



H2R

NEWSLETTER



Talent Market Update



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Talent Market Update

The first six months of 2026 have been surprisingly buoyant across the talent market, particularly in Wellington. Recruitment activity remains steady but selective, with confidence to hire improving, but decisions still carefully scrutinised. Organisations are focused on critical roles, essential backfills, and priority programmes, rather than broad-based growth.



Across both the public and private sectors, headcount controls remain, with continued demand for fixed-term roles along with a healthy lift for contract resources to support key delivery work. The 2026 Budget reinforces this measured environment, with targeted investment in infrastructure, health, education, digital capability, and workforce development, alongside a wider public sector reset.

Talent availability is tightening in areas such as change and transformation, generalist HR (strong ER focus), finance, digital delivery, architecture, data and analytics, cyber security, and AI-enabled transformation. Sought after candidates are often receiving multiple offers, so hiring managers need to move quickly, align early on must-haves versus nice-to-haves, and streamline approvals.

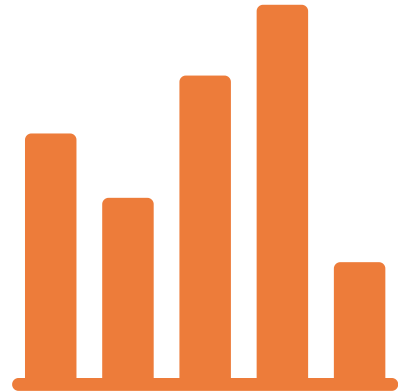
Candidate behaviour is also changing. After a period of prioritising job security, more people are entering the market by choice, seeking purpose, values alignment, supportive leadership, flexibility, sustainable workloads, and clear development opportunities. Hybrid working and additional benefits remain important, but candidates are increasingly focused on long-term alignment with their lifestyle and career goals.

AI continues to shape the talent market, but organisations are increasingly recognising the importance of maintaining human connection through recruitment and workplace change. As AI adoption increases, many businesses are navigating greater change, transformation, and a higher number of employee relations cases, reinforcing the need for strong communication, leadership, and change capability. Alongside technical skills, employers are placing greater value on learning agility, curiosity, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, resilience, and adaptability.

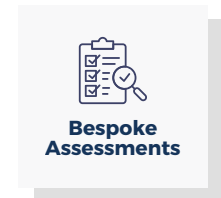
In technology, investment signals around digital modernisation, the Government Digital Delivery Agency, and AI acceleration have reinforced the importance of digital capability, data maturity, cyber resilience, and AI readiness. While employers remain disciplined and selective, demand is expected to strengthen as priority programmes progress throughout 2026.

We are now post the government budget announcement and quickly heading towards the election on November 7th. What the market looks like as we head into a new government financial year remains to be seen but we are quietly confident that the demand for resource to support transformative change will continue through this period.

Organisations that are clear on their requirements, move quickly, and offer a compelling employee value proposition will be best placed to secure high-quality talent in a competitive and evolving market.



The Growing Demand for Bespoke Assessment and Development Solutions



One trend we have observed is the increasing need for assessment and development solutions that go beyond traditional, off-the-shelf approaches. As roles become more specialised, stakeholder-focused, and complex, organisations are seeking assessment methods that accurately reflect the real-world challenges their people face.

Whether identifying future leaders, selecting for specialist operational positions, or developing capability in critical functions, clients are increasingly looking for tailored solutions that align closely with their unique context and what success looks like.

Recently, we have partnered with clients to design bespoke assessment centres, development centres, role-play simulations, and situational judgement exercises that are grounded in organisational psychology and talent development principles. Our approach begins with understanding the role, environment, and critical capabilities required for success. We then translate these insights into realistic scenarios and behavioural assessments that allow participants to demonstrate judgement, influence, adaptability, communication, stakeholder engagement, and leadership in situations that closely mirror the demands of the role.

The result is a more meaningful and defensible assessment experience that provides richer insights than traditional methods alone. Participants benefit from realistic opportunities to practise and develop critical skills, while organisations gain greater confidence in their talent decisions and development investments. By combining psychological rigour with practical workplace needs, we help clients assess not only whether someone can perform a role today, but also their potential to succeed and grow in increasingly complex environments.

To find out more about how H2R could support your recruitment or development with bespoke assessment and development centres, please reach out to Skee Joseph in Wellington, or Hayley Wright and Jade Naito in Auckland.

The Frictionless Trap

Why Thinking Still Matters in the Age of AI



Tech Week
Webinar

At our recent Tech Week webinar, hosted by H2R Technology and Julia Pahina, we explored an important and timely conversation:

The Frictionless Trap - the hidden trade-offs that can come with increasing reliance on AI.

There's no doubt that AI is changing the way we work. It helps us move faster, reduce repetitive tasks, generate ideas quickly, and improve efficiency across many parts of our day-to-day work. But as Julia highlighted during the discussion, there is also value in friction.

The moments where we pause, challenge assumptions, work through complexity, and form our own views are often the moments where deeper thinking happens. That process helps build judgement, confidence, and capability - qualities that remain uniquely human and cannot simply be outsourced to technology.

This is especially relevant for people early in their careers. Future leaders still need opportunities to wrestle with ambiguity, make decisions, learn through experience, and develop critical thinking over time. If every difficult task becomes frictionless, we risk losing some of the experiences that help people grow.

One practical idea Julia shared was deliberately creating small "pause points" before turning to AI. Something as simple as spending five minutes thinking through a problem independently each morning can help maintain curiosity, creativity, and sharper decision-making.

The opportunity is not to avoid AI - far from it. The real opportunity is to use AI intentionally: embracing the efficiencies it offers while continuing to strengthen the human skills that matter most.

As AI becomes more embedded in the way we work, organisations will need to find the right balance between speed and capability-building.

How are you approaching that balance in your own workplace? We'd love to hear your thoughts.



Team Update And Recent Events



People Updates



We are delighted to welcome Prany Sun to the Wellington team as a Senior Consultant. Prany brings more than five years of agency recruitment experience specialising in Business Support recruitment. She is passionate about connecting with people, building meaningful relationships and thrives in the fast-paced, people-focused world of recruitment. We're excited to have her as part of the team.



We're also pleased to announce that Danielle Keen has stepped into the role of Business Support Consultant on secondment, moving from her previous position as Recruitment Coordinator. Danielle has been with H2R for the past two years and brings extensive knowledge of our business, systems and client relationships. Her transition into consulting is a fantastic reflection of her growth and contribution to the team, and we look forward to seeing her thrive in this new opportunity.



As Danielle takes on her secondment, we would also like to wish Olivia all the very best as she prepares to begin parental leave later this month. We thank her for her contribution to the Business Support team and look forward to welcoming her back in early 2027.



Joining the Wellington team as Recruitment Coordinator is Grace Boshier, who steps into the role while Danielle is on secondment. Grace holds a Master's degree in Conservation Biology from Victoria University and brings a diverse professional background, having worked as both a conference and events coordinator and within a medical research facility. At H2R, Grace is responsible for preparing contractor documentation and supporting both the contract and permanent recruitment teams.



We are delighted to announce the promotion of Torban Otway to Associate Consultant. Torban joined H2R Technology in early 2024 as part of our Candidate Management team. Since then, he has demonstrated excellent candidate and client care, while providing strong support to our consultants throughout the recruitment process. We wish Torban every success in his new role and look forward to seeing him continue to grow his career with H2R Technology.



We are pleased to welcome back Grainger Scott, who returns to support the H2R Technology team with candidate management. Grainger originally joined H2R Technology in 2022 before heading overseas to study and play semi-professional football. We are lucky to have Grainger back from college in the US, supporting us over the next few months.

Events

It's been a busy and engaging few months across H2R, with our team hosting and supporting a range of events focused on connection, learning, and future-focused conversations.

H2R Auckland Client Networking Breakfast

We were delighted to host a session presented by Melissa Crawford, who delivered an insightful and future-focused discussion on the evolving intersection between HR and technology. Reflecting on how significantly the world of work has changed since ChatGPT was first introduced only a few years ago, Melissa encouraged attendees to lift their gaze toward what comes next. Some of the key themes explored included the importance of intentionally creating friction to support critical thinking and development, the current under-utilisation of AI as a learning and development tool within organisations, the changing capabilities and leadership skills needed for the future workforce, and the role HR professionals can play in advocating for people as workplaces continue to evolve.

Supporting AdminZ Wellington

Our Wellington team were proud sponsors of the AdminZ Wellington Group Administrative Professionals Day event held at the historic Thistle Inn. The event brought together administrative professionals from across the region for a meaningful and engaging session led by Gerard Hoffman, who presented on the topic of "hope when things look dark." Gerard shared practical, evidence-based insights on maintaining hope and resilience during challenging times, presenting with realism, compassion, and humour. His strengths-based approach provided attendees with relatable and practical ideas that were equally relevant in both professional and personal settings. We were thrilled to support another successful AdminZ event and connect with so many talented professionals within the administration community.

Waikato Client Networking Lunch

Our team also recently hosted a client networking lunch in the Waikato, bringing together clients and connections from across the region in a relaxed and welcoming setting. The lunch provided a great opportunity to connect, strengthen relationships, and share conversations about the evolving employment market and workplace trends. It was fantastic to see so many familiar and new faces around the table and continue building strong connections within the Waikato business community.

