



# What do workers really want?

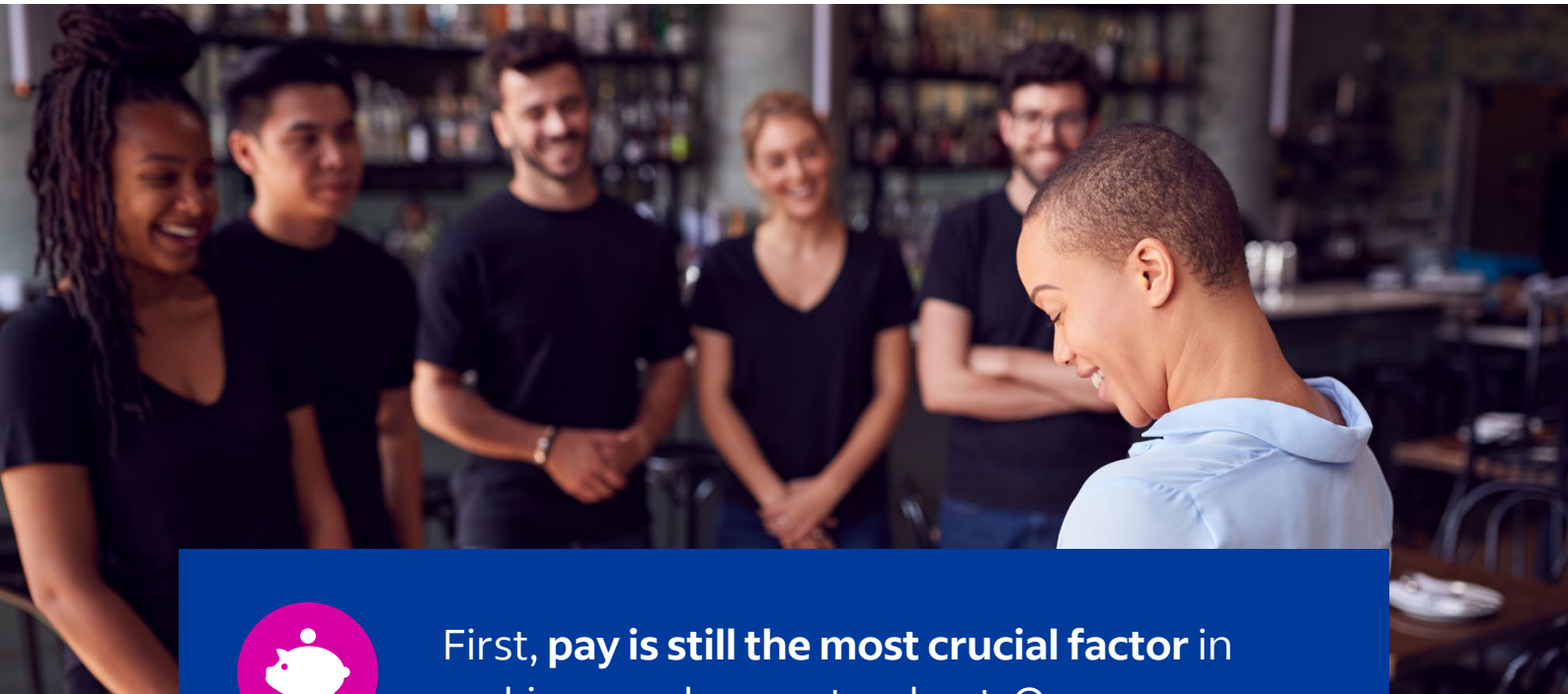
How Employers Can Tackle the Candidate Driven Market in 2022

# Executive Summary

## In a candidate-driven market, employers must do more to understand the needs of their temporary workforce.

This report explores the current state of temporary staffing in the UK - revealing what workers expect, where employers are failing to meet those expectations, and how leaders can adapt their strategies to increase retention and productivity.

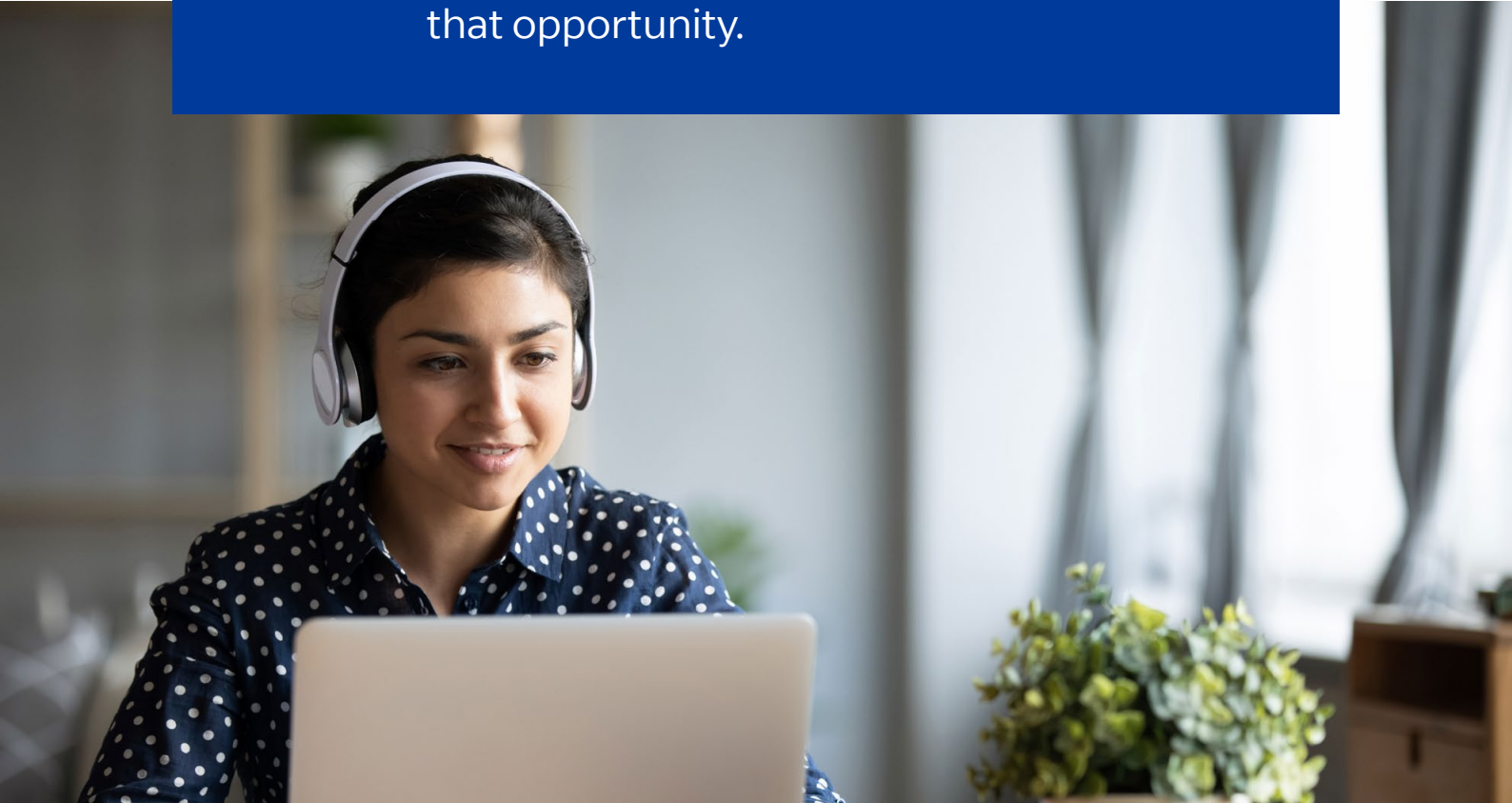
It is the result of proprietary research, during which we surveyed 3,830 temporary workers from across the country. This has yielded a number of vital insights, which we elaborate on throughout the report.



First, **pay is still the most crucial factor** in making employers stand out. Our survey found that compensation is the most common reason workers gave for choosing one employer over another. While this may be disappointing for businesses looking to reduce their staffing spend, it is important information given the level of competition for talent.



Second, we found that **the majority of temporary staff want to work more hours** - and will repay employers that provide that opportunity.



Throughout the survey, both the volume and consistency of shifts were revealed to be major pain points for temporary workers. Organisations that are able to offer regular work will therefore benefit greatly.

Finally, our survey uncovered the primary factors that motivate individuals to undertake temporary work. We found that **control and choice** over when and where they work are what make temporary work appealing to most employees. Flexibility is therefore prioritised over any other non-financial perk.

## Key findings

- ✓ Better pay is key to attracting higher quality talent
- ✓ The volume and consistency of shifts is most workers' key pain point
- ✓ Flexibility is the factor that makes flexible work most appealing



# The Candidate-Driven Market

Following the “perfect storm” of Brexit and COVID-19, the UK’s talent market has undergone an unprecedented shift in the last two years.

Throughout 2021, a wide range of industries were faced with a sudden shortage of willing workers. This was driven by a variety of factors, including:

- ↓ a drop in foreign workers following Brexit;
- ↓ a large number of workers changing industries during the pandemic;
- ↓ and a widespread reconsideration of work-life balance triggered by the pandemic

- often dubbed  
“The Great Resignation.”

These changes created a “talent-driven market”, in which the onus was placed on employers to impress candidates in order to fill shifts. The results were extraordinary: businesses increased wages for low-skilled jobs; offered 4-figure signing-on bonuses; and in some extreme cases were forced to temporarily close down operations.

Many commentators believed the shift would be short-lived; as the economic realities kicked in, labour markets would naturally sort themselves out. But this has proven to be wishful thinking.

# 2022 may be even tougher for employers

**As of January 2022, there were around 4.3 job vacancies per 100 employee jobs in the United Kingdom - the highest job vacancy rate in the provided time period.<sup>1</sup>**

And according to a recent report from KPMG and REC, the extreme staffing shortages which dominated headlines in 2021 show no sign of resolving in the new year.<sup>2</sup>

This means businesses are going to have to find new ways of fulfilling their staffing - and many are already exploring novel workforce strategies that are better fit for the labour market 2022 faces them with.



<sup>1</sup><https://www.statista.com/statistics/530196/uk-job-vacancy-rate/#:~:text=As%20of%20January%202022%2C%20there,in%20the%20provided%20time%20period>  
<sup>2</sup><https://www.hrreview.co.uk/hr-news/staff-shortages-to-continue-well-beyond-2022/140196>

# The Blended Workforce

**To navigate a candidate-driven market, employers are using more temporary workers to achieve a more flexible workforce solution.**

Faced with ongoing staffing shortages, many employers have discovered that their established workforce model was actually far from optimal. Filling a full-time role is time consuming, costly and creates a series of obligations which constrain a business's ability to adapt during difficult situations.

This realisation has been a long time coming. In recent years, a variety of studies have shown that, for example:



**77%** of executives believe freelance and gig workers will substantially replace full-time employees within the next five year<sup>3</sup>;



that **Less than half** of executives believe their current workforce is adaptable to the new future of work<sup>4</sup>;



and that **32%** of organisations are replacing full-time employees with temporary workers as a cost saving measure.

However, these efforts have become more concentrated in the last year - with particular emphasis on a model known as the "blended workforce."



<sup>3</sup>[https://www.cxcglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/2020-2021\\_CXC\\_CW\\_Global\\_Trends\\_Report-1.pdf](https://www.cxcglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/2020-2021_CXC_CW_Global_Trends_Report-1.pdf)

<sup>4</sup>[https://www.cxcglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/2020-2021\\_CXC\\_CW\\_Global\\_Trends\\_Report-1.pdf](https://www.cxcglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/2020-2021_CXC_CW_Global_Trends_Report-1.pdf)

<sup>5</sup>[https://www.cxcglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/2020-2021\\_CXC\\_CW\\_Global\\_Trends\\_Report-1.pdf](https://www.cxcglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/2020-2021_CXC_CW_Global_Trends_Report-1.pdf)

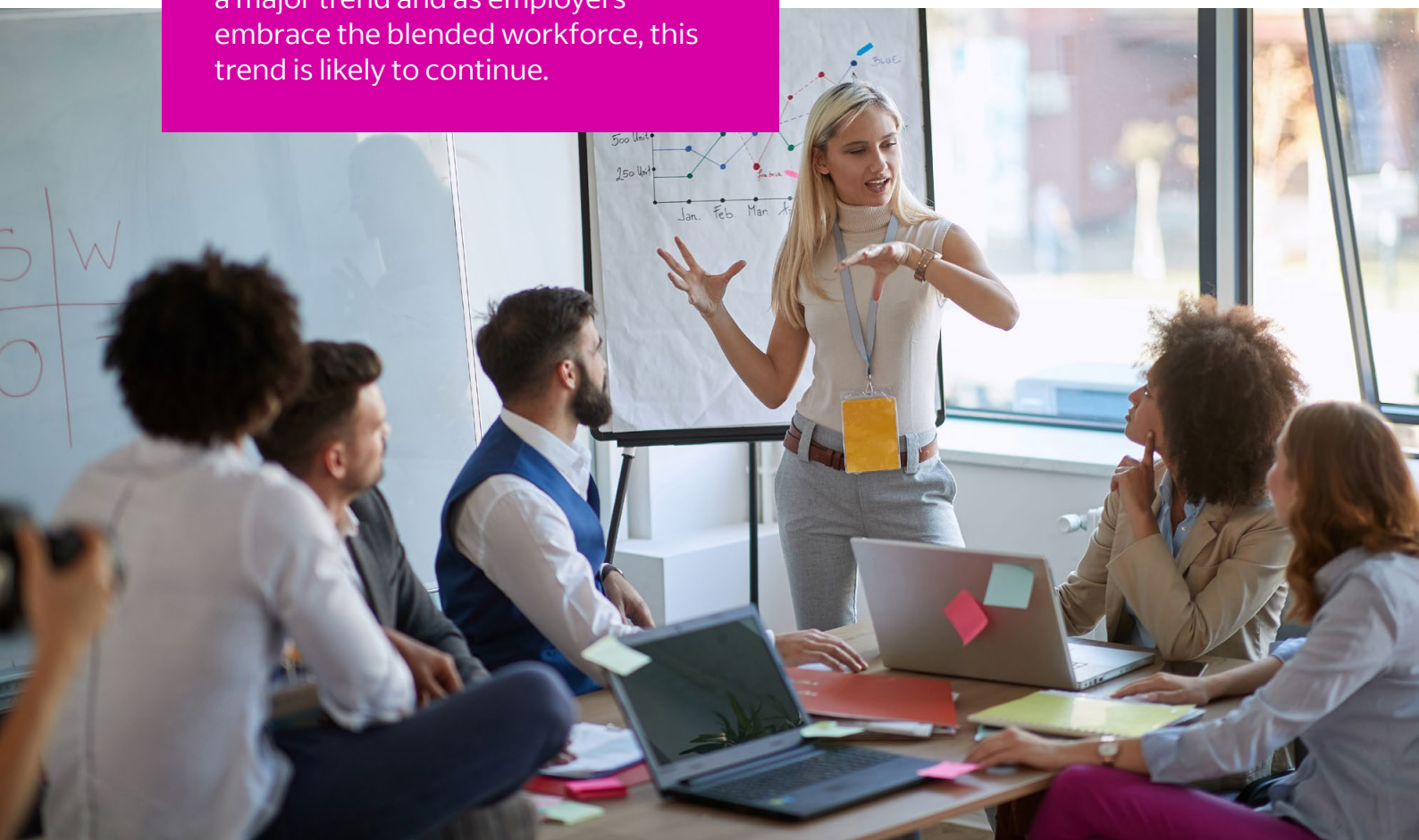
# Reimagining the role of temporary workers

Companies that adopt this model supplement their core, full-time staff with a pool of temporary workers. This allows them to respond to changing staffing needs far more efficiently - especially when full-time workers are so hard to secure.

The timing could not be more perfect: in the last two years, temporary work has become far more popular, with the latest figures suggesting there are over **1.7 million** temporary workers in the UK.<sup>6</sup> But what is perhaps more telling is the speed at which this shift has occurred.

An astonishing **38.5%** of the temporary workers we surveyed were in full-time employment a year ago. This suggests a major trend and as employers embrace the blended workforce, this trend is likely to continue.

On the other hand, few businesses fully understand the needs and wants of this newly emerging pool of talent. Organisations expend resources tracking and optimising their internal workforce, yet generally have little insight into their contingent workforce at all. This presents a serious problem for many businesses looking to build a truly blended workforce.



<sup>6</sup><https://www.statista.com/statistics/530216/temporary-workers-in-the-uk/>



## Temporary workers must be valued

Our recent research was specifically designed to provide that insight and help employers improve the experience of their temporary workers. This is vital for both parties: workers want to have their needs met, and employers want to encourage productivity, improve morale, and most importantly earn their temporary workers' loyalty.

The findings demonstrated that most temporary workers are relatively happy with their situation - but there are still many areas that require urgent action.



While a **majority** of temporary workers feel their employers “sometimes” meet their expectations, just **3.7%** said there were no ways their employers failed to meet their expectations.

The areas of complaint were rarely about the work itself: as our surveys found, the vast majority of workers feel engaged either “always” or “often.” Instead, the problems appear to primarily arise around the availability of work - a theme we will now explore in detail.



# Understanding the Temporary Workforce

Three key pain points of the UK's temporary workforce

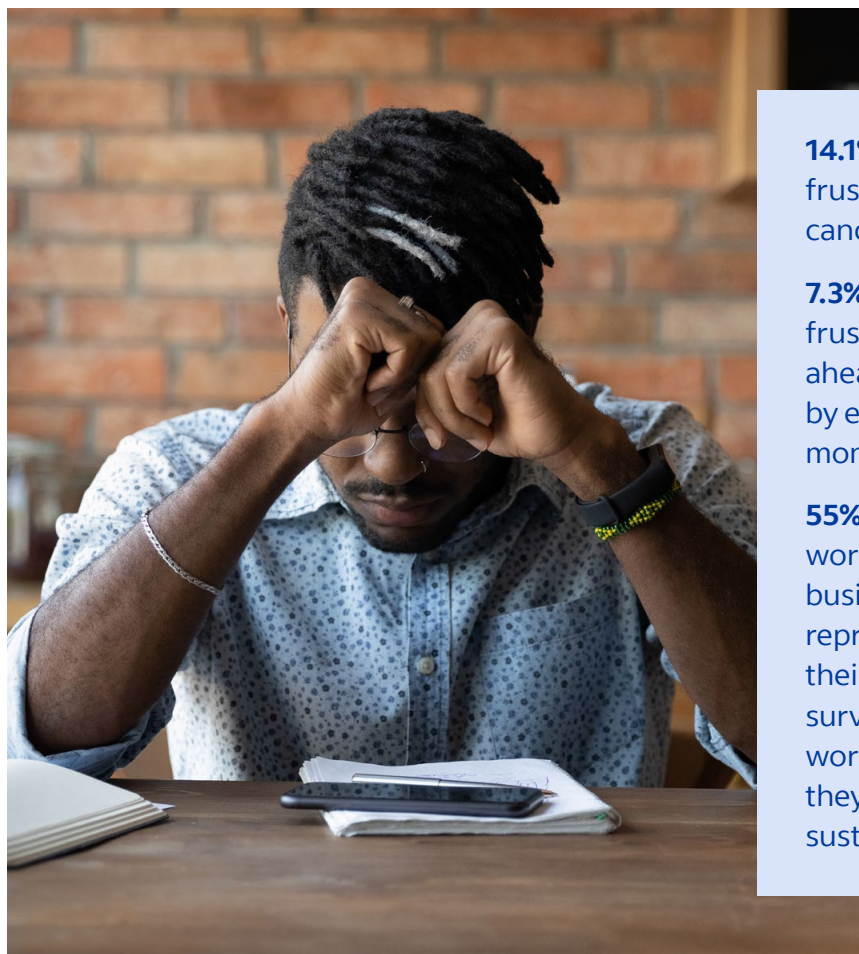
## 1 Shift consistency

The most common way temporary workers say employers are failing to meet their expectations is through the inconsistency of the shifts they are offered.



**33.4%** of temporary workers say employers are not consistent with their shift offering.

They often do not know from one week to the next how much they will be working - and therefore how much money they will be making.



**14.1%** of workers say they are frustrated by regularly having shifts cancelled at the last minute.

**7.3%** of workers are actively frustrated by the inability to plan ahead; and nearly **5%** are frustrated by earning different amounts of money each month.

**55%** of temporary workers currently work for just 1 or 2 different businesses, meaning each employer represents a large proportion of their overall income. And while our surveys show that workers prefer to work for fewer different companies, they will likely be driven away by sustained inconsistency.



## Why are shifts so inconsistent?

The most likely cause is simple: too many employers do not currently include temporary workers in their workforce planning.



The most recent research suggests that just **35% of companies** currently include temporary workforce as part of their strategic planning.<sup>7</sup>

This is typically reported as evidence that businesses are missing out on opportunities to increase efficiency. But our research demonstrates that it also causes friction between employers and employees - and likely reduces vital factors like morale, engagement and loyalty.

## 2

## Shift volume and location

The biggest frustration temporary workers currently voice is a lack of shifts in their area. **66%** say this problem is persistent and makes it difficult for them to earn a regular living. **30%** of temporary workers are currently working less than 15 hours per week. In some cases this may be a conscious decision, but in the majority of cases it is not.

Many temporary workers may well end up returning to the permanent workforce if their needs are not sufficiently met.

**29.8%** of people we surveyed have shifted from full-time to temporary work in the last year and have found that they now work fewer hours.

The location element of this must also be recognised. **24.8%** say the location of a shift is the most important factor when choosing where to work, and reducing factors like commute time will have a massive impact on both the number of workers willing to take a shift and the level of engagement the worker exhibits.



### Why are there not more temporary shifts available?

Of course, to some extent the volume of shifts reflects how much businesses need extra workers. But in many cases, it also reflects the business's underestimation as to the level of temporary talent available.

Many employers assume temporary workers take shifts as a "side gig" but our surveys found that just **12.1%** of workers cite "supplementing [their] income" as a key reason for taking temporary work. This suggests the vast majority of temporary workers are not looking for extra work - and that there is a much larger appetite for temporary work than many businesses realise.



### 3

## Communication and cultural integration

In order to make a blended workforce function properly, employers need to ensure their temporary workers feel included within the larger workforce. Our research suggests this is a consistent pain point for many temporary workers.

**10%** of workers say “working with a lot of different people” is the factor they enjoy most about their work.

Yet **12.6%** say that their employers don’t provide basic information - such as introductions to other staff members. This indicates a failure for employers to properly integrate their temporary workers - which will inevitably produce friction in the long term if not resolved.

Other similar complaints include not providing enough training (**9.4%**) and the job not being as described (**8.2%**). While the groups voicing these problems are relatively small, the impact on a company culture of even a small minority of dissatisfied workers can be immense.

Ultimately, **nearly 30%** of workers feel the companies they work for don’t care about their wellbeing, and **nearly half** report “sometimes” feeling safe in their working environments. These findings suggest that employers still have plenty of work ahead of them to make their temporary workers feel fully supported.

### Why does communication fail?

In the vast majority of cases, these issues are not intentional on the part of employers. Instead, they are the product of complex staffing arrangements whereby there is often no single provider handling all temporary workers - and therefore communication silos emerge.

Another key factor is a lack of long-term planning. Without a vision for how the blended workforce will evolve over time, many employers will not see the value in properly integrating their workers. But as time passes, the loyalty and engagement that proper communication abets will become clear.

# How Businesses Can Appeal to Workers

Four things temporary workers want from employers



## 1. Better pay

Our research reveals that wages are the factor workers care about most. **More than three-quarters** of workers say pay rate is amongst the three most important factors - with **23.1%** ranking it as their number priority. And given that extremely high rates of inflation have essentially annulled recent wage increases, many workers are feeling the financial pressure in 2022.

Clearly, employers need to focus on wages in order to stand out from competitors but they should also be mindful of how they use their resources in order to get the most out of their investments.

### Three ways to get smarter on wages

1

#### Location-specific wages

Employers should consider adapting pay to be location-specific. If a shift is in a location that is particularly difficult to reach, increasing the hourly wage might help incentivise workers to make the effort.

2

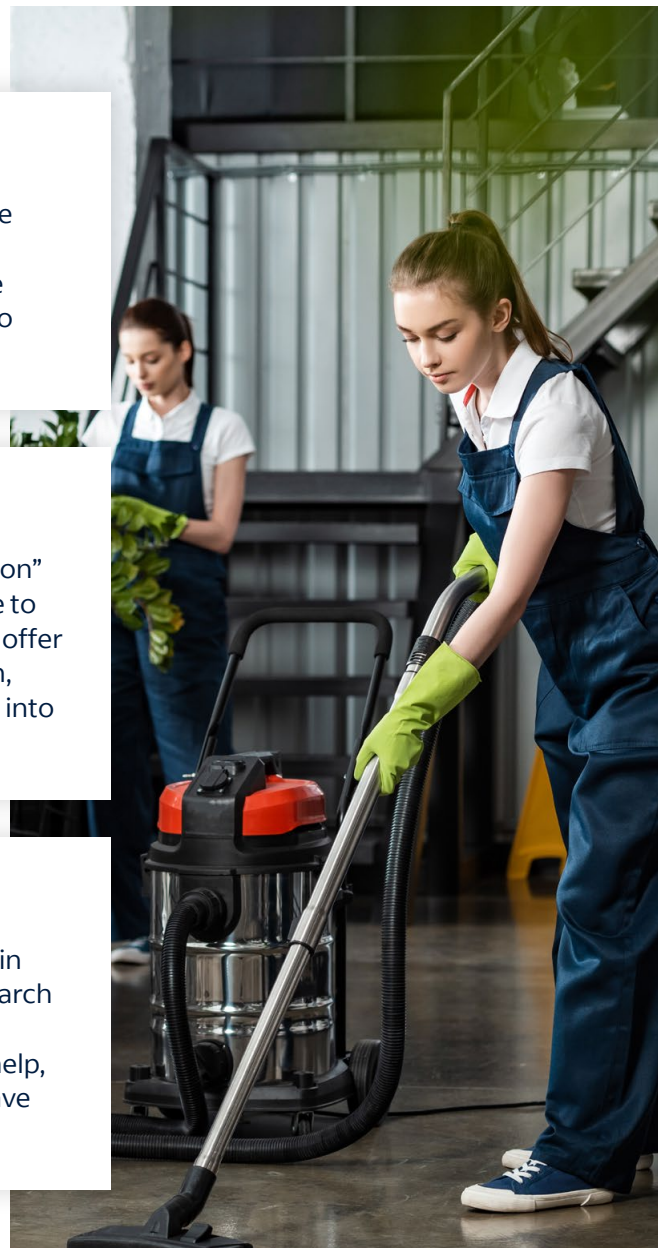
#### Reward loyalty

Over **20%** of workers ranked “career progression” as one of their priorities when choosing where to work. While not every employer will be able to offer temporary workers a clear path to progression, they can offer wage increases over time to tap into the desire for growth and build loyalty.

3

#### Make bigger increases

Employers need to offer substantial increases in order to stand out from competitors. Our research showed that there is no single silver bullet for staffing challenges. And while better pay will help, it will need to be part of a larger program to have the required impact.





## 2. Greater flexibility

The term “flexibility” has become increasingly trendy in recent years and our research has helped crystallise the specific aspects of flexibility that temporary workers value most.

We discover that “flexible working hours” is by far the most popular non-financial perk. But perhaps more tellingly, **45.5%** of workers stated that it is the “ability to fit work around

their schedule” that they value most. What was it in their schedule they needed to fit work around? Child care responsibilities, hobbies, education, and running their own businesses.

Employers should look to lean into flexibility as a key differentiating factor. But they should also ensure they emphasise the aspects of flexibility which matter most to their workers.

### Three ways to enable flexibility

1

#### Make workers feel comfortable choosing shifts

While temporary workers are always allowed to turn down offers, many fear they may lose out on future work if they regularly refuse shifts. This reduces their sense of flexibility, and employers should seek to communicate that it is okay not to take every shift they offer.

2

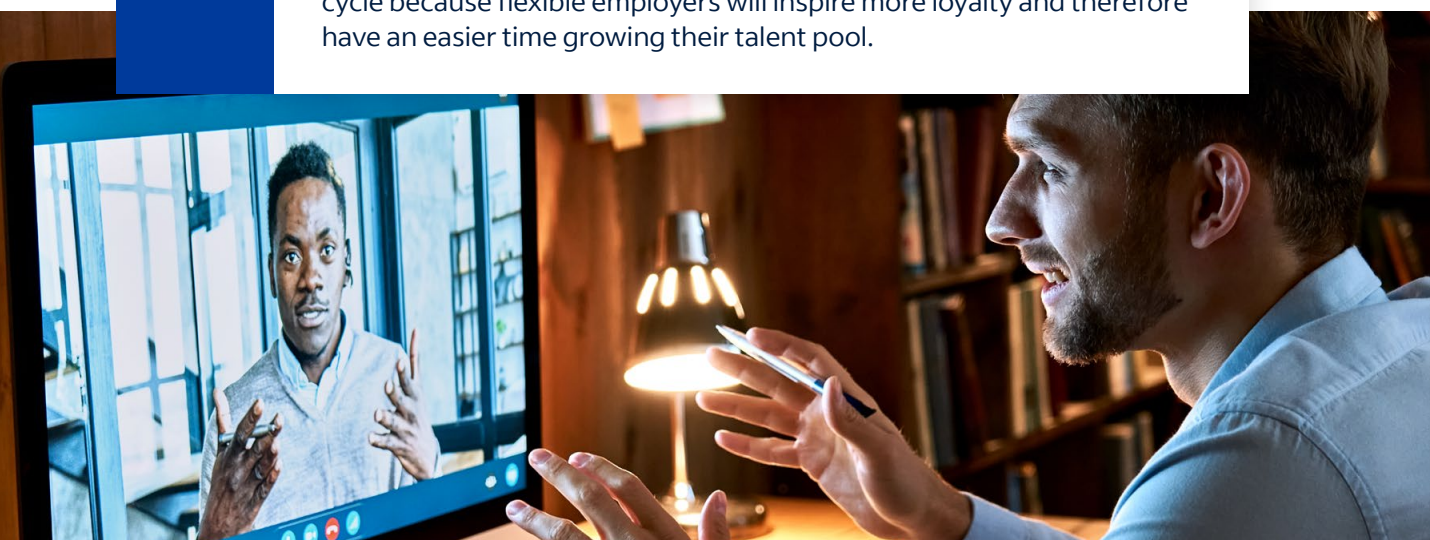
#### Embrace technology

Flexibility requires a level of visibility and responsiveness many traditional temporary staffing agencies cannot offer. Instead, employers need to be able to leverage technology to make choosing shifts fast and seamless - so that workers can be genuinely flexible with their time.

3

#### Increase your temporary workforce

Many employers limit their own flexibility by using a relatively small pool of temporary workers. But the larger your trusted talent pool is, the more flexibility each worker can be offered. This creates a self-fulfilling cycle because flexible employers will inspire more loyalty and therefore have an easier time growing their talent pool.





### 3. Consistent, accessible shifts

As we have explored, the volume and consistency of shifts is a major pain point for temporary workers. Employers who are able to effectively address that issue will gain a huge advantage over their competitors.

This will not be easy; a majority of workers already expect inconsistency from employers, and consistency takes time to demonstrate. But that doesn't mean there aren't important steps employers can take today in order to show temporary workers they are serious about improving the way they treat them.

#### Three ways to win workers over

1

#### Provide transport

Employers cannot simply change the location of their offices or warehouses. However, they can smooth the edges of less accessible shifts by providing transport, subsidising travel or even offering to compensate workers for the time they spend commuting.

2

#### Offer employers more control

Few employers can guarantee the same shifts will always be available to temporary workers. However, by giving workers more control over their choice of shifts, employers can enable workers to find their own consistency.

3

#### Improve communication

Employers should address concerns about consistency head-on. Where possible, a direct dialogue with valued temporary workers will help both parties understand the situation and negotiate a solution that is preferable. Even if this doesn't change the situation, workers will feel their needs are being addressed and valued.





## 4. Employer branding

Plenty of prior research has demonstrated that employer branding has a vital impact on the decisions candidates make. One widely publicised poll found that **86%** of HR professionals say recruitment is becoming more like marketing.<sup>8</sup>

However, our research sheds light on the most common avenues temporary workers use to find out about prospective employers. **58.6%** of workers use Indeed.com to assess an employer before working with them. Others consult Google Reviews (**17.5%**); LinkedIn (**12.8%**); and Glassdoor (**7.5%**).

Most employers focus on factors they can exert more control over - such as their own social media profiles. But just **1.7%** of the workers we surveyed said they would check a business's Instagram

This suggests that employers may be misallocating their resources - and therefore missing out on an opportunity to differentiate themselves. Instead, they should focus on engaging directly with these third-party platforms and ensuring their presence there is curated to show them in a good light.

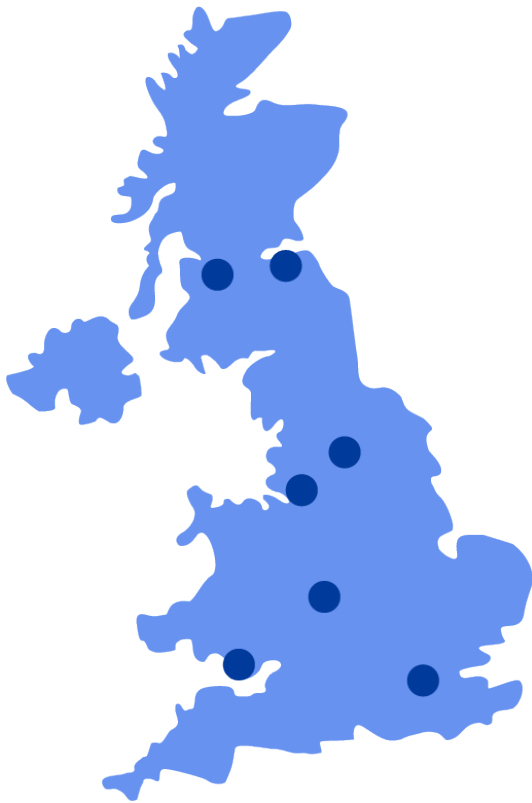


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