

## Everyone is pretending this is still a normal hiring market... The “Perfect Candidate” Is Exhausted.

Not just hard to find, exhausted.

And most businesses still haven't realised how much that changes hiring.

Welcome back to **The Shortlist** from [Belvedere Recruitment](#), our weekly take on what's really happening across hiring, talent and workforce transformation in Poland, CEE and beyond.

Last issue, we talked about the contradiction defining the 2026 market:

More layoffs.

More applicants.

And somehow, still a shortage of specialist talent.

This week the story goes deeper.

Because the market is no longer only struggling with access to talent, it's struggling with **alignment between expectation and reality**.

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ManpowerGroup's 2026 Talent Shortage Survey found that **72% of employers globally still report difficulty finding the skills they need**, with AI skills now ranked as the hardest to find.

At the same time, ADP Research reported that only **22% of global workers strongly agree their job is safe from elimination**.

So employers are anxious about skills.

Candidates are anxious about security.

And somewhere in the middle, both sides are pretending this is still a normal hiring market.

**It isn't.**



People are updating CVs at midnight.

Applying for roles they're overqualified for.

Accepting interviews they're not excited about.

Smiling in meetings while privately wondering if their role will still exist in 12 months.

Some professionals are not burned out because they're working too hard.

They're burned out because they're performing certainty while privately feeling uncertain about their future.

And companies are feeling their own pressure too.

Costs are under review.

Transformation timelines are shrinking.

AI expectations are rising.

Every hire suddenly feels "business critical."

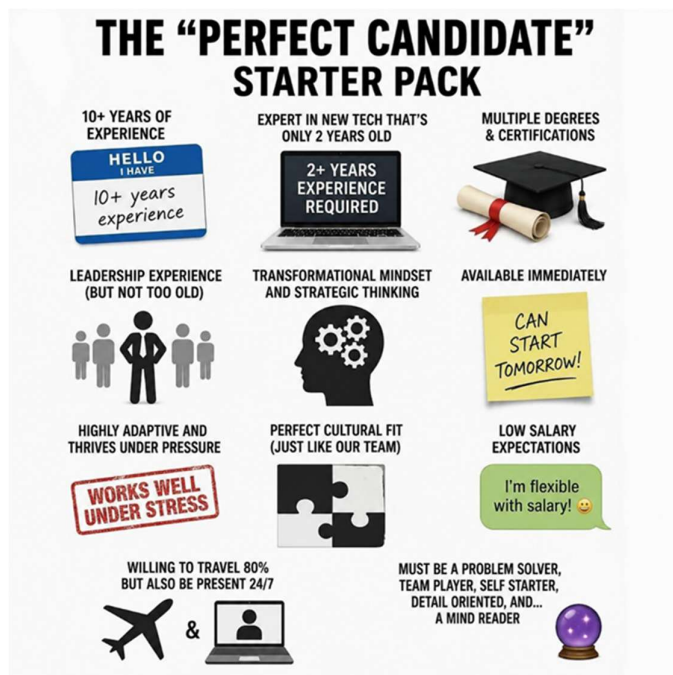
Which is exactly why many companies are still searching for candidates who look like this:

- 7 years of experience in a 3-year-old technology
- leadership maturity
- technical depth
- transformation capability
- AI exposure

- industry alignment
  - immediate availability
  - and salary expectations from a completely different market cycle
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Then comes the familiar conclusion:

“We just can’t find the right people.”



Because the truth is:

Sometimes the right people are there, they just don't look perfect on paper.

And in a market moving this quickly, “*perfect on paper*” may be one of the most expensive myths in hiring.

Because skills now expire faster than most organisations can restructure.

AI is accelerating that.

Work is changing faster than job descriptions.

And some professionals are gaining more practical capability in 12 months than others built in five years under older operating models.

That changes the definition of “qualified.”

The companies moving fastest across banking, fintech, shared services and technology are starting to hire differently.

They’re looking harder at:

- learning velocity
- adaptability
- resilience
- communication
- commercial thinking
- curiosity
- trust
- and the ability to evolve with the business

Not instead of technical ability.

Alongside it.

That distinction matters.

Because hiring for adaptability does not mean lowering standards.

It means understanding which standards actually predict performance...

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A candidate who ticks 70% of the requirements but learns fast, communicates clearly and understands business impact may outperform the “perfect” profile who needs the world to stay exactly as it is.



Spoiler alert! The world is not staying exactly as it is.

Candidates also need to hear this.

Potential alone is not enough anymore.

The professionals standing out in 2026 are not waiting to be developed.

They are actively evolving.

Learning AI tools.

Building visibility.

Improving stakeholder communication.

Understanding commercial outcomes.

Thinking beyond delivery and into value.

The strongest candidates are no longer positioning themselves only around what they have done.

They are positioning themselves around what they can become.

That is a major shift.

One hiring leader said something recently that captures the whole market:

**“We realised too late we were recruiting for stability in a market that now rewards adaptability.”**

That sentence should probably be printed out and stuck next to every job description written this year.

Preferably before someone adds “must have 12 years of Copilot experience.”

Here’s what we’re seeing across Poland and CEE right now:

- businesses reducing unnecessary “nice-to-have” requirements
- more openness to transferable skills across industries
- faster processes outperforming “perfect fit” hiring models

- stronger demand for AI literacy, not just AI specialists
- passive candidates continuing to outperform active applicants in senior hiring
- candidate trust becoming a serious competitive advantage

And perhaps the biggest shift of all:

The companies building the strongest teams are not always the ones offering the highest salaries, they are the ones creating the highest trust.

Because people remember how a process makes them feel.

They remember whether communication was clear.

They remember whether decisions moved.

They remember whether the business treated them like a future colleague or a line item in a workflow.

And in a market where top candidates still have options, that matters, a lot.

*So here's the question worth asking this week.*

**If you're hiring:**

Are you searching for the perfect candidate, or are you clear enough to recognise the right one before someone else does?

**And if you're a candidate:**

Are you waiting to be chosen, or are you actively becoming impossible to ignore?

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***This is Issue two of The Shortlist.***

We'll keep bringing you the hiring realities, market contradictions and talent shifts shaping Poland, CEE and beyond every week.

No generic recruitment noise.

Just useful insight from the market we're actually working in.

***If this resonated, share it with someone hiring, scaling, restructuring or quietly wondering why recruitment suddenly feels harder than it should.***

And as always, comments, challenges and topic suggestions are very welcome!

We read everything.

— ***The Belvedere Team***

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