



talent works

| Total Talent Solution

Did the storm *pass*?

As TA Teams plan their budgets for 2026,
we take a look at the forecast.

Change how you hire. Everywhere. In every way.



Introduction

As TA Teams plan their budgets for 2026, what's the forecast?

For much of the past two years, talent acquisition has been navigating through turbulent weather. Market slowdowns, hiring freezes, and corporate restructures created a storm that left even the most seasoned TA leaders clutching their umbrellas. Yet as 2025 winds down and organisations look toward 2026, there's a collective question in the air: Did the storm finally pass—or are we simply in the eye of it?





The calm after the chaos

After the hiring boom of 2021–2022 and the subsequent contraction of 2023–2024, TA functions have endured a rollercoaster. First came the urgency of scaling fast to meet post-pandemic growth. Then came the slowdown: headcount reductions, budget cuts, and an almost overnight shift in focus from acquisition to optimisation.

As we head towards 2026, it feels like the narrative may be changing from survival to sustainability. For TA leaders, that means the 2026 planning cycle feels different. There's cautious optimism - perhaps even quiet confidence. The clouds haven't fully cleared, but visibility is improving.



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What is driving the change?

One of the most significant shifts for 2026 will be how TA budgets are allocated. Gone are the days when growth automatically meant more recruiters, more tools, and bigger spend. Today, it's about doing more with less - but also doing better.

1. Headcount vs. Technology Investment:

Instead of rehiring large TA teams, many organisations are exploring how technology can fill capacity gaps. AI-driven sourcing tools, automated screening, and intelligent interview scheduling are no longer "nice-to-haves" - they're core to delivering productivity at scale. However, the true differentiator isn't just in adopting tools; it's in integrating them into the workflow effectively. 2026 budgets will prioritise systems that reduce recruiter workload rather than simply add new layers of admin.

2. Employer Brand as a Cost Centre - No More:

Employer branding, which was often the first casualty of a budget cut, is re-emerging as a strategic investment. With candidate outreach becoming increasingly automated, candidate engagement is the differentiator. In 2026, expect more leaders to reallocate spend from job boards and agencies into brand storytelling, social content, and data-driven reputation management.

3. Data and Analytics Take the Lead:

TA teams are under mounting pressure to prove their value. That means data visibility and reporting tools are top of the priority list. From pipeline conversion ratios to quality-of-hire metrics, 2026 will demand evidence-led decision-making. In many organisations, the TA budget conversation will be inseparable from analytics, procurement and managed service provision.

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The total talent opportunity

If the past few years taught TA anything, it's that recruitment cannot operate in isolation. As 2026 budgets are drawn up, there's a strong push toward aligning TA strategy with business forecasting.

Where hiring plans were once reactive, they're now deeply tied to workforce planning and business transformation. TA leaders are sitting earlier at the table - discussing not only who to hire, but whether roles should even exist in their current form.

For instance:

- Skills-based hiring is replacing rigid role definitions.
- Internal mobility and upskilling are taking precedence over external recruitment.
- Contingent and project-based models are offering flexibility in uncertain markets.

The result? A more fluid, agile TA function, one that looks less like a cost centre and more like a strategic workforce enabler.

For talent solutions providers, there is now more opportunity than ever to explore total talent. With a growing appetite within organisations to understand talent acquisition holistically, providers who can shape and deliver a single workforce strategy are sought-after.

Total talent is about more than **simply sourcing different types of talent**. It's about **unifying** all of your talent acquisition needs under one **global framework**.

Implementing a total talent solution now calls for providers with real agility, multi-faceted skill-sets in-house and the ability to deliver technology-led talent acquisition strategies with confidence, clarity and credibility.

If the storm has passed, there are a lot of learnings that can take teams forward:

Rediscovering creativity

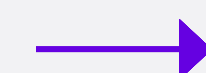
Talent Acquisition teams are working in close partnership with providers to find creative and innovative ways to deliver the talent needed to meet business goals. Combining contingent workers, permanent hires and automation means evolving a blended workforce solution backed by truly agile talent acquisition practices, empowering teams to build communities and networks, drive consistent engagement and keep talent of all types close.

Identifying critical gaps

Talent Acquisition teams have more opportunity than ever to introduce new technology platforms, shape bespoke processes and build a candidate experience that feels branded, human and personalised. At the same time, not every TA team can be an expert in every aspect of the process. Building an end-to-end, technology-led experience, guiding candidates from attraction to offer and onboarding, represents a valuable strategic investment.

A single source of truth

The changing demands placed on Talent Acquisition teams, with new technologies, changing candidate expectations and uncertain market conditions, means that costs can easily spiral out of control. Clear data and reporting across contingent and permanent hiring is essential, based on a single source of truth for all of your talent acquisition spend.



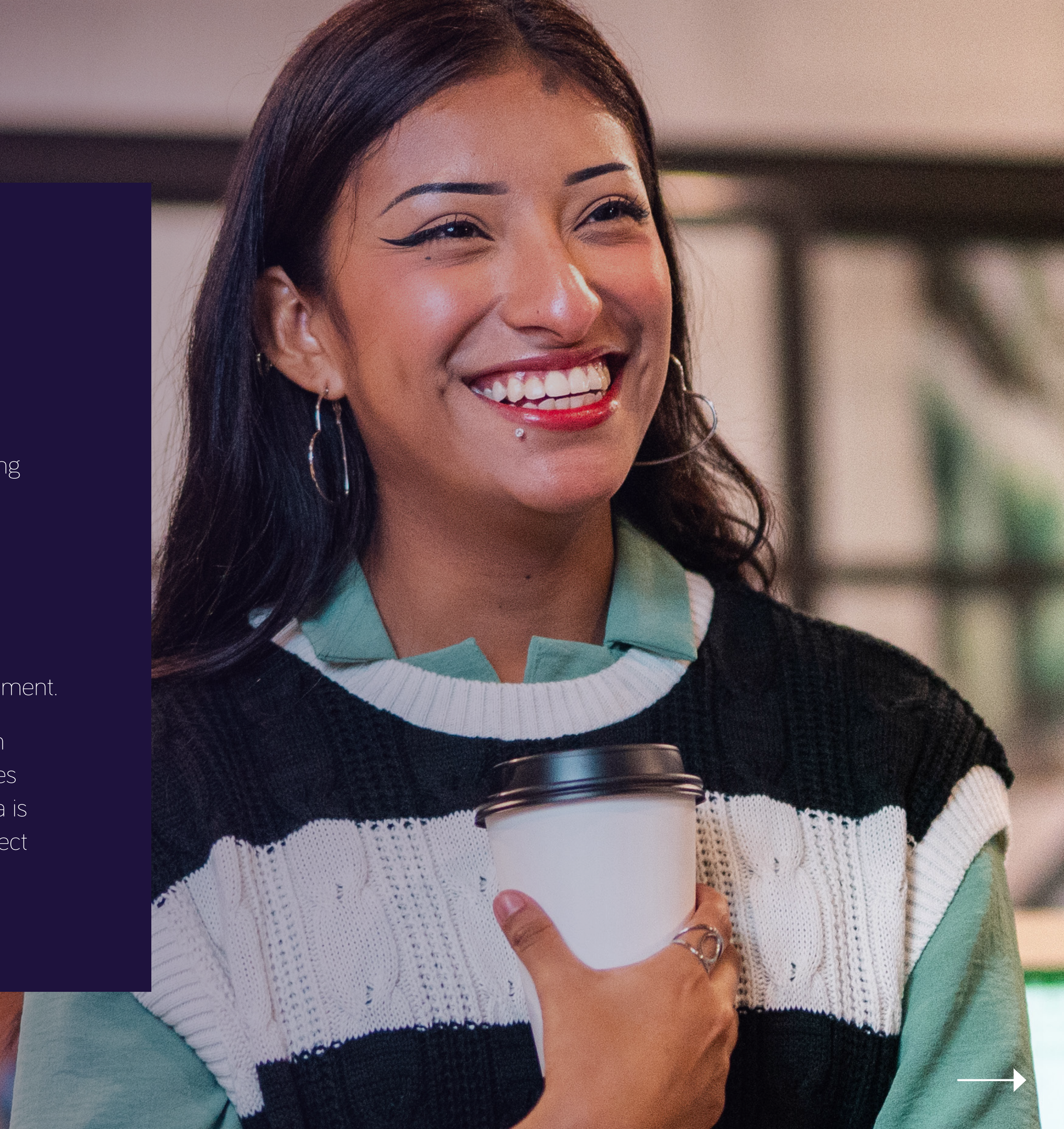
Conclusion

Forget about the weather. It will always change and change again.

The real insight to take into 2026 is that the days of reactive spending should be consigned to history – and that’s something for hiring organisations to embrace, celebrate and shout about. 2026 will reward the teams that:

- Demonstrate agility through a total talent solution.
- Prioritise long-term brand equity over short-term hiring spikes.
- Use technology not just to automate, but to amplify human judgement.

The opportunity is here to demonstrate clearly how talent acquisition strategy supports broader business goals, responds to new challenges and leverages new technologies to reduce cost. But that new agenda is to be driven forward now – so that TA teams have the budget to effect strategic changes, rather than simply react to changing needs.





To find out more about our offering, or to discuss how we can support your business, **please get in touch.**

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