

Robert—
—Walters



2025

Talent Trends





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AI in recruitment



AI in recruitment

AI has the potential to transform hiring processes by cutting costs and improving time-to-hire. Recruitment technologies are rapidly building in AI-enabled features to manage the end-to-end process, such as LinkedIn’s recently announced AI hiring assistant. And while solutions that promise to create a job ad, source and screen candidates will no doubt save time, employers are faced with challenging questions around the ethics and effectiveness of these approaches.

While, for employers, 2024 was all about experimenting with AI in the recruitment process, most are still in the very early stages of adoption. Candidates, however, are already using AI at every stage of their job search, from tools that help them to cut through AI screening processes to bots that help them apply for jobs while they sleep, AI for interview prep and AI assistants to help them answer questions in live interviews.

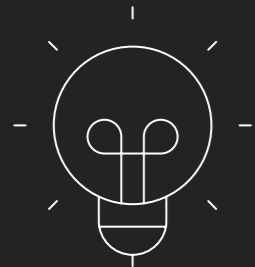
As the use of AI in recruitment grows, employers must leverage its strengths while also remaining vigilant about its limitations when the human touch is lost. Employers that aren’t proactively considering their AI policies for candidates, assessing how to implement AI in their hiring processes in a way that is fair, ethical, legal and effective and identifying where it is essential to maintain the crucial human elements of recruitment will be left behind.

3 in 10

employers are implementing AI in their recruitment process

6,700+

hours saved at Robert Walters through our AI Trailblazers programme



AI in recruitment key takeaways

- 1 Leverage efficiency:** Businesses can utilise AI to handle routine tasks allowing HR teams to focus on strategic planning and engagement, thereby optimising resource allocation in the recruitment process.
- 2 Combine AI with human judgment:** Balance the use of AI with human oversight to capture essential human factors and soft skills. This approach helps ensure a comprehensive assessment of candidates, maintaining the human touch in the recruitment process.
- 3 Ensure transparency and build trust:** Clearly communicate how AI is used in the hiring process and manage candidate data ethically. Transparency is crucial to building trust with candidates and upholding your organisation's reputation.
- 4 Plan for investment and continuous improvement:** Be prepared for the initial investment in AI technology and training. Regularly audit and refine AI processes to mitigate biases and improve accuracy, ensuring the system evolves with your business's needs.

Human-centric leadership



Human-centric leadership

As organisations face a rapidly changing business environment, the key to survival may lie in a shift to human-centric leadership. This is where leaders move beyond their identity as professionals to show their authentic selves, and in turn recognise the multi-faceted human complexity of the people in their organisation. Human-centric leaders are inclusive, empathetic and driven by a purpose beyond profit, and offer their employees flexibility and an environment of psychological safety where their health and wellbeing is respected so they can perform at their best.

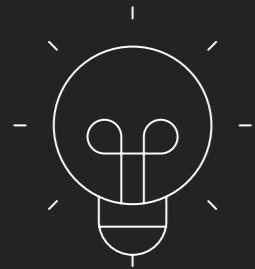
Businesses that do adopt a human-centric leadership approach will need to focus on understanding and meeting the needs of their employees as well as promoting continuous learning and innovation so they can develop leaders who will nurture their greatest assets – their people.

1.5x

more likely to retain high performers when you have a human-centric organisational focus

2.6x

more likely to meet objectives as a ‘people-first’ organisation



Human-centric leadership key takeaways

1

Offer training and development: Leaders should be trained on the principles of human-centric leadership. This may include empathy, emotional intelligence, leading with authenticity, active listening and inclusivity.

2

Deliver clear communication: Open, transparent and regular communication is key in a human-centric approach. Companies should build an environment where ideas are freely shared and valued, and where constructive feedback is encouraged.

3

Don't forget about culture: Shifting to a human-centric approach may require a significant change in company culture. This may involve redefining company values, rethinking performance metrics and revamping reward systems to align with human-centric principles.

4

Engage your employees: Organisations should focus on understanding the needs of their employees to develop strategies to increase employee engagement. This could involve creating more opportunities for collaboration, promoting work-life balance and implementing recognition and reward systems.

**Treat your
candidates like
customers**



Treat your candidates like customers

Businesses meticulously craft buyer journeys to attract and retain their customers, and people increasingly expect consumer-level experiences in all areas of life – including the recruitment process.

This begins with creating a positive first impression during the application stage, and through a clear, streamlined and engaging interview process. A positive candidate experience should ensure transparency and maintain consistent communication to reduce candidate dissatisfaction which, if mishandled, could have a negative impact on a company's reputation.

Seek candidate feedback where possible (for example through surveys) to gain actionable insights that can help you refine and enhance the hiring, onboarding and overall employee experience.

83%

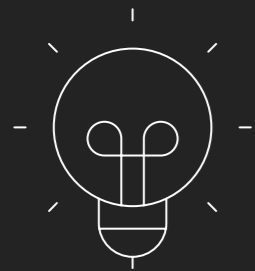
of candidates say a negative interview experience can change their view of a business

40%

of companies regularly monitor their candidate experience

70%

increase in quality of new hires by companies who have invested in candidate experience



Treat your candidates like customers key takeaways

1

First impressions matter: A positive candidate experience is crucial. To ensure a good experience be transparent, have clear communication and a seamless application process. This will help ensure that even unsuccessful candidates feel respected, thereby enhancing your company's reputation and encouraging future applications or referrals.

2

Leverage feedback for continuous improvement: Just as customer satisfaction surveys inform product improvements, candidate and employee surveys provide actionable insights to refine recruitment, onboarding and employee engagement processes.

3

Exceptional onboarding drives retention: A great onboarding experience can significantly impact job satisfaction and retention. It's essential to equip new hires with the tools and information they need from day one, as this sets the tone for their ongoing engagement and productivity.

Rethinking remote working



Rethinking remote working

The second half of 2024 saw a number of large employers hit the headlines for their 'return-to-office' mandates requiring employees to be in the office five days a week. 2025 will see businesses rethinking the role of remote working in their organisation, recognising the importance of in-person interactions on culture, spontaneous innovation, learning and team cohesion.

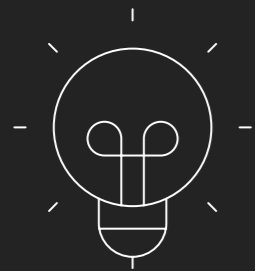
With fully remote roles on the decline globally, employers that want to differentiate themselves will look to more personalised hybrid and flexible models to attract and retain top talent, rather than the one size fits all approach of current hybrid models such as set 'anchor' days in the office. Approaches like 'window working' (see next chapter) seek to offer employees flexibility and autonomy while maintaining connection and productivity.

43%

of businesses are operating a structured hybrid model going into 2025

72%

of recruitment professionals report hiring difficulties for organisations requiring employees to be in the office full time



Rethinking remote working key takeaways

1

Communicate hybrid models: Businesses need to ensure that they are clearly communicating any changes to their working patterns and that they have clear policies in place if they are going to offer hybrid and flexible working. Having more structured models can balance the need for in-person collaboration with some degree of flexibility, allowing companies to maintain a consistent office presence while accommodating employee preferences.

2

Consider the impact on your employees: High-profile return-to-office mandates have resulted in significant and very public employee dissatisfaction. The increased costs and impact on mental health associated with full-time office work are driving employees to resist strict policies, potentially leading to higher turnover and productivity losses.

3

Personalised work models: The future of work is expected to evolve towards more nuanced arrangements, with hybrid models incorporating flexible schedules and purposeful in-person interactions. Companies that can adapt and offer more personalised work arrangements may win in the war for talent.

Window working



Window working

Flexibility remains vital to employees in 2025, and window working may just be the method to keep both employees and employers in perfect harmony.

Window working is the ability to work flexibly on a schedule that works for the individual but still allows for agreed core time for teams to engage when needed. For example, a business might agree that 10am-2pm will be core working hours where all employees are available for collaboration, meetings and calls (instead of the traditional 9am-5pm), allowing people to work the rest of their hours at a time best that suits them, or put in place a schedule where people can start earlier and finish earlier (or later) to align with the hours they're most productive. For both employees and employers, moving to a window workday method promotes trust and can boost productivity, leading to increased job satisfaction and better employee retention.

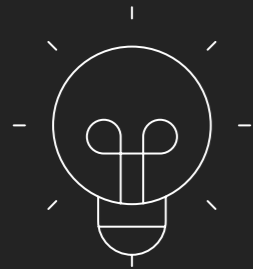
However, for window working to be successful, organisations must support it from a leadership level down, with clear communication around priorities, deadlines and availability expectations. It is essential to ensure employees also understand what they need to do to make it work.

75%

of full time workers want to work flexibly

9.8%

percentage of jobs advertising flexible working in the job ad



Window working key takeaways

1

Embraces flexibility: Window working allows employees to have flexible work hours around their personal commitments and peak productivity periods, rather than sticking to traditional work hours.

2

Reduces stress: By allowing employees to manage their professional and personal responsibilities in a balanced way, employers can reduce stress levels and prevent burnout.

3

Prioritises productivity: This approach enables employees to work during their most productive hours, which can lead to enhanced efficiency and output.

4

Requires clear communication: For window working to be successful, there needs to be clear communication between employees and managers about priorities, deadlines and expectations regarding availability.

5

Needs leadership buy-in: The company culture must support window working from the top down to work, with leadership demonstrating trust in employees to manage their time and get their work done.

Career lattice vs ladder



Career lattice vs ladder

Traditionally professionals climbed the ‘career ladder’ to progress their career, moving up vertically in seniority in one department or profession. But increasingly people are embracing the ‘career lattice’, where they make lateral career moves and gain skills and experience across different positions. In doing so they build a more rounded experience by exploring professional challenges that align to their interests and allow them to bridge the gaps between disciplines.

Aligning career opportunities with employees’ values and aspirations is crucial for retention and employee engagement. Embracing a career lattice approach to career development for your people offers a strategic approach to achieve this alignment, ensuring that employees do not feel their roles become stagnant, which can lead to dissatisfaction and increased turnover.

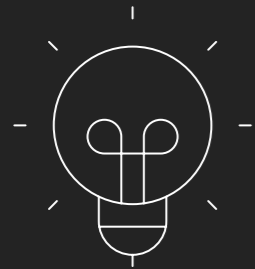
This approach not only keeps employees motivated and engaged but can also help organisations fill skills gaps and plan for succession.

94%

of employees stay longer with a business that invests in their professional development

29%

of employees do not have a clear view on career progression opportunities within their current organisation



Career lattice vs ladder key takeaways

- 1** **Align careers with values and aspirations:** Employees increasingly seek roles that resonate with their personal values and career aspirations. Ensuring opportunities for professional and personal growth is essential to support retention.
- 2** **Think cross-function:** Taking a career lattice approach to employee development can create the opportunity for cross-function moves which can support team collaboration and increase teams' knowledge and skill sets.
- 3** **Embed growth opportunities in recruitment:** Communicate your commitment to employee development and internal mobility from the outset, starting with job ads. This attracts talent that prioritises career development and aligns with your company culture.
- 4** **Offer support and communicate continuously:** Managers should facilitate ongoing conversations around career development, offering support through training, compensation and recognition.
- 5** **Cultivate a growth-orientated culture:** Embrace a culture that encourages employee growth and development.

Un-retiring



Un-retiring

We will continue to see retired individuals returning to the workforce in 2025 in growing numbers. This trend is driven by a number of factors, including economic pressure due to rising living costs, retirement funds not stretching as far as they previously did, and people seeking to increase their income to remain comfortable.

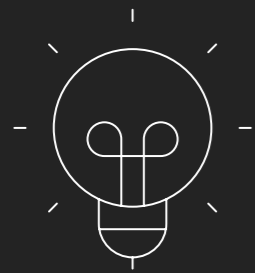
Retirees re-entering the workforce give organisations the opportunity to build a broader multi-generational workforce. Employers that do see the potential of hiring from this demographic may just have found a unique solution to addressing skills shortages while at the same time improving diversity and inclusion.

2.8m

retirees in the UK have returned to work

3%

plan to go back to work full time with the majority looking for part-time and flexible work schedules



Un-retiring key takeaways

1

Recognise the potential: Older employees possess significant experience and knowledge, contributing positively to workplace dynamics and brand reputation.

2

Adopt flexible practices: Tailor job descriptions to be age-inclusive, offer flexible working conditions and ensure training accommodates the needs of all your workers.

3

Leverage experience: Value the life experiences of older employees to enhance workplace productivity and culture.

4

Promote a supportive culture: Engage older workers by offering incentives, mentoring and support, ensuring they feel valued and integrated within the organisation.

Preparing your people for the jobs of tomorrow



Preparing your people for the jobs of tomorrow

New technologies, changing ways of working, climate change, cultural and demographic shifts and the impact of AI and automation on jobs and industries will all dramatically change the way we work over the next two decades.

The only consistent factor will be change, and with that the need for people to adapt and learn new skills. Businesses will need to equip their people with the ability to drive self-learning and be curious. With that we will see a sizeable shift in how people learn – through the growing use of online platforms, peer-to-peer learning and a move to an anytime, anywhere approach, where traditional models of training and education will be replaced with micro learning and skills training with a more experiential and gamified approach.

To prepare your people for the jobs of tomorrow businesses will need to embrace lifelong learning, focus on digital literacy, cultivate soft skills, encourage innovation and creativity and remain agile.

39%

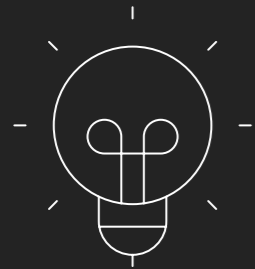
of key skills required in the job market will change by 2030

60%

of jobs in advanced economies are exposed to AI

\$83.5b

expected worth of the soft skills training market by 2032, up from \$29.8b in 2023



Preparing your people for the jobs of tomorrow key takeaways

- 1 Embrace lifelong learning:** Foster a culture of continuous learning within your organisation. Encourage employees to engage in upskilling and reskilling initiatives to stay abreast of technological advancements and industry trends.
- 2 Focus on digital literacy:** As technology continues to transform industries, digital literacy becomes indispensable. Ensure your teams are proficient in digital tools and platforms, and consider investing in training programmes that enhance digital competencies.
- 3 Cultivate soft skills:** While technical skills are important, soft skills like critical thinking, adaptability, communication and emotional intelligence are increasingly valued. Encourage development in these areas through mentorship programmes, collaborative projects and leadership training.
- 4 Encourage innovation and creativity:** Create an environment that enables innovation and creative problem-solving. Support initiatives that allow employees to experiment with new ideas and provide resources to explore unconventional solutions.
- 5 Stay informed and agile:** Keep up to date with industry developments and labour market trends. Be ready to pivot your recruitment strategies and adapt quickly to emerging opportunities and challenges, ensuring your organisation remains competitive.

We deliver end-to-end talent solutions

Robert Walters is the world's most trusted talent solutions business. Across the globe, we deliver recruitment, recruitment outsourcing and talent advisory services for businesses of all shapes and sizes, opening doors for people with diverse skills, ambitions, and backgrounds.

We help organisations find the skills and solutions to reach their goals and assist talented professionals to power their unique potential.



Specialist professional recruitment

Leverage our specialised industry expertise, extensive local insights, and global reach to champion your story and connect you with the best professionals for your organisation.

- Permanent recruitment
- Temporary recruitment
- Interim management
- Executive search



Recruitment outsourcing

Experience agile recruitment solutions tailored to your unique requirements, seamlessly scalable to match your evolving needs and objectives.

- Recruitment process outsourcing
- Contingent workforce solutions



Talent advisory

Elevate your hiring strategy with our data-driven market intelligence and ESG solutions, empowering your business to cultivate talent, foster growth, and future-proof your success.

- Market intelligence
- Future of work
- Talent development

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New Zealand | Philippines | Portugal | Singapore | South Korea | Spain | Switzerland | Taiwan | Thailand | United Arab Emirates | United Kingdom | United States | Vietnam