

Recruit to SUCCESS

At the start of any calendar year recruitment is never too far from the minds of employers and jobseekers alike. IMI Magazine's Recruitment Focus looks at likely recruitment trends for the year ahead and offers some thoughts on strategy for hiring the right staff



ON TREND

LEE BIGGINS PEERS INTO HIS CRYSTAL BALL TO SEE WHAT 2017 HAS TO OFFER

The automotive industry was predicted to be hit hard by Brexit given that it relies heavily on the free movement of European labour. But, according to data from CV-Library, automotive was one of the top industries for job growth in 2016, with vacancies rising by 28% since 2015. This was a significant increase on the 16.7% rise from 2014 to 2015, suggesting that businesses across the sector are confident about growing their workforce despite ongoing uncertainty.

Furthermore, while the summer months tend to be a quieter time for recruitment, in 2016, July, August and September all saw particularly strong growth, with November being one of the top months for job growth in the sector. Alongside this, our data also shows that there are currently nearly 225,000 automotive industry candidates registered on our database, showing a continued healthy interest in the industry from UK job hunters. It also appears that candidates are still

looking for new opportunities, with applications growing by an impressive 23% in 2016 compared to the previous year. This suggests that job hunters are still actively looking for roles, providing a strong pipeline of talent for organisations to tap into and ensure that business output across the industry remains strong.

The one area where the automotive sector has not performed so well in the past twelve months is salaries. According to CV-Library's analysis, pay dropped by 4% in 2016 suggesting that businesses aren't as confident as we may have originally thought and this could be cause for concern. Pay expectations are already weak and as inflation moves up we can expect a period of low or negative wage growth for the squeezed middle. Added to this, the implication of Brexit for employers is still unclear – particularly in terms of access to migrant labour and a dent in consumer and business confidence.

ACCESS CONCERNS

While we are waiting with bated breath to hear further details on Article 50 there are ongoing concerns that a potential Brexit could impact the automotive industry's access to talented candidates. The sector is reliant on heavily skilled individuals; however it is reported that Britain is not producing enough skilled



LEE BIGGINS IS THE FOUNDER AND MANAGING DIRECTOR OF CV-LIBRARY

engineers to meet this demand. In fact, just 21,000 engineers graduated from British universities in 2015, compared to 600,000 in India. This year, if the industry's access to global talent is restricted, there could be ongoing issues and a significant skills gap.

With the exponential developments in automotive technology there might be a need for workers to have to up-skill and learn about new technologies in order to stay ahead. The innovative organisations will offer this training in-house, ensuring that their workers are learning new skills which will ultimately improve their business performance against major competitors. For those businesses in the sector that don't facilitate this development, they could find employees moving on to the organisations that will help them to up-skill and, ultimately, stay ahead.

The UK is recognised the world over for its automotive strength and it is hoped that this will continue well into 2017 and beyond. The sector is in a strong position at the moment, fuelled by impressive job growth figures and a healthy appetite for jobs amongst candidates. It's unclear exactly what the year ahead has in store for this industry, but it is hoped that it will continue to thrive in the face of uncertainty.



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THE HIRING RANGE

GAVIN WHITE EXPLORES THE CHALLENGES POSED BY THE HIRING PROCESS

Hiring skilled staff in the automotive industry today is a tough business. Not selecting the right person for the role can cost a company greatly. During the recession the sector lost many skilled workers to other industries, but as recovery has been substantial enough to see the UK's car production peak just behind Germany and Spain, the industry is once again hiring to rebuild its workforce. However, along with reports of a skills shortage, automotive companies have found it difficult to recruit and retain employees with the ability to work across multiple areas as vehicles become increasingly technical.



GAVIN WHITE IS MANAGING DIRECTOR OF AUTOTECH RECRUIT

The first step in any hiring process is not only a full and clear understanding of the role required but of the current external drivers. It's all very well placing an advert for a new position but is the starting salary enough to capture the right attention? Having a good understanding of what job seekers of the calibre you are trying to attract are looking for, including salary and training, is essential. Interestingly, it is often the smaller independent garages which have their finger on the pulse of these needs and are more flexible in their job specifications in order to engage with the right candidate.

Having a good agency on board can help enormously. Invite them into your business; let them understand the culture, the standard of your existing staff, what is important to you and what the benefits of working with you are. Any agency worth their salt will also have a good view of the current marketplace and what potential candidates are looking for. While placing an advert on a recruitment site will bring you a vast quantity of potential job seekers, using an agency ensures that you only get the quality prospects as all applicants will have been pre-screened – saving you an enormous amount of time and effort.

LOW TURNOVER DESIRABLE

Regardless of size, it is important for all automotive companies to realise that there is a greater sense of determination from job seekers entering the automotive market today. They recognise the progression opportunity this booming industry can bring and, in the case of permanent recruitment, we see that today's skilled technicians are very much aware of their value and continue to actively seek new job opportunities. Therefore it is essential employers don't overlook the importance of retention. A high turnover of staff can also have a negative impact on the reputation of a company, which can deter the employment of even temporary placements during peak periods.

With automotive technology moving at such a high pace the industry needs to train employees to ensure they not only retain their workforce, but that they possess the right blend of skills and education to complete technical jobs effectively and keep up with the evolving technology.

While we don't have any hard data, it's very apparent from the number of people calling us seeking employment that de-motivation is a major factor for finding a new job. Money is actually lower down on the list. What employees are actually looking for is the option to progress and better themselves through training and the potential to move up the ladder. A frequent question during the interview process from candidates is: "Is there further training?" While many companies promise this, they are not always delivering. Some of the larger automotive companies are beginning to realise this and are doing more to retain their staff, while smaller companies are seemingly less mindful of the fact.

Delivering on these training promises, while setting out a clear career path, is essential during the recruitment process to ensure the right candidate is employed. Not doing so can ultimately affect the morale and motivation of the workforce, so outline this during the initial drafting of the job specification and the interview process.