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Precis:

HR leaders survey 2021 by Taverner Research



TAVERNER
RESEARCH

Survey Key Findings

Among the survey's key findings:

- Engineers were far and away the skillset in shortest supply – nominated by 53% of respondents, and 61% of rural councils. This shortage was most acute in NSW, Queensland and SA (mentioned by two-thirds-plus of respondents in each of those states.). Likewise, two-thirds of smaller councils (100-200 FTEs) noted a shortage of engineering staff. 
- While town planning was the second most noted area of shortage, this again varied from 59% of metropolitan councils down to 25% of rural LGAs. In this case larger councils appeared to be worst affected, with 62% of those employing more than 500 FTEs claiming a shortage. 
- Areas of lowest skill shortage included IT, compliance, human resources, and internal audit – all 10% or lower. 
- One-third of Councils also had other shortage areas. Of these, multiple mentions were made of asset and property managers, labourers, plant operators, child care nurses, and pool staff/lifeguards. 
- Two-thirds of respondents agreed that working for Council has become more attractive than it was 12 months ago (20% “a lot” and 48% “a little”). Larger councils were most likely to agree (at 92% “yes”). 
- There were three dominant themes behind this perceived trend. Number one (by a long margin) was increased job security, with job stability and greater flexibility also popular choices. A number of respondents also believed councils are seen as more dynamic organisations than in the past. 
- Only one in five respondents agreed that “good applicants are prepared to work for less than they were 12 months ago”. 
- In a series of ten statements, agreement was strongest with “We are now more prepared to recruit from outside local government for technical and senior roles” (68% agree), “Many technically competent applicants lack the necessary leadership skills” (66%), and “new technology makes it too easy for unsuitable applicants to apply” (56%). 
- Agreement was lowest with regard to “Short-listed applicants generally want more workplace flexibility than we are prepared to offer” (25% agreement), “Perceived Council culture or reputation deters external applicants from applying here” (30%) and “Many otherwise suitable applicants do not fit our culture” (34%). 
- 9% also agreed it was true across the board that “We now have little difficulty attracting suitable applicants for our vacancies” – with 60% saying it was true “for some roles”. 

Precis:

Recruitment market dynamics by CouncilJobs



Trends and Insights

Population movement is exerting heavy pressure on Council budgets

- It's an exodus from NSW/WA to Qld/Vic...

Population

While the Australian population grew by 339,000 (1.3%) in the year, the growth was nearly all in Qld (+382,000 or +6.2%) and Vic (+143,000 or +2.3%), offsetting sharp losses in NSW (-148,000 -1.9%), WA (-41,000 or -1.6%), SA (-3,000 or -0.2%) and NT (-1,000 or -0.4%).

Recruitment

Nationally, while council recruitment aligned with Australian Population growth (+1600 or +1.1%), the picture at the state level was far less consistent, with NSW, WA and SA expanding their work force and Vic, Tas and NT shrinking.

Remuneration

Council Employee remuneration grew in every state and every segment and overall, by 4.3% (\$608m), reflecting the challenges of recruiting suitably skilled and motivated candidates.

- And nearly all to Regional cities

Regional cities are exploding with people leaving Capital cities, Rural towns, and Remote districts. Regional cities gained 93% (315,680) of the country's entire population growth (+1.3%) in just one year. Regional City Councils

workforce (+1.3%) and Remuneration (+5.2%) grew fastest in response. Adding to their challenges, Regional cities also had the second highest rate of attrition (10.6%). 

- Rural towns are being squeezed (out)

With the highest level of population loss (-1.7%), lowest level of headcount (FTE) growth (0.2%), highest level of staff attrition (16.2%), Rural towns' only option seems to be to pay the people who remain more, so consequently they have the highest level of Remuneration growth (6%). 

Critical Skills shortages exist nationally

- Engineering still has the highest gap between demand and supply, and this is felt across all states but most of all in NSW
- Gaps also exist in most states in specialist council roles of
 - Governance,
 - Finance and
 - Planning

Smarter advertising design and processes significantly improve response rates

- Design ads to be first seen on mobile devices
- Consider key Ad copy inclusions for job level and type
- Automate recruitment processes to speed up communication with best candidates



Precis:

Outsourced executive recruitment by Blackadder

Key Findings

1. Expert external recruiters enhance Council's reputation and relieve overwhelmed HR teams

We are finding more and more Councils are looking for external recruitment assistance – especially for executive roles or professional positions. We believe this is due to a few factors; very busy HR teams and the lack of internal specialist executive recruitment resources, the opportunity for Council's reputation to be enhanced by a professional recruiter through excellent recruitment processes, the personal service a professional recruiter can provide, and the extensive database of potential candidates a recruiter has available.

2. Good candidates are now more prepared to move

We are seeing a definite move away from the city to the regional and rural areas. This started pre-Covid and has continued to escalate. This is resulting in more candidates for roles in regional and rural locations. As an extension of this, many applicants from the private sector are seeing local government as a profession of choice.

3. Effective advertising is critical and needs to be tailored for leadership positions

One of the most important, and often overlooked, areas of recruitment is advertising. Communicating the right message in an advertisement is so important, as is position title, and the advertisement should immediately grab the attention of a prospective candidate.

4. Interview strategy is key, and connections between candidates and panel members is important

The objective of the interview should be to get behind the person presented in the application. Speaking personally to potential applicants, the use of pre-interview questions and scenario questions and the use of profiling tools are key steps. We are finding that a candidate getting a “connection” with panel members is becoming more and more important and often can be the point of difference between two similar candidates.

5. Thorough background checks have never been more important

Comprehensive checking of credentials is fundamentally important prior to confirmation of offer. Using a professional service to ensure qualifications and police checks, as a minimum, are undertaken should be standard practice for Councils.

6. Hiring for Leaders needs a specialist approach that caters to the culture of council

Almost without exception, particularly for management level positions but also for other roles, we are finding Councils looking for well-developed leadership skills and demonstrated achievements through the utilisation of those skills. This is critically important as we believe leadership is the major determinant of culture and if you get your culture right the people in that culture will continue to amaze you.

The right leaders are an organisations greatest asset. Unfortunately, for varying reasons, recruitment of those staff into a position is sometimes not given the priority it deserves.

Precis: Advertising and communications by Leonards



The Recruitment Evolution Story

The Rise of the Digital Notice Board

- The internet of things has paved the way for nearly all things from commodities to real estate to jobs to now be freely traded on notice boards. including jobs.
- What we have learned is that the Notice Board management capacity decreases with transaction complexity. For example while many people would buy a pair of jeans delivered on line however a real estate portal is just the start of the purchase journey that goes “off line” to a real estate agent.
- Specialist Human Resource software and offline intervention is needed to assess, interview, check, gather details and select to make it “all work”.

Evolutionary Breakthroughs and Challenges

The advent of the jobs board has started an evolutionary chain like the universes “big bang” where there are pluses and minuses:

- Becoming the market accepted job seekers brand/ Employers suffer brand loss.
- Providing high volumes of applications/challenge for recruitment administration.
- Recruitment providers provide targeted applicant information/ Jobs boards are not a recruitment management system and more information is needed (double work).
- Providing targeted emails to passively disrupt potential applicants/broad market passive recruitment disruption still mainly in mastheads.

Importance of Councils Owned Space

- Councils web site has become a major asset for recruitment and is often the most viewed page (by a significant margin).
- Council Positions Vacant page is a high demand site for job seekers within an LGA.
- Council web site is providing the greatest source of quality applicants.
- The high traffic and focused recruitment demand creates great opportunity to grow Council’s corporate brand with recruitment as a communications spearhead.

Emerging Recruitment Trends

Emergence of the jobs board video that is cheaply tailored for each job by utilizing:

- Reusable hero video templates being edited/spliced with
- Cheap phone-based video for each job.
- Birth of the low-cost jobs board video (circa \$500).
- Content achieving numerous Council communication goals.
- Profiled databases utilizing HRIS data to build high quality data base eligibility lists ready for messaging.