THE MARKETING JUNCTION

TMJ WEEKLY STAFFING INTELLIGENCE BRIEF

Volume 1 • Issue 7

Industry Trends. Market Intelligence. Communication Insights.

September 8, 2026

UNLEASHING THE THREE BEASTS

Understanding the Data and Metrics You Need to Compete in Staffing Today

Last week, we looked at what it takes to successfully rebrand a staffing company for the workforce solutions and business execution market.

There is another question that comes immediately afterward:

How do you know where you actually stand?

Not what you think your market position is. Not what your marketing agency tells you. Not what your sales team believes. What the data actually says.

Where are competitors outperforming you? Which channels are producing meaningful attention? What is happening to the money you are putting into marketing? Which content is working? Where are your leads coming from? What happens to those leads after they arrive? Which opportunities are being created, and which are disappearing?

And perhaps most importantly, what does the CEO need to know that the marketing department does not?

The answers come from three different areas of executive intelligence that increasingly matter to staffing and recruitment companies:

- **Market and performance intelligence.**
- **Marketing-to-revenue intelligence.**
- **Content, social and execution intelligence.**

We have developed and are developing three proprietary tools to create forensic-level reporting on all of these at a level of accuracy that is unmatched in the industry. They are a major part of the platform that led to us being the first marketing firm to be recognized for excellence in staffing in the United Kingdom, shortlisted for “Outstanding Supplier to the Contracting Industry” at The Contracting Awards 2026.

Our technology developers lovingly refer to these tools as “**The Three Beasts.**”

THE THREE BEASTS

The first is Junction Dash, TMJ's next-generation reporting and intelligence system.
Junction Dash provides each client with a personalized, real-time dashboard covering website performance and visitors, LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram, competitor activity, best-performing content, engagement statistics, and overall progress and ROI-related metrics.

The system can track more than 120 real-time parameters. Dashboards can be customized for different users and teams, including CEOs, marketing teams, sales teams and management. The layout can be changed in real time using drag-and-drop functionality, allowing the dashboard to reflect what a particular decision-maker actually needs to know.

It also supports daily, weekly and monthly reporting, comparative reporting, and different levels of detail, from a one-page executive report to a much deeper analysis.

That distinction matters.

A CEO should not have to wade through a marketing department's dashboard to find the three numbers that determine whether the business is moving in the right direction.

The second Beast is the **ROI Tracking Tool**.
This system is being developed to connect marketing expenditure to leads, conversions and sales. It is designed as an integration layer across CRM and marketing platforms including HubSpot, Bullhorn, Vincere, Accommodate and Mailchimp, and it also captures leads that come directly from websites and other sources.

The objective is straightforward:
Where did the lead come from?
What happened to it?
Did it become an opportunity?
Did it become business?
What did we spend to create it?
And what return did that investment generate?

That is a fundamentally different question from asking how many people visited a website or how many people clicked an advertisement.

The third Beast is Junction Social, TMJ's own content management and social media platform, provided to clients at no additional cost.

It gives clients a dedicated workspace for content calendars, review and approval, feedback, publishing and performance monitoring. Multiple teams and departments can work within the same client account while maintaining separate workspaces, calendars, approvals and reporting.

Most importantly, it brings planning, approvals, publishing, collaboration and performance data into one environment rather than forcing teams to move between multiple disconnected platforms.

The point of all three is bigger than the technology itself.

You cannot manage what you cannot see.

And you certainly cannot outperform a competitor who understands your market, your performance, your economics and your opportunities better than you do.

Whether you use these particular systems or build your own intelligence architecture, these are areas every serious staffing company should be able to measure.

TMJ has used this kind of intelligence to sharpen its own competitive understanding and strengthen its approach to recruitment marketing. If you would like more information about the Three Beasts, we would be happy to provide it.

But the larger point is not that you need our technology.

The larger point is that you need the intelligence.

Executive Snapshot

The staffing market is producing an unusual combination of signals right now.

In the United States, SIA's latest Bullhorn Staffing Indicator shows staffing hours remained at year-to-date highs in the week ending August 22 and were approximately 10% above the comparable week a year earlier.

The American Staffing Association's August index also showed temporary and contract staffing employment 4.4% above the comparable period of 2025.

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August payrolls also surprised on the upside: employers added 162,000 jobs, nearly three times the consensus forecast, while unemployment held at 4.1%.

Yet the broader U.S. labor market is not displaying conventional boom conditions. Initial unemployment claims were 206,000 for the week ending August 29, while planned layoffs rose in August but remained significantly below the level of a year earlier. Reuters characterizes the environment as one of "slow hire, slow fire."

The implication is important for staffing executives: **activity can be rising without the market becoming easy.**

In Britain, the picture is similarly mixed. The latest KPMG/REC Report on Jobs found permanent placements rising for the first time since September 2022, while temporary billings increased for a fifth consecutive month and starting salaries for permanent roles grew at their fastest rate since January.

Official data are more sobering. The Office for National Statistics counted 707,000 vacancies in the three months to July, the lowest level outside the pandemic since late 2014.

Europe is showing a different kind of stability. Eurostat reported euro-area unemployment at 6.4% in July, unchanged from June, while EU unemployment stood at 6.1%. Yet both were slightly higher than a year earlier.

The common thread is not simply whether demand is rising or falling.

It is that **the market is becoming harder to interpret from a single number.**

That is precisely why competitive and operational intelligence matters.

Labor Economist's Market Watch

🇺🇸 United States

The U.S. labor market delivered a much stronger August than expected. Employers added 162,000 jobs, nearly three times the consensus forecast, while unemployment held at 4.1%. Earlier estimates were also revised higher: June payroll growth increased from 20,000 to 31,000, while July was revised from a loss of 23,000 jobs to a gain of 21,000. Together, the revisions suggest summer hiring was considerably more resilient than initial reports indicated.

The gains were concentrated in several areas. Food services and drinking places added 59,000 jobs, local government education added 42,000, and manufacturing employment increased by 16,000. Average hourly earnings also rose 0.3% to $37.75, although annual wage growth slowed to 3.1%, its weakest pace since June 2021.

Financial markets interpreted the stronger employment picture as increasing the Federal Reserve's room to raise rates. Immediately following the report, futures markets put the probability of a September increase at roughly 59%, while Treasury yields and the dollar moved higher. Attention now shifts to this week's inflation data, which could prove decisive ahead of the Fed's September meeting.

Energy costs complicate that decision. The national average price of on-highway diesel stood at $5.60 per gallon at the end of August, about $1.87 higher than a year earlier. Elevated fuel costs create continuing inflation pressure even as wage growth moderates, leaving the Fed balancing a resilient labor market against inflation that remains above target.

President Trump has continued to call publicly for lower interest rates, arguing that high borrowing costs put the United States at a competitive disadvantage. At the same time, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent has expanded Treasury's long-duration debt buybacks as policymakers confront unusually high long-term borrowing costs, although analysts remain divided over how much influence those purchases can exert on yields.

For staffing leaders, the August report changes the tone of the labor-market discussion. Hiring is stronger than the summer's initial data suggested, but the improvement is uneven. Leisure and hospitality and government education accounted for a large share of August's gains, while several major industries showed little change. The next question is whether the rebound broadens across sectors or remains concentrated in a relatively small number of hiring categories.

United Kingdom

UK recruitment activity showed tentative signs of improvement in August, with permanent placements rising for the first time since September 2022, ending a decline of almost four years, according to the latest REC and KPMG recruitment data. Temporary billings also increased for a fifth consecutive month, while starting salaries for permanent roles recorded their strongest growth since January.

The improvement was not uniform. Permanent placements increased in London and the Midlands but continued to decline in the North and South. At the same time, candidate availability reached its highest level in three and a half years, partly reflecting redundancies and a larger pool of people looking for work. That combination suggests employers may be becoming somewhat more willing to hire, but candidates continue to face considerable competition for available roles.

Official data reinforce that caution. The Office for National Statistics reported 707,000 vacancies in the three months through July, the lowest level outside the pandemic period since late 2014. Recruitment activity may therefore be stabilizing from a weak base rather than signaling a broad return to strong employer demand.

The distinction matters for monetary policy as well. Faster starting-salary growth alongside improving placement activity would give the Bank of England another labor-market indicator to watch as it assesses whether domestic wage pressures are easing sufficiently. At the same time, elevated candidate availability and historically low vacancies point toward considerably more slack than the placement figures alone might suggest.

The broader economy remains another constraint. July GDP figures are due September 11 and will provide a fresh test of whether improving recruitment indicators are being accompanied by stronger economic activity.

For staffing leaders, August's recruitment data are encouraging but not yet decisive. **Permanent placements may finally be turning a corner, but they are doing so in a market where vacancies remain historically weak and candidate supply is unusually high.** If placement growth continues while vacancies and candidate availability begin moving in the same direction, the case for a genuine hiring recovery will become considerably stronger.

Europe

Europe's headline unemployment figures remained stable in July, but the underlying picture continues to diverge sharply between countries. EU unemployment held at 6.1%, while the euro-area rate remained at 6.4%. Both were slightly higher than a year earlier, however, and the number of unemployed people across the EU increased by 296,000 over the same period.

The differences between individual labor markets remain substantial. Finland recorded unemployment of 10.5%, up from 9.9% a year earlier, while Spain continued moving in the opposite direction, with unemployment falling from 10.6% to 10.0%. Czechia retained one of the EU's lowest unemployment rates at 3.3%, although that too has risen from 2.8% a year earlier. Malta has also moved higher, from 2.5% to 3.5%, illustrating that even some of Europe's lowest-unemployment economies have softened over the past year.

Youth unemployment provided the clearest improvement in the latest figures. The EU rate fell from 15.6% in June to 15.1% in July, representing 98,000 fewer unemployed people under 25. Euro-area youth unemployment also declined, from 15.0% to 14.9%.

The European Commission expects unemployment to remain relatively stable, averaging around 6% across the EU through 2027. That resilience, however, is occurring alongside slower employment growth and declining hiring rates. The Commission estimates employment growth will slow to 0.3% this year before reaching 0.4% in 2027, with recent labor-market adjustment occurring primarily through reduced recruitment rather than widespread job losses.

For staffing leaders, that distinction matters. Europe's labor market is not experiencing a broad employment contraction, but employers are becoming more cautious about adding people. Stable headline unemployment can therefore coexist with weaker recruitment activity, while the substantial differences between countries reinforce the importance of looking beyond the EU-wide number when assessing hiring conditions.

Global

Global finance ministers met in Asheville, North Carolina, last week with trade imbalances and China's export-driven growth model near the center of the discussion. U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent urged other G20 members to do more to protect their economies from Chinese imports, arguing that large trade imbalances were drawing growth away from other economies and threatening domestic industries and jobs. Nineteen G20 members ultimately supported language addressing unsustainable cheap exports, while China dissented, preventing agreement on a joint statement.

The concern has only intensified with the latest trade data. Figures released September 8 show Chinese exports rising 25% year over year in August, while the country's monthly trade surplus widened to $119.1 billion. Strong demand for technology products, including semiconductors and equipment connected to the global AI investment cycle, continues to support China's export performance even as its domestic economy remains comparatively weak.

The meeting also took place against a backdrop of heightened financial and geopolitical uncertainty. German Finance Minister Lars Klingbeil warned that uncertainty was weighing on global growth, pointing to the Iran conflict, continuing U.S. tariff disputes, including the current dispute with Canada, and trade tensions involving China. The broader concern for employers is straightforward: prolonged uncertainty can delay investment decisions and, in turn, the hiring that follows them.

New research published by Barry Eichengreen and six coauthors adds another dimension to the fragmentation debate by examining how it could affect the global economic gains from artificial intelligence. Their benchmark simulation estimates that AI diffusion could leave global GDP 1.64% above baseline. Trade fragmentation reduces that modeled gain to 1.49%, while a scenario in which fragmentation also slows innovation at the technological frontier lowers it further to 1.29%. The authors emphasize that these are illustrative scenarios rather than forecasts.

The research also identifies a potential advantage for economies that maintain diversified trade and technology relationships rather than aligning exclusively with one economic bloc. In the authors' simulations, these “connector” economies can preserve access to AI-related technologies, investment and supply chains and, under certain conditions, more than offset the economic losses associated with fragmentation.

For staffing leaders, the connection between the two stories is important. **Trade fragmentation is increasingly about more than the movement of physical goods. It can also influence where technology, investment and productivity gains spread across the global economy.** Countries that retain access to major trade and technology networks may therefore be better positioned to capture the business investment and labor demand associated with AI adoption, while more isolated economies risk seeing those opportunities develop elsewhere.

U.S. Hiring Demand Tracker

Online hiring demand remained broadly stable in the latest weekly data, but the regional picture improved. The seasonally adjusted Indeed U.S. Job Postings Index increased from 101.91 on August 21 to 102.13 on August 28, a week-over-week increase of approximately 0.2%. Overall posting activity therefore remains slightly above its February 2020 pre-pandemic baseline.

New job postings moved in the opposite direction, slipping from 97.81 to 97.72, a decline of approximately 0.1%. The small movement in both measures points to a hiring market that remains relatively stable rather than one undergoing a meaningful acceleration or contraction.

Regional Read
Northeast: -0.1%
New York | Massachusetts | Pennsylvania

The Northeast was the only region in the fixed sample to decline, although the movement was marginal. New York weakened during the week, while Massachusetts and Pennsylvania edged higher, leaving the regional basket essentially flat.

South: +0.4%
Georgia | Texas | Florida

The South recorded the strongest increase of the four regions. All three states moved higher, with Georgia and Texas providing most of the gain. Posting levels in each of the three Southern states also remain above their February 2020 baseline.

Midwest: +0.4%
Illinois | Michigan | Minnesota

Hiring demand also strengthened modestly across the Midwest sample. Michigan recorded the clearest improvement, Illinois edged higher and Minnesota was effectively unchanged. The result places the Midwest alongside the South as the strongest regional mover in this week's tracker.

West: +0.3%
California | Washington | Colorado

The West improved modestly despite considerable differences among its component states. Washington and Colorado moved higher, while California edged slightly lower. All three remain below their February 2020 posting baseline, with Washington continuing to show the largest gap.

What It Means
The latest reading shows modest regional improvement without a national hiring surge. Three of the four regional baskets moved higher, led by the South and Midwest, while the Northeast was essentially unchanged.

For staffing leaders, the geographic divergence may be more informative than the small national increase. The South continues to show the strongest posting levels relative to the pre-pandemic baseline, while the West remains substantially weaker despite improving during the latest week. At the same time, the slight decline in newly posted jobs suggests employers are not yet adding fresh requisitions at a pace consistent with a broad hiring rebound.

Staffing Industry Implications

1. Competitive Intelligence Is Becoming An Operating Discipline

Competitive intelligence used to mean knowing which firms were competing for the same accounts.

That is no longer enough.

A modern staffing company needs to understand how competitors are positioning themselves, what they are publishing, which audiences they appear to be reaching, how their digital presence compares, where they are investing, and what the market appears to be responding to.

That is not a marketing exercise.

It is part of running the business.

2. The CEO Needs A Different Dashboard

One of the most overlooked problems in business intelligence is giving everyone the same information.

The CEO needs a different view from the marketing director. The sales leader needs a different view from the CEO. Operations needs different information again.

The objective is not to create more dashboards.

It is to create the **right dashboard for the decision-maker.**

A CEO may need competitor movement, marketing investment, lead generation, conversion, revenue contribution and overall commercial performance.

A marketing executive may need channel performance, content engagement, website behavior and campaign data.

A sales executive may need lead sources, progression and conversion.

The intelligence becomes more valuable when it is organized around the decision.

3. More Data Does Not Automatically Mean More Intelligence

A company can have Google Analytics, LinkedIn analytics, CRM reports, social media dashboards, advertising reports and sales spreadsheets and still have very little usable intelligence.

The problem is fragmentation.

If nobody can connect the information, compare it, interpret it and act on it, the business has accumulated data rather than intelligence.

The competitive advantage comes from **connecting the pieces**.

4. Marketing Performance Needs To Be Connected To Commercial Reality

A staffing firm should be able to trace the path from marketing activity toward business outcome.

Not every interaction will become revenue, and not every marketing contribution can be reduced to a single attribution number.

But the business should still be able to ask sensible questions about source, progression, conversion, expenditure and return.

The important shift is from:
“**What did marketing do?**”

to:
“**What happened because marketing did it?**”

5. Intelligence Should Reveal Weakness, Not Just Confirm Success

This may be the most valuable function of a serious reporting system.

A dashboard should not exist to make management feel good.

It should expose the uncomfortable things.

A competitor may be outperforming you in a market you thought you owned.

A campaign may be generating activity but poor-quality leads.

A website may be attracting visitors but failing to produce meaningful commercial movement.

A content strategy may be consuming resources without producing sufficient engagement.

A channel you have ignored may be producing opportunities.

The value of intelligence is often found in the gap between what management believes and what the evidence shows.

6. Speed Of Interpretation Is Becoming A Competitive Advantage

The market does not wait for quarterly reviews.

If a competitor changes its positioning, a major client changes its hiring strategy, a new channel starts producing stronger engagement, or a campaign suddenly stops converting, the value of knowing six months later is dramatically lower than knowing now.

Real-time intelligence changes the speed at which management can respond.

That is increasingly important in staffing because the underlying market can move faster than traditional reporting cycles.

7. The Most Valuable Metric May Be The One Nobody Is Measuring

Every staffing company has familiar numbers.

Revenue.

Gross margin.

Placements.

New clients.

Fill rates.

Website traffic.

Leads.

The harder question is:
What important variable is missing from the dashboard?

Sometimes the most commercially significant insight comes from a metric that management has never thought to collect.

That is where serious intelligence work begins.

What We're Seeing In The Market

1. The Dashboard Is Becoming A Management Instrument

There is a difference between reporting what happened and creating an instrument for managing what happens next.

The first produces reports.

The second changes behavior.

The best executive reporting increasingly gives leaders the ability to identify movement, compare performance, isolate exceptions and determine where attention is required.

That makes the dashboard part of the operating system of the company rather than an after-the-fact reporting exercise.

2. The Competitive Gap Is Often A Visibility Gap

One of the most interesting problems we see is that companies frequently know more about themselves than the market knows about them.

They have expertise.

They have successful placements.

They have client relationships.

They have specialist knowledge.

They may even have excellent marketing activity.

But they cannot always see how that compares with what competitors are doing in the same space.

That creates a dangerous asymmetry.

You may know your business extremely well while knowing surprisingly little about how your business looks from the outside.

3. Executive Reporting Is Moving Toward Questions, Not Numbers

A report full of numbers can still leave an executive asking, “So what?”

The stronger approach starts with the business question.

Are we winning the right market?

Are competitors gaining ground?

Is our marketing generating the type of opportunity we actually want?

Which channels deserve more investment?

Where are prospects disappearing?

What changed this month?

What requires action now?

The technology becomes useful when it answers those questions rather than simply displaying information.

MESSAGING TREND OF THE WEEK

FROM DATA REPORTING TO EXECUTIVE INTELLIGENCE

The distinction is simple.

Data reporting tells you what happened.

Executive intelligence helps you understand what it means.

That difference is becoming increasingly important as staffing companies accumulate more technology, more channels, more marketing activity and more sources of information.

The answer is not necessarily another application.

The answer is an intelligence architecture that brings the relevant information together and puts it in front of the person who needs it.

Data is abundant.
Attention is scarce.
Interpretation is valuable.

EXECUTIVE INSIGHT

The most dangerous competitor is not necessarily the company with the biggest marketing budget.

It may be the company that knows more.

Knows which markets are moving.

Knows which messages are working.

Knows where its competitors are gaining ground.

Knows which marketing investments produce opportunities.

Knows which opportunities actually become business.

Knows where its own weaknesses are.

And knows all of that **before you do.**

That is why intelligence is becoming a competitive capability rather than a reporting function.

The companies that win the next stage of the staffing market will not simply have more information.

They will be better at turning information into decisions.

Diagnostic Question Of The Week

If you asked your team tomorrow to show you exactly where you are outperforming competitors, where you are falling behind, which marketing investments are producing qualified opportunities, what is converting into actual business, and what

you should change next, could they answer from one coherent intelligence system?

If the answer is no, the issue may not be a lack of data.

It may be a lack of visibility, integration and interpretation.

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TMJ Weekly Staffing Intelligence Brief

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End of Issue 7

Let's Change The Record.

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