



ARCHITECTURE & INTERIORS  
SALARY & EMPLOYMENT REVIEW  
February 2018

**FRAME**



# FRAME

This report has been produced internally by FRAME Recruitment.  
Data collected in November & December 2017.  
All salary data listed in GBP

**2017 in architecture and design was certainly not for the faint-hearted, and for many practices, hiring talent was highlighted as a major challenge.**

The uncertainty of 2016 has developed into concurrent caution and hard and fast hiring. The best talent has become confident and isn't walking the streets.

Recruitment was neither strategic, nor based on long-term business objectives. Most hires we made to plug a talent gap, to replace an employee who left or as a distressed purchase following a project win. The market to employ, and be employed, is now volatile and frantic which has led the sector into a position where it is employers who are finding themselves on the back-foot and in a war for talent.

In this review, the largest and most comprehensive we've produced, we set out to report on employees' attitudes as well as how businesses feel; Who are the best employers when it comes to the welfare of their people? How many employees have been in their job for less than one year? How have some practices improved their retention? How do candidates really go about looking for their next job? Will it get easier or harder in 2018? How many businesses felt that internal skills shortages restricted their ability to deliver their business objectives?

These are questions which have not been asked before and in this report will be answered.

I hope you enjoy the read.

**Ben Darnton.**  
Managing Director, FRAME



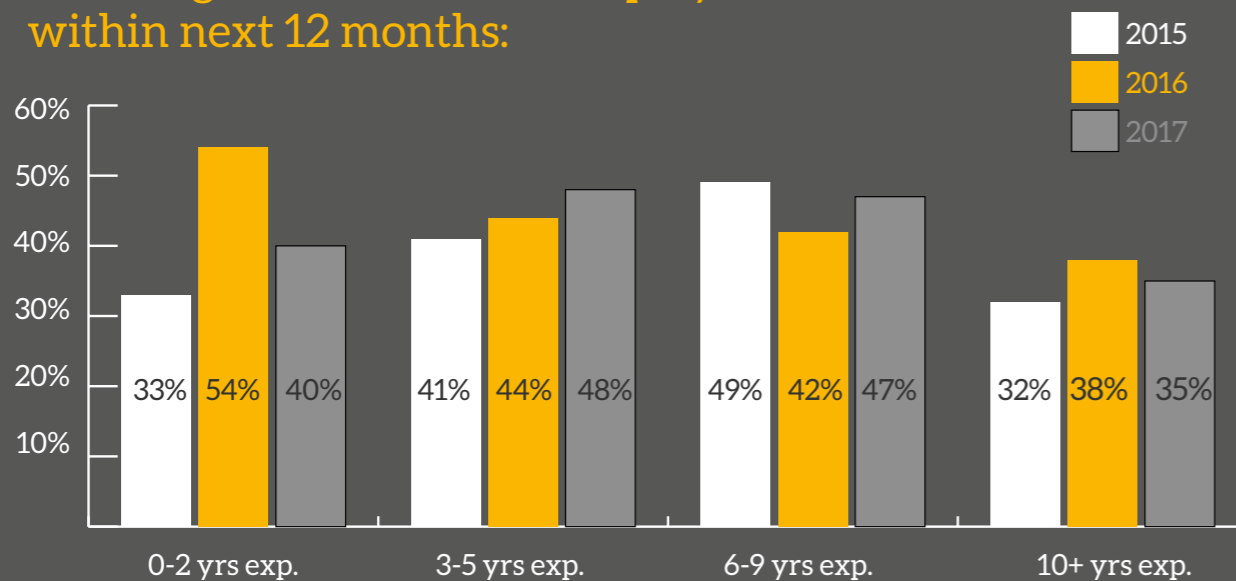


# RETENTION

Last year we reported that, on average, 44% of architecture and design employees planned to leave their current employer within the next 12 months, and our survey data shows that this is close to what happened. A lot of people moved jobs in 2017 with 40% of respondents with 3-5 years' experience and 29% of respondents with more than 10 years' experience reporting they had been in their current job for less than 12 months.

Employees with less than 2 years' experience were most likely to leave their current employer in 2016, whereas this year's data reports the opposite. Of these people, 25% fewer plan to leave their employer by the end of 2018. The other categories of 3-5 years' and 6-9 years' experience are more likely to leave their current employer within the next 12 months, both showing a 5% increase.

## Planning to leave current employer within next 12 months:



## "31% of experienced staff changed jobs in the last 12 months"

These categories also report a 14% and 17% drop in perceived career development opportunities.

Darnton explained: "Combining our employee and employer data shows the stand out factor contributing to the drop in movement from less experienced staff, is career development. 61% of these employees feel that their current employer offers good career development opportunities, now higher than any other experience category and represents a 20% shift. Supporting this view, employers identified personal development as equal to communication and pay & benefits improvements which had contributed to improving retention in 2017.

## "Only 33% of larger firms felt their staff are happy"

Overall, 75% tell us that staff retention was either the same, or worse, in 2017 compared to 2016. One group of employers stood out for bucking this trend, 38% of medium-sized practices reported that their retention had improved in 2017 and it is this group of practices who have the most to say about how they did it.

But what else has or can change to increase retention levels positively? Darnton commented: "It's important to remember that people leave jobs for one of two reasons; either something changed, or something didn't. There are many examples of practices trying to do something about it by making employee welfare, communication, reward and career development of equal importance to winning projects. If you've spent all your energy in 2017 winning projects, but you can't keep the people that will deliver them in 2018, it's been a false economy. You can't do one without the other."

We asked how employers thought their staff felt in 2017 and overall the answer was 'OK'. 50% of small and medium sized practices thought their staff felt 'happy' but this was reduced to 33% when the same question was asked to larger firms.

### Does your current employer offer good career development opportunities?

|               |     |
|---------------|-----|
| 0-2 years exp | 61% |
| 3-5 years exp | 50% |
| 6-9 years exp | 52% |
| 10+ years exp | 59% |

Business leaders within large companies seem to be feeling the pressure too, with 78% reporting that their jobs will be more difficult in 2018 when compared to last year. This, combined with the fact that none reported that retention would improve, indicates that the perception for many is that large companies are a tough place to be right now.



# HIRING TRENDS

Hiring in 2017 was like visiting a dentist; you only go if you have to. "When we ask a client how quickly they need to get a new employee in place, the most common answer is 'we need them now' and this is the reality of the environment businesses are working in. Hiring is reactive, more often than not it's a distressed purchase, and it is frenetic" says Darnton.

In many ways, hiring is back to where it was 11 years ago, with a significant difference - some companies are hurting, some are thriving. This polarisation combined with concurrent confidence and caution makes today's situation very fluid.

Such a busy job market combined with 'speed is of the essence' driven reactive hiring, means that finding the talent you need can be a hit and miss affair. Practices are clearly aware of the problem with 55% of Hiring Managers and Directors indicating that skills shortages have restricted their ability to deliver their business objectives in 2017.

Darnton continued: "The issue companies face when they hire reactively is that not all can do it well. Moving quickly during the attraction, interview and decision making stage is critical. If they don't they'll lose out to someone better than them."

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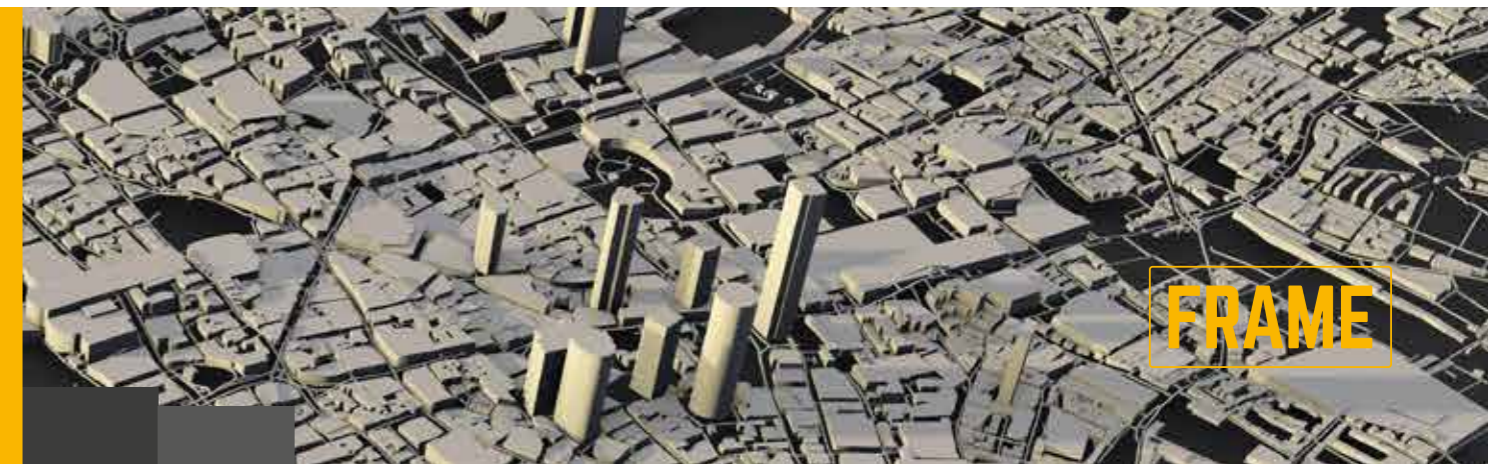
It is a major catch twenty-two; most businesses know the specific skill sets they'll need for a specific project they've bid for, but they have to wait until contracts are signed and end up needing somebody in quickly. This person has to be on the market and available in the first place, or if they are being headhunted then the hiring company needs to have a compelling value proposition.

In any candidate-driven market, a company's recruitment and attraction processes will come into question and this should start with their employer brand. "Most practices do not have visibly powerful employer brands and in today's market, a high-value activity for anyone involved with hiring will be to review their recruitment

process; What is the candidate's experience of it? Is it designed to avoid being too slow without cutting corners? What tools can be used to improve it? And most importantly, what do people think about us as an employer? Some of the proudest practices would be shocked by how little prospective candidates know about them."

Looking ahead into 2018, 54% of medium practices, 56% of large practices and 92% of small practices said that they would continue to hire reactively.

All the signs are pointing to continued volatility, and thus, "reactive is the new normal".



# JOBSEEKING TRENDS

The pockets of redundancies in 2017 did not create a sudden surge of jobseekers becoming available, as some might have expected, and those that did find themselves out of a job have quickly moved on to other businesses and in most cases have had their pick of roles.

FRAME experienced a notable increase in senior candidates contacting us about their careers in 2017, which prompted us to look deeper into jobseeker dynamics. The survey asked candidates how they would choose to go about finding a new job, with some interesting results.

On average, 43% of architecture and design employees told us that they would choose to hunt for a job personally, 34% would choose to use a recruiter and the remainder would do both. It might be surprising to some that the more experienced the candidate, the more likely they are to use a recruiter.

Darnton added: "These figures are tough reading. When you look at employees with 0 - 5 years'

experience, 26% would prefer to use a recruiter to find a new job, increasing to 37% of those with 6 - 9 years' experience and again to 41% of those with more than 10 years' experience.

"The more experienced the candidate, the more likely they are to use a recruiter."

It appears that with experience, architects and designers are telling us that it's not practical to research the hundreds of practice's websites and job boards, apply for all of the jobs available at a point in time, attend multiple interviews and would prefer to use a recruiter to do some of the hard work for them, answer their questions in advance and to select vacancies which are suitable for them.

## BENCHMARKING FACT!

COMPARED TO THE ENGINEERING SECTOR, WHERE 52% OF JOBSEEKERS WOULD USE A RECRUITER TO FIND THEIR NEXT JOB, IN ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN ONLY 34% OF CANDIDATES WOULD USE A RECRUITER.

**BREAKING NEWS;** not all recruiters are good! 66% of respondents said that their perception of recruiters was that 'some are good', 9% thought recruiters are 'unprofessional' and 9% deemed recruiters to be a 'necessary evil' only 5% thought that recruiters 'added value' to them. Darnton commented: "There are very good and very bad recruiters in every industry which is no different for architecture and design. For the first time, we have a number to put to it and it looks like architecture and design recruitment has an image problem."

"From a candidate perspective, if planning to use a recruiter; do your research, find a credible consultant, understand their specialism, the types

of companies they work with, make sure you like them and feel comfortable with putting your name in their hands."

"With 43% of candidates opting to find a job directly, becoming an 'employer of choice' to prospective employees will become an ever more prominent phrase, or at least it should be" says Darnton. "With so many similar companies clustered together, very few practices are promoting their uniqueness effectively."



# PAY & BONUS

Has base pay changed within the last 12 months? “No” says Darnton. “Last year we reported small increases in some areas, but on the whole average pay remained static. 2017 was, and 2018 is likely to be, no different. The reality sounds harsh but architecture and design remains an undervalued industry, when compared to other jobs and sectors which require their employees to have a similar level of professional qualifications, and this won’t change any time soon.”

There is no doubt that businesses are doing their best to pay their employees as much as possible as highlighted by the fact that 60% of employees received a pay rise in the last 12 months, an increase of 4% compared to the previous year. “It’s encouraging to see employers addressing the pent up frustration of static pay in 2015 & 16” says Darnton. 75% of employees with 6-9 years’ experience received a pay rise, followed by 63% of employees with 3-5 years’ experience. However, in 2017 47% of junior employees and those with more than 10 years’ experience saw no increase in pay.

Bonuses were also on the move with 42% receiving one, up from 35% in 2016. Again those with 6-9 years’ experience received

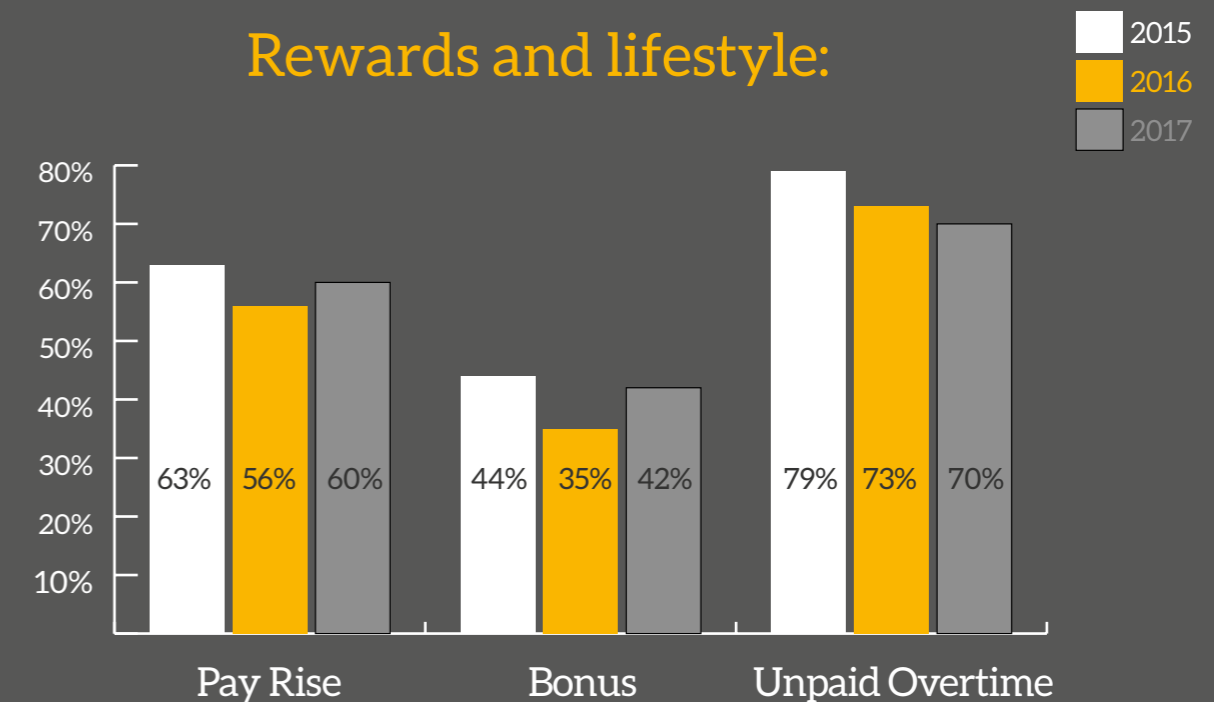
more bonuses than other experience categories, with 58% receiving a bonus followed by 42% of 3-5 years’ experience, 40% with more than 10 years’ experience and just 27% of those with less than 2 years’ experience.

“These statistics tell us that employers are protecting their most valuable asset. Losing someone with 6-9 years’ experience is tough for a business to cope with and replacing them with someone else is typically very difficult to do, especially quickly. Companies are reacting to this fact by paying them more.”

Although there is little sector wide structure to paying overtime, employees aren’t working as much of it. “Employers have become more aware of the negativity associated with employees working unpaid overtime and are addressing this” says Darnton. “Discretionary as well as formal Time Off In Lieu policies are increasingly common in 2017, some have made unpaid overtime more palatable through paying for a taxi home and an evening meal too.”

| Job Title                | Working in London | 0-2 yrs exp | 3-5 yrs exp | 6-9 yrs exp | 10+ yrs exp |
|--------------------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 3D Visualiser            | Yes               | £28,130     | £36,125     | £45,025     | £50,035     |
| 3D Visualiser            | No                | £24,325     | £30,155     | £40,075     | £45,165     |
| Architect                | Yes               | £31,850     | £35,500     | £42,315     | £48,895     |
| Architect                | No                | £28,555     | £33,250     | £38,795     | £45,685     |
| Architectural Assistant  | Yes               | £25,235     | £30,500     | £32,330     | £35,615     |
| Architectural Assistant  | No                | £24,495     | £26,325     | £30,200     | £33,450     |
| Architectural Technician | Yes               | £25,315     | £32,050     | £37,020     | £45,125     |
| Architectural Technician | No                | £22,745     | £27,275     | £30,060     | £36,825     |
| Project Architect        | Yes               | £35,125     | £40,015     | £44,895     | £50,160     |
| Project Architect        | No                | £30,890     | £35,220     | £40,135     | £45,400     |
| Interior Designer        | Yes               | £24,150     | £31,400     | £45,025     | £50,135     |
| Interior Designer        | No                | £20,225     | £27,500     | £41,490     | £47,995     |
| Interior Technician      | Yes               | £23,210     | £30,800     | £37,250     | £45,320     |
| Interior Technician      | No                | £20,100     | £28,200     | £38,950     | £40,550     |

## Rewards and lifestyle:





# BENEFITS

In 2017, we were asked by several employers to research and present what was happening with benefits in architecture and design. Employee benefits have become a hot topic amongst HR Managers and Directors of practices and many have recognised that this is an integral part of retaining current staff and attracting talent to their businesses.

63 London practices took part in the survey, who for consistency, provided details of base benefits (uninflated for length of service) for an Architect, Technician or Designer with 5 years' experience that had already passed probation.

When compiled, the data showed huge variations between statutory minimums and slightly or significantly enhanced benefits.

Holiday ranges from a minimum of 20 days, to a maximum of 28 with small and half of medium sized businesses offering, on average, the lowest amount of holidays to employees. Overtime pay is mostly at the discretion of the business with only 8% of the companies surveyed having a formal approach to overtime pay. When it comes to private healthcare, 14% offered this coverage to staff, with two covering the cost of family private healthcare. The same percentage of employers (14%) also offered death in service coverage. The majority of companies are running statutory level employer contributions to pension schemes and those who are going above and beyond are offering up to 5%.

The trends show that practices fall into four broad benefit categories based on their size;

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| SMALL                 | Very few enhancements to statutory minimums.   |
| MEDIUM ('NEW SCHOOL') | 63% offered enhanced holidays with an average of 23 days, and enhanced sick pay. 38% offer private healthcare, 50% offer enhanced pension and 38% offer a formal TOIL policy.                                      |
| MEDIUM ('OLD SCHOOL') | 20% offer enhanced holiday with an average of 20.4 days, 33% offer enhanced sick pay, only one offers private healthcare, 50% offer enhanced pension and just one offered a formal overtime/TOIL policy.           |
| LARGE                 | 64% offer enhanced holiday (27% offering 25 days) with an average of 22 days, 27% offer enhanced sick pay, 64% offer private healthcare, 73% offer enhanced pension and just under 50% offer a formal TOIL policy. |

“small and medium sized businesses offer, on average, the lowest amount of holidays to employees”

Across all categories and contributors, soft benefits such as social events, cycle to work schemes, summer and Christmas functions and team building trips are the norm, architecture and design offices are a social place to work.

Maternity pay is a big talking point with employers across the country, but how many firms offer more than statutory? Darnton commented: “One company offers full pay during standard maternity leave. The large majority, 71%, offer statutory maternity pay, the remaining businesses offering some kind of enhanced scheme. The range of enhanced schemes differs hugely, between 2 weeks full pay to 12 weeks at full pay.”

Why new school or old school? Practices falling into the new school category are overtly driving an employee-centred strategy to run their business, the old school practices are following a project-centred strategy to running their business.

Does that mean that working in a new school, old school, small or large practice is better? Definitely not... Just like pay, benefits are an emotive subject and are only part of the overall value proposition to an employee.

When it comes to benefits in architecture and design, there is no normal.

[www.frame-recruitment.com/2018review](http://www.frame-recruitment.com/2018review)

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