



## Recruitment insight:

# Resourcing Manufacturing staff during Covid-19

The phrase 'unprecedented times' has been heard a lot in 2020, and while it may have lost some of its oomph since the outbreak of Covid-19, what's clear is that for each of us, the years of experience we have in our fields is being put to the test. This of course is no different when it comes to the jobs market, with such a drastic shift affecting every industry in the UK, both in terms of employer demand and the availability of talent.

### The UK recruitment market today

Typically year, we would see a seasonal decline in jobseeking activity in the summer months, with fewer people searching and applying for roles. As travel corridors opened, and restrictions eased this came as expected at the beginning of Q3, with declining candidate activity in July. However, with the winding down of furlough, there were weekly increases in candidate activity throughout August and September, meaning that as we enter Q4, job searches are up **14%** year on year.

While on the employer side, confidence is returning as can be seen by steady growth in the number of job vacancies advertised in the market. Across the market there was a **15%** uplift in September alone, meaning the job market now sits at **62%** of pre-Covid-19 levels.

These green shoots are driven particularly by industries such as Healthcare, IT, Social Care and Logistics which remain the most active job advertisers. While in August there was significant increase in hospitality, skilled trades, property, and cleaning. This is a direct result of the loosening of restrictions, highlighted by those sectors which are still most negatively affected including travel, media and design, and the arts.

Effectively, across the market, the return of employer confidence is being overtaken by rising candidate demand. This is illustrated by a **32%** increase in the average number of applications per vacancy (APV), which is most significant in hard to fill roles such as IT and Social care.



# Looking ahead

Looking ahead, the unusual trends we've seen this summer show a sign of things to come. We will no doubt encounter more change in the jobs market, and with further shifts in consumer demand and behaviour across the festive period underpinning this change, the spikes and falls we expect to see across a range of industries will be reshaped, and with restrictions still in place – this is likely to spread into the first half of 2021.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer's winter economy plan includes 'The Job Support Scheme', which will replace the furlough scheme, seeing the government continuing to top up wages of workers who have not been able to return to the workplace full time due to Covid-19, for the six months following November. What's notable is that this stretches from November, right through to May – highlighting that typical seasonal trends over the winter can be expected to shift further.

While for hiring managers fishing in bigger talent pools than they are used to, there is a real opportunity for recruiting businesses as we move from a candidate scarce market, to a candidate rich market.

When it comes to planning 2021's recruitment strategy, it's all of the above factors and some yet unknown, which will be at the top of the agenda. So the need to embrace flexibility in terms of approach, budgeting and target audience will be the order of the day, with a greater focus on previously untapped talent pools, innovative talent attraction methods and ROI being even more important than ever before.

# Manufacturing, production, and the year to date

The manufacturing industry has seen supply chains, availability of workforce, and cost of materials heavily impacted by the outbreak of Covid-19. That said, the industry has shown remarkable resilience, with subsectors such as pharmaceuticals and medical manufacturing remaining particularly strong. Meanwhile, across the industry as a whole, we have witnessed a remarkable display of flexibility, as production shifted to meet the call to arms and supply PPE and ventilators needed in the fight against Covid-19. This required retrofitting, innovation and retooling across Britain's manufacturers, at a rate which will change the industry for years to come.

This is being reflected more positively on the ground, with the CBI recently reporting that employer confidence was improving across the industry. As the tide begins to turn, orders placed to manufacturers became more consistent in Q3, following a significant drop in Q2.

This returning confidence has been reflected in the growing recruitment efforts of the sector. The latest Quarterly Recruitment Outlook from Totaljobs and The British Chambers of Commerce revealed that just shy of **50%** of manufacturing firms in the UK were actively recruiting in the three months to October. This is echoed by figures seen on Totaljobs, where in Q3, there were **86%** more manufacturing and production roles advertised than Q2, with a monthly increase of **31%** in September alone. With a changing employment landscape seeing more people looking for work in the UK, this is being met with growing interest from Britain's workforce, with a **36%** rise in applications to these roles across the quarter.



**68,000**

people searching on Totaljobs for manufacturing roles in Q3

**86%**

increase in manufacturing roles advertised in Q3

**36%**

rise in applications to manufacturing roles

**Totaljobs**



# Future thinking

The UK is the ninth largest manufacturing nation in the world, and the success of the sector will be critical to economic recovery. Accordingly, the industry can expect government support to get back on its feet.

The sector has already seen the introduction of necessary provisions, including the Kickstart Scheme which hopes to find work for young people, the Job Support Scheme to ease the financial cost of employment on businesses struggling during the pandemic, as well as 'Bounce Back Loans', taken up by over a million business on a new 'Pay as You Grow' repayment model.

As a consequence of uncertainty surrounding Brexit, over the past few years, businesses in the manufacturing sector have been reluctant to commit to invest in their business, on recruitment, and on machinery. But as we look to emerge from the outbreak of Covid-19, investment into these things will be key to business success.

With a candidate-rich market, widening government support and the sector exempt from tiered restrictions, manufacturers who are looking to recruit can expect an influx of applications from candidates who are looking to the industry for their next opportunity. This presents an opportunity for awakening manufacturers to recruit from a growing talent pool of interested, able and committed workers, likely at a lower cost than in years gone by.

With this in mind, Front of mind for manufacturers as we head into 2021, will be ensuring recruitment is conducted as efficiently as possible, with tight budget control, and flexibility. But, with an abundance of candidates to choose from, comes the opportunity to do just that. Key for recruiters in the field will be ensuring talent pipelines remain in place, spend is used wisely, candidate expectations are managed, and headcount doesn't become a blocker for continued business success.



# What this means for you?

Employers operating in the manufacturing industry should brace themselves for growing applications numbers, and consider how they can quickly and efficiently sort, sift and select the best candidates to ensure return on investment.



**Get in touch to find out more**

## How we can help:

### 1) Helping you flex your recruitment budget

With Totaljobs Performance you can set your budget and only pay for the applications you want to receive. Rather than spreading your recruitment budget with a flat cost, you have the flexibility to dial it up or down depending on your needs.

### 2) Helping you manage your applications

The Totaljobs applicant management system allows you to manage a high volume of applications through each stage of the recruitment process, from shortlisted to hired. And to help you sift through applications quickly, we use data and insight to highlight those which best match your job advert, helping to lighten your workload.

### 3) Helping you to think differently

With an influx of candidates into the market, the best hires might not have previously worked in the sector. We studied over 270,000 job adverts to find the most compatible industries, based on the skills required. Whether time management, communication or problem solving is key – you can use Totaljobs to find people with transferable skills from sectors such as business management, social care, IT or logistics.

**Totaljobs**





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With a head office in London and offices in Birmingham, Havant, Cardiff, Leeds, Manchester, Nottingham and Glasgow, Totaljobs Group also consists of Caterer.com, CatererGlobal, CWJobs and Milkround. Together these brands are the UK division of StepStone Group, one of the world's largest e-recruitment businesses.

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