

‘Video game vouchers, plants and home office cleaners’: How firms are luring staff as ‘war for talent’ intensifies

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osses of companies across sectors are currently desperate to find stand-out ways to attract and retain staff amid an acute hiring crisis.

There are over 1 million job vacancies in the UK right now. In the tech sector a skills shortage is seeing soaring wage inflation as start-ups compete to hire software talent, while over in the hospitality industry labour shortages show little sign of letting up.

Bosses at white-collar recruiter Robert Walters recently revealed junior software developers are managing to secure close to 100% pay increases in new roles as competition intensifies.

In addition to raising pay, companies have been offering packages including flexible working and increased autonomy to lure in staff. (Mealkit firm Gousto recently said it will allow its 1,000 office-based employees to “nomadic work” abroad for up to one month a year).

New data from London-based workplace benefits marketplace Juno has now revealed that in an attempt to keep existing staff happy and attract fresh talent, firms are resorting to offering more unusual benefits.

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They include free video game vouchers, plants, regular meal kit deliveries and at-home cleaning services for WFH offices.

The start-up polled a sample of 110 businesses using its platform for the report and found a significant spike in demand for these "non-conventional workplace benefits", notably the ability to book a home cleaner.

Companies surveyed include London restaurant Cricket, adtech start-up Teads and deliveries start-up Stuart.

Overall, the poll found plant deliveries were its clients' most popular choice of perk, followed closely by meal kits and fitness classes. Employers' more unusual gifts included CBD products and massages.

Juno works by allowing employers to give staff credits on its app to book services from partners such as Patch Plants, Barry's UK and childcare provider, Koru Kids.

Its business model is based on the idea that "the days of forced pub visits don't cater to a generation of workers that want a hyper-personalised, bespoke offering".

Cricket has begun offering managers at its three London sites

access to the perks, and intends to roll out the program to its entire staff base.

The restaurant's head of people, Monclef Mansur, said: "We thought long and hard about adding a benefit that wasn't the usual benefit no one used."

A combination of Brexit and Covid has seen many young workers return to their home countries, and pubs and restaurants around the UK are struggling to recruit. Retention is also an issue, as rivals with gaping vacancies offer previously unheard of sign-on bonuses and 30% higher salaries.

Start-up Uptime, a London-based educational app offering five-minute "knowledge hacks" backed by YouTube founder Chad Hurley, is among tech firms facing recruitment challenges.

CTO Joe Simms is recruiting for data engineers and app developers for his 50-strong team.

He said: "We have been finding the market is so competitive now that many technical candidates are pulling out before the first interview due to an abundance of offers."