



HOT IN HR THIS MONTH

- Labour market remains strong despite Brexit uncertainty
- Employers to develop 'universal skills framework' for a modern workforce
- 12,000' Asda staff currently face sack in bitter contract dispute
- UK employers express concern over shortage of skilled candidates
- What kind of problem solver are you? Find out in our quiz

Visit our website at:
www.pbhrc.co.uk

Get social with us! Just search for PBHRC on :



LABOUR MARKET REMAINS STRONG DESPITE BREXIT UNCERTAINTY, FIGURES SHOW

25 SEP 2019 BY FRANCIS CHURCHILL

Employer hiring intentions have remained positive despite recent uncertainty, latest figures show, with expected demand for permanent employees increasing in the three months to the end of August in spite of continued doubt around Brexit. The latest Jobs Outlook by the Recruitment & Employment Confederation (REC) showed short-term demand to fill permanent posts increased 5 percentage points compared to the three months to the end of March, reaching +21 on the REC's index. This means the proportion of employers expecting an increase in permanent workers over the next three months was 21 percentage points higher than those expecting a decrease. The medium-term demand for permanent employees – looking at the next four to 12 months – increased 7 percentage points to +25.

Employer hiring intentions have remained positive despite recent uncertainty, latest figures show, with expected demand for permanent employees increasing in the three months to the end of August in spite of continued doubt around Brexit. The latest Jobs Outlook by the Recruitment & Employment Confederation (REC) showed short-term demand to fill permanent posts increased 5 percentage points compared to the three months to the end of March, reaching +21 on the REC's index. This means the proportion of employers expecting an increase in permanent workers over the next three months was 21 percentage points higher than those expecting a decrease. The medium-term demand for permanent employees – looking at the next four to 12 months – increased 7 percentage points to +25. Employers unaware of post-Brexit visa rules, finds CIPD survey
UK employers express concern over shortage of skilled candidates
Rate of EU migration falls to lowest levels since 2013
This was despite an overall drop in business confidence, which fell 4 percentage points to -30 on the REC's index.

Jon Boys, CIPD labour market economist, said the results suggested that, despite recent political and economical uncertainty, there had been no big hits to employment in the short term. "They really just continue the trend [of official labour market data] which is employment's really strong, we're not yet at a downturn," he said. But Boys added that although there were no big hits to employment, there was still reason to worry. "The overarching story is that recruitment is a fairly short-term thing compared to something that would really show you businesses were confident, such as really long-term capital investment, and that's because of Brexit uncertainty," he said.

The REC's outlook also showed that short-term demand for agency workers had increased by 12 percentage points over the same time period, and that three-quarters (75 per cent) of employers reported little or no surplus workforce capacity – increasing to 85 per cent in the public sector. Just under half (49 per cent) of employers of permanent staff expressed concerns about the sufficient availability of candidates for hire, with the health and social care, engineering and technical, and construction sectors of most concern. Neil Carberry, chief executive of the REC, said the figures emphasised why businesses were "frustrated at the lack of a smooth and stable resolution" to Brexit. "There is growth to pursue and there are jobs to create – businesses believe in themselves and are ready to go. But the unstable economic outlook continues to put a dampener on their ambitions," he said. "Attracting workers to the UK to fill critical shortages and making sure they feel welcome, speeding [up] investment decisions that create jobs and investing in skills development for all workers are critical to our future success. It's time to get back onto this agenda."

EMPLOYERS TO DEVELOP 'UNIVERSAL SKILLS FRAMEWORK' FOR A MODERN WORKFORCE

14 AUG 2019 BY ELIZABETH
HOWLETT

A coalition of employers and educational organisations has started work on building the UK's first universal framework for essential skills. Due to be launched in 2020, the framework will consist of a set of apps and online tools designed to ensure young people entering the workforce for the first time have the non-academic skillsets businesses are looking for. It will attempt to address employers' growing need for a more rounded set of skills, such as critical thinking and creativity, brought on by the increased use of technology and automation in the workplace. It will also include tools to help employers find the right skills in candidates, and upskill or reskill their workforce.

The framework will be developed by the Essential Skills Taskforce, which includes the CIPD, Business in the Community and the EY Foundation among others. The launch of the taskforce comes as A-level students across the country receive their exam results. Sir John Holman, who will chair the taskforce, said employers were now looking for higher-order essential skills that a machine would not be able to deliver. "By producing a universal framework of essential skills that are clear, measurable and authoritative, we will give employers a toolkit that they can use to select and train the employees they need to succeed in tomorrow's workplace," he said.

Lizzie Crowley, skills policy adviser at the CIPD, said: "Technological change has shifted the emphasis away from routine tasks and towards tasks that are more complex and require decision-making, critical thinking and problem-solving. "That's why these skills have become ever more important." The new framework further develops the Skills Builder Framework (SBF) – used by more than 700 organisations – which sets out the skills needed to thrive at work. Currently used in schools, the SBF sets out capabilities at different levels, and supports teachers to embed the development of those skills within the current curriculum.

Crowley said that if a universal framework was introduced, it would enable employees to better reflect on what existing support they had within the workplace and help them upskill staff. She added: "Beyond that, it's actually supporting employers around their workforce practices to ensure they can recruit people with these skills and develop skills in their existing workforce. "Employees can use the framework as a self-reflective tool to identify where they currently sit in terms of competencies on these skillsets and help them develop – especially those that may have lost their job because of technological change." Employers from a range of sectors will be consulted about the framework and it will go through several development stages. The final version is expected to be published in spring 2020.



12,000' ASDA STAFF CURRENTLY FACE SACK IN BITTER CONTRACT DISPUTE

JAMES SILLARS, SKY NEWS

Approximately 12,000 Asda workers are currently facing the sack next month for refusing to sign controversial new contracts, a source has told Sky News. It is understood all staff who fail to sign the agreement by a 2 November deadline will be dismissed unless the supermarket chain backs down. Workers who have snubbed the contract are currently serving notice periods but can yet change their minds. Asda said on Wednesday that the "vast majority" of over 100,000 people affected by the new contract had signed on the dotted line. The retailer refused to comment when Sky News sought clarification on the scale of the crisis.

The issue came to a head earlier on Wednesday when a protest march involving hundreds of workers delivered a petition, containing 23,000 signatures in one of Asda's store trolleys, to the company's headquarters in Leeds. The march was organised by the GMB union which has opposed the deal on several grounds including the loss of breaks and forced bank holiday work. National officer Gary Carter said: "Tens of thousands of members of the public are backing our Asda workers in their fight against these draconian contracts." "Contract 6 is shocking - the changes are forcing our members to choose between looking after their families, or being able to support them. It's a disgrace." "Today we are back in the birthplace of Asda - once a proud, family company - calling on bosses to respect workers and offer them a better deal."

Asda says staff who have failed to support the changes are currently serving a 12-week notice period, but they could yet remain in their posts by agreeing to the new contract. It argues 95% of staff will be better off as a result of the updated contract - with top-up payments until 2021 for those who do lose out. It said no one would be forced to work Christmas or New Year Bank Holidays and these shifts would continue to be paid at double time for volunteers.

An Asda spokesperson said: "Whilst we respect the right of the GMB to express its views, the comments from the GMB's Gary Carter this morning around Asda colleagues being sacked due to commitments outside work are untrue." "This change represents an investment of over £80m and an increase in real pay for over 100,000 of our hourly paid colleagues. "Throughout the consultation process on these changes we have taken colleague concerns and feedback from colleague representatives - including Mr Carter - on board and have been clear that we understand our colleagues have responsibilities outside of work and we will always help them balance these with their work life." "We have been clear that we don't want any of our colleagues to leave us and whilst the vast majority of colleagues have chosen to sign the new contract, we continue to have conversations with those who have chosen not to, to try and understand their concerns." "It is vital that we make sure we are prepared to adapt to the demands of our market. Change is never easy, but we are determined that Asda remains a sustainable business for its customers and colleagues - now and in the future." "The UK's supermarket sector has been engaged in a fierce price war since the financial crisis - a conflict which has intensified as discounters Lidl and Aldi grew quickly and captured market share from the so-called "big four".

That fight has come at a price - putting a pressure on margins and therefore profits. It has forced the likes of Tesco, Sainsbury's, Morrisons and Asda to reorganise their store networks and cut jobs to focus on price and customer service.

Asda has made substantial progress in recapturing some lost market share over the past year though the latest industry figures, supplied by Kantar Worldpanel, showed the chain's sales slipping by 0.9% in the 12 weeks to 6 October. That took its market share down to 15%. Its planned £13bn merger with Sainsbury's - blocked on competition grounds by the Competition and Markets Authority earlier this year - would have created the UK's largest supermarket retailer ahead of Tesco in market share terms.

UK EMPLOYERS EXPRESS CONCERN OVER SHORTAGE OF SKILLED CANDIDATES

28 AUG 2019 BY ELIZABETH HOWLETT

New data has revealed that nearly half of UK employers are still worried about a shortage of skilled candidates, as the demand for permanent staff increases despite low confidence levels in the UK economy. New data from the Recruitment & Employment Confederation's (REC) JobsOutlook report revealed that, between May and July 2019, 46 per cent of employers of permanent staff expressed concern about finding enough suitable candidates for hire – a fall of only 4 percentage points since 2018 – renewing worries about the effects of a post-Brexit skills gap. According to the report, employers are anticipating the most “acute shortages” of skills in health and social care (48 per cent), engineering and technical (39 per cent) and hospitality (36 per cent). The REC also warned that these results should “ring alarm bells” for the public sector, as 45 per cent of public sector employers reported having no spare workforce capacity at all.

Commenting on the report, Kirstie Donnelly, managing director of City & Guilds Group, said: “It’s clear that UK businesses are facing critical skills gaps, which, left unaddressed, could have a detrimental impact on their productivity and ability to compete post-Brexit. “While there’s still plenty more to be done at policy level to minimise skills gaps, more employers should be considering how they can upskill and train their current workforce, to ensure they are equipped with the talent they need for the future.” The report also showed that employers are experiencing low confidence in the UK economy. The balance between respondents who were confident the economy would improve and those who believed it would worsen was -26 per cent – calculated by subtracting the percentage of respondents who answered negatively (44 per cent) from those answering positively (18 per cent).

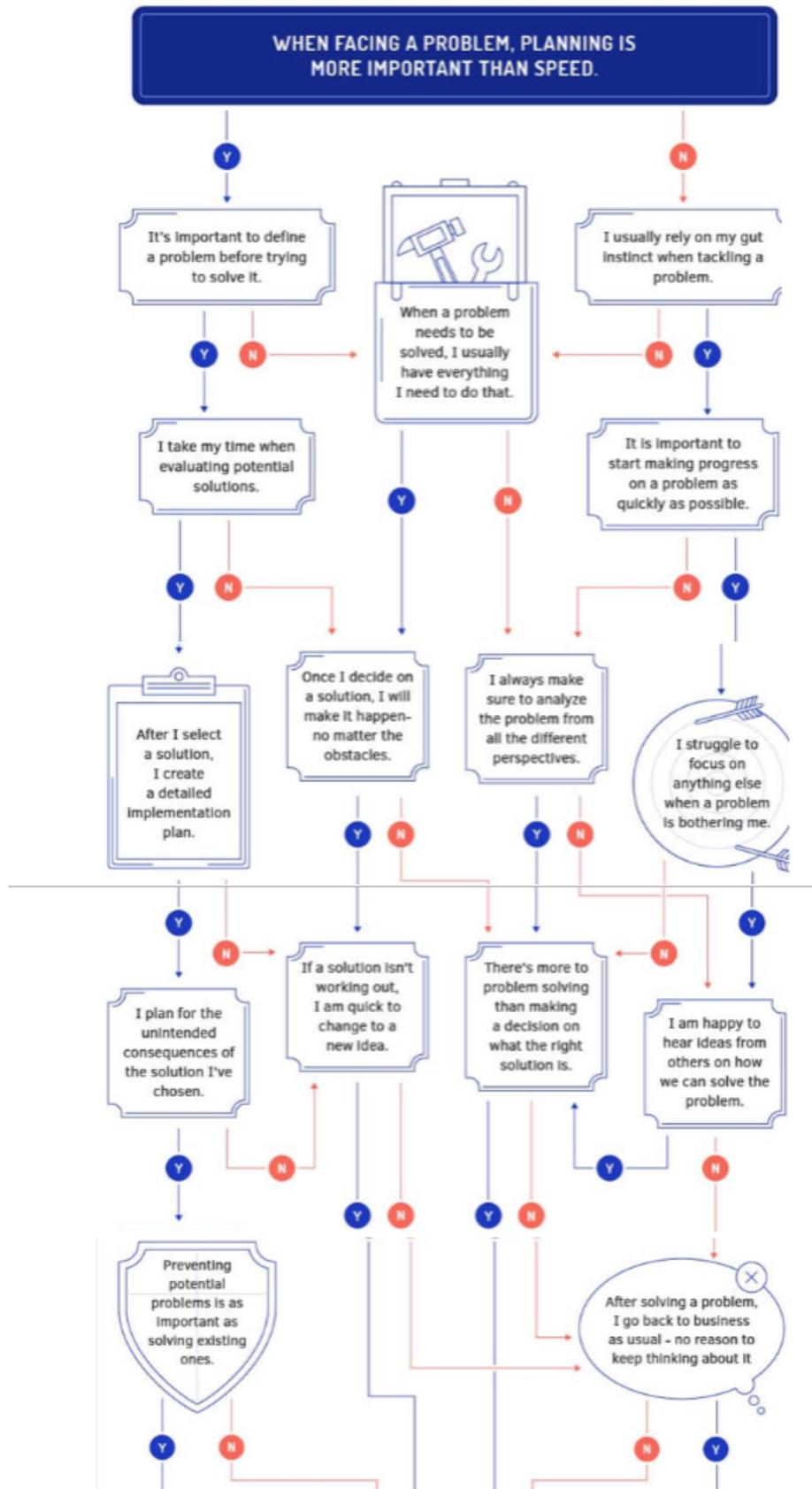
However, despite this drop in confidence, employers were still looking to hire. The REC forecasted that the demand for permanent staff would increase, with a greater proportion of respondents answering positively about future hiring intentions. The balance of respondents saying they would increase permanent employees rose to +19 per cent in the short term and +21 per cent in the medium term in May-July 2019. This compared to the +16 per cent and +18 per cent respectively recorded in the previous quarter (February-April 2019). Tom Hadley, director of policy and campaigns at the REC, said that the survey suggested that employers were seeking to take on both permanent and temporary workers to maintain stability amid Brexit uncertainty – and many were attempting to transfer their temps to permanent roles to combat candidate shortages.

The percentage of companies transferring at least half of their temporary workers on to permanent contracts increased from 15 per cent in May-July 2018 to 23 per cent in the same period this year. Hadley added that the government’s recent announcement that freedom of movement could end abruptly on 31 October if there is a no-deal Brexit had “come at the worst possible time” for employers. “EU workers are an integral part of our health and social care system and the UK workforce as a whole. It is essential that the government has in place a sensible transition towards an evidence-based immigration policy to help reassure employers and EU citizens,” he said.

WHAT KIND OF PROBLEM SOLVER ARE YOU?

SOURCED AT [HTTPS://WWW.HUMANRESOURCESONLINE.NET/WHAT-KIND-OF-PROBLEM-SOLVER-ARE-YOU/](https://www.humanresourcesonline.net/what-kind-of-problem-solver-are-you/)

Workplace conflicts and new challenges happen every day, and HR professionals are often under pressure to generate the best solutions. We've sourced an infographic that helps us identify what kind of problem solver we are and how we can improve our problem-solving skills. Give it a go!



The image consists of three vertical panels, each with a distinct color and illustration. The first panel (blue) shows a woman pointing at a whiteboard. The second panel (green) shows a man looking at a laptop with a speech bubble above his head. The third panel (orange) shows a woman looking at a screen with a question mark above her head.

**YOU ARE A
SYSTEMATIC
PROBLEM SOLVER**

- ✓ You take the time to evaluate the problem you're tackling and all of the potential solutions.
- ✓ You consider the future and put processes in place to ensure it doesn't happen again.

**YOU ARE AN
INCONSISTENT
PROBLEM SOLVER**

- ✓ You know that your gut isn't always right and that you should be more structured with your problem solving.

But it doesn't always work out like that.

**YOU ARE AN
INTUITIVE
PROBLEM SOLVER**

- ✓ You rely on your instincts but don't see problems as opportunities for positive change.
- ✓ Your style might work sometimes but you're not being as effective as you could be.