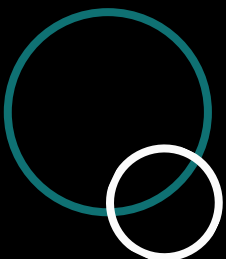


Q2 MARKET REVIEW

THIS QUARTER IN RECRUITMENT



THIS QUARTER IN RECRUITMENT

Hiring remains active, but the rules have fundamentally changed. The Q2 labour market is defined by caution, not contraction. Employers continue to hire, but the focus has shifted decisively from headcount growth to capability.

Organisations are no longer hiring to expand teams; they are hiring to solve problems: closing skills gaps, strengthening resilience, and driving productivity. This shift is reshaping how hiring decisions are made, extending timelines, and redefining what "hireable" looks like.

Indicator	Status	Commentary
Overall hiring sentiment		Employers remain cautiously active. Decision-making cycles are longer, but approved hires are progressing once budgets are signed off.
Permanent market		Steady demand across core operational roles; fewer speculative hires. Business-critical roles continue to move.
Contract market		Project-based hiring has increased, particularly where headcount approval is constrained.
Salary pressure		Upward pressure remains in specialist and leadership roles, driven by counter-offer activity and skills shortages.
Candidate availability		Active applicants have increased slightly, but high-performing candidates remain selective and often off-market.

SECTOR INTELLIGENCE

TECH AND ENGINEERING



MARKET ACTIVITY

Demand for engineering talent remains steady, but the purpose of hiring has shifted. Eighteen months ago, recruitment was growth-driven; today, it is efficiency-driven. Manufacturers are prioritising automation, maintenance resilience, and cost control, not team expansion.

ROLES IN DEMAND



Multi-skilled
Maintenance
Engineer



Production
Manager



Quality
Assurance
Engineer



Health & Safety
Manager



Continuous
Improvement
Engineer

SKILL SHORTAGES

Multi-skilled professionals with combined mechanical and electrical expertise remain scarce, alongside candidates with hands-on experience in Lean manufacturing and process optimisation.

SALARY MOVEMENT

Upward pressure is concentrated in supervisory and specialist technical roles. Entry-level production salaries remain stable, often supplemented by attendance and performance incentives.

HIRING IMPLICATION

Engineering candidates are moving quickly. Employers with slow, multi-stage interview processes are consistently losing top talent. Integrating technical and cultural assessment into a single stage is reducing drop-off and accelerating hiring outcomes.

SECTOR INTELLIGENCE

COMMERCIAL



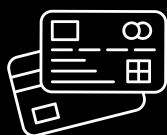
MARKET ACTIVITY

Commercial hiring remains steady, with demand focused on roles critical to revenue protection and operational delivery, including credit control and finance support. Hybrid working continues to shape candidate behaviour. Organisations offering limited flexibility are seeing reduced applicant volumes and longer shortlisting cycles.

ROLES IN DEMAND



Management
Accountant



Credit
Controller



Customer
Success
Executive



Sales Support
Administrator



Operations
Coordinator

SKILL SHORTAGES

The most in-demand profiles combine financial literacy with strong systems capability (advanced Excel, CRM experience, and the ability to interpret business data). This combination remains particularly scarce at the mid-career level.

SALARY MOVEMENT

Finance and analytical roles are seeing modest but consistent salary growth. Customer-facing and administrative roles remain stable unless they carry additional commercial responsibility.

HIRING IMPLICATION

Candidates are increasingly evaluating employers based on career trajectory, not just starting salary. Employers who clearly communicate progression pathways and timelines early in the process are securing stronger engagement and higher acceptance rates.

SECTOR INTELLIGENCE

CONSTRUCTION



MARKET ACTIVITY

Hiring is being driven by pre-project activity rather than active site expansion. Main contractors are strengthening commercial and project governance functions ahead of the next infrastructure investment cycle. Infrastructure-linked projects are already creating regional competition for experienced professionals.

ROLES IN DEMAND



Quantity
Surveyor



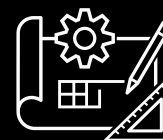
Estimator



Project
Manager



Site Manager



Civil Engineer

SKILL SHORTAGES

Commercially experienced Quantity Surveyors with contract management expertise are the hardest profiles to source. Site managers who combine operational delivery with compliance experience are similarly constrained.

SALARY MOVEMENT

Commercial construction roles are experiencing the strongest wage inflation in the sector. Operational site roles remain stable but highly competitive, particularly where employers are drawing from the same regional talent pools.

HIRING IMPLICATION

Succession planning has become an immediate operational priority. Mid-level professionals are being promoted rapidly to fill senior gaps, creating secondary vacancies. Employers must now build two layers of the talent pipeline simultaneously.

SECTOR INTELLIGENCE

INDUSTRIAL & LOGISTICS



MARKET ACTIVITY

Hiring remains volume-driven, but cost pressures are reshaping strategy. Temporary-to-permanent hiring has increased as employers seek to reduce long-term risk by assessing suitability before committing to permanent contracts.

ROLES IN DEMAND



Warehouse
Supervisor



FLT Driver



Production
Operative



Shift Manager



Logistics
Coordinator

SKILL SHORTAGES

Certified FLT operators with consistent work histories remain difficult to source across most regions. Supervisory candidates who combine operational expertise with strong people management capability (not just team leadership experience) are particularly scarce.

SALARY MOVEMENT

Operative wages remain broadly stable. Supervisory roles are experiencing moderate upward pressure, driven primarily by retention challenges rather than competition for new hires.

HIRING IMPLICATION

Retention is now as critical as attraction. Predictable shift patterns and clearly defined progression pathways are proving more effective at reducing turnover than pay increases alone.

SECTOR INTELLIGENCE

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY



MARKET ACTIVITY

IT hiring remains highly selective. Investment is focused on digital resilience, cybersecurity capability, and core operational systems rather than large-scale transformation programmes. Contract hiring has increased to support short-term implementation and security audit requirements.

ROLES IN DEMAND



Cybersecurity Analyst



Data Analyst



ERP Systems Specialist



Software Developer



IT Support Engineer

SKILL SHORTAGES

Cybersecurity expertise and ERP implementation experience, particularly in cross-functional environments, remain in short supply. More broadly, employers are struggling to secure technical professionals who can demonstrate measurable business impact beyond purely IT responsibilities.

SALARY MOVEMENT

Strong upward pressure continues in cybersecurity and data-focused roles. Infrastructure and support positions remain competitive but broadly stable.

HIRING IMPLICATION

Candidates are selecting employers based on the credibility of their technology roadmap. Hiring managers must be prepared to articulate digital strategy clearly. Candidates are using this to assess whether a role offers genuine progression or long-term maintenance.

SALARY & RATE INTELLIGENCE

PERMANENT MARKET

Salary growth remains strongest in technical and specialist roles, driven by supply constraints and increased candidate leverage. Counter-offer activity, particularly among mid-career professionals, is extending hiring timelines and complicating decision-making.

At leadership level, three-month notice periods are now standard, further constraining available talent.



CONTRACT MARKET

Day rates continue to rise across engineering, construction project management, and IT transformation roles. Project-based engagements are increasingly preferred over rolling contracts.

Specialist contractor availability has tightened significantly, with lead times increasing for niche skill sets.



Engineering candidates are moving quickly. Employers relying on slow, multi-stage interview processes are losing them. Combining technical and cultural assessment into a single stage is proving effective in reducing drop-off and accelerating time-to-hire.

CANDIDATE MARKET INSIGHTS



WHAT IS MOTIVATING MOVEMENT

Salary progression remains an important driver of job moves. High-performing candidates are increasingly prioritising career development visibility, clear progression pathways, work-life balance, and flexibility. Hybrid working is now a baseline expectation across commercial roles.



CANDIDATE CONFIDENCE

Candidate sentiment is cautiously optimistic, with a gradual increase in those open to new opportunities. High performers remain highly selective, while passive candidates represent the strongest hiring potential for employers with a compelling value proposition.



NOTICE PERIOD TRENDS

Notice periods are continuing to lengthen. Support and operational roles typically require one month, technical specialists one to two months, and senior leadership roles three months or more. These timelines are extending hiring cycles and must be factored into workforce planning.

BUILDING EMPLOYER BRAND IN A COMPETITIVE MARKET

The organisations securing the strongest hires this quarter are treating recruitment as a commercial function, not an administrative process. Four practices are consistently driving better outcomes.

COMMUNICATE THE OPPORTUNITY, NOT JUST THE ROLE

Candidates want clarity on success metrics, performance expectations, and career trajectory. Job descriptions that read as specifications, rather than genuine opportunities, are driving early disengagement.

MOVE FASTER THAN YOUR COMPETITION

High-quality candidates expect feedback within 48 hours at each stage. Employers who meet this expectation achieve stronger engagement and higher offer conversion. The primary reason candidates withdraw is not compensation, but lack of pace and communication.

INVOLVE LEADERSHIP EARLY

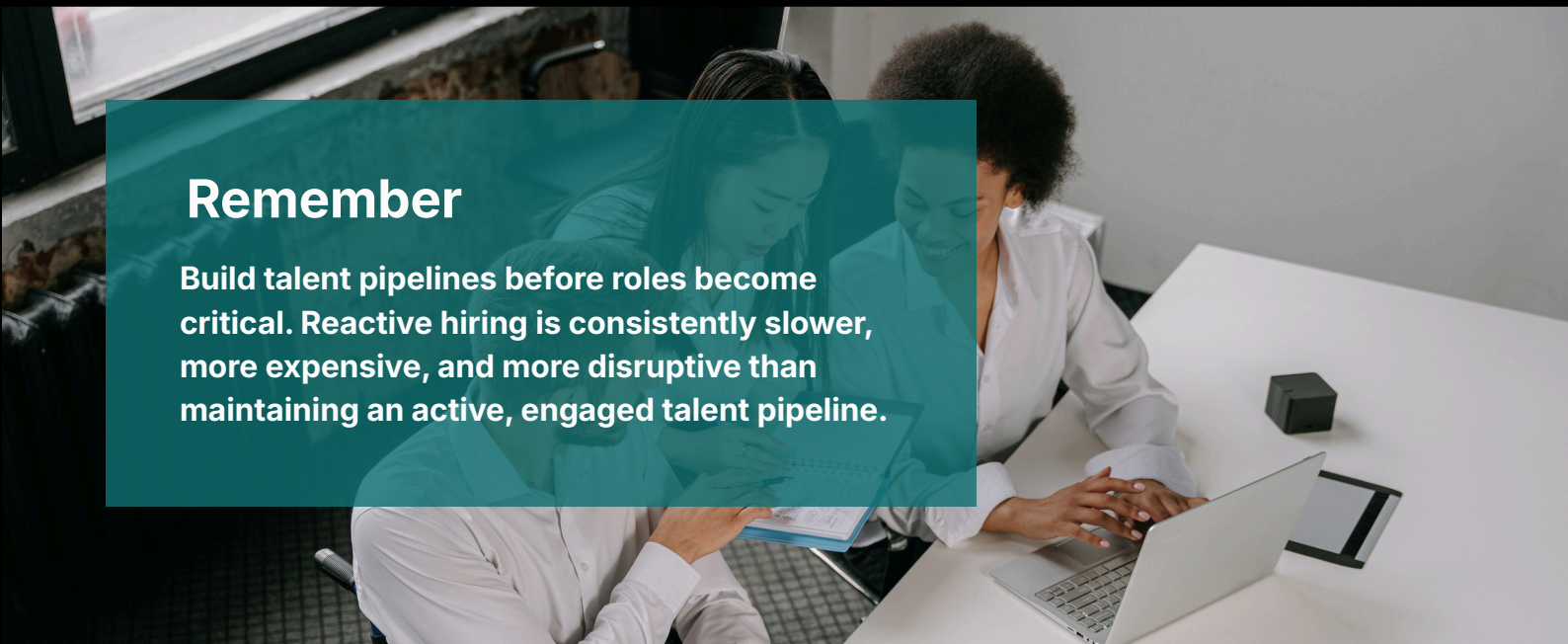
Early access to decision-makers builds trust and accelerates hiring. It also reduces bottlenecks later in the process, improving both candidate experience and time-to-hire.

ALIGN COMMERCIAL PARAMETERS BEFORE GOING TO MARKET

Agree salary bands, approvals, and hiring criteria upfront. Delays caused by internal sign-off remain a leading cause of offer-stage failure.

Remember

Build talent pipelines before roles become critical. Reactive hiring is consistently slower, more expensive, and more disruptive than maintaining an active, engaged talent pipeline.



WHAT Q2 MEANS FOR Q3

WHERE DEMAND IS LIKELY TO INCREASE

Infrastructure-linked construction roles will accelerate as projects move into delivery. Demand for multi-skilled engineers will continue to rise, particularly in automation and energy efficiency. Finance hiring will see a seasonal uplift driven by year-end reporting and audit activity.

RISKS TO MONITOR

Delayed capital expenditure decisions remain a key constraint on senior hiring across engineering, construction, and technology. Employers offering below-market salaries risk prolonged vacancies, where the cost of delay outweighs any perceived savings.

SKILLS TO WATCH

- Automation and controls engineering
- ERP implementation expertise
- Commercial project cost management
- Cybersecurity and infrastructure resilience

Q3 will reward execution. Employers who move early, communicate clearly, and align on realistic salary expectations will secure the strongest talent. Those who delay or maintain below-market positioning will extend hiring timelines and dilute candidate quality.





WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

If you're hiring in Q2 or planning ahead for Q3, you've probably already felt how quickly the market is moving.

The organisations securing the strongest talent right now aren't waiting for pressure to build, they're getting ahead of it.

That's where we're supporting clients like you:

- Making sure hiring plans reflect what's actually happening in the market
- Giving you the data to offer salaries that secure, not lose the right people
- Helping you build pipelines early, so you're not reacting when roles become urgent

Because in Q3, it won't be about whether you can hire. It'll be about how quickly and effectively you can deliver.

If you'd like to sense-check your hiring plans or talk through what this means for your team, we're always happy to have a conversation.

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About This Report

The Regional Recruitment Workforce Intelligence Report is published quarterly. It draws on ONS labour market data, industry publications, job board analytics, internal placement data, and candidate survey insights. The next edition will be published in July 2026. For sector-specific hiring advice or support in building your talent pipeline, contact Regional Recruitment at www.regionalrecruitment.co.uk