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WHY SHOULD YOUR CUSTOMER CARE?

Many years ago, one of us was being mentored by the Executive Vice President of Marketing at Chase Manhattan Bank, and he gave us what is perhaps the most valuable piece of information about marketing one could get.

He said there was only one rule in marketing, only one **question that mattered above all others**. And this was it:

"Why should the customer care?"

Simple. Brutal. And increasingly relevant to the way staffing companies market themselves today.

If no one is responding to your emails or your LinkedIn campaign, **they obviously haven't been made to care**.

If people visit your website and leave, **they obviously haven't been made to care**.

If your Google campaign produces clicks but no meaningful opportunities, **they obviously haven't been made to care**.

And if a marketing company hands you a "marketing solution in a box," complete with campaigns, content calendars, social media and reporting, but cannot tell you why customers should respond to any of it, then what exactly has been solved?

A box of marketing activities is not a marketing strategy. A LinkedIn campaign is not a reason to respond. A website is not a reason to buy. And a report showing impressions does not explain why nobody cared.

That is why the first question should not be **"What marketing should we do?"**

It should be:

"Why isn't the customer caring?"

That is a forensic question.

The answer might be the message. The offer. The positioning. The audience. The website. The proof. Or the simple fact that the prospect cannot see why what is being offered matters to them. The job is to identify that answer in the evidence, then bring intelligence, staffing expertise, creativity and experience to bear on fixing it. In other words, stop putting ingredients in a box and calling it dinner.

MAKE THE CUSTOMER CARE!

And if you're a marketing company and you're not doing that, but you are doing a million other unexplainable things, we just don't care!

Having said that, here are the things you should care most about this week if you want to stay ahead of the competition.

Executive Snapshot

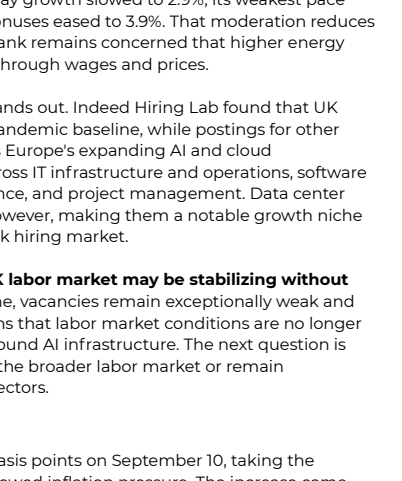
The staffing market is producing a particularly interesting combination of signals: U.S. staffing activity remains higher than a year ago, UK recruitment indicators have begun to improve, while European vacancy rates are moving lower. [SIA](#) | [Bullhorn Staffing Indicator, September 15, 2026](#) [KPMG and REC](#) | [UK Report on Jobs, September 2026](#) [Eurostat](#) | [Job Vacancy Rate, Q2 2026](#)

In the United States, staffing hours went up 7% year over year for the week ending September 5, with commercial staffing up 8%. [SIA](#) | [Bullhorn Staffing Indicator, September 15, 2026](#)

The broader U.S. labor market also remains active. August payroll employment increased by 162,000 and unemployment remained at 4.1%, according to the latest Bureau of Labor Statistics report. [BLS](#) | [Employment Situation, August 2026](#)

In Britain, permanent placements increased in August for the first time since September 2022, while temporary billings rose for a fifth consecutive month. The improvement was marginal, however, and staff availability continued to rise as vacancies declined. [KPMG and REC](#) | [UK Report on Jobs, September 2026](#)

[Reuters](#) | [UK Recruiters See First Rise in Permanent Hiring Since 2022](#)



Europe is sending a more cautious signal. The euro-area job vacancy rate fell to 2.1% in the second quarter from 2.3% in the first quarter, while the EU rate fell to 2.0% from 2.1%. [Eurostat](#) | [Job Vacancy Rate, Q2 2026](#)

The commercial implication is not simply that staffing demand is changing.

It is that **buyers have more reasons to pause, compare, research and ignore**.

And that makes the ability to earn attention increasingly important.

Labor Economist's Market Watch

United States

The Federal Reserve raised interest rates by 25 basis points last week, taking the federal funds target range to 3.75%-4.00% as policymakers shifted their focus firmly toward inflation. Chair Kevin Warsh described the labor market as "one basic sign of strength," noting that unemployment remains around 4.1% and that job gains have kept pace with growth in the workforce. He later said unemployment was "basically running consistent with full employment," giving the Fed greater latitude to address persistent inflation without responding to significant labor market weakness.

Weekly unemployment claims reinforced that picture, although with an important qualification. Initial claims fell to 196,000 in the week ending September 12, their lowest level since mid-July, while the four-week average declined to 203,250. Economists cautioned that volatility surrounding the Labor Day holiday may have exaggerated the latest decline, but the underlying trend remains consistent with relatively low layoffs.

Oxford Economics describes the labor market as "balanced and broadening." The three-month average pace of job creation stands at 71,000, relatively close to Oxford's estimated breakeven rate of approximately 50,000 jobs needed to keep unemployment stable. Importantly for staffing firms, employment growth is also becoming less dependent on healthcare, with transportation and professional services gaining momentum. Information and financial activities remain weaker, with Oxford attributing much of those sectors' employment pressure to increasing AI adoption.

Housing presents a more visible risk to that stability. Single-family building permits fell 1.8% in August, while builder confidence dropped to 32 in September, its lowest reading in a year. The average 30-year mortgage rate also climbed to 6.95%, its highest since January 2025. Although construction began on more single-family homes in August, declining permits and weaker builder confidence suggest activity could slow in the months ahead.

For staffing leaders, the U.S. labor market is therefore **stable, but increasingly selective**. Layoffs remain low and hiring is broadening across more industries, giving the Fed room to concentrate on inflation. Simultaneously, higher borrowing costs are beginning to weigh more visibly on rate-sensitive sectors such as housing. The question heading into the fall is whether that pressure remains concentrated or begins to weaken hiring demand more broadly.

United Kingdom

The UK labor market remained weak heading into last week's Bank of England decision, although policymakers increasingly see signs that the deterioration may be stabilizing. The Monetary Policy Committee voted 6-3 to hold Bank Rate at 3.75%, with Megan Creecher, Catherine Mann and Huw Pill favoring an immediate increase to 4%. The three argued that labor market and economic slack appeared to have peaked, increasing the risk that higher energy prices could eventually feed into wages and broader inflation.

The underlying employment data remains soft. Payrolled employment fell by 39,000 in the three months through July and was 84,000 lower than the previous year. A provisional estimate for August notes that a further monthly decline of 26,000, although that figure remains subject to revision. Unemployment held at 4.3%, while vacancies fell to 702,000, their lowest level outside the pandemic since 2014.

Wage pressures are also easing. Private-sector regular pay growth slowed to 2.9%, its weakest pace since October 2020, while total pay growth including bonuses eased to 3.9%. That moderation reduces one source of domestic inflation pressure even as the Bank remains concerned that higher energy prices could eventually generate second-round effects through wages and prices.

Against that backdrop, one pocket of hiring demand stands out. Indeed Hiring Lab found that UK data center job postings are now 24% above their pre-pandemic baseline, while postings for other technology roles remain 45% below. The growth reflects Europe's expanding AI and cloud infrastructure build-out, with demand concentrated across IT infrastructure and operations, software development, management, installation and maintenance, and project management. Data center positions still account for less than 1% of UK postings, however, making them a notable growth niche rather than a broad counterweight to the country's weak hiring market.

For staffing leaders, the distinction is important. **The UK labor market may be stabilizing without yet recovering**. Payroll employment continues to decline, vacancies remain exceptionally weak and wage growth is slowing. However, policymakers see signs that labor market conditions are no longer deteriorating, while specialized demand is emerging around AI infrastructure. The next question is whether those pockets of growth begin spreading into the broader labor market or remain concentrated in a small number of investment-driven sectors.

Europe

The European Central Bank raised interest rates by 25 basis points on September 10, taking the deposit rate to 2.50%, as policymakers responded to renewed inflation pressure. The increase came despite a labor market that remains comparatively resilient at the euro-area level, while wage pressures continue to moderate. Euro-area labor cost growth slowed to 3.1% in the second quarter, considerably below the rates recorded during the 2022 and 2023 inflation shock.

That aggregate stability continues to conceal substantial movement underneath the headline labor figures. Eurostat's latest labor market flows data show that of EU workers who were unemployed in the first quarter, 23.2% moved into employment during the second quarter, while 52.8% remained unemployed and 24.0% left the labor force altogether. The figures illustrate how a relatively stable unemployment rate can coexist with considerable movement into, out of and between employment.

One increasingly visible source of hiring demand is Europe's data center expansion. Indeed Hiring Lab found that center postings above pre-pandemic levels in all ten European markets it examined, even as broader technology hiring remains depressed. Aragón in Spain stands out, with 8.1% of local postings related to data centers, while such positions now account for nearly 5% of all postings in Ireland. Employers are also advertising substantial pay premiums for many data center roles, particularly installation, maintenance and project-related positions.

The European Commission is simultaneously attempting to make it easier for workers to move to where those opportunities exist. Its new Fair Labour Mobility package would simplify cross-border social-security documentation, improve recognition of skills and professional qualifications and strengthen coordination through the European Labour Authority. The Commission estimates the measures could generate approximately €5 billion in benefits by 2040 through faster qualification recognition, administrative savings and reduced fraud.

For staffing leaders, the European picture is therefore becoming increasingly **regional and skills-specific**. Aggregate employment remains relatively stable, but workers and hiring demand are not evenly distributed across countries, industries or occupations. Rapid investment in AI infrastructure is creating concentrated demand in markets such as Aragón and Ireland, while the EU is simultaneously trying to reduce the administrative barriers that prevent workers from moving across borders to fill those roles.

Global

A new policy paper from Takamol Holding argues that global labor markets are gradually moving toward what it calls a "capability economy," in which demonstrated skills and capabilities become increasingly important relative to traditional job titles, credentials and tenure. The shift reflects a broader transformation in how work is organized as employment becomes more technology-enabled, cross-border and fragmented across different forms of work.

Artificial intelligence is accelerating that transition. Citing the World Economic Forum, the paper notes that structural labor market change is expected to create 170 million jobs globally by 2030 while displacing 92 million, producing a net gain of 78 million roles. At the same time, 59% of workers are expected to require training as the skills demanded by employers change.

Evidence from this week's regional labor data illustrates what that transition can look like in practice. Oxford Economics continues to identify AI adoption as an important factor behind employment losses in U.S. information and financial activities. In Europe, meanwhile, investment in AI infrastructure is generating strong demand for a relatively concentrated group of data center capabilities, including IT infrastructure, software development, installation and maintenance, management and project management.

That demand is also translating into higher advertised wages. Indeed found that data center positions carried a pay premium over comparable roles outside data centers in 28 of the 29 European countries-and-occupation combinations for which sufficient salary data were available. The pattern suggests that the employment impact of AI investment is not simply a question of jobs gained versus jobs lost. It is increasingly about **which capabilities employers need, where those workers are located and how quickly existing workers can move into emerging areas of demand**.

For staffing leaders, that distinction matters. If employers increasingly hire around capabilities rather than conventional job categories, the value of a workforce intermediary shifts as well. Identifying transferable skills, verifying capabilities and connecting workers with emerging areas of demand could become increasingly important alongside the traditional work of filling defined vacancies.

U.S. Hiring Demand Tracker

Online hiring demand strengthened in the latest weekly data, with all four regional baskets moving higher. The seasonally adjusted Indeed U.S. Job Postings Index increased from **102.41 on September 4 to 103.15 on September 11**, a week-over-week increase of approximately 0.7%. Overall posting activity therefore moved further above its February 2020 pre-pandemic baseline.

New job postings moved in the opposite direction, declining from 97.52 to 96.81, a decrease of approximately 0.7%. The divergence between the two national measures widened during the week, with the overall stock of job postings strengthening even as the flow of newly added postings weakened.

Regional Read

Northeast: +0.6%

New York | Pennsylvania | New Jersey

Hiring demand strengthened modestly across the Northeast sample. New York increased from 89.09 to 89.95, Pennsylvania rose from 97.44 to 97.87, and New Jersey moved from 92.30 to 92.59. New York recorded the strongest percentage increase of the three states, but all remain below their February 2020 posting baseline.

South: +0.9%

Texas | Florida | North Carolina

The South recorded the strongest increase of the four regional baskets. Texas rose from 115.34 to 116.90, North Carolina increased from 110.96 to 111.82, and Florida moved from 104.92 to 105.58. All three states contributed to the regional gain and all remain above their February 2020 baseline, continuing to distinguish the South from the other regional samples.

Midwest: +0.7%

Illinois | Michigan | Missouri

Hiring demand also strengthened across the Midwest. Illinois increased from 87.61 to 88.41, Missouri rose from 106.43 to 107.57, and Michigan edged from 101.51 to 101.58. Missouri and Illinois provided most of the regional gain, while Michigan was effectively unchanged. Missouri and Michigan remain above their February 2020 baseline, while Illinois remains below it.

West: +0.6%

California | Oregon | Arizona

The West also improved, with all three states in the regional sample moving higher. California increased from 85.33 to 86.03, Oregon rose from 89.77 to 90.38, and Arizona moved from 112.49 to 112.80. California and Oregon remain below their February 2020 baseline despite the latest improvement, while Arizona remains above it.

What It Means

The latest reading shows **broader regional improvement without a corresponding increase in fresh hiring demand**. All four regional baskets strengthened during the week, led by the South at approximately 0.9%, followed by the Midwest at 0.7% and the Northeast and West at roughly 0.6%.

The breadth of the regional improvement is notable. Unlike recent weeks, when gains were concentrated in only part of the country, every regional sample moved higher and all 12 component states increased, although Michigan did only marginally.

For staffing leaders, however, the national new postings measure introduces an important counterweight. Overall job postings increased approximately 0.7%, but newly posted jobs declined by roughly the same amount. Total postings measure the stock of available opportunities, while new postings provide a clearer indication of fresh employer demand entering the market.

The South continues to stand out. Texas, Florida and North Carolina all remain above their February 2020 posting levels and all strengthened during the latest week. The West also improved across all three states, but California and Oregon remain below their pre-pandemic baselines, illustrating the continuing geographic differences between the national numbers.

Taken together, the data point to **broader geographic strength in existing hiring demand, but not yet a broad acceleration in new requisitions**. Employers are maintaining a substantial volume of open postings across the country, and this week's gains were unusually widespread. The decline in new postings, however, suggests that the next signal to watch is whether fresh employer demand begins to catch up with the strengthening stock of existing vacancies.

Staffing Industry Implications

1. ATTENTION IS BECOMING A COMMERCIAL RESOURCE

Marketing has traditionally treated attention as something that can be purchased through reach. But reach is not the same thing as attention, and attention is not the same thing as interest. LinkedIn's 2026 B2B research explicitly describes a shift away from lead volume toward relevance, trust and intent. It found that 78% of marketing chiefs believe proving return on investment has become more important over the past two years, while 87% of marketers say measuring long-term impact is becoming harder. [LinkedIn](#) | [6 B2B Marketing Insights for 2026: Demand More From Demand Generation](#)

For staffing firms, the question is therefore not simply:

How many people saw us?

It is:

Did anything we said give the right person a reason to stop?

2. MORE CONTENT DOES NOT NECESSARILY CREATE MORE DIFFERENTIATION

AI has dramatically reduced the cost and time required to produce polished marketing language. LinkedIn's latest research argues that as AI makes content creation easier, authentic human communication and credibility become increasingly important. [LinkedIn](#) | [Beyond the Algorithm: Why Trust Is Your Most Valuable Asset in the AI Era](#) That creates a peculiar problem for staffing companies. If everyone can produce professional-looking content, professional-looking content becomes less distinctive. The market can become filled with competent language saying essentially the same thing.

More noise makes a buried message harder to hear.

3. THE PROBLEM MAY NOT BE YOUR CAMPAIGN

A campaign can be technically successful and commercially unsuccessful at the same time.

- An email can be delivered.
- A LinkedIn post can be published.
- An advertisement can generate clicks.
- A prospect can visit the website.

But if those events tell us nothing about whether the prospect understood why the message mattered. That is where diagnostic ninking becomes more important than activity reporting.

The question becomes:

Where did interest stop?

4. THE MESSAGE CAN BE BURIED WITHOUT BEING WRONG

This may be one of the most dangerous marketing problems because it is easy to miss.

- A staffing firm may have an excellent service.
- It may have outstanding recruiters.
- It may have satisfied clients.
- It may even have impressive results.

But if those things are buried beneath generic language, a prospect cannot be expected to excavate them.

LinkedIn's August 2026 research makes a similar distinction between awareness and credibility, arguing that B2B buyers need reinforcing signals from brands, employees, customers and other trusted voices before confidence develops. [LinkedIn](#) | [The Credibility Code, August 5, 2026](#) The problem, therefore, may not be that the company lacks something valuable. It may be that the market cannot see it.

5. THE FIRST JOB OF FORENSICS IS TO LOCATE THE LEAK

When a marketing program produces disappointing results, the instinct is often to add something.

- More content.
- More advertising.
- More emails.
- More social posts.
- More automation.

But adding activity before identifying the failure point can simply increase the volume of the wrong thing.

Forensic analysis asks a different sequence of questions:

- **Who are we trying to reach?**
- **What are they being shown?**
- **What do they actually see?**
- **What do they understand?**
- **Where do they disengage?**
- **What evidence tells us why?**

That is a fundamentally different discipline from simply managing campaigns.

6. RELEVANCE HAS TO BE VISIBLE QUICKLY

LinkedIn's current B2B research describes relevance as one of the foundations of quality demand generation, alongside trust and intent. [LinkedIn](#) | [Demand More From Demand Generation](#)

For a staffing company, relevance is not merely saying:

"We specialize in staffing."

It may mean demonstrating that the firm understands a particular industry, workforce problem, operating environment, geography, job category or business objective.

The prospect needs to recognize themselves. If they cannot, attention becomes much harder to earn.

7. CREDIBILITY HAS TO COMPOUND

One message rarely carries the entire burden of persuasion. LinkedIn's August research describes credibility as a system of reinforcing signals from the brand, employees, customers and creators. [LinkedIn](#) | [The Credibility Code](#) For staffing firms, that means the message should not live only in the company's advertising. It should be reinforced by the people who work there, the clients who have experienced the service, the evidence the company publishes and the expertise it demonstrates publicly.

The objective is not to shout the same message louder.

It is to give the market multiple reasons to believe it.

What We're Seeing In The Market

1. POLISHED MARKETING IS BECOMING CHEAPER

The economics of producing marketing content have changed. AI can now help companies produce written material, images, campaigns and video ads at a scale that was previously expensive or time-consuming. That does not automatically make the resulting communication valuable. Recent research into AI-generated commercial web content found identifiable structural patterns in AI-produced material, suggesting that machine-generated commercial language can develop recognizable characteristics even after being rendered. [SloppShape](#) | [Identifying AI-Generated Commercial Web Content, September 2026](#)

The commercial consequence is straightforward:

When everyone can sound polished, sounding polished stops being enough.

2. TRUST IS MOVING CLOSER TO THE CENTER OF THE MESSAGE

LinkedIn's August 2026 B2B research makes a direct distinction between awareness and credibility, arguing that attention without credibility creates noise rather than confidence. [LinkedIn](#) | [The Credibility Code](#)

That is particularly relevant to staffing.

A staffing company is asking a client to trust it with people, productivity, deadlines, reputation and often sensitive workforce decisions.

"Great service" is a claim.

A documented result is evidence.

Those are not the same thing.

3. AI IS BECOMING ANOTHER PLACE WHERE THE MESSAGE HAS TO SURVIVE

A September 2026 public benchmark tracking staffing agencies across six AI and search surfaces found substantial differences in how often staffing brands appeared in recommendation-shaped results. The benchmark is explicitly described as directional rather than a definitive industry ranking, but it illustrates a new problem: staffing companies are increasingly being evaluated through systems that must interpret their publicly available information. [Staffing Agencies](#) | [AI Market Discovery Index, September 2026](#)

That creates another reason for specificity.

If a company's public information does not clearly establish what it does, whom it serves and what makes it distinctive, both humans and machines have less distinctive information from which to understand it.

The issue is no longer only:

Can the prospect find us?

It is also:

Can the prospect understand us?

4. THE MARKET IS MOVING FROM MESSAGE CREATION TO MESSAGE DIAGNOSIS

This may be the most important change.

For years, much of marketing was organized around producing things.

- Campaigns.
- Content.
- Websites.
- Emails.
- Social media.

The emerging problem is different. There is already plenty of material. The harder question is determining **which message is actually getting through**. That requires evidence. It requires competitive observation. It requires behavioral data. It requires looking underneath the campaign rather than simply reporting that the campaign ran. And sometimes it requires discovering that the message the company believes is obvious is not obvious to the market at all.

MESSAGING TREND OF THE WEEK

FROM MESSAGE DISTRIBUTION TO MESSAGE DIAGNOSIS

The old question was:

How do we get our message in front of more people?

The emerging question is:

What happens after they see it?

- Did they stop?
- Did they understand?
- Did they believe it?
- Did they remember it?
- Did they investigate?
- Did they respond?
- Did they move closer to a commercial conversation?

That is the difference between **distribution** and **diagnosis**. Marketing can distribute a message perfectly and still fail commercially. The message can arrive exactly where it was supposed to arrive and produce almost nothing. That is why the future of sophisticated marketing will increasingly depend on understanding not simply where the message went, but **what happened to it when it got there**.

EXECUTIVE INSIGHT

The biggest marketing problem facing many staffing companies may not be a shortage of activity. It may be that their most valuable message is buried under nearly everything else: under generic positioning, service descriptions, corporate language, content and campaigns, and under the assumption that because something was communicated, it was understood.

And now AI is making it easier for everyone to produce even more communication. That makes forensic intelligence more valuable, not less. The Three Beasts were not created simply to tell a staffing CEO how much marketing happened. They exist to help expose what is happening underneath activity. Where attention is being lost. Where competitors are saying something more clearly. Where the message is failing to distinguish the company. Where a prospect is being given no compelling reason to continue. And where the company's actual expertise is hidden by its own marketing.

The question is no longer whether you are communicating.

The question is whether anyone cares enough to listen.

Diagnostic Question Of The Week

If your marketing activity continues to increase but qualified prospects are not responding at the rate you expect, **do you know exactly where the message is losing them?**

Not how many emails were sent.

Not how many impressions were generated.

Not how many people visited the website.

Where did they stop caring, and what evidence tells you why?

Research Sources & References

U.S. Staffing and Labor Market

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