



Attracting Top Talent in Engineering

#Engineering

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In today's market, finding the right person for the job feels harder than ever. It raises an interesting question – what's actually changed over the past decade to make the talent world feel so crowded, yet so difficult at the same time.

For candidates, truly well-matched opportunities are few and far between. In fact, many are applying for roles they know they aren't entirely suitable for, simply to stay active in the market. For employers, this can mask the real challenge. A high volume of applicants can create the illusion of a strong talent pool, when in reality, genuinely suitable candidates are seemingly very hard to identify. It's one of the reasons job ads alone aren't delivering the same results as they once did – and why a more targeted, specialist approach to hiring is becoming increasingly important.



Engaging a broad and diverse talent pool

In 2024, CIPD research found that fewer than a fifth of employers actively test their job adverts for biased language. It's a small detail, but one with significant impact, and it suggests that the power of inclusive advertising is still widely overlooked.

Despite the increasing focus on diversity and inclusion as a whole, many businesses underestimate how much influence certain words and phrases can have on who chooses to apply. Subtle cues in language can either widen the talent pool or unintentionally narrow it.

What's particularly interesting is the disconnect this creates. Organisations are often criticised for a lack of diversity, yet the common response is: *"we hired the best person for the role from those who applied."* The reality, however, is that the issue often starts much earlier.

Inclusive hiring doesn't typically break down at interview stage; it breaks down at advert stage. If the right people aren't encouraged to apply in the first place, they were never part of the process to begin with. In a market where talent is already hard to find, these kinds of invisible barriers are the ones that companies really can't afford.



Building robust engineering teams from the ground-up

Despite the correct opportunities being harder to come by, graduate engineers are becoming selective about the roles they engage with. Graduates and junior professionals are looking for purpose, progression and a genuine sense that they'll be supported from day one. Through graduate events and mock interview days this year, one theme has consistently stood out: sustainability matters. Early-career professionals are paying closer attention to company values, and they're less willing to wait years for progression and meaningful responsibility. What won't come as a surprise, is there's an increasing expectation around flexibility and hybrid working policies across all levels of seniority in engineering. Employers with rigid on-site policies continue to lose out on talent, particularly in Electrical, Mechanical Design and Project positions. In fact, more than 1 million UK workers have left a job in the past year because of a lack of flexible working opportunities.

What attracts the best talent in specialist engineering roles

In engineering, clear growth pathways are becoming a major differentiator, particularly for candidates who want to deepen their technical expertise rather than feel they need to move into management to progress. More engineers are also looking for visibility of meaningful projects - roles that offer real-world problem-solving, tangible impact and genuine responsibility.

Whether it's tackling complex challenges or contributing to projects with clear value, candidates want to understand how their work will make a difference. For employers, that means being able to clearly communicate not just the purpose and impact of the role, but also the development opportunities available from an early stage. Businesses that can offer structured growth, hands-on experience and early ownership are far more likely to secure the best talent.

Future trend predictions in hiring

Looking ahead, hiring strategies across engineering will continue to evolve in response to both talent shortages and changing candidate expectations. One clear trend is the growing investment in early talent pipelines, with a focus on developing skills from the ground up through graduate programmes, apprenticeships and structured entry-level pathways.



At the same time, skills-based hiring will be important to reduce bias and widen accessibility. Moving away from purely experience-led CV screening will allow businesses to offer opportunities to a larger pool of candidates, especially those from non-traditional engineering backgrounds.

However, the rise of AI-driven screening tools and automated video interviews, while effective in managing high volumes of applicants, can create a more impersonal experience for candidates. This becomes problematic as more young professionals prioritise employer values and overall purpose, making it harder for them to build a genuine connection with potential employers.



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