

White collar jobs market booming: Employers need to be more creative to attract talent amid chronic skills shortages

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The professional recruitment market has continued to perform exceptionally well with increases in year-on-year vacancy and placement figures, while monthly data points towards a recruitment sector recovering exceptionally well from the pandemic. However, employers must be more creative at attracting top talent amid chronic skills shortages. That's according to the latest Recruitment Trends Snapshot report from The Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCo).

The data, provided by growth analytics experts cube19, revealed perhaps unsurprisingly that year-on-year metrics for permanent vacancies and placements showed marked increases – up 39% and 91% respectively – which is entirely reflective of the easing of restrictions over the summer of 2020 which was quickly followed by the Government reintroducing working from home and a 10pm curfew for the hospitality sector in the latter part of September.

However, the fact that both permanent and contract vacancies increased between August and September 2021 – up 13% and 7% respectively – is indicative of the widely reported skills shortages across the professional sector which continue to drive demand for talent. This is in line with the latest data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), which shows vacancies hit record highs between July and September.

APSCo's data continues to reveal the ongoing reliance placed on professional staffing firms by employers as demand for talent drives hiring activity with sales revenue for both permanent and contract placements up 2% and 16% month-on-month. With widespread reports of skills shortages, coupled with the UK's post Brexit immigration policy exacerbating this issue, employers are having to be more creative in their talent attraction strategies in a post Covid environment where talent is demanding more from companies than salary alone. This is in keeping with the latest research from APSCo member Reed.co.uk which suggests that businesses need to adapt their offerings in accordance with new priorities shaped by the pandemic.

Commenting on the data Ann Swain, Chief Executive of APSCo said:

“We're seeing a continued demand for new skills across the professional staffing sector that is both positive and concerning. While it's encouraging to see vacancy and placement numbers increasing, we're all too aware that skills shortages are rife across every industry. Where there's a limited availability of skills – and an unattractive visa route that fails to encourage non-UK nationals into employment in the country – employers are going to have to be more creative at attracting top talent. Salary is obviously a major draw but increasingly, benefits that facilitate flexible working and a work life balance are becoming increasingly sought after. While the staffing sector is equipped to support UK employers as the economy continues to bounce back, in the current environment, securing the best skills

is going to require the appropriate investment – and that’s not always just about money.”

Joe McGuire, Chief Revenue Office at cube19 says:

“After seeing the growth numbers revised up, it is encouraging but maybe not surprising to see these stats rising again. There is a significantly growing demand for contractors and in spite of perm vacancies still trending behind pre-pandemic levels, perm placements are at an all-time high, which is indicative of a candidate short market. There are some clear challenges in front of us but we remain positive that the professional recruitment market will remain buoyant for some time.”

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