

BOND WILLIAMS

# INSIGHTS

2024

## EMPOWERING YOUR DIVERSE WORKFORCE

### 2024 TRENDS

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NAVIGATING THE  
LEADERSHIP LANDSCAPE:  
MANAGING EQUITABLY  
AND CONSISTENCY

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TACTICS FOR HIRING IN A  
COMPETITIVE JOB MARKET

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WHAT DO YOU THINK?

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EMPLOYMENT LEGISLATION  
CHANGES 2024

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BOND WILLIAMS  
PROFESSIONAL RECRUITMENT





# WELCOME TO THE LATEST EDITION OF BOND WILLIAMS INSIGHTS

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As we approach our 20th birthday, our nearly two decades of unwavering commitment to quality, integrity, and excellence have propelled us to become a trusted partner for both clients and candidates.

We express our deep gratitude to our amazing team, loyal clients, and the countless candidates we've had the privilege of placing on their professional journeys.

In this edition, we explore pivotal insights and trends shaping the HR and leadership landscape in 2024. Amidst profound shifts in work dynamics, we delve into the pursuit of flexibility, well-being, and purposeful work. Addressing burnout and resilience remains a top priority as we guide individuals in navigating career changes and enhancing their work-life balance.

Our focus extends to the delicate balance of leadership, emphasising equity and consistency for effective management in an ever-changing landscape. We examine the success and challenges of hybrid teams, exploring strategies for a successful transition back to full-time workplaces.

Critical areas such as employee retention, innovative onboarding, and utilising temporary staff solutions are explored to navigate challenges posed by talent shortages. We advocate for skills-based recruitment to bridge the gap and foster diversity, creating an inclusive workplace culture.

Navigating the competitive job market, we provide strategic hiring tactics to attract and retain top talent, with insights into responding to counteroffers and the importance of agile recruitment processes.

Stay informed regarding employment law changes in 2024, empowering organisations to foster fair and inclusive workplaces.

As we embark on the year ahead, these articles offer valuable insights, expert opinions, and innovative strategies to navigate the ever-evolving professional landscape.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone contributing their thoughts and experiences – your feedback motivates us to continue to deliver exceptional service every day!

Thank you for being an integral part of our journey.

**Claire Bond**  
Director, Bond Williams Professional Recruitment

If you would like to be involved or contribute to the next issue of Bond Williams Insights, we'd love to hear from you. **Please email:** [laura.webb@bondwilliams.co.uk](mailto:laura.webb@bondwilliams.co.uk)

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## INTRODUCING BOND WILLIAMS LEADERSHIP TEAM

Based across our three offices in Bournemouth, Southampton and Oxford, our entire recruitment consultancy team has over 250 years' combined experience and each specialise in one of our five core divisions.

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With over 185 years of combined experience, spanning five distinct areas of specialism our leadership team are true experts in their fields.

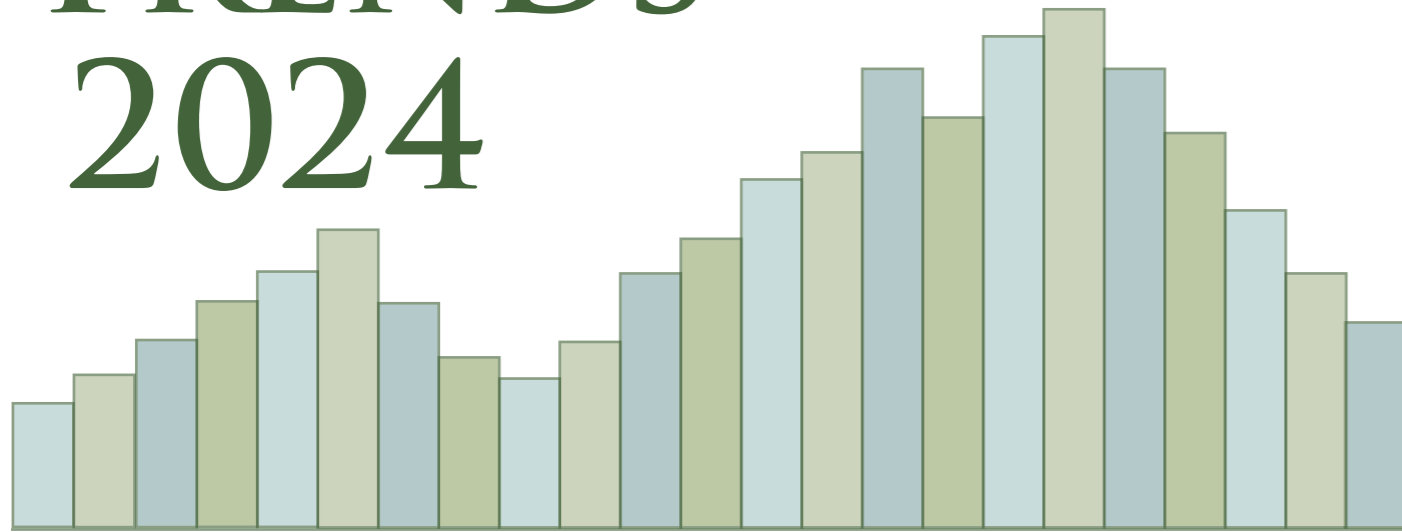
Whether you seek advice or support for specialist roles, rest assured that our team is well-equipped to guide you. Don't hesitate to reach out and tap into their wealth of knowledge.

For more information, visit our website: <https://www.bondwilliams.co.uk>

### OUR FIVE SPECIALIST DIVISIONS



# TRENDS 2024



As we embark on the year ahead, there are several noteworthy trends that promise to shape the landscape. Here's an in-depth look at key developments anticipated for 2024.



## GenAI in HR

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is poised to revolutionise the Human Resources (HR) domain. A staggering 76% of HR leaders, according to a Gartner survey, express concerns about falling behind without AI implementation. While AI can enhance HR processes, such as recruitment and staff development, the challenge lies in maintaining a delicate balance between efficiency and human touch. HR Technology Platforms, coupled with AI, will address compliance issues, and simplify the management of remote and hybrid workplaces.



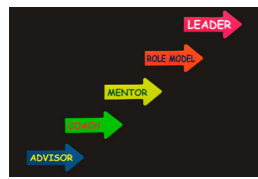
## Mature Workers

The employment rate for individuals aged 50 to 64 is rebounding, reaching 71.3%. Targeted training programs, like the government's 'returnships' scheme, (an offering bringing together three programmes to help get older workers back to work, including Apprenticeships, Skills Bootcamps, and Sector-Based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs), which are reinvigorating the demand for mature workers. Recognising and harnessing the ability of these individuals through focused training may appear as a prominent trend in 2024.



## Employee Training and Development / Career Management & Internal Mobility

With skill shortages on the rise, organisations must prioritise career management and internal mobility to retain talent. Recognising the impact of AI and technology on roles, HR should identify necessary skills, foster a learning culture, and provide ongoing training to enhance employee satisfaction, loyalty, and engagement.



## Leader and Manager Development

HR leaders are expected to concentrate on developing managers and leaders, given the increasing responsibilities they shoulder. Bridging the gap between business needs and employee experience in learning and development is crucial for success in this context.



## Employee Well-being

The focus on employee well-being continues, aiming to enhance satisfaction, engagement, and productivity. Organisations must remain adaptable to evolving employee needs.



## Employee Retention as a Priority

With employee attrition costing organisations significant knowledge and expertise, retention becomes a top priority. Embracing long-term strategies, nurturing talent and fostering cultures that encourage employee loyalty are imperative.



## Organisational Culture

The shift to remote work has resulted in a need to reconnect to organisational culture. Focusing on aligning employees with company cultures and empowering teams to create vibrant microcultures will be essential.



## Returning to the Office and Flexible Working Arrangements

The debate on flexible working arrangements is expected to persist. Striking the right balance, understanding employee preferences, and highlighting the benefits of in-office collaboration will be critical.



## Productivity Push

In the face of increased costs and ongoing debates on hybrid working, productivity takes centre stage. Organisations must assess, report and drive productivity while addressing challenges related to hybrid work models.



## Competitive Salaries and Benefits (Compensation Evolution)

Adapting compensation packages to meet evolving employee needs for flexibility, fairness and transparency is a top priority. Employers should consider individualised compensation models as a powerful recruitment tool.



## Sourcing Talent in a Difficult Market

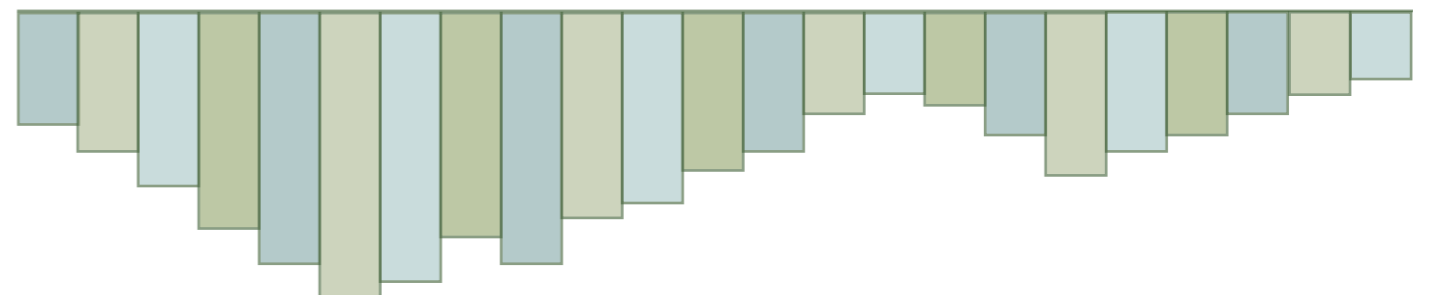
Organisations must reassess strategies for talent acquisition in a competitive market. Emphasising skills-based recruitment and partnering with specialist recruitment agencies can offer innovative solutions to bridge skills gaps.



## Employment Law Changes in 2024

There are notable legislative adjustments poised to enhance fairness in the workplace. These changes aim to empower employees and foster a fairer working environment. Employers should remain vigilant and proactive in staying abreast of these anticipated employment law changes. Adapting policies and practices accordingly will not only ensure compliance but also contribute to a more inclusive and employee-friendly work environment in 2024.

In navigating these trends, organisations have the opportunity to not only stay relevant but also set themselves apart by proactively addressing the evolving needs of their workforce.



# UNLOCKING SUCCESS WITH BOND WILLIAMS' TEMPORARY STAFFING SOLUTIONS



In today's ever-changing business scene, being flexible and adaptable is like having a secret weapon. Did you know that the UK had almost 1.62 million temporary workers in 2023? The Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC) noticed a surge, and guess what? So did we at Bond Williams! We're here to spill the beans on why our temporary candidates can be your business's best allies.

## What are Temporary Workers?

Temporary employees, or as we like to call them - Temps, contractors, seasonal staff, interim, casual staff, outsourced or freelancers - are temporary workers hired by employers to fill specific roles, tackle projects, handle seasonal tasks or even cover for maternity leave.

## How do you employ Temporary Workers?

You can hire temporary workers through agencies classed as an "employment business," like Bond Williams, as such we handle all the details like paying these fantastic workers and making sure their rights are well taken care of.

## What are the advantages of using Temporary Staff?

### 1. Flexibility

Picture this: your business is like a rollercoaster. Temporary staff are your flexible seat belts, letting you handle unexpected twists and turns with ease. Having the flexibility to respond to fluctuating workloads and unexpected projects is crucial. Temporary staff provide a win-win situation, allowing you to manage sudden changes in demand effectively. Plus, you get an opportunity to trial new teams, expand into different markets and explore new avenues without any long-term commitments.

### 2. Cost Savings

Who doesn't love saving some money? Temporary staffing is like getting a discount on your recruitment expenses. No need for long and expensive training sessions covering everything with a role, you train what you need and pay for the time you need it. Working with Bond Williams, not only provides access to a pool of qualified temporary staff, we also offer cost-effective solutions and discounted fees through exclusive partnerships.

### 3. Efficiency

Temp workers are like task-ninjas. Focused on specific projects, they bring a specialised skill set, without the distractions of daily duties, making your business more efficient. This results in heightened efficiency, as they can dedicate their time and expertise to the task at hand. While initial explanations may be necessary, temp workers are motivated to make a positive impression, and who knows, they might just impress you enough to land a permanent job.

### 4. Quick Recruitment Process

Do you need someone ASAP? Bond Williams has you covered. Our speedy recruitment process ensures you have top-notch temporary talent on-site or virtually working within a few hours. Fast, efficient and stress-free! Urgent situations demand rapid responses and our thoroughly tested and referenced database of temporary staff ensures not only time saving but also guarantees access to tried-and-tested talent that can seamlessly integrate into your team.

### 5. Cover for Absences

Life happens, and so do unexpected staff absences. Maintaining business continuity during staff absences is vital. Temporary or contract employees offer a flexible solution to cover holidays, illnesses or sudden departures ensuring your business operations remain unaffected and provide stability during short or longer-term staffing gaps.

### 6. Wellbeing and Morale

Temporary staff can contribute to a positive workplace environment by lightening the load and boosting overall productivity. With workforces becoming leaner, temporary solutions are like a breath of fresh air helping both morale and overall wellbeing.

### 7. Adapt to Industry Trends

The business world moves at lightning speed. Temporary workers bring fresh ideas and skills, helping your business stay on trend and ahead of the game.

### 8. Specialist Expertise

Imagine having a wizard on your team for short-term projects! Temp workers can bring a wealth of specialist experience, injecting innovation and efficiency into your business, paving the way for growth.

### 9. Diversity and Inclusion

Temporary staffing is like a celebration of diversity! By tapping into a varied pool of temporary talent, you not only gain different skills but also create a more inclusive and welcoming workplace.

### 10. Strategic Workforce Planning

Temporary staffing can be the secret weapon in your strategic workforce planning toolkit. It lets your business scale up or down within hours based on market demands, making you agile and ready for anything.

### 11. Post-Placement Support

And the support doesn't stop after the temporary workers clock in! Bond Williams offers ongoing support, like job shadowing, evaluations and feedback sessions, to ensure everyone's happy and thriving.

**In the face of the unknown, Bond Williams can act as an extension to your team, ready to tackle challenges with you. Whether you need temporary, permanent or contract staffing solutions, our team of specialists, armed with over 250 years of combined recruitment experience, is here to make your journey smoother. Reach out to us today, and let's help you turn uncertainty into success.**

# NAVIGATING THE LEADERSHIP LANDSCAPE: MANAGING EQUITABLY AND CONSISTENTLY

## Introduction

Being a leader in the dynamic and ever-evolving landscape of workplaces in 2024 with the ability to manage teams equitably and consistently is crucial for successful leadership. Being a leader is a tough challenge. They are tasked with steering their teams through challenges, fostering a positive work environment, navigating the diverse workforces, and ensuring that everyone has an equal opportunity to thrive.

Take multi-generational workforces as an example. In 2024 there can be as many as five generations in the workplace: traditionalists, baby boomers, Generation X (Gen X), millennials, and Generation Z (Gen Z). This can feel overwhelming. Traditionalists that may have an expectation of a hierarchical organisation and feel unable to challenge leaders. Where Gen Z are more likely to expect flexibility and have less tolerance of authoritarian environments. Challenging to manage, but the diversity of perspectives and experience could be invaluable in creating an innovative workplace.

In this article we'll explore the key challenges faced by leaders in maintaining equity and consistency and delve into practical strategies to overcome these hurdles.

## Understanding the Challenges

### Diverse Workforce:

Managing a diverse team is a common challenge for leaders. Differences in backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives can create a complex dynamic that requires a nuanced approach. Leaders must navigate these diversities while ensuring everyone feels valued and most importantly - included.

### Changing Dynamics:

The modern workplace is in a constant state of flux. We are living in a VUCA world (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous.) Changes in technology, industry and social trends, the environment, and global events can impact the dynamics within a workplace. Leaders must adapt to these changes while maintaining a consistent approach to their leadership style.

### Communication Breakdowns:

Effective communication is at the heart of all successful relationships and none more so than that of the role of a leader. Miscommunication, however, is a common challenge. Leaders must ensure that their messages are clear, transparent, delivered in a way that appeals to a diverse workforce, and easily understood by everyone to avoid misunderstandings and provide clarity in mission and objective setting.

### Balancing Act:

Being a leader is like walking a tightrope. The modern leader is more supportive and nurturing but needs to retain boundaries and get the balance right between showing the vulnerability it takes to build trust, and role modelling strong leadership skills. Striking this balance ensures a healthy work environment while still fostering respect for leadership.

## Strategies for Equitable and Consistent Leadership

### Embrace Diversity and Inclusion:

Foster a workplace culture that not only encourages but openly celebrates diversity and inclusion. Encourage open discussions about differences and create an environment where every team member feels heard and valued. By embracing diversity, leaders can tap into a wealth of perspectives that drive innovation and creativity, as well as being more likely to represent your client base.

### Regular Training and Development:

Equip leaders with the necessary skills to manage diverse teams effectively. Regular training on cultural sensitivity, emotional intelligence, and conflict resolution can help leaders navigate challenges that arise due to differences in perspectives and backgrounds. The ability to challenge effectively is key. Leaders need to role model what is acceptable within the workplace, and not allow clumsy comments and poor behaviour to go unchecked.

### Establish Clear Communication Channels:

To tackle communication breakdowns, leaders must establish clear and open channels of communication. Regular team meetings, one-on-one sessions, and the use of collaborative tools can ensure that information flows seamlessly throughout the organisation. Transparency builds trust and helps eliminate misunderstandings. And trust is the foundation of all good teams and relationships.

### Set Clear Expectations:

Consistency in leadership starts with setting clear expectations. Clearly communicate goals, performance standards, and behavioural expectations to all team members. When everyone understands what is expected of them, it creates a level playing field and fosters a sense of fairness.

### Lead by Example:

Leaders must role model and exemplify the values and behaviours they expect from their team. By demonstrating fairness, consistency, and a commitment to diversity, leaders set the tone for the entire organisation. Team members are more likely to follow a leader who embodies the principles of equity and consistency.

### Individualised Leadership:

While maintaining consistency is crucial, leaders should also recognise the individual needs of team members. Flexibility in leadership styles allows leaders to adapt to the unique strengths and challenges of each team member, promoting a more personalised and equitable approach.

### Regular Feedback and Recognition:

Provide regular feedback to team members to help them grow and improve. Recognition for accomplishments, both big and small, reinforces a positive work environment. Consistent acknowledgment of contributions fosters a sense of fairness and motivates the team. Public recognition of accomplishments is a great motivator, but developmental feedback should always be on a one-to-one basis.

### Adaptability and Resilience:

Leaders must cultivate adaptability and resilience. The ability to navigate change, learn from setbacks, and lead the team through challenges is crucial. A resilient leader sets an example for the team, showing them how to face adversity with a positive and constructive mindset.

## Conclusion

In the fast-paced world of leadership, managing teams equitably and consistently is a multifaceted and ever-changing challenge. Leaders need to be adept at understanding the unique dynamics of their teams, embracing diversity, and fostering open communication. By role modelling expectations, implementing strategies such as regular training, clear expectations, and individualised leadership, leaders can create a workplace culture that values fairness and consistency.

As the landscape of leadership continues to evolve, the leaders of tomorrow will be those who can navigate the complexities of equity and consistency, inspiring their teams to reach new heights while fostering an inclusive and supportive work environment.



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**Rachel Atkinson is The People Choreographer®, committed to disrupting tradition to create inclusive workplace communities.**

# ONBOARDING REINVENTED:

## Ensuring New Employees Succeed in a Hybrid Landscape



In the ever-evolving landscape of work, the rise of hybrid models has become a prominent feature, blurring the lines between remote and in-office environments. As organisations embrace this new era of work, effective onboarding for new employees has never been more crucial. A recent survey revealed that a significant 39% of employees who have been with a company for less than six months contemplate leaving within the next 12 months. This alarming trend emphasises the urgent need for organisations to revamp their onboarding processes to ensure a seamless integration into the hybrid work environment.

### The Power of Structured Onboarding

Onboarding is not merely a routine process but vitally strategic. Shockingly, only 12% of employees believe their organisations have effective onboarding processes, as reported by Gallup. Forbes adds to the urgency, saying that 4% of companies lack a strategy for onboarding internal promotions. However, companies with structured onboarding programs keep an impressive 58% of employees for three years, with 77% of new hires hitting their first performance milestones successfully. This data underscores the undeniable benefits of a well-designed onboarding process in fostering employee retention and performance.

### Revolutionising the Onboarding Experience

To address the dissatisfaction expressed by 88% of employees with their onboarding experiences, organisations must move beyond traditional approaches. Treating onboarding as a mere series of processes and paperwork, a practice seen in 58% of organisations, falls short in providing a meaningful and engaging experience for new hires.

### Innovative Strategies for Enhanced Onboarding

#### 1. Virtual Onboarding Toolkit

Develop a comprehensive virtual onboarding toolkit, including welcome videos, digital

handbooks, and virtual tours. These resources provide valuable insights into the organisation's culture, values and structure.

#### 2. Personalised Onboarding Plan

Tailor onboarding plans to individual roles, allowing new hires to focus on skills directly relevant to their positions. This fosters a sense of importance and relevance, reducing the likelihood of early turnover.

#### 3. Mentorship Programmes

Implement mentorship programmes to enhance the onboarding experience. Pair new employees with experienced team members for guidance, insights, and support, accelerating the learning curve and building connections within the organisation.

#### 4. Regular Check-ins and Feedback Sessions

Establish a consistent schedule of check-ins and feedback sessions between new employees and managers to address concerns, discuss progress, and offer constructive feedback.

#### 5. Interactive Training Modules

Utilise technology to create engaging training modules with multimedia elements, gamification and real-world scenarios for a dynamic and memorable onboarding process.

#### 6. Encourage Social Interactions

Foster social interactions within the team through virtual team-building activities, coffee chats and informal gatherings to help new employees build connections with their colleagues.

#### 7. Flexible Onboarding Schedules

Recognise the challenges of hybrid work and offer flexibility in onboarding schedules, accommodating unique circumstances for remote and in-office work.

#### 8. Embracing Employee Management Software

To streamline and automate various aspects of the onboarding process, organisations can utilise employee management software. This technology ensures a seamless and efficient experience for both HR teams and new hires.

Organisations must prioritise effective onboarding to retain talent and reduce early turnover. By implementing personalised, engaging, and supportive onboarding strategies, companies can create a positive and inclusive environment, fostering employee satisfaction and loyalty. The success of the onboarding process sets the stage for long-term employee engagement and contributes to the overall resilience and success of the organisation in the evolving world of work.

# BRIDGING THE SKILLS GAP AND EMBRACING EXPERIENCED TALENT



The widespread skills gap continues to challenge industries across the board. Organisations are re-evaluating hiring practices, investing in upskilling initiatives and reconsidering conventional qualification requirements to address this critical issue. However, a notable departure from the workforce, particularly due to early retirements following the Covid-19 pandemic, has intensified the scarcity of skilled candidates. ONS data reinforces the emergence of "unretirement," with 77% of adults aged 50-69 leaving their jobs earlier than expected during the pandemic. A substantial 40% of those 50 and over who left work during the pandemic now express a desire to return, underlining the potential of this age group to address labour shortages.

A report titled 'Where Have All the Workers Gone?' by The House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee highlighted a staggering increase of 565,000 economically inactive individuals' post-pandemic. The primary reason for this exodus? Early retirements. This mass departure of skilled professionals amplifies the existing shortfall of qualified candidates, leading to prolonged unfilled vacancies.

Responding to this workforce challenge, the Department for Work and Pensions started a rapid review on workforce participation to develop strategies for reintegration. Surprisingly, new research from LinkedIn suggests an unexpected solution: a potential return to work by retirees influenced by the ongoing cost of living crisis.

### The Boomerang Workforce: Retirees Consider Rejoining

The cost-of-living crisis, with soaring prices of essentials like food, fuel and energy, is prompting retired individuals to rethink their financial strategies. LinkedIn's research shows that three in ten retired workers are contemplating rejoining the workforce, presenting a unique opportunity for employers seeking mature, experienced and knowledgeable candidates.

### Strategies and Tailoring Approaches for Attracting Mature Workers for Successful Reintegration and Preferences

Acknowledging the inevitability of an aging workforce, companies must consider the following strategies and tailored approach to attract and retain mature talent considering their unique needs and preferences:

**1. Flexibility** - A significant finding from LinkedIn's research is that 41% of retirees seek a flexible work schedule. Employers should consider offering job-sharing, part-time schedules, remote work or non-traditional working hours to accommodate varied responsibilities, interests and personal obligations of older workers.

### 2. Improve Language around Diversity and Inclusion

Recognising that 43% of retirees expect age-related challenges in job hunting, organisations should prioritise strong diversity and inclusion initiatives. Revise job advert language, application requirements, emphasise traits like reliability and experience, avoiding age-related terms that may deter mature workers, overall inclusivity should be carefully analysed to encourage applications from a wide range of candidates.

**3. Appropriate Benefits Packages** - Employee benefits packages should align with the expectations and needs of mature employees. Research by HR Magazine reveals that two-thirds of workers over 50 value flexibility and support during illness. Amid the cost-of-living crisis, companies can stand out by providing retirement benefits, offering health insurance, wellness programmes, income protection, on-site care for grandchildren and other targeted benefits can enhance attraction and retention.

**4. Propose Training Opportunities** - Offer training to help mature workers upskill and update their knowledge, making them competitive in the job market.

**5. Train Interviewers on Best Practices** - Combat age-related assumptions during interviews by focusing on skills and experience and provide constructive feedback to mature applicants.

**6. Perfect Social Media Presence** - Use social media channels to highlight a diverse and inclusive workplace, with existing team members advocating for the company's inclusive culture.

By adopting these strategies, companies can not only address the current labour shortage but also create a workplace environment that values and attracts experienced professionals, fostering a culture of inclusion and diversity.



# WHAT DO YOU THINK?

I recently learned more about creating a thinking environment, based on Nancy Kline's work. She has written several books including 'Time to Think', 'More Time to Think', and 'The Promise that Changes Everything: I Won't Interrupt You'. It is based on the premise that our best actions follow our best thinking. Kline talks about how we can often have our best intuitive thoughts and ideas some time after we've started thinking about something, specifically when we are uninterrupted. She says that interruptions are not only unhelpful because we haven't completed our thinking, but they are also an 'assault' on the brain and our brain chemistry responds with a fight or flight response.

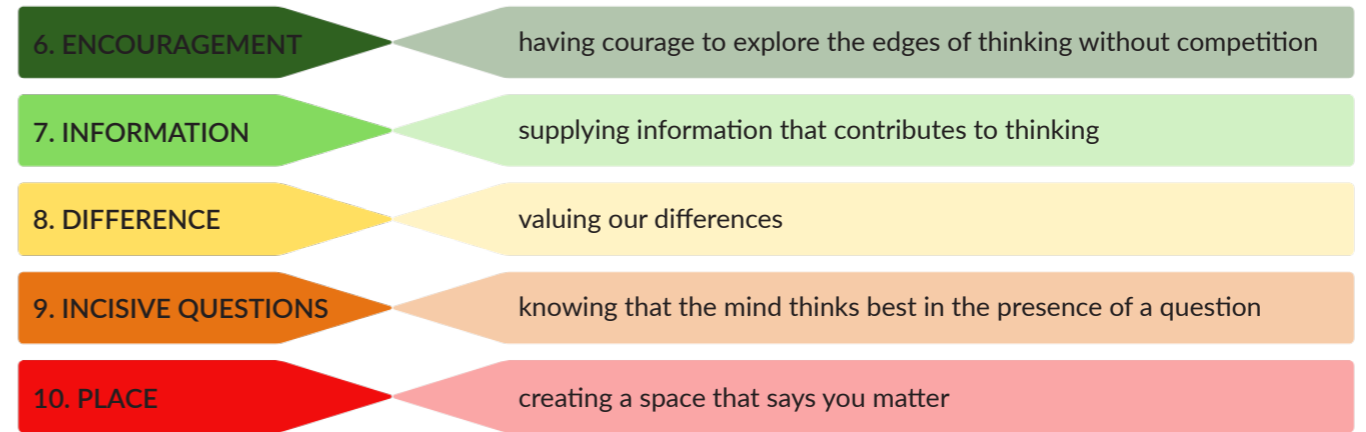
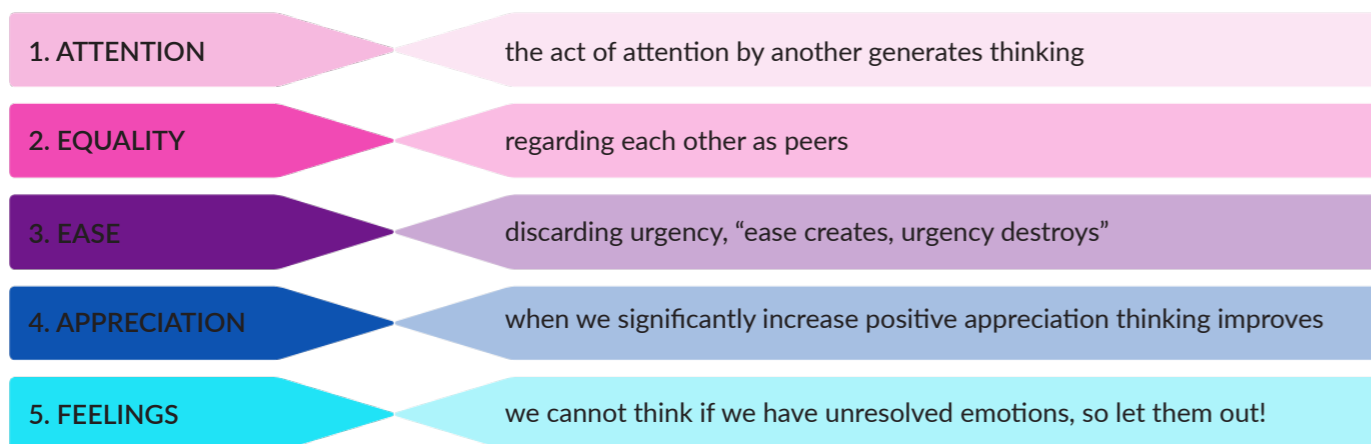
In her research she found that on average we only have 20 seconds to think in the presence of another before being interrupted. Her life work has been dedicated to researching and teaching all the ingredients that are required to create the best thinking environment.

Another fundamental premise is the idea that we do our best thinking when we think as ourselves, for ourselves.

There is a key ingredient, which is psychological safety. This is a term used by Amy Edmondson to describe a belief that you won't be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes. We all have a human need for connection and research shows that from a very young age we will actually forgo our own truth or our own needs in order to maintain attachments. At times being accepted can feel like a matter of life and death, and it is certainly true when we are a baby. Why is this important? Because there are very few spaces where we might feel able to be ourselves, think for ourselves and to speak our truth.

For me there is an intersection between spaces that create psychologically safe environments that allow us to feel able to be ourselves, and in acknowledging the systemic influences that perhaps we have internalised such as the desire to conform. So creating space with the promise of safety and for the individual to choose to accept that invitation with vulnerability and courage.

## Kline describes 10 components of a thinking environment:



Having experienced a thinking environment for myself I can see how each of these components creates space for the inner work that not only is incredibly empowering because it is self directed, and also it is incredibly liberating because of how we all have a drive to reach our full potential.

So I invite you to reflect on, how often do you think independently? When was the last time you had time and space to think without interruption? How often do you allow yourself to be censored, or directed by others?

And organisationally, do you value independent thinking? What ways have you created the space for thinking, inclusion and no interruptions?



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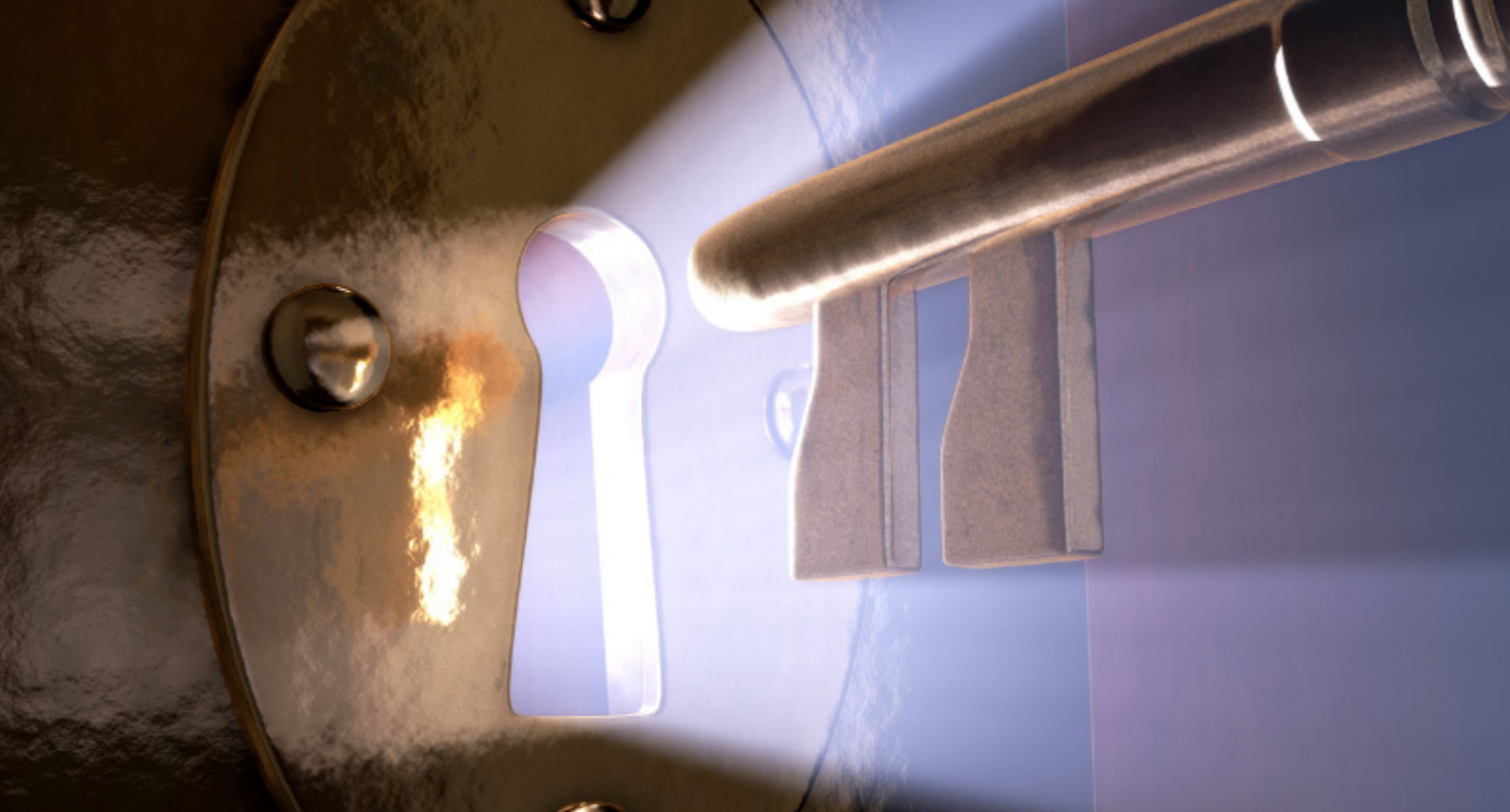
*Sarah is a seasoned and accomplished HR professional with extensive expertise and experience. As a qualified NLP Practitioner, ICF Accredited Certified Coach, and accredited Insights Discovery Practitioner, Sarah is a versatile consultant, with a deep understanding of human behaviour, leadership, and team dynamics.*

*With over 24 years of collaboration with Senior Leaders and Executives across diverse industries, including the voluntary sector, retail, FMCG, and Leisure & Travel, Sarah has honed a unique skill set covering transformational change, strategic planning, coaching, training facilitation, and employee experience and engagement.*

*Sarah likes to invest time in understanding the unique needs of each client, tailoring training to align with their specific requirements, whether it's the content, training style, language, group size, or delivery mode (online or in-person), Sarah ensures that every aspect aligns with the organisation's vision and goals.*

*As a trainer, Sarah excels in engaging groups, facilitating learning through reflection and discussion, she focuses on the practical application of knowledge to empower individuals and teams to implement their learnings effectively.*

*Sarah's coaching background includes training with Animas Coaching, earning the ICF Accredited Diploma in Transformational Coaching, and becoming an Associate Certified Coach with the ICF. Her coaching approach is dedicated to empowering clients, particularly managers and leaders, to enhance their leadership skills, motivation, and team engagement. She finds joy in the transformative power of coaching, exploring situations deeply with clients, helping them discover what truly matters, and guiding them to a higher level of awareness, granting greater control and choices in their lives.*



# HOW BOND WILLIAMS TACKLES HIRING CHALLENGES - UNLOCKING TALENT

In today's ever changing job market, selecting the right recruitment partner is more than a choice; it's a strategic decision and smart move that can shape the success of your organisation. As the challenges of 2024 unfold in a candidate driven market with a scarcity of skilled workers, Bond Williams can step in as a strategic solution and ally providing you with the edge you need for successful recruitment. Here's why partnering with Bond Williams could be a game changer for addressing the challenge of sourcing the right talent in a difficult market:

## 1. Know How that Counts

Our unrivalled knowledge of a combined 250 years experience gives us unparalleled insight into the market for candidates past and present in our specialist areas of Accounting & Finance, IT & Software Solutions, Office & Commercial, Human Resources and Engineering, Science & Space. Many of our team members have been with us for over a decade, providing continuity of service and leveraging unrivalled knowledge in our niche specialist areas.

## 2. Made to Measure Solutions

We don't do a one size fits all, Bond Williams provide a truly consultative approach, working closely with you we invest time in understanding your business needs, culture and goals. This dedication allows us to deliver tailor made recruitment solutions that perfectly match what you're looking for.

## 3. You Come First

Building solid relationships is our priority, with dedicated account managers, you get personalised support based on your needs. We value your time and with our long-standing team you can trust that your investment won't go to waste.

## 4. Quality Candidates

Bond Williams has a broad and well-established network that allows us to tap into the best talent, even those not actively looking for new opportunities. Our goal is not just to fill positions but to find the perfect fit for your unique requirements. We understand that it's not just about skills; it's about aligning with your company culture and values.

## 5. Cutting-Edge Technology

Bond Williams uses advanced cutting-edge technology to source the best talent for you. Our in-house intelligent database, crafted over 20 years, enables us to hone in on specific skills and discover candidates who might otherwise be hard to find.

## 6. Local Know How, National Reach

Our offices strategically cover the South of England, London and the Midlands. This means we understand local needs whilst having a national reach.

## 7. Proven Success

Since 2004, Bond Williams has consistently placed high-quality candidates, earning a steadfast reputation for excellent recruitment services.

## 8. Options Galore

Whether you need permanent, temporary, contract or interim roles filled, Bond Williams has you covered at all levels.

## 9. Quick and Flexible

We combine the agility of a local agency with the resources of a large corporation. This ensures we can swiftly respond to changes in the job market, always providing the right professionals for your needs.

## 10. Honest and Transparent

Our work is grounded in integrity, honesty and ethics. You can trust us to make the decisions that inspire confidence throughout the recruitment process.

## 11. Saving you Time and Money

Our streamlined recruitment processes save both time and money for your company.

## 12. Your Partner for Successful Recruitment

More than just a service provider, Bond Williams can be your strategic partner in achieving your recruitment goals, acting as an extension of your team.

## 13. Industry Insights at your Fingertips

Working with us means you have access to free industry-specific webinars & events, market information and salary surveys, keeping you informed about industry trends and market changes.

## 14. Always Getting Better

Committed to improvement. Share your feedback with us, we consistently strive to enhance our service further.

At Bond Williams, we break free from conventional recruitment. Our approach isn't just a process, it's a promise to elevate your recruitment experience. Leveraging our expertise and extensive network, we don't merely match candidates, we find the perfect fit for your organisation. Whether you're a company seeking the ideal candidate or a professional contemplating your next career move, connect with our team today. Let us help you navigate skills shortages and stay ahead in talent acquisition. At Bond Williams, we're committed to transforming your recruitment journey into a seamless and rewarding experience.





# EMPLOYMENT LEGISLATION CHANGES 2024



The government recently published detailed guidance on the changes for part-year workers, irregular hour workers and rolled-up holiday pay. It can be found here - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/simplifying-holiday-entitlement-and-holiday-pay-calculations/holiday-pay-and-entitlement-reforms-from-1-january-2024>. There are some great examples on how to do what can be quite complex calculations.

## Flexible Working to become a day 1 right from 6 April 2024

The Flexible Working (Amendment) Regulations 2023 came into effect on 6 April 2024. They removed the 26-week service requirement for an employee to make a flexible working request, so that such requests can be made from day one of employment. The government announced their intention to do this nearly two years ago, but it has taken a while to come on to the statute book. Other changes made by this legislation are:

- Employees will be able to make two flexible working requests within a 12-month period, up from the current one request;
- Employers will have to respond to the request within two months, down from the current three months; and
- There will no longer be any requirement for an employee to explain what effect their request will have on the employer or how the impact might be dealt with by the employer.

It will be interesting to see if these changes will see a significant increase in flexible working requests by employees. Whatever happens, employers will need to update any flexible working policies they have to bring them in line with the new legislation.

## Extended protection from redundancy for pregnant employees and those on family leave

The Maternity Leave, Adoption Leave and Shared Parental Leave (Amendment) Regulations 2024 came into effect on 6 April 2024, enforcing the Protection from Redundancy (Pregnancy and Family Leave) Act 2023.

At the moment, the one 'positive discrimination' piece of employment legislation, regulation 10 of the Maternity and Parental Leave Regulations 1999, obliges employers to offer first refusal of any suitable alternative employment in a redundancy situation to parents on maternity, adoption or shared parental leave. The new law extends the period of time for this protection in the following ways:

- **Maternity Leave** – 18 months from the first day of the estimated week of childbirth. This can change to exact date of childbirth if the employee informs their employer before their maternity leave ends.
- **Adoption Leave** – 18 months from the first day of placement of the child.
- **Shared Parental Leave** – 18 months from the birth of the child, provided the parent takes at least six consecutive weeks of shared parental leave and is not entitled under one of the two categories above.

## New Carers Leave right from 6 April 2024

The Carer's Leave Regulations 2024 came into effect on 6 April 2024. They provide for a new right for employees who are carers, by providing the entitlement for up to one week of unpaid carer's leave in any 12-month period. The new right will be available to employees from day one of their employment and who can show they have a dependant with a long-term care need. The one week of unpaid leave (an employer can choose to pay if they wish) can be taken in half-days or full days and do not have to be consecutive. Employees will need to provide their employer with notice of their intention to take carer's leave in writing. Like holiday requests, the amount of notice must be at least twice the amount of leave requested or, if longer, three days' notice.

Employers have the right to postpone a request for carer's leave if they can show the operation of their business will be unduly disrupted. If this is the case, the employer has to tell the employee about the postponement before the leave is due to start and must explain the reasons for it. The postponement can only be for a maximum of one month.

Employees are also protected from any detriment or dismissal because they request, or indeed take, carer's leave.

Employers with family friendly policies will need to update them to account for this new right. As it is only an unpaid right, I do question whether it will be taken up in a significant way.

## Changes to paternity leave

The Paternity Leave (Amendment) Regulations 2024 came into effect on 6 April 2024. This follows an announcement of intent by the government last summer to amend the right to paternity leave. Previously employees had to take any paternity leave, whether one or two weeks, in one block. The new legislation will enable them to be able to take two separate one-week of paternity leave. They will also be able to take it at any time within the 52 weeks after the birth of their child, not 56 days as is the current time limit.

Another positive change is that employees will only need to give 28 days' notice of their intention to take paternity leave, which is significantly less than the earlier position that required notice to be given 15 weeks before the expected week of childbirth.

This is a positive change for employees who want to take paternity leave, as it allows for a great deal more flexibility and I am sure many will make use of splitting their paternity leave and taking it later in the year after the birth of their child.

As can be seen from above, there have been a number of significant changes in the family friendly rights of employment law.

Re-cap: What do employers need to do?

- Update flexible working policy
- Update family friendly policies
- Ensure that you deal with any flexible working request from 6 April in accordance with the changes.

Employers do need to ensure their policies are updated in line with April's new legislation. Here at ViewHR we will be very happy in assisting employers with this, whether it is training staff or drafting amendments to existing policies.

And a small reminder that As of April 1, 2024, the UK's national minimum wage has been updated. The revised rates are:

- **National Living Wage (21 and over):** £11.44 per hour (an increase of £1.02 or 9.8% from the 2023 rate of £10.42).
- **18-20 Year Old Rate:** £8.60 per hour (an increase of £1.11 or 14.8%).
- **16-17 Year Old Rate:** £6.40 per hour (an increase of £1.12 or 21.2%).
- **Apprentice Rate:** £6.40 per hour (an increase of £1.12 or 21.2%).
- **Accommodation Offset:** £9.99 per day (an increase of £0.89 or 9.8%).

These changes aim to ensure fair wages for workers and improve their financial well-being. Employers should be aware of these new rates and adjust their payroll accordingly.



**Author: Paul Burton, Employment Law Solicitor, ViewHR**

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Paul has been an employment solicitor for nearly 20 years and is known for his in-depth knowledge and expertise in the areas of employment law and human resources. He was a partner at a sizeable South Coast law firm before coming to ViewHR and has often been asked to be a guest speaker at HR events, including lectures for CIPD. He regularly provides training to clients in relation to their human resources, for example, performance management and tackling sickness absence.

# TACTICS FOR EFFECTIVE HIRING IN A COMPETITIVE JOB MARKET



In the rapidly evolving business landscape, the UK's employment rate soared to 76.0% in 2023, with a significant 44% of workers embracing remote work. As the competition for talent intensifies, effectively addressing the challenges of a dynamic recruitment market becomes a crucial endeavour. Bond Williams saw a surge in job vacancies, with approximately 957,000 openings in the three months leading up to October 2023. In this competitive landscape, it is paramount to streamline recruitment processes to secure top-tier candidates swiftly and efficiently.

## The Cost of Delayed Recruitment

No employer aims to make a recruitment mistake, given the substantial costs associated with such errors. According to the REC, replacing an employee can cost a business up to 2.5 times the employee's salary, underlining the monetary impact of delayed recruitment. Recognising the financial implications, as well as the potential loss of top-tier candidates, is critical.

## The Consequences of a Slow Hiring Process

### 1. Risking the Loss of Top Talent

In a candidate-driven market, where more job openings exist than qualified candidates, a prolonged hiring process risks losing ideal candidates to competitors or bidding wars. Personnel Today reports that companies take an average of 44 days to fill an open position, and candidates expect swift action, making a process lasting 7-14 days risks the feeling of being too lengthy.

### 2. Damage to Your Brand

Recruitment delays not only result in talent loss but can harm your brand's long-term reputation. Candidates left in limbo may perceive your company as disorganised or indifferent to its employees, negatively affecting word-of-mouth reputation and deterring future applications.

### 3. Affects on Productivity and Wellbeing

A prolonged recruitment process leaves a critical role unfilled, increasing work pressure on existing employees, leading to stress, resignations, and added vacancies. This domino effect can severely affect productivity and your bottom line.

## How to Enhance Your Recruitment Process

### 1. Assess Your Current State

Begin by examining your current recruitment process. Gather and analyse data, measuring each stage to identify bottlenecks. This critical evaluation serves as a foundation for improvement.

### 2. Key Metrics to Consider

Metrics worth considering include time between recognising the need for a new employee and posting a job advertisement, duration between application deadline and shortlisting candidates, time from job offer to start date, and overall time to hire. Calculating the daily cost of keeping a role unfilled is also essential.

### 3. Resource Allocation

Allocate resources to streamline the process or consider revising your current system. Engaging specialist recruitment agencies, such as Bond Williams Professional Recruitment, with over 250 years of combined experience, can speed up the search for qualified candidates, reducing time to hire.

## Bond Williams Top Tips for Elevating Your Recruitment Processes

### 1. Provide Interview Training

Equip your recruitment team with comprehensive interview training, ensuring fair, effective and insightful interviews.

### 2. Use your Agency Effectively

Partner effectively with your agency, breakdown job requirements, distinguish between essential and negotiable aspects, and maintain open communication for accurate candidate matching.

### 3. Craft a Compelling Job Description

Clearly define the role, highlight key qualifications, emphasise company culture, and collaborate with stakeholders to attract the right talent.

### 4. Invest in Employer Branding

Build a strong employer brand highlighting company culture, values and employee testimonials to attract top talent.

### 5. Review and Enhance Benefits

Regularly compare, review and enhance employee benefits to retain and attract talent, setting your organisation apart in a crowded job market.

### 6. Benchmark Salaries Regularly

Benchmark salaries regularly to ensure competitiveness and attract candidates with the desired skill sets.

### 7. Create a Positive Candidate Experience

Craft a positive and efficient candidate experience, providing swift feedback and prompt communication throughout the process.

### 8. Move Quickly in the Hiring Process

Act swiftly on applications and candidates, especially for lower-level roles, to secure top talent in a competitive market.

### 9. Embrace Remote Working

Consider remote/hybrid working to expand your candidate pool, appealing to top talent and preventing the loss of ideal candidates or offer flexible work arrangements, showing flexible work arrangements to accommodate diverse needs, enhancing your company's appeal to a broader talent pool.

### 10. Invest in Training Opportunities

Offer training and development opportunities, positioning your company as one that invests in employee growth and attracting ambitious individuals.

### 11. Prioritise Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

Highlight your commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion in your recruitment strategy, fostering innovation and attracting a wide range of candidates. Adjust hiring processes for inclusivity at every stage, fostering a workplace that values diversity.

### 12. Champion Neurodiverse Inclusivity

Highlight your commitment to neurodiversity in your branding, collaborate with specialist organisations and offer flexible work arrangements to accommodate neurodiverse candidates.

### 13. Leverage Employee Referrals

Encourage and reward employee referrals to tap into your existing workforce as a source for potential candidates.

### 14. Continuous Improvement

Regularly assess and refine your recruitment processes, seeking feedback to ensure effectiveness in a dynamic job market.

### 15. Use Technology Wisely

Embrace technology for efficient recruitment, exploring applicant tracking systems and tools to streamline processes.

### 16. Promote Clear and Consistent Communication

Maintain transparent and consistent communication throughout the process, fostering a positive candidate experience.

Consider implementing these strategic tips for a more robust and successful recruitment strategy as we embark on the journey toward a more effective recruitment process.



# NAVIGATING BACK TO FULL-TIME WORKPLACES - STRATEGIES FOR A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION

As the business landscape evolves, leaders have expressed a strong desire to transition employees back to full-time office work, with a remarkable 83% of companies setting their sights on this goal. However, a substantial challenge arises, as over a third of UK workers contemplate leaving if required to return to the office full-time. This article explores both the motivations behind companies' yearning for in-person collaboration and the factors contributing to employees' hesitancy to return, incorporating recent statistics that shed light on the global perspective.

## Why Do Companies Want Employees Back in the Office?

There are many compelling reasons why companies are eager for a full-time return to the office environment. These motivations encompass enhancing productivity and profitability, cultivating collaboration and team synergy, bolstering client relationships, and upholding established workflow efficiencies. Furthermore, returning to the office environment facilitates teamwork and sparks creativity, fosters camaraderie among colleagues, provides opportunities for mentorship and professional growth, expedites decision-making processes, ensures security protocols are adhered to, stimulates innovation, grants easy access to resources, and facilitates in-person supervision for roles that demand direct oversight.

## Why Are Employees Hesitant to Return?

Employees show hesitancy towards returning to the office for a multitude of reasons. These include the flexibility and convenience afforded by remote work arrangements, apprehensions about health and safety amidst lingering pandemic concerns, the perceived increase in productivity while working remotely, the evolution of technology enabling seamless virtual collaboration, and a growing preference for hybrid work models that offer a blend of in-office and remote work. Moreover, concerns about commuting time and associated expenses further contribute to employees' reluctance to return to traditional office setups. To navigate these apprehensions successfully, it's crucial to develop a balanced approach that addresses both organisational needs and employee preferences effectively.

## What could be a Roadmap for a Balanced Approach for a Successful Return?

KPMG CEO Outlook survey found 64% of leaders globally, and 63% of those in the UK, predicted a full return to in-office working by 2026. A whopping 90% of companies plan to implement return-to-office policies by the end of 2024, according to a report from Resume Builder. Achieving a successful return needs a thoughtful and balanced approach.

Consider the following strategies:

- 1 Clear Communication** - Transparently communicate the reasons for the return, outlining benefits for both the company and employees.
- 2 Flexible Work Arrangements** - Aim for a hybrid model, allowing employees to choose a mix of office and remote work.
- 3 Attractive Office Environment** - Invest in creating a comfortable, modern, and appealing office space.
- 4 Support for Commuting** - Offer commuting support, such as transportation subsidies or flexible options.
- 5 Incentives and Perks** - Provide bonuses, flexible schedules, added vacation days or exclusive benefits.
- 6 Employee Wellness Programmes** - Implement wellness programmes supporting physical and mental health.
- 7 Employee Input** - Conduct surveys, involve employees in decision-making and consider their concerns and preferences.
- 8 Recognition and Appreciation** - Acknowledge and appreciate remote efforts, creating a positive atmosphere.
- 9 Customise Return Plans & Phased Approaches** - Implement phased returns, gradually increasing office days to alleviate anxieties.
- 10 Enhanced Office Technology** - Ensure the office is equipped with advanced technology supporting seamless collaboration.
- 11 Professional Development Opportunities** - Emphasise in-person professional development opportunities available in the office.
- 12 Team-Building Activities & Social Events** - Plan activities fostering camaraderie among employees to create a positive workplace culture.
- 13 Leadership Presence** - Demonstrate leadership presence in the office to instil confidence and unity.
- 14 Continuous Feedback** - Establish a continuous feedback loop, regularly assessing experiences and making adjustments.

By incorporating these strategies and considering global perspectives, employers can create an environment that meets business needs while addressing employee concerns, making the return to the office more enticing. Organisations must adapt to the changing HR landscape, embracing flexible working arrangements and carefully considering the unique needs of their organisation and workforce to find the right balance for a successful transition.



# SHAPING THE FUTURE:

## TRENDS SHAPING 2024 ACROSS BOND WILLIAMS' SPECIALIST DIVISIONS

As we step into 2024, Bond Williams proudly leads the way in anticipating and adapting to emerging trends across our specialist divisions and meeting the demands of the workforce in the South of England. Below, we present an insightful overview of our key trends and predictions for 2024 within our specialist divisions.

### 1. HR and Office Trends: Navigating Challenges and Opportunities

HR focuses on retaining talent amidst heightened competition, offering personalised development plans and flexible work options.

- **The Push for Productivity:** HR's role extends beyond headcount reporting. It now involves maximising employee output and monitoring performance.
- **Monitoring Performance:** The focus shifts to understanding how employees perform, optimising their productivity and inspiring motivation.
- **Reinventing the Workplace / Hybrid Work Dilemma:** HR must find the right balance between office-based work and remote arrangements, creating flexible work environments that suits diverse needs.
- **Learning** evolves with a focus on upskilling via innovative methods like microlearning and gamification.
- **Employee experience** extends beyond engagement, prioritising well-being and work-life balance.
- **Technology** plays a crucial role, with AI transforming processes, recruitment, staff development and data analytics driving decisions.
- **Career path** diversity, emphasising internal mobility and skill development.
- **Inclusivity** continues importance, along with support for neurodiverse employees. Embracing these trends ensures HR's agility and organisational success in the evolving landscape.
- **Targeted training programmes** rejuvenate mature workers' demand.
- **Prioritising** career management, internal mobility and employee well-being is crucial, alongside vigilance for legal changes in 2024.

**In-demand HR roles** include HR Generalist Manager, Senior HR Advisor and specialist titles like HR Compliance & Employee Relations and Compensation, Benefits & Wellness Specialist.

HR's agility and adaptability will determine success in 2024. By embracing these trends, organisations can retain top talent and stay competitive.

### 2. In the Oxfordshire scientific sector of 2024, several key trends are shaping the landscape:

- **Quality Control Technician Excellence:** Professionals in this role uphold rigorous standards, aligning with Oxfordshire's commitment to scientific precision.
- **Collaborative Research Initiatives:** Anticipate increased partnerships among academia, research institutions, and businesses, fostering knowledge exchange and accelerating breakthroughs.
- **Sustainability Focus:** Environmental consciousness is paramount, driving the scientific community to prioritise sustainable practices in research and development efforts.
- **Investment in Training:** Organisations recognise the importance of continuous learning to keep pace with technological advancements, emphasising ongoing training and development for scientific professionals.
- **AI** is facilitating scientific research by accelerating data analysis, modelling complex systems, and discovering patterns that lead to breakthroughs.

Additionally, trends such as digital transformation, interdisciplinary collaboration, ethical considerations, and the health tech revolution are reshaping the sector. As the scientific landscape evolves, staying informed about these trends is essential for professionals to remain competitive and contribute effectively to advancements in the field.

### 3. Accounting & Finance Trends on the South Coast:

- **Technology Integration:** Innovative technologies like automation and AI reshape traditional accounting processes. Professionals with a keen understanding of these advancements are in high demand.
- **Remote Work Optimisation:** Remote or hybrid working as a minimum is important to candidates but employers are pushing to have employees back in the office for cultural, team working and learning reasons.
- **Regulatory Changes:** Constant regulatory changes require experts who can navigate complexities, ensuring compliance and mitigating risks.
- **Strategic Financial Management:** Businesses place a premium on strategic financial management, recruiting individuals to provide insights into financial data and aid in strategic planning.
- **In-Demand Accounting & Finance Skills:** Candidates with full accounting qualifications (ACA/ACCA/CIMA), together with Payroll, Credit Control, Purchase Ledger, Audit, and Tax are in high demand. Bond Williams offers unparalleled insights into the finance sector, ensuring businesses and candidates benefit from our expertise.

### 4. IT & Software Solutions Skill Requirements:

As technology continues to evolve, staying ahead of the curve is essential. Here are our predictions for the top IT and software solutions skills in 2024:

- **Threat Intelligence and Analysis:** Cybersecurity Analysts need to excel in threat intelligence and analysis to combat potential cyber threats effectively. This involves collecting and analysing data on current threat landscapes, understanding attacker methodologies and predicting future risks. With the cyber world growing increasingly complex, keeping up with the latest cybersecurity trends and technologies is paramount for maintaining strong defences.
- **Responsible AI:** AI and machine learning specialists must prioritise responsible AI practices, emphasising ethical considerations and transparency in their work.
- **DevSecOps:** DevOps Engineers should align with the DevSecOps trend, seamlessly integrating security into the DevOps process.
- **Edge Computing:** Architects should have a strong understanding of Edge Computing, as the trend towards processing data closer to the source gains momentum.
- **Shift-Left Testing:** Automated Testers need to adopt the Shift-Left Testing approach, incorporating testing earlier in the development lifecycle.
- **Zero Trust Security:** IT Support professionals must stay updated on Zero Trust Security principles, particularly concerning network and firewall management.
- **In-Demand IT & Software Solutions Roles:** Essential roles include Front End Developer, Back End Developer, Data Engineers/Scientists, Scrum Master, Cybersecurity Analysts and Business Intelligence Developer.

Bond Williams IT remains your dedicated ally in navigating the ever-evolving IT landscape. Stay ahead of the curve with our expertise and insights.

In a landscape of evolving workforce needs, organisations can stay relevant and stand out by proactively addressing change. Whether you seek top professionals or explore new career opportunities, our proven record, innovative approaches and expertise across five core divisions – **Accounting & Finance, IT & Software Solutions, Office & Commercial, Human Resources, and Engineering, Science & Space** – will guide you through the recruitment landscape.



# EMPOWERING YOUR NEURODIVERSE WORKFORCE

**We have been talking, understanding, and progressing our workplaces in many areas of Diversity and Inclusion, but one area that has been underrepresented in that conversation is Neurodiversity – until now!**

High profile employers such as the GCHQ are making headlines by targeting neurodiverse people in their recruitment, championing that “neurodiverse employees are integral to the workings of the nation’s security services”. Awareness is rising thanks to more and more public figures disclosing their neurodiversity, think Emma Watson, Christine McGuinness and Elon Musk. At a time when recruitment and retention of great staff is challenging, how to harness neurodiverse skills has become a topic that employers ignore at their own ‘talent’ peril.

As interest grows in this important area of D&I, so do the questions. Let’s start with the obvious one, “what is neurodiversity”? As with, all D&I, it is something that is continuing to evolve, in a nutshell, Neurodiversity is an umbrella term that is used to describe people that have cognitive differences.

These include, but are not limited to:

- Autism (ASD / ASC / Aspergers)
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or attention deficit disorder (ADD)
- Dyslexia
- Dyscalculia
- Dyspraxia or developmental coordination disorder (DCD)

At least 20% of the UK’s adult populations are considered to be neurodiverse, their brain’s work in a different way to neurotypical people. So, whilst someone who falls under this umbrella term may be considered to have a disability, the term Neurodiversity comes from a place of ability. That focus will help employers as we continue to look for and grow talent that will make a difference to our businesses. For several years, we have been talking about and seeking out ‘cognitive diversity’, well here it is.

At least 20% of  
the UK’s adult  
populations are  
considered to  
be neurodiverse

So, we have cleared up the meaning, but it is now time to bust some common myths.

1. **We’re all a little bit autistic, right?** Well, no we aren’t, there is no scientific basis or foundation for that. While often said to try to understand autistic people’s experience, this comment can do the opposite and invalidate autism.
2. **All neurodiverse people are super smart, like Rain Man?** Being neurodiverse has no correlation to low or high intelligence. Neurodiverse people have what we call a ‘spiky profile’ for the workplace with greater strengths in some areas as compared to neurotypical. These strengths could be seeing patterns, or attention to detail. But again, we need to be careful about stereotyping, which nicely leads us on to...
3. **All neurodiverse people are the same.** We have already established that Neurodiversity is an umbrella term for several conditions which present differently. Like all aspects of D&I no one group of people are homogenous in their attitudes or behaviours. There’s a saying “When you have met one Autistic person, you have met one Autistic person.”
4. **It can be cured.** No, these are lifetime conditions. By ensuring that we have workplaces that understand neurodiversity we can make adjustments to ensure inclusion and harness the strengths of someone who is neurodivergent.

So as employers what we can do to ensure we are inclusive and are harnessing the strengths of those who are neurodivergent and have a more productive workplace? As with anything, it starts with action! Baseline where you are now; how many of your employees have shared their diagnosis and have adjustments in place? Plan where you want to progress to, what does that look like in your Inclusion journey?

Raise awareness by starting a conversation with your neurodiverse employees. What is the workplace like for them? What are their challenges and where do they feel they can excel? How do they use technology to support, do they make changes to the environment?

Build on the conversation, invite managers and employees to training and to be part of the ongoing action. Our experience is that many actions taken to support neurodivergent employees are beneficial to the rest of the workforce too.

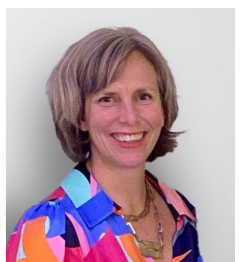
Think about your culture, policies, and practices; assess if they are neurodiverse friendly. Have you considered how someone who is neurodiverse may experience your recruitment and onboarding processes? What adjustments do you need to make? Language is something that is vital to consider. How are you structuring your questions so that they can be easily understood and interpreted? Remember, words can have different meanings to different people.

We don’t mean to overwhelm you, which is a common feeling for those who are neurodivergent, but if we are going to make strides in this area of inclusion, we need to ask ourselves the same challenging questions that we have asked for other diverse groups. Now is the time to take action and join the Neurodiversity movement.



Emma Calvert

**Authors: Emma Calvert and Rosie Knapper are the founders of the Dorset based Neuro-inclusivity. They are on a mission to build awareness, skill and harness neurodiverse superpowers in the work place. They provide Neurodiversity training and coaching and advise companies on policies and practices. To find out more head to [www.neuro-inclusivity.co.uk](http://www.neuro-inclusivity.co.uk) And follow them on LinkedIn – [Neuro-inclusivity](https://www.linkedin.com/company/neuro-inclusivity).**



Rosie Knapper

# The Art of Responding to Employee Counteroffers



Recent research from the CIPD sheds light on a growing trend among employers, who increasingly turn to counteroffers as a strategy to retain valuable talent in the face of persistent skills shortages. The CIPD Labour Market Outlook report reveals that 40% of UK employers have extended counteroffers in the past 12 months, with London leading as the 'counteroffer capital' at 58%. In this guide, we delve into the nuances of responding to counteroffers from employees, exploring the types of counteroffers, the reasons behind them, and the potential pitfalls for both employers and employees.

## Understanding the Counteroffer Landscape

Counteroffers come in various forms, from salary increases to adjustments in benefits, changes in job roles, flexible working arrangements, or alterations in responsibilities. Employers need to tailor these offers to address the specific concerns or motivations prompting the employee to consider alternative opportunities.

## Why Employers Make Counteroffers

1. **Loss of Skills and Knowledge** - Retaining valuable skills to avoid setbacks and disruptions.
2. **Timely and Costly Recruitment** - Mitigating the time and expense associated with recruiting new talent.
3. **Genuine Valuation of the Employee** - Expressing genuine appreciation for the employee's contributions.
4. **Alternative Solutions** - Presenting alternative solutions that meet the employee's needs.
5. **Resource Constraints** - Overcoming challenges in obtaining the budget or time for recruitment.
6. **Ongoing Projects** - Ensuring continuity in crucial ongoing projects.
7. **Competitiveness** - Preventing the loss of the employee to a competitor.
8. **Knowledge Transfer Challenges** - Addressing the lack of time for a seamless handover with a replacement.
9. **Market Rate Awareness** - Recognising disparities in employee compensation based on market benchmarks.

However, despite the initial allure of counteroffers, statistics reveal that 60% of employees who accept them end up leaving within the first six months. Employers should guide employees to consider factors such as the reasons for leaving, impact on loyalty, long-term salary implications, and future career advancement when contemplating a counteroffer.

## Encouraging Objectivity and Communication

Both employers and employees are advised to approach the decision objectively, considering the long-term implications for the employee's career and professional relationships. While a counteroffer recognises past contributions, it may not fully address the underlying reasons for seeking new opportunities. Open and honest communication between both parties is essential to making informed decisions that align with the employee's professional aspirations and the employer's strategic goals.

## How do you address and alleviate counteroffers?

### 1. Employee Concerns

Proactively address the concerns that led the employee to consider external offers. Encourage open dialogue to understand their aspirations, professional development needs and any dissatisfaction that may have triggered the job search.

### 2. Employee Retention Strategies

Introduce strategies beyond counteroffers that contribute to employee retention, including investing in professional development programmes, mentorship opportunities or flexible work arrangements that enhance job satisfaction and loyalty.

### 3. Company Culture and Values

Ensure counteroffers align with the company's culture and values. Employees are more likely to stay when they feel a strong connection to the organisation's mission and values. Highlight the intangible benefits that make your company an attractive and fulfilling place to work.

### 4. Continuous Employee Feedback

Advocate for a culture of continuous feedback where employees feel comfortable expressing their concerns before considering external opportunities. Regular check-ins and performance reviews can help identify issues early on and prevent the need for counteroffers.

### 5. Transparent Communication

Maintain transparent communication throughout the counteroffer process. Keep employees informed about the steps the company is taking to address their concerns and make sure they understand the implications of accepting a counteroffer.

### 6. External Benchmarking

Conduct periodic external benchmarking of salaries and benefits to ensure your compensation packages remain competitive. This proactive approach can help identify potential issues before employees start exploring opportunities elsewhere.

### 7. Long-Term Retention Strategies

Implement long-term retention strategies that go beyond immediate counteroffers by building a workplace culture that fosters continuous learning, career growth and employee wellbeing contributing to sustained employee satisfaction.

Responding to counteroffers requires a delicate balance of recognising an employee's value while addressing the root causes of their desire to explore new opportunities. By understanding the types of counteroffers, the reasons behind them and the potential pitfalls, employers can navigate these situations with transparency and effectiveness, fostering a workplace culture that values open communication and mutual growth. Integrating these elements addresses employee concerns, promotes a holistic approach to retention, and emphasises the long-term strategies that contribute to a positive and stable work environment.

## OUR NEXT HR & LEADERSHIP EVENT:



**Mock Tribunal Event**  
**Thursday, 10th October 2024**  
**Vitality Stadium, Bournemouth, BH7 7AF**  
**9am - 12:30pm**

Bond Williams Professional Recruitment are pleased to welcome back Paul Burton, Employment Law Solicitor at ViewHR along with real barristers from 3PB Barristers to take us through a mock tribunal.

You will gain an insight into the procedures for employment tribunals and have an opportunity to ask questions.

To reserve your place, head over to our website: <https://bondwilliams.co.uk/events>

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