

# Is there a UK skills migration?

Approaching Brexit we feared the reduced import of professional skills to the UK, skills upon which we are highly dependent, particularly in science, medical, technology and engineering. This coupled with the restrictions on our ambitious home-talent to fulfil European work experiences or career opportunities made Brexit a fairly daunting prospect.

## But what about now?

Have these new rules hampered the availability of talent into the UK and has the prolific increase in remote working meant we are starting to lose 'too much' talent overseas?

The UK Chemicals sector is resilient as we know, and continues to battle against the issues it faces, but as quoted by Steve Elliott in a CIA Press Release in May 2022, "we are seeing an increasing resource and competence challenge."

Elliot stresses the need for UK to stay competitive against global and European players as "the scale and cumulative impact of these rising costs will inevitably put pressure on investment decisions for UK businesses, many of which are headquartered overseas".

The hidden danger being that if we don't stay competitive, we will see an in-balance of the skills movement which is essential to the UK; more of our experienced or highest-potential talent will be poached abroad by more competitive players. With the increase in 'remote working' this increases that danger.' We must be aware of this added competition to our skilled resources in the UK Chemical sector, in my view this 'talent spotting and poaching' has already started to increase.

Interestingly, 'Perkbox' in April 2022 quoted '62% of UK workforce considering professional move abroad, in remote working era'. And I see it is an issue that is likely to increase, due to the expectations of many candidates now to be able to work remotely.

RMG is seeing an increase of requests by contacts in the UK, to recruit UK Operational or COMAH qualified professionals for their global sites, including in the US, China, and the Middle East. The perceived calibre of our UK experienced operational candidates is that they have extremely high standards of HSEQ expertise having worked under rigorous

UK standards of control. For permanent roles and interim contracts these are typically highly lucrative and offer exciting career propositions. The need has increased due to the higher emphasis on control, efficiency and Health and Safety needs globally.

Having recruited in the Chemicals sector for 30 years, I've always been exceptionally interested in UK senior professional leaders (typically in Operations, Engineering, Science and Tech) who are seeking to return as candidates to the UK. I have enjoyed working with outstanding individuals who have experienced a career acceleration in their global group, usually through a high-talent progression program. These bring exceptional life experiences, ambitious attitude, and transferable skills back into the UK.

In the UK Chemical industry, we have a highly skilled workforce, 'double that of any other manufacturing industry', quoting Simon Marsh recently from the CIA. Our sector and these employees are essential to the UK and to the Government's 'levelling up' agenda particularly for us here in the North West. I wholeheartedly agree, retaining and securing a continual succession plan to acquire or train these skills for the future is also essential for the North of the UK, and the UK economy, don't let's shoot ourselves in the foot 'again'.

As a suggestion to improve your availability of skills or to keep one step ahead of your competition locally, is to take a more proactive approach to your skills planning in the short to medium term. We have seen many companies take more control of their 'continual-needs' skill base and for key succession-planning within their organisation through 'Market Mapping' projects. Your competitors may already be doing this! Market Mapping is a way to compete through market IP knowledge to give you advantage in the professional skills market and for when you need to recruit quickly. It is one way you can intelligently analyse and 'market map' the talent available (within realistic parameters), so in my view, surely must be worth consideration.

**More details on Market Mapping can be found here - <https://www.rmg-uk.com/market-mapping>. [anita.caldwell@rmg-uk.com](mailto:anita.caldwell@rmg-uk.com)**

