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Charlotte staffing execs get candid on how employers can compete in current market

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The current hiring environment has been described as a "candidate's market" due to low unemployment, high turnover rates and the rise of remote work. As part of the *Charlotte Business Journal's* survey of the area's largest staffing companies, we asked local staffing executives how their employer clients are reacting to current wage demands, what steps they recommend to attract talent and how they are approaching pay in this climate.



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Charlotte's largest staffing companies on pay and hiring in a candidate's market.

"Companies that are willing to flex across work location, salary, required skills and years of experience have the biggest advantage



criticality of the role and employers have the most success hiring quickly and retaining talent when they hire based on aptitude and willingness to learn."

Franklin Johnson, vice president at Access Services Inc., also cites a need for pay flexibility. He said, "It is truly a candidate's market and those companies that are successfully competing for talent are those that are agile and flexible with compensation. The salary demands have skyrocketed and companies at this point have to meet those demands or risk not having the necessary talent to operate their business. It is truly the survival of the fittest in today's market."

Meeting market demands is necessary to fill open positions, replied Robin Gibson, vice president of operations at DecisionPathHR. "We have seen substantial pay increases by our clients to remain competitive in the marketplace. To best educate our clients and prospects, we may provide a wage analysis to showcase pay by skill set and further demonstrate what the market demands. How clients 'should' approach the pay issue and what the climate demands are two different ends of the spectrum. If a client does not meet the market pay rate, it is very difficult to recruit and fill those positions."

Brady Teague, TalentBridge's Charlotte market leader, agrees. "Clients have to assess the current market for the skill set they desire for the position. No longer can clients not pay market wages for talent. There is no standard other than what the market currently offers for the skill set in demand. Clients are surprised at first, but willing to flex on their compensation expectations or change the skill set they desire for the position."

On the employee retention side, Signature Consultants' Gray also advises clients to look to the market rate. "In terms of retaining existing employees," he said, "employers should look to see if their current comp plans are in line with market rates and adjust where they can via off-cycle pay increases. Retention is difficult once someone has made the decision to leave."

"Businesses must be flexible and look at the demands of the market," said James Wilton, Genesis10 branch manager. Most



retain their own internal talent. Otherwise, they risk having their talent poached."

Todd Warner, president of MyWorkChoice, suggested companies regularly revisit compensation. He said, "In the last two years,

escalating pay rates have moved from an annual discussion to a monthly discussion. The hypercompetitive general labor, no experience required market has been reduced to a pay rate differentiator among all traditional full-time job openings.”

The candidate market in general has increased in cost,” responded Rob Thompson, director of delivery and recruiting operations at DISYS Charlotte. “We’ve seen a 10% to 20% increase in candidate pay structure across our portfolios. My recommendation based on how competitive the market is to allow virtual or hybrid schedule to stay competitive. Additionally, move faster on the interview process. Clients are getting beat in procuring talent simply because they either aren’t interviewing efficiently enough in a candidate-driven market, or they aren’t adjusting budgets to the economy accordingly.”

As part of the *CBJ* survey, we also asked what skill sets are in the highest demand in Charlotte. According to a CompTIA analysis of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data, employer job postings for new tech hiring totaled 505,663 in June, up 62% from June 2021. The local market reflects this demand for technology workers across industry sectors. The most in-demand skill sets mentioned in the *CBJ* survey were DevOps, java developers, InfoSec, Scrum/Agile, data scientists, project managers, technical business analysts, Cloud, UX, machine learning and AI.

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