



# HOW TO BE THE BEST RECRUITER TO WORK FOR

# How to be an employer of choice in recruitment



**Alex Evans**

Managing Director, TALiNT Partners

**Finding and keeping recruitment talent is a top priority for the global staffing industry, so what are the best ANZ recruiters doing to be recognised as the best employers?**

It's fair to say that the staffing sector has bounced back from the pandemic-led hiring freeze in 2020, with some markets recovering faster than others.

Global staffing revenues hit US\$445 billion in 2021, up 12% on 2020 and predicted to grow by 8% in 2022 according to the SIA. APAC accounted for US\$115 billion (compared to US\$152 billion in the US and US\$178 billion in EMEA). According to IBISWorld, Australia alone generates around \$16 billion – with nearly 10,000 recruiters employing over 205,000 people.

To find out how Australian staffing firms have fought the war for their own talent, TALiNT Partners convened a virtual roundtable with a select group of ANZ agency and industry leaders to share insights and tactics.

The first observation from Ross Clennett, a high-performance coach and recruitment trainer, was that the boom has started to erode business development skills due to the massive and sustained flow of work.

“There is a temptation to have a go at everything, but this has created a productivity problem,” he explained. “I ask my clients, of the jobs lost how much time have you invested and how could you be more effective?”

Having demonstrated value beyond finding and placing the best candidates over the last two years, recruiters are no longer seen as a necessary evil in the UK – with many achieving higher margins and justifying higher premiums for advisory services and a range of talent solutions. How does this compare to Australia and New Zealand, and is the industry recognised as a professional service?

“Certainly, there are a number of agencies looking to elevate their service and elevate their price, decline more business and provide a more exclusive offering, but there are plenty of others at the other end of the market who are playing the volume game,” added Ross. “Whatever the model, it has to increase your profit.”

For Mark Smith, Group MD of multiple TIARA award winners People2people and Frog Recruitment, it's a question of scale. “Yes, you can get higher profit margins, but it's hard to create a scalable consultancy business and retain premium talent with the right incentives.”

## RELATIONSHIP-LED

Zain Wadee, MD of Pulse Staffing, has been working in ANZ for the last three years and previously in the UK for many more. “Having a perspective from both markets, I think ANZ does lend itself to a more solutions and consultancy type offering as it's more



relationship and value driven compared to the more transactional approach associated with the UK.”

Asked if recruiters in Australia are more loyal than those in UK – bearing in mind the UK has a long tail of 39,500 start-up staffing firms – Zain said: “There are still people setting up businesses in Australia, but I think it’s driven more by that general desire to build longer term relationships - whether it’s for your own business or as part of a larger firm.”

“Hiring and retaining recruiters is a challenge because of the pressure on agencies as everyone has raised the bar on incentives,” added Ross Clennett. “The recruitment path for recruiters to come over from the UK and Ireland has become harder over the past 3 years, so agency leaders need to ensure their own talent has the right skills or can be nurtured and upskilled from within.”

Andrea McHutchon, Australian Country Director for Salt, observed higher levels of loyalty over the last two years where recruiters saw they were being invested in despite tough market conditions. “We have used training and clearer career paths to retain our talent, but we have also looked for people with the right skills in other industries,” she explained. “We looked at the travel and hospitality industries as

people were looking to change their career but were already trained in customer service and commercial acumen.”

Mapping out a career path earlier is helping to attract and retain recruitment talent, agreed Ross. “Whereas, back in the day, we concentrated on them hitting their billing targets then talking about career trajectory, the more sophisticated agencies are much more considered about career development. People2People have done a fantastic job with their pathways and that clarity for new recruits is vital.”

## SKIN IN THE GAME

Mark Smith has also seen success with share schemes. “If you share the pie, it will get bigger, so it’s always been part of the plan to offer employee ownership,” he explained. “The key lesson is that we do it on a discretionary basis and people must invest in the company. Everyone knows it’s available to them, but those who want a share in the growth they help to create ask to be considered for it. We now have employee shareholders in each of the different states we operate in.”

Will share schemes become a more common incentive? “We have certainly increased incentives across the business these past couple of years, introducing a new self-care allowance for each staff member plus our work from anywhere



policy,” commented Kat Docherty, Co-Founder of TIARA award winner Mayday Recruitment. “Hearing Mark discuss P2P’s share options has definitely given us food for thought as a further option for Mayday in the future.”

Everyone seems to have a different policy on when and where their people work but most agree that the office needs to be nice, even if people only come in once a week.

“We have hired people in the specific locations we want to work in, so they can work wherever is most suitable to them and only come to the office once a month in some cases,” shared Sarah Elliott, TA Team Leader at Hays Enterprise Solutions. “I’m fully remote, so the utilisation of technology is very important to us.”

## TECH ROI

Have agency leaders seen more value from technology after two years of better adoption?

“We get so fixated on technology, but if your data is rubbish or you don’t manage your database well, you’ll just regurgitate the same candidates; focus on what you need from your database,” observed Mike Dickson, Partner & Director at [axr] Sales & Marketing Recruitment.

People2People’s Mark Smith added: “You can’t initiate automation without the right data and we need time to really look at

what we have so we not only make best use of our database but find a way for candidates to update it for us. Great project for a downturn.”

“The next race for recruiters is to contact passive candidates around the time they might start looking,” said Ross Clennett. “If you can use data to win that race then that is the race to be in.”

The big question is how you motivate people to use the tools properly and get buy in from everyone on how to work in the right way.

Purpose and recognition have become powerful tools over the last few years, as we have seen through our TIARA awards programme.

“Everyone wants a purpose, but it has to be meaningful,” said Mike Dickson. “As leaders, we should be very clear about what the purpose is and bring it back to all company meetings and celebrations, so you don’t just recognise profit but the purpose driving it.”

This point was echoed by Andrea McHutchon. “Purpose and values should underpin everything that consultants and other staff do, so talk about them daily not just at key points in the year.”

## POWER OF RECOGNITION

It’s important to remember that the business is more than the sales team, so

**Talenza won The Mercury Best Large Recruitment Company to Work For at the TIARA Recruitment Awards ANZ 2021**



***“What excites me is the future; I see a lot of young people choosing recruitment now as a career rather than just falling into it and we’re having more mature conversations within the industry.”***

Mike Dickson, Partner & Director, [axr] Sales & Marketing Recruitment

agency leaders should celebrate all success - not just top billers but all of the back-office people that support them. “We worked with a consultant to come up with our purpose and values and how it can permeate throughout the business,” said Mark Smith. “This is when we created the STRIDE awards which bring our values to life.”

Recognition is a great way to encourage the behaviour you want to see in your business and these agency leaders have used the TIARAs and their own internal honours to do this.

So how confident were these leaders about the next 6 to 12 months in recruitment? Mike Dickson summed it up with his final comment of the session. “Years ago, this kind of meeting, and this level of collaboration wouldn’t have happened. What excites me is the future; I see a lot of young people choosing recruitment now as a career rather than just falling into it and we’re having more mature conversations within the industry.”

“Our industry has got bigger, stronger, more mature and far more professional,” concluded TALiNT Partners Director David Head. “It’s going in the direction we want it to be, because of recruitment leaders like these.”







Connecting the talent ecosystem: We bring together a global network of leading employers and solution providers to make better talent and technology decisions.