

The epiphany opportunity:

How meeting great expectations can transform hiring



“I’m never commuting again.”

“There’s no way I’m staying with a company that doesn’t value me.”

“I don’t feel like I belong in this business anymore.”

“My loyalty to my employer has held my career back.”

“I can’t keep working at an organization that’s stuck in the past.”

“I no longer get a sense of purpose from my job.”

A moment of realization has struck millions of workers in the past year – an epiphany in how they view their work, their employer, or even their whole career. People are no longer satisfied with their current reality. And they know they can change it by quitting their job.

Moreover, with their skills in demand like never before, employees can take their pick of new roles. The ‘great resignation’ has triggered greater expectations. From pay to flexibility to purpose, candidates are more demanding than ever. People are moving job for a better employee experience, and to get more of what they want from work.

In the business world, the ‘great resignation’ is seen as a threat. But for progressive employers it is an opportunity. Taking the initiative to improve the employee experience will reduce attrition issues. By meeting greater candidate expectations, organizations can beat their competitors to well-motivated, high-performing talent.



This paper explores key personal motivations behind ‘the great resignation’ and examines the elevated expectations now held by employees and candidates.

By understanding these expectations, talent acquisition (TA) teams can better incentivize attraction across different audience segments. We will look at effective ways for recruiters to convince candidates their expectations will be met – drawing on current real-world examples.

The focus is on changes and improvements that can be made across the recruitment lifecycle – attraction, assessment and the candidate experience. But, of course, retention and recruitment are closely interwoven. Much of the insight in this paper is equally relevant to mitigating ‘the great resignation’ and preventing major attrition problems.

If you are involved in any aspect of talent acquisition, HRM, leadership or management, then greater expectations will impact on your role in 2022.





Talent acquisition should be in the retention conversation

Good reasons to stay at an organization are good reasons to join an organization. If an employer can demonstrate a great employee experience, it will be a magnet for high performers who are dissatisfied in their current job.

TA functions cannot directly influence an organization's working conditions and employee experience. However, TA often holds highly relevant data, research, and insight on making changes and improvements. When tackling attrition issues, TA leaders should be in the conversation with HR, Reward, L&D, Internal Comms, and Operational leaders – especially on the topic of EVP and employer brand.

You can find Korn Ferry insights on retention and the 'great resignation' [here](#).

More than 24 million US workers quit their jobs from April to September 2021.

Bloomberg, December 2021

24% of employees in the UK plan to move jobs within the next six months.

Raconteur, December 2021

The 'great resignation' is here. Research studies and surveys across the globe have evidenced a new-found desire for employees to change their job.

The reasons why employees are dissatisfied are many and varied. People have always quit to escape bad bosses, and they continue to do so. But changes to work and life during the pandemic are key factors at play.

Every individual has their own story to tell about how lockdown life has changed them. Two years under the shadow of Covid is an experience that has affected different people in contrasting ways.

For many, a period of self-reflection in lockdown has led to a personal epiphany. They might want to retain flexible working. Perhaps they have re-evaluated their career prospects and path. They may be seeking more meaning and purpose from their work. They all want to get something more from their work.

Talent Acquisition teams need to understand the various circumstances and motivations behind the desire to quit - and the more that candidates are looking for from a new job and employer.

Through six stories, we will look at six of the key expectations identified.



01

I want more money and more benefits that actually benefit me

Salary, benefits & rewards

Carlos' epiphany

The first year of the pandemic was tough. I was in and out of manufacturing jobs, struggling to pay bills, dipping into my savings for a house deposit. Then, in summer 2021 everything went crazy. Jobs everywhere. Employers offering much higher pay. Signing on bonuses. All kinds of benefits.

Now, for the first time in my life, I'm the one with the power over the employers. They need me more than I need them. They're chasing after me - and that's a good feeling. This is the opportunity for me to secure a better future for my family in 2022 and beyond.

Carlos' expectations met

My first priority was a higher salary. Much higher. Some of my friends jumped on a well-paying job with the highest signing-on bonus. But I looked closely at the benefits packages too. The health benefits are the big one, of course. But some employers have discounts on all kinds of stores and brands. With inflation so high, those discounts matter. All the little bits of the package add up. An extra day's vacation is valuable to me.

In the end, I did the sums on the different packages at a couple of companies. I compared the working conditions. Then I chose the one that offered me the most overall in terms of my family finances.



Higher salaries

Companies are setting aside 3.9% of payroll budgets to raises in 2022, a record high not seen in a decade.

Conference Board Survey, November 2021

People who changed jobs saw average wage growth of 6.6% in September 2021, up from 5.1% in the first half of the year.

ADP Q3 2021 Workforce Virility Report

The need, or opportunity, to earn a higher salary is a key driver of 'the great resignation'. This is especially true for workers in high volume roles such as logistics, customer service and manufacturing – but the expectation of a higher salary is universally stated as the number one priority of job hunters in recent surveys. Inflation and the cost-of-living squeeze are a concern across socio-economic groups.

2022 is likely to see continued wage growth, as inflation is expected to continue at a high rate well into the year. Employers have to decide whether to continue giving raises and offering higher starting salaries – can wage cost increases be passed to customers? If ongoing raises are unsustainable, could additions or improvements be made to benefits packages, instead?

It's important to keep in mind that the priority for job hunters is a higher salary, but not always the highest salary they can get.

Imagine a mid-20s IT professional currently on \$60,000 a year. One company is offering her \$90,000 to come and work on legacy systems in a small IT team with no progression prospects. Another is offering \$80,000 to work with trailblazing technology and an inspiring CTO in a global IT function with a clear career path. The second opportunity could be far more appealing, despite the salary gap.

Thinking beyond the pay packet is essential because higher-starting salaries certainly won't solve retention problems. If the employee experience or career prospects don't match up to expectations, then new joiners might simply leave for another job.

Sign-on bonuses

Roles offering a sign-on bonus increased by 454% in August 2021.

GlobalData, September 2021

The summer of 2021 saw an unprecedented increase in signing on bonuses as employers scrambled to find a short-term solution to employee shortages. Sums offered range from \$150 for unskilled roles to \$100,000 for medical professionals.

In 2022, sign-on bonuses will continue to be a valuable tool in incentivizing recruitment – for organizations that can afford them. As with salaries raises, organizations need to consider the financial implications and keep a close eye on market conditions, market activity, and the economy. Sign-on bonuses usually come with a minimum length of service commitment to aid retention. But as highlighted above, if the employee experience fails to measure up, then workers could leave once the bonus is paid – to collect another elsewhere.

Making incentives work

A major US retailer faced the prospect of closing stores due to staff shortages. To counter this threat, the company analyzed up-to-the-minute market data to pinpoint exactly what competitors were offering in different locations. To boost attraction, it then introduced sign on bonuses and increased salaries, to match competitors in each specific market. In addition, the company avoided a barrier to attraction by tying vaccination requirements to minimum federal/state guidelines, rather than implementing its own mandate. This combination of measures directly increased hiring numbers. Not one store had to shut its doors.



Service length incentives

2021 also saw more employers paying a bonus to new starters for remaining in post for a set period of time – either as an addition or complement to a sign-on payment. For volume roles in particular, these incentives can impact on retention.

While some workers will have the confidence to switch job multiple times in 2022, many people are looking for stability and security after the uncertainty of the last two years. Service length incentives will be appealing to this segment of the workforce. If these incentives can be extended to existing employees as well as new ones, it will prevent resentment and boost retention.

Health benefits

In the majority of territories, health benefits are a huge incentive to candidate attraction. 2022 is a year in which many major organizations will be reviewing health benefits as the longer-term ramifications become clearer.

Larger organizations, in particular, are focused on improving the affordability of health care for lower-wage workers – both to reduce sickness rates and to help national and international efforts to address health inequality.

In terms of talent attraction, health benefits are a very strong financial incentive. They are also key to creating a positive employee experience. A workplace environment that promotes wellbeing will be very appealing to workers worried about burnout or their mental or physical health.





Flexible / segmented benefits

74% of employees said they would work harder for an employer that provided benefits to support individual needs. 50% of workers would sacrifice some of their salary for more tailored employee benefits.

Metlife Re:Me report, 2021

One of the key trends in Reward is to tailor benefits to meet the needs of different members of the workforce. Many organizations offer a suite of flexible benefits from which employees can build the benefits package that suits them – a young Gen Z graduate wants very different things to a millennial parent or a Gen X-er with 10 years of the career to go.

Take working parents as an example. They form a significant proportion of the overall workforce – with many worried about burn out from juggling their different priorities in life.

A 2021 survey from Maven and Great Place to Work identified five characteristics of a workplace that helped parents feel more supported. The number one factor that prevented working parents from feeling burnout was a benefits package that felt special and unique to their needs.

Crucially, this isn't just about providing a one-size all fits package for parents. The needs of parents with babies and toddlers are very different to those with teenagers. Adoptive parents and those with disabled children have different needs again.

Progressive employers are increasingly acknowledging these differences and adapting their benefits offering accordingly to support retention and recruitment. It's not just about the benefits themselves but how they are communicated and promoted to employees.

Two-way communication on benefits

One global IT company regularly surveys its employees on benefits, to identify which are most valued and where there are gaps. It then prioritizes Reward investments to drive a better return on spend.

In the US, every employee is sent personalized total rewards statements, which outline the full value of their package, and also reminds them of relevant development programs relevant to their career stage.

Actions for talent acquisition

- It is imperative to keep up to date with the latest salaries and sign on bonuses offered by key competitors. If salaries or bonuses are at or above current market levels, then recruitment marketing and recruiters should strongly highlight this.
- Evaluate the total financial value of your rewards packages – if you can give candidates tangible figures you can convince them to join you rather than competitors paying a slightly higher pay rate.
- Identify the different types of workers you employ and aim to hire – and think about the different needs that different individuals have. Then look closely at the different benefits your organization offers – to determine which are most to each of the segments. You can then highlight the most relevant, attractive benefits to different audiences.
- Wherever possible, highlight how your benefits improve the employee experience and life inside work. Liaise with hiring managers to ensure they understand the full range of incentives and benefits on offer – and that they understand the importance of highlighting the incentives that will be most relevant to candidates.
- If your target audience face barriers to joining your organization, offer a benefit to overcome that barrier.



02

I want to feel more sense of belonging to my employer

Brand & EVP

Atif's epiphany

I was furloughed early in the pandemic. As the months went by, there was very little communication, and I started feeling disengaged from what was happening in the company. They were slow to adapt to Covid. We were worse affected than our competitors.

When my team returned to full-time, it felt like the company still hadn't truly adapted to a post-pandemic world. We were hearing the same old corporate statements and messages as two years ago - nothing made me want to stay and help the company rebuild and grow. I realized I didn't belong anymore.

Meeting Atif's expectations

I started looking at jobs with our competitors and checked out their websites and LinkedIn pages. The companies that impressed me most had a story to tell about their response to the pandemic - and they had videos with employees explaining how they had been supported over the last two years.

I interviewed with the three companies that looked most in tune with my values. Two felt like the right cultural fit. I've joined the one with the most positive message about its future - and my role in it.



Brand familiarity

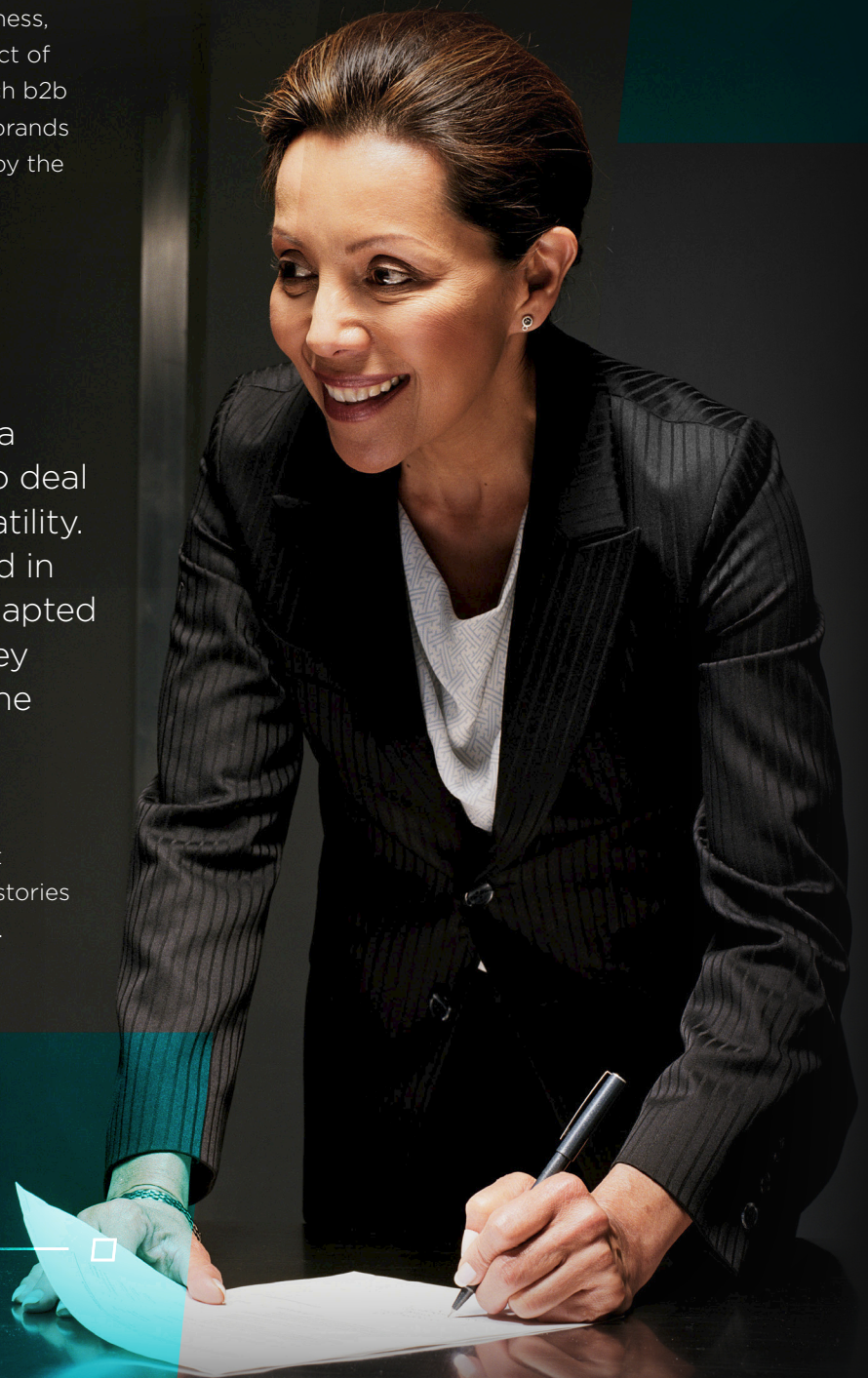
During a period of uncertainty such as the pandemic, workers seek the reassurance of familiar brands and large organizations. Employers with a high profile are at an advantage in recruitment – but it is not enough to rely on a commercial brand to attract talent. Now, more than ever, organizations need to promote their employer brand and EVP.

For organizations with lower market awareness, it is essential to raise the visibility and impact of the employer brand. For example, many tech b2b companies have built successful employer brands despite their name being almost unknown by the general public.

Resilience

The future is unpredictable. Candidates won't want to join a company that is ill-equipped to deal with future challenges and volatility. They will certainly be interested in how prospective employers adapted to the pandemic – and how they treated their employees over the past two years.

Organizations have seen high candidate engagement levels with stories and content about their adaptations to Covid. Personal stories told by employees are particularly effective.



Positive future prospects

The last two years have featured wave after wave of bad news and negativity. People want more in their life to feel positive about – and to look forward to. Organizations will be far more appealing if they can tell a positive story to candidates about their plans for the future.

On a basic level, candidates want reassurance their job won't be at risk within months of joining. But the real power of positivity is in engaging and exciting prospective recruits – give them a sense of direction, goals to reach for, a mission to share with colleagues.

A relevant, meaningful employee value proposition

As highlighted above, it's crucial for organizations to promote an engaging employer brand that showcases a distinctive and relevant employee value proposition (EVP).

Rewards, benefits, facilities and working conditions are often very similar across different organizations. It can be difficult for employers to make their offer stand out in the market. Your EVP should be unique to you – it is what will attract the people most in tune with your mission and values. An EVP with specific messaging relevant to different audience segments is especially powerful in boosting attraction.

Many organizations have changed more in the past two years than in the previous decade. However, only some organizations have reflected these changes by refreshing their existing EVP or developing a completely new one.

It is vital for your EVP and employer brand communications to be an authentic representation of your culture now – not what it was two years ago. Candidates want to see evidence of how inclusive and fair the workplace is. In addition, this is a time when many workers are looking for a greater sense of purpose and meaning from their work. Employees want to feel like they belong – culture, inclusivity, shared values and a common purpose all combine to create that feeling.



Making a connection through the EVP

A global life sciences organization invested significantly in researching, developing and communicating its global EVP. The EVP focuses on the connection between each employee's work and the positive impact it ultimately has on the world.

To bring this messaging to life, the company puts its employees front and center in videos and marketing. Employees all over the world share their experiences and stories – providing not just a personal, human touch, but also local nuance and color. This creates stronger engagement with candidates who are in tune with the company's mission and values.

Actions for talent acquisition

- Review your current EVP, employer brand and recruitment marketing. Does it still feel relevant to the target market or should it be brought up to date?
- Can you segment messaging more effectively for different audiences? Is the EVP inspiring? Does it show how employees will find a sense of purpose?
- Feature inspiring employer brand ambassadors in your recruitment marketing – people who are passionate about your organization and its mission/purpose.



A man in a blue suit and glasses is looking at his smartphone on a city street. The background shows a modern building with a glass facade and other people walking.

Greater expectations and the candidate experience

Candidates are not 'incentivized' to join an organization by their experience of the application and assessment/interview process. However, the candidate experience is a huge influence on whether someone will accept a role. The talent shortage has put candidates in the driving seat – they know that employers are competing for their signature on a contract.

Right now, candidates want to feel wanted and important. They expect recruiters to listen to, and cater to, their needs. If they see any sign of disrespect, they will turn to another opportunity. If they don't feel the process is moving fast enough for their liking, they will accept an offer already on the table.

Crucially, candidates see the recruitment process as exemplary of wider organizational processes and attitudes – a poor process sets off alarm bells. A great process makes the employer more attractive.

For further Korn Ferry insight and guidance on the candidate experience [click here](#).

03

I want more flexibility and work-life balance

Flexibility

Marina's epiphany

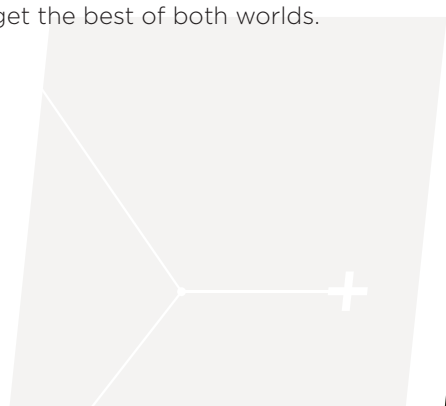
My life has been transformed by working from home. No rush hour commute. More time with the kids. A quieter, more productive working environment. My energy levels are up. My anxiety levels are down. The whole family are getting on better. I am better at my job.

Sure, I miss my colleagues and some aspects of office life - but not enough to go back to it. Now, my company is requesting my whole team comes back at least four days a week. I simply won't do that. Work-life balance is the biggest priority in my life. Forever.

Meeting Marina's expectations

It was easy for me to narrow down a new job. I spoke to a few recruiters and looked at the careers sites of three or four other employers. In every case, the flexible working options were what I looked at first.

I joined the business that offered me the best of hybrid working. I can work from home any time I like - five days a week if I want. But I go into the office too, whenever I like. There's big focus on virtually-enabled collaboration - and socials. I get the best of both worlds.



Home and remote working

50% percent of respondents said that flexibility of hours or location has become more important than before.

LinkedIn Survey Summer 2021

Advances in technology have supported the rise of home working over the last 10 years – but many workers never imagined they would have the opportunity to work regularly from home.

Then the lockdown came. Millions of people experienced home working for the first time. And a lot of them liked it – to the point that many in the workforce never want to go back to a physical workplace.

To retain and attract certain categories of in-demand worker, organizations may have to make homeworking permanently available – where there is no obvious impact to business performance and productivity. Indeed, some prominent tech companies have already announced remote working will be forever.

The challenge for many employers is to gauge and balance the positive and negative effects on productivity, collaboration, learning, career development, culture and engagement. It may be that hybrid working makes more sense for the business and for employees seeking greater flexibility.



Hybrid working

According to a spring 2021 survey from the financial firm Prudential, 49% of people said they were saving money by working remotely, 46% percent said they were saving time because they didn't have to commute, and 34% percent said remote work improved their health.

As 2021 progressed, many organizations began experimenting with hybrid working, often with employees required on-site two or three days a week. Whilst the pandemic has taught the world to take nothing for granted, hybrid working is likely to become the new norm for many workers in 2022.

To candidates seeking greater flexibility, hybrid working will hold strong appeal. While some people would prefer to stay home every day, a higher percentage want a balance of onsite and remote working.

Crucially, candidates will expect hybrid working to operate on their terms. They will prefer to choose how many days a week or month they need to be on-site – and on which days of the week. An apprentice or graduate trainee may want to be in the office most days of the week. A parent of young children may prefer to commute only a couple of days a month.

Candidates will also be impressed by employers who offer extra support for remote working, such as technology/broadband allowances – or an active program of virtual social events.

The right environment for hybrid high-performance

An IT business recently opened its new headquarters in Houston, Texas.

This state-of-the-art facility has been designed as a 'culture hub' which prioritizes face-to-face collaboration. The aim is to offer employees the flexibility they crave through hybrid working, while providing an empowering environment for networking, co-creating and celebrating together.



Four-day week and part-time/flexible hours

Part-time and/or flexible hours have long been attractive to certain audience segments, especially working parents and older members of the workforce. Following their experiences in lockdown, a far wider proportion of the workforce would relish greater flexibility.

The four-day week is particularly appealing – with many workers prepared to fit four and a half day's hours into a four-day week. The extra day for family or hobbies and interests will make a huge difference to the overall employee experience.

Another option for employers is to offer flexible start and finish times with core offices hours in the middle of the day. Avoiding the commute or being there for the school run can make a massive difference to people's lives.

Rethinking resource deployment

When faced with a talent shortage, one global company chose to rethink how its key outputs could be delivered. Then, the company tapped into the gig economy by creating flexible, contract roles assigned to specific projects only. The company gained cost-efficient access to a new talent pool of high-quality professionals seeking flexibility and autonomy. At the same time, the company redesigned its team structures to create more roles at junior level, which are easier to hire into.

Actions for talent acquisition

- Liaise with line managers and operational teams to confirm which open roles could be performed from home five days a week, and which can offer hybrid working. Check on job share availability or part-time hours.
- Create content for your careers site or social platforms to highlight your remote, hybrid and flexible working options. Show how flexible working has improved your employees' life, wellbeing or careers.



04

I want my next employer to be more progressive on social and environmental issues

ESG

Marcie's epiphany

It feels like the world has moved on a lot in the last few years, but my company is stuck in the past. After George Floyd, there were some bland statements about valuing all people – but that was only because of pressure from employees of color. My friends who worked in other companies said there were forums internally for employees to share how they were feeling – and talk about their own experiences. My employer shut those kinds of conversations down.

They're exactly the same with climate change. Sure, they have a nice statement about being kind to the planet. But I don't see us doing anything different or positive, beyond what regulations tell us we have to do. I can't look at myself in the mirror and say that I'm comfortable working here anymore.

Meeting Marcie's expectations

The first thing I noticed when looking for a new job was that some companies only pay lip service to diversity issues and the environment. You quickly get used to seeing tokenistic, glossy photos of ethnic minority employees or disabled employees.

The employers who stood out had a clear position on social issues and the environment. More than that, they were up front about how much progress they had made on inclusion – and what steps they were taking to improve it. One company invited me to a virtual meeting with the members of their diversity groups. Talking directly to those inspiring, incredible people gave me the confidence to join their business.



Action on inclusion and equity internally

Where organizations once focused on diversity alone, they now put much greater emphasis on inclusion, equity and belonging. Employees want to feel comfortable to be themselves at work – and attitudes have generally become more progressive in workplaces across the world.

High profile events such as the George Floyd trial in the US have prompted much conversation and reflection within workforces. Employees want their workplaces to be fairer and feel more inclusive – and employers recognize the business benefits, as well the moral obligation.

Employees will leave companies that don't feel inclusive or that hold them back for standing out as different. Candidates will join companies that can show they are welcoming, inclusive and fair – and give people from minority groups the opportunity to thrive and progress.

Honesty is crucial on the topic of inclusion. There is no point presenting a rosier picture than the reality – candidates will do their own research and drop out of the process, or quit for another job soon after joining.

Candidates will be attracted to organizations that state their commitment to inclusion and give an honest appraisal of their progress to date – and their roadmap for continued improvement.

Talent acquisition teams are getting great results by collaborating with internal diversity networks and featuring role models prominently in recruitment marketing. You can learn more from our Korn Ferry insight on becoming a DE&I hiring champion [here](#).



Action on sustainability

Environmental issues are a huge concern to a significant proportion of the workforce – and not just amongst younger generations. During the pandemic, support for the ‘circular economy’ also grew amongst the public, government and corporations.

Employees want to see action, not words on carbon and pollution – they are especially suspicious of ‘greenwashing’. Candidates will be keen to see evidence that organizations are actually taking proactive steps to minimize or mitigate their impact.

From a talent attraction perspective, forward thinking employers are putting their employees at the heart of storytelling, rather than directly repurposing content from corporate social responsibility (CSR) departments.

Sustainability can be tied into EVP messaging.

External support for social and green issues

70% of workers said they’d consider quitting their companies in favor of working for an organization with a stronger viewpoint on social issues that matter to them.

Gartner 2021 survey

Nobody wants to be ashamed of their employer or embarrassed by them. Increasingly, people want to feel proud to work for their employer because of their stance on social issues. They want their employer to be vocal in supporting the issues they view as important.

Organizations will strengthen their talent attraction by stating a clear and strong position within recruitment marketing and related social media activities. The best way to do this is not through corporate statements but filtered through the human perspective of your current employees.

Standing out through social justice

One organization views its longstanding leadership on green and social issues as a key differentiator in recruiting and retaining talent. This Fortune 500 company demonstrates its respect for human rights through positive action. Recent developments include the creation of an AI ethics advisory board, and a major commitment to historically black colleges and universities in the US over the next five years.



Actions for talent acquisition

- Engage with internal diversity networks – collaborate on attraction initiatives and careers events.
- Be honest in recruitment comms about inclusion and your plans for the future.
- Feature diverse role models and brand advocates in your recruitment marketing. Show how people from minority groups have thrived and progressed within your organization.
- Liaise with CSR departments to create recruitment-focused content about sustainability issues. Align the messaging with your EVP and bring stories to life through people.

The proportion of employees considered highly engaged increased from 40% to 60% when their organizations acted on today's social issues.

Gartner 2021 survey





Inclusive hiring in action

It is a challenge in itself to find and hire AI and machine learning specialists with the skills to transform a Global IT service model. Hiring diverse candidates makes that challenge even tougher. Korn Ferry recently worked with a major tech organization on a complex, diversity-focused hiring exercise.

Alongside our client, we planned and implemented a new multi-faceted approach to candidate attraction and the candidate experience. Our sourcing and marketing strategies actively targeted under-represented candidates and looked outside conventional IT talent pools. The employee referral program was expanded, and a new internship program introduced.

To build engagement, we shared diverse employee stories and created inclusive job descriptions, with careful attention to language and content. The interview process was updated to feel more inclusive and be more equitable. Crucially, we also created a new onboarding process to support and smooth the transition for the full diversity of new hires.

The sophistication of the campaign enabled our client to successfully recruit hundreds of qualified candidates, while significantly diversifying its tech function. The full story can be found [here](#).

05

I want to get more purpose and meaning from my work

Purpose

Francesca's epiphany

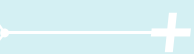
I used to think I had the best job in the world. I boasted about the long hours and weekends I worked. It was a constant whirlwind of sealing deals and moving on to the next. I was hitting my targets, earning bonuses, winning praise all round. But I never had time to pause and reflect on what my career was becoming - or the person I was turning into.

Then Covid came along, and everything ground to a halt. I'd never had so much time to myself in my life. I started questioning everything - especially my job. My bosses loved the results I got. But what satisfaction was I actually getting from it? How was I helping the world or other people? Why didn't I enjoy doing 90% of the role? It dawned on me that I needed more purpose from my work.

Meeting Francesca's expectations

I thought long and hard about what I really wanted from my work - what would give me a sense of meaning and purpose? I didn't want to focus on bottom line impact and shareholder value. I realized I wanted to pass on my experience to others - to be a role model and mentor.

I talked to a lot of recruiters about my skills and my motivations - selecting companies who could demonstrate both a sound business strategy and a positive impact on the world. I found a leadership role focused on building the long-term performance of a raw, young team. Best of all, my new company's products are helping reduce infant mortality rates all over the world.



Purpose and meaning from outcomes

For many people, lockdown was a period of soul-searching. The media and internet are awash with stories of personal awakenings. With time to reflect, employees have realized something is missing from working life – a sense of meaning or purpose.

Some workers want their work to be more worthwhile – they want to have a positive impact on individual people or the world as a whole, whether directly or indirectly. It is the final outcome of what they do that gives them purpose. A maintenance worker in a BioPharma lab is playing their part in the creation of life-saving drugs, even though they play no active part in the process.

Candidates' desire to do a worthwhile job gives an obvious advantage to employers in certain industries: healthcare, life-sciences, education, government. The challenge is to stand out against competitors who offer a similar opportunity to 'make a difference'. Employers need to ensure their messaging is distinctive and integrated into the overall EVP.

For profit-driven commercial businesses, the company vision and mission are the best starting point for offering candidates a sense of purpose. How is your business working to make its customers lives better or easier? What is it doing to improve modern life or solve problems in the world? How is it helping to create prosperity?

Food companies are helping alleviate hunger. Construction firms are building the homes and infrastructure communities need. Without utilities, transport or logistics companies, life would grind to a halt. Banks and finance companies help people buy homes and grow businesses.



Purpose and meaning from day-to-day activity

There is another side to purpose and meaning at work. Some people have reflected on the job they do and decided they want to gain more satisfaction from the tasks they perform daily. Why do tasks you don't enjoy when you could be doing a job that satisfies you? Why perform duties that stress you out and make you anxious when your role could make you feel content?

They could be a sales leader who's realized they prefer closing deals to people management. They might be an engineer who wants to see products through the whole lifecycle rather than focus on concept generation. They might be a programmer who prefers troubleshooting existing apps to building new ones from scratch.

Recruiters can attract highly-motivated talent to many kinds of roles by identifying the key tasks involved that can provide job satisfaction. This is not information you can get direct from a job description. You need to talk to people who enjoy the job and perform well in it. What is it they enjoy?

The problem-solving; the collaboration; the opportunity to nurture others?

Actions for talent acquisition

- Review and update recruitment marketing and job postings – do they highlight the purpose of the organization and the positive impact it makes? Do they highlight the contribution the post holder makes – however big or small?
- Ensure your current EVP is up to date and aligned with the organizational mission, purpose and values. Use current employees to share stories from a personal perspective.
- Identify how key roles can offer day-to-day job satisfaction and promote it. The people you attract will be far more like to perform highly and remain in the role.

74% of millennials want an organization's values to match their own.



06



I want more learning opportunities and a more defined career path

Development and progression

Ali's epiphany

I loved everything about my job from day one. My colleagues. My boss. My lab and its facilities. I used to go in every day with a smile on face. I was at the start of my career and everything was rosy. I got my first promotion after nine months. Work was fun. I imagined myself staying for my whole career – maybe even making senior leadership by my 40s.

But in the last two years of Covid, it feels like nothing has happened. I've gained no new skills. No new experience. Nothing to help me progress. But worse than that, I realize my loyalty to my employer had blinded me to the reality. There was never a career plan in place for me – no route forwards or upwards. It hurts to leave my colleagues behind, but the time has come.

Meeting Ali's expectations

They are at least 10 bioscience companies who are currently hiring in a country near me. I looked at the websites of each and narrowed my search down to those who felt like a good fit. Then, I looked closely at their pages on Learning and Development and career progression – which was limited on detail for my particular job, to be honest.

It was only when talking directly to recruiters that I got a sense for which employer cared most about my development and future potential. The recruiter asked a lot of great questions about what I wanted to learn, and how I wanted to grow. When I met the hiring manager, she had fully drafted plans with timescales and milestones. I accepted the job on the day.



Training / learning and development

The pandemic has put a pause on many organizational activities – including formal training and development. Employees have also had less opportunity to learn through doing – due to furlough or a reduction in regular business activities. Working from home has meant less opportunity to learn from more experienced colleagues.

Employers who highlight their learning opportunities will appeal very strongly to candidates who feel they have stagnated over the last two years. Support for gaining recognized qualifications will be a major draw. To make learning and development (L&D) messaging credible, it is important to feature real employees who have benefited from learning – let them explain in their own words how they have improved.

People of different generations and levels of experience seek different kinds of training.

Re-skilling / upskilling

Offering re-skilling and upskilling training to new hires is proving an effective tactic for some employers – for example, telecom infrastructure companies have been training up part-qualified engineers in new fiber optic broadband installation.

Some companies have been providing ‘life skills’ training to build the long-term career prospects of employees in entry-level. Amazon has been running a TV campaign about logistics operatives retraining as engineers.

Clear career plans and paths

‘Where is my career going?’ is a question countless people asked themselves during the pandemic.

Candidates are looking for new roles that offer genuine and tangible career paths – be they linear, horizontal or a combination of both.

A common phrase in job postings is “potential for career progression”. However, it is rare for organizations to spell out exactly what that potential is within the recruitment process.

Organizations need to be more upfront and honest about progression and different career paths. And, they need to present career paths in a more engaging way – using the examples of employees who have risen through the ranks.

It’s important to explain how the path into leadership and management works – are there progression pathways for non-people managers for example?

Show candidates where their future could lie – and outline how long it will take them to get there.

Actions for talent acquisition

- It’s important to liaise with the L&D team to learn more about the current learning offering – and any upcoming developments or new activities, resources, products and qualifications.
- Showcase stories of learning and career progression – from the employees’ perspective.
- Recruiters need to understand what new skills and abilities their candidates seek. Then, they need to talk to L&D and Hiring Managers to establish how those expectations can be met.



Conclusion

The talent shortage has put employees, and candidates, in charge. 2022 will be a year that millions of people quit their job because their employer could no longer meet their expectations.

Greater expectations are driving the 'great resignation' - and shaking up the jobs market and talent acquisition world. The reasons for a career move vary widely from individual to individual. Many want to be paid more, and to receive benefits that feel valuable and relevant to them.

But candidate expectations are far broader and more nuanced than financial reward alone - job hunters have had an epiphany. They want more from the employee experience.

Flexibility and work-life balance. Culture and belonging. Social and environmental issues. Purpose and meaning. Learning and career paths. All of these factors are at play - with different individuals prioritizing them in different ways.

The employers that best meet candidates' greater expectations will outcompete their peers for high-performing job hunters, while minimizing their own attrition problems. It's vital for talent acquisition teams to act now and take proactive steps to reach and appeal to these dissatisfied and epiphany-inspired job hunters.

EVP, employer brand and candidate communications are all key. Organizations will impress jobhunters by doing more to showcase their culture, mission and impact - and by addressing specific expectations via real employee voices and stories. Authenticity matters.

Across the recruitment lifecycle, enhancements can be made to processes and methodologies. The candidate experience can be improved.

No single change will make a transformative difference. Combined, these improvements and new strategies can transform hiring performance.

Want to know more?

Hear a candid, revealing dialogue with leaders from global organizations HPE and Lonza, as they join Korn Ferry experts to discuss major challenges talent leaders are facing and how they are trying to solve them. [Watch now.](#)



Korn Ferry is a global organizational consulting firm. We work with our clients to design optimal organization structures, roles, and responsibilities. We help them hire the right people and advise them on how to reward and motivate their workforce while developing professionals as they navigate and advance their careers. Our 7,000 experts in more than 50 countries deliver on five core areas: Organization Strategy, Assessment and Succession, Talent Acquisition, Leadership Development, and Total Rewards.