

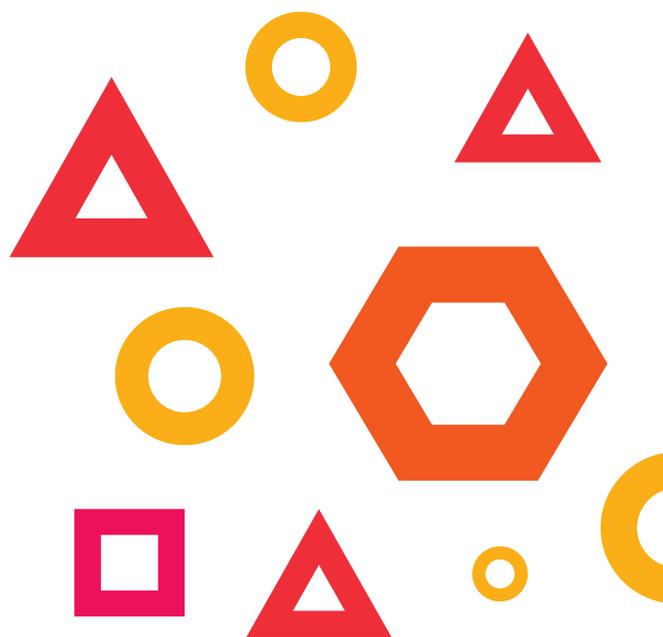
# The Ultimate Guide to plugging the skills gap

With unemployment levels remaining at a record low, the UK is facing a growing skills gap to the tune of £6.3 billion. With the right talent in short supply, Employers are paying a high price to ensure their organisation remains able to meet the fast-shifting demands of their customers. In this fiercely competitive landscape, recruitment and retention continue to top the list of priorities for business leaders eager to enlist the best and brightest to help them achieve their commercial ambitions.

Yet, as economic and political uncertainty persists, the light at the end of the tunnel could be far away. From unanswered questions regarding visa restrictions and the impact of cutting-edge technology creating new jobs, the UK could be set to experience even greater skill shortages in the immediate future. As demand continues to outstrip supply, those who think outside the box will be the winners in the war for talent.

**With this in mind, we've put together a detailed guide to help you plug the skills gap in your business and retain your competitive edge.**

**“The UK is facing a growing skills gap to the tune of £6.3 billion”**



# Nurturing talent through training and development

**Faced with an acute skills shortage, recruitment has become a talent tug of war for businesses of every size and sector. With their focus firmly fixed on bringing in new blood to meet new demands, managers can be quick to overlook the valuable assets they already have in the business.**

One of the most cost-effective ways of addressing the skills gap in a business is to provide training to existing staff. With the right resources in place, the pay-off will be worth the upfront cost and short-term loss of productivity. The best way to begin is by conducting a skills gap analysis. This will help you to identify the attributes you need to meet your business goals. It should also inform your Employee development and hiring programs.

## Motivate staff to upskill

When most people think of workplace learning, the image that comes to mind is often a mindless click-next online course packed with text-heavy screens – but it doesn't have to be this way. Whether it's a classroom-based course that your Employees take part in during working hours or an interactive digital learning solution that tracks progress and rewards achievements, the training solutions you choose should engage your staff and motivate them to master new skills.

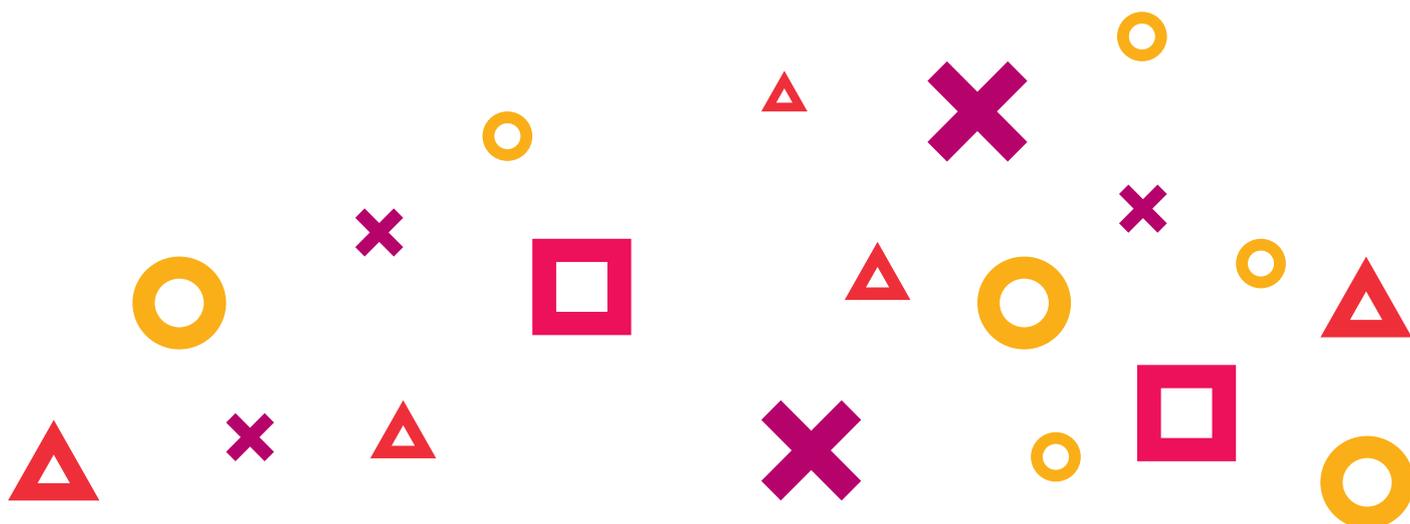
## Boost engagement

By offering opportunities in training and development, leaders demonstrate a commitment to their staff. Dedicated to the development of their people, managers who provide training tend to see a sharp rise in engagement levels as workers feel nurtured by their Employer.

Equipped with their new-found skills, Employees feel empowered to contribute new ideas; their value in your organisation has doubled. Not only are you able to meet the needs of a fast-moving market, but your retention levels have improved thanks to the commitment you have shown to your staff.

## Create a culture of learning

Training should not be treated as a one and done. You may have succeeded in upskilling certain members of staff to meet the gaps in your current operation, but things change. Anticipating your business' future needs will encourage you to foster a learning culture – one in which all staff are encouraged to look ahead and consider what skills they may need to perform their job in the future.



# Taking advantage of the Temporary market

**While management must think ahead to the long-term solutions that will address the skills gaps in the future, the fastest-acting remedy to a talent deficit can often be found in the Temporary jobs market.**

## **A strategic approach to business growth**

Rather than just a cheap alternative to permanent Employees, research has shown how organisations that are reliant on agency workers are more likely to take a strategic approach, calling on Temporary and contract workers to help them achieve business objectives. Such an approach can be highly effective in responding to growth, gaining immediate access to skills the organisation is lacking and keeping the business moving.

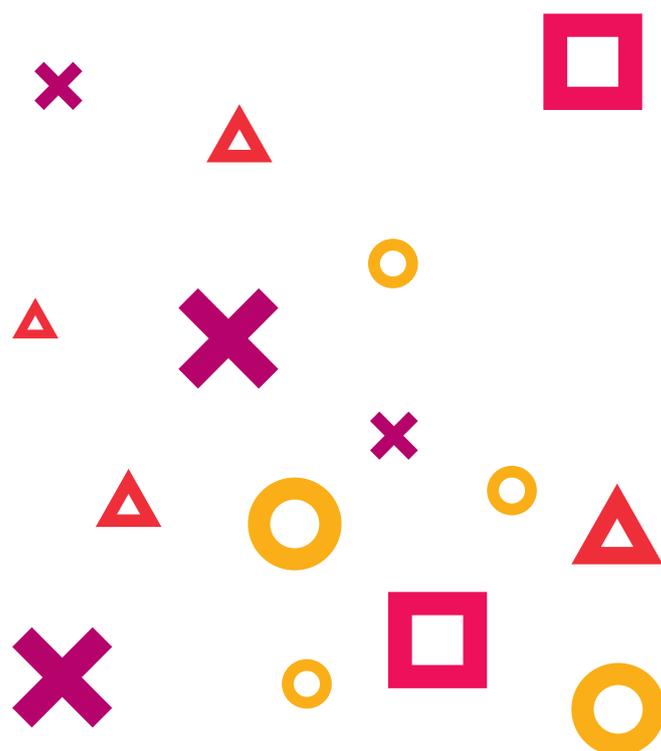
## **Scale-up and down with demand**

Beyond cost-savings, Employers are increasingly proving the critical role that Temporary staff can play in creating a more proactive recruitment strategy. Due to the overheads associated with permanent staff, scaling up and down in light of demand is difficult to do. Employers who opt for Temp workers can take advantage of the fixed-term nature of these contracts to continually review business growth and recruit accordingly.

Control over the size of the workforce and the costs of employment makes Temporary talent a favourable solution for companies eager to retain their competitive edge. What's more, Temporary contracts can become permanent when a professional shows exceptional skill and seeks full-time work with your business.

## **Give Candidates what they want**

The gig economy may have its problems, but due to the opportunities it presents for Candidates with regard to work-life balance, a surge in the number of professionals looking for fixed-term employment is on the rise. In a skills drought, supply rules the market. For individuals with specialist skills, demand can quickly result in increased value for their experience. Temporary roles offering handsome salaries that reflect the current shortage become increasingly attractive to such Candidates – particularly those who prioritise flexibility and freedom in their career.



# Embracing the future of work

**Alongside the steady growth of the Temporary jobs market, recent years have seen the emergence in new ways of working driven by technological advances, the rise of new management strategies and the deliberate policy decisions made by the government. Linear career paths may have been the norm once, but cultural change has shifted our perceptions of what a traditional career looks like. What we see increasingly nowadays is the need for work to meld better with the demands of everyday life.**

As they vie for skills in an increasingly competitive landscape, Employers would be wise to explore the potential that exists in corners of the talent pool that may have previously been overlooked. Individuals returning from career breaks, for example, could prove the perfect fit for an unfilled position in your business. In order to secure such Candidates, you may need to make slight adjustments to your acquisition strategy.

## Offer flexi-time

It's a well-known fact that juggling our personal and professional commitments can be demanding, particularly when we are caring for a dependant in our spare time. Introducing flexi-time as an option can allow Employees to fit their working hours around their individual needs and external commitments. Offering this possibility to Candidates will automatically put you ahead of firms who are more rigid in their working hours.

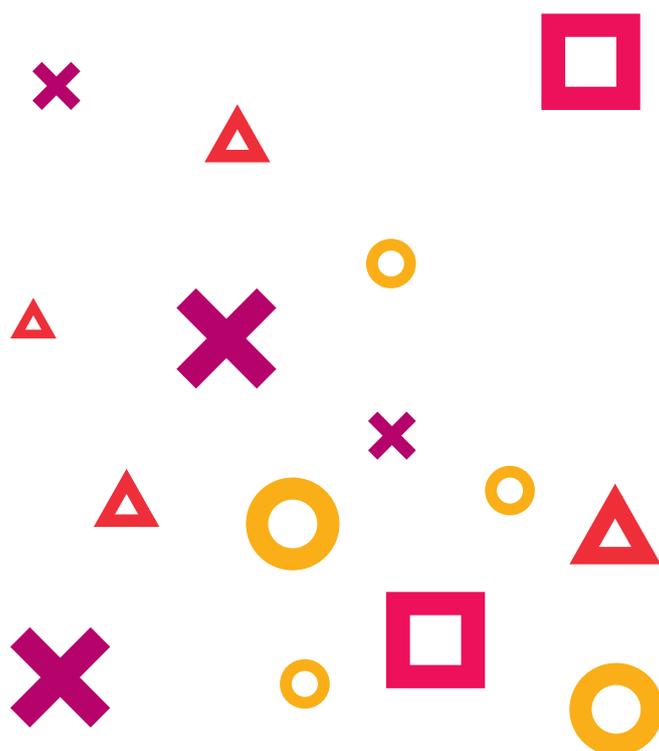
## Consider remote working

In a similar vein, establishing a remote working policy can help to broaden your reach and open up the hiring pool to Candidates who don't live locally or have recently started a family. If you're willing to employ staff on the basis that they are the right person for the job, opening up to the possibility of recruiting remote Employees may enable you to access a wealth of talent that otherwise may have been closed off to you.

## Introduce job-sharing as an option

Concerned about the prospect of losing a valuable Employee due to personal commitments? Some Employers are exploring the benefits that job sharing has to offer. Despite the reservations that some leaders may have towards the idea, job sharing has in many cases proved a positive way of protecting the interests of both Employer and Employee.

Introducing the possibility of job sharing into a role can broaden the talent pool by attracting well-skilled Candidates who have no intention of working full-time. Employers may also benefit from enhanced output resulting from the combination of two Candidates' different skillsets. What's more, job sharing could even help to increase productivity as each partner is more likely to do their fair share if they do not have a full week's work to complete.



# Engaging the next generation of talent

**In the war for talent, a healthy pipeline of potential Candidates is arguably one of the most valuable assets a business can have. While they may not be able to kickstart their careers just yet, making an active effort to engage the next generation can help organisations to plan for the future and build relationships with the Candidates that could eventually become full-time Employees.**

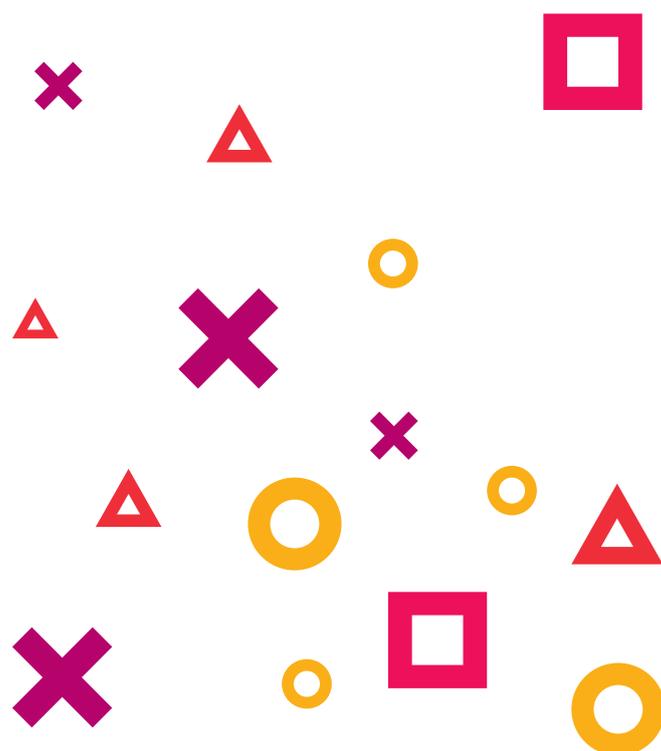
## **Bolster your Employer brand**

Creating opportunities for students and school leavers is a great way to give back to society, but it isn't just the community that stands to gain from internships and work experience. If you can create an effective programme of work that is valuable to the learner and allows young people to gain hands-on experience in the workplace, it won't take long for word to travel.

With a reputation as a company dedicated in nurturing the next generation, you will soon see a steady stream of students eager to get work experience with your company. It might not aid in plugging the immediate skills shortage but offering opportunities for professional development will aid in cementing your brand as an Employer of choice.

## **Work experience as a recruitment strategy**

If your student proves to be a great fit for the company and demonstrates significant potential, offering them a part-time role while they study could be a cost-effective way to hook in young talent and get ahead of the competition. Since you are bringing on board a Candidate who does not bring assumptions or preconceptions from their history in the workplace, such an approach allows you to mould this clean-slate talent to fit your business.



# Conclusion

**With competition as rife as it is, talent acquisition must entail more than a reactive search for the right Candidate when the need arises. Plugging the skills gap requires managers to adopt a long-term view.**

**A strong brand and a commitment to training and development will naturally put your organisation one step ahead. Working with a specialist recruiter will take the weight off your shoulders and allow you to focus on such initiatives safe in the knowledge that a steady stream of talent is interested in your business.**

At Allen Associates, we help Employers to source and secure the talent they need to achieve their lofty ambitions and retain their competitive edge in the market. For the last 20 years, our business has grown to become a leading independent Recruitment agency with offices in Oxfordshire and London. No matter the size of your business or how specific your needs with regard to personnel, our specialist recruitment consultants are well-equipped to advise and assist you in talent acquisition.

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