

BOND WILLIAMS

INSIGHTS

2022 ISSUE 12

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MATTERS



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PROFESSIONAL RECRUITMENT



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Hello and welcome

TO ISSUE 12 OF BOND WILLIAMS INSIGHTS!

It's been nearly 18 years since we formed Bond Williams, Happy Birthday to us! (More about that on Page 5). In this issue we cover topics that have come about as lasting legacies of COVID, in the way we work and how people's priorities have considerably shifted. Flexibility is now a pre-requisite for most people as they look for a better balance in their lives. For example, we are seeing people consider reduced pay for shorter working weeks and even changing careers (or working for companies further afield) in search of better wellbeing and more purposeful work. High talent shortages are proving a real challenge for HR and Recruiters around the country. Skills-based recruitment is becoming more relevant now previously qualified people may not be so readily available in the open market. We'd urge companies to look to potential candidates practical skills and performance that could be assessed rather than focussing purely on qualifications, look at what skills you actually need and develop a skills based approach to recruitment and development strategies. If that isn't possible you need to be moving very quickly on candidates that are in the open market, they are being snapped up quickly and companies are missing out on the talent that is available to competitors that are able to move quicker or have shorter recruitment processes.

Outside of recruitment, focussing on employee retention, leaders are also having to learn from the changes that have taken place, listen to their people and adapt to the landscape, we can't do what we have always done and if we do, don't expect the same result! Hybrid teams have gained momentum and it's highly rewarding for businesses that are getting it right. If you can give your people what they need to thrive, are able to set clear expectations and communicate clearly and frequently so that everyone knows what is expected you're in a good position. Trust in leaders is more important than ever, our people have been through a lot, and they need to know they can trust us. Shared values and beliefs together with meaningful work are all high on people's agendas right now, they also want autonomy and consideration for their wellbeing. Addressing burnout and building resilience in our people and managers are still key topics that have come to the forefront since COVID. Good people really are hard to replace, it pays to look after them and re-engage the ones we want to keep. There may or may not be challenging times ahead depending on who you listen to, we hope with some of the thought provoking articles we have in this issue and our future leadership events will give you some extra tools to help navigate the path ahead.

Finally, I would like to say a huge thank you to our amazing team for their continued determination and support, our clients for your business and support over the past 18 years and the thousands of candidates we have placed during this time. As a team we continue to go the extra mile, every day, for you. Thank you!

Clare
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

BOND WILLIAMS

PROFESSIONAL RECRUITMENT

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2022 HR TRENDS

The challenges that have emerged over the past two years have had huge impacts on employees. And it's not surprising to learn that the [number of people quitting their jobs](#) is reaching an all time high. It's clear that recruitment, onboarding retention, and other HR initiatives must be a priority for businesses throughout 2022.

The question is: what should organisations be focusing on? Of course, there are the obvious elements, such as acknowledging growing demand for hybrid working, incorporating digital technologies into interview processes, creating environments to support mental health and wellbeing, and investing in the employee experience.

However, there are a few not-so-obvious HR trends that are due to emerge, too. Here's a closer look at 4 major HR changes we're expecting to see this year:

1. A stronger focus on employer value proposition

As we're already witnessing, 2022 is set to be a candidates' market. As more and more organisations begin to return to business-as-usual, an increasing number are looking to fill vacancies – and create new roles – to assist with recovery and growth. Demand for skills is fierce, which means businesses must be prepared to offer more during the interview process; not just offering a job but offering unrivalled value. Businesses must differentiate themselves with a strong employer value proposition.

2. Expansion of skill sets

A major trend noted by McKinsey is for businesses to [invest in talent to prepare for uncertainty](#). As the pandemic demonstrated, the future can never be predicted. It also showed that those

businesses with highly diverse skill sets were better equipped to adapt to change and overcome obstacles. It's expected that businesses this year will be keen to expand the types of skills they have onboard, not just recruiting those with hard skills, but with varying soft skills that result in diverse thinking and ideas.

3. A shift from equality to equity

The term 'equality' is becoming outdated as businesses begin to realise that while every employee should be treated fairly, they don't all need to be treated the same. Employees have different needs. For example, research shows that, during COVID-19, [women were more likely to be concerned about mental health](#), while LGBTQ+ workers were most likely to worry about their performance. Businesses must prioritise diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) to meet individual employee needs.

4. Changes to the traditional HR role

HR departments have largely remained unchanged for many years. However, this year we're expecting to see major changes to the HR role as businesses realise the value of the department outside of payroll and employee management. HR is more critical than ever, being tasked with ensuring workplaces remain compliant with ever-changing legislation, identifying signs of burnout in remote employees, and implementing solutions to align workplace processes with the new landscape.

As the working world returns to normal after the greatest ever widespread upheaval, 2022 stands to be one of the most transformative years yet in terms of HR. And if your business needs support to get on board with these new trends, we're here to help.



HAPPY 18TH BIRTHDAY BOND WILLIAMS

Back in 2004 we knew that there was a gap in the market for a different kind of agency - one that provided a consultative approach and focused on placing quality candidates in quality roles, rather than pure volume. I can't believe that was 18 years ago in July when with the full support of Rob, I initially opened our spare bedroom door to start Bond Williams. We very quickly experienced phenomenal growth, outgrowing three offices in central Bournemouth and earning an enviable reputation for our service and specialist sector knowledge among clients and candidates across the region. Over the years it has been a roller coaster of a journey, many highs both business wise and in the lives of our fabulous team - we have had record years of growth and success, toasted many births and marriages; but there have also been real lows including the losses of many loved ones, a recession and of course Covid-19. We have supported one another through thick and thin, laughter and tears, both as a team and individually.

Today, Bond Williams is a successful, highly respected and reputable recruitment agency specialising in five sectors - Human Resources, Office & Commercial, Accounting & Finance, IT & Software Solutions and Engineering, Science & Space and operating across three offices in Bournemouth, Southampton and Oxford. We are still able to offer the service levels of an independent consultancy whilst having the impact of a corporate agency and with over 250 years' combined experience. Our

talented team boast a diverse range of specialist industry knowledge and are highly recognised for building strong and long-lasting relationships and delivering exceptional results.

The recruitment marketplace has changed considerably over the years since we opened. With the impact of modern technology it became so easy for candidates to apply for roles that ad response numbers could be huge, but in many cases lacked quality. At other times applications can be few and far between due to market skills shortages.

And today there are different challenges, with a strong job market has come the aforementioned candidate shortages and competition for talent attraction. Big salaries are being offered around the country, candidate demands are increasing and some businesses have been inflexible with requirements and demands. For many workers flexible working has become their number one requirement (one many are not prepared to give up now, unless offset by a large pay rise!). Job seekers are taking jobs with companies outside of their local offering flexibility, sometimes for lower incomes over higher salaries with less flexible employers locally. Workers are being pulled back into the office, which for some will cost them more than working from home with cost going up on public transport, petrol and general costs of living, leaving workers to consider changing jobs to counteract that. Recently, in-demand skill sets are seeing sharp pay rises as labour shortages continue in some

industries. Whether the market can justify and hold these high pay rises and those being offered these hike in salaries are worth it and employees can 'deliver' at those levels remains to be seen. Candidates do tend to move for money especially when it is considerably higher. My advice would be if you can offer a work life balance coupled with competitive pay you will be best placed to retain employees. Re-engage the employees you have, if you don't someone else will. You can't do now what you have always done and expect the same result. The market has substantially shifted.

And finally, what's my biggest takeaway over the past 18 years? When you have the right team by your side, they are often stronger, adaptable and more resilient than you think. We aim to recruit the best people for ourselves as well as our clients and we have strived to create a culture and environment that brings out the best in those people, where they can thrive! I continue to be amazed by their loyalty and support and we have grown stronger through both the challenges and successes we have encountered. As a business we have reflected and adapted over the years and we too are offering more of a work life balance to our team. Myself and Rob would like to say a huge thank you to our amazing team for their loyalty and support, our clients, many of which have been with us since the beginning, and to the thousands of candidates we have placed over the years. As a team we continue to go the extra mile, every day, for you. Thank you!



WHY MENOPAUSE MATTERS

While there's still no specific menopause policy in place here in the UK, menopause discrimination does fall under the Equality Act 2010. This prohibits businesses from putting women at a disadvantage or treating them less favourably under the age, sex, and disability clauses. And with menopausal women being the [fastest growing demographic in the UK workforce](#) today, the Equality Act is certainly a good start.

But it's not enough.

The Impact of Menopause

In 2019, BUPA and the CIPD issued a report which showed that [60% of menopausal women felt that their symptoms had a negative impact](#) on them at work. According to a report by Unison, 8 in 10 women experience noticeable symptoms of menopause.

Sadly, these symptoms – which may include anxiety, discomfort, pain, and fatigue – can cause women to lose confidence in their ability, feel like they have to work to hide their symptoms around others, and perhaps even make the decision to leave their position.

Research suggests that around [900,000 women in the UK have quit their jobs because of menopausal symptoms](#). And this is a massive problem. Especially at a time when the world has really been making huge strides towards narrowing the gender gap. Over in the United States, for example, [the percentage of female Senior Vice Presidents increased by 5%](#) and the percentage of females in c-suite positions rose by 4% in just five years between 2015-2020, which is impressive progress in such a short period.

Losing women from the workplace – particularly women in the 45-55 age category who are perhaps reaching a level of experience and confidence that would see them elevated into these more senior positions – is almost like falling at the final hurdle.

It is clear that not discriminating against women in this stage of their life is a rather passive approach. It's not enough for businesses to just prevent prejudice; they should be actively working to improve awareness and build inclusive environments for women.

Inclusivity for Women in the Workplace

Building safe, inclusive workplaces for women, trans people, and non-binary workers who experience menopausal symptoms is key to building upon the gender equality progress that's already being made around the world. Here are some changes that businesses can easily implement to help build these inclusive working environments:

- **Employee Training**

Training employees can help to educate workers and make them more aware of how menopause can affect women. Training can show how employees can talk and listen about sensitive and traditionally taboo topics, and demonstrate ways in which both managers and co-workers can offer appropriate support should it be required.

- **Health & Safety Assessments**

Conducting a health & safety assessment can help to identify any workplace elements that could exacerbate menopause symptoms, and outline changes that could be made to help eliminate these issues. For example, high temperatures in the workplace may worsen hot flashes, so improved temperature control in the workplace may help.

- **Workplace Policies**

Businesses may wish to consider developing new workplace policies that make it clear that women may request changes to their role or working environment should they be struggling to manage their symptoms. For example, businesses may be able to offer women more flexible working patterns or different uniforms if they are irritating the skin.

- **Culture Building**

One of the most effective changes that businesses can make is to create an inclusive, open, and welcoming culture for women that actively promotes inclusivity. By building inclusivity into core operations, processes, and ways of working, businesses can ensure that they have strong foundations in place that help women progress, not hold them back.

Benefits of Inclusivity

While changes such as those outlined above can bring numerous benefits to women in the workplace, they can also bring benefits to businesses implementing them, too.

By creating environments that support women in all stages of their life, businesses can reduce staff turnover to minimise the cost of recruitment. They can also boost workplace productivity by lowering menopause-related absences, and maintain their reputation by preventing issues relating to employee relations or workplace tribunals.

Making Changes

The most important thing for businesses to remember is that no one expects them to be experts in the menopause. An improved understanding of the issues that women may experience, knowledge of how it can impact them in the workplace, and ideas for promoting inclusivity and offering support can go a long way towards building better, safer, healthier, and happier environments for anyone going through the menopause.

DRIVING D&I IN YOUR TALENT ACQUISITION PROCESS



For many businesses, diversity and inclusion is one of the leading issues on the agenda as we move into 2021.

Although simply saying that you welcome, recognise and champion difference in your workplace seems to be the norm at the moment, actually striving to back up this statement with data can be a little more challenging. The reality is that many employers can struggle to quantify how their talent acquisition strategy does, or in some cases does not, drive diversity and inclusion.

If you're keen to understand and improve inclusion and diversity throughout your talent acquisition process, the following tasks and considerations will help you to recognise, evaluate and better your approach when engaging with new talent, whatever the role you may be looking to fill.

TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT YOUR CURRENT DATA

The first stage to evaluating and improving your talent and acquisition strategy in terms of inclusion and diversity is to call on the data you already have readily available within your organisation.

Are you failing to attract applications from a certain demographic? Are certain people more prone to applying for a role with you? If so, who are they?

By studying existing data, you can pinpoint any areas where diversity and inclusion may be failing within your application process. Flagging this up for further investigation is a powerful first step towards driving truly inclusive and diverse practices across your recruitment activity.

IS YOUR APPLICATION PROCESS INHERENTLY DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION FRIENDLY?

Delving deeper into every element of your application process can involve asking the tough questions. Could you be unconsciously putting off some people from applying for your vacancies for example?

Does the recruitment area of your website depict plenty of white, able-bodied personnel and leave out images of people from different ethnicities or with disabilities?

How (and by whom) are your applications being pre-screened? Is unconscious bias being allowed to creep in even before you get to see the short listed applicants?

Could it be that the forms used as part of the recruitment process, or

even the job specs themselves, fail to explicitly state that you welcome applications from people with different backgrounds? Is it possible that your job advert may be off-putting to those with mobility issues thanks to the unconscious use of terminology such as 'climb the ladder' or 'step up to the challenge'?

Although these aspects may be subtle, they are barriers to diversity and inclusion in the modern workplace.

RECONSIDER YOUR SELECTION PANEL

Finally, you'll need to remove any unconscious bias at the final part of the recruitment process.

Take a closer look at your selection panel. Are the people seated on that panel representative of inclusion and diversity in your workplace or are they all from similar backgrounds? Have they been given any training on inclusion recently?

These are all questions that need to be asked to ensure a 'recruit like me' mentality is removed from every stage of the recruitment process. It is only by reassessing your talent acquisition process and asking the difficult, probing questions that turn a spotlight on existing practises that you can truly identify and overcome any barriers towards being a workforce that celebrates, nurtures and champions difference.

Is your business ready for the next generation?

Over the past few years, businesses have done exceptionally well to create workplaces and working experiences that support not one but two distinct generations: Generation X and Generation Y. However, what organisations must be aware of is that Generation Z are now starting to build their own careers... and it's just 7 years until the oldest members of Generation Alpha are sending their CVs in!

So... is your business ready for the next generation?

Acknowledging Differences

Equality has long been important in the workplace. However, with another new generation entering the workforce, the term 'equality' is becoming somewhat redundant. Quite simply, businesses can't afford to treat everyone in exactly the same way. They must be ready and willing to acknowledge the differences in the next generation and build equitable processes that both satisfy and delight.

One of the biggest mistakes that a business can make over the next few years is to keep on using the same recruitment processes, the same onboarding techniques, and the same retention practises as they used for Millennials. It's time to adapt to ensure you're attracting the right talent and getting the most

from your resources.

Preparing for Success

An important question for businesses to be asking today is 'what does the next generation want?'. There's no single answer. But here are some things to consider:

- **Shifting the meaning of 'culture'**

'Culture' in the workplace is often used to refer to the hiring of people who fit in. Until recently, it's been important for employees to get along. But Generation Z don't need to be friends with everyone to communicate, collaborate, and work together.

Research shows that Gen Z-ers are much more willing than previous generations to join forces with those with different views to work towards a shared goal, which means businesses should be building a value-based, not popularity-based culture.

- **Investing in wellbeing**

Reports suggest that Generation Z have lower levels of emotional wellbeing than Gen X and Millennials. And it's not surprising. They were born into an economy facing a financial crisis, and are trying to launch a career during a global health crisis! If you haven't already started to incorporate wellbeing into your processes, now is the time. It's important for businesses to understand the impact of

burnout, identify the signs of poor mental health, and implement measures to support employees.

- **Introducing role flexibility**

Generation Z are focused on getting the job done... regardless of how they do it. They're results-driven, not process-driven. Not only do Gen Z-ers want to be able to work independently, they also don't want to be restricted by title or department.

One factor that businesses today may wish to consider is organisational structure. While hierarchy is important, the value of structure is declining. More flexibility for employees to drive results through flexible means could help to attract new talent.

- **Moving away from tradition**

Organisations have typically not looked upon remote working favourably. However, the pandemic demonstrated that businesses can certainly thrive even without an office full of workers, and flexibility is likely to become a top candidate preference.

In fact, more than half of all Gen Z-ers say they'd consider quitting a job if unable to work from home at least part of the time. Where possible and practical, businesses should be striving to move away from tradition and embrace modern practises.





HOW CAN YOU IMPROVE YOUR EMPLOYEE RETENTION STRATEGY?

An increasing number of businesses are working to build employee retention strategies. And that's certainly a step in the right direction. But retention strategies are much like marketing strategies. Or sales strategies. Or hiring strategies. Or practically any other strategy you can think of. They're not magic solutions. Some will work. Others will fail. Some will need tweaks and optimisations along the way.

That in itself is not a problem. What is a problem, however, is that many businesses aren't putting the effort into assessing whether or not their strategies are working.

In fact, last year's CIPD Resourcing and Talent Planning

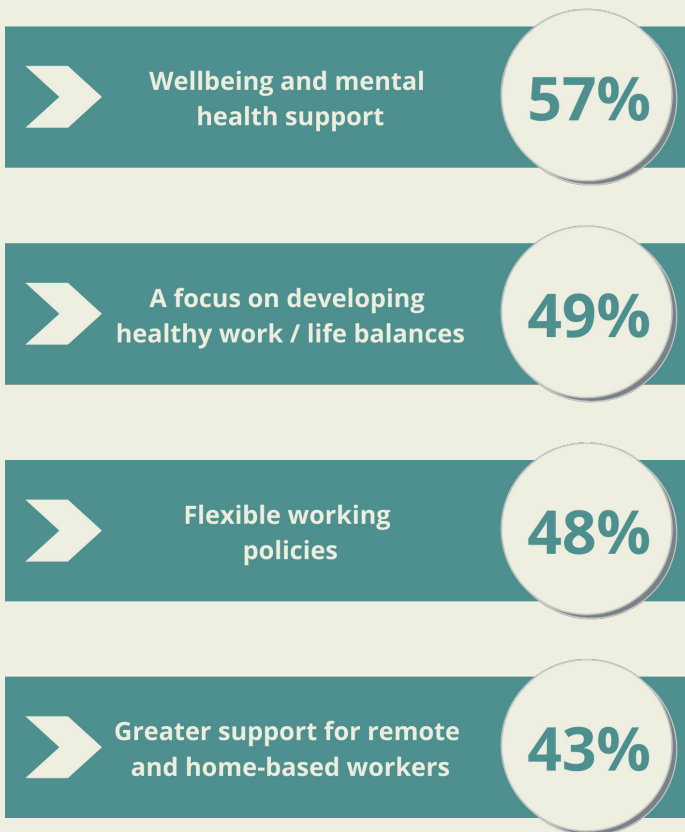
Survey shows that just 12% of organisations are actively monitoring the [effectiveness of their retention initiatives](#).

If you think your retention strategy could be delivering greater value, read on. We're about to explore some of the most powerful ways businesses can retain top talent.

What are Businesses Doing Well?

Before we delve into improvement methods, it's important to acknowledge what's going right in the world of employee retention. According to the CIPD report, many businesses are already including the

following elements into their strategies:



Continuing to prioritise these elements is critical. But alone, they're not quite enough to keep your top talent in place during this very turbulent period; a period where workers are questioning their relationship with their employer, re-evaluating what matters to them, and viewing their career in the context of the 'new normal'.

What Needs to be Done?

Businesses need to take a deep dive into the evolving needs, requirements, and preferences of their employees. If you've been reading our blog, you'll know that we recently talked about 'stay interviews'; the proactive alternative to exit interviews which ask 'what do you need' rather than 'what could have gone better?'

When we ask this type of question, it becomes easier to accurately align employee needs and requirements with the methods we include in our retention strategies.

Some elements that we think many businesses will uncover are a need for:

- **Better workforce planning**

Businesses should be looking to anticipate their own needs before these needs pose a problem. By the time a skills gap is identified, it's often too late. And employees that possess the required skills become overburdened with additional responsibilities. The CIPD report finds that 28% of businesses aren't forecasting their recruitment needs beyond 6 months, so better workforce planning is certainly required right now.

- **Greater focus on diversity & inclusion**

All employees want to feel that they belong. If they don't, they'll look for somewhere they find more comfortable. It's time for businesses to acknowledge the differences between employees, identify the challenges experienced across different workplace communities, and find ways to satisfy needs in an equitable way. When employees feel like they're 'part of the family', they're more likely to stick around.

- **Opportunities for professional growth**

Becoming stagnant is one of the biggest causes of employee turnover, so it's important, where possible, to provide workers with opportunities to advance. Whether it's offering additional training, enabling workers to dip their toes into other areas of the business to work on 'passion projects', or anything else, building a progression path gives employees new goals to work towards, and new motivations.

Most Important of all? Act.

Whether you're planning to utilise stay interviews, you'd rather stick with exit interviews, or you're considering a mixture of both, the most important thing is to act. Gaining insights is useless if you never act on them. It's time to listen, learn, and adapt. That's the best way to improve your employee retention strategy, boost workplace satisfaction, keep your talent happy, and reduce costly staff turnover.



SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH AT WORK

1 in 6 people will have suffered with a mental health problem within the last seven days, according to the Mental Health Foundation.¹ What's more, [one in four people](#) in the UK will deal with a mental health issue at some point in their lifetime. As employers, it's vital we're aware of mental health issues and are equipped with the tools, resources and knowledge needed to support our teams, both in and out of the office.

The importance of a supportive environment

Mental health is a broad term, meaning there's no one-size-fits-all solution which workplaces can apply but, the 2017 '[Thriving At Work](#)' report provides a useful core framework which can be adopted and adapted by employers of all sizes. These recommendations cover:

- Create a documented mental health at work plan which promotes good mental health, and the support services in place for those who need them.
- Encourage open conversations around the subject of mental health, from the recruitment stage onwards.
- Put measures in place which favour a healthy work life balance for all team members.
- Schedule regular mental

health check-ins, so team members can speak with their line managers about anything which they may be struggling with.

Many of these measures are easily adapted to a virtual environment for hybrid and distanced teams, ensuring no-one is prevented from accessing the support they may need due to being physically distanced from the office.

Recognising the different types of mental health issues

As an employer you have a duty of care to your team which requires you to support their physical and mental health. Part of this responsibility is being able to recognise the different types of mental health issues that your employees may be struggling with.

Mental health issues such as stress, anxiety and depression are common amongst the working population, but other types of mental health conditions, such as bipolar disorder can all impact on how someone feels, behaves and deals with their workplace responsibilities.

What does the law say?

The Equality Act 2010 makes it illegal to discriminate against someone with a disability, whether seen or unseen, and requires you as the employer to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate that person. An adjustment is considered

reasonable if it's affordable, doesn't infringe on the health and safety of another person and is practical. When applied to someone dealing with a mental health issue, this could mean offering more one-to-one support, adjusting working hours or providing access to a trained counsellor or other professional.

Reducing work-related stress

[HSE's Management Standards](#) can help you to reduce stressors and lower the levels of work-related stress. The Management Standards cover a series of conditions:

Demand: workload, shift patterns or the workplace itself

Control: how much input each individual has on how their work is carried out

Support: what resources are provided

Relationships: positive working to avoid workplace conflict

Role: clearly defined positions

Change: how changes are communicated and deployed

Working through these conditions can help you to pinpoint sources of workplace stress, take steps to limit their impact and promote improved mental health.

¹ Source: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/statistics/mental-health-statistics-uk-and-worldwide>



Rethinking Redundancies in the Post-Pandemic Landscape

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the [rate of redundancies](#) across the UK rose quicker than during the 2008 financial crisis. Fortunately, the world is gradually beginning to return to some degree of pre-pandemic normalcy. However, as businesses focus on recovery, it is clear that job losses are far from behind us.

In fact, a recent report by Acas suggests that [1 in 5 employers are considering making redundancies](#) over the next year in an effort to ease financial worries.

COVID-19 recovery is proving to be almost as big a challenge for businesses as the crisis itself. And for many, downsizing the workforce will be the only viable option. But for others, redundancy may not be the 'magic solution' that it seems on the surface.

It's time to rethink redundancies in the post-pandemic landscape, and consider whether identifying alternative solutions could have a more positive overall impact.

The Impact of Redundancy

Many businesses see redundancy as a way to save money. And it is. But it can also have a number of negative impacts. One such impact is employee wellbeing. Which, as we all know, is one of the most urgent issues businesses are facing today.

Illness. Isolation. Grief. Disruption. Frustration. Exhaustion. Anxiety. The pandemic has caused many of us to experience at least one – and sometimes all – of these feelings on a daily basis. Employees are dealing with changes in how they work, and changes in how they live, all at once. And so it's really not all that surprising to learn that

68% of employers believe the level of [wellbeing in the workplace](#) has declined.

Businesses must realise that redundancies don't just affect those losing their jobs; that the effect can easily and instantly ripple through the entire organisation. Remaining employees wonder if they're next for the chop. They struggle with the loss of those that have been instrumental in building their professional support system. They take on additional workloads to 'pull up the slack', increasing the risk of employee burnout. Redundancy can have significant impacts on everyone in the company.

Redundancy Alternatives

Prior to jumping into redundancy plans, businesses should pause to consider whether there are any alternatives that could help to put the business in a more secure and sustainable financial position, without posing significant risk to workplace wellbeing which could spark a wave of resignations and a large number of vacancies to fill.

Options may include...

- Flexible schedules to accommodate part time work and job sharing
- Reducing or restricting overtime hours
- Internal hiring, filling vacancies with existing staff

- Retraining existing employees for lateral moves into new departments

Remaining Compliant

Unfortunately, finding alternatives won't always be suitable, and it is inevitable that businesses will announce redundancies during this difficult period of recovery. Large businesses especially are anticipated to be making cuts, with Acas reporting that those with over 250 employees are 20% more likely than SMEs to make job losses.

Where redundancy is the most justifiable option, it's crucial that the process is undertaken in a way that remains compliant with current UK legislation. This not only helps to protect the wellbeing of the workforce, but also your business reputation.

Collective Consultation practices must be followed if more than 20 job losses are made within 90 days. You can read the full guidance for making redundancies at: www.gov.uk/staff-redundant.

Support When You Need it Most

At Bond Williams, we're committed to supporting businesses through this challenging time with advice and assistance relating to all aspects of hiring, onboarding, wellbeing, and retention. Get in touch with our team today for tailored support.



THE IMPORTANCE OF CANDIDATE RECRUITMENT AND ONBOARDING

Over the past few years, the importance of adapting the candidate recruitment technique and prioritising post-hire onboarding has become increasingly apparent.

However, now that many businesses are once again beginning to think about expanding the workforce following the wide scale COVID-19 hiring freeze, there are some new challenges in candidate recruitment and onboarding that must be considered.

Challenges in Candidate Recruitment

The main challenge we're seeing in the post-pandemic hiring landscape is developing a hiring strategy that successfully helps businesses to differentiate themselves and stand out from the crowd in what is a tough and highly competitive candidate-driven market.

During the pandemic itself, with fewer organisations hiring and a rise in redundancies, businesses had their choice of candidates. Today, however, it's the other way around.

In fact, a single week in June 2021 saw nearly [200,000 new job adverts](#) posted in the UK; much more than before lockdown. Coupled with rapidly dropping levels of unemployment, candidate recruitment is becoming a significant challenge.

It's reported that businesses are [increasing salaries by up to 40%](#) to attract the best people. But there may be another way: building a positive candidate experience.

Right now, organisations should be working closely with end-to-end recruitment specialists to develop unique hiring techniques that attract and engage top talent.

While many may turn to online assessments and video interviews to achieve this, research shows that 86% are now incorporating virtual technologies into their hiring process, so it's no longer enough to stand out. It's time for organisations to do more.

The smart move is to leverage the experience and

insight of recruitment experts to design processes that adequately support and guide candidates through the journey, and perhaps even more importantly, continue doing so even after the journey ends.

During the pandemic, the percentage of businesses [providing feedback to all candidates](#) following an interview dropped to just 7%, which isn't good enough in a candidate-driven landscape. Organisations should be working with end-to-end recruiters that don't just support the hiring experience but the candidate experience in its entirety, helping to maintain relationships with great talent for potential future roles.

Challenges in Onboarding

As most employers will already know, there are 5 stages to the candidate experience:

1. Job search/application
2. Initial screening or assessment
3. Shortlisting for interview
4. Offer/acceptance
5. Onboarding

The challenge with onboarding in the post-pandemic landscape is the fact that remote working has very much become the norm. This means that businesses must be able to support new workers and help them to settle into the company and into the working environment, without relying on immersive office experiences and 'office osmosis'.

Unfortunately, many organisations appear to be failing to achieve this. Earlier this year, it was reported that more than half of all women – around 58% – and 65% of men felt [unsatisfied with the onboarding programme](#) they experienced as a new employee.

The good news is that the challenges of onboarding remotely or amongst a geographically dispersed team can be tackled by adapting your approach.

The bad news is that there's really no right or wrong way to change. There are, however, three ways that you can uncover the best methods for onboarding:

- Involve your existing employees and ask for their insight into any areas where they would have appreciated more support as they were settling in themselves.
- Discuss this with your candidates during the interview stage, asking about their expectations so that you can proactively prepare to welcome them.
- Partner with recruiters that will remain in touch with candidates throughout the onboarding process to obtain useful feedback for making necessary tweaks.

The COVID-19 outbreak introduced a lot of changes to the recruitment sector. Understanding the impact of these changes, acknowledging the new challenges they've brought with them, and being willing to adapt your candidate recruitment and onboarding strategies as needed are key to attracting the right talent, at the right time.





Why are so many employees resigning - and what can you do about it?

2022 is shaping up to be one of the most turbulent years UK businesses have ever faced. Of course, 2020 was a serious contender. But today, organisations are not only having to adapt to the 'new normal', but also handle the increasing retention challenge that's coming their way. The 'Great Resignation' is most certainly upon us.

Different reports are citing different figures when it comes to the 'Great Resignation'. The worst case scenario is that around [half of UK workers are either planning to quit, or are thinking of quitting](#), this year. More realistically, it's expected that around [one quarter will leave their jobs by the end of 2022](#). Either way, these numbers are enough to make us sit up and listen, consider the business impact, and build a plan.

Exploring the Business Impact

The Great Resignation has been a few years in the making, first reaching the point of concern between September and November last year, [when job vacancies hit an all-time high of 1.2 million](#). This, as you can probably imagine, has been having real and sometimes devastating impacts on organisations. 45% of companies facing shortages have asked their staff to work longer hours, risking employee burnout. And half

of those struggling with shortages say they've been unable to meet demand.

What's Sparking the 'Great Resignation'?

It appears as though multiple factors have come together simultaneously that are making employees take a closer look at their roles, and whether they're in the right place. The global health crisis is, of course, sparking much of the shift. But so is a growing awareness of the need for equality, equity, and inclusion in the workplace.

Some of the primary reasons why employees are leaving jobs today include:

- **Evolving expectations** – When the pandemic hit, many businesses discovered that they could operate successfully without the need for a fully occupied office. And employees found that they were able to carry out their roles productively, while also enjoying a much healthier work/life balance. It's not surprising that workers aren't keen to return to the office full time, and nearly half of all employees say they'd [consider quitting if flexibility wasn't an option](#).
- **Healthcare is at a standstill** – Accessing healthcare

over the past few years has been challenging, and NHS waiting lists are bigger than ever. Unfortunately, this seems to have had a significant impact on workers. Today, [twice as many 50-65 years olds are leaving their jobs due to ill health](#) than they are due to retirement, and many businesses are finding that they're rapidly losing experienced employees, resulting in a growing skills gap.

- **Workloads have changed** – Businesses have certainly had a lot on their plates during the COVID-19 crisis, having to do more with less. And employees are feeling the pressure. In fact, almost [half of all HR managers](#) have said they've considered quitting during the pandemic because of the additional responsibilities they've had to take on, such as implementing new health and safety measures, and rolling out comprehensive mental health schemes.
- **There are still limitations in equality** – Equality and equity are two words that are fast becoming part of the everyday lingo in workplace environments. And that's definitely a good thing. But equality still has its limits; there are still areas where we're not quite there. One of those areas is [support for older women](#). 1 in 4 women have thought about quitting because they feel businesses do not have robust enough measures in place to support them during menopause.

How to Reduce Resignations

As is clear to see from the many different reasons employees are citing for quitting their jobs, there's no single way to reduce resignations. There's no point introducing flexible working arrangements if your staff are quite happy to work from the office, for example. The best way to retain your staff is to listen closely to what they need.

Before business leaders get to a point where they're conducting exit interviews and asking 'what went wrong?', they should be working to carry out stay interviews and asking 'what do you need?'. Stay interviews can be a powerful retention tool, helping organisations learn more about what motivates their staff to work optimally.

Stay interviews aren't new. But until recently, there has been a definite trend for businesses to address resignation retroactively, rather than proactively. In the turbulent landscape we're facing today, however, we can't keep working in this same way. Businesses need to take action and make retention a new priority.

UPCOMING BOND WILLIAMS EVENTS

WE REGULARLY RUN FREE EVENTS FOR BUSINESS OWNERS, HR PROFESSIONALS AND EMPLOYEES WHOSE ROLE INVOLVES HR FUNCTIONS.

Held in partnership with specialist guest speakers and other local businesses, these webinars and events cover a variety of relevant and timely topics including employment law, professional development and industry innovations.

All of our upcoming webinars are detailed below.

[To book, please visit www.bondwilliams.co.uk/events](http://www.bondwilliams.co.uk/events)

Tuesday, 28th June 2022

Our workplace has evolved, have our peoples needs evolved too?

featuring James Hampton from Unify Partnership

9:15am - 11:30am

Vitality Stadium, Bournemouth

Tuesday, 19th July 2022

Is it time for a "she-bound"?

featuring Dr Alison Maitland and Liz Walker from Becoming International

9:15am - 10:45am

Online webinar

Tuesday, 13th September 2022

How to put the Happy into Hybrid Working

featuring Yvonne Guerineau from Dynamic Perspective Consulting

9:30am - 11:30am

Online webinar

GET INVOLVED!

We're always on the lookout for new event opportunities for the HR industry as well as our other specialist divisions – Accounting & Finance, IT & Software Solutions, Office & Commercial and Engineering, Science & Space.

If you'd like to suggest topics or get involved in any way, please contact: **Laura Webb on 01202 233777**

laura.webb@bondwilliams.co.uk



Suzanne Sherriff

Director

HR, Office and Commercial Divisions

Spotlight with newly promoted Director, Suzanne Sherriff

How long have you been with Bond Williams?

I came to Bond Williams 12 years. Initially as a temporary's consultant to run and grow the temporary's desk then progressed to Team Leader for both the temporary and permanent division, then Associate Director and now Director of the HR, Office & Commercial Divisions.

You have been in Recruitment now for 18 years, why have you stayed in it for so long?

I love the pace and variety of the role; no two days are ever the same and you can't ever become complacent. I have built relationships with so many people over the years and watched their careers progress.

I have also been offered a number of opportunities over the past 12 years to progress my career with Bond Williams which has kept me on my toes.

What do you do to relax after a busy day in recruitment?

To relax I drink wine in huge amounts!!

Seriously though, I have a close family that I love spending time with as well as friends and watching documentaries.

What do you recruit for in your area?

In the HR & Commercial division we cover a breath of roles. Firstly in HR we recruitment for roles ranging from HR Administrators to Hr Officers, L& D professionals, HR Managers through to HR Directors across a range of industries and companies, from small independents, SMEs through to Blue chip clients.

The commercial division can range from reception cover, customer service, sales, account management, marketing, ecommerce.

How has the market been for your division over the past year?

We have seen a huge number of permanent roles from entry level posts through to Executive roles added to which candidates have been in shorter supply, we have worked hard to be proactive and attract those candidates. We have also looked for alternative solutions and offerings for clients when skills are in short supply to help solve their challenges. We have also had lots of new clients approach us for many different reasons and have continued to service our long standing clients of which there are many.

What trends do you see developing in your marketplace?

Hybrid and remote working options will continue to trend this is now a requirement for many looking to move roles. However some clients are not able to offer this due to business needs or are unwilling to flex which creates more of challenge when recruiting as competitors outside of the area are offering hybrid or even remote working in which case the pool of candidates you have access to becomes less if you aren't able to be flexible. If you are paying very good rates, you will still attract candidates but there will need to be a motivator to be in the office fulltime. Having said that there are still candidates out there that want to be in the office fulltime but there are just fewer now.

I believe that companies may have to look more at skills and experience and do away with specific qualifications and minimum years experience. Candidates of the younger generation tend to have more of a portfolio of experience and are less inclined to stay in roles as long these days.

What roles are you finding are in demand at the moment?

Sales, Digital Marketing & E Commerce are very much in demand at the moment.

What are the biggest issues for candidates in your marketplace?

There is so much opportunity being offered to candidate now on a nationwide level with much bigger salaries being offered outside of the area. However that doesn't mean they will necessarily be offered those roles, some candidates expect working from home as a minimum requirement which isn't realistic for some roles and they may need to take a pay cut to do that if it is. On the reverse other candidates are willing to sacrifice benefits and flexible working for a much higher salary backfilling those roles where office based candidates on good salaries are now not wanting to go into the office fulltime but were still expecting to be paid the same. Candidates' expectations have risen and they will need to be realistic to cope with the flexibility they want as well as the employers playing their part as well.

What are the biggest issues for clients in your marketplace?

Clients need to become more flexible and offer different and varied benefits to attract candidates. Flexibility has become a prerequisite for many now that people have enjoyed the flexibility of working through covid and they have shaped their lives around that. Candidates now have so much choice with regards to companies, location and salaries offered, clients will need to flex up with pay now becoming a major player, with the cost of living going up, less restrictions on remote working locations and candidate shortages. Companies are paying for the right people. If they have open vacancies, their bottom line is affected!

What advice would you give to candidates?

Keep the personal touch when applying for roles send a covering letter for that specific role or call the recruiter as opposed to relying purely on online applications.

Read the job descriptions you are applying for and amend CV or add words to align with the role (only if you have the skills) and show some personality.

Be honest and courteous if the role isn't for you tell the recruiter don't ghost them, there may be future roles that are right for you, you want them to consider you. If you have gone AWOL or let them down before they are unlikely to give you another chance.

Send a follow up thankyou email after interviews

What advice would you give to clients?

Make sure that the candidate's journey from interview to onboarding is slick and quick whilst maintaining the personal touch. Keep communication consistent so everyone involved knows what is happening, people will only chase you for updates adding further work to your schedule. A quick update doesn't take a minute.

Look at your recruitment process, is it still fit for purpose? Can improvements be made to process, timings, forms etc.

Make sure the first people or robot screening the applications knows exactly what they are looking for and can also recognise additional skills and experience that could fit the role.

Spend more time training candidates especially if you can't find the exact skills you are looking for.

Get a good social media presence and branding is key, what makes you stand out from the crowd, why should someone work for you? Portray that positive company culture that supports a work life balance if you do, your competitors might not.

What do you like most about working at Bond Williams?

Working with a supportive forward thinking company that recognise & appreciate that people are their greatest asset. I am very proud of the reputation we have locally.

What do you most like about working in recruitment?

Excitement of the competition and the thrill of the chase. Working in a varied fast paced role keeps me on my toes as well as meeting people from all walks of life. Telling someone they have been offered a job never gets boring. Along with knowing the more you put in the more you get out.

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