



# **STRATEGIC RECRUITMENT REPORT**


Hiring  
Challenges for  
2021

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# OVERVIEW

Economists such as Roger Martin-Fagg tell us that **2021 will bring us a boom in many sectors**. However, many businesses have changed their working practices, operating differently and/or entering new sectors. **Now add in a pent-up jobseeker market and you're likely to see lots of attrition, too.**

Depending on which survey you review, approximately **40% of your staff** will already be looking to change jobs in the next 18 months. Many prior moves stalled due to the lockdowns and job market uncertainty; minor issues will have accelerated and come to a head due to lockdown pressures and having time to think while on furlough; people have retrained and upskilled themselves for new careers; and others will want new working conditions that you simply can't support.



*A pent-up job market, plus life changes, plus shifts in working practices... around 40% of staff expect to change jobs in the next 18 months*

**PLANNING AND PREPARING NOW WILL HELP  
YOU STEAL AN ADVANTAGE ON YOUR  
COMPETITION**

## THE MAIN MESSAGE

The biggest output is likely to be **higher than usual attrition**. However well you've coped over the last year, you're probably going to be looking for **more people**, with **unfamiliar skill sets**, and you're going to need to embed and manage them differently.

**Are you ready to recruit? Do you have capacity? Have you tested your operational readiness and resilience for change?**

## CONSIDER WHAT'S NEW

01

### FLEXIBLE WORKING

All surveys report a desire for remote working. Embrace change, communicate it, use it when you're hiring, and access bigger talent pools

02

### MENTAL HEALTH

Acknowledge that your people need support, and know that you'll have some tricky problems to tackle, both in your existing workforce and new hires

03

### PHYSICAL HEALTH

As cancer diagnoses are down and obesity is up, among other trends, expect a slew of absences at the very least

04

### DIVORCE

Couples have been tested to the limit, and increased divorce will create life changes that you can't anticipate or control

05

### HOLIDAY DEMAND

Expect a glut of requests at the same time, extra pressures on your remaining workers and / or a need for short term temporary hiring

## QUARSH 2021 HIRING CHALLENGES

**12%**

12% of Britons want life to return to how it was Pre-Covid - BritainThinks

**40%**

40% of movers want to leave cities for the countryside - Zoopla

**38%**

38% of employees want to change jobs in the next 12 months - CIPD

**10%**

10% of workers want to return to full-time office working; 32% want to be permanently home-based - O2 Business

**65%**

65% of those with pre-existing mental health conditions have worsened - MIND

**100%**

Depression rates have doubled during lockdown - ONS

**47%**

47% of Britons have gained significant weight - Evening Standard

**44%**

44% of workers are anxious about returning to work; over half want a 50/50 remote / office split - YouGov

**42%**

42% increase in divorce enquiries - Co-Op Legal Services

**29.1%**

Household savings at 29.1%, an all-time high - ONS

**54%**

Taking a holiday as most important post-lockdown action - Guardian

# PREPARE AND COMMUNICATE

**If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail.** None of us in our working lives have ever faced a global crisis like this, it's time to **stop, think, plan and control** the outcomes.

## STOP

Give yourself the time and space to understand where things are and if you are ready for people to return to work.

## THINK

Conduct a business health check (grey box!) to include the following and other impacts that will affect your business with people coming back into work:

## PREPARE

Develop a roadmap for returning to a full staff capacity with target stages set against your forecasted supply / demand requirements

## CONTROL

Develop contingencies to mitigate the negative impacts that could derail your staged plan and target thresholds

- **Business Blockers** What barriers do you have for people returning to work?
- **People Blockers** How do your people feel about coming back?
- **Health Issues** Are your mental and physical health processes good enough?
- **Workplace Challenges** What options can you offer for flexible working?
- **Demand Challenge** What is the market demand for our product/service output?
- **Disaster Recovery** What do we do if...?
- **Policy Requirements** What updates are needed to accommodate change?

Ensure you **update** and keep your people **informed** at all times. One thing is for certain; **if your people feel uncomfortable or uncertain about their future, you will see an increase in the number of people you lose** and need to rehire to meet your target plan.

# YOUR PEOPLE PLAN

**Our Recruitment Wheel** sets out the steps you can take to create a robust, scalable recruitment process, whether you're going it alone or working with recruitment partners - agency or RPO firms, like us.

Start with **Strategy** and planning. **Where are the threats?** Who's likely to leave? Is your return to work process fit for purpose? How will a partially distributed workforce impact on physical and mental health? Who's thriving at the moment, and who's struggling?

Spend some time **reflecting** on who you've got, who you'll lose and what you are going to need.

Next, run a **culture and skills matrix** through your leadership team, and cascade it through their sub-teams.

Look for **gaps in knowledge and skills**, look for **red flags** - people who are ready for a promotion that you can't provide, or who could learn/earn more elsewhere, or who've gone through major life changes.

*Skills and Culture matrices are a great way of getting to the heart of your business really quickly and intuitively*



Now think about new skills that you need. **Find someone in your network who can advise you** on those skills, as without that you'll waste a lot of time and money looking for and assessing people that you don't understand.

We think you'll find that you need to think about **pipelining** as never before.

For this to work well, you need to **plan your timeline** for hiring, and you'll need to think about your **employer brand**.



# EMPLOYER BRAND

Why should someone come and work for you? What can you offer that's better than anyone else, or at the very least better than where they are? How are you showcasing your working culture in a way that has authenticity and integrity?

## Culture

**Otherwise known as your Employer Brand, or EVP, your business has a culture.**

Much like your own personal levels of fitness, if you don't like it, you can do something about it. Your job is to reflect your business accurately and honestly to the outside world.

Believe it or not, amazing candidates aren't waiting for you to announce that you have a vacancy, ready to beat a path to your door.

The people you want may not even know your business exists.

You'll certainly be competing with others to secure the people you need.

The good news is, even in this market, decisions are rarely made solely based on money. A supportive group of colleagues, an interesting job, the potential to move up the ranks, challenging projects to work on.. all of these matter more across all demographics than salaries and benefits.

## Your actions

Have a good look at how you're presenting your business and consider the following.

1

**Showcase your employees.** Make sure their personalities shine through. Use video, if you can, and failing that some up to date pictures with some descriptions of hobbies is a good alternative

2

**Career development.** How have people moved through your business? What are the potential routes available to new colleagues? Have some real-world examples, both technical and managerial.

3

**Interesting work.** Talk about the projects your people have got involved in - the geekier the better, and plenty of descriptors about results achieved and how much the team enjoyed the challenge.

4

**Fun!** Charity challenges, Christmas parties, lockdown team-building, summer picnics... anything your people get up to that helps them gel is worth shouting about - website and socials.

# YOUR PEOPLE PLAN

Now you know where the threats and opportunities are, you can start future planning. You'll need to attract and assess, phases two and three of our Wheel.

## Attraction.

Create a job description for all the posts you've uncovered. **Bullet points are fine**; this isn't an external document. Use this to write a **compelling advert**, which should be more about the candidate and what they'll experience than how fantastic your business is. **Mitch Sullivan's copywriting course is great for learning how to do this.**

Now pass it through someone who knows their onions to **make sure the skills exist** in combination for the salary you have in mind. Last, write a briefing pack - **something that will inform and engage** the people you want to hire.

If you've got your messaging right, you'll receive fewer applicants than usual but they should be of a higher quality. Reply to all of them, even if they're irrelevant.

## Assessment.

In this market, people are looking for different things. **Security, flexibility, people to talk to, balance.** They're going to want to know what you did during the pandemic and how you took care of your teams. **You're going to want to know how they coped.**

You might be interviewing people who have been out of work; **look at this as an opportunity rather than a negative**, and remember they might be less confident than usual. They'll certainly find interviewing stressful, **so be kind.**

You're probably video interviewing - find **tests you can administer online**, ask for written reports, get them to run a presentation virtually.

Don't forget to write and use a **balanced scorecard**, which everyone on the interview panel signs up to, and remind the panel about **do's and don't's** of good interviewing practice.

*Remember:  
interviewing is a two-  
way street*



# YOUR PEOPLE PLAN

## Onboarding.

**The culture piece here is absolutely critical.** Have you redefined and strengthened your internal culture? Do people talk positively about their experiences during lockdown? Can you encourage that discussion during the early stages of someone's onboarding to reassure new people that they've made the right choice?

New people need **information, connections, and careful KPI management.** They will be feeling rudderless. If they're leading teams, they need the inside skinny on trouble-makers and allies. They need to be looked after, but not suffocated. **They definitely need encouragement and emotional connection.**

You may lose people that you'd like to keep, and you might find your clients are less happy than normal because your people aren't performing as well as usual. Be prepared for relatively high churn compared to pre-Covid.

## Data.

You can't improve what you don't measure. Recruitment is a process like any other. We measure 21 data points. The most useful are...

- **Cost of hire** Visible (agency fees, advertising) and hidden (opportunity cost of vacant seat, manager time). Helps to demonstrate the true cost of hiring.
- **Time to hire** From when the vacancy is identified to an offer is accepted. Provides information on internal efficiency and identifies bottlenecks.
- **Interview to offer ratio** Measures your attraction strategy success and how good your hiring managers are at interviewing
- **Source of hire** Tracks your best source of successful candidates - referrals, job boards, specialist advertising, your own careers page



**Look for trends, ways to improve, things to repeat.** Talk about it in your management meetings. If you're still in business, and growing, it's not an accident. **Apply the same logic to people acquisition.**

# SUMMARY

**All reports indicate that there is going to be a significant change to your workforce over the next 12 to 18 months and your culture will be changing too.** You're going to need a robust recruitment and attraction strategy that understands and embraces that. **Recruitment is a strategic challenge**, it's hard and embedding new people is always difficult; the way you differentiate yourself against your competitors is pivotal to the success you will have in attracting the right people.

**Consider your message and the way you have traditionally hired people.** Is it still relevant, or are other alternatives that would better suit your overall strategy to strengthen your business further?

You don't need to be bound by convention; **you can think differently and be different.** Plan who you'll need and when, then get your recruitment processes working effectively to see you through. **If you need any help, call us.**



## About the author

Lucy James is Managing Director of Quarsh Ltd, the **Complete Recruitment Department for SMEs**. Our mission is to help SMEs recruit better, giving a highly effective, cost-efficient alternative to DIY and agencies.

**We would love to help you get ahead of the curve.**

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For more information, visit [www.quarsh.com](http://www.quarsh.com)

## INSEAD REPORT 2021

**Charles Galunic, Prof of Organisational Behaviour**, states 6 post-lockdown issues:

1. Employee Health (organisational design of physical workspaces well as mental health)
2. Remote working (processes, resources and tools needed to do the job)
3. Control and centralisation (businesses “freeze up” when control is centralised)
4. Connection with colleagues (how to feel part of something when people don't physically meet)
5. Dual time horizons (crisis management vs repositioning for the future)
6. Backstage leadership (presence and style is not the same as guiding and shaping)