



Adesse's Tech Leaders: How to attract and retain top talent in Yorkshire *(without increasing salaries)*

"We're in this together as a group of people"

"We can't expect people to be robots"

Original research by Adesse

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We're delighted to share with you this report by Adesse Search. We've been hard at work filming interviews and conducting research with Tech Leaders in Yorkshire.

Series Two has focused on how companies can attract and retain their top talent, without resorting to inflating salary expectations.

As always, we've taken a candid look at the innovative ways leaders are trying to address this issue, with a focus on the personal lessons and triumphs our interviewees have experienced.

We hope you enjoy!

Watch all our videos now:

TAKE A LOOK

Here are some of the wonderful and inspiring Tech Leaders we've partnered with for this original research:



Mark Robinson

Development Delivery Manager at
StepChange Debt Charity



Zandra Moore

CEO of PanIntelligence



Andy Holland

Operations Director at Elementary Digital



Lucy Owens

Career Coach at Lucy Owens Coaching



Dan Akers

Co-founder of LightStart Apps



Rob Stanger

Director at Axiologik



Mike Stephens

Director at Ayup Digital



Charese Lock

Programme Manager at Lloyd's Banking Group

Hearts and Minds

Leeds-based StepChange Debt Charity is going through a massive Agile transformation at the moment. **Mark Robinson**, Development Delivery Manager has embraced a philosophy known as 'The Rider and the Elephant' to keep the development team steady in a time of tremendous change.

He explains, "The lesson is listening and understanding. Change is difficult (but good). It's vital to make sure people are bought in. The image of 'the rider' alludes to having a clear direction, whereas 'the elephant' refers to the heart and emotion - in order to embrace change, people have to want to do it."

He believes you need both for successful change, or indeed in any culture where an organisation is striving to improve what they do. The challenge is to stay unified and ensure people are empowered to do what they need to do.

Zandra Moore, CEO of PanIntelligence is equally passionate.

"Culture is huge for us. We have 3 values, being open, supportive and innovative. This means your voice is heard. We've found that if people feel listened to, it encourages trying and that leads to innovation."



Practise what you preach – being the boss

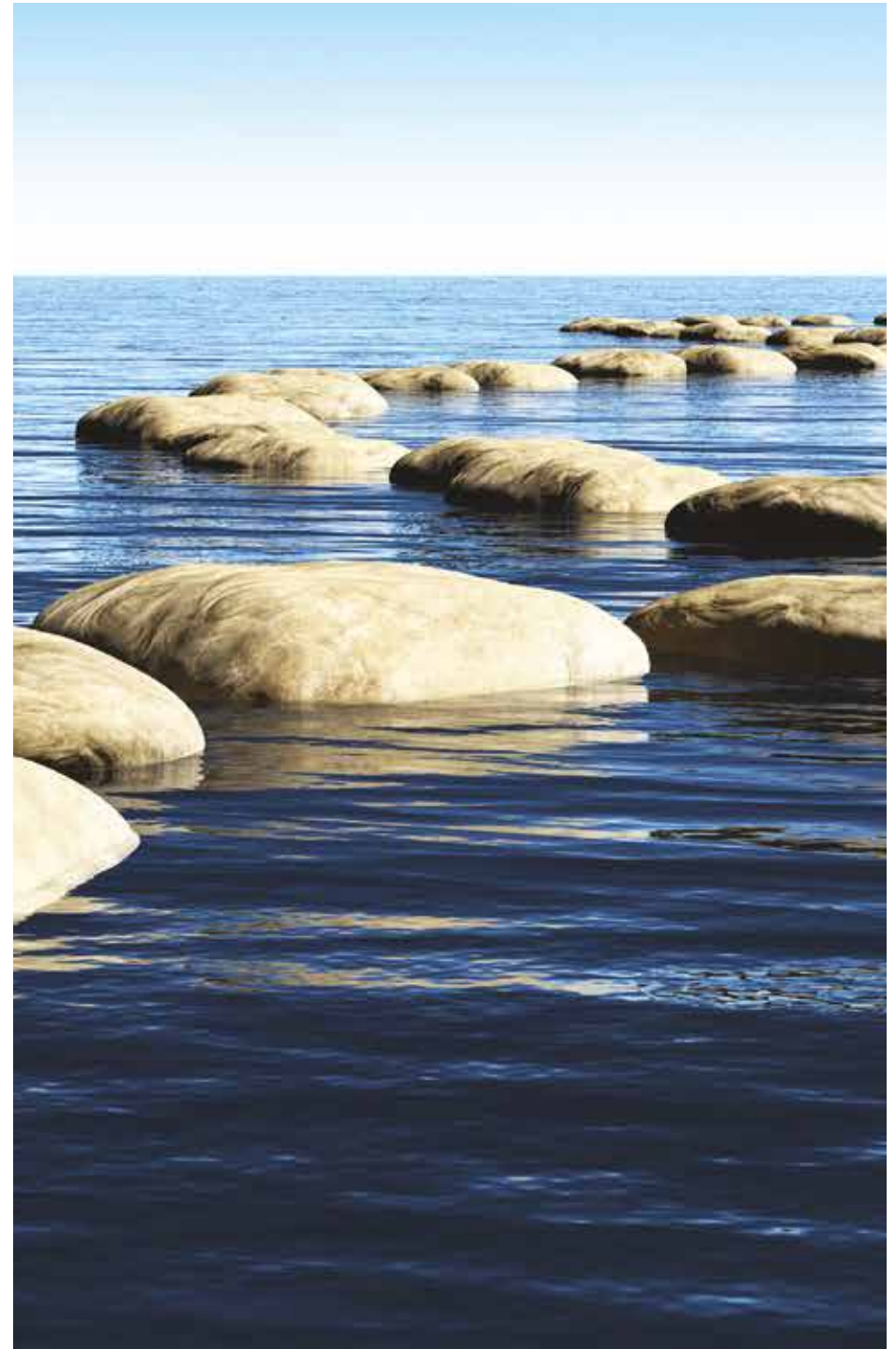
Zandra Moore reflects that, "I struggle to get the balance right, I'm being pulled in different directions – founder, owner, mum, wife... It helps that I really love my work, I want to be there, we're on an exciting journey. It's a choice. I don't get it right all the time."

Charese Lock, Programme Manager at Lloyd's Banking Group, quotes the infamous line, 'People don't leave their jobs, they leave their line managers'. She's interested in how we help people become excellent line managers. "We need to recognise what staff value, then build great working relationships. That is to say paying pro-active attention to what drives somebody and then manage them in a way that they get fulfilled."

For **Mike Stephens**, Director at Ayup Digital, the best management style is laid-back and relaxed. He maintains that's how you get the best of out of people rather than cracking the whip. "If you have trust, it's empowering."

Lucy Owens, Career Coach at Lucy Owens Coaching, explains a common issue. "It's about understanding your employees. Many people can't express their concern as they feel they might lose their job or tarnish their working reputation." Also, she asserts that two thirds of people are thoroughly disengaged with their boss.

She recommends that the **best question** for managers to ask their employees to build engagement and loyalty is, "What do you love doing?" or "When have you been most fulfilled?"



Flexibility

During the interviews, a recurring theme in increasing staff loyalty is offering flexibility.

01 **Mark Robinson** acknowledges his team are frequently targeted via LinkedIn, email and phone calls, which has inspired them to look at the working patterns they can offer. This has been a really successful way of ensuring staff commitment.

He's introduced 2 initiatives - 1) overtime at team's discretion, with control over their shift pattern and 2) as a team, to set their own hours, for example 9 day fortnight, 4 day condensed week. The onus is on the team to meet the demands of the business.

What's been massively surprising is that it has had no impact whatsoever on BAU or increased admin.

02 **Zandra Moore** says PanIntelligence have also thought long and hard about flexibility.

They try to offer more than a nice place to work. As a small employer they can't offer massive salaries, but rather try to work out what matters to individuals in order to care for and understand each person. Each stage of life is important, whether that's being parents, carers, or having health issues. They then work flexibility around personal circumstances.

03

New-kid-on-the-block Consultancy firm AxioLogik also has work/life balance at the core of its values.

Rob Stanger, one of the founding Directors asserts, "We are not a 'suit and tie, in the office 9-to-5' company, however when we're on client site it can be intense. Equally if it's a quiet time we're big believers in family time. As all three Directors have families, we know how stressful it can be, so we try to be empathetic - we can't expect people to be robots!"

04

Mike Stephens, believes that the digital and technology industry is ideal for creating a nice work/life balance and culture, taking inspiration from the likes of Google, with sofas and slides.

He feels it's important to treat people well with things like pensions but also make them feel valued and empowered. He embraces a philosophy of, "We're in this together as a group of people" and argues that as long as people get the work done it doesn't matter how and when.

Dan Akers, Co-founder, LightStart Apps has a different take on flexibility.

"We have a four day week, it's really important to bring people in line with our values, particularly work/life balance. I've fought hard to keep this 4 day working model as we grow."

In his opinion, even when people work five days, they only actually work four days as there is always some downtime or something else to do, meaning you get 4 quality days out of the 5 day week. Therefore at LightStart, all the team work 4 "intense" days. He believes you get the same output as a traditional week, except that you get a dedicated day off work.

05

06

Andy Holland, Operations Director, at Elementary Digital in Brighthouse agrees.

"Work/life balance is really important to us, we offer remote working and flexitime. It means that we have people that otherwise we wouldn't be able to hire. We have people right through the M62 corridor, from Hull to Liverpool. Practically as long as the work gets done we're happy. For example, we have one guy who does the school run then starts at 10am.

He picks the children up at 3, spends a couple of hours with them until his wife comes home then he works into the evening. Another guy on Wednesdays starts work at 2 PM so he can do childcare in the mornings. And then we have others that work 9 to 5:30."

Hiring for values

Technical skills can be learnt. What you can't teach is attitude and motivation. When you get the right values match between a company and an employee, it's powerful stuff.

"The digital revolution (in Yorkshire) is awesome. We've benefitted from massaging the talent pool, where people have had a great induction but (the company culture) isn't for them. We've benefitted from overspill from large corporates. Here, people can be a big fish in a small pond"



Zandra Moore
CEO, PanIntelligence

"We are trying to attract people not roles. We're a small business, so there may be crossover of several roles, there's an aspiration to grow towards a cooperative"



Dan Akers
Co-founder, LightStart Apps

"We look at why people want to work for the charity, their commitment. At the end of the day they can go home and feel good for making a difference"



Mark Robinson
Development Delivery Manager,
StepChange Debt Charity

"Every company has an ethos and ours is 'people over profit'. We aim to specialise in Social Good projects and Positive Impact projects. For example at the moment we're working on a Comic Relief funded project to rollout a national HIV testing system.

"It's been a journey to get here, but we put a focus on health as it's what we enjoy. There is a lot of satisfaction in positive change, not just turnover. 'Digital for Good'."



Mike Stephens
Director, Ayup Digital

Attracting a more diverse workforce

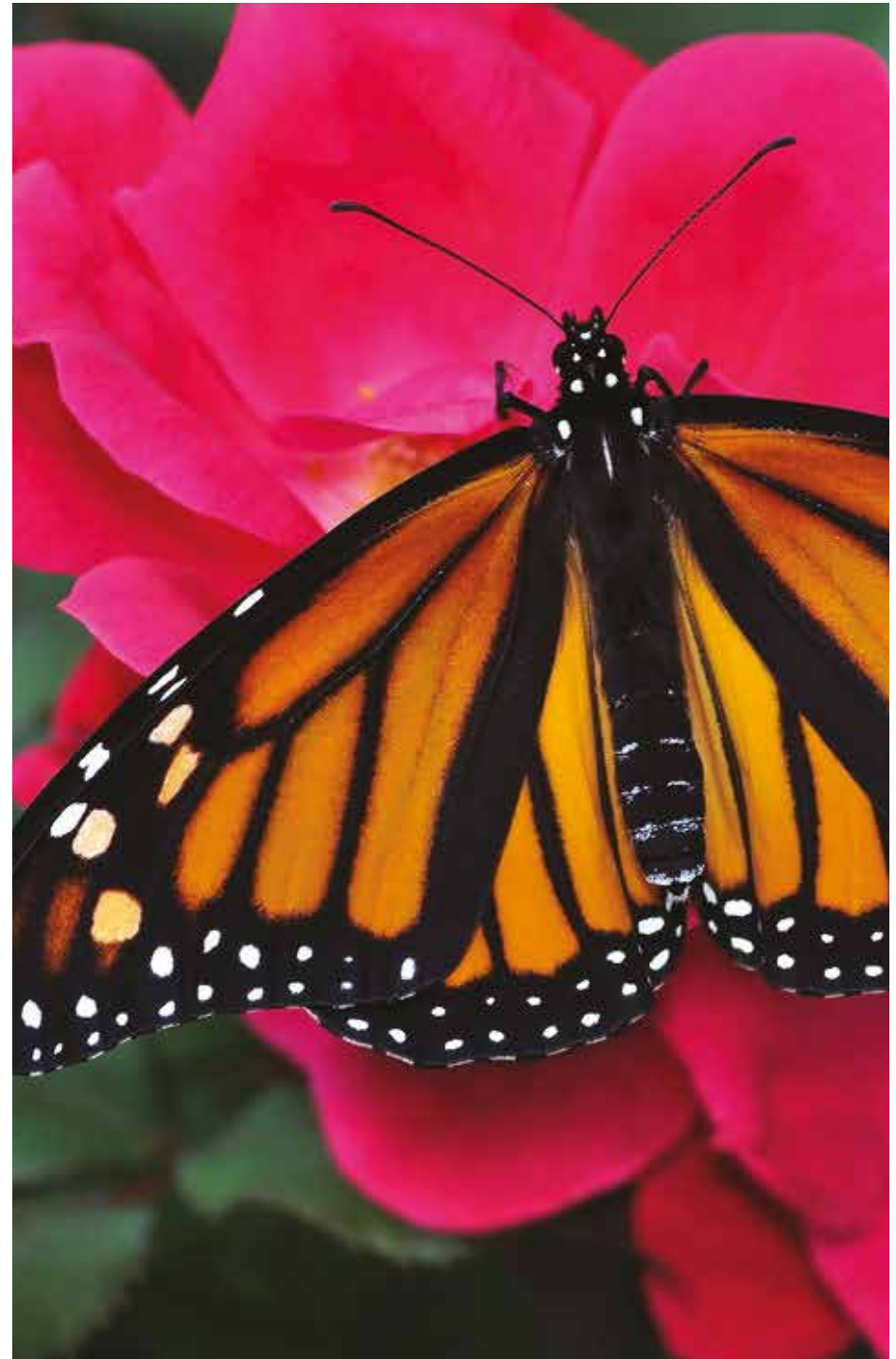
This is a topic **Charese Lock** from Lloyds is incredibly passionate about. She believes that schools and government policy means that often young people are offered no other option than higher education, and are funnelled down a certain route.

She argues, that you don't have to go to university to get a senior role (certainly her experience) and stresses the importance of apprenticeships and mentors. A great relationship with a professional mentor led to her own promotion last year.

Charese points to the continuing imbalance of women in technology roles. "It's an increasingly well-known statistic that women only apply for jobs if they meet 10 out of 10 of the criteria, whereas men are more likely to apply if they meet 6 out of 10."

For Charese, women need to improve their confidence, but she sees evidence that steps are being taken to improve numbers of women in STEM. "Lloyds Bank is rewording its job descriptions to take the corporate jargon and the technicalities out of the job description. Technical skills can be learnt but we want to attract the right talent. It's the people that make the difference in terms of the soft skills they bring."

Zandra Moore agrees, "We're trying hard to attract women but just aren't getting the applications."



Location, location, location...

Ayup Digital has just relocated to Leeds City Centre, from Hebden Bridge. As Director, **Mike Stephens** says, "It was a strategic decision with more opportunity to attract staff and a great Tech scene in Leeds."

Conversely, PanIntelligence strive to attract people out of Leeds, to their HQ in Yeadon. For them, (plus many of the Tech Leaders we work with, as well as us at Adesse), the trick is finding people who have no interest in commuting to the City Centre... Plus we can offer free parking!



When to let go

Rob Stanger proffers his thoughts on counter offers. In his experience they're a temporary measure. If you don't address the underlying reason, it just puts the problem off. It's important to understand your staff's personal and professional aspirations and create an environment where they can grow. "It's a weird thing - you want your staff to be as marketable as possible. Then they tend to want to stay"

Charese Lock raises the important topic of knowing when to let go of staff. In her view, sometimes it's not appropriate or desirable to keep hold of non-performing employees. Although it's important to keep on engaging and re-engaging with staff, if they're becoming 'plodders' or worse, disrupting what you're trying to achieve, maybe it's time to set them free.

Mike Stephens has a slightly more positive spin on it. "Everybody needs to move at some point, that's the flipside of growing. They have to be free to explore exciting stuff and we need to be honest and support that person."



First impressions count

Charese Lock, Programme Manager, Lloyd's Banking Group

- Don't forget interviews go both ways. Consider what happens when an interviewee walks through the door? What experience do we give people?
- Don't leave people waiting. Give them a warm welcome and make them desperate to work there. Set the right first example.

Mike Stephens, Director, Ayup Digital

- We have an FNAQ or our Frequently Not Asked Questions. It's a Handbook for staff which lists things in a fun way. The questions they're afraid to ask, for example "how do I answer the phone" or "whose turn is it to make a cup of tea?"

“Adesse is proud to have a relationship with the leaders featured in this report, but we’d love to partner with you too. Let’s start with a coffee, when’s good for you?”

Claire Ackers, Director of Adesse Search



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