

## **Employers hurting their productivity with unrealistic job specs**

According to the 2015 UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES), 209,000 skill-shortage vacancies went unfilled, representing a 43% increase on 2013. The 244-page report cites that the situation 'may act as a brake on business growth and productivity'. There is the ongoing debate among academics and economists on why the skills gap persists – if there really is one at all.

One thing is certain, employers aren't helping themselves when it comes to the recruitment process.

We're talking about job postings, which recruiters and job hunters say contain unrealistic requirements. It's not uncommon for two or three full-time jobs to be described in one role.

Recruitment Strategist George Blomgren explains that when the recession began, many employers downsized. "Remaining employees were often given new responsibilities, sometimes completely unrelated to their primary roles. They became jackalopes and quite often, employers forgot that these unique hybrid employees don't actually exist in the wilds – and now they want to recruit similar employees.'

Before the recession, employers expected that some training would be needed. According to Blomgren, "Now employers often have a list of requirements – sometimes pages long". He points out, "you can't actually find jackalopes in the wilds. You have to make them.'

Employers don't have the flexibility, patience or tolerance to make their own jackalopes, however – nor do they want to spend money training them. And that's a problem. The UKCES report cites "the growing demand on staff to juggle multiple responsibilities," adding that the issue could be hurting productivity in the workplace.

Blomgren would agree. He writes, '...there is a cost associated with growing your own talent. I think we talk too much about the cost of hire (and in this case, subsequent training) and not enough about the cost of vacancy. That is, the cost to our organization and the stress it causes) when key roles go unfilled.'

The cost is certainly high for Britain. Research by jobs website Indeed finds that we're losing out on £18bn a year in lost productivity due to unfilled job vacancies. Indeed's research revealed that almost half of the jobs advertised remained empty after a month, and 27% are unfilled after three months.

Something's got to give.

The Harvard Business Review offers the best solution:

"Employers using new technologies need to base hiring decisions not just on education, but also on non-cognitive skills that allow some people to excel at learning; they need to design pay structures to retain workers who do learn...they need to design business models that enable workers to learn effectively on the job.'

If this doesn't happen, the cost to productivity will only soar.

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