



JENINE WARD | DIRECTOR

Jenine leads our Crone Corkill City division, specialists in Executive Assistants and Business Support, bringing her own wealth of experience in business support recruitment to the management of both temporary and permanent teams.

uk.linkedin.com/pub/jenine-ward/14/762/990

@cronecorkill

98% of respondents expect their performance to either increase or remain the same in the coming year.

SME's are experiencing recruitment difficulties due to a lack of a company brand presence.

Talent attraction is the key factor when allocating recruitment budgets.

Season ticket loans have become increasingly popular as a benefit to encourage retention.

In the discipline that you recruit for, what are the talent shortages you are encountering?

TOP THREE

Senior PA's

Corporate Receptionists

Advanced Microsoft Office

EXPECTATIONS ON PERFORMANCE

2014 continues to see a sharp rise in both temporary and permanent vacancies throughout the Executive Assistant & Business Support sector, a trend that was evident throughout 2013. 98% of the clients surveyed envisage they will either maintain or increase their headcount over the next 12 months. This figure is up 9% over the last 6 months and up 48% from 12 months ago, when only half of the respondents were confident enough to predict a stable or increasing headcount.

Coupled with these encouraging statistics is a rise in expected performance over the next 12 months. 89% of clients who were surveyed were confident and optimistic of their company's ability to either maintain or enhance its performance over the next 12 months.

Concern over the economy continues to drop at a rapid pace from 45% to 36%, due to its continued stability over the last couple of years. This continues a downward trend that we have seen across the last two surveys and is a 28% decrease over the last 12 months. In its place, there is increasing concern around the ability to recruit top talent to fill new vacancies. 47% of respondents cited this as the biggest challenge to their business over the coming 12 months.

RECRUITMENT

Reports are consistently showing a rise in both temporary and permanent placements throughout 2014, sustaining a trend we have seen over the last two surveys. The Executive Assistants & Business Support sector doesn't show any signs of this dissipating, if anything an upward trend seems more likely.

This however provides some problematic ramifications. The increase in demand for talent has given rise to the challenge of finding it. Quality and qualified candidates are scarce in what is a diminishing talent pool of Business Support Staff and Executive Assistants. 37% of our Crone Corkill respondents quoted a lack of qualified talent in the marketplace as their biggest difficulty when trying to attract new talent to their business. This figure is up 3% since our Winter Report and is a growing trend throughout all of the job sectors.

A lack of quality company brand presence is seen as the second biggest difficulty according to our survey of respondents, sharply rising to 34% since our Winter Survey. SMEs in particular are experiencing this difficulty; however this does suggest there is promising signs of growth in smaller firms.

Talent attraction places high on the list of priorities when it comes to budgeting for recruitment campaigns. Our Crone Corkill respondents focus initially on company performance which was emphasised by 40% of the vote, however, up 7% from 12 months ago is talent attraction with 38% of the vote. It may be food for thought for organisations developing recruitment strategies to prioritise this element higher in the initial strategy development process.

RETENTION

The most popular retention tool remains training and development, at 38%. Its popularity hasn't altered since our last survey where it scored the same. This suggests that although there are strategies in place, significant breakthroughs are yet to be made to unlock the full potential of training and development schemes as retention tools.

As the 'war for talent' continues to enjoy its resurgence, the need to provide added incentives and benefits to current packages has become evident in an effort to ward off rival competitors. For this reason changing or enhancing benefit packages is seen by Crone Corkill's respondents as the second most effective retention tool over the last 6 months, with 21% of the vote. On the other hand, the appetite for fiscal rewards as a retention tool has decreased, with 16% of respondents now prepared to offer enhanced compensation, compared to 25% this time last year.

Benefit packages have seen a marked change over the last few years, with more niche benefits being tried and tested to gauge their effectiveness as retention tools. Traditionally, private health care enjoys the most success in the Executive Assistants & Business Support industry topping the polls this time last year at 29%. However, in the last 12 months we have seen a dramatic drop to just 15%, this is due to the emergence of other benefits such as season ticket loans, which at 12% is up from 2% this time last year.

CONCLUSION

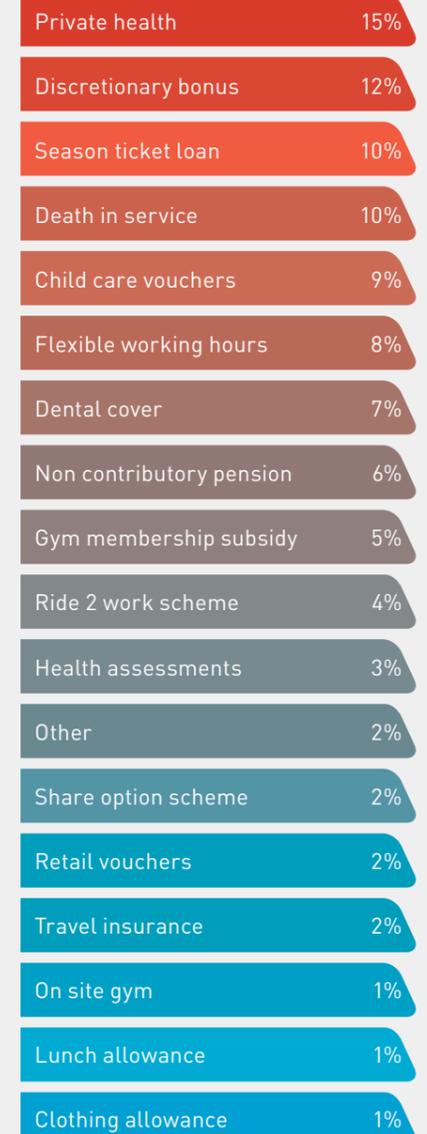
Our Winter Survey predicted the 2014 Executive Assistants & Business Support industry would see headcount increases, high confidence levels across all sectors and a recovering economy encouraging good performance. In line with these predictions we can safely say 2014 has been a good year for the sector to date. Moving forward, our survey results are showing a positive trend with growth looking set to continue for the next 6 months.

Although it seems like good news all round, there are still some genuine concerns from our survey respondents that the "war for talent" has certainly come back with a vengeance. The availability of qualified talent is diminishing and the focus on recruitment spend is stronger than it has been in previous years. Small businesses are struggling to attract talent through a lack of a strong company brand and although training and development tools are being used to stop the drop in retention rates, a significant breakthrough has yet to be made to stop competitors stealing talent.

Willingness to utilise benefit packages as a retention tool has seen a marked increase, which has resulted in previously unpopular benefits such as season ticket loans rise up to challenge traditional incentives such as private health care.

UK SURVEY RESULTS

In addition to statutory benefits (holidays, pension) what benefits do you offer?



89%

are confident they will maintain or enhance their performance in 2014

38%

of respondents intend to focus on training and development to retain staff