

Is lack of flexibility when hiring, stopping you from finding the ideal candidate?

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You may be missing out on great talent if your hiring policy is too rigid!

You will probably have heard that ‘flexible working’ is the future and that the ‘Gig Economy’ is growing rapidly. What might that mean for you and your business?

Flexible working

Flexible working is so much more than ‘Flexi-Time’. Today’s workers want the ability to accommodate their busy home life with work to achieve the much-touted work/life balance.

In this age of hosted voice, Cloud based services and the availability of, low cost, Internet enabled devices, working from home is no longer a euphemism for firing off a few emails throughout the day. Cloud based technology enables anyone with half decent broadband

services to be fully included and productive from home. Plus, their call stats and productivity can still be counted towards their KPI's because all activity and calls can be monitored and recorded.

We no longer live in a 9 to 5 world, the way we do business has changed dramatically over the years. Most of us work differently, our customers don't clock on at 9am and go home at 5pm, so neither can we.

Studies have shown that the best time to engage with a decision maker is before 9am or after 5pm. This is the time when they are more likely to be able to take on board the message that you want to get across to them. This is likely to be because, for the time being anyway, the people they manage do work 9 to 5 and therefore aren't there making demands on their time. It's also the best time because their employees aren't able to act as gatekeepers to your call!

So why aren't managers and businesses looking at ways to cover earlier hours and later hours with flexibility, rather than having to pay overtime rates when cover is crucial. There are some excellent candidates out there that cannot work 9 to 5 Monday to Friday!

So, the question is, how many talented people are we not considering for employment because the candidate is looking for flexibility? Are we, by accident, or design, searching for something that fits our existing model? Shouldn't we be thinking about what our business will need to look like over the coming years to take best advantage of changes in the way we interact with our clients and customers?

When the politicians decided that zero hours contracts needed debating, citing that they were unfair for the employee, they faced a backlash from workers who were pro-zero hours. These workers liked that they were not committed to 30 plus hours a week. They understood that it was a two-way street, albeit with the risk of not getting offered shifts, especially if they had turned down a shift recently. They argued that they wanted the freedom to choose, after all, if they wanted fixed hours they would look for a job that offered just that.

Zero hours suits some employers and some employees, but most businesses need more commitment to enable them to plan their resource.

If your business is B2B, do you really need someone for five days a week? Do you need them to work 8 hours a day? Does it make sense for them to arrive at 9am, take an hour for lunch and leave at 5.30pm? Is Business Development, or Sales, a 9 to 5 job? Does your telesales person need to be sat behind that expensive desk, in that expensive office every day? Might that call centre person be more productive if they didn't have to spend the first hour of their day fighting their way through the traffic, or standing-up on the overcrowded bus journey in?

Do we have our people in during the hours that we, or our managers, want to work? Is it because we feel the need to keep an eye on our staff? Is flexible working, or rather the lack of it, down to the trust issue?

There are so many questions around true flexibility in the workplace, but it will happen, probably before we have all the answers!

Those businesses that understand flexibility get more discretionary effort from their employees and are the businesses that are attracting the talent. If you rarely make a sale on a Friday afternoon, why have the whole sales team in? If, on the other hand, you think you're missing out on business because your team gets up and leaves at 5.30, maybe it's time for a rethink!

Contractors – The Gig Economy

The desire for a more flexible work life has resulted in an explosion of workers entering the contractor field. Figures just released show that there was a 72% growth in the "Gig Economy" in London last year (2016), and it shows no sign of slowing down. The thought of working on a contract and then taking an extended break before moving onto something new and exciting is compelling. Contractors enjoy the change of environment, new projects and the different products & markets that "gigging" offers. They get to expand their knowledge

and bring new ideas into different organisation. And all without the stigma attached to 'job hopping'.

Businesses often use contractors to deliver exceptional projects, it wouldn't make sense to hire a permanent employee if the work required has an end date. Contractors are expected to walk in to a business on Monday morning and be productive by the afternoon, after all they are doing what they do, you wouldn't expect a locum at your local doctor's surgery to need any time to get up to speed?

Contractors are often thought to be overpaid by the regular employees that they work alongside, however, the permanent staff don't want to lose their employee benefits and security by jumping the fence into the world of the contractor.

So, the brave reap the rewards? It is a risk reward situation and until recently, the rewards have outweighed the risk considerably. But are things changing?

Contracting is also subject to supply and demand. As more people set themselves up as contractors, the more competition for the available work grows. The growth of the pool of contractors, in certain industries or specialities, is resulting in daily rates decreasing. Inevitably, the rates will find their level, although they will always be higher than a permanent employees, where holiday, pension, sick leave, employers NI contributions and a host of other overheads associated with employees must be paid.

So, in conclusion, tomorrows work force will include more career contractors and increasing numbers of flexible workers (time and location). This is great for employers, workers and the economy. It opens the door for employers to take advantage of the vastly untapped talent that is out there, return to work mums and those with a disability being a couple of prime examples.