

“Remote washing” will only make your recruitment headache worse

You're looking for talent. But here's the paradox: despite the daily reports of layoffs, there still seems to be a dire shortage of the right people. One way employers are responding is to make their jobs more aligned with contemporary lifestyle choices by offering remote and flexible working options.

Temps de lecture : minute

13 April 2023

However, new evidence from an analysis of over 64,000 job offers on the [Jobgether remote working search engine](#) shows that employers are resorting to an epidemic of “remote washing” - overstating the flex characteristics of positions - to try and fill roles.

Are we really still experiencing skills shortages?

The difficulties facing employers seeking staff are still intense. In [Australia](#), 90% of businesses reckon they will be affected by staffing shortages in 2023 and 36% expect that to slow their business growth. In [Germany](#), a recent report from the Economy Ministry said skills shortages are "acutely affecting" many companies' growth. Companies in [Taiwan](#) are going to find it difficult to hire quality candidates in 2023, according to the Salary Survey 2023 from the European Chamber of Commerce Taiwan (ECCT). And the UK is severely impacted. Although there is a slowing in the number of vacancies, latest figures show well over a million unfilled

jobs, according to the *Office for National Statistics (ONS)*, with the situation getting worse in the care, science, engineering and hospitality sectors.

Under these conditions, standing out from other companies is a must. However, in your efforts to appeal to candidates, do not fall into the trap of “remote washing” or overstating the remote and flex credentials of that position you are about to put out there - however tempting that may seem.

Talent wants remote

Remote and flex working is clearly hugely popular with candidates. A July 2022 study of 13,382 global workers by McKinsey & Company, found that 40% put workplace flexibility as a top motivator in whether they stayed in a role. That’s as highly as they rated salary! Over a quarter said a lack of flexibility by their last employer was a major factor in why they quit.

Another 2022 study, by social media management platform Buffer, found the experience of 2,000 remote workers across 16 countries was overwhelmingly positive. Practically all (97%) said they would recommend remote working over being office-based. And employers seem to be responding. The same survey found that almost three-quarters of remote workers said their firm was planning to allow more remote working - up from 46% in 2021.

Where claim and reality diverge

But claiming to offer remote and flex work, and actually delivering on that promise are two different things. Many employers appear to be getting cold feet on the matter. A January 2023 survey by recruitment-agency Monster of 1,806 US workers, tells us that a third of employers who planned to adopt a virtual or hybrid model a year ago have now changed

their minds.

In January, Disney employees discovered that the company is reversing course on remote working, with a mandatory four-day office week beginning in March. Starbucks, Twitter and auditing firm KPMG are also imposing more “in-person” days, or even a return to full-time office working.



Read also

Meet Jobgether, a company built on the principles of "freemote" work

What's really going on right now?

There's certainly room for concern, from where we sit. Based on a detailed evaluation of 30 criteria across 64,000+ fully remote positions from 6,800 employers, we see that there are many definitions of “remote,” ranging from limited flexibility to fully global remote positions.

- Most employers still limit their remote positions to one specific

- country. Such jobs account for more than 87% of the positions available. This often reflects the fact that employers might want their team members to get together physically on a regular basis – once a week or once every two weeks for instance. This requires employees to live in a well connected location from where they can travel easily.
- Secondly, some employers are fine with hiring talents across several geographies. Multi-country positions account for 11% of the jobs on Jobgether. These employers will require their remote employees to live in a specific time zone or continent.
 - Finally, fully global and distributed companies who are “remote by design” are looking for candidates globally, no matter where they are based. They are fine with digital nomads moving from one country to the other. Such a flexible approach is now made possible thanks to contracting platforms such as Deel, or Oyster. However, such jobs still only represent 2% of available remote positions.

That’s an extremely low figure, meaning that some degree of remote washing is nearly universal. One big reason for this is that we are still in the teething stages with remote working. It’s not a new concept, of course, but it is only since the pandemic that it has gone mainstream. Most employers are still working out their core values on the subject and the policies to back them up. Employees are still finding out where they can go for impartial information about the true nature of a position advertised as remote, and advice about which employers offer the best policies.

One more positive finding from our analysis is that startups and SMBs are twice as likely to be open to global hiring than the average, with 4% of their job offers fully remote and geo-flexible. Perhaps this is where the real remote revolution is happening. More recently founded companies have remote as part of their DNA.

Don't overpromise

Where does that leave your current recruitment campaign? Sure, you have some aspects of flex working on offer, but how extensive are they in reality and how long will they last?

If you overclaim now - you're setting yourself up for a fall. You're obviously going to choose the best person on the market. And when your brilliant new recruit, currently enjoying the lifestyle on some gorgeous Mediterranean island, discovers they really need to be in the Dusseldorf office three days a week, rather than the expected three days per month... they will find other options.

Arnaud Devigne is cofounder and co-CEO of *Jobgether*.

Article by Arnaud Devigne