Welcome back to ***The Shortlist*** from **[Belvedere Recruitment]**.

Over the last four editions, we've explored some uncomfortable truths shaping the hiring market:

More applicants don't solve talent shortages.

The perfect candidate is disappearing.

Nobody trusts job descriptions anymore.

And perhaps surprisingly, AI isn't the competitive advantage many people think it is.

This week, we're looking at what sits underneath all four.

Confidence.

Or more specifically:

The growing shortage of confidence is quietly shaping hiring decisions, career decisions and business decisions across the market.

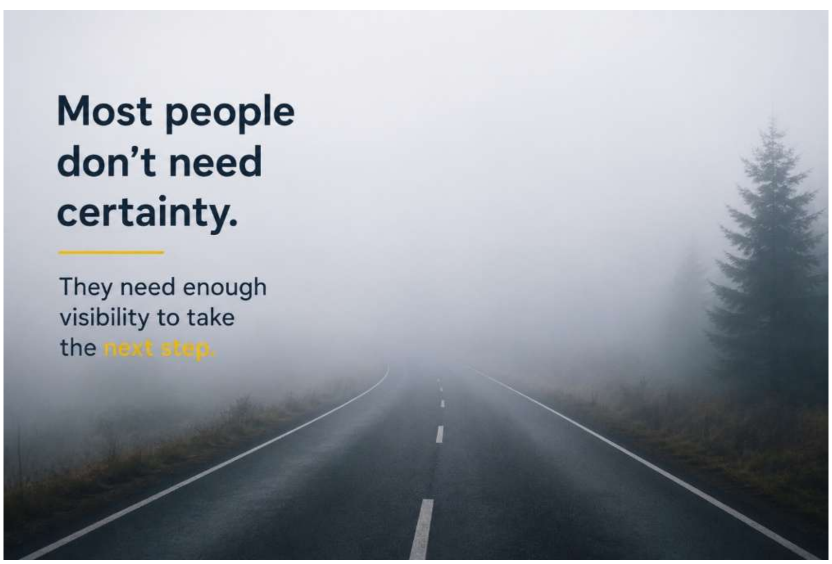
Because despite everything being written about AI, layoffs and workforce transformation, one thing keeps appearing in conversations with candidates, hiring leaders and business executives:

Uncertainty.

Not panic.

Not crisis.

Just uncertainty.



And uncertainty changes behaviour…

People become more cautious.

Companies become more selective.

Decisions take longer.

Risks feel bigger.

Opportunities get scrutinised harder.

The result?

A market that looks busy on the surface but often feels hesitant underneath.

We see it every day.

Candidates who changed jobs two years ago now stay where they are because certainty has become valuable.
Hiring managers who know they need the capability to delay decisions because budgets feel less predictable.
Leadership teams launch hiring processes only to pause them midway through because priorities have shifted.

Everyone is moving, but everyone is looking over their shoulder first.

And perhaps that's why one of the most important observations from the last year isn't about AI, it's about **trust**.

Scott Galloway recently made an observation that resonates strongly with what we're seeing in the market:

People increasingly need to think about careers not as jobs, but as assets.

Assets that need constant investment.

Constant learning.

Constant adaptation. Constant renewal.

That applies to organisations, because companies are now competing for confidence in exactly the same way candidates are.

Candidates are asking:
Will this company still be growing in three years?

Will this role still be relevant?

Will this leadership team navigate uncertainty successfully?

Will I learn here?

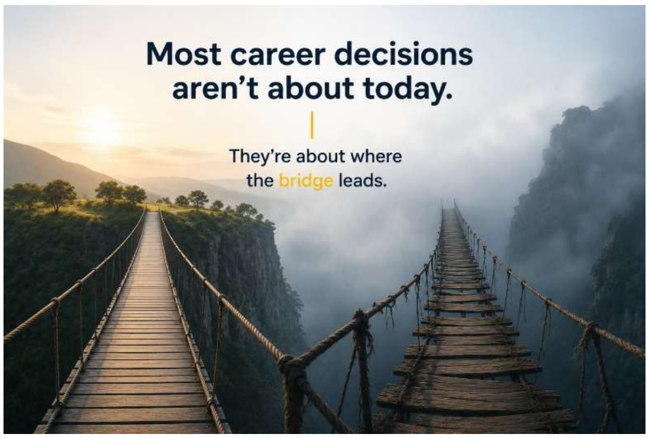
Will I grow here?

Will I matter here?

Notice something interesting?

Most of those questions have nothing to do with salary.

That’s because people are no longer simply evaluating jobs; they’re evaluating futures. And that changes recruitment entirely.



For years, companies competed through compensation, benefits and brand.

Today, increasingly, they’re competing through ***clarity***.

The organisations attracting the strongest talent right now are rarely the loudest. They’re the clearest.

Clear about:

- where they’re going
- why they’re hiring
- what success looks like
- how decisions get made
- how people grow
- and what challenges genuinely exist

That honestly matters because candidates have become remarkably sophisticated.

They’ve lived through restructures.

Layoffs.

Hiring freezes.

Economic uncertainty.

AI disruption.

Promises that never materialised.

And they’ve learned something important…

The strongest signal isn’t perfection; it’s credibility.

We see this every day across banking, fintech, technology, and shared services organisations throughout Poland and the wider CEE region.

The businesses consistently winning talent aren’t necessarily offering the highest salaries. They’re creating confidence.

Confidence in leadership.

Confidence in growth.

Confidence in direction.

Confidence in opportunity.

That’s becoming a significant competitive advantage.

LinkedIn’s workforce research continues to show that career development, learning opportunities, meaningful work and quality leadership remain among the strongest drivers of attraction to retention.

Not because people suddenly care less about money.

But because uncertainty has increased the value of confidence.

And confidence starts with leadership.

It starts with communication.

It starts with trust.

Perhaps that’s why the best recruiters, hiring managers and leaders increasingly share the same skill.

They reduce uncertainty.

They create clarity.

They help people make better decisions.

And in a market full of noise, that has become incredibly valuable.

A few things we're seeing heavily across Poland and CEE right now:

- candidates prioritising leadership quality more heavily than before
- increased scrutiny of employer credibility
- greater interest in career development over title inflation
- stronger demand for transparent communication
- organisations with clear growth stories are attracting better talent
- trust becoming a measurable hiring advantage

And perhaps the biggest shift of all?

The strongest companies are no longer selling jobs; they're selling confidence in the future.

The strongest candidates aren't selling experience; they're selling adaptability.

Both sides are looking for the same thing.

Confidence that the decision they are about to make will still look smart two years from now.

That's the real market dynamic shaping 2026.

So, here's the question worth asking this week:
If someone joined your organisation tomorrow, would they be buying a role?
Or would they be buying confidence in where you're going?

This is Issue #5 of *The Shortlist*.

And if the market is teaching us anything right now, it's this:

In an uncertain world, trust becomes more valuable.
Clarity becomes more valuable.
And confidence becomes a competitive advantage.

If this resonates, follow Belvedere and subscribe to this newsletter or share it with someone navigating hiring, scaling or workforce transformation right now.

You probably already know who that person is.

And if there's a hiring contradiction, market trend or leadership challenge you'd like us to unpack in future editions, let us know in the comments.

— The Belvedere Team
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