



# HUMAN RESOURCES TALENT ATTRACTION in 2023

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**OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES AND PITFALLS**

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The past few years have been turbulent times in HR. In 2020 we saw a huge swathe of redundancies in talent attraction, which lead to a scramble to re-recruit once the hiring tap was switched back on. But what did that mean for talent?

During, and post-COVID, businesses came to understand the true value of the People function, and as such, invested heavily. Experienced heads were needed to facilitate change through agile working and great communication. Internal recruiters were brought in to keep up with hiring demands as businesses fought to not only recover, but capitalise by squeezing two years of growth into 12 months.

The demand for generalists, especially at Senior HR Advisor / Junior HR Business Partner level has been unprecedented. Demand genuinely outstripped supply earlier in the year. This resulted in an almighty war for talent. We witnessed an inflated salary bubble, that is just starting to right itself as we approach the new year.

At the most senior level, Chief People Officer roles have been slowly returning. However, the salaries on offer do not match pre-COVID levels currently. It will be interesting to see how this dynamic plays out in 2023. Hopefully our salary survey will shed some light on the expectations of senior people in the market place versus businesses looking to bring on this level of expertise.

Before we dive in to the nuances of HR hiring in 2023, lets take a look at how businesses have managed to retain their current employees.





# What does great retention look like?

For starters, it's not rocket science. It's impossible to please all of the people, all of the time. The key is to listen ... and then take action. The power of being listened to is unrivalled.

## 01 Don't underestimate the value of choice

Agile, flexible, hybrid ... whatever you call it, it's here to stay for the foreseeable future. Forcing people to fit your preferences is like holding the door open and telling them to leave. As a society, we had a taste of a better work life balance that we're not willing to let go. These flexible practices play a huge role.

## 02 Have a respectful, adult to adult culture

The shift to flexibility forced a change in mentality. We had no choice but to trust our workforce. Of course, some famously struggled with this, but most businesses witnessed a lasting culture shift and the adult to adult relationship between employer and employee is prevalent across the businesses I see with low turnover.

## 03 Appoint savvy line managers

Managing a hybrid team takes a different skillset to the traditional office-based days of old. Whether hiring new managers or training existing ones, understanding the shift in dynamics is essential in providing timely support, creating a consistent feedback loop and continuing employee development.



## 04 Great back office support mechanisms

The key to success with hybrid working is in having the right kit to work remotely, that also suits an office environment. But the businesses who do it best go way beyond an updated laptop and an office chair for at home. HRIS and/or self service systems help reinforce that adult to adult culture.

Circling back to my point about listening, having a benefits package that people actually find value in and want to use is also essential – these aren't perks anymore, they're a given.

## 05 Learn from your exit interview

Too many businesses either neglect to conduct them, or simply file away the completed form never to be seen again.

Instead, take this opportunity to learn and improve your employee experience. A sure-fire way to improve your retention rates.



# What challenges are agencies currently facing?



Unfortunately, market circumstances have simply exacerbated challenges that we've been facing for many years now.

First up, the elephant in the room – attracting and retaining top talent. We thought things were tough in 2019 but how wrong we were. As I mentioned previously, 2022 has been a perfect storm as demand outstripped supply in many parts of the country. With macro-economic factors starting to influence the hiring market, I suspect that people will assume recruitment will become easier next year.

Unfortunately, I don't think it's that simple.

Employee engagement has always been, and remains to be, the most common challenge I hear amongst my network. Keeping your people involved was tricky enough when everyone shared the same location. Now we are largely dispersed, it's an even bigger challenge.

Some companies do this brilliantly, but for most of us, it's an ever changing feast – we're all constantly learning and adapting to our employees needs in order to keep them engaged in our businesses.

Impacting on both hiring and EE strategies is employee development. Gone are the days of 'water cooler moments' and learning by osmosis. Whilst learning and development has been a huge concern in an agile, hybrid world, it's also been a significant opportunity for those with expertise in this area.

Speaking of hybrid; whilst unprecedented levels of flexibility has brought many positives, it hasn't been without its concerns. One of which is ensuring an inclusive culture. Issues such as hidden discrimination and cultural misunderstandings are considerably harder to identify with a dispersed workforce.

Remote communication, whilst a very common challenge, can also aggravate rifts in your culture, potentially leading to an inequitable environment where employees leave because they feel like they don't belong.

A common challenge I hear quoted amongst my network is colleague wellbeing. Business owners had their eyes opened to the importance of wellbeing in the workplace and whilst those who do it well shout loudly about their successes, there are many behind the scenes who feel they are off

## We Are Adam blogs I recommend:

[How You Can Help Employees With The Cost of Living Crisis](#)

[Has Hybrid Working Had Its Day?](#)

[10 Ways to Increase Applications to Your Job advert](#)

[How to NOT Drive Away Talent](#)

[Does HR Have an Image Problem?](#)

the pace. Particular difficulties include people working longer hours or on their holiday which leads to burnout, making poor investments in underutilised benefits and employees feeling lonely and disconnected from the outside world.

However, the resounding difficulty that everyone in my network is experiencing is how to navigate change in a constantly VUCA world. For those unfamiliar with the military term, VUCA stands for volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity.

We wrote a piece in partnership with Oakridge, a highly regarded business coaching consultancy, back when the first signs of VUCA were emerging in 2019. You can [find that blog here](#), and it's just as relevant now as it was then.

The positive news is that there is a common theme running through all of these challenges, and resolving them could be simpler than you think. It won't be easy, but let's explore how you can tackle them.

# How can you tackle these challenges?

I'll start by saying that the solutions to many of the HR world's challenges are simple, but don't mistake that for being easy. You need to build a robust, uncomplicated end-to-end people strategy.

Sounds effortless right? Wrong.

I'm sure we're all under no illusions as to how difficult it can be to fully realise your Business to Employee (B2E) strategy. Sometimes referred to as Cradle to Grave HR, your organisation can use a B2E strategy to catch the eyes and interest of the best and most talented people out there.

You'll need to get under the skin of the wider business strategy and pin down exactly what it aims to achieve. Look at the company mission, vision and values, and how each vacancy will impact on broader business goals.

By creating a narrative around your organisation and the role you are hiring for, it helps you catch the eye of the talent you need. In our current, candidate-short market, this can make all the difference to your recruitment and give you an edge over your competitors.

And don't neglect your current team in favour of wooing potential employees! Regular check-ins with your people are essential to make sure that you are still on track and providing the type of environment that you say you are.

Are they also bought in to what you are putting out there, or are they going to see your communications and think that you're full of it?

Once you have this in place, you'll need to back it up with solid systems and processes to create a great all-round employee experience. Have you invested in the right tech? Are your processes clear, easy to understand and most importantly, fit for purpose? Does your people strategy fulfil your employees wants and needs?

Dig into what is causing unnecessary turnover for some (hopefully) quick wins and great insights. Your exit interviews are essential here. As I mentioned earlier, most businesses conduct exit interviews but few use the data effectively. They should be your first port of call when developing a retention strategy.

The new year is a great time to assess what skills gaps you may have in the business. Can these be plugged by training your existing workforce or do you need to hire? Maybe a vigorous training programme could be put into place, or a formal mentoring system to encourage more senior team members to pass on their knowledge and future proof the business.

Talent development is essential in overcoming many business challenges, so be sure to provide clear comms around what is expected of people to help improve take up.

Perhaps instead of L&D, there's a need to embark on an organisational design project. Having a long term, data backed approach to hiring, talent attraction and succession planning will ultimately give you a leg up against your competitors during this talent squeeze.

Getting prepared now for hiring needs 6 months or more down the line will stand you in good stead for securing the top talent in your field.







# The golden question; will it get easier?

In 2022 we saw a record high of 1.3 million vacancies combined with a record low of 3.5% unemployment. That certainly won't rectify itself overnight.

However, if there's anything we've learnt over the last few years its that change is constant. I'm not sure that talent attraction will get easier in 2023.

We've had multiple 'once-in-a-lifetime' events, and are highly likely to be in the midst of another recession as I write. With such factors out of our control, all we can do is adapt to the current climate.

Recession, and the cost of living crisis, is likely to scare many talented people into staying where they are. Previous events have shown that 'last in, first out' is alive and well. Not to mention you now need to worry about the long term viability of the business – whether that's a start up or global corporation.

We've seen that no one is immune to these macro-economic influences, and at times

it can feel like we're at the mercy of the markets.

So, control the controllables instead. Focus on switching up your employee experience with a complete, end-to-end B2E strategy that not just meets, but hopefully exceeds employee expectations.

And don't forget, you'll only know it is working if you ask questions of your colleagues and actively listen to their answers.

Data – whether qualitative or quantitative – is king.

If you're struggling to get your head around talent challenges, drop me a line on [vanessa@weareadam.com](mailto:vanessa@weareadam.com).

I'd love to get heads together over a coffee to see what solutions we can come up with.

