

Lily  
Shippen

2026  
SALARY  
SURVEY

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# INTRODUCTION

*As we approach the end of Q1, it is clear that this year marks a defining moment for businesses of all sizes across the UK.*

What began as short-term pressure has become a sustained squeeze, with organisations navigating rising costs, cautious growth, regulatory change and a talent market that remains highly selective.

*For many leaders, 2026 is not about riding out uncertainty, but about making deliberate, strategic decisions that will shape the years ahead.*

Within this environment, compensation and benefits have moved firmly to the centre of

attraction and retention strategies. Candidates are more informed, more confident in their value and increasingly unwilling to compromise on what matters to them.

*Employers, meanwhile, are being challenged to balance competitiveness with commercial reality.*

The result is a recalibration of expectations on both sides, particularly within Business Support and HR functions where role scope, accountability and impact continue to evolve.

The 2026 Lily Shippen Salary Survey provides a timely, data-led view of how these dynamics are playing out as organisations enter the second quarter of the year.

Drawing on real-time hiring activity and market insight, this whitepaper breaks down current salary benchmarks, identifies recurring themes across the Business Support and HR markets, and highlights where pressure points and opportunities are emerging.

Beyond salary data, the report explores wider trends shaping decision-making in 2026, including evolving benefit expectations, flexibility, workload sustainability and the growing importance of trust, stability and long-term value.

It sets out what employers need to be aware of as they plan for the year ahead, and what professionals should consider as they assess their next career move.

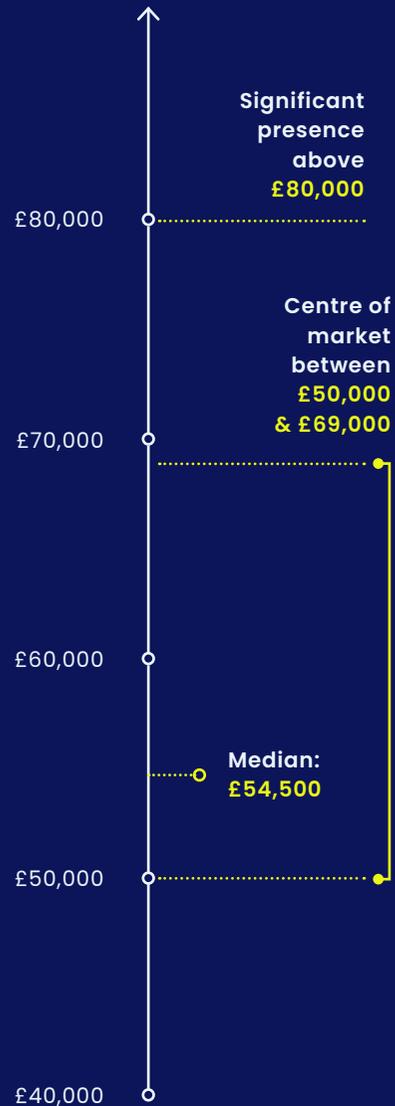
*This report is designed to bridge the gap between employer constraints and candidate expectations.*

It offers an honest view of the market, supporting more balanced, informed decisions on both sides as 2026 unfolds.



*"Candidates are more informed, more confident in their value and increasingly unwilling to compromise on what matters to them."*

# LONDON COMMENTARY



*London remains the most competitive and complex market for Business Support professionals in the UK.*

Salaries continue to be shaped by a combination of cost-of-living pressures, and consistently high demand across the capital.

Our data shows the employers are still prepared to pay a premium for proven capability, however, expectations have risen alongside pay, with businesses increasingly focused on output, adaptability, and long-term fit, rather than title alone.

## SALARY LEVELS AND POSITIONING

*London continues to command the strongest salary outcomes in the Business Support market.*

Median base salaries sit at approximately £54,500, reflecting both the seniority of roles and the strategic proximity to executive leadership teams.

The distribution of salaries is broader than in any other region, with a visible concentration of roles in the £50,000–£69,000 range and a meaningful presence above £80,000.

Higher pay in London must be viewed in context. These salaries are accompanied by significantly higher expectations around availability, discretion, and strategic contribution.

Many London-based roles now function as extensions of leadership teams, with EAs and senior PAs acting as gatekeepers, decision-makers, and operational anchors.

## PAY PROGRESSION AND REWARD DYNAMICS

*Despite higher starting salaries, London respondents are less likely to have received a pay rise in the past year.*

Where increases have occurred, they are predominantly modest, often falling within the three to five per cent range.

This suggests that many professionals are operating near the top of internal salary bands, leaving limited room for progression without a change in role title or remit.

Bonuses are more prevalent in London than

elsewhere, particularly discretionary bonuses. Guaranteed bonuses are rare, but more common than in regional markets. Benefits packages are also broader, with private healthcare more frequently included.

Even so, these enhancements do not fully compensate for the pressure associated with London-based roles.

*"Higher pay in London must be viewed in context. These salaries are accompanied by significantly higher expectations..."*

## WORKLOAD, HOURS, AND SCOPE

*Workload intensity in London is consistently high. Respondents frequently report working beyond contracted hours, often as a standard expectation rather than an exception.*

This is especially pronounced among senior EAs and Chiefs of Staff, whose roles increasingly encompass project delivery, stakeholder management, and strategic oversight.

The expansion of scope is not always accompanied by formal recognition. Many respondents describe carrying responsibility well beyond their job description, without corresponding re-grading or title progression.

## PROGRESSION AND RETENTION RISK

*Progression remains one of the most acute challenges in the London market.*

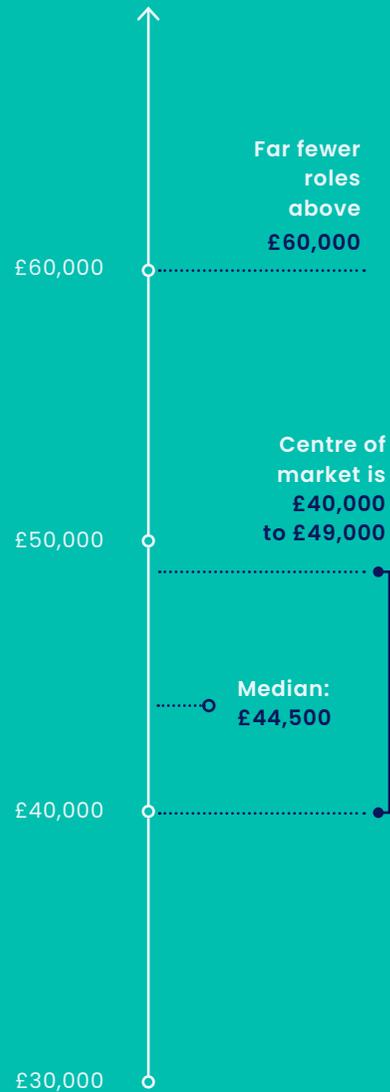
*"Respondents frequently report working beyond contracted hours, often as a standard expectation rather than an exception."*

While there is access to higher-paying roles, the pathway between Senior EA and Lead, Chief of Staff, or operational leadership positions is often informal and poorly defined.

This creates a sharp ceiling for experienced professionals and contributes to heightened attrition risk.

ROLE	London Permanent Salary (Per annum)	London Temporary Rate (Rate per hour)
Junior Receptionist	£26,500 - £33,000	£13-£16
Senior Receptionist	£33,000 - £38,500	£16-£18
Receptionist Manager	£40,000 - £50,000	£19-£24
Data Entry	£25,000 - £28,000	£12-£14
Administration Assistant	£26,000 - £34,500	£13-£16
Team Assistant	£33,500 - £45,000	£16-£26
Personal Assistant	£40,000 - £55,000	£20-£26
Executive Assistant	£50,000 - £70,000	£25-£32
Office Manager	£43,000 - £70,000	£21-£35
Executive Assistant Manager	£60,000 - £95,000	£30-£45
Private Personal Assistant	£55,000 - £110,000	£29-£40
Executive Business Partner	£60,000 - £115,000	£32-£50
Chief of Staff	£80,000 - £150,000	£35-£75

# MANCHESTER COMMENTARY



*Manchester has become one of the UK's most commercially significant cities, underpinned by sustained investment, strong infrastructure and a highly diverse business ecosystem.*

The city continues to attract both domestic and international businesses looking to scale, driven by its access to talent, cost advantages compared to London and its growing global profile.

As businesses expand and mature,

Manchester's role as a strategic base for operations, leadership and decision-making has strengthened, reinforcing its position as a key market within the national and international business setting.

## SALARY LANDSCAPE

*In Manchester and the wider North West, median salaries sit at approximately £44,500, with the £40,000–£49,000 band firmly established as the centre of the market.*

Salaries are more tightly clustered than in London, with fewer roles breaking into the £60,000+ range.

Despite this, the calibre of candidates and the scope of roles in the region continues to rise. Many organisations are building leadership teams outside London, increasing demand for senior Business Support without materially adjusting salary frameworks.

## **PAY RISES AND MARKET BEHAVIOUR**

*Respondents in this region are more likely to have received a pay rise in the past year than their London counterparts.*

These increases, however, are typically incremental rather than transformational. Most fall within the three to five per cent range, indicating ongoing cost-of-living adjustments rather than strategic reward.

Rather than implementing broad-based pay increases, employers have taken a more selective approach to salary investment. Higher salaries are

being offered where roles demonstrate expanded scope, increased autonomy or closer alignment to senior leadership.

*As a result, senior and strategic EA roles show some upward flexibility, while more traditional EA and PA positions have seen minimal year-on-year movement.*

Importantly, salary stability should not be interpreted as reduced demand. Demand for experienced EA and PA talent in Manchester remains strong, particularly for candidates who can operate with a high degree of independence and support complex, fast-paced businesses.

However, salary growth has been targeted rather than universal, with employers prioritising value, impact and scope over title alone.

This pattern suggests a market that is actively trying to retain talent, but within tightly constrained salary structures.

## ROLE EVOLUTION AND WORKLOAD

*Roles in Manchester and the North West are evolving rapidly. Respondents describe increasing involvement in strategic initiatives, cross-functional projects, and senior stakeholder support.*

Hybrid working is well embedded, but the boundaries between role and availability are increasingly blurred.

As in London, working beyond contracted hours is common, though often framed as a necessity rather than an expectation. The cumulative effect is a workforce carrying senior-level responsibility without senior-level pay.

## PROGRESSION CONSTRAINTS

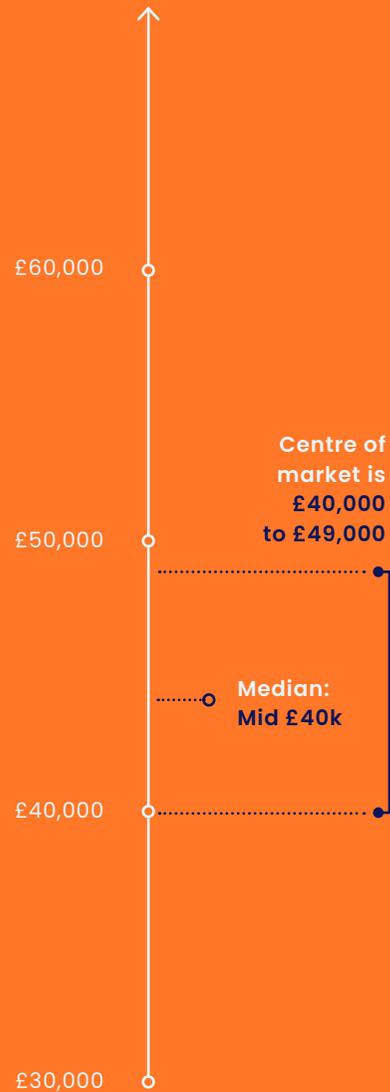
*Progression pathways in this region are limited by organisational scale. While there is growing demand for senior support, fewer formal Lead or Head-level roles exist.*

As a result, experienced professionals often face a ceiling unless they pivot into London-based or fully remote roles.

*Hybrid working is well embedded, but the boundaries between role and availability are increasingly blurred.*

<b>ROLE</b>	<b>Manchester Permanent Salary (Per annum)</b>	<b>Manchester Temporary Rate (Rate per hour)</b>
<b>Junior Receptionist</b>	<b>£24,000 – £30,000</b>	<b>£12-£14</b>
<b>Senior Receptionist</b>	<b>£30,000 – £36,500</b>	<b>£15-£17</b>
<b>Receptionist Manager</b>	<b>£35,000 – £44,000</b>	<b>£17-£21</b>
<b>Data Entry</b>	<b>£23,000 – £25,000</b>	<b>£11-£12</b>
<b>Administration Assistant</b>	<b>£25,000 – £30,000</b>	<b>£12-£14</b>
<b>Team Assistant</b>	<b>£27,000 – £33,500</b>	<b>£14-£16</b>
<b>Personal Assistant</b>	<b>£35,000 – £45,000</b>	<b>£16-£20</b>
<b>Executive Assistant</b>	<b>£40,000 – £55,000</b>	<b>£20-£25</b>
<b>Office Manager</b>	<b>£38,000 – £52,500</b>	<b>£17-£25</b>
<b>Executive Assistant Manager</b>	<b>£50,000 – £75,000</b>	<b>£25-£35</b>
<b>Private Personal Assistant</b>	<b>£45,000 – £80,000</b>	<b>£23-£30</b>
<b>Executive Business Partner</b>	<b>£50,000 – £75,000</b>	<b>£25-£35</b>
<b>Chief of Staff</b>	<b>£70,000 – £120,000</b>	<b>£35-£60</b>

# REGIONAL COMMENTARY



## *Regional UK markets operate under a different set of dynamics to London and Manchester.*

While demand for experienced Business Support professionals remains steady, the structures that underpin pay, progression, and reward are typically flatter, slower-moving, and more locally constrained.

Unlike the major hubs, where salary inflation and competition are driven by density of employers and rapid role evolution, regional markets are shaped by smaller organisational footprints, longer tenure, and more conservative reward frameworks.

This creates a market that appears stable on the surface, but where underlying pressure is building as role scope continues to expand faster than pay and progression models can adapt.

## SALARY LANDSCAPE

***Across the Midlands and wider UK regions, salary positioning remains concentrated in the £40,000–£49,000 band, with median earnings typically settling in the mid-£40,000s.***

While this broadly aligns with historical regional benchmarks, it increasingly feels misaligned with the scope and complexity of

many roles now being delivered. Professionals outside London and Manchester consistently perceive their pay as less competitive, not because of unrealistic expectations, but because responsibilities have expanded without a commensurate shift in reward.

***Bonuses remain the exception rather than the norm, and benefits packages are often limited to statutory or near-statutory provision.***

As a result, the total reward proposition in regional markets is materially weaker, placing greater pressure on base salary to carry perceived value.

Where this does not adjust, dissatisfaction accumulates quietly but persistently.

## **PAY GROWTH WITHOUT PROGRESSION**

***Although respondents in regional markets are marginally more likely to***

***report receiving annual pay increases, these rises are overwhelmingly positioned as cost-of-living adjustments rather than recognition of increased responsibility or performance.***

There is little evidence of accelerated pay progression or structured reward pathways, even as roles become broader and more senior in practice.

This has created a clear psychological divide. Pay rises are seen as maintenance, not momentum.

For experienced professionals, particularly those supporting founders or senior leadership teams, this reinforces a sense that they are capped by geography rather than capability.

## **THE ROLE OF FLEXIBILITY IN REGIONAL MARKETS**

***Hybrid working is now widely embedded across regional roles,***

***but fully remote positions remain inconsistent and unevenly priced.***

Where remote roles do exist, salary benchmarking varies significantly, often influenced more by legacy regional norms than by role scope or output.

***This inconsistency is creating internal and external tension.***

Professionals performing comparable roles, sometimes within the same organisation, can be paid markedly different salaries based solely on location or contract history.

Over time, this erodes trust and increases the likelihood of attrition among high-performing individuals who feel structurally undervalued.

## **PROGRESSION BOTTLENECKS AND LONG-TERM RISK**

***Smaller organisational footprints in regional markets continue to***

***limit vertical progression. Many respondents report that meaningful advancement would require a change in employer, a pivot in role type, or relocation to a larger city market. This is not a reflection of ambition, but of structural reality.***

For employers, this presents a long-term risk. Without deliberate investment in role design, pay architecture, and development pathways, regional businesses risk losing their most capable talent just as they reach peak effectiveness.

Retention in these markets will increasingly depend on proactive reward strategy, not loyalty or location.

<b>ROLE</b>	<b>Rest of UK/ Regional Permanent Salary (Per annum)</b>	<b>Rest of UK/ Regional Temporary Rate (Rate per hour)</b>
<b>Junior Receptionist</b>	<b>£24,000 - £28,000</b>	<b>£12-£14</b>
<b>Senior Receptionist</b>	<b>£30,000 - £35,000</b>	<b>£15-£17</b>
<b>Receptionist Manager</b>	<b>£35,000 - £42,000</b>	<b>£17-£21</b>
<b>Data Entry</b>	<b>£23,000 - £25,000</b>	<b>£11-£12</b>
<b>Administration Assistant</b>	<b>£25,000 - £28,000</b>	<b>£12-£14</b>
<b>Team Assistant</b>	<b>£27,000 - £32,000</b>	<b>£14-£16</b>
<b>Personal Assistant</b>	<b>£32,000 - £45,000</b>	<b>£16-£20</b>
<b>Executive Assistant</b>	<b>£40,000 - £50,000</b>	<b>£20-£24</b>
<b>Office Manager</b>	<b>£38,000 - £50,000</b>	<b>£17-£22</b>
<b>Executive Assistant Manager</b>	<b>£50,000 - £70,000</b>	<b>£25-£32</b>
<b>Private Personal Assistant</b>	<b>£40,000 - £75,000</b>	<b>£20-£30</b>
<b>Executive Business Partner</b>	<b>£50,000 - £70,000</b>	<b>£25-£35</b>
<b>Chief of Staff</b>	<b>£70,000 - £120,000</b>	<b>£35-£60</b>

# HR COMMENTARY

*The HR market has entered a phase where salary behaviour is shaped less by demand volatility and more by structural tension.*

Hiring activity remains steady, and in many organisations HR capability is more critical than ever. However, the way HR is rewarded has not evolved in line with how the role itself has expanded.

Rather than experiencing downward pressure on pay, HR professionals are encountering a more subtle constraint: stable salaries combined with limited progression, increasing accountability, and heightened exposure to organisational risk.

This dynamic sits at the centre of the current HR market.

## SALARY STABILITY VERSUS SALARY PROGRESSION

*Across the data, HR salaries appear broadly resilient. There is little evidence of widespread erosion, even amid economic caution.*

However, stability should not be mistaken for momentum. Salary progression within HR has become increasingly incremental, particularly below director level.

Increases, where they occur, are most often framed as maintenance or retention measures rather than recognition of expanded scope or impact.

Structural rebanding remains uncommon, even where responsibility has materially increased. This has resulted in a flatter

reward profile across the HR market, with fewer clear points for progression.

## HR AS A LIABILITY-BEARING FUNCTION

*One of the most significant shifts evident in the data is the extent to which HR has become a liability-bearing function.*

HR is now routinely accountable for employment risk, regulatory compliance, employee relations exposure, and the downstream consequences of leadership decisions.

Despite this shift, salary behaviour has not recalibrated to reflect the increased risk profile of the role. In many organisations, HR is expected to absorb legal and cultural exposure while operating within legacy reward structures designed for a more advisory function.

This disconnect is becoming increasingly visible and has implications for retention and capability at senior levels.

## RESPONSIBILITY EXPANSION AND REWARD LAG

*HR roles have expanded not just in volume, but in depth. The function is now central to organisational resilience, acting as the bridge between commercial decisions and people outcomes.*

However, the data suggests that responsibility expansion has consistently outpaced reward evolution.

This lag is not always immediately destabilising, but over time it compounds. HR professionals report operating at a higher level of complexity without corresponding structural recognition, reinforcing the sense that the role has evolved faster than the framework supporting it.

## THE MID-MARKET SQUEEZE

*The most acute pressure sits within the middle of the HR market.*

Entry-level roles remain relatively accessible, and senior leadership positions are often protected by clearer authority and reward.

By contrast, experienced HR Managers and Business Partners face the greatest compression.

At this level, scope expands rapidly, exposure increases, and expectations rise, yet salary progression and title evolution are often limited.

This has created a bottleneck where capable HR professionals take on senior-level accountability without the signals that normally accompany advancement.

## INVISIBLE PROGRESSION AND LONG-TERM IMPACT

*A recurring theme across responses is invisible progression.*

HR professionals are stepping into de facto senior roles, leading complex agendas and carrying significant organisational risk, without formal promotion or recalibration of reward.

While this may appear sustainable in the short term, it has longer-term implications.

Invisible progression suppresses future salary trajectories, weakens succession planning, and increases the likelihood that experienced HR professionals either disengage or seek alternative models such as interim, fractional, or consultancy work.



*"HR professionals take on senior-level accountability without the signals that normally accompany advancement."*

## CANDIDATE BEHAVIOUR IN A CONSTRAINED SALARY ENVIRONMENT

*In response to constrained progression, HR professionals are becoming more selective. Salary remains important, but it is increasingly assessed in context.*

Candidates are placing greater weight on clarity of remit, leadership access, and genuine influence, rather than moving for marginal pay increases alone.

This has contributed to a quieter market in volume terms, but one characterised by deliberate decision-making and higher expectations of role design.

## LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS FOR THE HR MARKET

*If salary compression and reward lag persist, the HR market risks a gradual erosion of experienced, commercially*

*minded practitioners willing to step into high-exposure roles.*

Over time, this may reduce the depth of in-house HR leadership and increase reliance on external or interim support.

Organisations that proactively align salary progression with responsibility, authority, and risk exposure will be better positioned to attract and retain credible HR leaders.

Those that do not may find that capability gaps emerge slowly, but decisively.

## LONDON

ROLE	Entry Level	Assistant Coordinator	ADVISOR	Manager/ Business Partner	Head Of
HR Generalist	£28,000 – £32,000	£30,000 – £38,000	£42,000 – £58,000	£60,000 – £95,000	£95,000 – £150,000
Recruitment	£28,000 – £32,000	£30,000 – £35,000	£42,000 – £55,000	£60,000 – £85,000	£90,000 – £120,000
Early Careers	£28,000 – £32,000	£30,000 – £35,000	£42,000 – £55,000	£60,000 – £80,000	£90,000 – £120,000
Learning & Development	£28,000 – £32,000	£30,000 – £35,000	£42,000 – £55,000	£60,000 – £80,000	£90,000 – £120,000
Rewards & Benefits	£28,000 – £35,000	£30,000 – £38,000	£42,000 – £58,000	£60,000 – £85,000	£90,000 – £120,000

## MANCHESTER

ROLE	Entry Level	Assistant Coordinator	ADVISOR	Manager/ Business Partner	Head Of
HR Generalist	£25,000 – £30,000	£28,000 – £32,000	£30,000 – £35,000	£39,000 – £58,000	£72,000 – £100,000
Recruitment	£25,000 – £28,000	£26,000 – £32,000	£35,000 – £40,000	£45,000 – £60,000	£80,000 – £100,000
Early Careers	£25,000 – £28,000	£26,000 – £32,000	£35,000 – £40,000	£45,000 – £60,000	£70,000 – £100,000
Learning & Development	£25,000 – £28,000	£26,000 – £32,000	£35,000 – £40,000	£45,000 – £60,000	£70,000 – £100,000
Rewards & Benefits	£25,000 – £28,000	£26,000 – £32,000	£35,000 – £42,000	£45,000 – £65,000	£80,000 – £100,000

# KEY THEMES

*While salary data provides a critical benchmark, it only tells part of the story.*

The 2026 salary survey reveals a series of deeper behavioural and structural shifts that are fundamentally changing how Business Support and HR professionals evaluate opportunity, and how employers must compete for talent.

These shifts are not isolated trends. They reflect a broader recalibration of priorities, driven by increased transparency, expanding role scope, and a growing focus on long term sustainability rather than short term progression.

## **CAREER PROGRESSION IS BEING REDEFINED**

*One of the most significant shifts in the market is a growing willingness among experienced professionals to move sideways rather than upwards.*

Traditional linear progression is no longer the default expectation.

Instead, candidates are making more deliberate decisions, prioritising roles that offer stronger leadership exposure, clearer ownership, and more credible long-term progression, even where this does not immediately translate into a higher title or salary increase.

This reflects a more strategic approach to career management. Candidates are increasingly aware that title inflation without genuine influence or development can limit future mobility.

As a result, lateral moves are often being used to strengthen long term positioning, gain exposure to senior leadership, or move into more stable and sustainable environments.

For employers, this creates a clear opportunity.

Organisations that can demonstrate meaningful scope, leadership access, and defined progression pathways are often able to attract high quality talent even without significant salary premiums.

Conversely, roles that rely solely on incremental pay increases or inflated titles are losing impact in a more informed and selective market.

## **SCOPE CREEP IS DRIVING SALARY TENSION AND ATTRITION RISK**

*Across both Business Support and HR functions, role scope has expanded significantly over recent years.*

Business Support professionals are increasingly

absorbing operational responsibilities, project delivery, and elements of people leadership, while HR professionals are managing more complex commercial challenges alongside traditional employee relations and organisational development work.

In many cases, this expansion has not been matched by corresponding increases in title, recognition, or salary.

*This growing disconnect between responsibility and reward is creating tension across the market.*

Professionals are becoming more conscious of the gap between what they are accountable for and how they are compensated, and this is driving both disengagement and increased willingness to explore external opportunities.

From a hiring perspective, this dynamic is contributing to tighter candidate pools at mid and senior levels, as experienced professionals become more selective about roles that offer genuine alignment between scope and reward.

## SALARY TRANSPARENCY IS RESHAPING HIRING CONVERSATIONS

*Salary transparency has become one of the defining characteristics of the current market.*

Candidates are entering hiring processes significantly better informed than in previous years, supported by access to salary benchmarking tools, peer networks, and open professional dialogue.

*As a result, expectations are often formed before initial conversations take place.*

Candidates are quickly able to identify where salary positioning does not align with role scope, seniority, or market norms, and this misalignment can undermine employer credibility early in the process.

This shift has changed the balance of power

in salary discussions. Compensation is no longer assessed in isolation, but in the context of organisational maturity, leadership credibility, and long-term opportunity.

Employers who approach salary positioning with clarity and intent are better placed to build trust and secure talent, while those relying on outdated benchmarks or vague salary ranges are seeing higher rates of candidate disengagement.

*"Candidates are entering hiring processes significantly better informed than in previous years..."*

## STABILITY AND LEADERSHIP CREDIBILITY ARE BECOMING DECISIVE FACTORS

*While ambition remains strong, there has been a clear shift in how candidates assess risk.*

Organisational stability, leadership credibility, and long-term viability are now central considerations in decision making.

Rapid growth alone is no longer sufficient to attract experienced professionals. Candidates are increasingly evaluating whether a business has the structure, leadership, and strategic direction to support sustainable careers.

This reflects a more cautious and considered approach, particularly following several years of economic uncertainty and organisational restructuring across many sectors.

For employers, this means that employer brand, leadership reputation, and organisational clarity are playing a greater role alongside salary in influencing hiring outcomes.

## SLOW DECISION MAKING IS COSTING EMPLOYERS ACCESS TO TOP TALENT

*One of the most consistent frustrations reported by candidates is the pace of hiring processes.*

Extended timelines, multiple approval layers, and delayed feedback are increasingly incompatible with candidate expectations, particularly at mid and senior levels.

In a competitive market, strong candidates are rarely available for extended periods. Delays are often interpreted not as diligence, but as uncertainty or lack of alignment.

Many candidates are choosing to withdraw from processes or accept alternative roles with organisations that demonstrate clearer intent and faster decision making.

Importantly, this is not purely an operational issue. Slow hiring processes can weaken the perceived credibility of a salary offer.

Even competitive packages lose impact when presented within an uncertain or prolonged process.

## **POORLY DEFINED ROLES ARE INCREASINGLY BEING REJECTED**

*There is a clear decline in tolerance for vague job descriptions and poorly defined roles.*

Candidates are placing far greater emphasis on clarity around reporting lines, decision making authority, and success measures before accepting new opportunities.

This shift reflects accumulated experience. Many professionals have previously experienced roles where scope expanded significantly without recognition or reward.

As a result, candidates are now setting clearer boundaries at the point of entry.

For employers, this has direct consequences. Poorly defined roles disproportionately deter the strongest candidates, who

have both the market awareness and confidence to walk away from ambiguity.

Even where salary is competitive, uncertainty around remit and expectations reduces the attractiveness of the opportunity.

In contrast, organisations that invest in clearly structured roles with defined ownership and progression are seeing stronger engagement and higher quality hires.

*"There is a clear decline in tolerance for vague job descriptions and poorly defined roles."*

## WHAT CANDIDATES PRIORITISE TODAY: INSIGHT FROM LIVE MARKET POLLING

*Alongside the salary survey, live polling of 243 Business Support and HR professionals provides additional insight into how candidates are evaluating opportunity.*

Work life balance emerged as the single most important factor, selected by 50% of respondents.

Salary and overall package ranked second at 27%, followed by growth and development at 14%. The individual leader supported ranked lowest at just 9%.

These findings reinforce a critical shift. While salary remains important, it is no longer the primary deciding factor for many candidates.

Instead, professionals are prioritising roles that offer sustainability, clarity, and realistic expectations. This aligns closely with survey

feedback, which highlights increasing workloads, expanded responsibilities, and frequent out of hours demands.

Candidates are not rejecting ambition or progression. They are seeking roles where intensity is sustainable and clearly defined.

*Salary remains a fundamental expectation, but it is increasingly viewed as a baseline rather than a differentiator.*

Candidates expect fair compensation but are less willing to sacrifice wellbeing and long term sustainability for marginal financial gain.

Growth and development also remain central considerations. Candidates are placing greater emphasis on long term career progression and employability, rather than focusing solely on immediate reporting relationships.

## WHAT THIS MEANS FOR EMPLOYERS

*Taken together, the survey and polling data point to a more informed, selective, and strategically minded talent market.*

Candidates are assessing opportunities through a wider lens, balancing salary with role design, leadership credibility, organisational stability, and long term development.

*For employers, this creates a clear imperative. Competitive salary alone is no longer sufficient to secure and retain top talent.*

Roles must be clearly defined, aligned with realistic expectations, and positioned within a credible long term career framework.

Organisations that recognise and respond to these shifts will be best placed to attract high quality Business Support and HR professionals.

Those that do not risk losing talent not necessarily to higher paying competitors, but to businesses offering greater clarity, credibility, and alignment.

*Roles must be clearly defined, aligned with realistic expectations, and positioned within a credible long term career framework.*

# Lily Shippen



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