

Connecting  
Talent Potential

to

Business  
Outcomes

A Look at Global Trends Influencing  
How Work Gets Done



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# Introduction

For talent and organizations alike, the world of work grows more demanding every day. Professionals must evolve their skills to keep pace with innovation, and corporate hiring managers and leaders must get creative in how they move the organization forward. Navigating the demands of innovation and competition is everyone's concern, and a recent Allegis Group global survey of approximately 2,000 workers and 1,800 HR and business decision-makers reveals that everyone in business is feeling the pressure to keep up.

For companies, the challenge begins with how they engage people and resources. Four in five (79 percent) surveyed decision-makers believe it is more difficult to attract and retain talent with critical skills than it was three years ago. Most believe the inability to effectively secure talent could impact core business capabilities, resulting in compromises in operations and service delivery (cited as an issue by 84 percent), limitations on business growth and profitability (84 percent), and obstacles to innovation (77 percent). Nearly half (49 percent) say it is harder today to determine what talent and technology resources are needed to accomplish key goals, projects, and initiatives than it was three years ago. For their part, most workers (87 percent) agree employers need to do a better job of providing resources and technologies to best attract job seekers and retain employees.

Along with the challenges of today's global business environment, companies and workers also enjoy opportunities to transform the way work gets done. The technology to automate work is advancing rapidly. Companies have more talent engagement and resource options for achieving business goals than ever before, and a greater portion of workers have unprecedented flexibility for how, where, and when they do their jobs.

Those opportunities give rise to fundamental trends that are changing how companies connect with workers and achieve outcomes. First, new technology is raising worker expectations for employers to eliminate cumbersome processes to create a more human, consumer-like work experience. Second, that same innovation drives a need for more sophisticated talent, prompting companies to seek outsourced services for these increasingly strategic needs. Third, new generations of workers are using technology and culture shifts to break the mold of the one-employer, nine-to-five work model, causing the workforce to fragment into an increasingly mixed combination of employees, contractors, freelancers, and services providers. Fourth, that mixed workforce and the increasing role of technology give rise to an array of new regulations as governments adjust to issues such as privacy and the treatment of flexible workers.

In short, organizations have enormous potential to create value and improve the work and career experience, but the ability to translate that potential into tangible results depends on how they tackle these trends. This report explores how companies and workers address these four challenges to reach one common goal: connecting talent potential to business outcomes.

Survey results help shed light on how the trends influence the outlook of business decision-makers, including HR and procurement leaders, as well as candidates. Complementing the survey findings is commentary from experts in talent acquisition and flexible workforce engagement. Together, the data and insight provide a foundation for advancing the most important conversations influencing talent and business today.



## Trend 1:

# Increasing Pressure to Balance Technology and the Human Touch

Advances in technology drive efficiency, improve business intelligence, and create more agile, value-driven companies. But innovation should do more than contribute to growth and profitability. It should also boost the human experience of being in the workforce every day, from helping workers communicate and build relationships, to driving personal fulfillment.

## A Natural Demand: Technology Can Make Life Better for People

Not surprisingly, companies see the human factor as a major influence on their ability to attract and retain workers in a competitive talent landscape, and they are racing to apply technology in a way that improves the personal aspects of the job. In fact, more than half (58 percent) of HR and business decision-makers cite the push to humanize the talent experience as a priority to improve talent attraction, productivity, and retention, and nearly half (43 percent) say that improving the use of digital tools and data is a workforce priority. At the same time, more than half (57 percent) of workers see a need for employers to better humanize the worker or job seeker experience.

Where are the challenges? Consider the basics of day-to-day work, as well as an individual's long-term career arc. Only a quarter (27 percent) of organizations say their use of technology has greatly improved their employees' ability to get work done compared to three years ago. In the same timeframe comparison, just 30 percent of surveyed workers state that technology has greatly improved their ability to get work done. Other influences on the human experience, such as communication, job satisfaction and fulfillment, career advancement, and relationship-building, fared similarly, with only 14 to 23 percent of companies recognizing great improvements in these areas over the last three years.

While organizations recognize the potentially humanizing influence of technology, their level of commitment to adopting new solutions varies. Roughly half of decision-makers (48 percent) describe their organizations'

approach to innovation as strategic, with a plan to revise processes and utilize technology across all activities that influence the worker and job seeker experience. A similar portion (42 percent) describe their organizations as reactive, acting only when an issue with the worker or job seeker experience results in lost business, a lack of prospective talent, or employee turnover.

Talent technology has evolved significantly over the past decade, offering a path to more intelligent interactions with talent, and an overall improvement in the worker experience, yet only a small portion of employers are keeping up with innovation. For example, just 23 percent of surveyed decision-makers rely on automated solutions to identify, assess, prioritize, and engage talent from across all digital channels, and 28 percent draw on detailed, current data that tracks pay rates by location, skills, and available talent supply.

Bringing people to the real opportunities that can help them is another challenge. Only one in four organizations (23 percent) use advanced artificial intelligence (AI) tools to correlate candidate skills and experience to guide career advancement for their workers. And a third (35 percent) support their employees with a comprehensive learning platform, including training modules, development paths, and other online resources. In effect, when it comes to applying workforce technology innovations, companies have much room to improve.

As companies slowly wake up to the importance of the worker experience in attracting and retaining talent, the message is clear: to move ahead of the pack, commit to applying technology as a means of making every day better for the people who drive their success. Put simply, make it easy for your workers to do their very best work.

## Take Action >>>

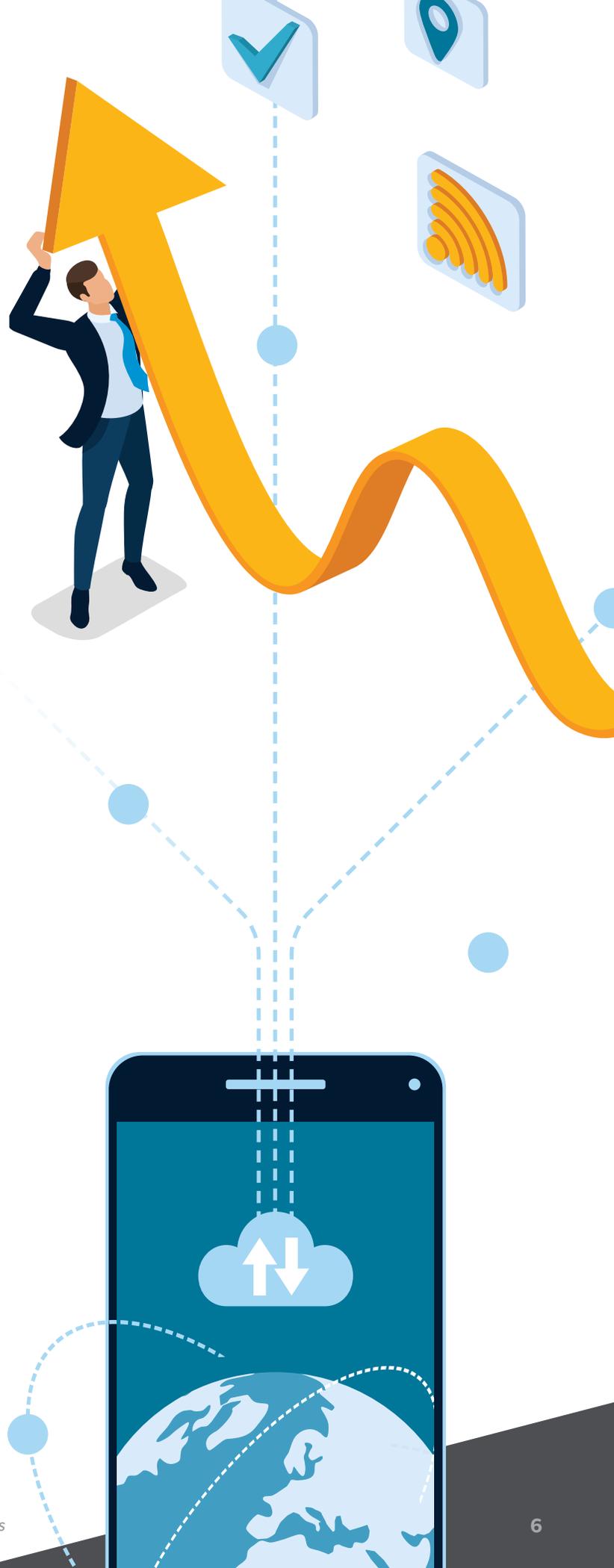
### A Path to a Better Human Experience

For employers, technology can help address many questions that shape today's worker experience. Are job candidates treated with the communication and respect they deserve? Do organizations offer informed compensation options, reflecting the market, skills, and level of need truly appropriate to the candidate? Does the company provide a transparent view into career path options for all workers? Can people quickly find resources or receive answers to their questions about an administrative need, such as payroll and benefits, or the status of a project? With a strategy that applies technology to make work smarter and more transparent, employers can create a more compelling experience for everyone.

#### *Boost the Candidate Experience with Smarter Talent Acquisition Tools*

Candidate experience begins with an intelligent approach to talent acquisition, and AI tools are providing significant advances to inform smarter engagement. First, innovative market intelligence tools are enabling better decisions about pay and location. A holistic supply-and-demand solution can aggregate and analyze information on how much companies pay people. Key inputs include timeframes of engagement and rates of pay for flexible workers, as well as benchmark information available through government and industry organizations. The output, based on AI-driven analysis, is a range of pay, including the number of hires at specific rates for any given position or skill set in a particular location based on real hiring data. Such digital solutions help to ensure that the right offer is made to attract the right talent at the appropriate cost.

A second digital tool that improves workforce intelligence can be found in the realm of social sourcing. Solutions in this area help companies automate the sourcing, and research, of talent through the vast social media landscape. By applying AI capabilities to connect candidate data from multiple social media channels, these solutions can free talent acquisition professionals from the burden of manually researching vast amounts of online data for potential candidates.<sup>1</sup> Relieved of this manual research, the talent acquisition function can focus on forging stronger, more personal connections with the talent they seek.



## Improve Retention Through Digital Career Resources

The proliferation of digital solutions also empowers workers to better interact with their employers, as well as improve how they develop skills and advance their careers. Such career empowerment can be a strong factor in improving the retention of traditional employees, as well as facilitating return engagements for flexible workers.

One example of empowering worker interaction is the evolving talent community. Formerly a means of cultivating communication between professionals in similar fields or skill sets, the talent community is now being applied to better manage the flexible workforce, as well. By bringing contractors and contingent workers into the same environment, companies can better open their workers to opportunities across the organization. In the case of a platform operated by a talent supplier, those opportunities may span several client organizations, along with relevant data on assignment status, including start- and end-dates, that can help match talent to their next opportunity.<sup>2</sup>

In the area of employee experience, training and career path tools can boost engagement. Thanks to the advent of smart online platforms, companies are bringing skills development out of the static realm of conventional learning management systems. Training is now being embraced through a dynamic environment for exploring topics and skills that may have been previously unavailable. A worker can access learning through a single platform, create a strategy for acquiring skills related to their desired goals, add content, or explore unique learning paths.<sup>3</sup> The result is a learning ecosystem that gives workers a compelling resource for continuous growth.

Career advancement means more than skills development. Success often lies in the worker's ability to see and choose their right direction based on individual goals and interests. Once again, innovative solutions are emerging that can guide such career advancement. Using AI tools, a talent advisor can even look into the probability of success for professionals who want to change fields. Is a shift from a role in financial services to marketing a high-probability move? Data can show the answer, based on others who have made similar moves. Through the use of advanced data analysis, employers, managers, or talent advisers can help workers make the most informed decisions possible, even as they reach beyond their comfort zones for seemingly unrelated career moves.

## The Human Wildcard — Capture the Intangibles

Knowing how to apply technology to better serve candidates and workers is important, but when it comes to humanizing the talent experience, personal commitment is essential, from leadership to management and all levels of operation. It is a commitment of time, a willingness to work across functions, and an openness to questioning the meaningful points of experience. Having everyone in the organization drive the human-technology balance will make the difference between a strategy that simply invests in technology and one that connects technology to real outcomes.<sup>4</sup>



## Humanizing Forces: Takeaways From the Talent Technology Landscape

Blair Kennard, Executive Director of Marketing and Technology, Aerotek

When it comes to delivering a great experience for an employer and the job candidate, technology helps, but simply implementing innovative solutions is not enough. An understanding of the client and candidate needs and how they want to engage is key. So where does innovation work, and where is it falling short? The answers are evolving, but three common threads can help inform a realistic technology strategy: scalability, personalization, and intelligence.

### *Scalability is a Must-Have*

From a technological standpoint, interactions between companies and job seekers are faster and more productive than even just a few years ago, resulting in a higher quality of engagement. The use of email, phone, social feeds, text, or any number of channels can be customized to the personal preferences of the client and candidate. Whether you are hiring or looking to be hired, using multiple channels will improve results.

For employers, it is tough to hire at scale without technology to reach a meaningful number of relevant candidates early in the recruiting process. Well over a third of the people we hire for clients come through digital means — a figure that has increased by 25 percent in the last few years. Part of that increase stems from our customer-centric improvements in strategy and technology, and part of it is due to changing preferences. When technology is done well, it provides a humanizing influence because it gives job seekers what they want: immediate results. They are more likely to get that immediacy through digital means, and smart employers understand how to balance that dynamic with phone calls and face-to-face interactions.

### *Personalization Has Room to Improve*

To stand out from the crowd and forge better connections, organizations have pursued tools that personalize automated communications. That personalization comes in many forms, such as an artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot pointing someone to specific answers to questions or a search engine that recognizes user traits and delivers recommended opportunities directly to the job seeker.

Unfortunately, personalization is not functioning as well as it needs to because the staffing industry has not quite figured out the complexities of human communication and because updated data is hard to come by. In the consumer marketplace, companies are getting much better; consider the personalized recommendations you receive from a shopping site based on your preferences. In the business-to-business world or employer-talent relationship, there is a considerable appetite to make advances in personalization just as companies are doing in the consumer space. As AI innovation continues and the ability to augment candidate profiles through multiple data sources increases, progress in personalizing candidate communications will improve. As a talent solutions partner, keeping ahead of that innovation curve is a key part of our job.

### *Candidate Intelligence is a Technology Superpower*

What do workers want? The answer to that question varies by individual, and knowing the answer can make a recruiter or hiring manager exponentially more effective in establishing a true connection with a potential candidate. Our Voice of the Customer survey is an example of a best practice in forming the foundation of that knowledge. From the direct feedback informing that research, we understand that a candidate wants a quality job, but we also have the means to see that a quality job is not just about pay but rather about aligning with one's skills, goals, and interests.

Organizations need to use technology to supplement the conversation when reaching out to talent. When calling a candidate, a recruiter should already know whether the person recently changed jobs, moved to a new location, gained a new skill, or demonstrated a new interest. Companies should reach out to talent with recommendations about opportunities or how to align with those openings at the resume level. Our technology innovation aims to drive more meaningful and intelligent conversations at the outset. Such intelligence is a part of the “superpower” we can and must give to recruiters — a data-driven clairvoyance that can jumpstart a relationship where old-fashioned “what do you want” questions previously failed.

### *Who Owns the Technology and the Human Relationship?*

Ultimately, the humanizing power of talent technology is in the hands of organizations that put that technology to work as part of their broader strategy to connect talent to jobs. As a talent partner, our standards have to be high because we own the technology and the human interaction. Technology capabilities are expected. We consider them an inherent part of doing business. A differentiated and superior experience results when the technology paves the way for human engagement.

Our priority is not only in using technology to free our recruiters from the burdens of manually researching resumes but also in applying practices that help them nurture relationships in that newly opened time. In our mission of connecting talent to opportunity, we know that technology matters, but we have to prioritize the human experience. Building relationships has been the root of our success over the last three decades, and it will continue to drive the success of our clients and candidates in the future.



## Trend 2:

# The Growing, Strategic Role of Outsourced Services

In the past, organizations treated outsourcing as a way to address demands that fell outside a company's core business. Today, the complexity of business processes and technology advancements are changing the outsourcing dynamic. With a rising dependence on specialized skills and functions, companies find the best way to leverage talent is to engage them through providers of services and expertise that focus on critical areas of need and are measured on outcomes, not input.

### Employers See Room to Improve

From IT projects to business functions, such as recruiting and marketing, outsourced services can influence growth and profitability profoundly. More than a quarter (28 percent) of HR and business decision-makers cite the use of outsourced services providers to realize outcomes as a business priority. Their focus is on achieving results with the right speed, cost, and quality to support the organization. At the same time, nearly half (45 percent) say they consider outsourcing more often today compared to three years ago as an alternative to direct hiring. Fifty-two percent expect their use of outsourced services to rise over the next two years. Overall, the use of outsourced services as a way to leverage talent to get work done is increasing steadily.

The key to value and impact lies in the ability to manage engagements across the enterprise strategically. In that respect, there is room to improve, as only 34 percent of survey respondents who engage outsourced services manage a significant portion through a centralized strategy overseen by procurement. The largest portion (43 percent) of companies have some visibility and management of services to track costs but with limited strategic input, while 23 percent are less advanced. This smaller group of decision-makers engages contractors and outsourced services on a case-by-case basis without any centralized management.

Among organizations using a centralized strategy to leverage talent through outsourced services overseen by procurement, nearly all (91 percent) agree that doing so yields measurable improvements in cost control, quality, and outcomes. Nearly half (45 percent) of surveyed businesses plan to bring a larger portion of outsourced services under the management of a centralized procurement function over the next two years.

## Take Action >>>

### Engage Services to Connect with Critical Talent

Survey findings point to companies' desires to expand their use of outsourced services, but they are challenged to do so in a way that is strategic and impactful. Companies can evolve their approach to services engagement in two ways. First, they can apply a systematic approach to assessing needs and identifying the right resources, including services providers, to address them. Second, they can focus on better managing outsourced services and budgets at the enterprise level to track and optimize costs and quality of results.

#### *A Systematic Approach to Prioritizing Needs*

The decision to engage a services provider is best considered in light of the work to be done and the questions that surround that work. Is the talent gap that needs to be filled due to a project aimed at a specific outcome? If so, a services provider may be the best option, as performance can be managed easily against clear performance criteria. Is the work involved outside the scope of the organization's primary capabilities? Once again, if the answer is yes, the services provider may be best equipped to handle the details and align the resources to succeed.

Beyond the complexity of work and employer capabilities, additional factors contribute to the services engagement decision, including competitive advantage, risk, and cost.<sup>5</sup> For example, a technology services provider may bring a communications organization's legacy IT services to the cloud to provide more speed and responsiveness — a competitive advantage in a demanding market. Likewise, a financial services organization may turn to a services provider to provide legal guidance, delivering expertise to help the company manage otherwise unrecognizable risks. And when it comes to cost, the potential of the services model for engaging the needed resources can be significant.

Looking beyond scope and cost, organizations must consider the talent that a services or solutions provider brings to the table. A services provider delivers on its promise by engaging capable professionals predictably and consistently. In complicated and skills-intensive endeavors such as a technology implementation, the quality and commitment of talent is a key driver of success. Whether implementing a technology solution, opening a call center, or managing facilities infrastructure and operations, a services provider can bring stability and predictability to projects that may prove risky for an organization to manage in-house.

### *Manage Services at an Enterprise Level for Optimum Cost and Quality*

The imperative to work with services providers is often held at the line-of-business level, with department managers determining what providers to use, how much to budget for them, and how to manage and measure performance. This traditional, decentralized approach creates opportunities for cost and quality improvements for the enterprise willing to shift their management of outsourced services budgets to a centralized procurement function. The goal is to achieve a clear view of spending, a consistent and high quality of talent engaged through the service, and improved consistency in terms of scope creation, execution of plans, and predictability of results.

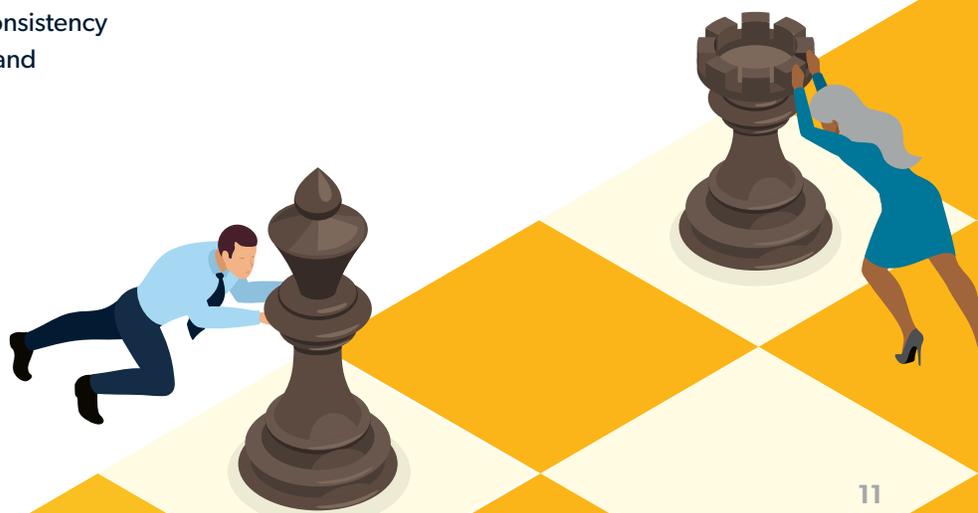
The effort to grow procurement's role in managing services providers is not without challenges. Managers at the line-of-business level should be open to working with procurement when engaging the provider. Procurement, for its part, must have visibility into key data to drive better decision-making, and attaining that visibility requires cooperation across the business along with technology to capture the data.<sup>6</sup>

To address the challenges, organizations may take a focused approach to change management and relationship building, technology evolution, and process transformation. Change management begins with procurement's commitment to working with business leaders to capture data, including planned and actual delivery, cost, and measurement of impact. By helping business leaders demonstrate the value of their efforts, procurement can begin building the relationships needed to bring that data into a centralized view.

When that happens, companies can begin to pinpoint opportunities for improving value from their services partners. For example, if an organization can see that one provider often delivers late or that one manager consistently expands the scope or moves the calendar on a project, the organization can work with the parties involved to adjust expectations or shift requirements to improve accuracy.

### **Monitoring Talent as a Part of the Provider Relationship**

Procurement must now look beyond cost-control as the only priority when considering outsourcing and also consider factors such as the level of skill and worker engagement each provider brings to the table.<sup>7</sup> By doing so, procurement can boost its ability to help employers leverage the right solutions to achieve the results a business needs, consistently and cost-effectively.



## Professional Services Make Transformation Real

Jeff Mason, Vice President, TEKsystems Global Services

Transformation. The term has become a buzzword in the world of business and technology. In the minds of jaded decision-makers, it has taken on the mystical quality of a distant ideal. But for any company leader facing a “how-do-we-get-from-here-to-there” decision, transformation is more than wishful thinking; it is a practical and immediate matter that reaches to the heart of an organization’s growth and success.

The need for transformation can stem from market pressures like customer shortfalls, longer cycle times, or competitors moving ahead with innovation. These pressures lead to technology or process initiatives, such as re-thinking how a company stores and handles data or redesigning its virtual presence on web or mobile channels. These initiatives are often technical, involving highly skilled input and execution that can change the way every customer, partner, or worker experiences the company. How can organizations hire the skilled employees they need to make transformation happen? In many cases, the answer is simple: they can’t.

In a time when many highly skilled workers embrace careers as contractors or consultants, organizations need to adopt strategies that meet those workers where they are, as flexible professionals who choose their work by the project. As such, a growing number of companies are turning to professional services as a path to talent and teams ready-made to deliver on the most challenging projects. But more than simply a source of talent, a professional services partner should touch on all aspects of transformation, including vision and strategy, execution, and change management.

### *Vision and Strategy*

A clear strategic vision is one of the most overlooked values a great services partner brings to the table. For example, a company may realize it must achieve a more responsive customer care process, and part of that issue may involve moving legacy applications to the cloud. Internal parties may have differing views on how to

achieve that move. Soon enough, such an initiative may run into issues with competing interests or with priorities that are well-meaning but short-sighted.

As a consultative partner, the services provider can bring expertise and an objective view into the planning process to create a credible, realistic vision. Even more important, a good partner understands the pitfalls to avoid in building sponsorship and support. In the case of a cloud implementation, for example, many decisions need to be made about which legacy applications to address. What is the appetite for different platforms, and what level of support will be required to make those platforms work? What does success look like? An informed answer to these questions leads to a better strategic foundation.

### *Execution*

A quality network of talent leads to the skilled teams that can execute impactful engagement. If a services provider treats its workers well — with opportunities that help them grow, a path to career success, and supportive communications — the quality of work being done for the client will reflect that care.

Beyond accessing quality talent, a services provider should be able to draw from a large supply of workers to assemble the exact mix of talent needed for success. In our organization, we understand that clients expect us to bring a portfolio of expertise with a variety of technology stacks, resulting in workforce transformation, cloud transformations, or whatever they need. Each customer benefits from the experience we gain implementing projects with other clients, ultimately driving the best chance for the quickest, most realistic outcome.

### *Change Management*

While change management begins with a clear vision and detailed planning, its impact should extend well beyond implementation. In the case of a technology deployment, the real impact and value are defined by long-term user adoption, and adoption should not be taken for granted.

Creative change management begins with understanding issues that influence user sentiment. In many cases, users may not see the value of the changes a company is undertaking. They are being asked to work outside their comfort zone, so the goal is to help them move from a comfortable current state to a less comfortable state that yields a better future. In essence, getting people to embrace new ways of working requires outreach and education, and services providers are often the best suited to provide that outreach.

### *You Can't Outsource Resilience — or Can You?*

A well planned, executed, and supported transformation initiative should position an organization to navigate unforeseen changes, whether that means adding new technologies to a platform, bringing new users into a process, or adjusting a workflow. This flexibility is the connection between transformation and business resilience, a concern for many companies as they face a future of rapid innovation and market uncertainty. A trusted provider of services and expertise can prove essential in building resilience, delivering a level of transformation that addresses near-term goals while positioning the organization for long-term success.



## Trend 3:

# The Fragmentation of the Workforce

Talent acquisition is about much more than hiring traditional employees, as professionals increasingly embrace engagements as contractors, freelancers, consultants, or other types of flexible workers. Nearly three quarters (74 percent) of workers say the right freelance, contract, or other flexible projects can provide a career that is as fulfilling and lucrative as a conventional employee role. Sixty-five percent are more interested in flexible work today than they were three years ago. The result is a workforce that may seem fragmented as qualified, flexible workers are often hidden from view by siloed corporate processes and systems that focus primarily on traditional employees.

## Companies Struggle to Engage All Talent Types

To tap into the full supply of available talent, employers must adapt their workforce strategies. That means all work is open to consideration for all engagement models, including employees or flexible workers. This tactic, known as a total talent approach, gives companies an advantage over processes that predetermined whether roles were meant for employees, contractors, or freelancers.

The total talent approach bridges gaps between legacy processes and technologies that are specific to each worker type and now allows us to see all workers through a single lens. Unfortunately, most companies have yet to realize the full vision. In fact, only a minority of surveyed HR and business decision-makers (28 percent) say their organizations can access employees, potential candidates, contractors, freelancers, workforce suppliers, and services partners on one system. Another 51 percent say they are moving toward that holistic capability. Among decision-makers from organizations without their total workforce supply on a single platform, 84 percent are negatively impacted, facing challenges such as securing people with the capabilities and skills to best fit their needs, engaging talent quickly enough to meet goals, or securing workers at the optimum cost.

While companies may not be fully positioned to address a fragmented workforce, decision-makers believe the fundamentals for a total talent strategy are in place. The majority (83 percent) say their organizations are empowered by their culture, processes, and supporting systems to consider all talent options. Most say that they break down tasks to evaluate how best to achieve the desired outcome before deciding on the type of talent to use (79 percent). At the same time, the majority of companies see the need for improvement, as 84 percent plan to invest in technology to improve total workforce visibility over the next two years. A full 83 percent say they will focus on bridging silos among HR, procurement, and line-of-business decision-makers.



## Take Action >>>

### Reach the Entire Supply of Today's Workers

Connecting the fragmented workforce to optimize business outcomes is no easy task, but a total talent approach is within reach for employers. Success requires four areas of change: reexamining how work gets done, adopting technology to bring all workers into view, positioning the organization and its value proposition to attract non-traditional workers, and defining and committing to hiring manager success.

#### *Consider the Work and the Desired Outcome First*

In the past, employers typically thought about employees in terms of the positions they held rather than the outcomes they delivered. For example, if a company needed more resources to launch a website or support an expanded technology or services function, it would consider opening new positions and hiring new employees. In the modern world, however, initiatives move rapidly, outcomes matter more than activity, and the need for different skills changes constantly.

In such a dynamic environment, employers are well-served to begin conversations about how to fill job openings with an even more fundamental question: "What do we need to accomplish?" From that point, break down that goal into the tasks needed to achieve the outcome and then assess how best to accomplish the result. Is the effort highly skilled but easily managed with clearly defined goals? Then a contractor or outsourced services provider might be the best resource. Does the activity require a long-term commitment, project ownership, and management? Perhaps a permanent employee is the best option.

What emerges from this evaluation is a plan that considers multiple resources, each from a different model of engagement and capability. The employer then taps into available resources from across the total talent universe with a high level of precision for getting the work done, with the highest quality output, at the most cost-effective rate.

### *Use Technology to Connect With Talent*

Over time, the proliferation of disconnected, siloed data sources has become an obstacle to a total talent strategy. Hiring managers accessed flexible workers through one system, freelancers and contractors through other sources, and potential employees through another.

Today, thanks to innovations in technology, the long-standing, aspirational vision of a single total talent platform that connects all workers is now a reality. In a fully mature total talent platform, the user can enter requirements, whether by job description, skills needed for a task, or any other descriptor, and the system can provide choices for the need. One platform can draw from all worker types, so the response to such a query could be a current employee, a candidate in the applicant tracking system, a consultant, a freelance resource, or a contingent worker represented by a supplier.

Among the advances enabling total talent visibility is the use of AI. With an ability to understand human input, the AI component of an effective total talent platform processes requests or information without requiring users to adhere to a specific structure or vocabulary. In effect, a recruiter or hiring manager can engage the system the same way they interact with another human, and the system can reply with options drawn from multiple sources.



## Adjust Your Value Proposition to Attract and Engage Non-Employee Workers

The total talent approach does more than adjust how companies see across the fragmented workforce; it also extends to how they attract talent. For example, the traditional employer brand is built on the idea of the employer value proposition that answers, “why would this company be a great place to work?” In the modern world, the prospective candidate may be less interested in the employer and more interested in the value of work being done.

To appeal to the flexible workforce, employers may turn their focus to the “assignment value proposition.” This approach supports cases where the employer needs to sell the project’s value just as much as the strength of the company itself. What types of skills are required? What are the opportunities to grow new skills and expand professional experience? How visible is the work? How compelling is the potential success story? Could future engagements be a result? The answers to these questions contribute to the assignment value proposition, and they could make a difference in attracting the best and brightest flexible workers to a critical initiative.

## Commit to Make the Hiring Manager’s Life Better

Ultimately, a total talent strategy is centered on addressing issues that influence one of the most important people in the engagement or hiring process, and that is the hiring manager. After all, it is the hiring manager who suffers when siloed processes leave prolonged vacancies. It is also the hiring manager who bears the most frustration when an inability to see into the talent supply causes companies to unnecessarily engage workers who may not be the best fit.

A total talent function empowers the hiring manager to see all options and make better choices based on informed input and relevant data. The result paints a great business case for getting hiring managers on board with the approach: higher quality talent, at the right time and the right cost. By bringing hiring managers on board with the total talent vision, companies can better ensure that the processes and technologies are adopted as they evolve.

## Aligning Talent Strategy With the Way People Work

The journey toward a total talent capability takes time and dedication on the part of the employer, but this approach can be crucial in connecting to workers across varied engagement models. With a detailed understanding of the work to be done, enabled by technology, and focusing on providing a positive experience for all worker types, companies applying a total talent approach can better align their strategies with the way people work.



## Total Talent Comes to Life

*Kristy Sidlar, Executive Director of Workforce Solutions, Allegis Global Solutions*

The journey to total talent is a long one. Around 10 years ago, companies seriously began to wonder how they could get their arms around the entire workforce supply. The idea of managing all workers, including traditional employees, contractors, consultants, and other resources under one strategic umbrella was not new. At the time, though, much of the supporting structure was not around to make it happen.

Consider what it takes to bring total talent to life. Procurement and HR would need an appetite to commit to a common workforce engagement process. Technologies would have to provide a view of traditional workers, candidates, and flexible workers through a single platform. And the implementation and change management capability would have to be available to carry out a holistic system of acquisition and governance. Some of these elements could be brought to bear, but to make total talent real, ALL of these elements had to be in place, and that was not yet happening.

Today, things are different. Each element — the appetite, the technology, and the capability—contributes to what is becoming the practical, active application of the total talent vision.

### *The Appetite Reaches a Threshold*

For decades, procurement was primarily concerned with securing contractors, consultants, and freelancers, and HR was in charge of hiring employees. Recently, talent scarcity began to create more demand for many skills and more pressure on the workforce supply.

Facing prolonged vacancies and work left undone, companies began looking at dwindling pipelines of potential new employees and started to wonder whether the company could bring in contingent workers instead. HR and procurement began exploring the idea of creating a unified talent pool to draw from, regardless of work style. But both sides of the equation worked in separate worlds, with disparate reporting structures, systems, and processes for engagement.

Currently, the imbalance of supply and demand for talent cannot be ignored. The number of vacancies exceeds the number of candidates for many skills, and many professionals choose to operate as flexible workers rather than as traditional employees. The appetite for critical talent makes hiring managers more open than ever to seeking any worker who has the desired skill set. In effect, hiring companies have shifted their focus from “who do we need to hire” to “how do we get work done” regardless of who does it and in what capacity. And they are turning to talent partners to help them find the answer. The takeaway: HR and procurement are both now proactively turning to providers of traditional recruiting or flexible workforce engagement solutions, asking for a single total talent approach as a path forward.

### *The Technology has Arrived*

What if a hiring manager, a procurement specialist, or an HR or recruitment team could log into one system for talent? They could enter requirements and receive recommendations of quality candidates drawn from applicant tracking systems, freelancer management systems, contingent workforce suppliers, contractor databases, or other sources? Gone are the what-ifs of targeting talent, as companies no longer miss out on potential workers due to pre-made decisions about hiring an employee versus engaging a contractor.

In the past, this level of functionality proved elusive. Not only was it difficult to integrate all data sources, but it was also nearly impossible to normalize all data into a searchable structure. Now, the technology capability exists to access data from multiple sources. Even more importantly, thanks to applications driven by artificial intelligence (AI), a person can “ask” a system to identify people for specific requirements, and the system can understand, search, and return relevant results immediately. The takeaway: total talent platforms are not just possible; they are practical.

### *The Process Capability is Available*

Much of the work involved in bringing total talent capabilities to life is best suited to a talent solutions provider. After all, a company's internal teams may not have the objective view to agree on priorities, who does what, or how best to reach that holistic capability. Likewise, they may not have the dedicated, innovation function to develop and apply the technology, nor will they always have the expertise to bring a holistic talent function up to speed in addressing changing workforce demands.

Talent solutions providers have all these abilities and, in many ways, have been leaning in the total talent direction for years. In particular, managed services providers (MSP) have been expanding their relationships with procurement to support direct hire for permanent employee needs. Likewise, in our organization, the recruitment process outsourcing (RPO) organization has been leading the development of technology stacks that span all models of work.

But total talent is more than RPO plus MSP. It is a framework for accessing workers that is shared by all stakeholders. The evolution to a total talent framework would likely not work without an outside solutions partner. Today, we have clients who are moving beyond the RPO plus MSP model to reach a total talent capability. The takeaway: A holistic talent process is not a prediction; it is a reality.

### *The Real Deal*

Thanks to more awareness and pressure to better engage a mixed workforce, organizations are committed to making the total talent function a reality. Due to the advent of cloud solutions, AI, and advanced data science, the technology exists to bring all worker data into one accessible place. And through advances in processes and expertise, along with additional years of client change management experience, the most advanced talent solutions providers are up to the task.

With the means to overcome the obstacles, companies have stopped treating total talent as a nice-to-have vision and started acting on it as an achievable goal. From a solutions provider point-of-view, the change is tangible, as the dynamic has shifted from the provider educating and promoting the vision to customers proactively coming to the provider and asking about total talent. Expect total talent to become more of a norm in the future, as companies that do not take the lead on the vision will soon find themselves trying to catch up with those who do.



## Trend 4:

# The Influence of the Changing Regulatory Environment

Evolving workforce regulations create a real obstacle between talent potential and business results. For example, between the engagement of skilled IT contractors and the desired outcome of a successful technology deployment are regulations concerning how a company defines and treats those workers (as contractors versus employees). There are privacy rules surrounding how personal information of candidates and workers is handled. There may also be laws about the screening questions a company asks candidates, along with numerous other changing rules.

Each of these regulatory requirements represents a potential risk that can slow the talent engagement process, cause an organization to miss out on certain talent types altogether, or, in the case of noncompliance, result in financial penalties and reputational damage. Adding to the challenge is the growing complexity of regulations, as organizations and governments navigate issues associated with evolving technologies, globalization, and the rise of the gig economy.

## Organizations Recognize Challenges but Struggle to Address Them

The issues associated with workforce regulations are not lost on companies today. For example, 59 percent of HR and business decision-makers agree that changing regulations over the past three years have made it more difficult to secure flexible talent such as contingent workers, contractors, and freelancers. Thirty-four percent have had to add staff on legal, compliance, or risk teams, and 27 percent experience slower decision-making due to legal reviews. In addition, decision-makers cite several other issues that command a higher level of importance today compared to three years ago. These issues include data protection and privacy (cited by 73 percent), maintaining an inclusive culture (57 percent), worker classification (49 percent), tax law (43 percent), and immigration regulations (37 percent).

Responding to the changing landscape, a greater portion of companies are taking a proactive stance and treating compliance as a strategic issue. Nearly a third of surveyed decision-makers (32 percent) cite controlling regulatory risk to make more confident and appropriate resource decisions as a business priority. Eighty-six percent are increasing their technologies and resources investment to better address demands associated with data protection/privacy, worker classification, tax law, or immigration regulations over the next two years. Fifty-two percent cite an increase in compliance training, and 63 percent plan to focus on related internal training over the next three years.

## Take Action >>>

### Get Proactive About Evolving Regulations

With a proactive compliance strategy in place, employers can prepare for changing needs quickly and minimize disruption to the business. Such a plan involves three keys to success: applying digital tools for clearer worker classification, building a culture that keeps everyone aware of and committed to acting on compliance needs, and leveraging talent resources to address changing conditions.<sup>8</sup>



## In the Headlines: Trends Driving Compliance Today



### *Data Privacy and Protection*

Companies cannot underestimate the role of data in today's workforce. Laws such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in Europe and the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) in the U.S. represent the latest push by regulators to hold those in possession of personal data accountable for their use. Control over the digital environment is essential to stay compliant with data privacy rules.



### *Worker Classification*

Defining employees, contingent workers, and freelancers is not as easy as it seems, and regulations require companies to afford benefits and support to workers according to the real conditions of their employment. For example, in a 2018 California ruling, *Dynamex Operations West, Inc. v. Superior Court*,<sup>9</sup> the state adopted an "ABC test" for determining worker classification. That test requires a worker to be classified as a contractor if the person is: A) free from the control of the hiring entity, B) performs work that is not central to the hiring organization's business, and C) is customarily engaged in an independently established trade of the same type of work performed for the hiring entity. Other notable rulings, such as a U.S. finding that Uber drivers are not considered employees,<sup>10</sup> will likely continue to be challenged around the world.



### *Background Checking*

Many regulations cover the amount and sort of background information that can be disclosed in the application and onboarding process, from the basic name and identification verifications (i.e., Social Security numbers in the U.S. or National Insurance Numbers in the UK) to education history, certifications, and reference checks. Beyond the basics, employers are subject to various rules according to the location and category of industry or work being done.<sup>11</sup>



### *Bias and Discrimination*

Today, much of the risk associated with discrimination stems from unconscious bias when the employer, through language, processes, or other means, unknowingly creates a disadvantage or disincentive for people of particular groups or backgrounds. Addressing bias and discrimination issues requires regulatory expertise to recognize specific areas of risk, as well as the resources and commitment to create a bias-free culture of inclusion and diversity.



### *Other Compliance Demands*

New regulatory demands extend across interactions with candidates and employees. For example, the legalization of marijuana in many parts of the U.S. creates questions about drug screening. "Ban the box" rulings that prevent employers from asking candidates about previous convictions have become newsworthy over the last five years. Additionally, immigration issues continue to create controversy and bureaucratic challenges as employers struggle to access, assess, and document out-of-country talent with today's high-demand skills.

### *Apply Digital Tools for Clearer Workforce Definition*

The availability of data provides a significant opportunity to improve alignment with certain regulations, most notably those surrounding worker classification. The challenge is that many companies may not know who their hiring managers engage as contractors, freelancers, or other non-employee talent. Consequently, the organization lacks any understanding of how that talent is managed. If an employer treats a person who does the work of an employee as a contractor, the company may fall into noncompliance with an assortment of regulations, ranging from compensation and tax withholding to benefits and the use of equipment and resources.

The right combination of technology and human expertise can address the issue by helping companies understand how all their workers are classified. Through a technology-supported effort, an organization can bring worker data into a shared environment and then apply AI tools to analyze it and identify misclassified talent. With visibility into the entire workforce, a business can quickly adjust to a variety of regulatory demands with a level of precision and measured outcomes not possible even a few years ago.

### *Build a Culture That Values Compliance*

The many processes and engagements involved in managing talent contribute significantly to an employer's risk exposure. These issues can only be handled if the employer acknowledges an ongoing need to monitor them. Socializing the do's and don'ts, as well as best practices, will also require management and leadership buy-in, and training.

Bringing practices to bear across an organization requires informing multiple resources and players. A proactive strategy creates clear paths of cascading communication across all levels of leadership, management, and operations. Likewise, an established process for escalation provides a quick way to better respond to issues before they create larger problems.

### *Leverage Internal and External Talent Partners*

The responsibility for monitoring regulatory demands typically falls on internal counsel, followed by HR and procurement functions that engage workers, and everyone involved in managing the people and technologies associated with compliance. Externally, a capable talent solutions partner can provide valuable input and support.

For example, a partner with significant experience in managing workforce engagement issues can help the employer recognize, prioritize, and address areas of need, such as sourcing regulations or candidate screening. The right provider can also introduce technology tools that identify and classify all worker types, as well as help the employer better handle and protect worker data. In all cases, the talent solutions provider acts as a best practice talent partner, not a legal advisor, but the guidance provided can go a long way to improving how quickly and effectively employers respond to new regulations.

### **Proactive Compliance is Good Business**

In an increasingly complex and global environment for managing business and talent, the practices that boost compliance all support an improved talent engagement capability. Transparent and compliant recruiting and talent engagement processes create a positive experience that can help increase candidate attraction and worker retention. Likewise, visibility into the entire talent population not only limits worker classification issues, but it also helps employers make the right decisions about who to engage to get work done.



## Conclusion:

# In the World of Business and Talent, Every Trend Matters

Employers today enjoy a tremendous array of choices to help them connect people to business outcomes more quickly and effectively than ever before. They can apply technology to humanize the worker experience for more productive and engaged employees. They may leverage specialized services to tackle important initiatives, enhance their total talent approach to better engage employees and flexible workers, or boost their processes and technologies to stay ahead of workforce regulations. None of these paths should be ignored.

Moving forward, companies will continue to experience the pressure to explore new and better approaches to secure talent and more creative ways to achieve outcomes. To be prepared, the high-performing organization must consider all trends, and the practices that address them, as part of its workforce strategy. The resulting approach is one that delivers more paths to talent, more options for improvement, and the agility to succeed in a changing and unpredictable global talent marketplace.



## Appendix:

# The Global Landscape: Shared Challenges for Business and Talent

Around the world, companies struggle to drive change and stay ahead of the pack in competitive and innovative markets. Their success is tied to their ability to address trends influencing talent and business. From humanizing the work experience to better attract and retain talent, to leveraging services for better outcomes, drawing from employee and flexible worker pools, and navigating changing regulations, the challenges and practices at play span all geographies. But the degree to which those trends create concern may vary by region.

That said, organizations will continue to benefit from a workforce strategy that looks at the global landscape, as well as local variances. Even for companies that operate within one country, global awareness is important because they may draw from overseas talent or services. With that in mind, what follows is an overview of trends and regional conditions that influence how companies around the world do business today.

## APAC: Companies Balance Higher Skills Demands and More Paths to Talent

For APAC organizations, the large variety of market conditions can create obstacles to workforce engagement. The demands for new skills are changing, and countries such as India, with its dependence on IT outsourcing business, are feeling the pressure to upskill the workforce for the next generation of technology. Japan continues to struggle with a larger aging demographic and shrinking talent supply. Meanwhile, demand for highly skilled workers is increasing in China as the country expands the role of technology and services industries in its economy.<sup>12</sup>

“The nature of work in APAC is changing rapidly. We’re seeing the most successful companies open themselves to new ways of engaging talent, applying technology innovation, and gaining more visibility into the workforce. The winners in tomorrow’s APAC economy will be the companies that embrace change and open themselves to new ways of achieving the results that drive business success.”

*Richard Waag*  
*President, Allegis Group APAC*



Roughly 400 of the 1,800 talent and business decision-makers polled in the Allegis Group trends survey are located in APAC. Compared to global averages, decision-makers in APAC experience:

#### *More Trouble with Workforce Strategy*

Decision-makers in APAC are more likely to have difficulty determining what talent and technology resources are needed to accomplish key goals, projects, and initiatives (a problem cited by 60 percent of APAC respondents versus 48 percent in EMEA and 45 percent in North America).

#### *More Inclination to Use Outsourced Services*

Companies are more likely to say they will grow their use of services over the next two years (an intention cited by 75 percent of APAC companies compared to 46 percent in EMEA and 47 percent in North America).

#### *More Investment in Compliance*

APAC respondents are more likely to invest in resources and technology associated with worker classification over the next two years (cited by 57 percent of APAC decision-makers versus 32 percent in EMEA and 34 percent in North America). Also, they are more likely to plan on using a talent solutions partner to support their compliance efforts in the same timeframe (54 percent in APAC versus 25 percent in EMEA and 33 percent in North America).

#### *More Use of Market Data*

Decision-makers are more likely (42 percent in APAC versus 22 percent in EMEA and 25 percent in North America) to draw on detailed, current data that tracks pay rates by location, skills, and available talent supply.

Together, these differences reflect a region with an abundance of workers, data, and options for getting work done yet reaches for clarity to map a path forward. A clear and objective view of workforce trends, changing regulations, and emerging innovations is essential in the region, as companies will continue to navigate changing conditions in a rapidly evolving market.



## EMEA: Regulatory and Market Issues Force Resilient Workforce Strategies

For organizations in EMEA, the headlines around Brexit, immigration, and changing government policies loom large. The bigger global trends that influence workforce strategies also apply to the region, including worker experience and attraction, the balance of outsourcing demands, the engagement of flexible workers, and regulatory conditions.

“Uncertainty and workforce challenges constantly influence the EMEA business landscape, whether companies deal with economic issues that vary by country, skills shortages that span the entire region, or regulations and policy questions that grab headlines. Companies are turning to us as a talent partner to help them get proactive in addressing these workforce issues. With the right strategy in place, EMEA organizations can meet these challenges quickly and improve business performance at the same time.”

*Oliver Wilkinson*  
*Director, Customer and Market Insight*  
*Allegis Group EMEA*

As with APAC, approximately 400 of 1,800 surveyed decision-makers hail from the EMEA region. Their perspectives track closer to North America than their APAC counterparts, but issues remain highly relevant in the region. Notable highlights include:

### *A Need to Improve the Worker Experience*

Companies in EMEA were less likely (40 percent versus 58 percent in APAC and 47 percent in North America) to have a strategic approach in place to improve the worker and candidate experience.

### *Opportunity to Optimize Outsourced Services*

EMEA decision-makers are more likely (44 percent versus 36 percent in APAC and 35 percent in North America) to say that procurement or HR has some visibility and management of services to track costs but with limited strategic input. Only 24 percent say they manage a significant portion of services through a centralized strategy (40 percent in APAC and 29 percent in North America).

### *A Focus on and Need to Advance a Total Talent Strategy*

Companies are less likely to say they can access any worker type, including employees or flexible workers, through a single platform (22 percent in EMEA versus 38 percent in APAC and 27 percent in North America). At the same time, slightly more EMEA decision-makers say they are working toward a total talent capability (54 percent versus 50 percent in APAC and 50 percent in North America).

### *A Struggle with Compliance Demands*

More decision-makers in EMEA (62 percent) agree that changing regulations over the past three years have made it more difficult to secure flexible talent than in North America (51 percent).

EMEA decision-makers face an array of issues that mirror the global picture. Progress is moderate, but few organizations feel strongly about their capabilities. In many cases, markets for outsourced services and engagement of flexible talent may have more room to evolve than in North American markets, but a measured pace of advancement is likely to define companies' approaches to workforce strategy.

## North America: Competitive Pressures Fuel Smarter Approaches to Work

North America is known as a mature market for talent solutions, outsourced services, and technology innovation. The region has a highly skilled workforce, but the people with the skills to do the most advanced work are often unavailable as demand far outstrips supply. Not surprisingly, companies recognize the need to be creative in addressing the trending challenges associated with engaging talent and achieving outcomes, but many may find themselves struggling to prioritize budgets and efforts to stay ahead of evolving demands.

With roughly 1,000 of 1,800 decision-makers surveyed, sentiment in the region underscores the trending issues facing companies around the world. Highlights include:

### *Business Performance Worries*

A majority of companies fear that an inability to secure quality talent, quickly and cost-effectively, impacts business growth and profitability (cited by 84 percent of decision-makers), operations and service delivery (83 percent), and innovation (73 percent).

### *A Focus on the Human Element*

A full 59 percent of decision-makers in the region cite the need to make the talent experience more human as a business priority to improve worker attraction, productivity, and retention, making it a more common priority in the region than the other trends cited in this report.

### *Increasing Use of Outsourced Services, Contractors, and Consultants*

Over the next two years, 47 percent of North American companies expect to grow their use of outsourced services and contractors, and 41 percent of those currently using outsourced services for talent without a centralized strategy will bring a larger portion of outsourced services under the management of a centralized procurement function in the same time frame.

### *Evolving Total Talent Capability*

A full 50 percent of companies in the region are working toward a total talent capability, improving their ability to access different talent types on their systems, but there is work to do.

### *Regulatory Concerns*

For half (56 percent) of companies, changing regulations about privacy, employment law, immigration, and other compliance matters have caused companies to take on more data and security requirements over the past three years. Another 51 percent increased security training, and 60 percent place more importance on regulatory compliance expertise as a part of their organization's buying decision when considering a staffing agency, outsourced services provider, or talent solutions partner.

For companies doing business and engaging talent in North America, all the major trends apply as they struggle to connect with talent and get work done. A talent solutions partner can prove particularly effective in addressing those trends because it can provide the most advanced view of the market, a deep level of subject matter expertise, and access to enabling technologies — all necessary in a mature, competitive market.

“The North American workforce landscape is one of constant innovation along with maturing solutions to long-standing challenges. As companies tackle issues such as talent scarcity with creative approaches to achieving results, their competitors are doing the same. Smart organizations stay ahead by committing to developing the people, technologies and processes that adapt quickly to changing demands.”

*Andy Hilger*  
*President, Allegis Group*

# Endnotes

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