Catalyst

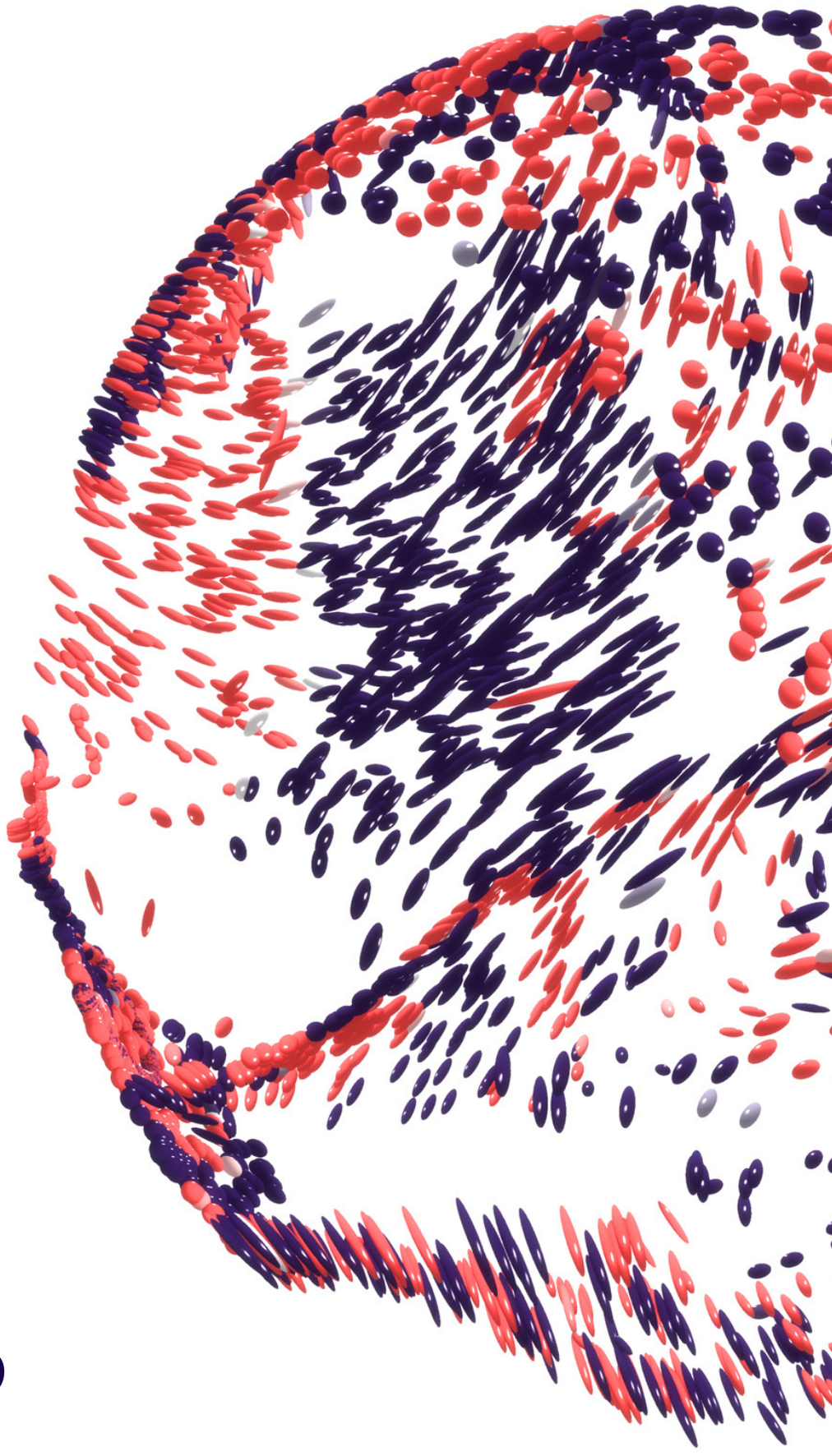
Workforces built for change // Issue 8

Introducing True Workforce Dexterity

A new era for AMS

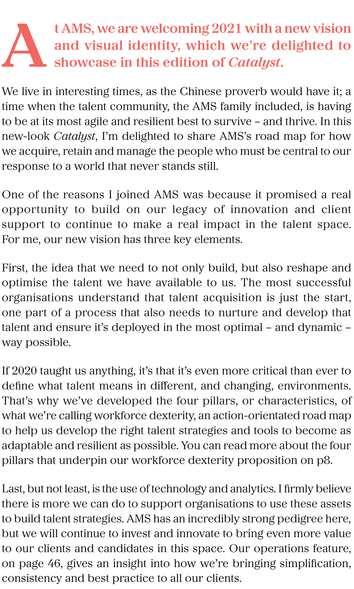
Building, reshaping and optimising talent

Looking ahead to a new world of work



A|M|S

Adapt and thrive



At AMS, we are welcoming 2021 with a new vision and visual identity, which we're delighted to showcase in this edition of *Catalyst*.

We live in interesting times, as the Chinese proverb would have it; a time when the talent community, the AMS family included, is having to be at its most agile and resilient best to survive – and thrive. In this new-look *Catalyst*, I'm delighted to share AMS's road map for how we acquire, retain and manage the people who must be central to our response to a world that never stands still.

One of the reasons I joined AMS was because it promised a real opportunity to build on our legacy of innovation and client support to continue to make a real impact in the talent space. For me, our new vision has three key elements.

First, the idea that we need to not only build, but also reshape and optimise the talent we have available to us. The most successful organisations understand that talent acquisition is just the start, one part of a process that also needs to nurture and develop that talent and ensure it's deployed in the most optimal – and dynamic – way possible.

If 2020 taught us anything, it's that it's even more critical than ever to define what talent means in different, and changing, environments. That's why we've developed the four pillars, or characteristics, of what we're calling workforce dexterity, an action-orientated road map to help us develop the right talent strategies and tools to become as adaptable and resilient as possible. You can read more about the four pillars that underpin our workforce dexterity proposition on p8.

Last, but not least, is the use of technology and analytics. I firmly believe there is more we can do to support organisations to use these assets to build talent strategies. AMS has an incredibly strong pedigree here, but we will continue to invest and innovate to bring even more value to our clients and candidates in this space. Our operations feature, on page 46, gives an insight into how we're bringing simplification, consistency and best practice to all our clients.

Open-minded and curious

Whether personally, as AMS, or through our clients, a key theme is how we react to the unexpected: how we remain unfazed, plan and mobilise when we need to anticipate, react or change tack. It's about keeping an open mind, always being curious, admitting that we don't know everything and that we can always learn something new.

This bumper edition of *Catalyst* showcases a range of ways in which our clients have responded to change in the past year, whether delivering virtual summer camps for employees' children while in lockdown (Synchrony, p31), reimagining employer brand and the use of technology (Gilead Sciences, p20), developing talent acquisition during a recruitment pause (Marsh & McLennan, p40) or innovating to boost diversity (Freshfields, p37).

The pandemic has also made me rethink my own approach to leadership, not just in terms of adaptability, but also in a willingness to show vulnerability, and the knowledge that empathy and humanity are essential attributes alongside positivity, clarity and confidence.

Looking ahead to 2021, I want AMS to provide even more and better support and services to our clients, whether that's in terms of the continuing trend towards workforce flexibility, the challenge of talent retention, wellbeing, or in myriad other ways. We need to build on the progress made towards more inclusive work cultures. And I want to look ahead to a time when the world is not defined by COVID-19.

I hope you will find some inspiration and insight in the pages that follow.

David Leigh
Chief Executive Officer, AMS

> **We need to build, reshape and optimise the talent we have available to us**

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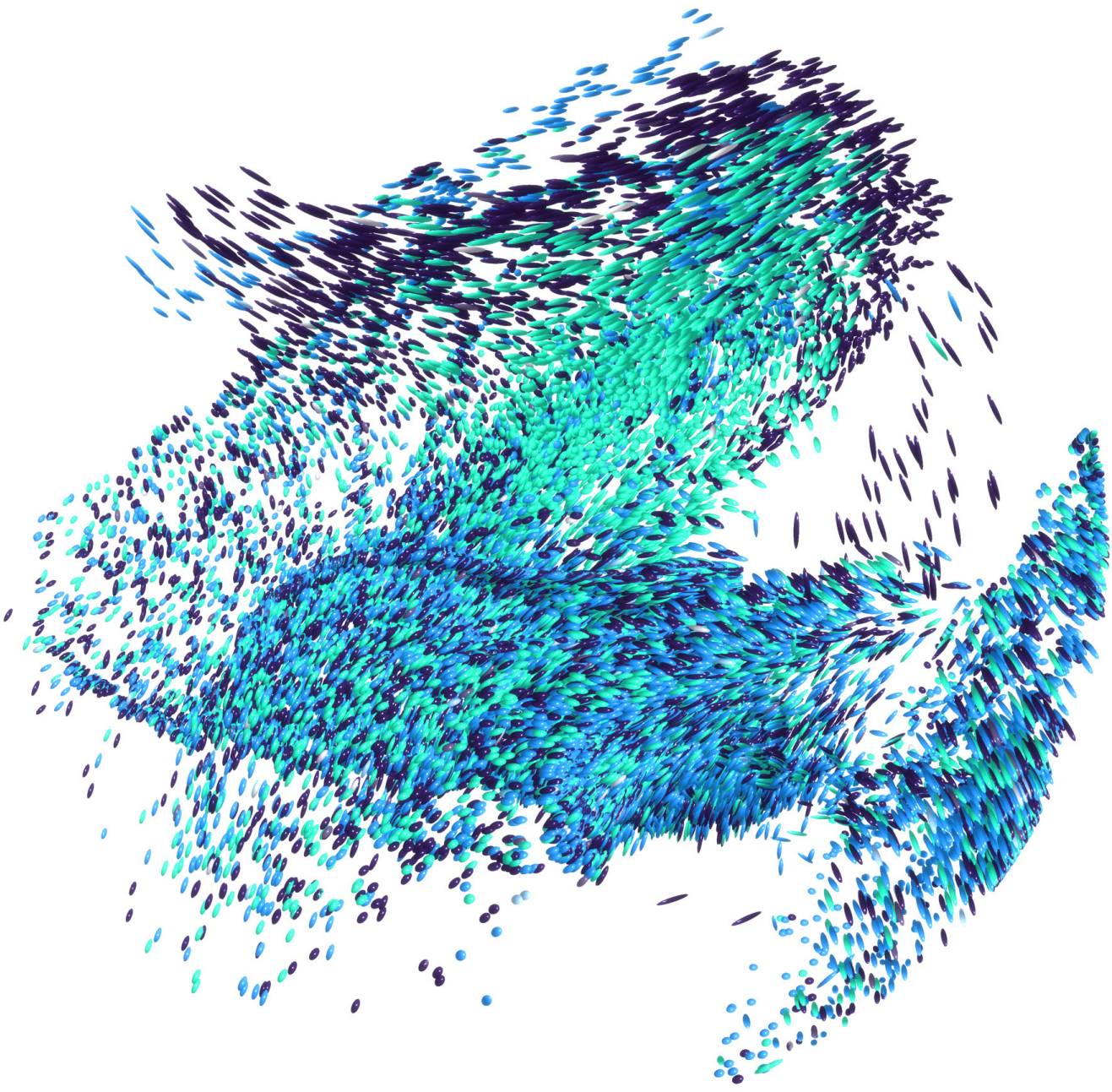

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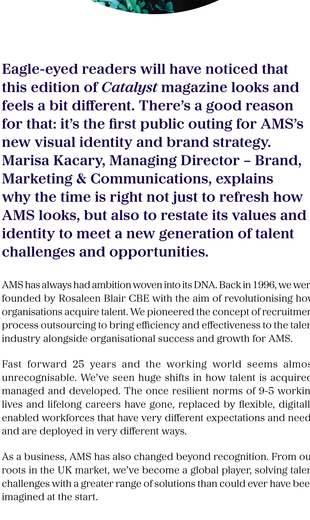
The concept of constantly adapting at an organisational and individual level is at the heart of what workforce dexterity is all about

David Leigh,
Chief Executive Officer, AMS

JUMP TO PAGE 08

TO READ
THE ARTICLE

A new magazine for a new era



Eagle-eyed readers will have noticed that this edition of *Catalyst* magazine looks and feels a bit different. There's a good reason for that: it's the first public outing for AMS's new visual identity and brand strategy. Marisa Kacary, Managing Director – Brand, Marketing & Communications, explains why the time is right not just to refresh how AMS looks, but also to restate its values and identity to meet a new generation of talent challenges and opportunities.

AMS has always had ambition woven into its DNA. Back in 1996, we were founded by Rosaleen Blair CBE with the aim of revolutionising how organisations acquire talent. We pioneered the concept of recruitment process outsourcing to bring efficiency and effectiveness to the talent industry alongside organisational success and growth for AMS.

Fast forward 25 years and the working world seems almost unrecognisable. We've seen huge shifts in how talent is acquired, managed and developed. The once resilient norms of 9-5 working lives and lifelong careers have gone, replaced by flexible, digitally enabled workforces that have very different expectations and needs and are deployed in very different ways.

As a business, AMS has also changed beyond recognition. From our roots in the UK market, we've become a global player, solving talent challenges with a greater range of solutions than could ever have been imagined at the start.

> **"We'll all need energy, fluidity and agility in the workforce to face the talent challenges that lie ahead"**

The time seems right, then, to build on our heritage and legacy – of which we are rightly immensely proud – to evolve a new brand that matches our ambition for the decades to come.

Reviewing and refreshing a well-established brand can never be taken lightly. We spent many hours talking with our stakeholders – staff, clients, suppliers, industry influencers – to conduct a root and branch review of our business, where we stand in the market, how we add value and how we should move forward.

Above all, we needed to future-proof to allow for new growth, to continue to be at the cutting edge of thinking about talent. We wanted to drive new conversations about workforce dexterity that have only become more urgent as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We want to support and challenge our clients to create and develop fit-for-the-future workforces that align with the pillars we have defined as key to workforce dexterity: fluidity, resilience, diversity and differentiation.

Our new brand strategy is about so much more than just a simplified name – many of our clients have always referred to us as AMS anyway. We've not underestimated the importance of a vibrant and distinctive visual identity. In many ways, this new identity says a great deal about the organisation we are and want to be: digitally-driven, global, passionate, data-driven and, above all, about putting people at the core of everything we do. Driven by a generative motion algorithm, our new hero visuals are tech-driven and shape shifting, mirroring the energy, fluidity and agility in the workforce we'll all need for the talent challenges that lie ahead.

We believe that to thrive, build for the future and take advantage of new opportunities requires a new approach to talent, a new approach we are proud to pioneer and partner with the most innovative and ambitious of clients to achieve. #weareAMS

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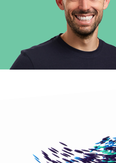

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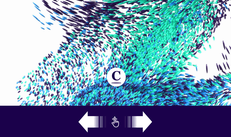


Contents

08 **CEO Insight**
AMS Chief Executive Officer David Leigh introduces workforce dexterity

09 **Viewpoint: AMS**
Chief Growth & Commercial Officer, Matthew Rodger on developing a culture of innovation

11 **Opinion: Josh Bersin**
Creating business resilience from disruption

12 **Viewpoint: AMS**
AMS's regional leaders provide a global view of talent trends

13 **Opinion: Rita McGrath**
How can we mobilise our entrepreneurial talent?

14 **Viewpoint: AMS**
What are the top talent acquisition trends for 2021?

16 **Baker Hughes: 10 years of innovation**
Celebrating 10 years of partnership with AMS

18 **In conversation: AMS and Deloitte Ireland**
How can CHROs humanise work in the wake of COVID?

19 **Opinion: Jacob Morgan**
Why you need to be more chef in HR

20 **Gilead Sciences: Bold in aspiration, agile in execution**
How tech systems are supporting talent generation

21 **Viewpoint: AMS**
What will it take to create the optimum environment for the future workforce?

22 **Viewpoint: AMS**
Digital transformation in Asia-Pacific

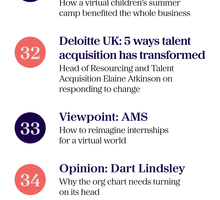
23 **Opinion: Gary Bragar**
NelsonHall's analyst on the 2020s workplace

24 **Viewpoint: AMS**
Putting candidate experience for hourly workers at the top of the agenda

27 **Opinion: Peter Brown**
Why workforce dexterity demands a fluid approach

28 **Bristol Myers Squibb: Developing existing talent**
Why a focus on internal mobility was crucial following a merger

30 **Equinor: Transforming approaches to emerging talent**
Launching a virtual graduate recruitment programme



31 **Synchrony: Supporting talent from within**
How a virtual children's summer camp benefited the whole business

32 **Deloitte UK: 5 ways talent acquisition has transformed**
Head of Resourcing and Talent Acquisition Elaine Atkinson on responding to change

33 **Viewpoint: AMS**
How to reimagine internships for a virtual world

34 **Opinion: Dart Lindsley**
Why the org chart needs turning on its head

35 **Viewpoint: AMS**
How will COVID-19 affect social mobility?

37 **Freshfields: Taking action to boost diversity**
Enhancing representation and social mobility in law firms

38 **Opinion: Kanya King**
MOBO's founder on a new platform connecting under-represented talent to business

39 **Opinion: Ian C Woodward**
Why future learning must focus on soft skills

40 **Marsh & McLennan: Upskilling the TA team**
Developing talent acquisition in a recruitment pause

42 **Viewpoint: AMS**
Putting D&I at the heart of your talent strategy

43 **Opinion: Margaret Heffernan**
Why resilience comes down to the health of your people

44 **Viewpoint: AMS**
How has AMS supported its people through the pandemic?

46 **Viewpoint: AMS**
Operations: Inside the engine room of our business

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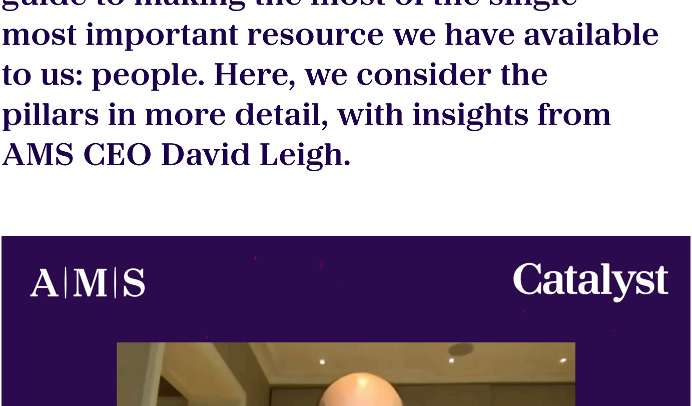
Meeting the human-first challenge: the power of workforce dexterity

As organisations navigate a world of constant change, AMS's four pillars of true workforce dexterity offer a road map and guide to making the most of the single most important resource we have available to us: people. Here, we consider the pillars in more detail, with insights from AMS CEO David Leigh.



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The beginning of any new year is invariably a time for a bit of crystal ball gazing; the chance to fill reports, blogs and column inches with predictions for the year ahead. As 2021 gets underway, and with more than a nod to the unpredictability we all experienced in 2020, we don't need to dig too deeply to unearth some familiar themes. COVID-19 has taught us that agility and flexibility are no longer just abstract concepts; rather, they've become our lived experience at work. None of us has had to search too hard for that disruption we've so often been told is the route to organisational innovation and success.

Alongside the need to bottle and deploy this agility for the future, our crystal ball gazers are also looking to another key element of our working lives in 2020: the human ingenuity, humanity and resilience that underpinned our response to such troubled times. Deloitte's 2021 *Global Human Capital Trends* survey anticipates that the organisations that will successfully make the shift from "surviving" to "thriving" in this environment will be those who are "distinctly human" at their core, embracing "a different way of being that approaches every issue, every question, and every decision from a human angle first".

In service of this distinctly human approach, Deloitte identifies five key trends: designing work for wellbeing; unleashing worker potential; the rise of (often cross-functional) 'superteams'; the primacy of workforce strategy, and, last, but certainly not least, the need to empower HR teams to "re-architect" work itself.

It's encouraging that the Deloitte report also confirms that business leaders have more confidence than ever in their HR colleagues as a result of how they've handled the COVID-19 crisis. But business thinking that places humans front and centre still provides a challenge, as well as opportunities, for everyone in organisations tasked with attracting, deploying, managing and developing its people. If Deloitte's cultures of "preparedness" require us to think human first, what does this mean on the ground?

> "Agility and flexibility are no longer just abstract concepts; they've become our lived experience at work"

Introducing the four pillars

Fortunately, help is at hand. The launch of AMS's new strategy for creating the true workforce dexterity that these human-first approaches demand is very timely. Its four pillars of workforce dexterity offer a new approach to building, reshaping and optimising workforces; talent strategies that will allow businesses to anticipate and capitalise on continuing shifts in people, processes and technology.

Fluid
Don't just keep up, anticipate what's next

Resilient
With the right workforce, uncertainty doesn't stand a chance

Diverse
Let's move beyond just acquiring talent

Differentiated
Real success is achieved by standing out in a crowd

The four pillars anticipate workforces that are boundless and global, quantified by skills rather than headcount. They have the adaptability that allows them to be built faster and the resilience to bend rather than break when faced with challenge and change. According to AMS CEO David Leigh, "success will take a mix of people – from full-time employees to contractors – who are able to reskill, upskill and shapeshift to support the needs of organisations. Optimising this collective workforce will require seamlessly integrated technologies and artificial intelligence that can improve speed and accuracy, as well as use predictive analytics to anticipate what's coming next".

In short, true workforce dexterity provides the strategy and tools that support HR teams and their organisations to make the most of workforces that will, of necessity, be multidimensional and constantly fluctuating. It helps to map out that shift in mindset we'll all need to make to thrive in a world that never stands still.

Let's take a look at the four pillars in more detail.

Fluid: don't just keep up, anticipate what's next

If we want to operate successfully in a business environment characterised by change and fluidity, our human-first response requires a mix of people, skills and technology that can flex as needs change.

It's a trend that's increasingly well documented, neatly summarised in an article by Deloitte: "As a result of work becoming less mechanistic and work outcomes evolving, jobs have become increasingly fluid and dynamic, with some thought leaders believing that the end of jobs – fixed, task-based work – is near. This change is being accelerated as ways of working shift away from rigid reporting lines to networks of teams, from prescribed routines and job descriptions to expanded job canvases, and from narrow skills to broad capabilities."

It's also a trend that many of us are experiencing on the ground. Such a skills-based approach to talent means that we have to be at the top of our game when it comes to understanding the markets for talent and how to access the skills we need. It requires us to rethink outdated notions of seeing contingent and permanent workers as completely different value propositions. We need to mind what we've learned in the last year about remote working and talent no longer being geographically confined. It means we have to be smart about using technology to get to know and deploy the capabilities of the people already inside our organisations and to keep channels of communication open with external talent whose skills we might need in the future.

Resilient: with the right workforce, uncertainty doesn't stand a chance

Bestselling author Brené Brown has an interesting take on what resilient individuals have in common. Her research found that they share a "tolerance for discomfort"; in fact, they lean into it.

It's not a bad lens through which to view the idea of resilience more widely. In effect, building resilience offers an antidote to uncertainty. When it comes to people at work, resilience is rooted in a company's ability to shift its workforce and systems in response to change without weakening over time. It's a hard ask that needs a strong, clear and well-communicated workforce strategy to achieve. For Leigh, though, being able to deal with that uncertainty is "a skill set and attribute that is critically important".

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that workforce resilience can be found in all sorts of places. It might come from redeploying, reskilling and upskilling the people we already have. It may be a matter of looking beyond our own sector or direct expertise, acquiring, swapping or trading talent as needs change. It will definitely need us to invest in our people to give them the individual resilience they need to be confident contributors in this often unnerving new world.

Diverse: let's move beyond just acquiring talent

We've been talking about the desirability of diverse workforces for some time. These days, we know that diversity is not just desirable, it's an essential business driver too. And, as our understanding of the power of a broad range of perspectives, capabilities, skills and experiences has developed, so our understanding of what diversity means has grown and evolved. For example, we're increasingly attuned to the benefits of cognitive diversity. Writing in *Harvard Business Review*, Alison Reynolds and David Lewis remind us that we're all inclined to gravitate towards people who "think and express themselves just like us". But that, of course, closes us off from crucial input from people who bring with them a range of different experiences and perspectives.

It's also important that diversity is not just about acquiring a diverse talent base. We need to retain a razor-sharp focus at every stage of the talent life cycle, making sure that everyone feels they can speak up, that they're heard and that difference is celebrated and recognised. As the pandemic threatens to heighten inequalities and limit social mobility, we must be on our guard to protect, and continue to extend, the diversity we need.

Leigh reminds us that diversity is "not just the right thing to do from an ethical and moral perspective. It's the only way to make sure we have the best possible talent bases in organisations". Talk is cheap; so is focusing just on talent acquisition. We need decisive and ongoing action in all areas of our business to make real the D&I strategies we know are essential to success.

Differentiated: real success is achieved by standing out in a crowd

Every business is unique, with its own mission and vision. So, too, are people. The differentiation challenge requires us to bring the two together, so that workforces both reflect and represent the businesses they support, elevating brand and building on strengths to help them stand out from the competition.

Differentiation is at the heart of effective talent strategy. It happens when an entire business pulls together in its mission to shape the future, with motivated and engaged people at the core. It's not just about existing staff buy-in, important as that is. It's also about emerging talent, anticipating the skills and competencies that will be needed to make the most of those opportunities that drive that mission and vision.

It's about bringing together the capabilities, insight and automation that are uniquely suited to every business. That's what creates a boundless workforce that stands apart from the crowd.

> "It's important that talent strategies can adapt and change, but it's equally important that the talent itself can adapt too"

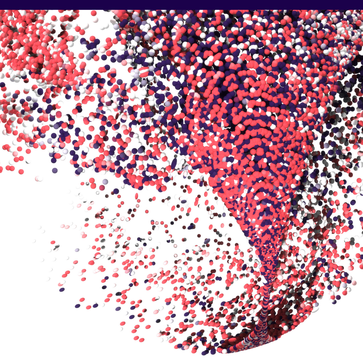
All about workforce dexterity

In simple terms, dexterity means 'skill in performing a task'. It's about people, often associated with hands, with pragmatism, with action. It also has a close association with agility and flexibility. For Leigh, when it comes to talent, it's about "capturing the essence of what organisations will need in an era of shifting workplace demands and expectations".

By adopting dexterity as a guiding principle and promise, AMS is recognising that what dexterity emphasises more than anything else is adaptability. Leigh says: "If we learned anything over the course of 2020, it's the importance of both organisations and individuals adapting in a very action-orientated way. It's important that talent strategies can adapt and change, but it's equally important that the talent itself can adapt too. We all recognise that the skill sets with which we started our careers won't be sufficient to see us through to the end of our working lives. The concept of constantly adapting at an organisational and individual level is at the heart of workforce dexterity."

Whatever the future might throw at us, whatever those new year crystal ball gazers might predict, workforce dexterity is a road map and guide to how best to structure work and make the most of talent in ways that enable both individuals and organisations to learn, grow and thrive.

Find out more about workforce dexterity.



Continuing a tradition of innovation

Matthew Rodger
Chief Growth & Commercial Officer, AMS

Matthew Rodger, AMS Chief Growth & Commercial Officer, looks at the changes he's seen during 20 years at the company – and how an investment in innovation will help clients meet the talent challenges they face.

A week, they say, is a long time in politics. Imagine, then, the changes I've seen and experienced in my 20 years at AMS. It's almost beyond cliché to talk about workplaces altered beyond recognition, technological transformation, and a radically different marketplace for talent, in terms of how people are sourced, deployed and managed. It's clear that, these days, there's no longer any single definition of 'workforce' or 'employee' for HR leaders.

However, as we enter a new year with a new vision, this would seem like a good time to reflect on how two decades of expansive change, capped by a single year of accelerated change, is driving our organisation to meet evolving client needs in innovative ways.

Navagating uncertainty with RPO

I joined AMS just as the famous dot.com bubble was bursting in 2001, causing a violent correction in certain economies (in some cases, recession) and a knock-on effect in the recruitment market. Since then, we've also lived through a global financial crisis and we are currently in the midst of a global pandemic. All the while, the pace and extent of technological change has only accelerated.

In those early days, the concept of recruitment process outsourcing (RPO) was pretty new and we had our work cut out to explain it – let alone sell it – to clients. But the world has turned in RPO's favour. As Gary Bragar, HRO Research Director at NelsonHall, suggests on p23, RPO now plays an integral role in helping organisations to navigate uncertainty.

At its heart, RPO is about managing fluctuating demand for talent, enabling organisations to scale up or down as business needs flex and change. In times of volatility, the business case for replacing fixed costs with external variable costs are obvious, but RPO goes beyond a simple cost-benefit analysis. It's also about transferring the complexities of scaling to partners skilled in managing that fluctuating demand; it's about working in partnership to give clients the visibility they need to know their talent needs are being met.

> At its heart, RPO is about managing fluctuating demand for talent, enabling organisations to scale up or down as business needs flex and change

An holistic approach

And, as people are increasingly deployed in a range of flexible ways, it's also about helping clients to take a more holistic approach to building a productive workforce. We need to think about skills and perspectives, not headcount; permanent talent alongside contractors, and technology functioning alongside people. In some areas of our clients' businesses (technology, for example) the only way to gain the right know-how will be to utilise contractors or non-employees of some description.

Just as workplaces are changing, so does the role RPO can play. It's no longer simply a matter of 'outsource vs don't outsource'. We're increasingly partnering with organisations to provide temporary RPO solutions for a particular project or challenge. This project-based hiring is a scaling model that organisations can adopt in times of extreme demand or to gain short-term expertise in talent acquisition, perhaps reflecting the project economy with which we're all becoming familiar. RPO can be elegant and strategic, without being complex.

RPO is also being seen as a form of resource augmentation: clients retain control of recruitment processes and outcomes, but these are boosted with additional capacity provided by AMS. The role our colleagues have played in helping Amazon US to keep up with its talent requirements over the past year is a great example of how this kind of 'call-off' arrangement offers a flexible new model for collaboration.

If those 20 years have taught me anything, it's that we need to continue to find innovative ways to define and redesign workforces built to withstand continued change in the years ahead. I look forward to helping our clients do just that.

Business resilience has three major aspects: employee health and wellbeing, business agility, and job and workforce transformation

Josh Bersin

JUMP TO PAGE 11

TO READ
THE ARTICLE

Creating future business resilience out of current disruption

Josh Bersin

To build organisational dexterity, we must learn from our responses to COVID-19 disruptions. Industry analyst Josh Bersin outlines 10 key practices that lay the foundations for business resilience.

In August 2020, the Josh Bersin Academy contacted 1,349 HR leaders and professionals around the globe, within multiple industry segments, to identify the HR- and business-response practices with the highest business impact. The survey was designed to analyse 53 practices, encompassing areas such as leadership, culture and communication, learning and talent strategies, pay and benefits plans, remote work, workplace configurations, and HR skills and capabilities.

Ten practices were found to have highest business impact in areas such as financial performance, customer satisfaction, workforce engagement and retention, and societal impact, namely:

- **Focusing support on employee health and safety**
- **Aggressively listening to the workforce to define return-to-work plans**
- **Creating integrated support for families and the worker's entire life**
- **Reinforcing and invigorating focus on purpose and mission**
- **Communicating and supporting agile teams to deal with ambiguity**
- **Quickly adopting technology to develop new products and services**
- **Rapidly, creatively and strategically hiring new, needed talent**
- **Leveraging contingent and part-time workers**
- **Facilitating and supporting teams to experiment and learn quickly**
- **Simplifying and speeding up performance management**

> **At its core, the pandemic is an economic transformation, not just a public health problem**

As results were analysed, Bersin and his research team realised that these 10 practices laid the foundation for business resilience. They also serve organisations well when dealing with any unplanned situation – such as a hostile takeover or a financial crisis. The research clearly showed that regardless of industry, geography, or company size, business resilience has three major aspects: employee health and wellbeing, business agility, and job and workforce transformation.

Based on survey responses, the research team found four levels of pandemic-related response, ranging from the implementation of purely tactical responses to those that lay the groundwork for business transformation. The stages break out as follows:

Stage 1 – Hope for the best:

18% of responses fell into this category, which is focused on financial survival, maintaining day-to-day operations, and actions related to employee furloughs or layoffs.

Stage 2 – Care for the people:

The largest percentage of respondents (46%) were at this stage, where organisations are focusing on keeping employees, customers and suppliers safe from infection.

Stage 3 – Drive agility and culture:

15% of respondents were at stage 3, where the emphasis is on educating and supporting employees to move fast, develop cross-functional solutions, and stay resilient and productive.

Stage 4 – Transform and reinvent:

21% of companies fell into the highest stage, which focuses on the reinvention of hiring, job design and pay, to transform into new business and operating models.

Economic transformation

At its core, the pandemic is an economic transformation, not just a public health problem. While many job roles have declined in need, others have had to be ramped up quickly for continued business success.

For example, Sainsbury's had to hire many new delivery drivers and in-store support people for various grocery services related to the pandemic. A healthcare provider rapidly staffed up critical-care staff and also cross-trained many people for potential shortages in various departments. Southwest Airlines promised its employees there would be no layoffs or furloughs in 2020 and was able to find new work for people using its Loan Your LUV platform, an internal gig work programme that the company has successfully used for more than a decade.

Across industries, geographies and organisations of different sizes, the most successful businesses are the ones that focus on people, balancing financial survival, tactical health and safety necessities, and day-to-day business continuity with strategic and forward-looking people practices, employee empowerment, and a strong focus on mission and purpose.

Learn more about *Business Resilience: The Global COVID-19 Pandemic Response Study*

Josh Bersin is an internationally recognised analyst, educator and thought leader in the global talent market. He is Dean of the Josh Bersin Academy, the world's first global development academy for HR and talent professionals at all levels and across all industries.

All the world's a stage: a global view of talent trends

Talent may be talent, wherever we find it. But any global approach to talent also needs to take into account the nuances of local markets. Who better to guide us through this potential minefield than AMS's four regional managing directors? We asked them to share insight into some of the trends they're seeing on the ground in each of their territories.

Maxine Pillinger, EMEA, Russia and CIS

AMS operates in 26 countries in Europe as well as some in South Africa and the Middle East, mostly placing candidates for clients based elsewhere. That makes it a very fragmented market, with the diversity of language and culture, and complex legal regulatory frameworks, creating challenges.

However, it also gives us the chance to provide solutions for clients for whom fragmented hiring volumes across a number of countries makes a fixed talent acquisition headcount hard to justify. Additionally, we're seeing outsourcing of operations such as HR, finance and IT to lower-cost markets, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. In some countries (for example, Poland and Hungary), this is driving towards skills shortages.

Of course, we're still living with the effects of COVID-19, with a continuing need for organisations to have the flexibility to scale up or down as business needs change. Internal mobility, especially around upskilling and reskilling, has become a real strategic-agenda item, especially in high-demand areas such as digital skills. This may challenge organisations that don't have the skills mapping in place to make this happen.

> Internal mobility, especially around upskilling and reskilling, has become a real strategic-agenda item

The pandemic has also accelerated other market trends already underway. Fast-moving consumer goods remains a buoyant sector. The scale of Amazon's recruitment in 2020 tells us that our high streets are unlikely ever to look the same again. Green energy and conscious climate agendas are gaining real traction. We all know that how and where we work has changed beyond all recognition. Candidates are now using the pandemic as a frame of reference for questions about sustainability and flexible working.

While D&I is very much on the agenda, there's no one-size-fits-all solution across Europe. More mature markets are seeing the kinds of calls for action familiar, for example, in the UK and the US. In Russia, a diversity challenge may be employing someone in Moscow who is not from Moscow. We need local solutions, sensitive to local cultures, which can mean managing multinational client expectations about what's possible.

Finally, it's perhaps surprising that the UK's exit from the European Union – Brexit – is not looming larger from the European client perspective. There may be more to come on this as the new regime becomes clearer as 2021 progresses.

Neil Jones, Asia-Pacific

Asia-Pacific (APAC) is a region in name only; as in Europe, we have to navigate massive language, cultural and legislative differences, with the huge distances between countries also an issue. Being based in Singapore, I'm aware that the distance between Singapore and Australia or Tokyo is as great as the distance between London and New York.

To deal with this complexity, AMS has developed the expertise and infrastructure to deal with such a fragmented market and access to local talent. We are able to scale our service centres up and down depending on fluctuating volumes, something that's been especially important during the COVID pandemic. We can operate efficiently across jurisdictions, often bridging the gap between the expectations of multinationals and what's possible on the ground locally.

More than anything, we need to be experts in a whole range of local markets with a variety of needs. India remains a powerhouse for digital skills; Japan has a big skills gap, but is still very internally focused; in China, we're working on a range of hybrid models, with AMS often topping up clients' own talent acquisition functions as the need arises.

One big trend in the region is the localisation of leadership. Traditional models of (mostly white) ex-pat leaders being jetted in by multinationals are being challenged by the growing demand for local leaders. The raw talent is there, but it needs to be fast-tracked and mentored, with markets such as Hong Kong and Singapore and sectors such as financial services and pharma in the vanguard. But there's a strong sense that this is a trend that's here to stay.

> Businesses are looking for emerging talent, hiring for competence and potential rather than for a specific skill set or role

Asia was, of course, the first region to have to deal with COVID-19. That's also meant that it was the first region to come out of the first wave. The effects of the pandemic across APAC have been patchy. China rebounded very quickly, while Australia has followed a more Western pattern. The markets for talent in Hong Kong and Singapore are stable, but subdued. Sectors such as financial services remain sticky and slow; pharma is (unsurprisingly) booming and digital and tech have been very resilient.

Some common themes have definitely emerged, though. Demand for talent is volatile, internal mobility is the order of the day and we've seen a move to more project-based environments. There's a sense that future winners will be all about dexterity; businesses are looking for emerging talent, hiring for competence and potential rather than for a specific skill set or role.

Steve Leach, UK and Ireland

COVID-19 has cast a long shadow on the market for talent in the UK and Ireland. Clients and stakeholders are still very focused on how best to react to the varying recruitment needs of the pandemic: one of our clients recently issued 700 new vacancies within hours of confirming an external hiring freeze – and they're by no means alone. It remains a challenge to anticipate the need for volumes or particular skills when the market is so volatile.

Businesses are beginning to get to grips with the longer-term impact of working practices that have been turned on their head in the past year. We've all applauded the positive benefits of flexible and remote working, but it's not going to be easy for HR and talent teams to manage the hybrid working models that are likely to emerge, and which their employees and future candidates seem to want. The high levels of humanity and engagement that have been at the fore at a time of mass remote working will continue to be needed during this transition.

The pandemic has also accelerated digital transformation, with organisations having to review, develop and change their business models in short order. The demand for digital skills remains a key challenge, whether in terms of external recruitment or internal skills development.

> We're seeing a greater expectation from candidates and employees that conversations around inclusion and belonging will take place

D&I is also a focus for most organisations. In recent years, many D&I agendas have been mostly focused on gender, but there's now a much greater awareness that we also need to focus on a much wider range of under-represented groups; notably ethnic minorities, but also those from the LGBTQ community, people with disabilities and those with neurodiversity. We're seeing a greater expectation from candidates and employees that conversations around inclusion and belonging will take place, and we've been coaching and counselling hiring managers to support this.

It would be hard to ignore the potential impact of Brexit on the UK and Ireland as 2021 gets underway. Some clients have already made adjustments to their operations and supply chains in anticipation of any disruption. However, there's still a great deal of uncertainty around the transition. There's a sense that HR teams will need to react as best they can as the situation becomes clearer; unfortunately, given the circumstances, it will be a reaction rather than the result of proactive planning.

Nicky Hancock, The Americas

It may be tempting to see the Americas as a homogenous, mature market. However, with the geography so huge, it's important to recognise that, while the challenges our clients face may be similar, their contexts are often very different. We're also now operating in Mexico, and are getting a taste of the complexities felt by our colleagues in Europe and APAC – as well as the opportunities of a market so rich in talent.

The past year has been a period of so much change for our clients. The switch to remote working and virtual hiring has opened up bigger and longer-term questions about how and where people work. There's a sense that the geographical concentration of skills we see in the US (finance in New York; tech on the West Coast) may be breaking down.

As elsewhere, candidates are much more likely to feel confident to raise issues about flexibility, and people are building their personal lives around it too; witness the tide of people leaving New York City. There's going to be a huge management challenge to deal with the new hybrid world of offices, hubs and virtual workers.

> We've seen a closer alignment between permanent and contract workers. It's increasingly understood that contract workers are brand ambassadors too

The pandemic has also thrown into relief issues of skills mobility, with organisations looking to mobilise the skills they have as their business needs change. It's not just a matter of hiring internally; it's also about upskilling and reskilling when buying in talent is neither competitive nor sustainable. There's much work still to be done to help organisations understand the talent they have available. We've been looking at creative ways to help with this, encouraging clients to focus, for example, on key areas for skills mapping (such as tech) rather than rolling out large-scale projects across the whole company.

We've also seen a closer alignment between permanent and contract workers. It's increasingly understood that contract workers are brand ambassadors too. That needs us to take a more holistic, total talent approach, breaking down traditional barriers between HR and procurement.

D&I remains a huge focus in the Americas in the wake of the Black Lives Matter protests. It's a highly sensitive, emotive and polarising issue. What's clear, though, is that silence is no longer an option. Under-represented groups will not, and should not, continue to accept the status quo. Many organisations have doubled down on commitments and initiatives, but these must now lead to action. It'll take a wide range of approaches to change often-entrenched cultures, but we have to make sure that the momentum is not lost.

We must stop killing everyday genius

Rita McGrath

Let's enable our people to become micro-entrepreneurs, by adopting a growth mindset within a culture of freedom and responsibility, writes Rita McGrath, Professor of Management at Columbia Business School.

An inflection point is a change, typically in the external environment, that exerts a10-fold force on your business. COVID-19 represents a classic inflection point. Companies, such as casual clothing manufacturer Entireworld, are thriving and struggling to meet demand; others, including office clothing producer Brooks Brothers, are facing collapsing demand and bankruptcy. As with other inflection points, the pandemic has accelerated an explosion of investment in digital work and in enabling remote working, where the conventional strictures of bureaucratic management are notably absent.

Consider the lessons we might learn from the success of Instagrammers YouTubers and high-value podcasters. Because the tools of creativity have now become democratised, and these creative people are able to force direct connections with supporters, they can build unique businesses without the overhang of a corporate parent or gatekeepers. They are micro-entrepreneurs, creating value for their ecosystem and using the feedback from that ecosystem to guide their decisions. Their experiences reveal a truth that escapes many executives in large organisations: that by managing employees essentially as poor substitutes for robots, enormous potential value is being completely overlooked.

Mobilising entrepreneurial talent

At a previous company, Reed Hastings, co-founder and CEO of Netflix, realised the processes he was putting in place to stamp out errors were having unintended consequences – stifling creativity, creating an unwillingness to experiment and a fear of standing out – that were antithetical to the goals of an innovative organisation.

When he founded Netflix, he determined to create a culture of freedom and responsibility in which high-talent individuals were given enormous scope to make decisions that, in other organisations, would have been reserved for only a few individuals at the 'top' of a hierarchy. He credits this stance with powering Netflix through inflection points (the growth of DVD by mail, the rise of streaming, and now the mastery of created content) that would have been fatal to a less flexible company.

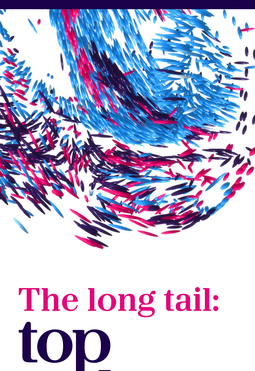
As Gary Hamel and Michele Zanini point out in *Humanocracy*, we now have an opportunity to rethink the way we design jobs, in order to mobilise, within organisations, the kind of micro-entrepreneurial talent that those Instagram, YouTube and podcasters display. But doing this requires changing our mindset to one of growth, rather than control.

> **By managing employees essentially as poor substitutes for robots, enormous potential value is being completely overlooked**

We know, thanks to the work of scholars such as Zeynep Ton and Jeffrey Pfeffer, that supposedly 'low-skill' jobs can be a powerful engine of adaptiveness and growth when they are designed as good jobs. Good jobs have a path to growth – in which individuals, whatever their position, are given the opportunity to master new challenges, grow their capabilities and share in the value their energies create.

Too often, corporate workers are disengaged, over-controlled, poorly paid interchangeable cogs in a wheel of control. Seen only as units of cost, they are not supported as the uniquely human engines of creativity they could be. Imagine that they were free to experiment and problem solve, encouraged to find new ways to add value to customers and given the right tools to discover novel solutions. Such a workforce might well constitute the best future-proofing any organisation can possess.

Rita McGrath is Professor of Management at Columbia Business School and a globally recognised expert on strategy, innovation and growth, with an emphasis on corporate entrepreneurship.



The long tail: top talent acquisition trends for 2021

Jim Sykes
Sector Managing Director, AMS

There's no doubt that 2020 was a year of change and crisis management for many in the talent acquisition community – and nowhere was that change felt more keenly than in pharmaceuticals and life sciences. With COVID-19 likely to cast a long shadow, Jim Sykes, AMS Managing Director for the sector, takes the temperature with clients and considers the likely trends for 2021.

It would be heartening to think that our year of crisis is behind us; that 2021 will offer us the opportunity to consign the pandemic to history and for talent acquisition (TA) teams to return to those pre-pandemic strategic wish lists. The reality, of course, is quite different; it's clear that we'll be unpicking the effects of an extraordinary 2020 for some time to come.

And what a year it was, when TA teams achieved so much in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles. For Beth Keeler, AVP Talent Acquisition at pharma giant Merck (MSD outside the US and Canada), TA's performance in 2020 was "almost miraculous; if anything, we're hiring faster and we're hiring more".

In the circumstances, it's unsurprising that 2021 is shaping up to be a year of transition as we dust ourselves off, take stock and consider how we build on a year when we've learned so much. Here are just some of the key trends likely to frame the year ahead.

> We need to educate hiring managers to think 'talent first', and put talent ahead of geography
>
> **Beth Keeler, AVP Talent Acquisition, Merck**

Rethinking how and where we work

It seems inconceivable that the flexible-working genie will ever fit back in its bottle, which leaves firms with thinking to do about the level of prescription that will be right for them, in terms of how and where we work. Two things are apparent, though. It's unlikely we'll ever go back to five days in the office as the default for everyone; hybrid solutions that offer more flexibility (but need careful planning) look much more likely. And it's clear that we've never been better placed to take advantage of the opportunity to hire talent independent of location. For Keeler, too, it's a question of educating hiring managers to think "talent first", to put talent ahead of geography.

Recruiting outside the box

Merck's experience of a spike in applications when it announced it was working on a vaccine last year is a story repeated across the industry: the sector's role in saving lives has never been more prominent – nor more attractive. It has meant the ability to bring in talent from outside the sector in greater numbers than ever before, even in competitive areas such as digital. It's a lesson for us all. For Alain Proietti, VP Talent Acquisition at Novo Nordisk, attracting talent from other sectors is just the start; we also need to provide that talent "with an environment to thrive". Time, then, to put aside our qualms about where talent comes from, and press home our advantage when it comes to widening the net to secure the best talent possible, all the while ensuring that our working environments, including for remote working, are optimised to make the most of it.

Breaking down brand

Pharma already understands the value of its brand and messaging: making lives better is a compelling message for any potential candidate. The challenge now is to shift to a greater focus on candidates as individuals, approaching talent with tailored messages that take into account career stage and specific function or role. Used well, brand can be a significant market differentiator. Look out for it being used with more finesse to attract talent this year.

> We need to provide talent with an environment to thrive
>
> **Alain Proietti, VP Talent Acquisition, Novo Nordisk**

A focus on onboarding

Moving to largely virtual recruitment remains one of the lasting achievements of 2020, with TA leaders reporting high levels of candidate and hiring manager satisfaction. The one area which has been more problematic is remote or virtual onboarding. For many years, onboarding has been the domain of HR operations teams rather than TA leaders but, with candidate experience now paramount, 2021 looks to be the year that TA functions may start to take accountability for the full candidate journey. With limited budgets to support solutions, we're going to have to get creative, both in terms of process and looking for even more efficiencies elsewhere to free up funds for this trickiest of areas.

Action on inclusion and diversity

While organisations are at different stages when it comes to inclusion and diversity strategies and implementation, the need to take these seriously has never been clearer: TA teams are likely to be operating in a culture with high levels of across-the-board buy-in when it comes to a more diverse workforce. This year is set to be one when we really get stuck into action on inclusion and diversity, looking for well-planned, practical and local strategies rather than broad aspirational statements. It's a key 2021 "laser focus" for Shilpa Shah, Director of Global Talent Acquisition at GE Healthcare, that needs to impact "every stage of the talent life cycle, from branding to recruitment to development to succession to promotion". In this spirit, I also predict far greater collaboration between TA and talent management to ensure diverse talent is welcomed into cultures where everyone can feel they belong.

Corporate change as a fact of life

The economic fallout from COVID-19 will make itself felt everywhere, with corporate environments likely to experience continuing levels of fluidity and change. Companies will be divesting themselves of business areas where they've fared less well, and mergers and acquisitions look set to continue apace. The pace of innovation within the life-sciences sector also looks set to continue unabated. Markus Pfunz, Director of Talent Acquisition at Medtronic, believes that "innovation is everything"; companies will have to be "nimbler to succeed, able to accept disruption". TA will also need to be at its agile best to react to environments where there'll be a need to ramp recruitment up or down in short order, and to plot workforce needs against changing corporate needs and structures.

Many TA leaders would love 2021 to be the year when they can focus on positioning themselves as a more strategic function that adds strategic value. But the pandemic has a long tail. The challenge for us all is to navigate what's more likely to be a year of transition while we lay the groundwork for the future. It'll take plenty of energy to plan, prioritise and secure those efficiencies that will enable us to gear up for a more strategic 2022.

Wellbeing now is a C-suite topic. We're seeing an emphasis on core capabilities such as resilience

Sinead Gogan,
CHRO, Deloitte Ireland

JUMP TO PAGE 18

TO READ
THE ARTICLE

10 years of innovation with Baker Hughes

Play video

In 2020, AMS celebrated its longstanding partnership with energy technology company Baker Hughes. Here, we talk to Graeme Marshall, Global Vice President HR – Talent Acquisition & Workforce Demand, about the value of workforce dexterity.

Since its inception in 2010, AMS's relationship with Baker Hughes has grown from delivering services in the Asia-Pacific region to a global solution with teams serving more than 90 countries worldwide, supported by our centres in Manila and Krakow.

During our partnership, we have placed some 40,000 colleagues into roles, and provided a range of services including Project RPO, RA heads to support Baker Hughes' onboarding and immigration-control processes, plus market mapping and brand projects.

An award-winning partnership

Engineering staffing provider NES and AMS were delighted to win the 'long-term partnership' award at the recent TIARA International Talent Solution Awards, recognising a successful 10-year relationship with Baker Hughes. The TIARAs set a new standard of excellence for the recruitment process outsourcing sector's crowning achievements and aim to shine a spotlight on RPO, managed sector and talent solutions providers, enabling excellence in talent acquisition.

Play video

Around the world with Baker Hughes

A virtual celebration was attended by more than 120 of our team members and client stakeholders globally on 1 October 2020.

Graeme Marshall, Global Vice President HR – Talent Acquisition & Workforce Demand, Baker Hughes

How has your award-winning partnership with AMS and NES developed over the past 10 years?

Initially, we were dealing with a handful of countries; now, we support an entire hemisphere and beyond. It's not just the service delivery that has evolved; the tools, technology and support have also developed.

We are more engaged with AMS as a whole and have had good conversations about learning, artificial intelligence (AI) and bots, which has influenced our thinking. The partnership has helped us understand our challenges and drive through solutions.

Due to the cyclical nature of our business, we are not an easy customer, so flexibility has been key throughout. We have been able to flex our resources up and down and this has really added value.

Often, we want something done quickly, and with supplier organisations, it can involve a stringent process, but the trust we have built up over 10 years means we can quickly build a solution together and deal with everything else later.

What has the partnership enabled you to do from a people perspective?

RPO gives us the flexibility to ramp resources up and down. The dedication of the team on the account has given a lot of credibility back to the business. When problems arise, we have found that credibility goes a long way and people are appreciative of the focus given from the whole team.

We've also been able to try new things, such as deploying new solutions or processes quickly and in certain targeted locations or businesses. The business has been very complimentary about our approach in this space, which has enabled us to move into new markets.

As you look to the future, what are the key areas you want to build on?

For us, 2021 will be about marrying up the perceptions of the business with the market conditions. We are moving into 'industrials and technology' and this brings challenges in terms of understanding the landscape. Part of this will be identifying what we need to do as a talent acquisition (TA) function, gaining knowledge on where we get skills and talent.

We want to bring our good work to light more to continue to give the business confidence, through tools and technology, market mapping and insights, and developing our employee value proposition and brand perception. We need more knowledge around the talent that is out there and how people view us as an organisation and employer.

In a culture of remote working, will Baker Hughes move to a more location-agnostic approach to talent?

Yes, absolutely. We have policies ready to launch that will make us less location bound. This will need to be a phased approach, in line with country legislation, tax laws and so on, but it's where we are heading.

The biggest challenge was always whether we were ready for this, but we have now proved it. Remote working is here to stay; COVID-19 has accelerated the pace of change.

What does true workforce dexterity mean to you?

It's the old adage of 'right people, right place, right time'. We have to ask ourselves the following questions: Are we geared up to access valuable talent? Are we assessing contingent and permanent workers on the same basis? Are we using digitisation to ensure we achieve our goals? Are we utilising tools and technology to check capacity of talent and share resources across the organisation where applicable? Are we using the right TA technologies?

Talent pools are critical; are we converting these into hires? We need to ensure that pools don't become stagnant. How do we keep them fresh and engaged? How can we communicate with them?

Candidate experience is vital as well. We anticipate that we will receive 500,000 applications this year, so we'll need to be really thoughtful about how we treat applicants. We're reviewing our candidate communications and quality; while we can't always give individualised feedback, it could be more personalised. For example, if there is a challenge with the quality of an individual's CV, could we embed links to help people understand how to improve?

As an employer with conscience, we need to ensure that we leverage our experience to point people in the right direction. This is of particular importance now. The impact of the pandemic means that there is a high level of unemployment. How could we help?

Until recently, transformation has been digital, but we're beginning to see humanisation coming through

Jo-Ann Feely, Global Managing Director – Innovation, AMS

JUMP TO PAGE 18

TO READ
THE ARTICLE

How CHROs can help to humanise organisations

Jo-Ann Feely, Global Managing Director, Innovation, AMS

In conversation with…

Sinead Gogan, CHRO, Deloitte Ireland

AMS's Global Managing Director for Innovation Jo-Ann Feely talks to Sinead Gogan, Chief HR Officer at Deloitte Ireland, about her role in influencing change and innovation within the organisation.

***Jo-Ann Feely (JF):* Could you tell us about your role at Deloitte Ireland, and what sets it apart from similar roles in other organisations?**

Sinead Gogan (SG): Yes, I lead the People & Purpose Team for Deloitte Ireland; we have up to 3,000 employees in the Irish market, and my team provides end-to-end people services. What's slightly different, and probably the most important element, is the purpose part of my role.

Last year, the team was reimagined to put purpose very deliberately at the heart of our strategy. This involved moving the Corporate Responsibility team over to join what was previously the HR team and integrating our corporate responsibility approach into our people programmes and plans.

Our overall purpose at Deloitte is "to make an impact that matters". This touches everything from our communities, to our climate change ambition, to how we interact with clients – and it obviously includes our people, who are the essence of our market proposition. So we're focused on how we bring that to life for the organisation and how we bring that to the market and use it to differentiate ourselves.

***JF:* The purpose part of your job is really interesting, especially in light of what's happened in the world over the past year. What are the specific challenges you're currently facing?**

SG: Like most employers of 'knowledge workers', we quickly transitioned everyone to homeworking. In some ways, that was the easy part, because as it became more permanent, we had to reimagine how to support people in that.

I think people feel supported in a supervisory context. But what's been difficult is the social part: how do you connect with people in this virtual world, with all of the pressures and the level of anxiety that's running through society everywhere? We've had to think that through and come up with new approaches, such as offering a paid sabbatical to colleagues and pivoting to virtual delivery for our corporate responsibility interventions with charity partners.

Wellbeing now is a C-suite topic. During my career, I don't remember much focus on it from leaders, but we're now seeing an emphasis on core capabilities such as resilience. As a training firm, we have a large cohort of graduates and early careers professionals who are just starting out. We've really had to think through our support for them and look at our curricula, adding in things such as self-care and augmenting access to employee assistance and counselling. We've also had to go on a journey, bringing wellbeing conversations into the wider organisation.

We've had to consider how to get work done in this virtual environment, where people are dealing with all sorts of complications and trauma in the background. It has been challenging for all businesses, but also hugely transformative, because there are benefits to how we're structured now.

Our people have told us they want to continue working remotely – not necessarily five days a week, but there are aspects that they want to keep – so we are trying to be deliberate and thoughtful around designing 'work for wellbeing'. How do we use what's happened to change how we do things and how we service clients? How can we help clients to think through what the future of work will look like?

> We are being very deliberate and thoughtful around designing 'work for wellbeing'

***JF:* Do you have access to the Deloitte Human Capital team to help you internally? I know that cobblers' children often have the worst shoes!**

SG: Yes, their support is phenomenal, and we want to be their guinea pigs! One of the biggest opportunities for my team is having access to that thought leadership and eminence and to their tools and resources. We've worked with them on aspects of our strategy, our operating model and our technology road map. It's also a two-way street: they, of course, want to have access to real HR organisations, and to gain our insights.

***JF:* How do you see your role as CHRO influencing change and innovation within your organisation? When we think back to the 2008 global financial crisis, it felt like the era of the CFO, because some practices needed to be overturned. Has this crisis initiated the era of the CHRO?**

SG: I absolutely think so. Our *Deloitte Human Capital Trends* report this year actually finishes with an open letter to the CHRO community.

Due to the pandemic, everything has been destabilised, and we're in the middle of 'disruption on steroids'. So, the phrase that comes to mind is "being more human"; getting to those connections and human aspects. Our graduate campaign this year was titled 'Humans Wanted'.

There has never been a better time to bring the CHRO perspective into the business and into decision-making. Organisations are looking for these insights because everybody is scrambling to adapt to this new world. In some sectors, they've leapfrogged their road maps by years in terms of digitisation and use of technology, and that affects how we deal with people as well.

Our employees now have a totally different expectation of the workplace, so big themes that are front of mind for me are employee experience and the human aspects of how we engage with our people as consumers. With what happened last year, I think the business is even more open and ready to work through what that means.

> Our graduate campaign this year was titled 'Humans Wanted'

***JF:* Does it perhaps gives us a chance to do more than simply revert to the old ways? Are there things you are missing from the 'old world' that you'd like to reinstate and is there anything from a new world that you'd like to ensure we don't reverse on?**

SG: Yes, as we talk to people and hear what they've missed, it's back to that human connection. Achieving a truly purpose-driven culture requires listening and being very open to what you hear. We surveyed our staff and more than 90% want to have virtual working in the future, just not five days a week. So how we use our spaces will be much more about co-location. But we miss that human aspect; there's a 'lack of collision', I guess. We don't run into people and have random conversations; we have to schedule time with someone.

Within our regular spheres, we are probably just as productive, if not more so. But it's those wider aspects that we miss. And people who are new in an organisation – how do they learn to navigate the firm? What will change dramatically is everyone schlepping into the city centre office early in the morning and then back home at 5pm.

And then there's how we service and deal with clients. Deloitte has clients in every sector of the economy. How can we help them think through how they might optimise those models of the future? In the past, everybody had to be physically in a certain chair, doing things in a certain way. Everybody sees the possibilities now – you're pushing against an open door.

***JF:* In terms of innovation agenda within Deloitte, is there anything that your CEO and leadership group are particularly focused on as we move into 2021?**

SG: I think most leaders are very firmly of the view that they're not waiting for things to go back to normal; they don't necessarily have the answers yet, but we are asking "how do we re-engineer and use this destabilisation to solve problems?"

We are trying to challenge ourselves, to go with that agility and build that resilience in the organisation – and use it to position ourselves to support clients into the future with the next inevitable disruption.

Sinead Gogan, CHRO, Deloitte Ireland, leads the People & Purpose team and strategy for Deloitte Ireland. Over her 20-plus-year career, Sinead has worked in consulting, technology and financial services across EMEA, the US and China.

Jo-Ann Feely is a member of AMS's Executive Committee and the Global Managing Director for Innovation, a newly created function within AMS that focuses on evolving and developing AMS's service portfolio while realising the benefits of technology in an ever-changing marketplace.

CHROs have a chance to drive transformation

One specific objective of the innovation function is defining the services that support workforce dexterity, so that we can help organisations think differently about talent acquisition. It isn't always about bringing in new people. A lot of organisations suffer from 'talent FOMO' and believe they need to bring in talent from their competitors. In fact, reshaping their existing workforce and utilising the talent they have – as well as growing their own – will allow them to be so much more flexible.

I think organisations see the 'grow-your-own' strategy as just a graduate or apprenticeship model. But we're learning that it could also be retraining skilled and unskilled workers from other industries and tapping into their potential, from the perspectives of social mobility, D&I and ethnicity. We have a phenomenal opportunity to help reshape and reframe our industry.

The next wave of HR transformation will be human. Until recently, transformation has been digital, but we're beginning to see humanisation coming through because we have had no other option during COVID. It's borne out by CEOs looking at wellbeing, motivation and work-life balance. These topics are high priorities for employees, so if you can say there are positives to the current situation, this is one of them.

It means that the time is now for CHROs to seize the opportunity to influence the board agenda, and to make that leap into a more people-focused approach to business planning and strategy. In the past, there's been a lot of rhetoric around "people making the difference", and the right talent increasing shareholder value. Now, I think that is coming into sharp focus.

CHROs have an opportunity to use data to lead the way and to challenge their executives to think differently about engagement and investment – and to put people at the heart of it. If they don't do it now, that moment will move on.

Be more chef

Jacob Morgan

The ingredients of successful talent practices lie in the right combination of humanity and technology, argues futurist Jacob Morgan.

Organisations around the world have had to transform more in the past 10 months than they have in the past 10 years, particularly in HR. But never before have we needed HR not to think, act or be like traditional HR. I want to challenge all professionals in this area to move away from thinking of yourselves as being in human resources to understanding that you are all in human transformation.

For my most recent book, *The Future Leader*, I interviewed more than 140 CEOs around the world and surveyed 14,000 employees in partnership with LinkedIn. I was able to uncover a specific set of mindsets and skills that leaders need to embrace in the new world of work. We call these The Notable Nine.

One of these mindsets is that of the chef, and it's an especially crucial one for HR professionals to master. Any chef will tell you that in order to make a dish that tastes and looks good, you have to balance many different ingredients. In HR, there are just two crucial ingredients you must balance in order to stand out and create great talent practices: humanity and technology. I call this HumanIT.

Creating a purpose-driven culture

Humanity includes things such as developing a sense of purpose and building the employee experience. The human side of work is ultimately why people work for their organisations. Employees want to work for a company where they feel valued and seen; where they are excited to come to work every day. Building a strong culture and empowering employees with the tools they need to succeed plays a huge role in the overall employee experience. HR leaders must be purpose-driven and care about their people. Employees aren't just cogs in the machine to drive higher profits. They are real people with goals, plans and personalities.

To create sustainable organisations, HR leaders need to understand their employees and foster strong co-worker relationships. They need to help make work meaningful and create development opportunities for all employees. The challenge when working with people is the combination of skills and personalities and ensuring everyone is in the right place doing meaningful work. Trust, innovation, collaboration, sales, and the like, all come from humanity.

Using technology in the right way

Technology is transforming how we live and work right before our eyes. It's especially evident in today's COVID-19 pandemic. We cannot ignore technology because it is coming at such a rapid pace and will surely disrupt us if we don't proactively find solutions.

Let's be honest, sometimes in HR we can get a little technology happy. It's not uncommon, for example, for a prospective employee to have to submit a CV and cover letter via a platform, take a personality assessment, play an online game that evaluates them on soft skills, and do a video interview with a bot all before they get a chance to interact with a human being. The process takes months and it's anything but human.

Technology should be used to help make the organisation *more* human and to bring people closer together, not further apart. Speed, efficiency, improved decision-making, productivity, and the like, all come from technology.

> **"The future isn't about pitting technology and humans against each other; it's about technology and humans working together in a cohesive environment created by thoughtful leaders"**

Leveraging the power of humanity and technology

People and technology are both crucial to a business and HR must embrace both. Use too much technology and your firm will be efficient and productive, but it will struggle with innovation, attracting top talent, and shaping the future. Focus too much on humanity and your firm will have top talent and great ideas, but it will be too slow to move and won't be productive or efficient.

You need both, but in balance. Humans and technology have their limits, and HR specifically needs to recognise and appreciate both the abilities and constraints. The future isn't about pitting technology and humans against each other; it's about technology and humans working together in a cohesive environment created by thoughtful leaders.

Just as a chef carefully crafts their recipes to highlight the unique characteristics of each ingredient, HR leaders need to build teams and organisations carefully to leverage both humans and technology. Thinking like a chef can help you and your company embrace all of the ingredients, find balance, and pull together individual flavours to create innovative masterpieces and make your talent practices stand out.

Jacob Morgan is an author, speaker and futurist. His latest book, The Future Leader: 9 Skills and Mindsets to Succeed in the Next Decade, *was published in 2020.*

Bold in aspiration and agile in execution

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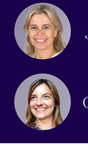

Jules Anderson

Giovanna Dinale

Companies in the biotech and pharmaceutical sector have been thrown into the public spotlight during the COVID pandemic. This has given global biopharma company Gilead Sciences an opportunity to connect with a broader range of candidates. But ensuring the right processes, tools and technology are in place to support its hiring strategy is key, explain Jules Anderson and Giovanna Dinale.

> Being a global organisation means that we could leverage knowledge from different geographies when it came to navigating the COVID pandemic. We took a lot of learnings from Asia. As the first region to experience it, our teams there had to be really agile in adapting to a completely new way of working.

Within weeks of COVID-19 hitting, our AMS team in China converted its assessment process from in-person to online. Initially there was some reluctance from the business (and from candidates themselves) but they started to get really good results.

We've found that candidate quality has remained high and time to hire is better. Candidate and hiring manager experience has also improved. What we might have anticipated taking three or four years to implement literally changed overnight, and the impact has been really positive.

Broadening the talent pool

From a global perspective, we want to become the biotech company of choice. Achieving that ambition ultimately means ensuring we are positioned as an attractive employer to candidates.

The pandemic has afforded us an opportunity to speak to a broader range of candidates around the globe, as individuals are interested in our vision "to create a better, healthier world for all people".

In 2020, we made more than 3,000 hires across our business, but it's important for us to treat our candidates in the right way; we need to be thoughtful about what people actually want and how we encourage them to join us. As we are hoping to secure them for a long and mutually productive tenure, giving candidates an authentic insight into the business is paramount.

To help with this, we have invested in building capability in our TA team. We're really focusing on trying to upskill our recruitment team's knowledge of the business so that members are better equipped and talk confidently with candidates about what our organisation does. We work in some exciting therapy areas, including HIV/AIDS, liver diseases, haematology and oncology, and respiratory diseases.

> We need to transition from reactive hiring for open roles to strategic hiring that is aligned with the direction of the business

Building the talent pipeline

We need to transition from reactive hiring for open roles to strategic hiring that is aligned with the direction of the business and the new therapy areas we want to work in. Within TA, that means looking at where we need to build networks and having the right technology in place to support that. As such, there's a big focus on systems to try to support our talent generation.

We continue to invest in improving our applicant-tracking system (Workday) to be much more customised, user-friendly and efficient. We have also looked at our customer relationship management database; we know that we needed to start to map candidate pipelines proactively. We're in the process of implementing a new candidate database tool (called Yello), which means we can keep in contact with candidates and share information with them. When a suitable role comes up, we have ready-made pools of candidates to reach out to, so it speeds up the time to hire, and also increases our profile.

Yello also allows us to participate in candidate events and target-marketing campaigns, which will give us greater audience sourcing capability. This will help us streamline our processes and focus on a more diverse candidate population, as well as enabling us to increase the diversity of our shortlist, which feeds into our broader corporate goals.

> We do not see location as a barrier to hiring as long as the person has the right skill set for the role we are recruiting for

Focusing on inclusion

Our focus on building an inclusive and diverse talent pool continues to be important. For example, we have a US-based initiative for both early talent and experienced workers which involves proactively creating roles to try to drive the diversity of our population at every stage – from attraction to development and retention.

More widely, we have also accelerated hiring manager training and now have a full curriculum around interviewing, onboarding and inclusive hiring. We recognise that beating biases is even more important when you're operating in a virtual environment.

We also view global mobility in a different way; while previously we were very driven by where candidates were based, we are increasingly seeing global mobility as an enabler to develop, upskill and retain internal talent and attract a broader range of external talent. This mindset has had a strong impact on diverse hiring; we have numerous examples of people taking on roles that will eventually be based in a different location.

True value from RPO

We've worked with AMS since March 2019, hiring for all roles up to director level. At the outset, we were thoughtful about how we designed the structure and team, as we wanted this to be much more than a transactional model. We are quite a niche business, so some of the roles for which we recruit are rare and specialised. Coupled with the fact that it's quite a competitive market, we have to make sure that our recruitment team really understands the nature of our business and the candidate landscape for the capabilities and skills we seek, so a lot of time was invested in identifying the skills, background and experience of the team that we needed.

When we were thrown into the COVID pandemic, our recruiters had to switch to being fully remote, so investing time in getting the right capability level and implementing effective processes and training for the team really paid off. They didn't need as much day-to-day support as perhaps a less-experienced team would have done.

Being bold

One of our leadership commitments is to be bold in aspiration, and we've certainly tried to model that within talent acquisition.

During this uncertain period, many team members have challenged themselves to do things differently – whether using new technology, trying different ways of working or encouraging the business to do different things. We are becoming a more exciting organisation because of the underlying ambition to be bold, and it's making it a more stimulating environment in which to operate.

Over the past year, our partnership with AMS has been key to helping us develop the tools, tactics and strategies to tackle the situation but also the agility to move to new ways of working, in order to provide real value to the business.

Jules Anderson is Senior Director, Global Talent Acquisition and Mobility, while Giovanna Dinale is Senior Director, Talent Acquisition EMEA-Canada-ASIA, for Gilead Sciences.

Q&A

Digital transformation starts from the C-suite

Future workforces will be unrestrained by boundaries, time zones or language, but creating the optimum environment requires digital transformation. Here, Clare Johnston, CEO and founder of digital talent specialist The Up Group (recently acquired by AMS), explains why we need to start at the top.

When it comes to digital transformation, what skills should businesses look for?

Today, you'll struggle to find a business that doesn't think it's in some part digital. Companies that are really committed to going through transformation start with having boards and CEOs who are strategically bought into going on that journey.

Then, I think it's important to decide what digital transformation means for an organisation. It can be internal supporting systems and processes, or external customer experience and proposition or both.

Usually, it's about understanding the business strategy with the CEO and then seeing how that translates to a data-led organisation.

Organisations are usually run by smart, capable boards. They understand the business strategy and the problems they need to solve. What they don't have is a fully formed vision for how that translates into an actual organisational structure with leadership roles. What does each role look like? What structure does each leader need under them? It's about translating business strategy into a talent strategy with defined leadership roles.

What impact has the pandemic had?

COVID-19 has acted as a catalyst for digital transformation. Businesses with a strong high-street presence have temporarily had to go digital-only. The pandemic has fast-tracked transformation road maps by several years. Organisations have had no choice but to do it to survive.

There have been two impacts. Traditional, multi-channel businesses have understood that they are neither set up, nor able to drive this level of digital adoption. So they've had to bring in skilled product/data/tech people to upskill their organisation.

Even for pure-play tech businesses, some sectors have struggled: for example, travel. Revenues have fallen to zero overnight and they've gone into severe preservation and cost-cutting mode.

However, some sectors have flourished. For software as a service (SaaS) organisations, particularly those in productivity, collaboration and communication, business has boomed. We've also seen healthtech and edtech businesses grow exponentially, with plenty of hiring.

> "We've all accelerated our digital understanding"

Is this digital awakening here to stay?

This year has left an indelible mark. The ways of working have changed and we've seen a huge shift in sentiment from both traditional and pure-play businesses about the way their companies are run, particularly around teams and remote working. I don't think we'll ever go back to working in the office five days a week, for example.

We've seen this from a talent perspective, with companies positively embracing distributed teams and remote working. Organisations that used to be constrained in getting top-tier tech talent because of geographical boundaries and having to ask people to relocate are now rethinking this. They now understand that they can have executive teams based internationally, as long as people are willing to travel.

So from a workforce and engagement perspective, I don't see us going back. We've dispelled the myth that everyone needs to be in the office.

Second, everyone has had to engage with services online, whether making doctor's appointments, or buying food and other goods. We've all accelerated our digital understanding and engagement. We're all going to love going back to the high street in some form, but the pandemic has proven that technology, from an enablement and delivery perspective, is here to stay.

So will we need a new type of leader?

Progressive and future-thinking leadership has always been needed, and this is even more the case now. Leaders who can embrace the accelerated change that has been forced upon us, and roll that forward in a sustainable and scalable way, are the ones who will succeed. Those who go against that tide – their time has passed; I don't think that works anymore.

Leadership needs to be agile, responsive and ready to adopt new ways of thinking and working.

> "It's about translating business strategy into a talent strategy"

What advice would you give leaders around digital transformation?

If any leader is still thinking "should we invest in digital transformation; should we change?" – there's no question anymore. It's about how to do it in the right way.

Those still taking a conservative approach should look at the businesses that are failing. This is the world in which we now live, and it underscores the need for business leaders to recognise the value of doing things differently. We have to look at ways to build companies in an efficient and scalable manner.

Digital acceleration in Asia-Pacific

Joy Koh, Regional Head of Growth and Advisory, AMS

With a youthful population, a swift pandemic response and a strong focus on local talent, how is the Asia-Pacific region adapting to new ways of working? Joy Koh, AMS Head of Growth and Advisory, provides insights.

In South East Asia, half of the population is below 30 years of age. Young people have grown up surrounded by technology, so both candidates and employees now expect workplace technology to emulate consumer-centric technology. This means that digital transformation strategies are front of mind, with organisations investing in technology to attract and engage applicants and employees.

For those working in the volume space, and highly competitive industries, it has become important to have artificial intelligence-sourcing and stack-ranking tools in place. Not only does this increase efficiency, it ensures you are getting the right candidate at the right time. The pace of change means that talent pools can quickly become stale, so it's important to evaluate them constantly.

Companies are focusing on improving retention and upskilling their workforce to prepare them for roles of the future. As organisations face constant change and evolution, businesses need to be able to identify candidates and employees who have high learning agility and change agility. We are increasingly seeing the use of assessment tools to assess employees, as well as candidates.

> Candidates and employees now expect workplace technology to emulate consumer-centric technology

Accelerating digital transformation

A lot of this has been accelerated by the pandemic. Our region was the first to experience COVID-19, and the strong pivot towards internal mobility has been a challenge. The tap of overseas talent has been turned off, so organisations have had to upskill local workforces. This has been aided by government funding and programmes, with heavy investment in reskilling, including a big push on digital-skills training. This will be a long-term change, with most countries in the APAC region now placing local talent first, and some even making changes to employment law.

Digital transformation strategies are successful when created with workforce personas at the centre of design. The type of candidate and employee experience the organisation wants to create should drive the decisions regarding the selection of tools.

There are three ways I see technology transforming the world of work over the next year:

Digital onboarding

We know that a poor onboarding experience leads to higher attrition, so how does an organisation create a seamless transition when people can't meet face to face during this pandemic? It's important to remember that onboarding doesn't start on day one, but once the employee signs the offer letter. Digital onboarding tools can enable early engagement by sending them information about the company, introducing them to their line manager and allowing them to communicate with their new colleagues. Organisations doing this well ensure that relevant and authentic contact is made at every stage.

Video

Video content drives the most engagement on social media, and the same principle applies to candidate attraction. While Zoom and Teams calls count as video, it also includes providing candidates with authentic information about your organisation, and delivering your training and induction programmes, through video content.

D&I

Diversity has been a big topic in North America and Europe recently; in the APAC region, the focus is on implementing tools and technology that support more inclusive processes – particularly around gender. Increasingly, we're seeing organisations use sourcing tools that anonymise candidate information which could cause bias (such as gender and educational institutions), create diversity-targeted career microsites, and remove biased language from job descriptions.

The needs of the 2020s workplace

Gary Bragar

Talent acquisition requirements are changing rapidly, particularly in the light of disruption caused by COVID-19. But what are the key priorities for businesses when it comes to future workforce planning? And where can RPO help? Gary Bragar, HRO Research Director at NelsonHall, outlines key findings from its latest report.

Organisations globally are facing hugely complex talent challenges, from short-term concerns around hiring skilled talent to fill immediate vacancies, to longer-term strategic workforce planning for the next five years (the blend of buying, borrowing and building of talent). The role of RPO in changeable times is to help clients navigate through the uncertainties they will face in the coming decade.

Uncertainty is not new. The past 20 years have seen various turbulent forces affecting the hiring market, including the dot-com bubble, 9/11, the Great Recession of 2008 and, most recently, COVID-19. That's at least four instances where hiring has plummeted. So, when outsourcing your recruitment, not only do you need a vendor that can quickly scale up to meet your hiring needs, you also need them to be able to scale down quickly where necessary.

During COVID, some areas such as food retail, healthcare and pharmaceuticals needed help to ramp up their hiring capabilities, while other industries, such as aviation, had to scale down. This is one of the major benefits that RPO partners can bring. From an organisational perspective, better to have a vendor on hand who can redeploy recruiters elsewhere than have to reduce your own internal HR team.

Complementing NelsonHall's Market analysis, *Evolution of RPO: Meeting Hiring Needs for the Workplace of the 2020s*, is the NelsonHall Vendor Evaluation & Assessment Tool (NEAT) – an annual interview-based survey which analyses the performance of vendors offering RPO services. We ask clients (end users of RPO services) to rate vendors based on importance and satisfaction, across a range of areas, on their ability to meet clients' current and future needs.

While key metrics have always included cost per hire and time to hire to evaluate the success of RPO vendors, we see clients increasingly focused on identifying and hiring the right talent – particularly in a market where identifying, growing and deploying the right skills and capabilities at speed is critical for success.

> **The future of work will include a high proportion of remote work that is highly distributed, combining a mix of permanent and contingent talent**

Companies are looking for talent that is fluid: they want the right skills, when and where they are needed. In our 2020 NEAT interviews, clients identified the following areas as key requirements from their RPO partner, in order of importance, that include:

1 AGILITY

The impact of COVID-19 and associated restrictions on hiring externally has forced companies to look at their internal talent and how they can deploy this. Some 90% of the major enterprises we interviewed recognise the need to embrace an holistic approach to talent acquisition – utilising a combination of permanent and contingent workers alongside internal talent.

Clients want their RPO partner to move quickly, easily and efficiently, adapting to the market and their own internal needs in an efficient way, to help them remain competitive. They are looking for their vendor partners to help them with their future staffing needs; specifically, what is the right blend of contingent workers and permanent staff.

2 DIVERSITY

In the new era of work, organisations need more diverse candidates – not just in terms of aspects including race and ethnicity; they need a diverse range of capabilities, experiences and perspectives which can come together to accelerate innovation and success.

COVID-19 has presented an opportunity for companies to look at 'boundaryless' talent – where individuals are based geographically is no longer as important as it once was – which means companies can reach out to a wider talent pool.

3 CANDIDATE SATISFACTION

A key concern for some years, candidate experience is still a top priority. Good companies want to ensure they're not just being polite and responsive in their recruitment process, but that they are communicating with candidates where they are at in every stage of the process.

AMS Hourly is a great example and tool which really helps candidates with their application journey – they can apply for jobs, take part in assessments and book interviews via their mobile quickly and easily. Candidates can see every step of their progression through the process so it eradicates the uncertainty of wondering if they have 'dropped off' the process.

When outsourcing your recruitment, it's critical to conduct workforce planning with your recruitment vendor alongside your internal HR team. Business leaders need to define the type of positions required and the skill sets needed for these. As the workforce and technology evolve, the talent needed may change, so it must be a continual conversation. Set goals around that diversity mix of people. Arrange monthly operations meetings with the client and recruitment vendor to review metrics, track progress and assess how you are working towards your goals.

The future of work will include a high proportion of remote work that is highly distributed, combining a mix of permanent and contingent talent. Vendor partners will need to understand each client's unique hiring needs and have a pipeline of talent available to scale quickly, as needed, to meet demand. Recruitment vendors and clients must embrace candidate-focused and employee-centric workplace cultures to attract and retain talent.

What is on organisations' priority list?

96% AGILITY

94% DIVERSITY

92% CANDIDATE SATISFACTION

90% DATA- AND ANALYTICS-DRIVEN INSIGHT

Gary Bragar joined NelsonHall in 2007 and became HRO Research Director in 2010. Gary helps to form effective client relationships and is widely known for his extensive practitioner, HRO buyer and HR services research experience. Prior to joining NelsonHall, he worked at AT&T where he gained extensive HR management experience including recruiting.

Delivering the candidate experience the hourly workforce deserves

Tena Lyons, VP & Global Head of Solutions Marketing, AMS

Hourly workers are now hailed as essential workers – requiring attention, trust and empathy from their job search. But does your recruitment process stand up to the task? Tena Lyons, VP and Global Head of Solutions Marketing at AMS, explains how to ensure your candidate experience delivers.

The level of accelerated change this year has been much greater than anticipated. While some organisations shuttered their doors, others found themselves figuring out how to support unanticipated growth or new business models entirely (hello Amazon delivery and drive-up wine orders). In many industries, grappling with uncertainty meant dialling their workforce up and down at a moment's notice. Seemingly, all roads led back to people – the driving force that kept the lights on.

Among the most impacted organisations were those heavily dependent on hourly workers. As airlines and hotels saw business rapidly shrink, restaurants dealt with closing and re-opening, and then closing again. As HR and operations teams scrambled to adjust and comply, they found themselves with a growing concern: employee safety and general wellbeing. There was no playbook to turn to for advice; we had never dealt with employee or customer safety to this extent. We deemed hourly employees 'essential workers', which meant – with fatigue and stress at an all-time high – they pushed their safety concerns aside and clocked in to deliver groceries, stock shelves and run the cash register.

Our recent eBook *The Hourly Hiring Guidebook*, produced with TalentCulture, explored the reality of COVID-19 for hourly workers. It's estimated that some 40 million US employees were laid off during the initial shockwaves of the pandemic, and in the month of June (2020) alone, 10.6 million workers temporarily lost their jobs. Employee sentiment began to shift: while 78% of those whose families experienced a COVID-related layoff originally believed they would be able to return to their hourly job, nearly half (47%) now believe their job is gone forever, according to a recent study released by the Associated Press, stating: "The hourly workforces will not only experience a surge in hiring as the economy regroups and businesses reopen and expand, but also a shifting of skills and qualifications as candidates look for new roles."

> Today's job seekers want more security, care and peace of mind. Empathy is your secret weapon

When these same essential workers look for a new job, they're met with ambiguity. While hourly workers comprise the majority of the paid workforce, we often reserve a curated experience for salaried hiring. But now, the needs and expectations of the hourly worker are shifting; for many, finding an employer they can count on amid uncertainty is just as important as collecting a paycheck. From that very first interaction with a job seeker, employers will need to make an impression and compete for talent differently.

As a talent acquisition professional, you're going to find yourself looking for new ways to compete for qualified workers in the year ahead – and here is your secret weapon: empathy. Today's job seekers want more security, care and peace of mind – and by delivering, you may solve a piece of the retention puzzle, too. But, if you don't treat them right during the job search, there's a good chance you won't do so when they are working for you.

While we navigate the changing landscape of the pandemic, firms will likely be delving into hiring programmes at the same time, sharpening demand and competition for the same hourly employees. Showing greater care and respect to your job seekers can start with a few simple tweaks to your candidate experience.

Value candidates' time

For decades, we've asked applicants to jump through hoops – entering data multiple times, uploading irrelevant documents and waiting weeks to hear back. Many hourly job seekers are going through this with multiple opportunities at once. It's exhausting, inefficient, and lacks respect for their time. For many hourly roles, consider the roadblock you create by requiring an email or CV for a job where it doesn't impact the hiring decision.

TIP: Create an engaging and frictionless experience, mobile-first for convenience, that provides a sense of respect for the hourly job seeker from that very first interaction. Treat hourly workers like the essential part of your business that they are.

Show concern for longevity

In managing the applicant tidal wave, hiring managers are often forced to 'just fill the role' – they have shifts that need people, fast. What we sometimes lose sight of is helping that hourly candidate find the role for which they are best suited, rather than the easiest fit. Engaging a job seeker to consider where they fit, and how you can best apply their skills to the right role, draws a clear picture of value and care.

TIP: Often reserved for salaried or technical positions, assessments can play a powerful role in hourly hiring. Served up early in the process, they show candidates you're invested in their success and don't see them as just headcount – they can also pay dividends when it comes to retention and career mobility.

Keep candidates informed

One of the biggest complaints for any job seeker is not knowing where they stand, leaving them feeling neglected. This ranges from simple questions about expectations or required uniforms, to updates on their application status or knowing whether they'll progress to an interview. When candidates go days or weeks without communication, it creates stress and uncertainty. Responsiveness creates a sense of mutual respect that not only keeps excited candidates engaged, it can also increase trust and loyalty.

TIP: Consider how automation can create a streamlined and responsive hiring experience that enables your recruiters and hiring managers to get back to the human part of their job working with candidates. Adopting more communication and feedback checkpoints in the process – whether automated or in person – indicates a culture of empathy and regard for employees.

> A hiring environment that leaves a candidate feeling treated with dignity and respect will go a long way – and help turn your brand into the company people want to work for
>
> **Meghan M. Biro, TalentCulture**

Got 59 seconds?

Watch the video

Introducing Hourly by AMS, a completely conversational hiring experience, built from the ground up by the talent acquisition experts at AMS.

Hourly
by AMS

The concept of a total talent solution and maximising all available resources is why we've incorporated talent acquisition and talent management under one strategic umbrella

Robert Carruthers, Executive Director of Talent Strategy & Innovation, Bristol Myers Squibb

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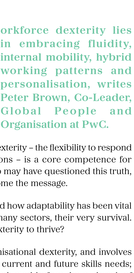
THE ARTICLE

Achieving workforce fluidity for true dexterity



Peter Brown

Workforce dexterity lies in embracing fluidity, internal mobility, hybrid working patterns and personalisation, writes Peter Brown, Co-Leader, Global People and Organisation at PwC.

When change is the only constant, dexterity – the flexibility to respond rapidly to changing market situations – is a core competence for every organisation. For leaders who may have questioned this truth, COVID-19 has surely hammered home the message.

Over recent months, we've witnessed how adaptability has been vital to businesses' innovation – and in many sectors, their very survival. But what gives organisations the dexterity to thrive?

Workforce fluidity underpins organisational dexterity, and involves taking a broad and holistic view of current and future skills needs; our *Talent Trends 2020* survey, conducted before the outbreak of COVID-19, showed that 74% of global CEOs were concerned about the availability of key skills.

Tapping into expertise, at the time that we need, requires an ecosystem comprising a fluid mix of roles and talent, supported by an organisational culture that champions and demonstrates agility. While senior leaders must trailblaze this, it will come as second nature to members of Generation Z, who are inquisitive and agile in their personal lives, and will expect this at work too.

A fluid workforce may constitute a blend of permanent and temporary staff, part-timers and full-timers, gig workers, freelancers, consultants – plus robots and AI. For example, at PwC, our Flexibility Talent Network is made up of experienced individuals who support our client engagement teams during specific periods of the year. These workers all wish to stay current and connected to the profession, even for a few months of the year, while we benefit from their valuable expertise.

Enhanced upskilling

Hiring for skills, rather than for experience or specific job roles, must be accompanied by enhanced upskilling and internal mobility; an acknowledgement that we already have talented people, who arguably understand the organisation better than external candidates, and may have the desire and capacity for a different cycle of experience.

Currently, only 18% of CEOs cite "significant progress" in establishing an upskilling programme, according to the talent trends survey. However, those with the most advanced programmes saw three times the improvement in innovation and accelerated digital transformation of those just starting their skills journey.

Greater fluidity supports linear career paths in addition to the traditional 'up-and-out' model. It's notable that COVID has helped to flatten hierarchies, taking away the 'oak-panelled boardroom' effect as senior staff take part in video calls from home, democratising the workforce – and talent.

> **Data suggests that productivity has been propped up by a cohort of 'superachievers' who have worked longer and harder than before the pandemic**

Understanding productivity

During the pandemic, boards have had to embrace digitisation and virtual ways of working – and most have not seen productivity fall off a cliff. In April 2020, nearly half (45%) of global CFOs surveyed predicted productivity loss due to a lack of remote-work capabilities; in June, just 26% anticipated productivity loss in the coming month.

CEOs agree: more than two-thirds (78%) of respondents to our *CEO Panel Survey*, conducted in August, reported that the shift towards remote collaboration is enduring, and 61% believe that the move towards low-density workplaces will persist.

Supporting this, high numbers of workers are saying they would prefer to spend only two to three days a week in an office in future.

However, these are early days in this mass remote-working experiment. Data from PwC's Perform Plus Platform suggests that productivity has been propped up by a cohort of 'superachievers' (around one-third of the total sample), who have worked longer and harder than before the pandemic, perhaps facing fewer distractions or feeding off the adrenaline of the crisis. This has disguised a fall in productivity, on average, among the rest, but may become unsustainable, challenging leaders to find ways to tackle performance.

Plus homeworking is not beneficial for everyone – nor for towns or city centres. Many organisations are locked into long-lease property contracts. Humans, by nature, are social animals and even video conferencing cannot replace the benefits of in-person interaction.

Hybrid working patterns

A hybrid working pattern with a mix of office and remote working could help address these issues, including a growth in regional hub-and-spoke offices, plus adoption of new technology. Last month, our own global leadership team (from across continents) donned virtual reality goggles and met in a virtual world. Unlike collaborating over video, it felt as if we were in the same room. One participant noted that having brightly coloured avatars also disguised ethnicity and removed any potential for racial bias.

Taking the emphasis off an employee's location broadens the talent pool, providing wider access to scarce skills and supporting diverse recruitment. However, where we hire for difference, we must not then push for conformity. Successful organisations embrace the differences of their recruits and celebrate their agility, their different ways of doing and thinking, and their ability to challenge and to bring new ideas.

In people-focused organisations, staff are treated as individuals, and an emphasis is placed on personalisation and employee experience. During COVID, organisations have taken wellbeing more seriously; 61% of CEOs have conducted wellness programmes since March. Fundamentally changing the way people work requires their buy-in and trust, plus personalised strategies to mitigate stress and burnout.

How will we know when our workforce provides the dexterity to thrive? When we understand our skills needs and have timely access to the talent we require – yet an outsider cannot tell whether a worker is permanent, freelance, part-time or other; simply that they are part of the organisation, connected emotionally, and aligned with its values and beliefs.

Peter Brown MBE is Co-Leader, Global People and Organisation, PwC. Follow him on LinkedIn and Twitter @Pete_Brown100

Taking a strategic approach to internal mobility

The first year following a merger can be testing for staff as new ideas are introduced and relationships built; throw in a pandemic, and things become tougher still. Robert Carruthers, Executive Director of Talent Strategy & Innovation at Bristol Myers Squibb, explains how he and his teams rose to the challenge.

When two organisations come together, you expect a period of integration and transition. For recruitment, that meant creating a new value proposition as the merged company looked to the future. However, what we couldn't have planned for was the volume of hiring, which grew by 40%. On top of that, with COVID, we moved to virtual recruitment. It was quite a learning curve.

To succeed, we had to upskill our talent teams. We put Microsoft Teams in place for interviewing, worked with analytics to keep up with volume and demand planning, and partnered more with RPOs to manage the scaling process. We helped our recruiters further develop the 'soft skills' they might not have used as much previously, such as resilience, agility and change-management capabilities. With the start of the new company, we began operating as a Centre of Excellence Talent Acquisition model. We really had to emphasise the training and partnering around some of these new processes and ways of working.

A second challenge was hiring in an ultra-competitive environment. Launching a new brand, a new value proposition and a whole new way of recruiting for science and research and development roles certainly compounded this.

> The number one reason why people leave a company is because they feel or perceive a lack of opportunity

Developing existing talent

One new function for which my team is responsible is supporting internal talent mobility. The concept of a total talent solution and maximising all available resources is why we've incorporated talent acquisition and talent management under one strategic umbrella.

The number one reason why people leave a company is because they feel or perceive a lack of opportunity. You can put a lot of resources towards sourcing external talent when the people you need could be in the next office over – you just never knew. This is a tremendous opportunity for all companies, so we need an efficient way of consistently identifying internal talent.

This year, we launched an executive-level programme in which talent was one of six growth drivers across Bristol Myers Squibb. We're looking to improve our understanding of the skills and capabilities across our broader employee base, what our future holds from a workforce-planning perspective and how we can fill those gaps.

Be strategic

When COVID-19 hit, many talent acquisition professionals went into survival mode. We could not anticipate how the recruiting process would change practically overnight; we were not necessarily prepared, and we had to adjust. After the first week of remote working, we were trying to manage it by reviewing reports and planning. By week two, we realised we were struggling because we weren't looking at the challenges holistically as a game-changing event. We were trying to fix broken elements tactically rather than looking at it as a more strategic change. Once we realised the environment was evolving, we became much more open to ideas and ways of working – and ultimately it got easier to solve.

In the end, I think we've all just got to remain positive and have faith. If you'd talked to me at this point last year, I'd have been part of the company being acquired. I would never have guessed the challenges of 2020, but we've achieved the goals we set for the year, and then some, despite the pandemic and all the changes that came with it.

The view from AMS: Kristin Thomas

We've partnered with Bristol Myers Squibb since 2012, but this expanded when our partner Celgene was acquired in 2019. We support them in both the US and EMEA across 31 markets for roles in all levels up to executive hiring. In EMEA, we manage the entire recruitment process, while providing sourcing and interview scheduling support in the US and Latin America in a mix of onsite and remote locations. We've also provided solutions in market insights, media, assessment and selection, branding and technology.

Having to think creatively, to adopt a flexible mindset and working collaboratively with AMS has made us realise that we can be agile when we need to be

Ellen M. Andreasson,
Head of Emerging Talent, Equinor

JUMP TO PAGE 30

TO READ
THE ARTICLE

A virtual circle: new approaches for emerging talent

Equinor is an energy company with an ambitious vision: to meet the increasing demand for energy in more sustainable ways. As the business develops and changes, bringing in young talent is an important part of its people strategy. But how has the team fared during COVID-19? Ellen M. Andreasson, Head of Emerging Talent, tells all.

Equinor's mission – to shape the future of energy – means that everyone in the business is committed to making this a reality, and the emerging talent team is no exception. It's a given that we need new talent and perspectives and, for new business models and opportunities, updated competencies and capabilities. Emerging talent will form a substantial part of our workforce renewal over the next few years, and we've put in place a robust pipeline to build relationships and attract the best graduates, interns and apprentices into the business.

In 2020, some 600 young starters joined us. We were in the middle of a round of apprentice recruitment when the COVID pandemic struck. Overnight, we hit the buffers. No longer able to carry out our usual face-to-face assessments, and with a third of candidates already booked to fly in to visit us, we had to pivot – and fast. Cancellation was briefly considered, but rejected. We made the decision then and there to put the needs of our candidates first – and to find a virtual solution that would enable us to press ahead.

Looking back, we benefited hugely from the fact that we already had a good, long-term relationship with AMS. Working together, we successfully completed the recruitment, as planned.

Once we realised that COVID-19 was with us to stay, it was time to face the challenge of protecting our emerging-talent pipeline for the rest of the year.

> Being able to deliver our first virtual graduate recruitment programme to plan and on schedule has been a great source of pride

Virtual delivery

What should we do about the 340 successful candidates enrolled in our summer internship programme? The answer: transform the programme for virtual delivery, with 275 of the original interns from Norway, the UK, the US and Japan joining a seven-week programme from home, using their own PCs. Before starting, each intern was given a list of projects to choose from. They were then placed in groups and assigned a mentor, boosted by weekly learning and social sessions, all delivered via Microsoft Teams. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive: 97% of respondents in our exit survey said that they would like to work for Equinor again.

What about career fairs and events? We held our first virtual career fairs, one with two other companies which extended our reach with our target markets. The usual career-fair giveaways were replaced by a donation game, where students could play and donate to a pre-approved charity of their choice.

How could we tackle our annual graduate recruitment process? By bringing together a team from Equinor and AMS to devise and develop from scratch a new format and content. In short order, we had ready a virtual assessment centre, again using Teams alongside a SOVA tool for assessment and scoring. Crucial to the process was a pilot day with recent graduate joiners and hiring managers so that we could test the concept, the tech and the risk assessments we put in place. And equally crucially, the whole programme was designed so that we have the flexibility to use it face to face in future if we want to.

Is virtual here to stay?

Being able to deliver our first virtual graduate recruitment programme to plan and on schedule has been a great source of pride. Even though we haven't been able to give top candidates the ever-popular experience of visiting company headquarters in Stavanger in Norway, feedback so far has been positive. The tech has worked and 365 candidates, 20-plus recruiters and 150 assessors later, we have excellent outcomes for entry next year.

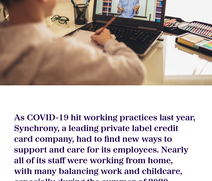
The million-dollar question we now face is, of course: is virtual here to stay? There have been undoubted advantages, in terms of both cost and carbon footprint. Having to think creatively, to adopt a flexible mindset and working collaboratively with AMS has made us realise that we can be agile when we need to be. It's been a year when necessity has driven change and given us experiences that we would not otherwise have had. We've been able to continue our work to identify and nurture emerging talent for the business. And, as importantly, it has left a legacy that will make us even more resilient for the future.

The view from AMS: David Ingleson and Lauren Cunningham

Working alongside Equinor to deliver its emerging-talent programme virtually has taught us many valuable lessons. One of Equinor's hiring managers spoke for many when she applauded our virtual approach for "absolutely aligning" with the company's strategy of being "always safe, high value and low carbon". Rather than change being seen an insurmountable barrier, we've made changes that have been rapid, effective and – thanks to everyone's hard work – relatively painless. The pandemic has shown us that, with the right mindset and relationships, change is not just possible, but can also be a transforming force for building sustainability and resilience longer term.

Mutual support in action:

Synchrony's Virtual Summer Camp



As COVID-19 hit working practices last year, Synchrony, a leading private label credit card company, had to find new ways to support and care for its employees. Nearly all of its staff were working from home, with many balancing work and childcare, especially during the summer of 2020.

Here, Synchrony's Senior Vice President of Talent & Transformation, Liz Heitner, explains how CEO Margaret Keane, and other senior leaders, came up with a creative idea that ended up benefiting the whole organisation.

I'm sure I'm not alone in having fond memories of those seemingly endless, perfect summers of my childhood: no school, long, hot days, the prospect and excitement of summer camp. Several months into 2020's pandemic, what wouldn't we have given to have one of those summers – for our children and ourselves?

It was not to be, of course. By the end of the school year, the Synchrony community – like everyone else – had weathered months of living with COVID-19 and unprecedented changes to the way we did our jobs. Parents balancing full working lives with homeschooling and limited childcare were on their knees.

Earlier in the year, we had been piloting tutoring programmes, with Synchrony employees offering tutoring and reading practice to children and teenagers in our community. The Synchrony Parent Community was also meeting regularly for mutual support and ideas sharing.

With summer on the horizon, it was time to up the ante. We knew that many of our parents would face a challenging time, with young children to look after and entertain; we could sense the disappointment of teenagers who had missed out on the usual rites of passage and had no summer jobs to go to; college students were returning home with their internships cancelled.

> A healthy dose of humanity can have a lasting, positive effect when it comes to how we connect

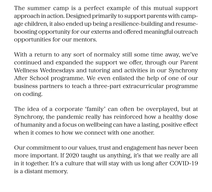
We believed that there had to be a way to bring all of these challenges together into an opportunity. And so the idea for our first virtual Synchrony Summer Camp was born.

The aim of the camp was simple: to replicate as closely as possible the activities and spirit of a typical summer camp experience. Every day, children aged 4-14 could access live, interactive sessions from a rich programme of activities, from fitness and crafts to culture and STEM. Virtual sessions were delivered by high-school and college students whose summers had been so badly disrupted – our Synchrony Summer Camp interns, who each committed to delivering 10 sessions of programming. Each intern was paired with a Synchrony employee mentor for support and encouragement.

It was always important to us that the camp offered opportunities for children to interact with each other and make new friends. It was also a global initiative, available to all employees across the US, India and the Philippines, with customised programming in each area.

Once we had this vision and infrastructure in place, we needed to make it happen. Working with our partners at AMS, we were able to create the right platform, build a fun brand, boost opportunities for participation and engagement and roll out an incredible series of activities. By building up a bank of recorded sessions on the camp website Replays Pages, children and parents could also access the fun whenever they wanted to, after the session too. By the end of the summer, 130-plus externs had entertained and engaged more than 3,000 campers. After some initial and understandable scepticism about quality and screen time, parent feedback was both positive and supportive.

> I was pretty apprehensive after seeing how difficult online schooling was for my kids. However, I am loving the new schedule and how excited my kids get to join. Each day they tell me something new that they learned. It has really been so helpful for us!
>
> *Summer Camp parent*



Importantly, we were able to reinforce messages about D&I, whether through story times that focused on the importance of respecting others' differences, a hugely popular series of sign language classes, or activities designed to support less-privileged members of our local communities.

Despite the many challenges of the pandemic, I believe there has never been a better time to be an HR professional. We've had to break through the confines that define how we usually operate and take a more holistic approach to how we interact with and support our employees and their families.

The summer camp is a perfect example of this mutual support approach in action. Designed primarily to support parents with camp-age children, it also ended up being a resilience-building and resume-boosting opportunity for our externs and offered meaningful outreach opportunities for our mentors.

With a return to any sort of normalcy still some time away, we've continued and expanded the support we offer, through our Parent Wellness Wednesdays and tutoring and activities in our Synchrony After School programme. We even enlisted the help of one of our business partners to teach a three-part extracurricular programme on coding.

The idea of a corporate 'family' can often be overplayed, but at Synchrony, the pandemic really has reinforced how a healthy dose of humanity and a focus on wellbeing can have a lasting, positive effect when it comes to how we connect with one another.

Our commitment to our values, trust and engagement has never been more important. If 2020 taught us anything, it's that we really are all in it together. It's a culture that will stay with us long after COVID-19 is a distant memory.

The view from AMS: Brittany Best

It was a pleasure to work with the team at Synchrony to help them bring their virtual summer camp to life. Our Brand & Attraction team brought its 'A game' in every respect. We worked together every step of the way, from building and managing the camp website and designing logos and the overall camp theme to video editing and mailing our hundreds of teddy bears and camp stickers. Two major highlights were the Synchrony's Got Talent video competition and the Virtual Art Exhibit, which showcased campers' creativity including paintings, drawings, poems and more.

To help meet the key goals of interaction and participation, we designed the camp badge-tracker, a sheet where campers could track the activities they'd completed and earn badges along the way. Once six badges had been earned, the tracker could be entered to win a prize, which proved to be very popular.

The camp was an excellent example of how teamwork and collaboration can make a difference, even in the most challenging of times.

SYNCHRONY SUMMER CAMP

5 ways talent acquisition has transformed

Elaine Atkinson, Head of Resourcing and Talent Acquisition, Deloitte UK

COVID-19 has amplified and accelerated a range of trends in talent acquisition for professional services firm Deloitte UK. Elaine Atkinson, Head of Resourcing and Talent Acquisition, explains how her function has responded and what's on the agenda for 2021.

1 Introducing new technology

Many of our processes – such as applications and candidate screening – were already online, and we had piloted the use of digital platforms to improve our assessment centres, building more agility into the function to meet the peaks and troughs in demand.

The COVID pandemic prompted us to accelerate our digital ambition. We had to shift all our interviews to virtual ones, and there was a reprioritisation of our hiring requirements, which we successfully managed by segmenting our candidates into different talent communities and keeping them warm until we needed them.

We are about to implement a new applicant-tracking system (ATS) that will help us to deliver a more consumer type experience for both candidates and hiring managers and enable more self-service. We're also introducing a new platform for contingent hiring – our overall goal being to ensure the tools are integrated and user-friendly, so the experience feels seamless.

We've already seen great success from implementing a real-time feedback tool which asks candidates at five points in the process about their experience. If comments are positive, we know what we're doing right; if not, we can intervene at the point any issue arises and seek to resolve them.

When technology is being used smartly, it frees up your talent acquisition team to focus on business needs, build talent pools for future growth areas and improve the overall hiring experience, internally and externally. This is even more important now; we should be investing just as much in helping our own people achieve their career goals as we do in getting great external people in.

2 Reimagining early careers provision

We were able to shift our internships and work-experience programmes from face-to-face to virtual offerings, and therefore expand our reach to a wider, more geographically diverse audience. We also redesigned the content, introducing sessions on wellbeing and meditation, interview skills and personal brand. More than 95% of the 600 students who attended said they would recommend it to a friend.

We usually run 170-plus physical assessment centres for graduates in September; these moved online in 2020, but we still wanted to bring to life the experience of working at Deloitte by engaging as many as possible of our hiring leaders in these sessions. We have also started to provide students with access to Deloitte Learning content before they join, to support their personal and professional growth and ensure they are 'work ready' sooner.

Research showed that the way we configured some of our assessments was not as inclusive as it could be for neurodiverse candidates. We quickly took steps to amend them; for example, removing the time component for online tests and ensuring individuals could complete the questions in any order. We continue to monitor our net promoter scores to ensure these changes are making a positive impact.

> We should be investing just as much in internal hiring as we do in getting great external people in

3 Being more inclusive

We already had a strong focus on inclusion, but Black Lives Matter gave us added momentum to review our end-to-end early career recruitment processes and understand any potential bias, particularly in relation to black students and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

We found that some students have more access to skills support, organisational insight and industry expertise, perhaps via family members or friends already working in a corporate environment. This means they often have more knowledge and an enhanced ability to deliver presentations on these topics – so we're removing the task of giving a presentation from our final stage assessments to help level the playing field.

We've also launched an interactive candidate preparation guide to help give everyone equal access to tools, career guidance and support when preparing for our student recruitment process. This has already been downloaded by 5,000-plus students.

In the past, we've often looked at diversity according to one demographic, but that can be quite one-dimensional. Looking at people more holistically – through intersectionality – and trying to build inclusion strategies around the whole person and their individual experience is much more effective and a focus for us in the year ahead.

As well as reviewing how we profile career opportunities at the firm – for example, looking at the language we use to advertise them – we are analysing the perception of our brand in the market. For instance, a lot of people apply to Deloitte because they've heard of us. But what about the people who haven't heard of us and don't apply? We are keen to understand how we can become more appealing to those people to further increase the diversity of our workforce.

> While there will always be educational cycles, I think there will be more fluidity and agility around talent, which will create much more opportunity

4 Developing talent pools

The pandemic turned everything on its head as the option to work remotely became the norm in many areas. We anticipate that this trend will continue in the long term to a greater degree than before; while the office will still exist, its purpose may change to become more of a place for collaboration and learning, among other things. Given that we now know that a lot of work can be effectively delivered remotely with an increased focus on outputs underpinned by trust, this creates a huge opportunity for talent acquisition teams to reach and hire from even more diverse talent pools across all regions and locations.

I'm challenging my own and my team's thinking to look at talent in a more holistic and fluid way, rather than by specific hire or contract type. For example, there could be people later in their career with fantastic experience who might want to retrain. If you're always focusing on talent from a certain demographic, you're closing off groups of people who have the skills and the potential to do those roles, so it's about approaching attraction and selection in a different way. This also applies to internal talent.

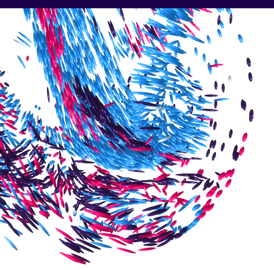
5 Being resilient

Change has become the new normal. There will always be things happening in the external market to which we need to respond, and the business needs to plan for, particularly in the age of digital disruption. We've seen an increased focus on employee wellbeing, building the resilience of our firm to deal better with uncertainty and ambiguity, and the speed and pace of change. This includes empowering our people to give themselves permission to put their personal needs first. Ultimately this will make us all better employees and leaders.

For talent acquisition, COVID-19 has felt like flying a plane, fixing it and redesigning the engine at the same time. We're always striving to improve what we do, but the level and pace of change and transformation has accelerated. Working closely with the business is more important than ever to ensure we're focusing and prioritising our efforts on those areas which will have the biggest impact, while retaining some level of control and certainty for our teams.

One of the benefits of recent times is feeling much more connected to my team and getting to know them on a deeper and more personal level.

Elaine Atkinson is Head of Resourcing and Talent Acquisition for Deloitte UK, leading a team which delivers 6,000-plus hires per annum. She is passionate about creating and delivering distinctive and agile hiring solutions which drive tangible business value.



Delivering virtual internships

COVID lockdowns have prevented many young people from participating in traditional, in-person work-experience opportunities. How did AMS reimagine the offering for clients' future talent?

Jane Clark, Head of Emerging Talent Advisory, AMS

The campus season of 2020 has been one like no other. From attraction through to onboarding and development, every part of the cycle has seen major shifts in terms of processes moving digitally in record speed.

A number of our clients had already been shifting activities to digital solutions and experimenting with new innovations. Generation Z (people born from 1995 – 2010) are true digital natives, exposed to the internet and social networks for most of their lives, and are very comfortable with integrating virtual and offline experiences.

We saw a few different approaches in 2020; some organisations became Zoom and Teams experts overnight, moving assessment centres, internships and onboarding to these platforms. This required some heavy lifting and adaptations along the way, but it was a way to keep the 'lights on'. Others leveraged internal systems and tech stacks to varying degrees of success. What still remained important was candidate experience. How can you create an outstanding and engaging experience online? That is exactly what we did through our partnership with Meet & Engage this summer.

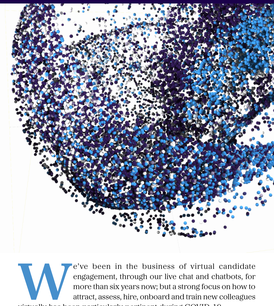
> Organisations need a virtual and digital campus strategy

A boost to inclusion

Organisations need a virtual and digital campus strategy, and while some acknowledge this, there are other businesses that are hopping from one situation to another in survival mode with no clear plan.

Virtual solutions can't replace everything in person... yet. For example, social networking at a virtual event and virtual work shadowing may still need some thought. However, these changes have brought positive inclusive changes, allowing more diverse candidates in harder-to-reach areas access to opportunities; for example, engaging in virtual campus events and virtual work-experience programmes that may not have been possible in the past.

Nicola Sullivan, Business Development Director, Meet & Engage



We've been in the business of virtual candidate engagement, through our live chat and chatbots, for more than six years now; but a strong focus on how to attract, assess, hire, onboard and train new colleagues virtually has been particularly pertinent during COVID-19.

Last year's global events have accelerated the use of technology in the hiring and employee journey, and it's here to stay. While the office isn't yet dead, this year has made us question what needs to be done in-person, and what can be experienced just as well virtually. This is not least because technology is often lower cost in terms of resource and time, as well as delivering enhanced accessibility and a reduced carbon footprint.

Supporting this theory are two decisive findings from Talentlyft.com: 68% of recruiting professionals say that investing in new technology is the best way to improve recruiting performance over the next five years, while 94% of recruiters and hiring professionals say that using HR technology has positively impacted their hiring process.

The question for organisations is: how does your tech help create an engaging, personalised and relevant experience for candidates and employees alike – including future talent such as interns and those participating in work experience?

> 2020 made organisations think with creativity and agility about how to deliver future talent to their business

Virtual internships

As consumers, we experience great technology in most aspects of our lives – from shopping and ordering takeaways to banking and entertainment. So, why, when we apply for a job via a careers site or join a virtual internship, should our future talent expect any less? That's why we were excited to get our heads together with AMS's Early Careers team last summer to see how our technology could support its vision for virtual internships.

Our platform provided the digital vehicle for clients to deliver their virtual internships to cohorts of new talent across their business. With a personalised dashboard, a blend of videos, e-learning and group engagement opportunities are pre-configured on our platform to provide a tailored and automated virtual internship programme. The information dashboard gives the client a sense of engagement and levels of participation.

While most of us are looking forward to a blend of in-person and remote working in the future, 2020 made organisations think with creativity and agility about how to bring future talent into their business. In doing so, they have arrived at some smart solutions that I have no doubt are here to stay.

Flipping the org chart for long-term success

Dart Lindsley

What happens when you take an age-old model and flip it on its head? Dart Lindsley, Head of Global Process Excellence for People Operations at Google, explains how reimagining the standard organisational chart has affected productivity, customer satisfaction and workforce dexterity.

Disciplines as diverse as military strategy, urban planning and software development have come to a similar conclusion: top-down control hinders dexterity. When simply applied, systems of control can slow down response time, act upon out-of-date information, and limit the variety of responses available to react to a dynamic environment. Organisations are more dexterous when each person in the company is an intelligent and informed agent, free to respond to the changing needs of customers, and importantly, free to develop themselves to better meet those needs.

Consider the words commonly used to refer to employees. Words such as 'assets' or 'human capital' that frame people as 'things' that companies own, and downplay the freedom of individuals to act independently. The word 'employee' means, literally, one who is used.

Metaphors are more than figures of speech. They are tools we use to think. The metaphors we use inside organisations are particularly interesting because they create a shared mental model of what the company is and how it functions. The metaphors we use to speak and think about our organisation often guide how we operate.

Flipping the organisational chart

The standard organisational chart is one of the more potent metaphors of control. It positions management at the top with instructions. My team and I have been conducting a simple experiment: we have inverted that structure.

In *The Metaphors We Live By*, cognitive linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson point out that in almost every culture, the metaphor of up vs down carries a similar set of meanings: up nearly always means more, and down means less; up health, down sickness; up virtue, down vice; up consciousness, and down unconsciousness.

Most germane to the topic of organisational dexterity, Lakoff and Johnson point out that up means control, and down means subject to control. "I'm on top of the situation. He is under my control" or "under my thumb". Overlords hire underlings. Top dogs dominate underdogs. People who rise to power have control over others.

> The metaphors we use to speak and think about our organisation often guide how we operate

The traditional organisational chart gives visible form to existing preconceptions about who controls whom in organisations, and cannot help but reproduce ideas that discount individual autonomy. Flipping it destabilises assumptions upon which many previously unquestioned beliefs are based.

For instance, when I imagine myself below, and the team above, I'm more able to see my role as one of support, not top-down control. From the new position, I'm responsible for fundamentals such as making sure the team gets the resources it needs, and articulating the values and purpose of the organisation.

The effect of flipping the organisational chart is more dramatic for individual contributors; it's as if they have been transformed from nouns – owned things – to verbs. Instead of being the lowest layer beneath a pyramid of stacked blocks, sub-teams seem to stretch up like the branches of a tree, towards light and air. It's an apt metaphor: the tips of the branches are where the most growth takes place. As one team member remarked: "It's like we took the lid off the organisation."

Flipping the organisational chart did not, on its own, improve our organisational dexterity. We were already testing out more nimble alternatives to top-down management, and the revised chart is a part of those tests. But once restrained, it became the most visual and compelling emblem of our emerging philosophy, and has informed many changes:

SELF-ORGANISATION

The team has become highly self-organising. Without much guidance from me, it has designed its own weekly meeting cadence – starting off with one model, and then, through debate and rapid prototyping, arriving at a simple set of bi-weekly stand-ups, where team members share progress and can reach out to each other for help. The team has also established a monthly retrospective to identify areas of self-improvement, and another weekly meeting in which anyone can nominate an educational topic of their choosing.

Example flipped organisational chart

PROJECT ALLOCATION AND TRACKING

Determining who works on what is no longer my responsibility alone. Within practical limits, projects are self-selected by team members based on which work interests them most. Each month, the team reports on how rewarding their work is; if it falls into the rest, we discuss how to improve or eliminate the work.

SELF-DIRECTED DEVELOPMENT

Traditional top-down management classifies people by job role and measures performance against the requirements of the role. It then sets development plans to bridge the gap between individual skills and the role description. This pushes everyone in the same role to conform instead of encouraging a diversification of skills. A team with uniform skills is less likely to be able to respond to diverse and changing customer needs. Instead of blindly converging on the same skill profiles, each team member consciously identifies areas in which they wish to specialise – one in design thinking, others in process improvement methodologies, and yet others in business architecture.

> A team with uniform skills is less likely to be able to respond to diverse and changing customer needs

A new perspective

Taken together, these practices have resulted in a team where every member is a leader. Our customers are happy; last year our customer net promoter scores were an extraordinary 9.5 out of 10. Every completed project has resulted in repeat business. And the team is happy. In our employee survey, the team responded with a 100% favourable score for quality of management, and an 88% favourable score for getting work done – both well above average.

Flipping the organisational chart doesn't take much effort. Admittedly, the inverted chart must be hand drawn because all the products designed to auto-generate charts support only the traditional format. And, if you are a manager like me, your ego might feel a slight twinge as you find yourself in a supporting role. Nonetheless, the potential upside makes this small experiment worth it.

Dart Lindsley is Head of Global Process Excellence for People Operations at Google. He routinely writes and speaks on the topic of how to improve the experience of work. The opinions expressed in this article are his own and not the views of Google.

What impact will COVID-19 have on social mobility?

Play video

A focus on social mobility helps bring diverse ideas and perspectives into the workforce. But will COVID-19, and the related restrictions, reinforce and worsen inequality?

Against a backdrop of COVID-19, resulting job losses and economic uncertainty, it can be easy for business leaders to abandon social mobility agendas. However, preventing long-term inequality for the 'COVID generation' (those aged 25 and under) is vital to creating a diverse and resilient workforce.

This is the view of HR Director and social mobility expert Bharatti Crack, who shared her thoughts with AMS's Sector Managing Director Janine Chidlow, in an exclusive interview.

Referencing her own background growing up within an immigrant family, Bharatti discusses the importance of allies and mentors in helping young people build the confidence and contacts needed to explore options beyond their socio-economic boundaries – and how imposter syndrome leads many people to walk away from opportunities.

"Your socio-economic background cuts across all types of diversity – race, gender, sexuality," she says. "There is huge intersectionality here."

> "While we have made solid progress, we are on a journey towards true D&I"

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened economic and educational inequality, the two primary drivers of social mobility, with those under 25 most at risk. While older workers may prefer working remotely for family or commuting reasons, younger employees risk losing out on training and skills development in the workplace. For those still in education, online teaching relies on access to computers and broadband, as well as a space to learn – luxuries not available to all children.

For business leaders, championing social mobility helps them to build a more diverse workforce. According to Bharatti, the pandemic has forced a shift in how leaders operate, nudging them towards a more people-centric, emotionally intelligent focus. This provides an opportunity for talent teams to remodel how they recruit, focusing less on qualifications and universities, and more on the skills and diverse ideas different people can bring.

Practical examples include looking beyond graduate recruitment milkrounds for early-stage careers and creating apprenticeship schemes, contextualised recruitment (taking into account a person's background alongside skills and qualifications) and gaining input on hiring from social mobility consultancies.

Ultimately, increasing social mobility in business is about getting buy-in from the top, both in organisations themselves and in government.

"Change is about people in positions of power. Individuals should represent the whole of society, not just the elites," says Bharatti.

Attitudes to social mobility

The Social Mobility Commission's *Social Mobility Barometer* examines public attitudes towards class and mobility. Its survey of 5,000 people found that:

77%

of people feel that there is a large gap between social classes in the UK

44%

believe that where you end up in society is determined by your background and parents

39%

believe it is becoming harder to move up in society (versus 22% who believe it is becoming easier)

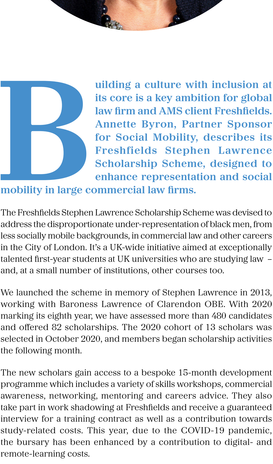
In 2020, the world woke up to the scale of injustice black people face in society. But we need advocates and allies who are prepared to take action at all times, not just when it's in the news

Kanya King, CEO, MOBO

JUMP TO PAGE 38

TO READ
THE ARTICLE

Taking action to boost diversity



Building a culture with inclusion at its core is a key ambition for global law firm and AMS client Freshfields. Annette Byron, Partner Sponsor for Social Mobility, describes its Freshfields Stephen Lawrence Scholarship Scheme, designed to enhance representation and social mobility in large commercial law firms.

The Freshfields Stephen Lawrence Scholarship Scheme was devised to address the disproportionate under-representation of black men, from less socially mobile backgrounds, in commercial law and other careers in the City of London. It's a UK-wide initiative aimed at exceptionally talented first-year students at UK universities who are studying law – and, at a small number of institutions, other courses too.

We launched the scheme in memory of Stephen Lawrence in 2013, working with Baroness Lawrence of Clarendon OBE. With 2020 marking its eighth year, we have assessed more than 480 candidates and offered 82 scholarships. The 2020 cohort of 13 scholars was selected in October 2020, and members began scholarship activities the following month.

The new scholars gain access to a bespoke 15-month development programme which includes a variety of skills workshops, commercial awareness, networking, mentoring and careers advice. They also take part in work shadowing at Freshfields and receive a guaranteed interview for a training contract as well as a contribution towards study-related costs. This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the bursary has been enhanced by a contribution to digital- and remote-learning costs.

Driving outcomes through trust

Scholars are put at the core of their activities; the impact is greater because programmes are co-created with them, incorporating bespoke conversations and high-quality, tailored content. Participants determine the timings of meetings and work experience within the context of the financial and other pressures they face. Mentoring may be as much about coaching individuals through significant life issues as it is about career development, but pastoral conversations only happen where there is trust.

The scholars drive their personal outcomes, in law and beyond. Not all are at recruitment stage yet, but the majority of 2013-2019 participants have won roles at large commercial law firms, including Freshfields, investment banks, barristers' chambers and the Civil Service Fast Stream, or have been accepted on Master's or Bar-qualification programmes.

> "The challenge of broadening representation can only be met if businesses action thoughtful change and put in the hard work"

The experience of candidates who are not awarded scholarships is also important to us: the combination of attending the insights meeting, the assessment-centre experience, and subsequent feedback and coaching – with all travel paid – is designed to set up all participants for success.

The challenge of broadening representation can only be met if businesses action thoughtful change and put in the hard work. For example, under most circumstances, organisational brand is of huge value when it comes to attracting candidates. But for those from non-traditional backgrounds, an invitation to experience life at a top City institution can feel like a journey to another planet. We try to find solutions to engage with those who 'self-select away'.

Building a culture of inclusion

We are building a culture with inclusion – of everyone – at its core. Inclusion doesn't become mainstream and minds won't be opened by outsourcing our scheme activities to others; the resource comes from volunteers at Freshfields and other participating organisations. Members of our global Black Affinity Network regularly showcase their skills. By creating links across our firm and the City, we are creating an ecosystem that will enable our scholars to thrive – now and in the future.

Potential does not always translate into top academic results, so a re-examination of how merit is evidenced and innovative ways to identify those with potential (rather than polish) are required. This is why there are no minimum-grade requirements for our scheme.

Applications are made by a range of Russell Group and non-Russell Group universities on behalf of exceptionally talented, demographically eligible students, with candidates submitting a two-minute supporting video. Higher education isn't the only route into a career in law, but this collaborative conversation with universities, and the other like-minded organisations involved, adds to the impact of the scheme.

Boosting opportunity in times of crisis

Last year, in view of COVID-19, our annual two-day assessment centre at Freshfields in London was reimagined into five assessment centres (part virtual, part in-person) at our London and Manchester offices, with a further option for students who preferred an entirely virtual experience.

This is a time when less-privileged candidates are facing greater challenges than ever. The pandemic has disproportionately affected black and minority ethnic communities; a lack of tech or of a suitable location in which to study – or of headspace to concentrate – can be huge barriers. It feels especially important and urgent that we bring together this group of talented individuals and give them a sense of community and the best possible opportunities.

Not only is addressing representation the right thing to do, but the business case is clear: diverse opinions lead to better decisions, and there's competitive edge from reaching and retaining a broad talent pool. Above all, we are proud to be working with such exceptional students. We continue to look forward to what we will learn from them, as we hope they learn from us.

Annette Byron is Partner Sponsor for Social Mobility at Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer and is one of the co-founders of the firm's global Black Affinity Network.

Mobilising our talent to connect, learn and grow

Kanya King

Founder and CEO of MOBO, Kanya King, introduces MOBOLISE, an online platform connecting under-represented talent to organisations. Enabling people of all ages to network with leaders and employers from different industries, it aims to help reverse inequalities and showcase the skills and passion of those within the black community.

I grew up surrounded by many talented creatives who were frustrated by the lack of awareness and opportunities out there, particularly for those from black and ethnic minority backgrounds. I recognised a particular void in the music industry, which instilled in me a drive to empower others to realise their potential. So, in 1996, I launched MOBO – and since then, we have discovered and supported talent in music, film and TV.

MOBO is built on the idea that creativity is a powerful expression of identity, capable of transcending racial and cultural divides. It's an effective tool, not only for social activism, but also for business success. And it has huge impact on increasing profit and influencing diversity of thinking within companies, meeting the needs of employees and consumers, today and in the future.

In recent years, our work has driven change within film, theatre and the media, and we wanted to create a way of expanding that into the wider business world. So, in 2020, we introduced MOBOLISE, an online platform to connect under-represented talent to organisations. MOBOLISE offers the chance for people of all ages to network with leaders and employees from different industries to gain mentorship, boost confidence, find vacancies, showcase skills and attend networking and mentoring events.

It aims to meet both the growing demand for new jobs expected in 2021 and the changing future of work and the skills that will be needed. We want talent to connect, learn and grow from other individuals.

> There is a whole generation of talent being wasted who have the drive, determination and passion to succeed

Elitism and lack of connections

If you come from a disadvantaged background, or you don't live in a city and so cannot access a network easily, it's very difficult to get into 'aspirational' companies because many of them focus too much on educational qualifications or an 'elite' background. There is a whole generation of talent being wasted who have the drive, determination and passion to succeed. Black talent may not be inclined to enter the creative and tech industries due to lack of connections; they don't have the same access to opportunities as many Caucasian candidates due to bias in the hiring process and practices.

There is also a lack of role models who look like them and to whom they can relate. So, a platform such as MOBOLISE has the potential to be transformative because we also provide mentors. It's not just about putting talent into organisations, it's about providing the support network people need to survive and, more importantly, thrive.

We developed the platform in conjunction with Accenture, with the aim of reversing inequalities and showcasing the skills of those within the black community who have the passion and ability to work for big businesses in these influential sectors.

Taking positive action

It is not acceptable to see the level of under-representation of black talent in the tech and creative sectors, when these are industries that are shaping the world. In 2020, the world woke up to the scale of injustice black people face in society, and we have seen many positive strides from those who want to make a difference. But we need advocates and allies who are prepared to take action at all times, not just when it's in the news, to ensure this is front of mind.

Sadly, many companies have created a working environment that provides incentives based on a majority culture, which often means minorities feel unable to be their true selves. When you are the 'other' in an organisation, it is a very lonely and isolating place.

Ultimately, the business case for increasing diversity is out there; studies show that more diverse, gender-balanced teams outperform those which are less diverse. It is great for the bottom line, including increasing shareholder value. So, this is not a societal argument, it's a commercial one.

It is clear there's no silver bullet. Organisations need to set clear goals, scrutinise their existing data and compare it over time. Efforts must be ongoing. You can increase accountability and transparency around these issues, which is what the new generation of talent expects. Doing or saying nothing reflects a lot about what organisations stand for and their values.

> Sadly, many companies have created a working environment that provides incentives based on a majority culture

Be an everyday ally

People in the everyday workplace need to ensure that their companies are an inclusive place for all kinds of people to work, but also belong. While no company is perfect, employers can make sure they take the steps necessary to be transparent, take an inventory of where they're at and know what steps need to be taken next.

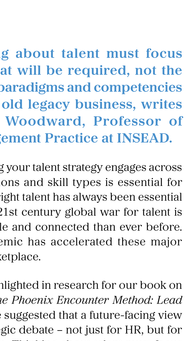
I would encourage all leaders to engage with internal and external networks and platforms to ensure minorities in the business are being listened to and can contribute to the decision-making process. Networks can also provide a platform to prompt difficult conversations, which many organisations have not had until this year.

The challenges of 2020 included a lot of talk about the future of work following the pandemic. With the rise in remote working, there's a new kind of digital economy that's inevitable now. As sectors move on to invest in a new kind of human capital in the coming years, it's important for organisations to consider where the opportunities will be, what skills they will require, and how they can prepare for these new areas of demand.

The world needs to focus on this new decade of opportunity, driven by an ideas economy and powered by untapped diversity of thinking. We hope that MOBOLISE is the catalyst for change.

Kanya King CBE is CEO and founder of MOBO. Since its inception in 1996, Kanya has built MOBO into a globally respected brand that engages with business and political leaders and allies with cultural icons and creative visionaries. With Kanya's expert guidance, the MOBO organisation has established itself as a champion of diversity, inclusion and recognition for BME talent within music, culture, arts, fashion, media and larger society as a whole.

Why dexterity depends on reimagining learning and development



Ian C Woodward

Thinking about talent must focus on what will be required, not the talent paradigms and competencies of the old legacy business, writes Ian C Woodward, Professor of Management Practice at INSEAD.

Ensuring your talent strategy engages across generations and skill types is essential for workforce dexterity. Having the right talent has always been essential for successful enterprises. The 21st century global war for talent is intense, with people more mobile and connected than ever before. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated these major changes in the global talent marketplace.

Trends related to talent were highlighted in research for our book on strategic leadership thinking, *The Phoenix Encounter Method: Lead Like Your Business Is On Fire!* We suggested that a future-facing view of talent must be central in strategic debate – not just for HR, but for the entire senior leadership team. Thinking about talent must focus on what will be required, not the talent paradigms and competencies of the old legacy business.

Our research showed that profound changes to traditional HR practices would be required to attract, develop, motivate and retain talent, as well as to match the flexibility needs of firms and talent alike. Post-COVID, talent solutions demand dexterity at individual, team and cross-organisational levels. One absolute key is to reimagine learning and development.

> **“Managing in COVID’s remote-working environment has demonstrated the need for strong interpersonal and collaboration skills”**

This moves hand-in-hand with more flexible workplace arrangements, modalities and policies combined with harnessing technology – not just to make work dexterous, but to gain efficiencies, releasing resources to accelerate talent development. Just consider two matters for the future-facing talent-development agenda.

Future skills and competencies will be very different, and modes of employee engagement will change. This paradigm shift began pre-COVID, affecting not only recruitment and retention policies/procedures, but also ongoing learning, development and training.

A 2017 McKinsey survey of young people and employers in nine countries found that educational systems have not kept pace with the changing nature of work, and many employers say they cannot find enough workers with the skills they need. Some 40% of employers said lack of skills was the main reason for entry-level job vacancies, and 60% said new graduates were not adequately prepared for the world of work.

Talent and skill gaps await both legacy and disruptive firms. Companies still need the technical skills to do things such as chemical engineering, mechanical engineering and actuarial studies, even if they are aided by new technologies such as artificial intelligence. Proportionately fewer millennials and members of Generation Z are graduating with such skills.

There also appear to be gaps in connecting sophisticated soft skills together with technical skills, usually those built from extended work experience. Surprisingly, a 2016 study from the Educational Training Service found that US millennials consistently scored below many of their international peers in literacy, numeracy and problem-solving in technology-rich environments.

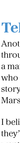
Managing in COVID’s remote-working environment has demonstrated the need for strong interpersonal and collaboration skills together with sustaining technical excellence (or fast adoption of new technologies or business models). Future learning and development must therefore work at breadth and depth in talent – as individuals, and across the entire talent pool. Organisations not creating talent-development solutions that engage across generations and skill types will face serious talent acquisition and retention issues, as well as higher costs.

The future view is well beyond promoting a culture of learning from failing, with intense knowledge and perspective sharing. Dexterity demands providing different ways of learning at depth and breadth – combining relevant technical and soft skills – and always challenging these to adapt to the velocity of business innovation.

Ian C Woodward is a Professor of Management Practice at INSEAD, Director of its flagship leadership course, the Advanced Management Programme, and co-author of **The Phoenix Encounter Method: Lead Like Your Business Is On Fire!** *(2020). He also co-authored academic research article The Global War for Talent (2009).*

Diversity and upskilling: developing talent acquisition during a recruitment pause

What happens to talent acquisition professionals when one of the world's biggest professional services firms goes on a recruitment pause? They spend time upskilling their teams, focusing on diversity and celebrating their story, says Joe Archila, Head of the Talent Acquisition Programme Office at Marsh & McLennan Companies.



One of the key commitments our executive leadership team communicated to colleagues when the COVID-19 pandemic hit was that no one was going to lose their job. Yes, we had to shut down our recruiting for a couple of months from March, but we're now beginning to see an uptick in hiring, particularly in parts of our business that weren't impacted as strongly, such as insurance and re-insurance.

During this downturn, we focused on upskilling our recruiters. Part of it was around our tools and technology, really drilling down into the platforms we use to hone our skills and better understand their impact, as well as retraining on unconscious bias.

We spent more time studying our businesses – and I think this is key to the success of talent acquisition. We have four business units with different models. For our recruiters to be most effective, they need to understand the business they're supporting. So, we invited guest speakers from each specialty to drill down into what those businesses need, alongside conducting deep-dive research into how they operate. We had the luxury of bandwidth to do this and I believe it's not on the agenda enough for recruiters.

> Job seekers today want to know where they're going and if yours is a place they'll feel good about working in

Tell your story

Another big shift we made – and this took shape as we were going through COVID – was to revamp our careers website. Our old site was a marketing wall of words and pretty pictures. Our new site speaks to who we are, what we believe in and what we celebrate. It's all about storytelling, with colleagues sharing what they love about working at Marsh & McLennan and why they're here.

I believe that's what job seekers want today. They want to know where they're going and if it's a place they'll feel good about working in. They want to know if they'll be able to grow their careers and do fun and exciting things. In an average year, we get 150,000-200,000 applicants, and I want to see the career site increase our applicant flow.

The career site also speaks to another of our key targets – increasing diversity. Gender diversity is a focus and we recently won three FAIRYGODBOSS awards for our efforts here: best company, best CEO focused on gender diversity, and best company for women in finance. We're very proud of that. We'd like to do more in terms of showing up and being part of the conversation with other groups, such as working parents and the LGBTQ community, to show that we're an employer of choice, striving to increase the diversity of our workforce.

An obvious focus has been hiring more black colleagues. Our CEO has been publicly vocal about doing so, and we've formed an internal Race Advisory Council – whose initial focus will be on the black community – to meet with our executive committee on a regular basis, as well as working closer with our employee resource groups. The challenge for organisations is that we're all competing with each other for the same talent pool. We believe that to win, you have to show up as an employer of choice. You have to be the place people want to go to work, which is why our new enterprise career site is so important.

The future

As the COVID vaccine becomes widely available, we're going to see a big shift back towards a job seeker's market. The corporate world was shielded from the worst of the pandemic in many ways, as we could go almost 100% virtual, unlike the retail and hospitality industries. However, it's still going to be competitive, so recruiters will need to understand the talent landscape and make it easy for candidates to understand who you are as an organisation, what you stand for and where you're going.

Finally – technology. There's been a big shift towards artificial intelligence, chatbots and machine learning. Be careful how far you swing the pendulum. Leverage technology where it makes sense, but make sure you have personal interaction where it brings you closer to candidates, creates an advantage and strikes a balance – with the goal to make the end-to-end candidate experience better.

The view from AMS: Kristin Thomas

Marsh & McLennan has been an AMS client since April 2018. Back at the start of our relationship, some of their strategic goals specific to recruitment were to streamline administrative processes globally, while ensuring a positive candidate experience and a high level of scalability. As a result, we provide end-to-end recruitment for lower-level roles in North America, the UK and Australia, and administrative support for roles outside of our scope in many other countries globally.

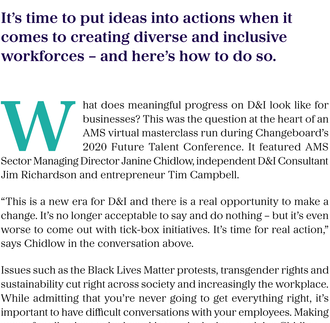
Having previously castigated workers for their resistance to change, a new story has emerged: people are actually very good at change when everybody knows why

Margaret Heffernan, Author

JUMP TO PAGE 43

TO READ
THE ARTICLE

Putting D&I at the heart of your talent strategy



Play video

It's time to put ideas into actions when it comes to creating diverse and inclusive workforces – and here's how to do so.

What does meaningful progress on D&I look like for businesses? This was the question at the heart of an AMS virtual masterclass run during Changeboard's 2020 Future Talent Conference. It featured AMS Sector Managing Director Janine Chidlow, independent D&I Consultant Jim Richardson and entrepreneur Tim Campbell.

"This is a new era for D&I and there is a real opportunity to make a change. It's no longer acceptable to say and do nothing – but it's even worse to come out with tick-box initiatives. It's time for real action," says Chidlow in the conversation above.

Issues such as the Black Lives Matter protests, transgender rights and sustainability cut right across society and increasingly the workplace. While admitting that you're never going to get everything right, it's important to have difficult conversations with your employees. Making space for all voices to be heard is true inclusion, explains Chidlow.

For Campbell, real progress is actually about taking a step back and first acknowledging privilege – whether racial, gender or societal. Only then can you begin to build a more diverse workforce, he argues.

Second, it's important to treat diversity like any other business requirement and listen to experts.

> It's no longer acceptable to say and do nothing

"The problem with diversity is that often it's the person being discriminated against who has to come up with the solutions," says Campbell. "If you were dealing with risk, you'd bring in experts to deliver results. It's wrong to expect employees to create solutions as well as doing their day jobs," he adds.

This is why many organisations are creating dedicated leadership roles for D&I. A 2020 report by LinkedIn found that job postings for chief diversity officers grew by more than 100% in the 45 days after the Black Lives Matter protests began. But is creating high-powered positions enough?

Ultimately, it's about changing cultures – and that has to come from the top. However, the business case for increased diversity is already clear, says Jim Richardson, citing numerous reports from McKinsey, Deloitte and PwC that show more diverse workforces perform better financially.

He believes that business leaders need to be braver when it comes to creating diverse teams.

"I'd love companies to invest in people who don't fit quite as well as they might initially think, and then train them up. I want organisations to look in different talent pools to where they normally do. To really make a difference, you need to hire people who aren't an exact match to you," he says.

Boardrooms are failing on diversity

More than a third of FTSE100 companies are set to miss a government target to have at least one director from an ethnic minority by 2021, according to the Parker review. The figures, released in February 2020, show that 37% of FTSE100 companies had no non-white board members. At FTSE250 level, things were even worse: 69% of businesses had all-white boards.

Robust and resilient

Margaret Heffernan

Organisations can only be resilient if the people within them are healthy and resilient too, argues author Margaret Heffernan.

The arrival of COVID-19 heralded a volte-face in management behaviour. According to McKinsey, leaders became more intent on caring about their staff and fostering an environment of trust and openness – while less focused on customers and competition. Deeper research by Professor Veronica Hope-Hailey found that the more trust leaders gave to their workforce, the more they got in return. Having previously castigated workers for their resistance to change, a new story has emerged: people are actually very good at change when everybody knows why.

What's perhaps more surprising is that it took a pandemic to remind bosses that companies depend on their workers. Automate all you like, businesses need human beings to run the show, to respond to customers, to have ideas and execute them. And if those individuals aren't themselves healthy and resilient, the business can't be either.

A resilient organisation is one that may suffer setbacks but still has the capacity to recover. In an age when so much is uncertain and unpredictable, resilience is an essential source of security. The defining features of resilient organisations aren't magical, they just have to be taken seriously as strategic necessities – not optional extras.

Agency influences commitment

Productivity is fundamental. Experiments from 1888 to the present day show that human productivity declines after about 40 hours of work a week. Why? Because after that, brains get tired and make mistakes, so the extra hours are spent cleaning up the mess. Sure, you can keep going a bit longer in crunch mode, but when long days and weeks become the norm, people develop tunnel vision and burn out, which means they can't think creatively, make good decisions or bring any energy or initiative to their work. Losing a night's sleep is cognitively equivalent to being over the alcohol limit. No company seeking resilience wants a workforce that is mentally drunk, though many work their people that way. But organisations that keep their people healthy, rested and alert acquire real stamina.

Agency increases commitment: having some control over how you work. I care more about work involving decisions I've made for myself. That's the big win in flexible working. It isn't a charter for slackers, it's an opportunity for ownership. I am more accountable for work that I feel is mine.

> "People are actually very good at change when everybody knows why"

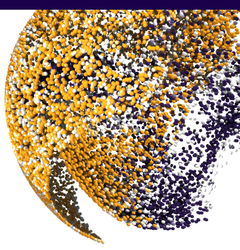
Work is (as we've rediscovered) social. Social capital – the norms of generosity, reciprocity and trust – flourish when people have the time to develop relationships with co-workers that are more than transactional. People who care about each other easily share ideas and information; that's how problems get identified and good ideas develop. It's also why some companies ban coffee cups at desks, encouraging people to hang out around coffee machines to talk to each other! The Swedes even have a special term for this – *fika* – which means more than a coffee break because it implies 'collective restoration'.

Bonds, loyalty and trust

When I interviewed leaders whose organisations had survived existential threats, many found the memories so intense that they wept. Which prompted my question: "What enabled you to survive so gut-wrenching an experience?" Each gave the same answer: "My colleagues. We kept going for each other." One added: "Longevity counts; it was pretty much the opposite of the gig economy."

Unsurprisingly, as the pandemic unfolded, market analysts started to view gig economy businesses with a more critical eye. Structural dependence on workers with little agency, long hours and no social capital increases fragility and amplifies risk. Companies don't have ideas; only people do. And what gives organisations resilience isn't rules and mission statements, but the bonds and loyalty and trust that people develop between each other. The health of every organisation, we now see, can't flourish if the people aren't healthy too.

Margaret Heffernan is an entrepreneur, CEO, writer and keynote speaker. Her latest book, **Uncharted: How to Map the Future Together**, *was published in 2020, exploring the people and organisations who aren't daunted by uncertainty.*



Supporting people through the pandemic

COVID-19 has brought issues around mental health and wellbeing into sharp focus. So, how has AMS supported colleagues through the trauma and uncertainty?

Philippa Williams, Head of Talent Development, AMS

Over the past year, wellbeing has been at the core of everything. We've tried to create a sense of community and belonging, which has such a strong impact on people's wellbeing. When COVID-19 struck, we had an immediate response. As a team, we mobilised and produced content, resources and toolkits to arm our people around managing uncertainty and working remotely.

We specifically chose to focus on wellness toolkits, thinking about the different categories of individuals working for us. That was key: whether people were isolated, homeschooling their children, or facing financial insecurity, we thought about the impact on our people. We worked really hard to create a forum where people felt comfortable to share stories, encouraging our leaders to be open about their vulnerabilities. This helped us create a sense of community.

We've also run some overt campaigns, such as hooking into Mental Health Awareness week last May. We have 60 mental health ambassadors around the globe and they stepped forward to run wellness and yoga sessions. Our D&I and wellness teams jointly created the theme #kindnessmatters, and that was very well timed, given COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter protests.

> We're all dealing with stress and ongoing anxiety. Compassion fatigue is something we can relate to

Adapting as things change

As the pandemic wore on, things changed. Initially, people with existing anxieties were the ones we focused on, but as the months went by, these issues became normal for everyone. We're all dealing with stress and ongoing anxiety, and compassion fatigue is something we can relate to. You're taking on everyone's stresses and it can be hard. This is why we switched to focusing on burnout at the end of the year, taking on more external support.

One of our biggest successes was our first Global Recognition Day, which was an excellent way to end the year. The idea of #kindnessmatters really carried through; simply telling people that they're doing well and you're thankful for their work did wonders, whether through one-to-one sessions, kudos boards or Zoom breakfasts. It was a really uplifting experience and it moved people in a way they didn't expect to be moved.

Tanya-Marie Nichols, Head of HR Americas, AMS

One of the key ways in which we're successfully improving wellbeing is by combining it with other focuses. If we can combine wellness with D&I, that's what we do. So, if we're doing a walk, it's going to be a Pride Walk. If we're going to run a community service, it's going to be dog walking. We're always trying to combine different strands and to make them as fun as possible.

When disrupted by the COVID pandemic, we created weekly meetings and check-ins with our people. These worked well at the start, but as we progressed, we realised it was too much. Our people were at different levels. Some were dealing with trauma, while others simply needed a distraction. We started as nurses and doctors trying to take care of everybody, but we soon realised we couldn't keep going at that pace, so began to partner with other people. As Philippa highlights above, compassion fatigue is something we had to deal with.

> Creating a safe space for our people to simply say 'I'm tired' has been vital

Creating space to talk

We talk a lot about burnout in America. We all want to be strong performers, but we've been working at 500% in an unheard of environment for almost a year now. You have to narrow your focus, otherwise you're going to slip up. Creating a safe space for our people to simply say "I'm tired" has been vital.

The #kindnessmatters campaign came out at the time of George Floyd's death and Black Lives Matter. It became our mantra in the US – the simplicity of being kind and treating everyone the same. Our mental health ambassadors were focusing on stress and anxiety, but many of them were not armed with the tools to deal with issues around systemic racism. Allowing our people to be honest and share their experiences helped.

For example, on our D&I day, we had lots of sessions on Microsoft Teams where people shared their stories around diversity. However, for me, the best bit was the little comments box on the side of the screen. This was where people who aren't necessarily brave enough to speak out felt comfortable enough to talk and make comments. All you have to do is start the debate and create a safe space for people to talk openly.

To be effective in talent acquisition, there are huge advantages to having both the scale of a global team, and a local presence and identity, wherever clients are recruiting

Mike Brown, Global Managing Director of Operations, AMS

JUMP TO PAGE 46

TO READ
THE ARTICLE

Delivering simplification, globalisation and growth

We take a look behind the scenes at AMS's Global Operations – the engine room of the company – talking to senior leaders about their team's important role in improving services for clients.

Mike Brown
Global Managing Director of Operations

Last year saw the creation of AMS's new Global Operations team. You might think that 'operations' refers to 'behind the scenes' activity, but for AMS, operations is about delivering great client service. Our operations team handles the process from new role requisitions through to onboarding for all the permanent and contingent hiring; of our 1,700-strong team around the globe, some 1,200 are client facing day to day. The team also manages the implementation process for our solutions and the development and maintenance of our technology platforms.

In a rapidly changing talent environment, it's important to bring simplification, consistency and best practice to all of our clients – learning from what we do well across multiple sectors and regions, and providing surety and confidence. To achieve this, we are implementing a simplification strategy with the aim of delivering better outcomes: better insights for hiring managers, better shortlists, better engagement with candidates throughout the process and, ultimately, happier candidates and clients.

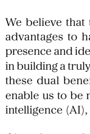
We believe that to be effective in talent acquisition, there are huge advantages to having both the scale of a global team, and a local presence and identity, wherever clients are recruiting. Having invested in building a truly global operations team, we are well placed to deliver these dual benefits. As technology in talent evolves, our scale will enable us to be more effective in putting new tools, such as artificial intelligence (AI), to best use.

Given the speed with which workforce dexterity is evolving, delivering creativity and innovation is also paramount. For example, we have led on applying automation to our processes where possible and sensible, we are at the cutting edge of insights, and we have deployed best practice in implementing complex global RPO solutions. We have an ambitious programme of further innovation built around use of data, AI and machine learning and effective systems integration.

By simplifying (allowing our people to do what they do best), leveraging our scale and local understanding, and continuing to innovate and create, we aim to continue to build true workforce dexterity for both clients and candidates.

> In a rapidly changing talent environment, it's important to bring simplification, consistency and best practice to all of our clients

Jolanta Gantkowska
Managing Director of Operations Strategy & Performance



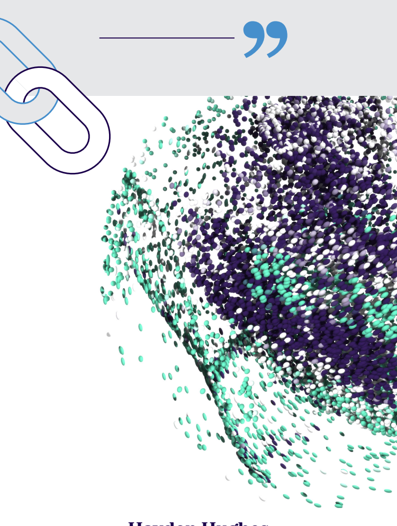
We have a network of seven Global Client Service Centres (GCSCs) – in Bracknell and Belfast (UK), Krakow and Gdansk (Poland), Manila (Philippines), Shanghai (China) and Cleveland (US) – delivering to more than 60 countries and supporting clients in 40-plus languages. We also provide shared services to AMS, delivering HR, finance, procurement and accounting services globally.

Characterised by continuous improvement and innovation, which has always been in our DNA, the GCSCs enable us to provide a global capability with in-country/regional presence. We have more than 2,000 employees working in them, around 90% of whom deliver recruiting, sourcing, administration, business intelligence, performance management and compliance services to our clients.

To help streamline our more repetitive processes, we have developed 'robots' which support recruiting, sourcing and administration (for example, in interview scheduling). We have around 21 automation solutions confirmed for implementation this year, for both new and existing clients. These robots generate significant improvements in candidate experience, increasing the chances of a successful hire. We also run a Digital Automation Centre of Excellence from our Polish Service Centre.

Continuing our themes of growing scale and local relevance is a key goal for 2021. This will translate into building a more agile location strategy, ensuring we provide the right level of flexibility for our clients and colleagues, and tapping into talent markets where we haven't been present up to now. We will be developing new locations (for example, Mexico) and also further leveraging the opportunities of remote working.

> Continuous improvement and innovation has always been in our DNA



Hayden Hughes
Global Head of Permanent Sourcing

In our permanent sourcing business, we receive in excess of 2.7m candidate applications and interview 400,000 individuals each year. Having the right team in place to support this is paramount, so upskilling and training have been a priority for us in the past year.

In 2020, we developed our Sourcing Academy, which was built on the foundation of our Talent Adviser and Trusted Adviser training programmes – both recently highlighted by NelsonHall for their quality and delivery. This year will see an extension of that training, including the development of our own proprietary training.

Historically, we have used the tech and systems (such as applicant-tracking systems and CRM tools) that clients have purchased. But we want to move from tech agnostic to tech expert, so we have built our own proprietary sourcing technology. This will enable us to simplify what we do and to innovate more effectively.

Our sourcing toolkit will blend our own technology, capability and data alongside strategic partnerships with select third parties. This means we can harness large sets of real-time candidate data – spanning skills, employers, location, salary, gender dynamics and talent/skills availability; predictive analytics and future trend analysis – as well as measuring and proactively managing unconscious bias.

Last year, we extensively reviewed our own process and capability across geography, industry and hiring type. As a result, we have taken further steps to ensure hiring manager and candidate experience sit at the heart of sourcing, developing an engaging process with both in mind at each and every step.

> We have taken further steps to ensure hiring manager and candidate experience sit at the heart of sourcing

Robert Łężny
Global Head of Permanent Administration

The complexity of global recruitment processes, which often involve multiple locations, client functions and needs, can make them difficult to co-ordinate, so the Administration team is on hand to put the pieces together. We support clients at any stage of the recruitment process, regardless of sector, size or status.

Co-ordinating with hiring managers, candidates and other third-party providers, we work across the end-to-end recruitment process for permanent hires, including requisition management, interview scheduling, offer management, onboarding and helpdesk, plus additional tasks such as audits, invoicing and reporting.

Taking care of hiring in this way allows our clients to focus on their core business and ensure there are no blockers or delays. Our ultimate goal is to enable the AMS team to hire top talent and ensure the experience is positive for all.

We are strongly driven by a performance culture – so processes, performance measurement and technology are key for us. We are constantly seeking improvements and efficiency opportunities (including automation) while also being flexible and open to changing circumstances.

Accuracy and time are important metrics. Our knowledge and tools allow us to make a difference from a process governance perspective, which may be translated into reduced time to offer, better client and candidate satisfaction and improved data quality.

> We are constantly seeking improvements and efficiency opportunities while also being flexible and open to changing circumstances

Madeleine Lawson
Global Head of Implementation and Transformation

Our Implementation and Transformation team primarily focuses on implementing new client solutions: developing and deploying complex end-to-end processes, putting in place and training large teams, and deploying new technologies. We are also responsible for supporting our existing customers with transformations, either managing changes to the entire solution, or focusing on improved automation, technologies or innovation.

The RPO market has continued to mature and evolve in recent years with a new level of sophistication, knowledge and expectation. In general, demand is moving towards a globalised approach with consistent processes, improved automation, intelligence and standardisation – this is much more efficient, scalable and cost-effective. Around half of our implementations are now global or multiregional. Given these changes, our role is to listen and to understand our clients' needs, ensuring that what we implement meets their strategic goals.

One of the impacts of COVID-19 is that clients are now entertaining new possibilities and ideas for implementation. We were all suddenly forced to work in a very different way, delivering activities within a project remotely. The pandemic has proved, for instance, that we do not need to relocate 250 individuals to a live training room halfway across a region or country, at considerable expense. We can deliver training remotely, with no serious impact on our effectiveness at go-live. We are challenging ourselves to think differently, to behave differently and to be more open-minded and innovative in how we deliver.

> The demand is trending towards globalised, consistent processes and standardisation – this approach is much more efficient, scalable and cost-effective

Jeff Owen
Managing Director of Contingent Workforce Solutions

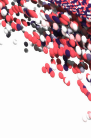
We have a team of around 300 contingent operators delivering recruiting, sourcing and administration services to clients. We hire some 12,000 workers a year for our customers across private and public sectors, and we process 28,000 contract extensions.

We are customer facing and innovative – we talk to customers about demand planning and how we can help best fit that plan in terms of future skills needs. We then execute on those plans with targeted delivery and by building strong customer relationships. Within our contingent operation, we work with our own applicant-tracking system, customer-relationship system and others; this allows us to flex rapidly to reflect changes in client demand and to add swift innovations to our offer.

The administration side is critical for contingent hiring as we are overseeing workers once they have started. We are offering, onboarding, conducting pre-employment screening, adjusting pay rates, extending contracts and offboarding people on an ongoing basis. Currently, we have a headcount of around 23,000 workers, either managed directly or through our partners, who are responsible for a number of other key projects for our clients on an ad-hoc basis. It could be anything from auto pension enrolment changes or an uplift in the minimum working wage, through to simple contract changes, which amounts to hundreds of thousands of transactions per year.

> We are customer facing and innovative – we talk to customers about demand planning and how we can help best fit that plan in terms of future skills needs

Andrew Wayland
Managing Director of Technology



Our focus is to ensure the complex mix of technologies that support our solutions is deployed securely and effectively. Wherever possible, we integrate our systems with those of our clients and deploy our best-practice process automations.

Being able to provide talent analytics to our clients is also fundamental to our value proposition, so we capture as much data as possible, subject to GDPR. Insightful analytics enable our clients to make better strategic workforce-planning decisions. We are continuously developing innovative new ways of using data to deliver measurable business outcomes for our clients and ultimately helping to deliver a more dexterous workforce.

There are many ways in which we are leveraging technology. One critical success factor in talent acquisition is for sourcers to have access to the best tools, helping them to move quickly and engage directly with candidates, reducing time spent emailing and searching. AI-matching tools and robotic process automation (RPA) technologies are becoming key to this. We have a world-class interview-scheduling technology platform which organises remote meetings, complex assessment centres and back-to-back meetings and video interviews – all delivered to candidates in a mobile-enabled solution. It works in 10 different languages and across multiple time zones.

Despite our fears around human obsolescence, robots will never replace people in talent acquisition. I believe we are creating technology-augmented humans – cyborgs – that can help us win the war for talent. The winners will be the ones that are able to master the technology and make best use of it.

> Insightful analytics enable our clients to make better strategic workforce-planning decisions

Giving back to the community at Cornerstone

Global technology firm and AMS partner, Cornerstone OnDemand, have introduced a freely-available online learning platform to help people in times of uncertainty.

The coronavirus pandemic caused unprecedented disruption to the way we think, work and live. Worldwide stay at home orders shook global supply chains and businesses had to quickly adapt operations and suddenly become a remote workforce overnight.

In response to this extraordinary event, people development solutions company, Cornerstone OnDemand, launched an online learning platform, Cornerstone Cares, in March 2020 to aid people's learning at a time of increased uncertainty. The platform, made freely available to the public, features dedicated learning playlists with courses, tools and general information on topics that are important in helping people adapt to the new normal.

Each learning playlist on Cornerstone Cares consists of a mix of nanolearning, microlearning and longer-form content, tailoring to every type of learner and their needs. Playlist topics includes best practices on working from home, unconscious bias, stress management and prevention and control of the coronavirus, with new courses being added on a regular basis to reflect the changing situation.

Some 162,000 people have already visited the Cornerstone Cares portal and more than 26,000 have signed up to access the free training materials. The number of course registrations has totalled 176,541 so far and most users partake in six courses on average. Unconscious bias has proven to be a prevalent topic on the portal with the *How Unconscious Bias Affects Your Work, Whether You Know It or Not*, and *Why Everyone Has Unconscious Bias* topping the list of most popular courses among users.

Cornerstone felt it was important to share its technology, expertise and resources with those who may not have access to this type of training content. No crisis has had a bigger impact on the workforce and bringing unity among the HR community has never been more important. As we look to the future and navigate the permanent changes that the pandemic will leave behind, Cornerstone is committed to supporting a stronger and more connected community through future solutions like Cornerstone Cares.

Visit Cornerstone Cares

Cornerstone

AMS is proud to partner with an array of amazing campaigns, social enterprises and charities globally. Here, we shine the spotlight on just a few of the partnerships we've developed. Take some time to review their websites and join their voices on social media.

North America
Hire Heroes USA

Hire Heroes USA empowers service members, veterans and their spouses to succeed in the civilian workforce.

Twitter

LinkedIn

UK
Recruit for Spouses

An independent social enterprise that improves employment opportunities for the partners of serving members of the British Armed Forces.

Twitter

LinkedIn

UK
Change the Race Ratio

A business-led campaign to improve racial and ethnic diversity in UK boardrooms. #changetheraceratio

Twitter

LinkedIn

UK
Bridge of Hope

Highlights current employment opportunities with progressive companies and organisations which embrace "Inclusive Recruitment".

Twitter

LinkedIn

Philippines
Project Pearls

To help the poorest of children in the Philippines to have a better life by giving them PEARLS: peace, education, aspiration, respect, love and smiles.

PEACE • EDUCATION • ASPIRATION • RESPECT • LOVE • SMILES

Twitter

Facebook

Singapore
Club Rainbow

Supports and empowers children with chronic illnesses and their families by providing compassionate and relevant services in their journey towards an enriching life.

LinkedIn

Facebook

Hong Kong
Society for Community Organization (SoCO)

Society for Community Organization (SoCO) is a non-profit organisation dedicated to relieving poverty and advocating for civic rights. SoCO serves the most underprivileged in Hong Kong.

LinkedIn

Facebook

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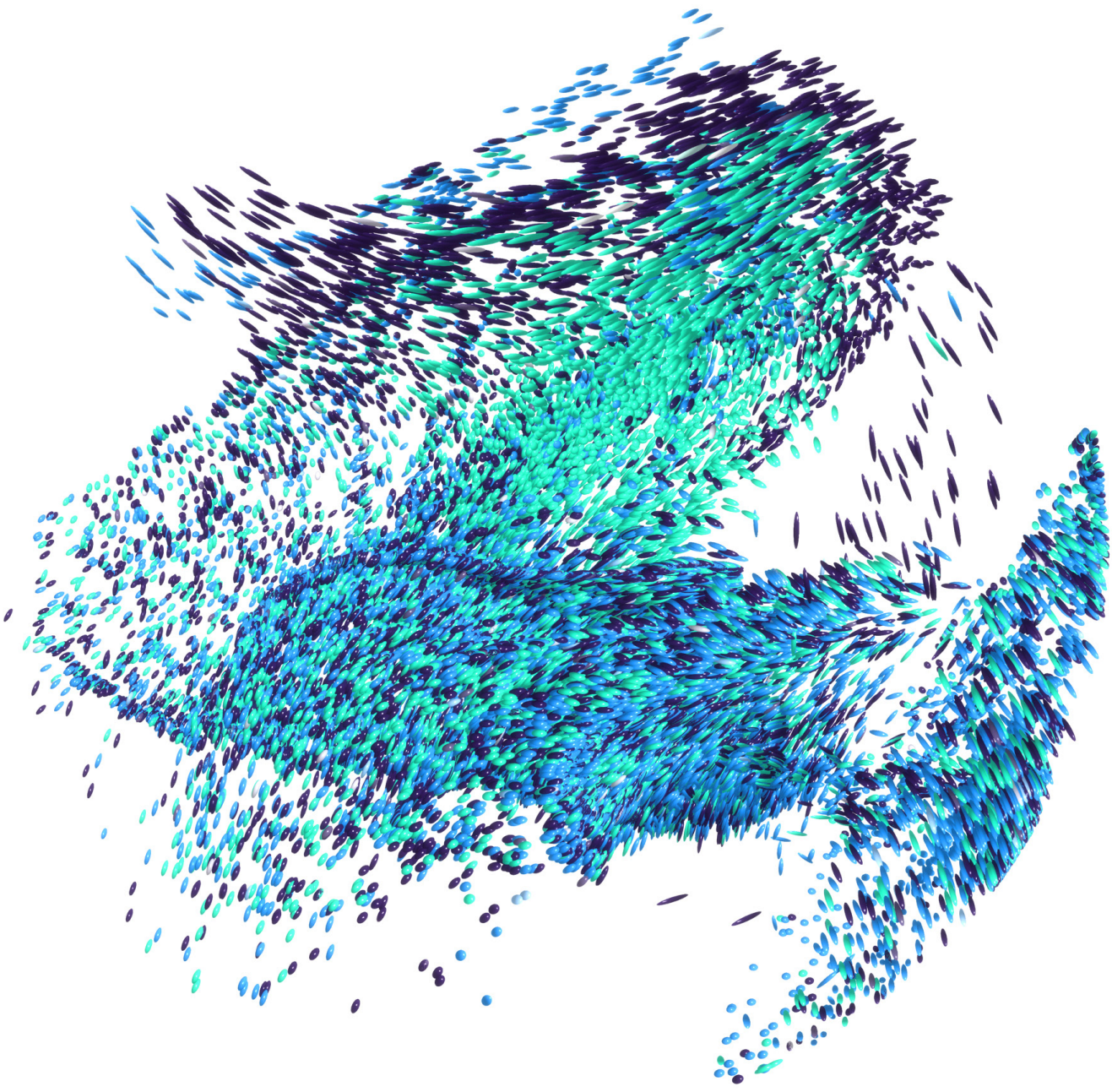

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