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First Quarter
Jan-Mar 2022

In the first calendar quarter of 2022 Workforce Positive has recruited in the infrastructure, construction, technical and professional services sectors. The location of these roles ranges from Sydney (NSW) to Townsville (QLD), with Total Employment Cost (TEC) of \$85,000 to \$300,000.

As a boutique recruiter, our methodology is based on human resources practices. During our processes we spend significant time getting to know both our clients and their specific needs for each role, as well as our candidates and their drivers.

This insight white paper draws on our first hand, recent experience to provide commentary in a fast paced and evolving recruiting environment - the likes of which have not been experienced before. The post pandemic employment landscape is an opportunity to set yourself apart as an employer and capitalise where others are less agile.

Recruitment Hurdles

Recruitment has long been a process of attracting the right skill set and a mutual fit between the person and the organisation. Whilst those things are still a priority, there are now significant screening hurdles to navigate before assessing suitability. Those emerging hurdles are workplace flexibility expectations, the ratio of work from home versus an office or central location, distance from home, and COVID-19 vaccination status.

Many candidates will self-select out of a process if their current workplace practices are more flexible, or there is any ambiguity with their potential employer. For example, an employer saying that they assess flexibility on a 'case-by-case basis' will be absolutely insufficient to secure a talented professional.

We predict clear policy on workplace flexibility and working from home will be a recruitment asset when going to market. Being able to provide detailed, concrete information, in addition to a detailed position description will set employers apart.

Retention

Retaining an employee in the early stages of their employment is a greater challenge in a hyperactive recruitment environment. Candidates are receiving multiple offers, and continuing to be active in the recruitment market, despite having accepted an employment offer and in rare instances, having started a new role.

There is little loyalty at play, if a more attractive offer is made there is every chance that your new recruit will jump ship. Employer's engagement and performance in the onboarding process is critical to ensure that their new team member feels confident in their decision to join the organisation.

We predict both a greater emphasis and energy allocation to onboarding, as a continuation of the recruitment process, and the use of retention bonuses. In projects we have seen completion bonuses to encourage employees to see the project through to completion. Now we are seeing this as a retention strategy both inside and outside of project environments.

Interstate and Overseas Candidates

Queensland continues to be an attractive relocation destination for Australians, and we are increasingly seeing qualified and experienced candidates from overseas seeking to make Australia their home.

During COVID lockdowns in New South Wales and Victoria, we saw an enormous spike in candidates looking to relocate to Queensland. Particularly those with friends and family living in the state who were able to source suitable housing. Whilst this has certainly slowed, Queensland is still a popular option for families - with a comparably lower cost of living to our Southern states.

We predict that talent pools will be strengthened by a more globally mobile workforce. Employers who are not currently placed to sponsor overseas candidates will benefit from adding this to their employer strategy. Being able to offer short term or temporary housing will often be a game changer for you in a competitive market.

Low Unemployment Rate

Australia is certainly enjoying the benefits and the pain of a low unemployment rate. In February 2022 the unemployment rate fell to 4.0% (ABS, 2022).

One of the most obvious casualties is housing affordability. Low unemployment has seen house pricing strengthen overall, and a decrease of rental vacancies. This combined with extensive flooding in highly populated areas of Australia's eastern seaboard, has seen housing security become a major issue for low and middle income earners.

A lack of suitable and/or affordable housing is also a barrier to relocation for new team members who would otherwise be available to join a new employer.

Workforce Positive predicts that Australia's housing crisis will be solved by the business community investing in residential housing. Purchasing or building units, townhouses and homes and making these available to employees on a long term basis will relieve the housing security stress being experienced by employees, create long term employment engagements and also support the broader community - with more housing becoming available to buy and rent in the open market.

Imagine being able to tell a candidate you could offer them stable employment, as well as stable housing - sit back and watch your talent tide rise.

Youth Unemployment Comparative to General Unemployment Rate

In Australia, the Youth Unemployment rate (ages 12-24) was sitting at 9.3% in February 2022, having decreased by 2.3% since March 2020. Comparatively, the general unemployment rate was sitting at 4%, having also decreased since March 2020 by 1.2%. Overall, the youth unemployment rate has improved the most but is still more than double that of the general population, leading us to consider longer term strategies to engage our youth.

Through designing employment conditions that embrace training and learning both inside and outside the organisation, including traineeships, apprenticeships and internships, employers may build a mutually engaging long term future with youth team members.

We predict a greater appetite from employers to play the long game and recruit inexperienced team members in the earlier stages of their career, potentially prior to enrolling in University or starting their Apprenticeship or Traineeship, to secure a workforce with tailored skill sets that come into fruition over a five year period.

Role Recruitment vs. Continuous Recruitment

Employers take various approaches when it comes to building their workforce. While some recruit only in instances of role vacancies, others are agile enough to take on someone who is suitable for the organisation, despite not having a specific role available. These organisations are flexible enough not to walk past an ideal team member should they express their interest in a role within the organisation, resulting in a highly and diversely skilled workforce, and increased opportunities for growth.

A combined approach would allow for both mindsets to act simultaneously, with organisations having open continuous recruitment and employer branding communications through their channels

of choice, while still recruiting for specific role vacancies as the needs arise. Organisations seeking to market themselves as employers should consider the following quote, taken directly from Mark Puncher, CEO of Employer Branding Australia.

"Employer branding is about being honest, proud...being bold, and brazen. It's debating about who you are as an employer, and who you're trying to connect with and who you want to work for you, including your current people and any future people, and then showing them why. If you want to do that, stop showing them gloss, and hype, and lies. Show them who you really are."

Mark Puncher

In other words, while gloss, hype and lies may spark interest and get people into your organisation; it is honesty, transparency and integrity that will keep them there.

As 2022 unfolds we predict that employers will invest in their employer branding and developing an employee value proposition that is compelling to their target team members, with the employer being marketed consistently and not only after vacancies need to be filled.

Covid-19 Vaccination Status

We have seen our clients adopt a range of different policies when it comes to the COVID-19 vaccination status of their workforce. In some instances, companies have adopted disclosure policies, whereby current and future employees are asked to disclose their vaccination status and can maintain employment whether vaccinated or otherwise.

We have also seen flexible COVID-19 vaccination policies, which do not impose vaccination requirements on their current and future employees. It has been our observation that those with strict COVID-19 vaccination mandates in their workplaces have struggled the most with their recruitment.

We were told by one candidate from regional Queensland that they had submitted a resume and received a phone call from the recruiting employer - the purpose of the call was to ask their vaccination status. Candidates who were vaccinated received job offers over the phone without even an informal interview. These kinds of recruitment practices are unsustainable and are a direct result of short term government policy.

It is our prediction that by the end of 2022, a candidate's COVID-19 vaccination status will no longer be a recruitment consideration for employers in the majority of sectors.

Accessibility

Accessibility to the job market has exponentially increased in the past five years, with more active recruitment methodologies (i.e., contacting through LinkedIn and Facebook) becoming prevalent across industries which were once limited to executive recruitment or 'head hunting' type engagements. It is also much easier for candidates to discover opportunities and connect with potential future employers through these platforms.

If we are taking accessibility more literally, when scheduling to meet your preferred candidate for a meeting or interview, consider whether they are currently employed and the various barriers around their availability. This includes travel times, parking, their current hours of work, getting back to work and multiple interviews they might be undertaking. Help them out by setting the meeting or interview at an appropriate time slot, such as in the evening outside of normal work hours. Your consideration of their time and juggling commitments will be highly valued.

When considering your commercial premises location, plan to have your workforce living within a 20-minute radius of your workplace, or on a major public transport route. Are the amenities most important to your staff available within this radius? For example, childcare, schooling, groceries, affordable housing, transport and parking options. People are time poor and the cost of living and transport is rising; employees plan to limit their travel time to better manage their work/life balance, the cost of running their vehicles and parking.

Our prediction in terms of accessibility is that we will see more fully flexible and outcomes driven workplaces in 2022, and we will see employees limiting their travel footprint to claw back their personal time.

Detail and Transparency

Throughout the recruitment processes we have managed so far in 2022, the incredibly positive feedback we have received on our Success Profiles has been a common denominator. The feedback from our candidates has been that their positive recruitment experience was due to the level of detail given from the outset of their application through to their appointment. Fortunately for us, they have been given such insufficient detail in concurrent job applications and recruitment processes that ours has stood out as being the exception.

We also received a lot of praise from our candidates about our long-term, in-depth and historical information about our clients. Due to our longstanding relationships with clients, we have been able to speak candidly and with a great level of detail about the employment opportunities at hand; something that is clearly lacking at present where third parties are engaging with candidates on behalf of employers.

When you are choosing a partner, appoint them based on their history with you, knowledge of your business operations, values, and the inner workings of your working environment.

In 2022, we predict greater cynicism from candidates. If you aren't committed to providing sufficient detail about the job opportunity and the organisation, don't expect candidates to commit their time and attention to the recruitment process.

Invest in Culture

Finally, our observation comes from a role we didn't recruit. One of our client's operates in the highly competitive professional services industry where experienced and qualified candidates are very difficult to attract, and there are many employment options available. This has been a systemic industry shortage spanning decades! Our client invested in the Workforce Positive Success Profiling and Quarterly Meetings program, where we workshop and map each employee's pathway to strategic success, and then review, plan and prioritise the Success Profile on a Quarterly basis with every member of the team. The processes embed clarity and communication, the engagement is palpable.

A team member with approximately one year of service had such a great employment experience that they recommended to an experienced peer that they join the employer as well. Employee referrals are the greatest compliment, and carry the most trust with candidates.

In 2022 we would like to see employers focus their energy and efforts internally, developing the culture within their organisation so that it is authentic and attracts values aligned team members. It is our prediction that culture and employee experience will be significant drivers of candidate behaviour. Don't be surprised if potential candidates reach out to your current team via LinkedIn, or similar, and ask for first hand employee experience feedback instead of taking your recruitment team's word for it.

About the Author

Kearin Lowry is the Director of Workforce Positive and has been recruiting since 2001 both within Australia and overseas. Since starting Workforce Positive in 2016, Kearin has focused her professional pursuits on channelling human energy.

Employers select team members based on their attitude, skills, experience and talents - but too often the workplace culture does not engage with employees and many choose to leave their gifts at the door instead of contributing as much as they can at work. Through her work Kearin's goal is to create workplace cultures that are values-led, where employees feel engaged, channelling their human energy into strategic success for themselves, their team and the organisation.

The Workforce Positive client portfolio covers a range of industry sectors including infrastructure, construction, agriculture, health, retail, technical and professional services, and manufacturing. Our current recruitment and strategy experience ensures that we add value in our professional engagements, benefitting our clients and their teams.

To further develop your employee value proposition and capitalise on the current recruitment market please contact Kearin Lowry, Director and Meliorist via workforcepositive.com.

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