

## Candidate Power

**Michelle Stewart, director of Berry Recruitment Group, considers trends and challenges in the commercial sector.**

“Being a recruiter with branches in all parts of the country means we are able to monitor national trends and there has certainly been a dramatic rise in business across the commercial sector; particularly in office and professional. At the start of the year we brought our three London agencies together under the new brand Wild Berry Associates, working out of fresh new offices in the West End. The success of this branch is typical of what we have experienced across England and Wales, with the first quarter of 2017 being massively ahead of the same period last year in the commercial sector. While there is not one, easily identifiable reason why this is the case, there are various factors that might have contributed to this quite dramatic trend.

For example, we are doing a great deal more work with management consultancies, so perhaps businesses are looking to strengthen themselves because they are anticipating a couple of years of choppy water due to the Brexit negotiations. Moving into the unknown necessarily brings increased levels of uncertainty and this might be combatted by the reassurance of bringing in expert help and advice in the form of consultants.

It might also reflect a growing confidence in the economy and the longer term stability of it.



**Michelle Stewart, Director of Berry Recruitment Group**

Immediately after the Brexit vote there were serious fears of a major economic down-turn; but the longer the realities have confounded these predictions the further confidence has grown. Another reason is simply that demand now outstrips supply and there are a lack of candidates for the number of jobs. Recruiting in the commercial sector therefore has become far more important for companies and we are benefiting because of it.

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### Time to recruit

This change has brought its own challenges, however. With power now having moved to candidates one of our main focuses is educating clients in acting quickly. After the recession they could take their time to select the best candidate, but things have changed. Candidates will now have a number of jobs to choose from; they are the ones with time, not the employer. There will be offers and counter-offers and until a candidate is over the line there is a risk that he or she will find a preferable role. So businesses not only have to act quickly, but they have to actually sell themselves to the candidate; a 180 degree shift since the recession.

Indeed, when we recruit for our own branches we have to sell ourselves to candidates, which is why we invested so much in the offices for our new brand Wild Berry Associates. We have to assume that the best recruitment consultants will have various roles to choose from. So the better the office environment and atmosphere, the increased likelihood of attracting the very best.

Educating clients about this is something we have had to do more often; we ask them to put themselves in the shoes of candidate who has several good offers on the table. We then ask them why a candidate would choose their business over a rival and this can really focus minds at the senior management level.

The salary, too, is obviously of vital importance and companies really can't offer poor wages thinking that desperate jobseekers will take anything.

Desperate jobseekers don't exist in this sector any longer; it is the clients that are desperate. We have to explain what packages are likely to attract the type of people they are looking for. The best talent will always want to work for successful companies with good reputations, and this is another area that businesses have to consider.

When there is lots of competition any advantage or edge could be crucial in succeeding. With demand for these roles continuing to grow there is no sign yet that this trend will be short-lived, and as long as economic conditions remain buoyant this it is likely to continue.

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