


2026 RECRUITMENT TRENDS:

WHAT BUILDING ENVELOPE EMPLOYERS NEED TO BE PREPARED FOR THIS YEAR



By: **Lee Hancock**



THE REASON FOR THIS REPORT

This month's report focuses on recruitment trends Building Envelope employers need to anticipate in 2026.

It's strange to think how much hiring has changed in just a few years.

Not long ago, growth was the goal for its own sake.

Everyone wanted more people, faster.

Today, the question isn't "who can we hire?" but "who do we actually need in the business?"

In 2026, teams are leaner, budgets are tighter, and every hiring decision carries more weight than before. Technology promises to make recruitment easier, yet many Building Envelope candidates still feel like they are disappearing into automated systems.

Meanwhile, skill gaps continue across fenestration, façades, cladding and fire protection. The debate around hybrid working is still ongoing, and the expectations on employers keep shifting.

This report cuts through the noise to show Building Envelope employers what's working right now, from AI in recruitment and skills-based hiring through to retention strategies, and why working with a specialist recruiter matters more than ever.

If you are hiring in 2026, the rush has settled. What remains is something more considered, more focused, and ultimately more human.



HIRING IN 2026: THE TALENT MARKET TODAY

In most Building Envelope businesses today, hiring hasn't stopped, but it has slowed.

Across the UK, the same pattern is clear. Teams are smaller, margins are tighter, and every new hire is carefully assessed.

Before opening a vacancy, directors and hiring managers are asking a familiar question. Can we deliver this project with the current team, or do we need to strengthen the business?

After years of rapid expansion across cladding, rainscreen and façade markets, companies are now prioritising stability over growth. Hiring is still happening, but it is more targeted.

Projects still need delivering, specifications still need supporting, and strong technical and commercial people are still in demand.

The key difference is focus. Employers are not looking for more people. They are looking for the right people.



HIRING IN 2026: THE TALENT MARKET TODAY

The Skill Gap Everyone's Talking About

Skill shortages remain a consistent challenge.

Across fenestration, façades and external wall systems, employers continue to report difficulty sourcing individuals with the right level of experience.

For example:

- Technical Managers with a solid understanding of rainscreen or curtain wall systems
- Specification Sales Managers with established relationships in the architect and contractor market
- Estimators or Project Managers with experience across complex façade packages

Applications are still coming through, but many candidates lack the specific experience required.

At the same time, changes to visa access are reducing the availability of overseas talent. This places greater emphasis on developing and retaining existing teams.

Employers are responding by reassessing how they evaluate candidates. Practical knowledge, adaptability and attitude are becoming as important as job titles.



HIRING IN 2026: THE TALENT MARKET TODAY

A Shift Back to Hands-On Work

Alongside increased technology use, there is renewed demand for hands-on expertise.

Roles linked to installation, site delivery and technical support remain critical across the Building Envelope sector. Whether in cladding installation, façade systems or fire protection works, the requirement for skilled individuals is strong.

Fewer people are entering these areas, which is increasing competition for experienced professionals.

At the same time, more younger candidates are showing interest in vocational and technical pathways.

Apprenticeships and practical career routes are becoming more attractive, which may support the sector long term.



HIRING IN 2026: THE TALENT MARKET TODAY

What It All Means for Employers

Hiring in 2026 is more deliberate.

Building Envelope employers are taking greater care in how they define roles, assess candidates and manage recruitment timelines.

The consultants and hiring managers seeing the best results are those who:

- Clearly define requirements from the outset
- Remain realistic about candidate availability
- Maintain communication throughout the process

Technology supports this, but consistent engagement and clear expectations continue to make the biggest difference.



STRATEGIC HIRING IMPERATIVES FOR 2026

Hiring feels more considered now. Every role has a clear purpose. Every decision carries more weight than it did a few years ago.

The speed that once defined recruitment has shifted. Building Envelope businesses are planning more carefully. Instead of reacting to vacancies, they are thinking ahead about the structure of their teams, the projects they need to deliver, and the skills required to support them.

Here is what is shaping that shift:



STRATEGIC HIRING IMPERATIVES FOR 2026

AI in Recruitment: A Practical Tool, Not a Replacement

AI is now part of most recruitment processes.

It can screen CVs, arrange interviews, and automate communication. For busy hiring managers in cladding, façades and fenestration businesses, that can save time.

However, technology on its own is not enough.

Many candidates within the Building Envelope sector still feel that applications disappear without feedback. This is especially common in technical and sales roles, where personal engagement still matters.

The difference comes in how AI is used.

When used well, it improves efficiency and consistency. When used poorly, it adds distance to a process that relies on trust and communication.

This is where experienced recruiters add value. They use technology to manage the process, while focusing their time on conversations, understanding motivations, and assessing whether someone will genuinely fit a role and a business.



STRATEGIC HIRING IMPERATIVES FOR 2026

Skills-Based Hiring Is Becoming the Norm

There is a noticeable shift away from relying purely on job titles and qualifications.

Within the Building Envelope sector, experience has always mattered, but now employers are looking more closely at what someone can actually deliver.

For example, a Specification Sales Manager is no longer judged just on their title or years in the role. Hiring managers want to understand which architects they have worked with, which projects they have influenced, and how they approach the specification process.

Similarly, a Technical Manager is assessed on their understanding of systems such as rainscreen cladding, curtain walling or external wall insulation, rather than just their career history on paper.

This approach is opening up opportunities.

Candidates who may not look perfect on a CV are being considered because they bring relevant knowledge, transferable skills, and the ability to adapt.

For employers, this often results in more effective hires.



STRATEGIC HIRING IMPERATIVES FOR 2026

Data Is Starting to Shape Better Decisions

Recruitment within the Building Envelope sector has traditionally relied on instinct and experience.

That is beginning to change.

More businesses are tracking key data points such as time-to-hire, where successful candidates come from, and how long they stay in a role.

This provides insight into where improvements are needed.

For example, prolonged hiring timelines often reflect unrealistic expectations, while declined offers may highlight alignment issues around salary or role scope.

Recruiters play an increasing role in interpreting this data and providing market context.



STRATEGIC HIRING IMPERATIVES FOR 2026

Candidate Experience Is Now a Differentiator

Candidate experience has become a key factor in successful hiring.

Many candidates in the Building Envelope sector still talk about lack of feedback, long delays, and unclear communication during recruitment processes.

These issues do not go unnoticed.

In a market where experienced Technical Sales Managers, Estimators and Project Managers are in demand, candidates have choices. A poor experience often leads them to withdraw or accept another offer.

The companies that are performing well are those that keep things simple and clear.

They communicate regularly. They explain the process. They provide feedback, even when it is not positive.

This builds trust and reflects positively on the business, regardless of the outcome.



STRATEGIC HIRING IMPERATIVES FOR 2026

Compensation Is About Clarity, Not Just Salary

Salary remains important, but the conversation has shifted.

Candidates want clarity.

Within the Building Envelope sector, salary expectations can vary significantly depending on product type, region, and level of experience. For example, a façade project manager working on large-scale developments will have different expectations to a regional sales manager covering distributors and contractors.

Employers who are transparent about salary ranges, bonus structures and progression tend to have more engaged candidates.

There is also more focus on the wider package, including:

- Bonus structures linked to performance
- Company vehicles or car allowance
- Flexible working arrangements
- Clear progression routes

The goal is not simply to offer more. It is to offer something that feels fair and aligned with the role and expectations.



STRATEGIC HIRING IMPERATIVES FOR 2026

Flexibility Still Matters, but Needs Structure

The conversation around remote and hybrid working is still evolving.

In the Building Envelope sector, many roles naturally require time on site, in the office, or meeting clients. Full remote working is not always practical, particularly for technical, operational or project-based positions.

However, flexibility still plays a role.

Sales professionals may expect autonomy over their working week. Technical staff may value the ability to manage office and site time. Managers are increasingly being judged on outcomes rather than presence.

The businesses managing this well are those that set clear expectations.

They define when presence is required and why. They communicate openly about how teams operate. This avoids confusion and helps maintain accountability.



THE 2026 EMPLOYER VALUE PROPOSITION

Candidates are making decisions about employers before applying.

Online presence, reputation and communication style all shape perception.

Employer Branding as a Practical Asset

Employer branding is now grounded in reality.

Candidates reviewing a Building Envelope business will consider:

- Feedback from employees
- Industry reputation
- Communication during hiring

The strongest employer brands are those that reflect actual working environments, not idealised messaging.



THE 2026 EMPLOYER VALUE PROPOSITION

Diversity and Inclusion in Practice

Diverse teams improve decision making.

Across the Building Envelope sector, this means:

- Broadening candidate pools
- Conducting fair and consistent interviews
- Avoiding overly narrow role specifications

This approach leads to stronger, more balanced teams.

Wellbeing and Sustainable Workloads

Wellbeing is now part of long-term performance.

In high-pressure environments such as façade projects or large-scale construction delivery, workload management is important.

Employers are starting to prioritise:

- Realistic deadlines
- Clear expectations
- Supportive team structures

This improves retention and overall output.



RETENTION AND DEVELOPMENT: THE REAL FOCUS

Retention is becoming just as important as hiring.

Internal Mobility

Employees want progression.

Where opportunities are limited, they are more likely to leave.

Providing internal development, whether into sales, technical or management roles, supports retention.

Upskilling and Development

Skills evolve quickly.

Companies investing in training, mentoring and practical development are better positioned to retain talent and adapt to market demands.

Succession Planning

Planning for leadership changes is essential.

Strong businesses identify potential future leaders early and support their transition into senior roles.



IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK: PREPARING FOR 2026

Practical steps to take:

1. Focus Investment Where It Matters

- Recruitment tools that improve efficiency
- Training for hiring managers
- Access to specialist recruitment support

2. Take a Long-Term View

- Short term: refine process and communication
- Mid term: track data and improve outcomes
- Long term: develop talent and leadership

3. Share Responsibility

Hiring works best when:

- Managers define requirements
- Recruiters provide market insight
- HR supports process

4. Measure Key Metrics

- Time to hire
- Cost per hire
- Retention
- Candidate feedback

5. Stay Flexible

Market conditions and project demands continue to change. A flexible approach ensures stability.



ABOUT NVELOPE RECRUITMENT LTD

Nvelope Recruitment Ltd is a specialist Building Envelope recruitment partner, working across fenestration, façades, cladding, rainscreen, EWI and fire protection.

With over 23 years' experience in the sector, we support businesses in recruiting Sales, Commercial, Technical, Operational and Management professionals across the UK.

Our focus is straightforward. We work closely with clients to understand their requirements and introduce candidates who align with both the role and the business.

If you would like to discuss your current hiring plans or gain insight into the Building Envelope market:

Call 01522 424125 or email info@nvelope.co.uk

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A BIT ABOUT ME



For the last 22 years I have been helping candidates like yourself make positive career choices; and I can help you decide what steps to take next to further your Building Envelope career.

If you feel you need a conversation, don't hesitate to get in touch!



01522 424125



lee@nvelope.co.uk



www.nvelope.co.uk



Lincoln, UK