



**Building a
great hiring
experience at
scale**

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It would be something of an understatement to say that the pandemic had brought about huge changes to the way technology is used in the workplace. The sudden shutdown of many physical workplaces in early 2020 led to an unprecedented digital transformation for many businesses.

As the country looks cautiously ahead to a return to partial normality, many firms are realising they now need to bring a similar level of agility to their recruitment efforts if they are going to be able to compete once the economy starts to reopen.

Chris Pateman, Senior Account Executive at OutMatch, believes this will lead many companies to reevaluate their hiring processes to incorporate more technology. "Traditional hiring processes are in their nature rigid and inefficient," he told participants of a recent TALiNT Partners event.

"The reliance on manual steps means that if you suddenly have to hire at scale you need to either quickly scale up your own team, or quickly outsource and bed that outsourcer into your organisation."

Since its inception in 2015, OutMatch has helped many companies with high-volume recruitment needs and has evolved its own recruitment automation capabilities to create what it calls a 'hiring experience stack', a layer of assessments, video interviewing and reference checking that allows a more efficient recruitment process and provides a cohesive candidate journey, both pre- and post-hire.

Improving the candidate experience will be especially crucial for industries such as hospitality, which have had to reduce headcount due to the pandemic but are likely to have to hire again at speed.

As one HR Director from the hospitality industry commented: "How we go about getting people back into the business and how we go about selecting and recruiting is going to be a challenge because our competitors will be in similar positions to us and we are all going to be fighting for great talent."



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In preparation for this, he said the company was piloting talent optimisation software. "We are starting to look at how we use technology more to try and make better assessment decisions."

Another Resourcing Leader in the construction industry said: "Given the mass volume of applications we receive, we are looking at upgrading our recruiting technology to help with some of the sifting that the team is having to do through CVs and applications and interviews. We are just doing far too many Teams interviews and the team is in need of a break". This sentiment was echoed by a number of attendees.

Impetus for change

One upside of the pandemic is that it has facilitated positive change. At McDonald's, for example, Drue Hammond, Market Talent Lead, said: "The relationship with franchisees is a crucial element of our business, we have worked together to improve virtual recruitment and onboarding. This has resulted in positive feedback all round and will form part of our thinking as to how our candidate experience continues to evolve."

Will Hamilton, Chief Marketing Officer at OutMatch, pointed out that necessity had driven similar changes across other industries. "Financial services contact centres went remote, fast. Previously they said it couldn't be done for regulatory reasons but it happened because it had to."

Culture 'conundrum'

But the downside of all this rapid change is that some staff are struggling to adapt to the new ways of working. With existing employees it is perhaps easier to help people adjust to remote working as they are more familiar with an organisation's culture. But panellists reported that many new hires are struggling.

This has been a particular problem with graduates, said Mel Punch, Head of UK careers at Investec. "Our grads who we onboarded in September during lockdown, some of the feedback we get is that they don't feel connected, they don't understand the culture."



The conundrum at the moment is how you get them to feel they are part of Investec.”

EY’s Head of Student Recruitment James Gordanifar reported a similar problem with the 1,000 graduates and apprentices the firm had taken on last September.

At Thames Water, Head of Resourcing Ben Gledhill said the company had implemented chat bots to try to overcome some of the issues.

“One thing that we noticed is that anxiety has heightened with new starters so that is the reason why we bought in automation. We now have a 24/7 comms capability with all our new starters so rather than stressing on a Saturday or a Sunday and not being able to get through to anybody, people can ask questions about onboarding, our culture and our brand.”

The dreaded drop outs

But while this type of technology will undoubtedly assist employee retention, it seems employers also need to go back a step further. One big problem reported by those on the panel was an increase in the number of candidates accepting a job but then dropping out before taking up their role.

The Chief People Officer from a tech services business agreed this was something that had become an increasing issue for them. They had added 5,000 new employees in the last year, and are seeing much higher levels of dropouts of acceptance than we ever saw previously.”

Their response has been to create a ‘pre-boarding team’ which has made a huge difference in terms of getting people to join the business and not get cold feet between accepting and starting.”

It seems there are a number of pain points in the hiring and onboarding processes and while technology can undoubtedly play a big role in overcoming these, there’s also still a need for human intervention. Finding the right balance between the two will be a key challenge for recruiters in the coming year.

EQ over IQ

The move to remote working hasn’t just changed the way we recruit, it’s also changed the skills needed in the modern workplace. People who thrived in an office environment haven’t necessarily thrived in a remote working situation and this can be particularly problematic when it extends to a company’s leaders.

“You can deliver a P&L and you could maybe previously have created a relationship with a client which was purely on a P&L basis, but what has really become apparent now is [we need] leaders who have real emotional intelligence and equally leaders who can create hope and leaders who can create a really clear vision and articulate where are we going and how are we going to get there,” said Rachel Jones, Director of Talent, Engagement and OD at Sodexo.

A prime example of a leader not fitting this description was perhaps KPMG’s UK chairman Bill Michael, who resigned recently after it was widely reported that he had told staff to “stop moaning” about working conditions during the pandemic in a virtual town hall meeting.

“He lacked EQ,” commented another guest. “EQ is worth so much more than IQ right now.”



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