

Demand for admin, HR and office support grows as employers struggle to recruit

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The vast majority (85%) of UK employers are concerned that they will be unable to hire crucial admin, HR and office support staff over the next year as skills shortages remain rife and war for talent heats up. That's according to new research by specialist recruitment firm Robert Half.

The firm's 2023 Salary Guide (<https://www.roberthalf.co.uk/salary-guide>) - which analyses and reports on market salaries, hiring trends, and skills requirements across the UK - revealed that the high demand for these roles has led to many candidates choosing not to proactively search for a new role and instead wait to be headhunted. With almost a third (31%) of hiring managers also revealing that the pace of recruitment will prevent them from attracting talent, businesses look set to face continued hiring struggles for some time yet.

According to the data (<https://www.roberthalf.co.uk/salary-guide>), skills shortages are being exacerbated by evolving skills requirements across the admin, HR and office support functions, with more businesses requiring Excel and data analytics skills in roles as the growth in people analytics grows. Survey respondents revealed that roles for junior HR professionals are increasingly requiring tech skills and larger responsibilities, creating a potential drain of early careers talent across HR.

Diversity challenges

While the data revealed that 28% of UK businesses are hiring new HR or support staff to spearhead diversity and inclusion efforts, the study also highlighted that recruitment across these roles is being hindered by a lack of current DEI visibility.

Two-thirds (66%) of hiring managers agreed that businesses need to be more transparent about their DEI activity to attract staff, with many HR professionals viewing a lack of openness as a 'red flag' when considering a new role. A further 24% revealed that they had been asked about diversity, inclusion and equity in the last 12 months, suggesting that businesses are facing a 'Catch-22' diversity scenario.

Shelley Crane, Market Director for Marketing, HR & Executive Support, at Robert Half, commented:

“Skills shortages are being widely talked about in remits that we expect to see a dearth of resources such as the STEM fields, but in reality, the effects of the war for talent are being felt across every function. Admin, HR and office support staff have a critical role to play in keeping businesses running, but our data suggests that the current hiring landscape is making recruitment across these roles difficult.

“Financial incentives can only go so far in attracting and retaining talent across these core operational functions. When we look in more detail at what motivates this segment of the workforce, clear evidence of and commitment to diversity has a clear role to play. We’re already seeing employers without a clear and concise DEI strategy and communications plan facing tough questions from candidates, and this will only become more commonplace as time goes on and younger socially aware employees join the jobs market. While businesses may need to first recruit the resources to drive diversity and inclusion actions, those that are seemingly doing nothing at the moment will struggle. Any steps – no matter how small – to drive more meaningful and transparent diversity conversations will improve a firm’s attractiveness to this segment of the workforce.”

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Press contact

Vickie Collinge

vickie@bluesky-pr.com

01582 790 705

Notes to editor

About the Research

Robert Half experts analysed internal data for 12 months to 1 March 2022, comprising more than 4,000 data points, relating to 200 roles across the finance and accounting, financial services, technology, HR and marketing sectors. Six-month comparisons were made against data that was validated on 1 September 2021.

Robert Half also commissioned Rigour Research to conduct a survey amongst 300 C-suite level senior leaders between 17-28 February 2022. This is the source of the data point on business confidence. The C-suite level senior leaders operate with hiring responsibilities across small (50-249 employees), medium (250-499) and large (500+ employees) from the public sector, private, and publicly listed businesses across the UK.

About Robert Half

Founded in 1948, Robert Half is the world's first and largest specialised talent solutions consultancy, working to fill professional services roles at all levels within the finance and accounting, banking, technology, HR, marketing and legal sectors. The company has more than 300 staffing locations worldwide and offers hiring and job search services at www.roberthalf.co.uk

Robert Half understands that it takes time and effort to evaluate the best talent strategy for different businesses. For further independent advice to assist with your recruitment and workforce planning efforts, visit www.roberthalf.co.uk/advice.