



HUDSON RPO

A low-angle, upward-looking photograph of several modern skyscrapers with glass facades, set against a clear blue sky. The buildings converge towards the top of the frame, creating a sense of height and scale.

**The War
For Talent
in Financial
Services**

The War For Talent in Financial Services

This time last year, most Western economies saw massive spikes in unemployment due to the pandemic, yet most industries today face one of the most acute labor market shortages ever

The finance sector is particularly struggling to not only attract, but retain employees, so TALiNT Partners and HudsonRPO convened a panel of TA and HR experts from across the sector to discuss the challenges they face and the approaches they are utilizing.

Our expert panellists had a fascinating range of experiences and perspectives but they all agreed on one thing: It's extremely tough out there!

Fierce competition for talent

Filling retail positions in banking is particularly challenging, highlighted a VP for a renowned bank. "For the first time in 15 years, we have less traffic to our site and more jobs. Until now we have never had to go out and look for people for those roles." They too have noticed "a very competitive market" with candidates "inundated" with job offers.

Changing jobs is certainly easier when working remotely. "It's definitely easier for people to have a quick side chat with recruiters to see where the land lies," pointed out a head of HR at a leading trading firm.

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Brooks Thurston, Global Talent Acquisition Operations Manager, Northern Trust

"Back-out" pandemic

The tight labor market has been accompanied by a pandemic of "back-outs", where individuals



Ken Brotherston
Managing Director
TALiNT Partners

decline already accepted job offers because of a better offer. Some job offers even result in no-shows – something many organizations have never really seen until now, highlighted Ken Brotherston, Managing Director of TALiNT Partners.

Thankfully, many more organizations are now more open to hiring talent anywhere across the nation, confirmed Rhoda Banks, SVP Talent Management at American Accredits. "But even though we have more access to talent, it hasn't been any easier to find it. Recruiting in this industry remains challenging. Candidates have so many more opportunities available to them now, which is posing a huge challenge for the industry."

Compliance challenges

In the Finance Sector (FS) issues of compliance can make hybrid/remote models much more difficult to offer all employees. "As we are a trading organization, we need employees, like traders, to be back in the office full-time, because of legislation and compliance issues," highlighted a guest.

"But it has been a real struggle getting employees to return to the physical office in both my current and previous role. Workers are rightly questioning why they have to return to the office, after successfully working remotely from home for over a year," explained Rhoda.

Balancing flexibility with business needs

One participant from a large investment company is facing similar challenges. "Although everyone is working remotely for now, come the fall the new work model will be dictated by each team, and remote options will depend on role/function," they explained.

"However, we are trying to be as flexible as possible. Every single team is different and we want to treat them all with the compassion they need, offer them flexibility fairly without being discriminatory. But of course, balancing that with the legitimate needs of the business is



proving to be difficult. Explaining why some roles can be 100 percent remote, while others can't is hugely challenging."

Overcoming traditional mindsets

Brooks Thurston, Global Talent Acquisition Operations Manager of financial services firm Northern Trust, headquartered in Chicago, commented "We are definitely witnessing an evolution from the 'gotta be here' approach to something more flexible. Our own mindset is evolving as more discussions are being had."

Even the largest financial organizations are taking very different positions on the issue, highlighted Ken. Just a few months ago, the CEO of Goldman Sachs called remote working "an aberration." In contrast, Citi's Chief sent a staff-wide memo in March saying the bank expected most staff to work in a hybrid model in a bid to improve work-life balance.

Onboarding needs to start early

Of course, just because a new recruit accepts a role, it's no guarantee that they'll join your firm, as they could potentially be inundated by multiple offers, and/or be poached by a competitor. "So it's vital to keep them excited and engaged about joining your firm, while they work out their notice period," advised one participant. "Managers/colleagues should make contact immediately with the candidate to develop a rapport and retain that excitement about joining, and prevent them from seeking other appointments before their start date. I constantly advise managers to introduce a 'buddy' to ensure regular contact through phone calls or emails."

Fintech startup MotoRefi's Director – Talent Acquisition, Adrian Russo, agreed: "After candidates sign the offer letter, keeping them engaged and looping them in communications is key to help them feel like they're already a member of the team. We have a whole workplace experience team solely devoted to the candidate/employee experience, who send out swag boxes to new hires."

Seeing physical office space should also be part of that early experience, unless they are really remote, so candidates get an opportunity to see the office, especially if it is a hybrid setup. Give them an office tour, so they can check out the location of their desk, places to eat lunch in the surrounding area, meeting spaces, etc.

Managers/leaders, however, are critical to a successful onboarding of new recruits. "Research shows employees will decide if they stay or go based on their connection with their manager, not HR," added Rhoda. "So although HR has a role in defining/designing an onboarding plan/process, it's vital to engage leaders in the onboarding process."

Most sought-after benefits

Offering the right benefits are also key to attracting top talent. "Attracting Millennials and Gen Z – who are becoming the majority of the workforce – is particularly challenging," pointed out Jeremiah Stone, Talent Acquisition Leader from Macquarie. "They have a different set of drivers and interests, and what they find compelling in employers can vary hugely. Compensation isn't always a driver. They want to work for companies that live the values of diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I). So they'll ask questions like, what is the impact of this work? Are there any programs around DE&I? What's the composition of your workforce and how has it improved?"

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Another hugely sought-after benefit is vacation/time off. In Rhoda's experience, "The top reason for candidates rejecting a job offer is actually vacation time and not compensation. "Many candidates are looking for more time off so giving new hires, say an extra week off," can help to seal the deal, according to Rhoda.

Titles and career progression matter too, confirmed another participant. In fact, what drives most senior staff to look for other job opportunities (especially VPs) is lack of growth/promotion opportunities. One delegate commented during exit interviews, it's not uncommon for them to hear, 'there's only one CIO/CFO role, and she/he is not going anywhere'. "So employees are definitely thinking about their long-term career trajectory. They want more responsibility, more ownership and want to make more of an impact on clients or the business. If they can't do that with their existing employer, then they will be tempted to consider other offers," they warned.

So how do you mitigate that? "It's about being proactive," according to said participant. "I have a call regularly with all my team leaders, where I ask: Do your people know they are important? Did you tell them they are valuable? Staff need to hear that while they still work for you; not when they hand in their resignation."

Looking ahead

So what can we expect to see in Talent Acquisition in finance over the next six months? For some participants, the next few months will be about testing the new way of working and whether it's in line with company culture and values. They are expecting to see "a lot of churn still happening as people get used to the new normal" and are banking on more turnover and needing more support to fulfil those roles.

Employees are undoubtedly hesitant about a full-time office return after a year and a half of comfortably working from home everyday. "However, they may feel differently once they get back into the groove of travelling to work," said TALiNT Partners' Consultant Tracey Klein. "Staff may decide that it does actually feel good to be back at the office with colleagues, and we may well see a willingness to be more present in the office."

We will see a "vast disparity between progressive organizations who are really leaning into this new hybrid work-style, and those that are trying to maintain the more traditional office work style," predicted Adrian. Companies that recognize that we are in new remote-first environment, and cater for all employee needs – including women – will see a more "equitable and diverse environment."

Get proactive and creative

Smart companies "will take advantage of this time and to capture new talent, and as a result will see diversity at all levels", added Adrian. "And competitors will find themselves asking what's Company A doing that we're not; and will want to replicate what Company A is doing. But by that time it will be too late."

Being proactive and being ahead of the game is crucial to winning the current war for talent. One guest has already got her eyes on the 'top talent' that her firm wants to retain. "We are being proactive, so in six months, we can say we've done x,y and z to retain our top talent."

It's vital to get creative to attract new talented recruits. For example, look where you normally wouldn't. "That means looking in local markets, as well as outside the industry. That's what we're doing to find talent for retail banking positions," explained Steve Wajda from HudsonRPO.

As most workers that left the workforce during the pandemic were women, companies could certainly do more to engage and woo them back through programmes like returnships.

Admittedly, many families in many parts of the US don't know what the school scenario will be like until September. So until those plans are in place, many women may be reluctant to committing to a new role even if it's remote. "However, there's no reason, why companies can't be proactive and start engaging these women now, rather than later in the year," added Ken.

After all, the key to winning this war for talent boils down to better planning, being more proactive and getting more creative, concluded the experts.





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