

Learning Insights #2: A risky business

An explosion of contingent workers is changing the face of the global workforce.
But are their employers ready?

Contents

Introduction



PAGE 4

Executive summary



PAGE 6

**Building
a future
volunteer
workforce:
Islamic Relief**



PAGE 17

Exploring the data

PAGE 12

**A place in the story for every
employee: UKFast**



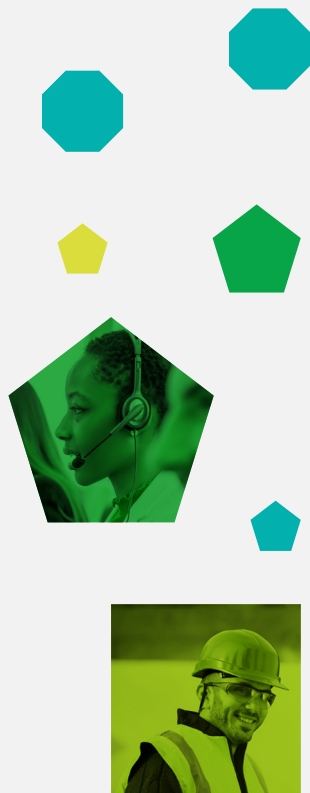
PAGE 20

Growth in the gig economy

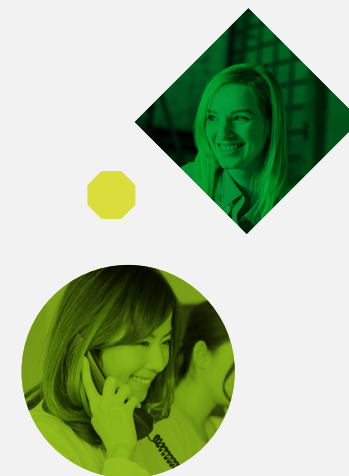
We know that the world is evolving at a lightning-quick pace, and that this is having huge ramifications in the workplace, not least on the skills that employees and businesses need to succeed.

In order to stay relevant, organisations must develop more agile working practices and structures that enable high performing teams to come together quickly and disband painlessly. So too, individuals need to change the way they think about developing skills and capabilities to find meaningful employment, meaning lifelong learning is the order of the day.

Contingent workers – whether they are short term contractors, temporary staff, trainees or suppliers – are key to making this work. They enable businesses to make the most of specialist skills that they do not require on a permanent basis and bring a much-needed external perspective to staid internal processes. For employees, careers that enable people to work across multiple organisations and projects are increasingly popular, and provide incredible opportunities for people to keep learning, diversifying their skillset and industry knowledge, keeping them engaged and employable.



But all the benefits of using a contingent workforce, and being a contingent worker, can only be realised if businesses get the training right. If they don't, they run a considerable risk of employing people who aren't able to do the job, and in so doing expose their organisation to commercial and reputational risk. Equally, if individuals are not given the right tools to learn, they will not only be unable to add value to the task at hand, but risk being left behind in a workforce that demands continual upskilling.



Building better training for contingent workers

With organisations globally becoming increasingly reliant on this segment of the workforce, we wanted to explore in more detail the way that employers are approaching their training, whether it is fit for purpose, and what both businesses and individuals can do to make sure L&D works for them.

We spoke with 500 employees and 100 employers in 13 countries around the world to find out how they are tackling the changing workforce; what's working, what's not, and the challenges and opportunities ahead.

You can find full details of the research sample and data gathered [here](#).

Spotting skills gaps

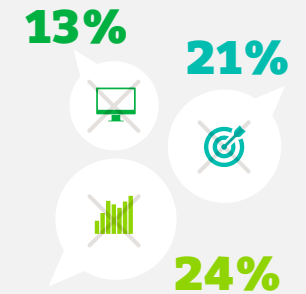


Absent and ineffectual

One in ten (13%) employers say they don't do training

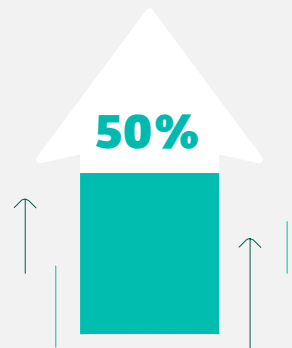
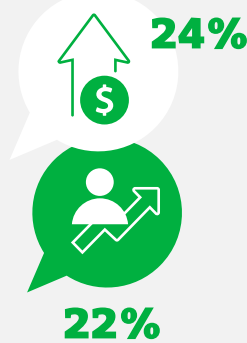
One in five (21%) employers say it's ineffective

One in four (24%) contingent workers say it has no impact on performance



Employers more confident of commercial success are more aware of their contingent workforce needs

24% of employers that predict increasing revenues say their biggest skills gaps will be amongst contingent workers and 22% say this is where they'll focus their training and people development



A growing workforce

50% of employers say that their use of contingent workers will increase in the next 3 – 5 years

Vs

14% of those who expect decreasing revenues say their biggest skills gaps will be amongst contingent workers and 13% say this is where they'll focus their training and people development



Thinking differently



Addressing the problem?

Contingent workers are currently expected to develop on-the-job, but both businesses and employees recognise that more creative methods would help a time-short and independent section of the workforce.

Employers

Over a fifth (22%) say that improved delivery platforms would help

followed by more self-guided / self-service learning (18%)

and a better blend of on- and offline learning (17%).



Contractors and contingent workers

70% say that if they had more direct control over the pace of workplace learning or training, they would learn new skills more quickly



Double trouble?

Employers not tackling the training issue around their contingent workers face the double threat of leaving their workforce exposed to risk and leaving huge swathes of their workers untrained, missing out on potential skills they need.

Contingent workers – including suppliers, freelancers, contractors, temporary workers, trainees or gig workers – together represent a great and growing segment of the workforce. But how are businesses, and individuals themselves, handling this change, and is HR and L&D keeping up with the pace?

The employer view

The increasing variety of workers and types of workplace are, for the most part, great news all round. On one hand, it gives employers the scope to hire people for shorter periods of time, to fulfil a particular goal, or to retain on a more ad-hoc basis so they get an uplift of resource in line with seasonal demand. The data tells us that 39% of employers are using suppliers on an ongoing basis, and a further 30% say they use them regularly/every few months. For 27% of employers, contractors are used on an ongoing basis, and for 32% they are regularly employed. Just 7% of global organisations say they don't use suppliers or contractors, and only

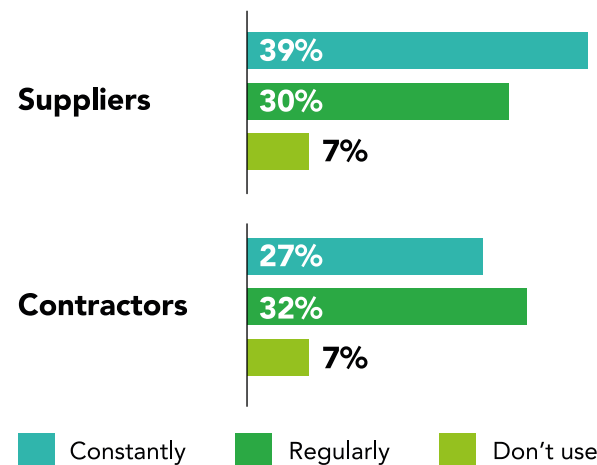
11% never use temporary workers or trainees. And this trend appears here to stay: just a sixth of employers think their use of employees such as contractors, suppliers, temporary staff, volunteers, trainees or apprentices will decrease.

The employee position

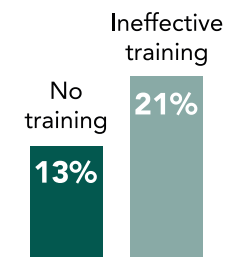
Equally, with employers increasingly open to working with non-permanent staff, there are more opportunities for people who have other commitments – whether that's caring responsibilities, portfolio careers, or studying – to find work that suits their lifestyle.

The flexibility of roles with non-permanent contracts is clearly attractive. Nearly one in five (19% globally) employees that are not already contingent workers would be willing to consider adopting short-term contract / freelance positions in the future. Contingent workers are also three times more likely to work part-time than their permanent counterparts (45% vs 16%), indicating that working in a more fluid way is better for work/life integration.

Use of suppliers and contract workers



Training for contractors and suppliers



How is L&D adjusting?

With the skills and capabilities businesses and individuals need evolving fast, there is plenty for L&D to be thinking about when identifying content, materials, and methods for upskilling and reskilling their workforce. It's easy to see how both the L&D department and the wider business would stay focused on permanent staff. But they deprioritise the contingent workforce at their peril. Contingent workers are clearly here to stay and employers are already heavily reliant on their skills. They simply must find ways to both effectively managing these individuals, as well as adapting their L&D provision to attract, retain and up-skill this new workforce for the future.

Currently, the training on offer to this segment of the workforce is not robust

enough to cater to their needs. One in ten employers (13%) said they don't carry out any training with contingent workers and employers report the lowest levels of training effectiveness in this group; over a fifth (21%) say training for contingent workers is ineffective.

Contingent workers themselves agree that current training is not effective enough; our research found that contingent workers (globally) are the most likely to say that the current training they receive has no impact on their performance at work (24% compared to 19% for workers on other types of contracts). They are also less aware of the purpose and value of training to both themselves and the organisation (18% compared to 23% for other types of contracts).



Employers thinking about future success are thinking about their contingent workforce

Encouragingly, the research shows that employers (globally) who are confident in the future of their businesses (said their company's overall revenue would increase in the next 12 months) are most perceptive about skills gaps among this workforce and understand the importance of investing in training. These, positive employers, were most likely to predict that their biggest skills gaps over the next 3-5 years would be amongst contingent workers (24% compared to 14% for those that predict a net decrease in revenue) but also more likely to say that their training and people development in the next 12 months will be focussed on contingent workers (22% compared to 13% for those who predicted a net decrease in revenue - 'negative employers').

So what is the best way to upskill this contingent workforce?

According to the employers we surveyed, the main training currently carried out among contingent workers is on-the-job (28%). But when it comes to improving the take up of L&D amongst contingent workers, over a quarter (26%) of global employers believe that improved delivery platforms would help, followed by shorter, micro-style learning (25%) and better quality, more engaging content (25%). Contingent employees also want more opportunity to share feedback on the training and development they need – with a quarter (25%) saying they'd like to input into what's available – which chimes with the employer view, as 24% say they think this would make these workers more likely to participate in learning.

What would improve learning for contingent workers?

Employers say



Employees say



improved delivery platforms

microlearning

better, more engaging content

more tailored content to employees needs

1

Islamic Relief

In 2016, the UK branch of international aid agency, Islamic Relief, decided to change how it trained its volunteers in order to reduce turnover and stand out in a competitive marketplace. The national Volunteer Leadership Programme was created in partnership with the Humanitarian Academy for Development (HAD) and 1,000 volunteers registered for one of 30 places. The impact from the year-long ILM accredited programme is already evident, and money raised by trained volunteers for Ramadan 2018 equated to three times the amount of the direct costs needed to run the leadership programme.

VOLUNTEER

with **Islamic Relief** and become a

LIFESAVER

islamic-relief.org.uk/volunteer



Insights from a global organisation that relies on its epic volunteer workforce to make an impact on people who need it the most



Building the future volunteer workforce

Abdullah Almamun, National Volunteer Coordinator at Islamic Relief UK, said:

“Our contingent, volunteer workforce is vital for our fundraising work, but we realised that we could improve retention and loyalty of our brilliant volunteers by focussing on quality over quantity. Implementing our national leadership programme allowed us to inspire and empower volunteers across the UK, giving them more responsibility and opportunities for progression within the charity.

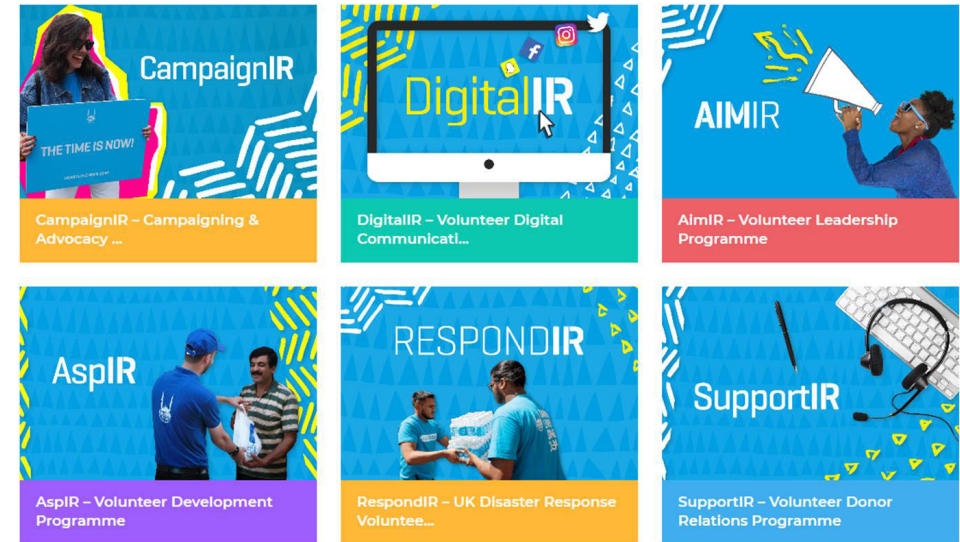
Volunteer graduates are the best ambassadors for the charity; they’re able to communicate our goals and ambitions to wider audiences, and

some have even been hired as internal staff after finishing the programme. I also like to think we are making a bigger impact by helping all our volunteers to hone skills to excel in their independent lives.

My advice for other businesses considering investing in learning and development programmes for their contingent or volunteer workforce is to focus on the long game. You can’t upskill a workforce and see benefits overnight, so you need to be prepared to be patient and take it one step at a time. Stick to one key objective that’s three years down the line and systematically work towards it – you will surely reap the rewards.”

“My advice for other businesses considering investing in learning and development programmes for their contingent or volunteer workforce is to focus on the long game.”

Abdullah Almamun
National Volunteer Coordinator at Islamic Relief



2

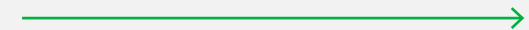
UKFast

Award Winning hosting provider UKFast wanted to revamp their onboarding programme to consider the needs of their contract and contingent workforce, including project workers, apprentices, those on short term contracts and students on placement years.

They develop a sense of community and culture through a combination of face to face training and online tools like Fastbook (their own version of Facebook) and FastTube.



Insights from hosting provider UKFast on making contractors of all types part of the family.



Finding a place in the story for every employee

“Contingent workers of all types are a core part of our business. We hire a large number of apprentices, take on lots of work experience students, and we’re always recruiting contractors to support the building work we do.

It’s really important that all of these workers feel they can contribute to the overall success of the business as early as possible. And the best way to help them feel comfortable and productive in a new organisation is to immerse them in the company and everything it’s about, and wherever we can to give them access to the same information and opportunities as we do our permanent employees. ”

For us, this starts from the point of recruitment; we want to make sure that people, whatever type of contract they are on, fit into our culture. We support a number of contingent workers on placement year from university and they are just as involved in our company as longer term employees, and we have a responsibility to train them; if we didn’t, we would be failing in our duty as an employer to inspire the next generation of employees.

It can also be extremely difficult, given the rapid pace of change and the skills

needed for jobs evolving quicker than we can write them, to find people who can do everything you possibly need them to. It’s far preferable to help upskill someone – even if they aren’t going to be with you for a long time – than go back to the drawing board and look for the complete employee that might not fit into our business’s culture and values.

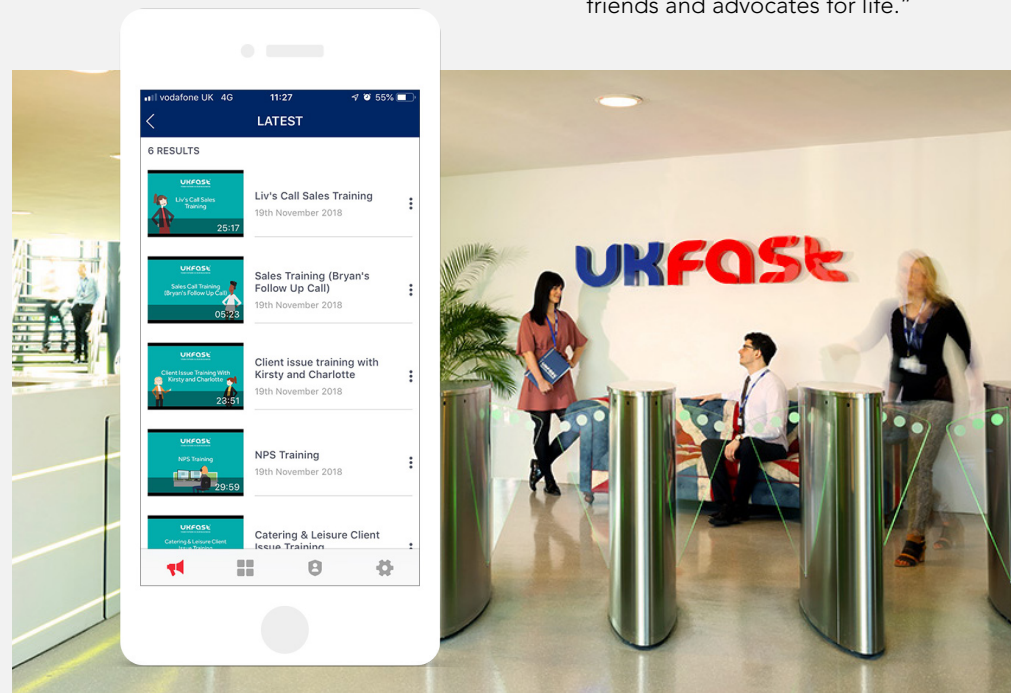
There’s definitely a need to tailor how we deliver training for different groups. Often contractors and temporary workers are brought in to support with a specific project that needs a quick result or requires very niche skills, or are juggling competing priorities – whether that’s multiple clients or balancing a job with formal learning. This means that they are often incredibly time-short, so we need to make sure that training, whether it’s basic health and safety, onboarding, or developing a new technical skill, fits their work/life patterns. We do have face-to-face inductions – as you can never underestimate the power of having people in a room as a group – but we make sure to keep the sense of community and connection with our digital channels, specifically ‘Fastbook’ (the UKFast version of Facebook) and FastTube (you guessed it).

“Ultimately, we hold firm in the belief that individuals who join us, for any period of time, are part of our community and family.”

Aaron Saxton
Director of Training
UKFast

The benefits of delivering training are in line with how authentic it feels. Storytelling is a huge part of this. It is human nature to want to be part of something and by helping people understand the journey you have gone through as a business, they can better understand the role they play, and the role that your organisation plays in their own personal journey.

Ultimately, we hold firm in the belief that individuals who join us, for any period of time, are part of our community and family, and in helping them develop we are supporting the industry, but also turning them into friends and advocates for life.”





John Yates, Group Director – Corporate Learning at City & Guilds Group

Not only are the skills needed for the future changing, so is the shape of the workforce. Contingent working arrangements in organisations globally are on the rise – particularly suppliers, contractors, trainees and gig workers. In this uncertain business landscape, it's more important than ever that organisations remain flexible in order to adapt to changing demand.

But our research shows current training is not robust enough to cater to this new workforce – and this is dangerous. Employers who don't invest in upskilling contingent workers in line with the evolving needs of the business aren't safeguarding their future, especially if they're not ensuring workers receive essential training such as on-boarding or compliance. Not making the effort to train contingent workers effectively will hold back the individual, the business, the industry and the economy as a whole.

Whatever the size of business, it can be hard to manage a contingent workforce – for instance, a construction business might need to juggle supplier teams as well as individual short-term employees. But the L&D sector now has access to evermore sophisticated tools to help with this – contractor management solutions like Sitepass for example, make it easier for businesses to manage their

contingent workforce centrally – ensuring they have the qualifications, compliance and training they need to get the job done, smoothly and safely.

It is understandable that with tight training budgets and business demands to see return on investment, training up workers who aren't full-time, permanent employees may feel less of a priority. But that doesn't mean there aren't really important reasons to do so – especially in these uncertain times.

By investing in L&D provision for this workforce, employers aren't just aiding their personal professional development, they're boosting internal skills and helping themselves to attract and retain this talent for the future. Looking at the bigger picture, they also contribute to the wider industry and economy when these skilled workers move on to another venture.

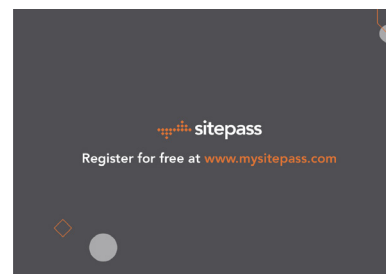
Resources




Read this reasearch
online



Pre register for our
guide on managing the
contingent workforce



Find out more about
Sitepass the contractor
management tool of
the future 



Subscribe to Kineo's
Stream of Thought
podcast



Discover how we're shaping the future of learning

Everything we do at Kineo stems from a simple idea – if we design a better learning experience, together we'll get better results.

Kineo helps the world's leading businesses improve performance through learning and technology. We're proud of our reputation for being flexible and innovative, and of our award-winning work with clients across the world.

Whatever your business challenge, we will partner with you every step of the way to find the learning solution that fits best – and delivers results. So, how can we help you?

**WE'RE
SHAPING
THE FUTURE
OF LEARNING**



A City & Guilds Group Business

info@kineo.com | www.kineo.com | +44 1273 764 070

Innovative digital learning | LMS solutions | Off the shelf learning resources | Consultancy