MARKET UPDATE 2025

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Lily Shippen Market Update 2025

BUSINESS SUPPORT & HR MARKET TRENDS 2025

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Skills, Hiring, and Movement: Strategic insights into the hiring landscape and market pressures for business support and HR roles

The hiring landscape for business support and HR professionals continues to evolve in 2025.

Economic conditions, shifting expectations around flexibility, and the growing importance of strategic support roles are reshaping how businesses attract and retain talent.

This section of the Lily Shippen Market Update explores the key trends influencing the year ahead and beyond.

Employers are no longer looking for purely administrative support, they want professionals who add strategic value.

Business support specialists are now expected to be proactive, commercially aware, and tech-savvy.

Executive Assistants and Chiefs of Staff who can coordinate across departments, manage complex projects, and act as true right-hands to their executives remain highly sought after. In HR, demand is strongest for generalists with a strategic mindset, capable of interpreting data, driving engagement, and influencing outcomes. There is also specific growth in demand for expertise in employee relations, talent development, DEI, and HR systems.

Across both functions, adaptability, resilience, and strong communication stand out as essential skills.

Despite high volumes of applications, businesses are finding it harder to hire the right people.

A clear mismatch between expectations and reality is creating friction in the market.

Some employers continue to seek candidates with senior-level skill sets at mid-level salaries, while others lose out due to slow and complex hiring processes.

At the same time, candidates are more discerning; they want clarity on responsibilities, flexibility, reporting lines, and career progression from the outset. A strong employer brand and a seamless recruitment experience now make the difference between securing talent and losing out to a competitor.

Another trend reshaping the market is the extension of notice periods. Increasingly, professionals are tied to four to twelve weeks and are more likely to serve these in full, particularly after longer tenures.

For employers, this means recruitment planning must start earlier, with temporary cover often the most practical way to bridge the gap.

For candidates, longer notice periods create opportunities to use transition time to upskill and prepare strategically for their next role.

Temporary and virtual support remain central to workforce strategy.

Businesses are turning to experienced interim professionals who can deliver immediate impact, whether to cover leave, manage projects, or provide continuity during headcount freezes.

Virtual Assistant recruitment in particular has seen sustained growth, offering employers the ability to scale support without permanent overheads, and giving candidates greater choice and flexibility in how they work.

Candidate movement has also picked up steadily since the start of 2025. Following a cautious close to last year, confidence is gradually returning, and more individuals are open to new opportunities, especially where they feel undervalued.

Passive candidate engagement is increasing, while direct applications are proving less effective, highlighting the need for targeted outreach and compelling propositions.

For employers, competitive salaries are no longer enough; culture, leadership, and flexibility are decisive factors. For candidates, now is a time to reassess priorities and align career moves with long-term development goals.

Looking ahead, the market is set to continue evolving.

Demand for strategic support roles will only grow, with interim HR professionals becoming increasingly valuable in driving transformation projects.

Temporary contracts and virtual models will remain popular, and businesses will need to introduce clearer progression frameworks to retain their business support talent. Employers who invest in development, structure, and communication will be best positioned to secure and retain top performers.

HR itself is under intense pressure in 2025. Standalone HR Managers are in high demand across SMEs, with agility and breadth of experience at a premium.

Larger organisations are moving further towards specialist models, creating space for project-based and interim professionals in employee relations, talent acquisition, and reward.

At the same time, learning and development, as well as employee engagement, are receiving greater investment as businesses seek to retain key talent and sustain performance.

From an economic perspective, cautious optimism is returning. While inflationary pressures remain, many organisations that paused hiring in late 2024 are re-engaging with strategic recruitment plans.

Budgets remain under scrutiny and multiple sign-off layers are slowing processes, yet employers that streamline their approach are still best placed to secure high-quality hires.

Temporary recruitment continues to be a vital solution for bridging short-term gaps and maintaining momentum on critical projects.

Perhaps the clearest shift in 2025 is the move towards a four-day in-office model.

Although hybrid working remains advertised, flexibility is increasingly being defined by employers rather than employees.

For Executive Assistants and Office Managers in particular, visibility and proximity to stakeholders are still considered essential.

Candidates, in turn, are asking sharper questions about expectations during interviews, and transparency has become critical. Structured office anchor days are also becoming more common, providing clarity and predictability for support professionals.

2025 has been a pivotal year for business support and HR recruitment.

The demand for the right skills has never been higher, but securing them requires speed, clarity, and competitiveness from employers.

Candidates are equally discerning, with culture, progression, and flexibility shaping decision-making as much as salary.

The organisations that succeed will be those who move decisively, communicate effectively, and place people at the centre of their strategy.

If you would like to discuss your recruitment plans or request a copy of our 2025 Salary Survey, please get in touch with the team at Lily Shippen.