing need.

The wheel of talent's adaptability provides an excellent foundation to allow talent acquisition teams to create multiple campaign iterations depending on the nature of the roles being filled, while still adhering to a core framework.

There are a range of tactics you can use to ensure that your brand's offering stands out from competitors. These can be split across talent identification, talent attraction and talent engagement categories.

Identifying talent requirements

The first step organisations need to take in the hiring process is to understand the type of talent they need to acquire and how they can obtain it. This requires you and/or your team to engage in strategic workforce planning.
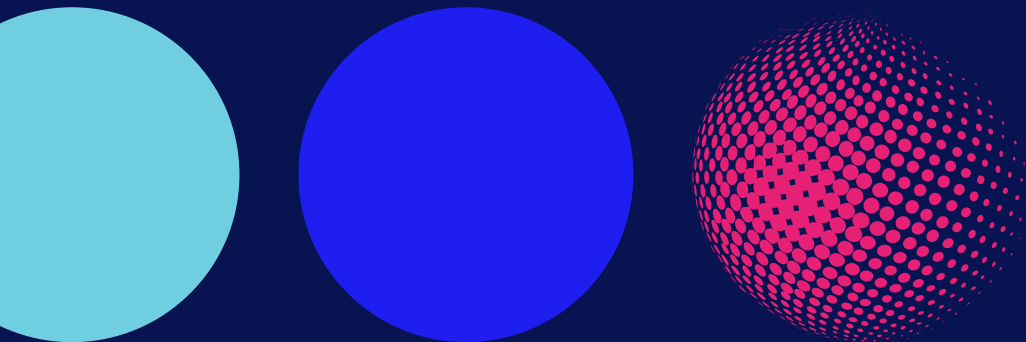
Strategic workforce planning

All talent acquisition teams need to be proactive when it comes to workforce planning to ensure they are not on the back foot when vacancies arise. If you are working reactively to fill short-term gaps, rather than operating to a well-planned process, you are less likely to make the right hires.

Firstly, you and your team should examine internal and external data to identify the skill sets you need imminently and in the future. This should include looking at current workforce trends and capturing past requirements surrounding historic recruiting patterns, key roles, recruitment peaks for volume campaigns, strategic hires, backfills and use of early talent.

You should also examine capacity for growth and identify points where scaling up rapidly may be required. For example, if your organisation wins a new contract, do you have the resource in place to account for this. If not, how will you ensure that you do? You may require the use of consultancy or recruitment partners to help plan and acquire desired skill sets in the required numbers.

Once existing and potential skills gaps have been identified, you can then examine how easy or difficult it will be to fill them and split your needs into different strands with timelines. These should comprise of:

→ **Operational** – short-term needs where talent teams will need to undertake daily task planning to fill skills gaps quickly

→ **Tactical** – looking to the medium term, often annual plans with exceptional/seasonal changes in recruitment highlighted

→ **Strategic** – a three-to-five-year plan which incorporates how hires and skills gaps can be aligned with an organisation's mission, vision and strategy

A good strategic workforce plan will give you a baseline to allow you to organise and prioritise your activities. However, any plan needs to be flexible enough to allow you to pivot should headwinds arise, such as significant organisational change or unexpected events – for example, a global pandemic.

Identifying how to fill talent gaps

74% of respondents to a Reed Talent Solutions survey highlighted that they used job adverts to find candidates.

After analysing how difficult various skills gaps will be to fill, only then can you begin to plan sourcing strategies and develop your plan of attack.

When asked the tactics they traditionally used to source talent, 74% of respondents to a Reed Talent Solutions survey highlighted that they used job adverts to find candidates. To maximise the effectiveness of job advertising, organisations must use the research and analysis stage in the wheel of talent to identify the best channels to reach professionals with different skill sets – or risk wasting money on advertising jobs in places which their target audience will not visit.

The weaknesses of traditional recruitment tactics

However, even a well-targeted job advertising campaign will struggle to find the right people in the current environment, as they reach those actively looking for jobs.

The survey also found that 38% of participants were using their existing networks to hire. While this extends your reach to include those not actively looking for roles, it still does not provide the required breadth – particularly for organisations requiring professionals with niche, hard-to-find skill sets.

A further 31% indicated that they used headhunting to source the talent they required. While this is an effective way of extending reach and should identify those with the right skills for a position, it is a time-consuming process which becomes unmanageable if you and your team are required to use your finite resource to headhunt for multiple roles.

Training for skill and making the most of early talent

Traditionally, you may have looked to fill vacancies based on previous experience and demonstrable skill sets. While this works well in a candidate-rich jobs market, in times where candidates are scarce, it not only limits your talent pool, but also means you are less likely to find anyone who meets your exact criteria.

'Hire for attitude, train for skill' was a phrase coined by Southwest Airlines CEO Herb Kelleher in 1978. In the current candidate-short talent market, you need to turn your attention to mindset and potential when hiring.

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Top tips: What should employers look for when recruiting to 'train for skill'?

Julie Hinchcliffe
Managing Director, Contingent Workforce Solutions at Reed Talent Solutions

"This should be focused on mindset, personality, plus how the candidate aligns to the company objectives and values. It should not be skill set based, but it should include transferrable skills.

"As such, talent teams creating person specifications and hiring managers (plus others) in the interview process should move away from competency-based assessments and look more towards the attributes candidates already have and can acquire.

"To do this, you will need to determine what attributes align best with your organisational culture."

Jo Lindsay
Managing Director, Consulting & Client Engagement at Reed Talent Solutions

"To assess these traits, employers will need to move away from traditional verbal and numerical reasoning tests, as well as a 'standard' hiring process. While psychometric testing can help to profile candidates beyond their existing competencies there are other types of test assessment which can help talent teams identify the best fit.

"These can include strength-based assessments, which can help to identify transferrable skills from everyday life which people can use in the workplace, and situational judgement tests, which ask candidates to choose from various options in a scenario – highlighting how their traits would guide their actions when placed into a role."

Annie Parry
CI and Projects Lead (RPO) at Reed Talent Solutions

"There will of course be universal desirables, such as honesty and integrity when looking for people to upskill."

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Identifying talent requirements

'Hiring on attitude' can help organisations discover untapped talent during any stage of a person's career – by using this strategy you can position yourself to have a first-class process in identifying early talent. Despite organisations knowing that hiring top people early in their careers is a great way to increase the talent level within a business, more can be done to formalise these processes beyond traditional graduate schemes, according to Annie:

"A number of organisations have defined grad schemes, but this is a limited part of early talent. Companies need to think more about apprenticeships and attracting people who have not continued into further education."

Why prioritise the search for early talent when talent acquisition teams need to make hires who can bring an immediate impact to an organisation? Early talent can do both. If your strategic workforce planning has been done correctly, you can onboard early talent into roles where they can make an immediate impact, all the while planning for them fill skills gaps in other areas of the organisation as they progress through their career with you.

It is this long-term planning which demonstrates the value of investing in early talent, as Jo highlights:

"The whole point of investing in early talent is not just to be altruistic, it is about the future roles they will take in the organisation. Once these professionals are in the business, it is up to HR teams to identify future leaders and offer them a programme for success."

Harnessing learning and development provides opportunities for early talent

When recruiting on potential, whether for early talent or professionals with more experience, you need to ensure that your organisation offers strong learning and development culture which helps your employees to grow.

"Those innovative organisations who are happy to upskill new hires in the current candidate-short market – perhaps someone they consider a seven out of 10, rather than their usual eight or nine out of 10 – you need to immediately create a path to improvement, where this candidate can progress to being a nine out of 10 and hit the ground running," says Jo.

How can organisations go about this? Julie says there are two different aspects to focus upon when it comes to L&D:

"Organisations need robust early talent programmes for their entry level roles to get entrants 'role ready' – especially if the attraction focus is on mindset and fit.

"Then, they need to consider what skills within their organisation are niche, what skills they always struggle to find, and focus their upskilling offering in these areas. This will provide a good career path for employees, while significantly reducing the cost of attraction for new hires, given these roles are hard to fill in the first place."

While L&D teams cannot set a development pathway for every new starter, they can give line managers the tools and techniques they need to upskill talent quickly. One way of quickly identifying immediate development needs is to use information from the recruitment process.

"Something a lot of organisations do very poorly is use the data obtained in the recruitment process to inform development," says Jo. "They go through an assessment and selection process which is highly tailored towards the sets of outputs desired, they invest a lot of time in that process and getting two or three different measures of people's performance. Matching people's development needs to their performance in the recruitment process is a quick and easy personal development tactic which can be devolved to line managers."

Developing internal mobility to help early talent grow

If you are keen to ensure continuous development among your teams, you need to have policies in place to enable internal mobility.

A study by benefits provider Caboodle found that a lack of career progression is the number one reason why people leave their jobs. If the talent you have brought in find their progression opportunities are lacking, they will look to advance their career elsewhere – rendering your investment in them obsolete.

Enabling internal mobility is an area where many organisations struggle. A survey of businesses by Deloitte found that only six percent believed they had excellent internal mobility programmes, with 36% stating that their policies were inadequate.

Internal mobility goes hand in hand with a culture strongly focused on learning and development. If you have created an environment which ensures managers take responsibility for fostering learning and development, this should naturally extend to include internal mobility too.

For many organisations, this will require a cultural shift – as well as the implementation of tactics which will allow talent to move fluidly between roles.

For example, you should be open to taking on internal hires with potential, but not necessarily an existing skill set required for the role, and offering them training.

Conversely, these professionals' current line managers must be willing to let them move on – rather than trying to block their progression because they do not want to lose an overperforming team member.

Other tactics should include the creation of internal talent identification schemes and succession planning – both of which will provide visibility over which employees should be promoted or moved sideways to aid their development. You could also consider the implementation of positive attrition to ensure that talented professionals do not find their career development blocked by underperforming colleagues.

The benefits of getting this right are not limited to supporting existing employees. Developing a reputation for helping professionals with their career progression will boost your employer brand and enable you to attract greater numbers of high-calibre people.

Standing out to attract talent – the employee value proposition (EVP)

Having a clear, concise EVP is vital to maximise your chance of hiring the right people.

However, in the Reed Talent Solutions survey of 1,000 business leaders, 15% of professionals felt their organisation did not have a clear EVP, 13% were unsure about its EVP and 10% did not know what an EVP is. That equates to over one-third of employers who have not thought about why someone should work for them. In a jobs market where candidates are at a premium, this puts them at an immediate competitive disadvantage when looking to attract talent.

There are two ways to develop an EVP:

1. By looking at the attributes your organisation wants to embody and look to integrate these into its culture

2. Examine your existing culture and look to communicate this through an EVP.

Annie Parry, CI and Projects Lead (RPO) at Reed Talent Solutions explains why consulting with current employees is a good first step when judging how to approach an EVP:

"An EVP is not a list of aspirational values, it should reflect the reality of why people join and stay with an organisation. If employee responses highlight a clear story around why they work for you, then this can form the basis of your EVP. If there is a mix of reasons, or employees cannot clearly list the reasons, then you need to invest time into looking at what your organisation stands for and why people should want to work there."

EVPs can encompass anything from compensation packages, employees' workspaces and the working environment, organisational culture and career development opportunities. Not only should you investigate the unique attributes and selling points your stakeholders feel are important, you would also be wise to conduct market research to identify competitors' EVPs – this will help to ensure you can craft an EVP that stands out from the crowd and resonates well with prospective and existing employees.

One-third of employers have not thought about why someone would work for them.

The need for authenticity

No matter what you include in your organisation's EVP, it needs to reflect what an employee will experience in your workforce. If a new starter finds a discrepancy between what you purport to offer and what is actually on offer, this can lead to a sharp increase in attrition rates.

"If it is authentic, then it will already run through your organisation," says Jo Lindsay, Managing Director, Consulting & Client Engagement at Reed Talent Solutions. "There is no point having an EVP which talks about autonomy if your organisation promotes working nine-to-five every day. Similarly, if you claim to have market-leading benefits, you must have market-leading benefits – you cannot just say it."

It is critical to decide how to develop your organisation's EVP: from the ground up or using existing culture. While the former will require investment and time to embed, this strategy will aid authenticity, as you have actively chosen to weave these selling points within your existing culture, rather than try to portray your existing policies and culture as something they are not.

The demand for more flexible working policies from employees is an area where this is crystalised. What flexibility means to professionals can be vastly different to what a business offers, as Jo highlights:

"If it is authentic, then it will already run through your organisation."

"If an organisation promotes itself as offering family-friendly working, it needs to make sure that its hybrid, remote or flexible working policies reflect that. Saying they have flexible hours for people is not a selling point – that's stated in law.

"What do they actually do that goes above and beyond statutory policies? How does their maternity, paternity and adoption leave stack up in the marketplace? This all comes back to authenticity. You can only realise the value in an employee value proposition if there's something genuinely valuable about it."

The demand for increased flexibility is a key area you should look to focus on at present, with the impact of the pandemic leading professionals to rethink their work-life priorities. However, the popularity of increased flexibility has led it to become part of the 'norm' that prospective employees expect, rather than the desired, rare benefit it once was.

Being an inclusive and equitable employer with a diverse workforce

Despite equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) having been on the workplace agenda for some time, there is a clear value proposition for organisations who are able to provide working environments embedded with excellent EDI practices.

The impact that improved diversity has on organisational performance has been demonstrated in a number of studies – and the benefits of excellent EDI policies also extends to the talent acquisition process. Increasingly, swathes of workers are seeking to work for inclusive employers who value diversity. A survey by Deloitte found that 80% of professionals rated an employer's inclusivity as an important factor when looking for a new job.

Organisations are at different stages of their EDI journeys – and therefore will have different ways of integrating this into their EVP.

**Martin Mason,
Founder and CEO,
Unleashed**

For support on where to begin, Martin Mason, Founder and CEO of HR consultancy Unleashed, outlines the basic EDI principles you should incorporate into your EVP:

"When developing an EVP, ensuring it is inclusive and representative of the culture you want to create is key. As a starting point, we suggest you focus on three areas first – commitment, allyship and removing systemic barriers for people to unleash their potential.

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Standing out to attract talent – the employee value proposition (EVP)

Commitment: When developing an EVP, it's important to be clear on your organisational stance on EDI. For example, taking into account market/country difference, where do you stand as a business? We advise having a clear set of guiding principles on your organisation's position on how you will embed this into your culture. Moving to a zero-tolerance stance on discrimination demonstrates to your colleagues that you are committed to inclusion and that they can challenge inappropriate behaviour while being encouraged and supported to do so.

Allyship: We want people to bring their best selves to work. Happy people, fired up to do the best job they can. An inclusive workplace creates a culture where this is possible. Articulate what allyship looks like in your EVP so that people are clear what good looks like. This could include statements encouraging people to speak up when they see behaviour that goes against your values or where a group or individual are not set up to succeed.

Removing systemic barriers: Today's business environments are ever-changing. And to succeed, your organisation must be innovative and agile. As the landscape shifts, you need to be fleet of foot: to remove bias from your employee lifecycle and identify and deploy talent as, when and where it is required. Understanding the talent you have is a critical business decision you'll have to make. Use technology solutions such as talent marketplaces and unbiased assessments to give you objective data in which to make decisions about your people. By identifying your people's strengths, skills, and talents in an objective way, you tap into a world where you can unleash unseen potential and reap the benefits of a happier, engaged and more productive workforce, enabling your EVP while planning for the future, managing risk and unlock opportunity; in other words – step in front of your competitors."

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Embedding EDI policies and values into an organisation is a wide-ranging topic which goes beyond the confines of talent acquisition. Both Unleashed and the CIPD have a plethora of valuable information on this important area of HR.

Inclusivity in the hiring process

There are many ways in which EDI should be presented within the recruitment process:

I   The role itself

"When looking at attraction, EDI needs to be considered at every stage," notes Annie. "This includes making sure only essential criteria is written into the candidate specification, examining whether the advert uses language that will discourage applications and analysing whether each stage of the candidate journey is necessary and allows every individual to show their best selves."

When creating job descriptions, often talent acquisition professionals will utilise job analysis, which can involve shadowing those already doing the role. While this is not a problem, if not careful it can lead to a job description and person specification which looks to find a replica of the employee currently in the position.

To avoid this, you should consider what skills you desire that are missing from your current employee and also consider whether the role could be operated in a different way. If it can be done remotely, would this open the position to applications from neurodiverse or people with disabilities who would not have wanted the role if it was office based? You must always remember that simply trying to replicate what has come before is a barrier to improving organisational EDI.

2 Accessibility

Accessibility must also be considered throughout the process. If you want to draw from the widest possible pool of talent, you need to ensure there are no barriers within the application process.

"Ask yourself how flexible your recruitment process is," says Jo. "Are candidates expected to interview face to face? If so, how accessible is the location? At all stages, do you provide alternate ways that people can interact with you? Are interview materials made available in brail or large print? Do you have the right RNIB "Tried and Tested" accreditation for your website so can it be used with readers for people who are blind?"

3 Bias

Finally, consider the biases of the people involved. Ideally, all professionals involved in the hiring process should have undergone some form of bias training to ensure that they are able to remove this from the decision-making process as much as possible.

There should also be an element of diversity in assessment panels. If an organisation promotes diversity as part of its EVP, what impression would it leave candidates with if the only people they dealt with from that organisation only contained people from the same demographic with regards to age, ethnicity, gender or socio-economic background? As well as the inadequate optics, it could also lead to a process lacking in plurality of views and perspectives, reducing the chance of identifying the right fit for a role.

Providing a great workplace experience

As well as ensuring your working environment is inclusive, if you offer your employees a great, enjoyable place to work you can make your organisation really stand out.

With a recent Gartner survey revealing that only 13% of employees are satisfied with their experience in work, there is an excellent opportunity for employers to boost the attractiveness of their EVP by offering an improved workplace experience.

Despite the name, workplace experience goes far beyond how an office or working environment is created and looks. When done correctly, workplace experience embodies an organisation's culture, values, and ambitions within the workplace ecosystem – both onsite and remotely.

Like developing an EVP, organisational leaders looking to create a first-class workplace experience must begin by asking themselves what their current employee experience is, and how can this be improved. Braelyn Hamill, Senior Consultant for Total Workplace at real estate firm Cushman & Wakefield, outlines what this should look like:

"From a cohesive in-person workplace experience to a hybrid workplace experience, it's no longer a simple matter of organisations answering: 'What's the experience of my employee in the office?' but rather, 'How does my employee experience our company physically and virtually; from the office and home (or other third-party spaces)?'.

"To answer this as a business leader, you have to have a clear understanding of the critical drivers of the organisation as well as a robustly integrated real estate and IT group."

Only 13% of employees are satisfied with their experience in work.

Ensuring that an organisation's people, physical space and technology coalesce is a key element to providing good workplace experience. However, ensuring that these three areas support the connection between co-workers is what will elevate workplace experience to make a real difference when it comes to talent retention – and subsequently attraction.

This is not something which can be forced, nor something which can be inauthentically promoted as part of an EVP. New starters will quickly realise whether the workplace experience they are encountering is as advertised, while sites like Glassdoor will highlight whether working for an organisation is truly a great experience.

If done well, positive experiences will boost your organisation's employer brand and add a game-changing facet to its EVP.

An EVP can comprise almost any aspect of an organisation's offering to its employees. If you can exhibit unique and authentic propositions to those looking for a new role it will set your organisation up well for the final aspect of building a great talent acquisition strategy: keeping talent engaged.

Engaging talent throughout the hiring process

How do you keep talent engaged throughout the hiring process?

Once you have identified the type of talent your organisation requires and what your offering is to those who match this profile, you need to consider how to keep talent engaged through the hiring process and ensure an excellent candidate experience.

In a tight talent market where employers have similar offerings, those seeking work may base their decision on whose offer to accept by how different organisations interacted with them throughout the recruitment process, how efficient it was for them and the level of service they received.

There are simple steps that you can take to ensure a seamless hiring process. Making it straightforward to apply for a role, being responsive to candidates and streamlining the recruitment process are the bare minimum needed to make a good impression on applicants.

However, in the current climate, most organisations will be taking these steps. The challenge you will face is how to offer a candidate experience which stands out from competitors attempting to do the same. A skilled use of recruitment technology (rectech), encompassing everything from applicant tracking systems (ATS) and vendor management systems (VMS), through to chatbots and talent pooling applications, can play a huge part in providing a first-class candidate experience.

Using rectech to provide an exceptional candidate experience

"Given how people interact with technology in life, they have the same expectations of the recruitment process," says Jo Lindsay, Managing Director, Consulting & Client Engagement at Reed Talent Solutions.

This means that organisations need alter how they judge the candidate experience. How candidates interact with the recruitment process should be comparable to how they use other technologies for convenience.

"Candidates want to use technology like they use Amazon wherever possible, one click actions, limited time to administer, and at their own convenience," notes Julie Hinchcliffe, Reed Talent Solutions' Managing Director of Contingent Workforce Solutions.

These expectations are not unrealistic. Rectech has evolved to the extent that the end-to-end recruitment process could be automated if an organisation chose to do so. Where in the process the technology is used you can improve the hiring experience.

There are areas of the hiring process which are ripe for automation, freeing up precious time for you and your team to focus on higher-value work. Areas like screening and compliance, scheduling interviews and engaging with the process on demand are far more efficient using technology. This increased efficiency is critical for hiring teams right now, as Annie Parry, Reed Talent Solutions' CI and Projects Lead (RPO), details: "In the current market accessibility and speed are key. Rectech can allow

"Candidates want to use technology like they use Amazon wherever possible, one click actions, limited time to administer, and at their own convenience."

candidates to complete the next steps in an application process at a time to suit them, rather than only during the traditional working hours when talent acquisition teams are in the office.

"Rectech can also improve the experience if it provides candidates with more information on the organisation and role they are applying for, enabling regular updates at each stage of the process. Historically, the greatest frustrations for candidates in the recruitment process have been lack of information and updates – talent acquisition teams are often under pressure to handle a large volume of applicants - rectech can bridge that gap."

Technology can also act to provide peace of mind quickly to candidates. Being able to upload identity and compliance documents to secure portals, receiving a rapid response from a chatbot to a simple query in one-tenth of the usual time, or even being able to rate and review the entire process are areas where deploying rectech vastly improves candidate interactions.

What you need to remember is that technology is not the total solution to creating a great candidate experience – instead it needs to go hand in hand with the human element.

Combining rectech and the human touch

The use of technology must balance the needs of candidates, hiring managers and internal recruitment teams, without forgetting the critical human touch.

"I think it is very easy to get excited about more and more technology," says Julie. "What talent teams need to do is understand how the technology slots into and supports the candidate experience, what problem is it trying to solve and whether it solves it?"

With more choice than ever before, it is critical that if you are looking to utilise technology, you should carefully research what is available, and how platforms can be integrated with each other and into your organisation's hiring process. Poor integration can negatively impact the candidate experience.

Julie adds: "Does it really enhance the candidate experience if an organisation using multiple platforms results in candidates having to access multiple systems throughout their recruitment journey?"

"Candidates are more than happy to use tech to streamline and digitalise the process, but still want someone at the end of the phone to guide them through it, answer queries and provide visibility on progress when needed.

"People seeking work want a human touch that can personalise the access and convenience that digital channels provide."

This means that having experienced recruitment specialists on hand to support candidates is still vital, as Jo outlines:

"If I'm on the way to the interview and I can't find the location of the building, I don't want to send an email and wait for a response, I want to speak to a human on the phone."

Using rectech to automate the more mundane and process-laden tasks allows you to focus on building relationships with candidates and providing them with a great service. When applicants look back on their experience, technology will only stand out to them if it did not work correctly. What they will remember most is the quality of the service provided by the humans involved in the process.

"People seeking work want a human touch that can personalise the access and convenience that digital channels provide."
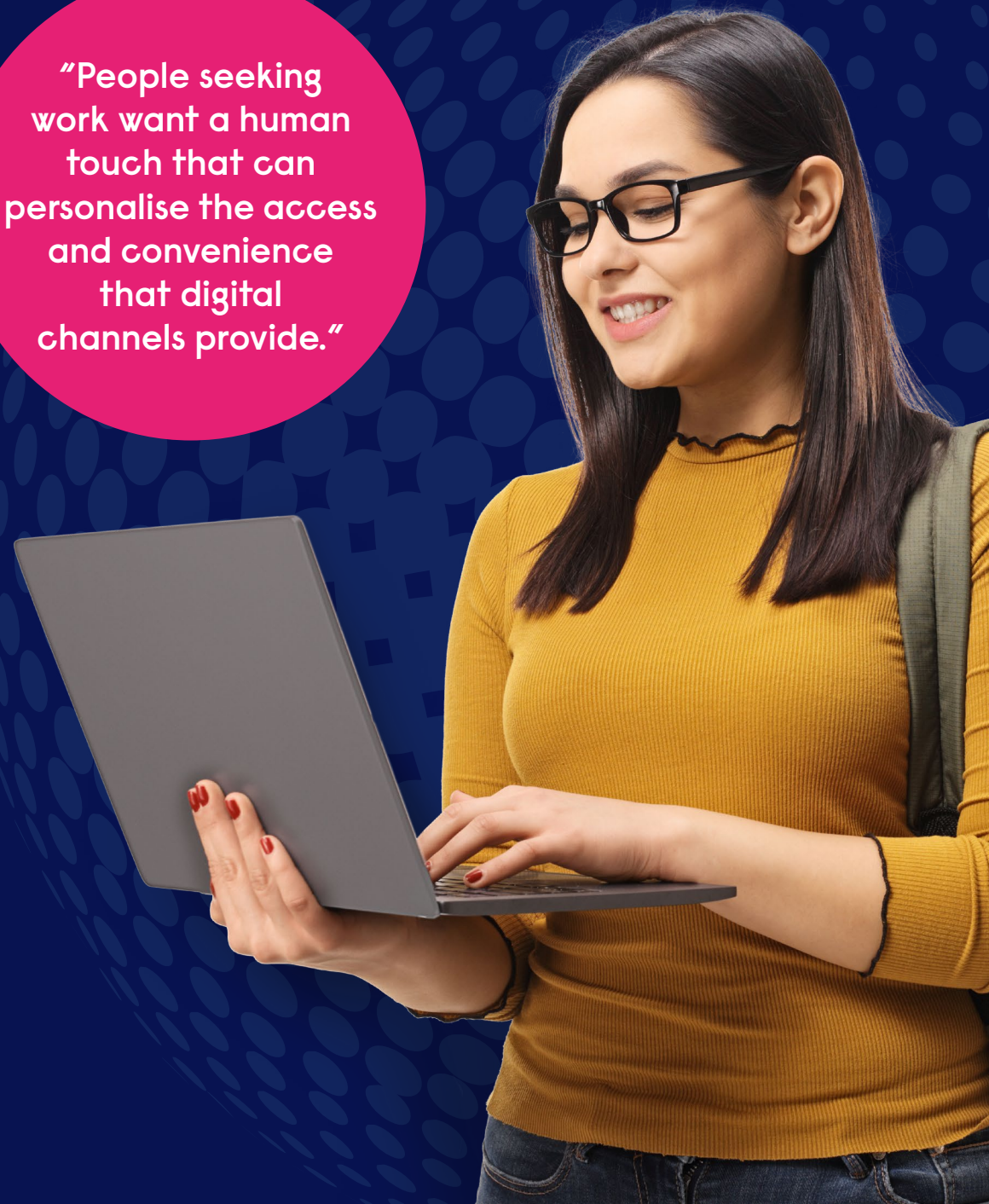
Developing talent communities and talent pools

When undertaking research and analysis of your organisation's total workforce requirements, you should identify where you have recurring needs for similar skill sets. Where this is applicable, the creation of talent communities and talent pools is an excellent way to keep professionals with desirable skill sets engaged until new roles become available. This provides you with a much easier route to hire, particularly when faced with a market where sourcing candidates is challenging.

The creation of a talent pool or talent community goes far beyond simply keeping a previous applicant on a candidate database. It involves cultivating talent using regular content and updates judged to be relevant and beneficial to them. As such, if you are looking to develop talent communities, your business must be willing devote the time and energy required to keep candidates engaged.

This initial investment will pay dividends when new roles for the required skill sets become available. You will have access to a group of high-quality professionals who are engaged with your company, cutting out the need for extensive candidate sourcing, saving money on the use of job advertising and rapidly increasing the speed of the hiring process.

It also provides candidates with an excellent experience too. Having received targeted, useful content from an employer who they are interested in working for, they now enter the process feeling more informed and having already had positive interactions with their prospective employer.

What support is available to implement best practice talent acquisition policies?

The steps outlined for the creation of a sure-fire talent acquisition strategy are not something which can be deployed instantaneously. Internal talent acquisition teams looking to implement such a strategy will need to invest time and effort in building the strategy and executing the tactics to attract talent.

Not only is the current market tight for candidates, but it comes amid a period where organisations are rebuilding their talent acquisition teams – with this area of HR crippled by the pandemic and now subject to a shortage of available specialists.

However, developing a process to find talent in this challenging environment is not an undertaking that you and your team must make solely by yourselves. Solutions exist to support professionals with the design and implementation of great talent acquisition strategies.

Recruitment process outsourcing (RPO) solutions encompass everything from providing immediate scalable expertise to handle short-term needs, all the way through to a team of specialists managing the end-to-end recruitment process for an organisation.

Utilising an RPO solution will support organisations looking to develop a first-class talent acquisition process. The external expertise accessed through different RPO solutions can provide anything from support with routine talent sourcing activities while internal teams handle higher-value work, through to developing an acquisition strategy for organisations which successfully identifies, attracts and engages talent.

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Why partner with Reed Talent Solutions?

Reed Talent Solutions' bespoke RPO offerings provide you will unparalleled access to talent, supporting you regardless of whether you require high-volume recruitment support or to identify a handful of professionals with niche skill sets.

Using the tried and tested talent attraction methodology, our experts can support you with ideating and implementing the strategy and tactics required to acquire talent in a challenging market. Our expertise encompasses everything from access to talent and speed of sourcing, through to talent identification and crafting an EVP.

As winners of the 'Talent Solutions Provider of the Year', 'Candidate Experience' and 'Long-term Partnership (Enterprise)' awards at the Tiara Talent Solutions Awards 2021, our industry-recognised solutions are proven to support organisations in sourcing the talent they need to reach the next level.

TIARA TALENT SOLUTIONS **AWARDS** WINNER THE ICIMS LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIP AWARD, ENTERPRISE

TIARA TALENT SOLUTIONS **AWARDS** WINNER THE PARASOL CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE AWARD

TIARA TALENT SOLUTIONS **AWARDS** WINNER THE TALENT SOLUTIONS PROVIDER OF THE YEAR AWARD

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