

Back to Normal?

No thank you: how Covid-19 will change the recruitment industry for the better.

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We are now five weeks into the 'new normal' of working from home. How has the recruitment industry fared during this period?

Naturally, as expected there has been a significant reduction in overall staff demand, with the initial spread of coronavirus hitting employers hard. Demand for both permanent and temporary workers in England fell during March for the first time since the global financial crisis of 2008 (Report on Jobs, REC):

- Permanent vacancies fell at a quicker pace than temporary
- Recruitment activity dropped at its quickest rate for more than a decade.



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From the 7th March to the 1st April 2020, there was a 15% reduction in the volume of job posting activity. Reduced demand for staff has weighed on pay growth.

Salaries awarded to newly placed permanent workers during March rose at the weakest pace since July 2016, while temporary wage inflation eased to its slowest for just over seven years (JobsOutlook, REC).

Hiring rates in recreation travel (-47.1%) and entertainment (-25.8%) are well below the national average of -15% (LinkedIn).



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Not surprisingly industries that are central to the pandemic response have recorded higher numbers of vacancies. Demand in health & social care is increasing with some recruitment businesses finding it difficult to fill the roles.

Nursing/medical/care all posted higher levels of demand for both permanent and temporary staff in March than the previous month (Report on Jobs, REC), as did organisations supplying staff in logistics across the food supply chain. (Emsi UK).

Blue collar saw higher levels of demand for temporary staff in March (Report on Jobs, REC), while transportation & logistics reported a hiring increase of +6.9% compared with last year (LinkedIn).



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How recruiters can help

Where there is chaos, and I don't think anyone can describe the current predicament as anything other than chaotic, there are still new opportunities and an important role for recruiters to play in supplying staff in critical sectors. For those industries still recruiting, social distancing makes the task more difficult; with technology being used, in place of the traditional face-to-face interviews. There are fewer candidates due to the virus; some candidates want the safe option of staying with their current employer and, naturally, some are unwell or scared of getting sick.

There is a lot that recruiters can do in these quieter times to ensure that when we come out of lockdown they are on the front foot. Naturally, winning new business is a priority at any point, but other activities such as building candidate databases and forward resource planning, evaluating technologies to help business efficiency, making data-based decisions about the best sectors on which to focus future growth, should also continue to be invested in.



What we are doing at Methods

The recruitment industry is very social and high energy, so we have ensured we have put the primary focus on staff well-being. At Methods that means we are making sure that team chats happen and that everyone is being spoken with on a regular basis. For example, we try to maintain a culture of fun and team work, so have 'Pizza Fridays' where we eat together.

Luckily, we are a highly digital and agile organisation, and we understand the benefit of the digital interview. We have worked with our clients and candidates to manage the remote interview process; the option to interview from home in familiar environment has been well received by all parties. The flexibility that clients are demonstrating is warming and is getting loyalty from the candidates.

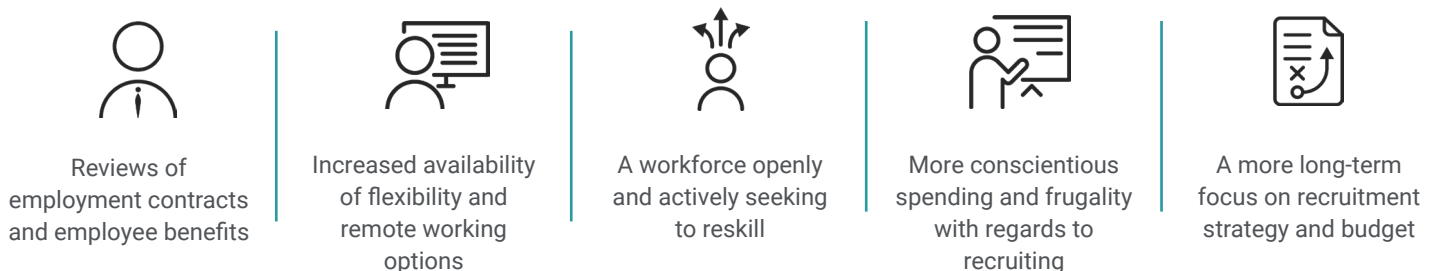
So, how will the landscape change for the future?

Suffice to say that flexible working will become a higher priority. The past five weeks have proven that employees can adapt to remote working and maintain productivity. Historically this has been a major blocker from businesses adopting this. Communications have improved, with people embracing Teams, Zoom and Facetime rather than simply attending 'conference calls and meetings' – everyone has maintained relationships and learnt how to build new ones without being in the room.

I welcome these changes. I don't want to go 'back to normal', as it is apparent that there are more efficient ways of working. It is important for companies to embrace technology when it comes to recruiting. Technology can help eliminate the need for expensive outsourced services and helps teams to work quickly and efficiently in a collaborative approach, whether in the office or remote.



To summarise, in life 'post Covid back to normal' we can expect to see the interview process moving online with far greater utilisation of recruitment technology, as well as:



I hope that all these elements will help organisations build better cultures and work-life balances and, as a result, we will have happier employees.

If you have any thoughts or questions, please feel free to contact me on zoe.lewis@methods.co.uk

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