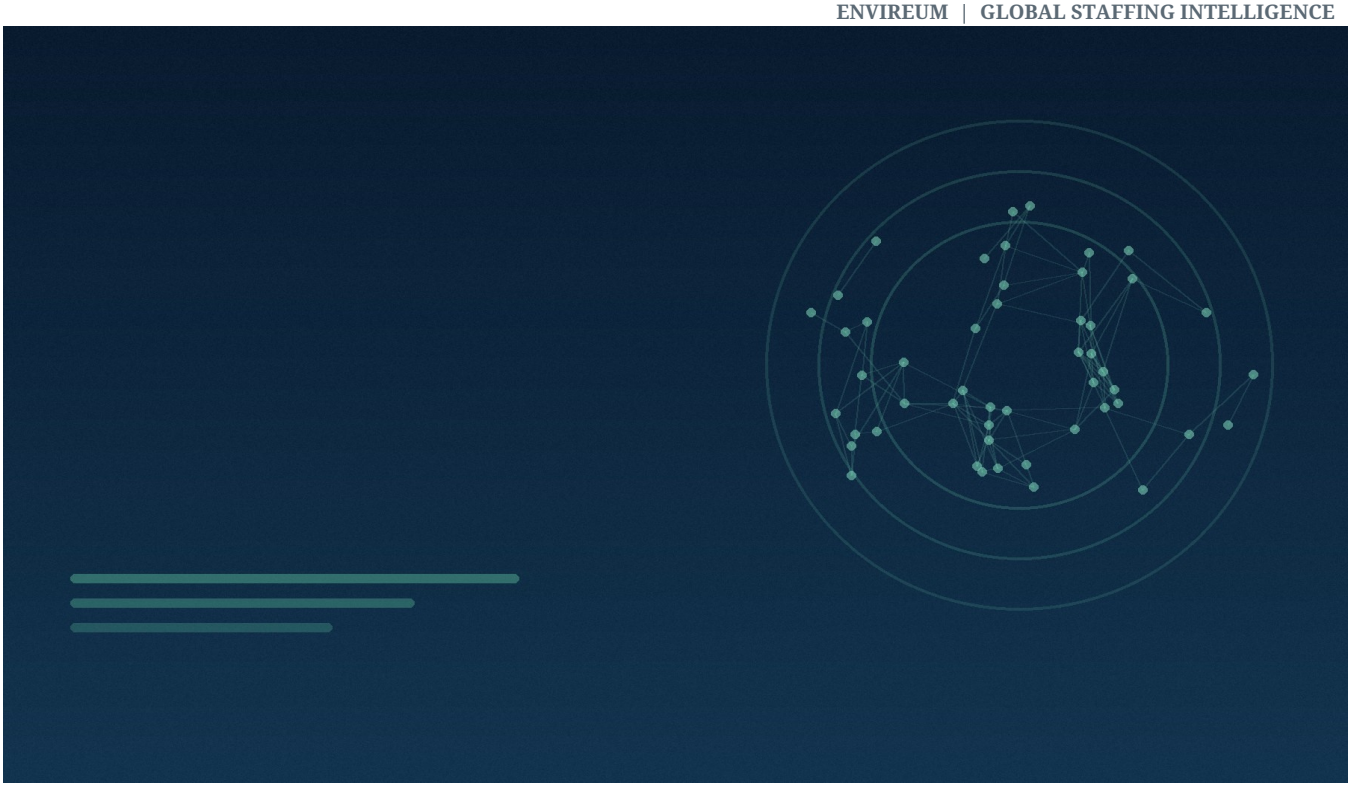


ENVIREUM RESEARCH & TALENT INTELLIGENCE

Global Staffing Trends Q2 2026

A quarter of stronger hiring intentions, uneven staffing recovery, and a decisive shift toward precision, flexibility and earlier talent intelligence.

THE SIGNAL

Hiring demand improved in Q2 - but not evenly. Employers increasingly need better market visibility, more flexible workforce options and talent pipelines that can be activated quickly when demand becomes real.

Q2 2026: A Stronger Quarter, Not a Simple One

Q2 2026 produced one of the clearest signs of renewed hiring confidence since 2022, but the underlying market remained fragmented. ManpowerGroup reported a global Net Employment Outlook (NEO) of 31%, six points higher than Q1 and seven points higher year over year, based on more than 41,700 employers across 42 countries. Yet the recovery was far from uniform: Asia Pacific led at 39%, the Americas followed at 37%, while Europe and the Middle East stood at 23%.

At the same time, actual vacancy and staffing indicators told a more cautious story.

GlobalData reported that worldwide job postings fell 2.3% quarter over quarter in Q2. The World Employment Confederation (WEC) described agency work as being in a gradual but fragile recovery, with positive momentum in some countries and continued weakness in others. This divergence matters: employers may be more willing to hire, but they are still selective about where, when and how they add headcount.

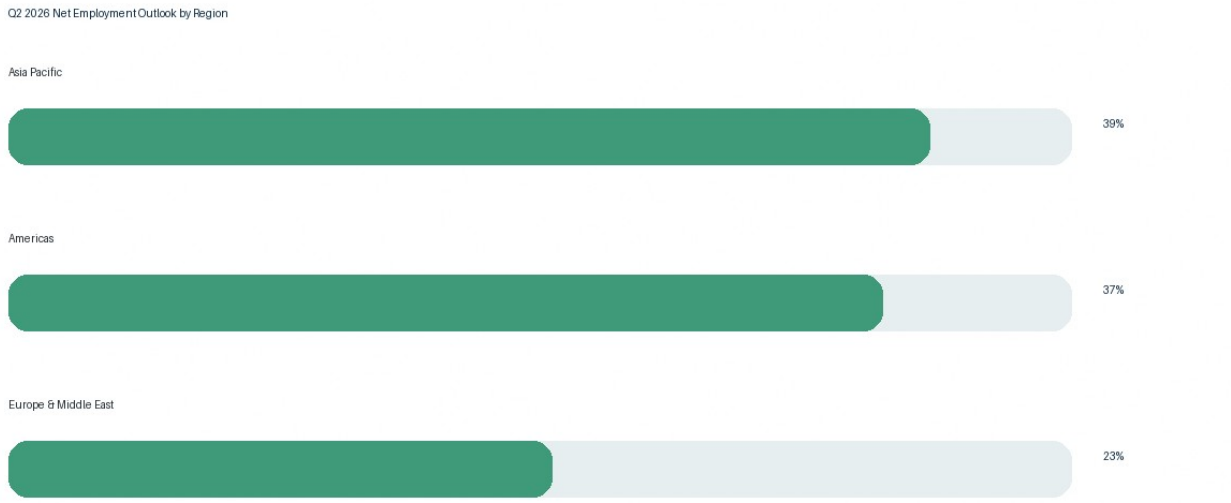
Five signals defined the quarter:

1. Hiring confidence strengthened, but regional and country differences widened.
2. Staffing demand began to recover in pockets, while permanent hiring remained cautious.
3. AI, big data and cybersecurity remained among the strongest technology hiring themes.
4. Flexible workforce models and multi-country operating models gained importance.
5. Staffing firms are being pushed upstream - from transactional suppliers toward labour-market intelligence and workforce partners.

31%	41%	2.3%
GLOBAL NEO	**INFORMATION**	**JOB POSTINGS**
Q2 hiring outlook	Strongest sector outlook	Global QoQ decline

The Global Hiring Map Became More Uneven

The headline number improved, but the geographic spread is the more important story for global employers. Q2 rewarded companies that looked beyond familiar markets and understood where hiring momentum, talent availability and competitive pressure were changing fastest.



Asia Pacific

APAC led the world with a 39% NEO. India posted the strongest hiring intentions globally at 68%, while Vietnam entered the ManpowerGroup survey at 47%. For employers building technology, engineering or shared-services teams, the region continued to combine strong demand with deep talent pools - but also rising competition for specialized skills.

The Americas

The Americas posted a 37% NEO. Brazil led the region at 55%, while the United States stood at 38%. WEC also reported year-over-year increases in agency-worker hours in Canada, Chile and the United States, indicating early improvement in flexible staffing activity.

Europe and the Middle East

The region recorded the lowest aggregate NEO at 23%, masking large differences. The UAE stood at 60%, Sweden at 39% and the Netherlands at 37%, while Romania and Slovakia were among the weakest markets. WEC separately noted positive agency-work momentum in Spain and Denmark but negative territory in the Netherlands, Ireland and parts of Western Europe.

Staffing Is Moving from Volume to Precision

Q2 did not look like a broad-based return to the high-volume hiring environment of earlier cycles. Instead, the market increasingly rewarded employers and staffing partners that could identify where demand was real, where skills were scarce and where alternative workforce models could reduce risk.

1 Flexible workforce solutions gain relevance

WEC highlighted the growing importance of flexible workforce solutions as clients delay permanent hiring decisions. That creates a more nuanced role for staffing firms: not simply filling temporary vacancies, but helping companies determine the right mix of permanent, contract, project and cross-border talent.

2 Multi-country capability becomes strategic

WEC also identified the rising relevance of multi-country operating models. For an SMB entering a new country, the challenge is rarely just finding a candidate. Compensation, competitor density, local hiring norms, employment structures and candidate availability can change dramatically from one market to another. The staffing partner with local intelligence has a substantial advantage.

3 Technology demand concentrates around critical skills

ManpowerGroup reported the Information sector as the strongest Q2 sector with a 41% NEO. GlobalData found AI, big data and cybersecurity among the leading technology themes in Q2 job postings, with the United States and India leading GenAI postings. The message for employers is not that technology hiring is universally booming; it is that competition remains intense around specific capabilities.

4 AI changes recruiting - but does not eliminate the intelligence gap

Two-thirds of employers in ManpowerGroup's Q2 study reported using AI in hiring, onboarding or training. Yet only 8% said AI fully met expectations in hiring and training, while 16% reported no positive ROI to date. Automation can accelerate parts of recruiting, but it does not replace market knowledge, target-company strategy, passive-talent identification or judgement about where the best candidates are likely to be found.

What Q2 Means for Global SMB Hiring



For smaller and mid-sized companies, the most important Q2 lesson is timing.

When hiring is uneven and specialized skills remain competitive, waiting until a requisition is approved can make the first weeks of a search unnecessarily reactive. Market research, target-company mapping, compensation intelligence and talent identification can often begin earlier - even when the final role specification is still evolving.

Traditional Trigger	Earlier Signal	Better Preparation
Approved requisition	Likely role in 30-90 days	Research market and talent pool
New-country opening	Expansion or customer growth	Map local competitors and talent
Recurring hard-to-fill role	Known historical difficulty	Maintain a reusable sourcing pipeline

The staffing partner of the next cycle will increasingly be measured by how well it prepares before demand becomes urgent.

For Envireum, that means treating staffing as an intelligence-led process: understand the market, identify the companies that employ relevant talent, map the candidate universe and build a sourcing foundation before Day 1. The objective is not to replace staffing agencies; it is to use a staffing partner earlier and more strategically.

“We do not need the requisition early. We need visibility early.”

The Q3 Signal: Caution Returned

Q2 should not be interpreted as the start of a straight-line hiring boom. ManpowerGroup's Q3 2026 survey, released after the quarter, reported a global NEO of 26% - five points lower than Q2, although still two points above the prior year. Hiring outlooks weakened quarter over quarter in 33 of 42 countries.

That makes the Q2 staffing lesson even more relevant: employers need optionality. A company that has already researched a market and identified likely talent can move quickly when a role is approved, while avoiding the cost of maintaining unnecessary headcount when demand is uncertain.

For staffing firms, the direction is equally clear. WEC described an opportunity to evolve from transactional suppliers toward labour-market intermediaries. In practical terms, that means combining recruiting execution with market intelligence, workforce flexibility and multi-country capability.

Envireum Perspective

The strongest global hiring strategy for the remainder of 2026 is neither “hire aggressively” nor “freeze hiring.” It is to become more prepared. Know where the talent is, understand the markets that are changing, identify the roles that are most likely to become urgent, and build the sourcing foundation before the clock starts.

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