

# HOW TO ADDRESS THE INDUSTRY'S SKILLS SHORTAGE

Working in partnership can make filling vacancies easier, says recruitment consultancy Zenopa

**R**ecruitment in the pharmaceutical industry has become a whole new ball game recently. And the pressure to find the right person for the right job is made more difficult by a lack of candidates with the right experience and skills sets across the board.

Gone are the days of vast, active databases and high staff turnover rates. Today's candidate-short market is a result of a consolidating industry and a smaller talent pool, with a workforce more cautious and discerning in their career moves. Added to this is the requirement for new skills that not all potential candidates possess.

"Recruitment is no longer like it was," explains Laura Marsh, account manager at specialist recruitment firm Zenopa. "What we are seeing is a longer time-to-fill for certain areas, with more focus across the whole market on matching culture and skills sets. People are also less willing to move because of the changes in the market and increased uncertainty. There's a lot of factors that come into recruiting the right people for the right job now."

The candidate-short market has become an increasing problem for the pharma sector since the skills shortage was first highlighted in 2008. In 2013, a survey by consultancy PwC found 51 percent of respondents noted it was becoming more difficult to find the right people for jobs, while this year, figures from a Cogent Skills survey show more than 80 percent of life sciences companies have vacancies affected by skills shortages, with 72 percent struggling to specifically attract people with the skills needed to satisfy "hard-to-fill" vacancies.

The shift from sales reps to key account managers has been one of the more visible areas affected by a skills shortage, where not everyone in this position has evolved sufficiently to meet the role's requirements. Other areas within the sector are also affected by a skills shortage, such as medical affairs, health economics and outcomes research, and regulatory affairs. Meanwhile, difficulties also exist around filling roles in certain geographic locations.

While there is no silver bullet to solving the candidate-short market issue there are several ways to make the process easier and ensure a fit, says Adam Woolley, recruitment consultant at Zenopa. The best approach, he says, is to understand the business, the culture and the role requirements but also to understand the candidate, what they want and then trying to find the best fit possible. "A collaborative and informed approach to recruitment is the best way forward for candidates and clients."

That means companies need to have a shift in mindset with more two-way communication, explains Natasha Wilson, executive recruiter at Zenopa. "Sometimes interviews can be a one-way process where companies just interview candidates to assess them for the role. But it's important for companies to think about what they can offer the candidate and what's unique about their company culture."

Other ways to attack the candidate-short market is to look at other options for filling gaps. Finding a candidate with five years' experience might be a struggle, for example, but Wilson says companies could consider someone who has developed great skills in a shorter time frame. Zenopa also notes a trend where the industry is beginning to hire more juniors and graduates, which will bring new talent and skills on board.

Recruitment today is about placing people that will add long-term value to an organisation, but relationships are needed to achieve this, notes Wilson. She urges

companies to work in partnership with recruiters. "We know the market, we know what candidates want and what other organisations are offering, and we have the skills to make sure the culture match is effectively communicated."

By being the bridge, she says, recruiters can remove the headache of filling vacancies. ○

Zenopa offers a range of recruitment services and market insight. For more information on how Zenopa can help with your recruitment needs, please contact Adam Woolley at [adam@zenopa.com](mailto:adam@zenopa.com) or on 01494 818010.



Adam Woolley, recruitment consultant, Zenopa