



*recruiting excellence for this digital technology age*

## **Finding the best talent may just have become a whole lot easier?**



We read that there's a growing shortage of top talent. In Digital Tech, Data & Analytics especially. It's becoming a global challenge to recruit and find the best people. As the world begins to recover (we pray) from the global pandemic, so a KPMG survey finds demand for Digital Tech Talent has grown at its fastest rate in the past 20 yrs: "companies need more and more people to deliver their digital transformation programmes and yet the number of people who are appropriately qualified *and* who are actually available to fill those vacancies is just not there". There's a core skills shortage and a true war for talent emerging for the best people.

A Randstad 2021 report just completed interviewed 850 global HR /Talent Heads in their Talent Trends Report. 54% said they had "significant talent scarcity, particularly in IT". The report concluded that: "For everyone 2020 was a tumultuous year and the rebuilding is just beginning. As organizations compete for top Digital talent, so they must consider all options. Talent retention is a must but we find will not be enough to meet growing demand. Reskilling will also be a key component. But our interviews show that HR leaders still expect to need to recruit new people to fill gaps, add key skills and new leadership".

Yet with a war for top talent, how get the best people? Salary packages and incentives all help but budgets and cost controls may not allow for top quartile remuneration. Culture, brand name, the challenge, the journey that an organisation may be on can also be a key ingredient. But what else can be done to access, find and recruit the best talent available?

The answer seems to be: *embrace remote working*. No need now for talent to be based in the same city as the company's base or head office. No need to even live in the same country. If you have the skills and expertise in principle then could be based anywhere in the world. Suddenly the whole global talent pool becomes available. No more constraints of recruiting people who need to be in the head office 4 or 5 days every week. No need for that geographic proximity? For a role based eg in London, not only could a company now recruit someone who lives anywhere in the UK. The recruitment search could range all over the world. No boundaries, why need them? Perhaps the only criterion, aside from the right skills and culture fit, may be "fluent in English".

A recent McKinsey job posting: on their template job form, there's a section marked "office location". That used to state the company's main address or operating site. Now it says: "anywhere, preference similar time zone"

Is this the way of the future? Will all key roles, especially in the Digital Tech & Data arenas, all see similar job postings?

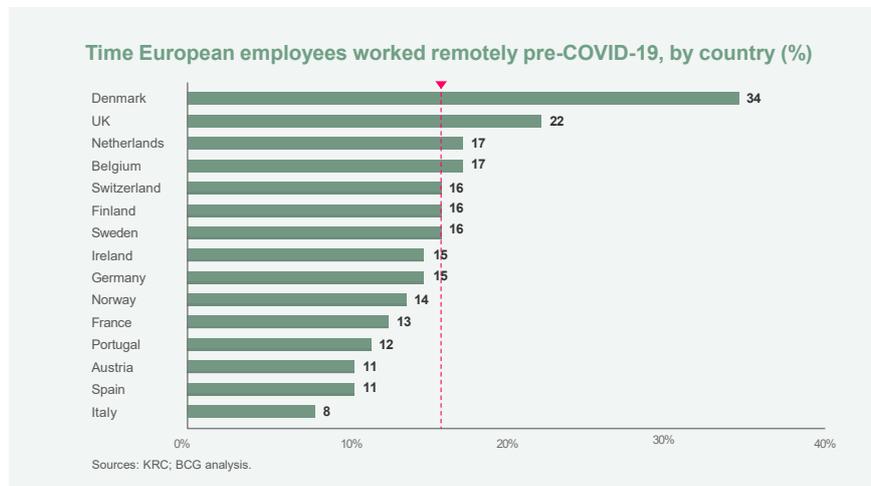
There's the prescient story about NASA Engineer Jack Nilles who published a book in 1973 called "The Telecommunication Transportation Trade-Off". In that, he predicted that "telecommuting" would replace office-based working. His vision was sparked even then by the desire to reduce traffic, air-pollution and energy consumption in city centres. He suggested "spreading the workforce more evenly across the country, increasing hiring flexibility and giving employees a better work:life balance". His book at the time sparked wide-spread forecasts from futurists about "the death of the office" and "the utopian birth of remote working". Those predictions in 1973 did not of course come to fruition, then. But now half a century later, with a global pandemic forcing an emergency reappraisal of the world of work, so now companies are waking up to post-Covid reality.

Not only do employees prefer the flexibility of remote /home working. But for companies, there is now an opportunity to turn this into a major positive strategy. It's about reinforcing their culture, enhancing the work environment, their care for their people. But also it's about new talent finding and sourcing. Opening up the world of work to new ideas, fresh perspectives, new ways of working, being innovative, embracing new people and talent models, enabling the company to grow in a way that can better meet the demands and challenges of the 2020's.

Shopify CEO Tobi Lutke has commented that: "office centrality is over, the future of the office is to act as an on-ramp to the same digital workplace that you can access from your WFH [work from home] set-up". A new Gartner report concludes that: "companies who aren't bound by geography can now have a global talent pool to choose from". Mark Zuckerberg has stated that in 5 years' time he expects "half of Facebook's employees to be working remotely with no need to ever come into an office". The HR Director of US Company LiveCareer (careers advisory service) has commented: "as long as companies can find motivated candidates who will be a good fit with their culture, then we can work to get them on-board, regardless of their physical location". Estonia and Barbados have recently launched special visas for "digital nomads", to use their country as a base for remote working. As Gartner puts it: "employees can live where they want, and still advance their careers".

In Europe, a few countries are pioneering this new remote model, Denmark and UK especially:

Denmark and the UK are at the forefront of remote work



Increased Diversity & Inclusion are major upsides. A remote model is great for physically disabled. And by expanding reach and opening-up new talent pools, so this can very significantly contribute to a more diverse and attractive workforce. Research by Mercer Consulting found that: “72% of Talent Acquisition scouts want remote working to make it easier to attract and hire under-represented talent that might not be abundant where their office is located”. A report from the charity Scope that looks to provide equality for disabled people has hailed “working from home as a stepping stone to greater inclusivity, helping people to bring their whole selves to their work without facing unnecessary obstacles”. As the Mercer report commented: “having flexibility on location, being able to offer employment no matter where people live, all helps break down barriers, allowing talent acquisition to cast a wider net”.

And the stats on remote working consistently show many positive outcomes:

- Research undertaken by McKinsey found that companies with diverse top teams exceeded others by 56% in operating results and achieved 53% higher returns on equity.
- Research by Scott Page has shown that business innovation depends less on IQ and more on diverse people working together and that diverse teams working on complex problems outperform homogeneous teams.
- Surveys by BCG Consulting found that:
  - productivity by remote workers increased by 13% compared with those working in offices
  - employee turnover was 25% less for companies backing remote working
  - 35% of employees said they would change jobs to have the flexibility to work remotely

The momentum towards a remote working strategy seems inevitable. The benefits of accessing a global talent pool can provide a new pipeline of top talent. The opportunity to strengthen work force culture with increased diversity and inclusion is overwhelming. Employees are asking for it. And even though some companies remain sceptical about the practicalities and advantages, the trend is proving irresistible. Are there any downsides?

The main challenge is going to be around building a cohesive and integrated team culture and “esprit de corps”. Hard to achieve that in any circumstances but much more challenging if the only contact is via Zoom and Teams and an on-going succession of video and phone calls. Especially hard for new employees who will not have had the advantage of at least some previous in-person meetings and contact with fellow team members. Not uncommon now to hear people say: “I’ve been with the company nearly a year now and I’ve still not actually met anyone”. The risk is that the sense of community, of belonging, of shared purpose and intent can never get truly built. Employees who are physically remote risk also becoming emotionally remote and isolated. They may be doing a very good job but their commitment to this specific team and company becomes depersonalised. That does nothing for that “esprit de corps”, or the willingness to go the extra mile, or that shared excitement when something remarkable gets achieved. It also can make such people more vulnerable to being poached or hired away.

What can be done to reduce that risk? The first step is for an organisation to acknowledge and accept that remote working is here to stay and needs to be positively and proactively embraced, rather than, as some in the BCG Consulting survey indicated, “hoping it would just go away”.

- Develop a full vision and strategy for remote working
- Evolve key HR tools to manage a physically diverse work force
- Set goals for the number of remote employees
- Measure remote employee output and effectiveness
- Put in place the Tech that properly empowers remote employees
- Establish ways of working that does additionally enable /encourage actual meeting
- Find ways to build that team spirit/that esprit de corps

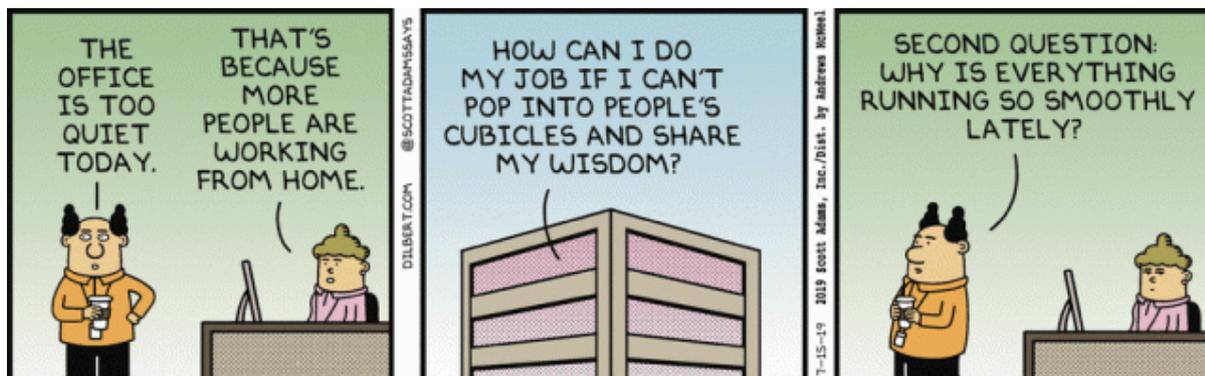
Some companies, like GitLab, Xerox, Standard Chartered Bank, Cimpres, even UK.Gov are now appointing someone to be their “Head of Remote”. Let’s see how GitLab’s Head of Remote Working, Darren Murph describes his role:

*“I work at GitLab. We are the world’s largest all-remote company, with over 1,300 team members in 67+ countries. with no company-owned offices.*

*I serve as GitLab’s Head of Remote. I act as a strategist and visionary in organizational design, I lead at the intersection of people, culture, operations, inclusivity, and communication. I’ve spent my career shaping remote teams and charting remote transformations. I collaborate with all functions of the business to support GitLab clients and partners seeking guidance on mastering remote workflows and building culture.*

- I collaborate with our People Group to improve onboarding and manager training.
- I champion and evangelize GitLab’s all-remote culture and initiatives through content creation, interviews, webinars, case studies, podcasts, and partnerships with organizations and universities.
- I work across the company to ensure that GitLab team members acclimate well to remote, give themselves permission to embrace our values and operate with remote-first workflows, and share our learnings with those outside of the GitLab organization.
- I created and published GitLab’s industry-leading guide to remote work (*The Remote Playbook*), a public library of tactical, implementable processes necessary for distributed teams to thrive.
- I believe remote work can reverse rural depopulation, make communities less transitory, and spread opportunity to underserved areas. I believe all-remote is the purest form of remote work, where every individual is afforded a level playing field.

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