



# BUSINESS LEADER SURVEY 2022 REPORT

People Strategy

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and smart** – these are  
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**Optimistic, ambitious, and smart** – these are common characteristics of our clients: experienced business leaders of companies usually turning over between £5m and £50m.

So, following 12 months of new and unexpected major world events, we asked these leaders of mid-tier companies about the biggest challenges they are facing as a business, from a people perspective and personally as a business leader.

**Here were their top 5:**

1. Recruitment and retention of good people – with one comment summing this up as **'It's chaos out there!'**
2. Uncertainty in the economic outlook – rising inflation, ongoing unexpected events, perhaps soon a general election – it's all change, all the time
3. Loss of consumer confidence threatening a slowdown in sales
4. Disruption and cost increases in the supply of raw materials
5. Impact on margin and profit

**We may all be operating in this same economy, but we certainly aren't all in the same boat.**



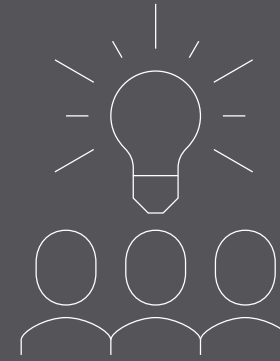
**Alex Kinchin-Smith,  
MD People Puzzles**



# What makes us different from the rest?

There are also companies thriving and growing so fast they are struggling to keep up with demand. The world is changing, and some companies are finding it easier to adapt.

These very commercial business issues identified by our clients sit alongside the other big people issues of the last two years: the great resignation, the challenge of running a company, promoting wellbeing, managing remote and hybrid working, and actively supporting and developing company culture.



At People Puzzles, our board-level HR Directors specialise in helping companies to develop a people strategy that builds solutions to these challenges into the rolling people planning for the business.

In this report, we discuss the survey's key people-related concerns, and what can be done to mitigate the challenges being faced – or turn them into opportunities.

**We hope you find our insights useful.**

**It's all about the people.**



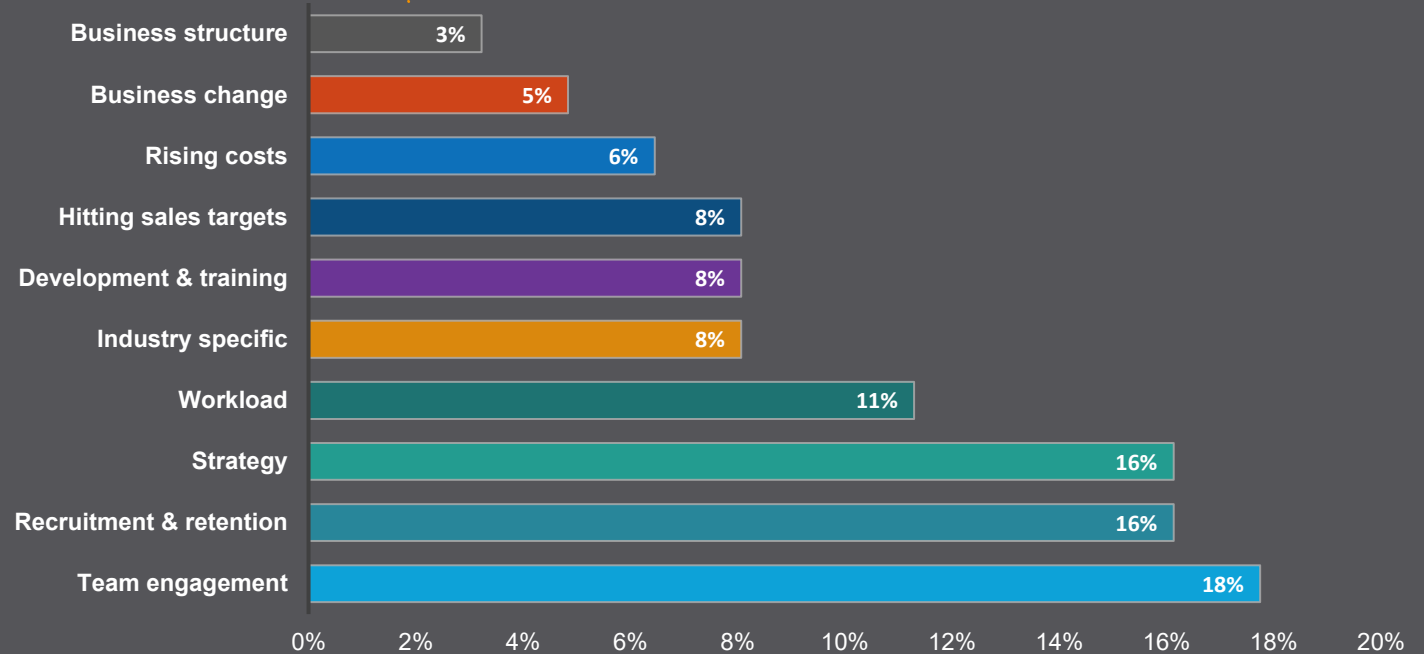




Get the people stuff right.  
It's not rocket science.

## A clear people strategy

When asked the question 'what is the biggest challenge you faced as a business leader?', having a clear people strategy was high on the list.





# 16% of responders highlighted their biggest challenge as a business leader was having a people strategy in place.

Strategy was a big challenge for business leaders with many still feeling they are reacting to issues and not having the time to focus on the bigger picture. They are spending too much time ON the business rather than IN the business.

If you want to grow your business, you need to demonstrate to staff that they're on the journey with you.

In fact, if there are 20 or more people working in your business, it's time to be proactive and make sure you have a people strategy in place.


Your people strategy should be looking forward at what skills you may need as your business grows.

The millennial generation is going to make up about 70% of the workforce by 2025 so older generations need to understand and plan for what will best motivate and engage them.



**Focus ON the business.**  
Plan for growth.





**It's not just about today – a people strategy will look forward to what skills you may need as your business grows**



# Your business's future growth plan

We have worked with hundreds of mid-tier firms over 12 years at People Puzzles and have developed our own approach to building people strategies that really deliver.

## So, what should a basic people strategy include?

Our People Puzzles Pinwheel approach, quickly captures what we believe to be the essential elements of a healthy organisation's HR function, driven by your business strategy.

### 1. Leading

Leadership teams can make or break a company's ability to succeed. Deloitte's report in 2020 suggested that you need a leadership team that can: Think differently (conceptually, broadly, experimentally, decisively), React differently (be driven, be resilient and take risks) and Interact differently (show inclusivity, social flexibility and leadership).

### 2. Culture

"Culture means doing the right thing when no-one is looking" Henry Ford. It's contextual and should support your business strategy. A high performance culture will deliver success.

### 3. Talent

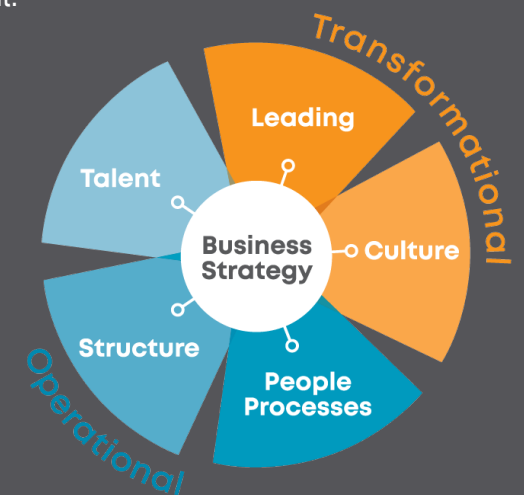
If you could find the right people, develop high performers, and then keep them long term, your business is more likely to be profitable and grow. It will also be easier to run and enable you, as a business leader to hand over more of the day-to-day work.

### 4. Structure

As your business scales up, things that made sense a year ago, may now be causing enormous problems in the way work flows through the business. Consider how you need to be structured in the future to achieve your company goals around delighting your customers, growing your sales and increasing your margin.

### 5. HR Processes

Organisations need to meet their legal obligation in terms of contractual and statutory workplace entitlements; however, compliance also means staying on top of any employment law changes. You need to have clear, friendly but firm policies around absence, holidays, disciplinaries, redundancy, legal compliance, grievances and recruitment.





**Increased staff engagement can dramatically increase profitability**

Stuart Calvert, People Puzzles  
HR Director and Regional Director

Leading an ambitious business continues to be one of the most challenging, interesting, difficult, and enjoyable jobs in the world. Whether your focus is on stability, survival, growth, or something in-between, we know that getting all the people stuff right is time-consuming and hard work!

At People Puzzles, we love helping business leaders adapt to today and plan for the future. Our team are people experts, always starting with the business strategy, and working that into what the business needs from its people to succeed over the short and long-term.

Our mission is to help our clients find the best solutions to their people challenges, build a great place to work, and build successful and healthy businesses.





## Who are we?

People Puzzles team of board level HR Directors provide flexible affordable HR expertise that will help your business to grow faster and be more profitable.

- ✓ We provide part-time commercially focused HR Directors that drive results.
- ✓ Our team of over 75+ portfolio HR Directors have come from big business and have years of SME experience. They are some of the UK's top HR experts.
- ✓ We have a flexible, no-ties business model meaning our clients can scale up or down as needed and won't be tied into a contract.
- ✓ We provide support and guidance every step of the way. A critical friend and an independent ally.

# TEAM





GET IN TOUCH AND  
YOU COULD SEE THE  
IMPACT IN DAYS



Make sure you are  
surrounded by experts

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Or visit us at **peoplepuzzles.co.uk**