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Building the future of work together

Simplexity – that’s what the employment industry brings to the world of work

By Denis Pennel

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Labour markets are becoming increasingly complex. This is being driven by a number of converging factors.

Firstly, Globalisation, as organisations and workers are now operating in a flat labour market, recruiting talent and competing for jobs across five continents. Shifting demographics is also a key contributor, as the northern hemisphere ages and retires and the global workforce is replaced by the burgeoning youth of the southern hemisphere.

Diversity is yet another reason. Labour markets are experiencing greater diversity than ever before with often four different generations present in the workforce. People working alongside each other often come from widely different cultures. A greater gender balance is now found in the global workplace too as women enter the workplace in increasing numbers. Our expectations of jobs and work are also changing. Older people are increasingly seeking flexibility in their lives while the younger generation wants experiences and variety. Meeting the differing ambitions of workers is an ongoing challenge for companies and employers.

Today’s business environment is complex. We work to ever tighter production cycles and are expected to meet ever faster turnarounds. The focus on process and production has been replaced by an emphasis on delivery and service and in today’s unpredictable business world the concept of collaboration and partnership is much more fluid. The result of globalisation is that these days the very process of production is often highly fragmented. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the building of the Boeing 787 aircraft, where Boeing subcontracts 70% of the production process and employs 28,000 different suppliers from around the world.

Meanwhile, the very nature of work is changing too. While work was once ‘top down’, involving procedures and hierarchies, today’s work is much flatter and modular. People work

in informal teams and move from project to project. Some of them are employed directly, some of them are freelance and some are specialist companies contracted to deliver a project. Work is also increasingly digital and remote. Teams may be virtual, not sitting in the same location or even in the same time zone.

I believe that wage employment is reaching its tipping point and that work is entering a new era. In this new labour reality we will see far more portfolio working just like we are seeing with the Ubers and Deliveroos of the gig economy. In the future we will see much more piece work as tasks are broken down into their component parts.

Another thing that is changing is the career trajectory of today's workers. It is very different from that of their parents and grandparents. In this new era workers will need far greater self-reliance as they piece together several different jobs and activities to create full time employment for themselves.

The employment industry understands the challenges this complexity presents and works alongside companies and workers to navigate this new world of work. As labour market intermediaries, working on behalf of both organisations and workers we simplify the complexity in today's labour markets and bring flexibility and security. It's called simplicity.

Modern labour markets need to reconcile often opposing concepts: They must find the right balance between freedom and protection - ensuring that workers are free to explore work options while still enjoying core social benefits such as holiday entitlements, pension and sick pay. They need to reconcile flexibility with stability as people move in and out of jobs more frequently; and they must also reconcile individualism with collectivism – by building modern forms of communities of workers.

Having observed these trends evolve in recent decades our industry has developed a wide range of services to help companies and workers navigate this new reality. We provide structure and direction by offering an increasingly diverse and tailor-made set of solutions. For companies we enable them to stay focused on their core business by analysing their HR needs and bringing solutions. The employment industry can handle entire recruitment process for companies – from identifying needs to preparing job descriptions, handling interviews and selection and onboarding new staff. By outsourcing their HR functions to us companies manage the risk and stay competitive.

For workers, the employment industry acts as a career agent supporting them in a less structured and more individualist labour market. We identify work and look to match supply with demand; we smooth transitions between jobs and sectors enabling workers to move from job to job and ensuring that they are always in work; we facilitate new opportunities through ongoing training and upskilling that ensures people have the skills and attributes needed to succeed in the new world of work. We also promote inclusive labour markets by finding work for those more vulnerable workers including young people, migrants and women.

As labour markets become more global and diverse so both companies and workers will be fishing in a global sea of talent. The employment industry is there to help them make sense of it and to ensure that both people and organisations fulfil their potential in a new age of simplicity.

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