

# Rollercoaster recruitment

## Brook Street reflects on the mixed fortunes of recruitment over the past 12 months



Recruitment activity in 2011 has perhaps been busier than might have been predicted this time last year. In recent months, alarming economic statistics, volatility in global financial markets and geopolitical developments have conspired to prompt many employers in the UK to approach the rebuilding of depleted workforces cautiously.

### Rollercoaster recruitment

Financial services companies, having led the

economy back out of recession, closely followed by the professional services and business services sectors, appear to have put the brakes on – in some cases, sharply. However, the extent to which this might develop into a longer-term downward trend isn't yet clear. The mood amongst larger employers remains cautiously optimistic, and the effort by many to promote their employer brands indicates a keenness to polish their credentials as desti-

nations of choice with talented people, even if actual job vacancies are thinner on the ground than in the first six months of the year.

With small and medium enterprises (SMEs) employing over half the working population, some of the government's strongest messages of encouragement, empathy and support have been aimed at entrepreneurs and business-owners. Many SMEs have recruited office and support staff to manage increased workloads and order-books, but many of their representative voices say that measures such as cutting red tape or reversing the last government's decision to increase NI liabilities, haven't made sufficient impact. If this perception persists, then hopes pinned on private sector growth revitalising the economy may start to look unrealistic.

Protests at the threat of widespread public sector redundancies have been perhaps more high-profile than the job losses themselves, which in many cases have yet to manifest themselves in a big way. Nevertheless, a key feature of the job market in 2011 has been the focus – by employers, recruiters and workers – on the transition from public to private sector facing many of those who will be made redundant from government departments, local authorities, health trusts, schools, universities, edu-

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# Skills in demand

## Tracking down talent in 2012: Elusive skill sets



Investing in talent in 2012 is going to be all about finding exactly the right mix of competencies and mindsets – and about clever ways to circumvent shortages of top talent.

### What might the year have in store for key sectors?

For employers planning to recruit in the New Year and beyond, any favourable shift in the balance of power in the job market may be offset by a shortfall in the right combination of technical skills, personal characteristics, commercial awareness and sector-specific experience. With uncertainty throughout the economy, organisations hiring administrative, secretarial and clerical staff, as well as other types of business support, will typically look for a more diverse range of skills that enable them to gain full productivity from their employee workforce.

As colleagues in sales, account management and other client-facing teams move into fifth gear – to both protect existing business and win new customers – reliable, motivated

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and savvy support professionals will be critical. Likewise, the soundings we've been taking from organisations preparing to undergo significant transformations, or break into lucrative overseas markets, indicate a widespread recognition that competitiveness rests on being properly resourced.

### In-demand skills: hiring priorities, sector-by-sector

But what are the most sought after skills and talents? Conversations with our clients have

shown a variety of priorities across different sectors:

**Financial services:** The confidence shown by jobseekers in investment and retail banking throughout the first half of 2011 may be temporarily held in check, at least until first-quarter bonuses are paid. Many will be reluctant to change employers and risk making themselves vulnerable to redundancy; if so, employers seeking sector-specific experience may have to revise offers upwards or be more open to hiring people with transferable skills from non-financial sectors. Areas needing additional support staff are likely to include risk, regulatory compliance, legal, financial control and corporate finance.

**Customer services and contact centres:** Utilities, energy suppliers, retailers, banks, insurers and telecommunications companies are set to bolster contact centre capacity, with many repatriating offshore customer service and support functions. Soaring energy bills, patchy broadband coverage and financial mis-selling are just some of the issues annoying cash-strapped households and underscoring the need for firms to attract and retain talented contact centre professionals at all levels.

**Industry and supply chains:** Skill shortages continue to trouble employers already concerned about the UK's dwindling reputation as a producer nation. New enterprise zones and tax breaks, as well as other initiatives to stimulate growth may help to restore capacity, while certain sub-sectors – such as high-tech manufacturers, low-carbon technology firms and renewable energy companies – appear reasonably optimistic. Logistics firms and warehousing companies, many of whom upped their game as employers earlier this year in anticipation of losing over-qualified people to the jobs they trained for, may well have to redouble their efforts, as manufacturers, distributors and retailers alike look for supply chain efficiencies to compensate for further squeezing of margins.

**Public services:** The extent of public sector job losses and the degree to which slack will be taken up by the private sector remains unclear. Should public sector workers flood the job market, any upward movement in private sector salaries due to competition for in-demand skills may be neutralised. Much will depend on whether those candidates have the experience, mindset and ability to hit the ground running to give private sector employees a run for their money. Within the public sector itself, areas like the NHS, social care, education and housing may have to work harder to attract and retain

people if disillusioned support staff move away from public services.

#### Prepare to pay

Payroll budgets for administrative and clerical staff, secretaries, PAs and support professionals, many of which have been frozen for two years or more, may nominally give way in 2012 – but market forces may mean individual earnings for some remain flat, other than those with exceptionally scarce skills. If talk of government investment in infrastructure being brought forward turns into action, and if

jitters in the money markets and global stock exchanges are contained, employers in the UK may be more inclined to take on extra resource to support workforces already at full stretch – judging that they can ill-afford to do anything else. Success will depend on the extent to which they see this as an investment in people they can develop and nurture, with payback firmly in mind.

Planning headcount and budgets for the coming year? For expert advice, contact your local Brook Street branch today.

## Super Service Quality

Our online Service Quality Assessments are a quick and easy way for you to tell us how we are doing. Having been in business for over 65 years, we understand that listening to our customers is fundamental to our success. As part of our commitment to providing you with the highest quality recruitment service, we've created online Service Quality Assessment (SQA) surveys, giving you the chance to tell us your thoughts.

#### Fill out an SQA today

We send all of our clients SQA surveys regularly, however if you would like to fill out an SQA today, simply contact your local branch who can send you one instantly. A copy of your SQA will also go to our head office so that any comments or suggestions you give can be implemented as part of our commitment to continuous improvement.

#### Measuring for success

SQA surveys are designed to measure every aspect of our service, from the initial contact you have with us, to how effective we were in fulfilling your recruitment requirements. Your thoughts and opinions are critical to us and

help us to shape our solutions. Specific areas we focus on include:

- Quality of initial contact
- Understanding of your business needs
- Speed of response
- Reliability of the Brook Street team
- Accuracy of matching the right candidates
- Value for money
- Convenience/location of branch
- Invoicing and payment process
- Quality of overall service

#### Continuing improvement

Our recent SQA results show continued high service levels with 96% of respondents saying they would use Brook Street again. Although we are pleased with these results, we are constantly looking at ways to improve our service to you, but we can't do this without your feedback. So please continue to contribute your thoughts to us.

## Rollercoaster recruitment ...continued from front page



cation authorities and housing associations. While prejudices and misconceptions may ultimately need to be addressed (on both sides), for the moment, the mass exodus hasn't happened.

#### The skill shortage merry-go-round

While the war for talent's ferocity died down with the onset of recession, a mushrooming constituency of jobseekers never quite stamped out skill shortages in certain disciplines, professions and industry sectors. Many of the technical skills (such as proficiency with certain software) and hands-on practical experience of running projects that periodically seemed out of reach are coming around again. And with many organisations still operating very much on an all-hands-on-deck basis, administrative, secretarial and clerical people who demonstrate flexibility, adaptability and self-motivation are those most likely to receive multiple offers and counter-offers. In turn, this might well mean employers finding themselves paying premiums for star candidates. Some might even resort to asking those they let go to come back – something which isn't as uncommon as many think.

How the recruitment landscape and wider economy will change in the new year remains to be seen. But for employers, it's undoubtedly going to be a question of performing an extremely tricky balancing act.

Planning headcount and budgets for the coming year? For expert advice, contact your local Brook Street branch today.

# All you want for Christmas...

Christmas is almost here and forward-thinking HR teams and line managers alike have been addressing the annual challenge of keeping the business running, even if employees are absent - in body or in spirit! Here are Brook Street's top recruitment tips for a disappointment-free festive season:

## Book those little helpers now

If canny employees have booked annual leave to give themselves a fortnight off over the festive period, that means their last day at work could be as early as 16th December – without reappearing before 3rd January. If your business is open throughout Christmas and New Year (like Brook Street), it's all the more important to act now to ensure you have sufficient cover in place and up-to-speed for when your permanent staff, or regular temporaries, take off for the holidays. Recommended actions include:

- **Revisit the holiday schedule:** Identify who'll be around and who has booked time off. Which tasks (if any) can be left until the new year? Which technical skills, software familiarity or general know-how will you need to stay on top of workloads?
- **Mix it up:** Investigate which roles could feasibly be combined for the duration of the season.
- **Bring it on:** If your holiday leave period is concurrent with the calendar year, and if unused holidays can't be carried forward, pre-empt any last-minute

requests  
for days  
off by  
staff  
who

don't want to lose their entitlement by encouraging them to use them before the Christmas period.

- **Stagger your key people:** Save yourself a headache by allocating and spreading out the days when people in critical roles will be off, ensuring it's still all-hands-on-deck (as much as possible) on days where you anticipate being busiest.

- **Check availability:** At Brook Street, we've already established who amongst our nationwide temporary workforce has committed to being available right the way through to the end of December and into the new year and many of our clients are doing the same.

## Hold off that hiring hangover...

As the holiday period approaches, the time it takes to fill permanent vacancies can easily extend way beyond the average for your organisation.

The dreaded winter lurgy, turbo-charged social diaries, extended leave taken by decision-makers and a collective sense of winding-down (regardless of rallying calls from company bosses) can all contribute to a slowing-down of the recruitment process. The season of goodwill might even prompt some candidates to think twice about going out on interview as staff parties, bonuses, overtime and cheerier workplaces temporarily edge out those factors that, in the cold reality of the new year, will remind them of why they want to leave in the first place.

If you want permanent new staff up and running quickly, now's the time to take action. Stay ahead of the game and avoid the scramble for good people that typically characterise the

new year job market by:

- **Starting at the end and work back:** Establish the last day by which you'd ideally like certain new recruits to have handed in their notice to their current employers.

- **Pin down key stakeholders:** As much as possible, ask those involved in the selection process to pencil in specific dates or times, and keep checking back with them.

- **Delegate induction duties:** If you anticipate people returning after the holidays taking a week or so to get themselves back into dynamic, purposeful frames of mind, encourage supervisors or colleagues to plan ahead, so that new employees can be given a proper welcome.

## One last thing to remember

January typically brings with it a glut of resignations - from those who found new jobs in December, but wanted to use up their holiday entitlement before handing in their notice, to others who'll have spent the holiday period reflecting on their job, or the overall direction of their career, and whose top-priority new year's resolution is to quit and do something new. If there's such a thing as a 'quiet period' in your own seasonal workload, use that time to informally evaluate your organisation's recruitment practices and capability.

For advice on effective workforce planning during the holiday season, contact your local Brook Street branch or visit [www.brookstreet.co.uk](http://www.brookstreet.co.uk)

# Sector Focus - NHS

## Headcount and pay freezes are kicking in, while reorganisation adds to uncertainty in the NHS – but good people are still in demand, and not always easy to find



Against a background of austerity measures, Primary Care Trusts and Strategic Health Authorities have been preparing for a phased transition to new structures, as part of government reforms. With workers facing two years of pay freezes (and the lower-paid set for a flat £250 increase), the mood amongst employers and employees is somewhat mixed. Throughout the NHS, temporary recruitment is still taking place, despite a static staffing environment. Anxious to avoid compulsory redundancies, managers have been identifying posts and people most at risk, while exploring options for redeployment and putting appropriate support mechanisms in place for those who will ultimately be forced to leave. While many authorities and trusts no longer have temporary workforces on-site in anything like pre-spending review volumes, pockets of activity in administrative and clerical teams remain, especially in jobs needing a degree of

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familiarity with the terminology, systems and culture associated with the NHS workplace.

For senior management and HR teams, coping strategies have encompassed working with external partners and smoothing the transition to leaner, more flexible structures without compromising on compliance and safeguarding policies or talent attraction criteria. That means finding smarter, more innovative ways to work with recruiters, while continuing to offer an attractive employment proposition

to talented people, so that a pipeline of compliant-ready talent is maintained.

Looking ahead, a key challenge for employers – during and beyond NHS reform – is likely to revolve around securing the skills and experience they need, as fast as they need them, while ensuring all recruits continue to be subject to the scrutiny of robust screening systems. Variations on the polyclinic model, already introduced in some places and planned for elsewhere, may create benefits in terms of cost efficiencies and supply chain co-ordination. However, concentrating people and services in fewer locations might make hiring a bigger ask than it currently is. What’s certain is that while budget-holders may have fewer financial resources at their disposal, their strategies for planning, attracting, affording and managing both temporary and permanent talent will be as crucial as they’ve ever been to excellence in healthcare service delivery.

Commenting on recent developments in the sector, Brook Street’s National Account Manager for the NHS, Rob McSherry, said: “We have worked with the NHS for over 30 years and are regularly consulted on issues such as making recruitment budgets stretch further, streamlining selection procedures and identifying transferable skills amongst workers to be redeployed. We’ve also seen an increase in requests to provide job seeking support to employees being made redundant, many of whom haven’t applied for a job or attended an interview for a number of years, or are acclimatising to the different dynamic of private-sector hiring regimes. The NHS is going through a massive amount of change currently, but the demand for excellent candidates is still very much out there and so are those candidates.”

For advice on attracting and retaining talent in your NHS organisation, contact Rob McSherry at [rob.mcsherry@brookstreet.co.uk](mailto:rob.mcsherry@brookstreet.co.uk). For your nearest Brook Street branch, visit [www.brookstreet.co.uk](http://www.brookstreet.co.uk)

## Candidate Focus

# A long term temp

Tasnim Shabbir tells Focus why she prefers the temporary assignments through Brook Street in Oxford



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With today’s unpredictable economic climate and increasingly high unemployment rates, more and more professionals are turning to temping as a way of filling their employment gaps and ensuring their income remains steady. The flexibility that is offered by becoming a “long term temp” is attractive to a lot of people, especially those with other commitments such as children or elderly family, or those who just like the variety that this professional lifestyle offers them. Brook Street temporary worker Tasnim Shabbir is a perfect example of this.

Having been made redundant from her permanent role from a local publishers in 2008,

Tasnim decided to register with Brook Street, Oxford in January 2009 and has been temping ever since. She tells Focus all about her time temping and why she enjoys working through the Oxford branch:

“I really enjoy temping through Brook Street, Oxford. I know I can always rely and depend on the team to get me the best job possible. I find them cheery, helpful and understanding and whenever I have popped in to see the team, they have always made me feel welcome. When the job market was really quiet, the team would still keep me updated with suitable assignments. They are always the consummate professionals offering advice when putting

me forward for roles and making sure I was fully briefed. In the past, I have registered with other recruitment agencies, but have found that I sometimes end up being a statistic – with the Brook Street Oxford team, this was never the case. It is fantastic to know that I have found an agency who understands my needs, especially when there are so many other people looking for work too.”

Rachel Sloman, Temporaries Controller at Brook Street Oxford, has put Tasnim into a number of assignments and understands the appeal of long term temping to her clients and candidates: “Tasnim has been a great long term temp for us; she is willing, adaptable and reliable – a fantastic candidate to call on, especially at short notice. Her professional attitude and extensive experience as a senior level PA means she is an extremely valuable and in-demand candidate. We have recently found her a long term temp position at the renowned Oxford University and have had great feedback from the client about her. Having candidates like Tasnim means that we are able to continue building on relationships with our clients by providing excellent staff who get the job done.”

# Client Focus - Aeroinv.com

Aeroinv.com is a leading aftermarket supplier of aircraft parts to companies around the world



## Aeroinv.com services:

- “Buy it now” functionality
- Immediate online pricing
- Easy to view trace paperwork
- 24/7 UK based Customer Service Team
- Regional field sales support
- Consolidated stock location
- Routine, critical and AOG support

With record numbers of people choosing to travel by plane, supplying into the aviation industry is big business. Aeroinv.com is a leading aftermarket supplier of aircraft parts. Their online store supports airlines, maintenance, repair and overhaul companies and supply chain specialists, offering the effective provision of aircraft parts.

The company operate on a global basis across EMEA, Asia Pacific and the Americas, with their head office based in Barnet, north London – just a few miles from the Brook Street Enfield branch. Gemma Billings, Branch Manager of Enfield, tells Focus more about how she and her team have worked with this exciting and dynamic organisation:

“Our branch has had a long-standing, strong relationship with Aeroinv.com over the last 10 years, supplying both temporary and permanent recruitment services across a variety of roles including HR, customer services and pricing analysts.

“Earlier this year, the business had a massive uplift in activity and, as such, needed a number of staff to create a brand new customer service team. Aeroinv.com operate in a 24-

“Aeroinv.com operate in a 24-hour environment and we knew the candidates supplied had to be highly professional and used to working in B2B settings”

hour environment and we knew the candidates supplied had to be highly professional and used to working in B2B settings. The different variety of recruitment methods we offered, our competitive rates and the fact that we had previously successfully placed with the firm, meant that we were able to sign a sole supply agreement for all of the outstanding vacancies and fill them all too.

“During the recruitment campaign, we invited the Head of Human Resources into the branch so he could spend some time looking at our interview procedure and our assessments and understand everything we do to find the perfect candidate.”

Since the success of this campaign, the branch have continued to recruit for

Aeroinv.com across a number of other areas and the company now have a dedicated Account Manager from the branch - Permanent Consultant, Rebecca Martin. Rebecca has been give a further five roles to recruit for recently and attends regular status meetings to ensure all the client’s needs are being met.

Speaking to Focus about the company relationship with Brook Street, Martin Webster, Head of Human Resources at Aeroinv.com said:

“Brook Street submitted a very professional and competitive proposal for our brief to recruit a Customer Service team. Once appointed, the service was excellent with a very high ratio of appointments from the candidates interviewed. All the candidates came well prepared due to the efforts made by Rebecca to make sure they fully understood our situation and the demands of the role. Rebecca continues to provide great support as we build up the team for growth in 2012.”

For more information about Aeroinv.com and the services they provide, please visit [www.aeroinv.com](http://www.aeroinv.com).

If you would like to be our next Client Focus, email [focus@brookstreet.co.uk](mailto:focus@brookstreet.co.uk)

Reward and Recognition

# Top Temps



At Brook Street, we believe that reward and recognition is incredibly important, especially for our temporary workers. Our Temp of the Month scheme is our way of recognising and rewarding these fantastic ambassadors for their dedication, hard work and commitment to our clients. Below are just a selection of the candidates who have all won Temp of the Month awards this year:

Alexandra McLuskie	Francella Hamilton	Katherine Timbou	Michelle Teppin
Alisa Kononova	Grant Carroll	Kirsty Gibson	Naila Aziz
Alistair Rennie	Halina Drwecka	Kornelia Lesniewicz	Rafal Sajdak
Andrew Morgan	Hannah Ingram	Krzysztof Mikanik	Richard Yeboah
Arkadiusz Czop	Hellen Davey	Lisa Penfold	Scott Brooks
Barbara Stala	Ian Mutabarura	Lorna Campbell	Scott Riddell
Barry Nelson	Irmantas Vaidilauskas	Maggie Poland	Selina Besley
Benjamin Marlow	Jaroslav Brzezinski	Mari Pires	Slawomir Wawszczak
Caroline Duckhouse	Jennifer Collins	Mark Self	Sophie Hipwell
Caspar Rapkin	Joan Aitchison	Marlene Rickaby	Stanislawa Jakimczuk
Damien Flis	Julie Gapper	Matthew Gurdas	Terry Comiskey
Ekaterina Burkeviciq	Julie Parker	Max Wellingham	Vaida Glaveckaite
Evelyn Maholam	June Lacey	Melissa Kirby	Yvonne Elaine
Fiona Rhodes	Kamil Ociepa	Micara Renz Keir	Zoe Lyons

Congratulations to the above and all those who have been awarded Temp of the Month in 2011! We look forward to working with you in 2012!

## Your Local Branch Details

Your local branch is:

Your local consultant is:

Call us on:

# AWR:

## Get Your Free Impact Assessment Today!

As most UK companies that use temporary workers will be aware, the Agency Worker Regulations (AWR) came into law on the 1st October. In the last issue of Focus, we provided a detailed look at the new legislation, answering key questions and giving expert guidance so that our clients could be prepared before implementation and in the run up to the 12 week-qualifying period.

Now that AWR is here, we are continuing to offer our clients advice and support across the UK. One way in which we are doing this is by conducting free AWR impact assessments. These sessions cover a range of issues in relation to temporary staffing that will help give you a full understanding of how, if at all, AWR will affect you and your business. These include:

- Assignment lengths
- Employment status
- Pay and benefits
- Holiday entitlements
- Maternity rights
- Limiting the risk of tribunal claims
- Collective facilities and permanent employment opportunities

If you would like to find out more about how the Agency Worker Regulations could affect your business, or would like your own free AWR impact assessment, contact your local branch today who will be happy to arrange this for you.

We welcome your comments and actively seek your contributions to

# Focus

Please send your stories to:  
focus@brookstreet.co.uk