

Welcome to the new edition of Nigel Wright's UK Consumer Update

During the last five years in the UK, since the start of the global financial crisis, we have focused on developing existing client relationships and establishing new client relationships in the broad consumer industry.

As such, today we can truly say that we have fantastic relationships with a variety of great UK companies, both large and small, from across the different categories.

We've also, during that time, listened carefully to our customers and ultimately worked hard to better align ourselves with their needs, making it easier for them to work with us. We're more discipline focused today, which means that our expertise, rather than being diluted across different geographies, is actually concentrated on offering clients and candidates in-depth advice about their specialist areas.

This has given us the ability to move very quickly and share the strongest candidates between our discipline experts – whether they're sales, marketing, manufacturing or supply chain focused. While we may have multiple contacts within a particular company, we can offer clients more specific expertise, depending on the role or the team we are recruiting for; this ultimately makes us a more credible and effective search provider.

With strong and sustainable client relationships in place, we have begun to re-focus on candidates. The UK economy has returned to growth and businesses are looking to hire again as confidence had grown. The market today, therefore, is very much candidate driven. Consequently, we are currently focused on growing our presence in the candidate space. We're doing so by investing in advertising, to raise the profile of our brand in the market; as well as people, so that we have greater capability to manage the number of candidates approaching us, as well as clients enquiring about our services.

Companies have tended to be quite lean over the last few years, relying on their employees to fulfil dual or multiple roles, rather than bringing new people in. Now though, those people are increasingly discovering that opportunities are available that appear more attractive, from a work-life balance perspective. This has helped create momentum in the market, as candidates begin to feel more

empowered to look elsewhere. Educating the market about your employer brand is, therefore, vitally important as an employer today.

Within sales, the recession created a skill gap at the National Account Manager (NAM) end of the market as many companies stopped hiring and developing graduates. Now, we find that lots of businesses are looking for really good, young NAMs. This is generally across the board too – with all categories looking to add numbers to their sales teams to capitalise on market growth.

In the marketing arena, innovation is the in-demand area. Whether its pack sizes, flavours or new technology, new product ideas to boost sales are paramount. The UK is the most competitive and advanced retail market in the world and as competition increases, particularly with the rise of a multitude of small entrepreneurial business on the scene, retailers and manufactures are challenging themselves and each other, to get ahead of the game.

Digital also continues to be a skill in demand; especially within retail, where companies are trying to engage better with customers who are shopping for and researching products more online. E-tailers are really keen to hire data insight people who can ascertain what is driving customer behaviours online. Category management is another sought-after skill area, again, because brands want to increase the share of category sales in what is a very competitive market.

At Nigel Wright, we have strong industry relationships, an ever growing database of the best in demand candidates and a great and growing team of consultants, all of whom have a long tenure and great experience, working within the UK consumer market. Although our business is international, we pride ourselves on our ability to be effective at the local level, within the countries we operate. We have an intimate understanding of the trends that are impacting the consumer industries and our experienced consultants can advise clients on key strategic areas that go beyond the hiring process.