

The recruitment *playbook*

How to become an agency ChatGPT names when employers ask who to use



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AI assistants recommend recruitment agencies with a clearly stated niche and published proof of it: dated salary guides, market notes and placement stories. They check that against REC or APSCo membership, trade press and reviews. Choose one niche to lead with, publish a dated salary guide for it and make your listings match.

For founders and managing directors of UK recruitment agencies, executive search firms and RPO providers.

Hiring managers still call the consultant who filled the last role. What has changed is what happens when the hiring manager is new, the role is new to the business or the finance director wants three agencies to compare. The first names now often come from an AI assistant. Forrester found in January 2026 that 94% of business buyers use AI somewhere in their buying process. Candidates do the same, asking which recruiters to trust.

For example, a medical devices founder asks ChatGPT which agencies specialise in quality and regulatory roles in UK medtech. She gets four names. Your desk has placed more quality leaders in medtech than any of them, and you are not on the list. Most agency websites are job boards with a short 'about us' and a list of sectors ending in 'and more', which gives an assistant nothing to separate one agency from the next.

94%

of business buyers use AI somewhere in their buying process

FORRESTER, JANUARY 2026

4x

how much more likely business buyers are than consumers to use Microsoft Copilot, which is built into Microsoft 365

FORRESTER, JANUARY 2026

11%

of AI answers include LinkedIn, and many cited posts had only 15 to 25 reactions

SEMRUSH, MARCH 2026

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The questions that decide *who gets the call.*

Employers name a function, a sector or a level, and often a place, and many ask about pay, law and process rather than agencies.

BUYER ASKS

Which recruitment agencies specialise in finance roles in Leeds?

BUYER ASKS

Which recruitment agencies are best for fintech roles in London?

BUYER ASKS

Retained or contingent search for a head of sales: which is better?

BUYER ASKS

What is the going salary for a senior quantity surveyor in Bristol?

BUYER ASKS

What does the Employment Rights Act mean for our probation periods?

BUYER ASKS

Is it worth using a recruiter now that AI tools can screen CVs?

BUYER ASKS

Which executive search firms place CFOs for private equity backed businesses?

BUYER ASKS

Is this recruitment agency good to work with?

TRY THIS Ask five of these in ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, Copilot and Perplexity, each in a fresh chat. Note who is named, and who is named instead of you. Answers vary from run to run, so only count a result that repeats.

How the assistants choose

01 A niche in plain words

'Permanent and interim finance recruitment for businesses in Yorkshire' can be matched to a question. 'Delivering talent solutions across multiple sectors' cannot.

02 Evidence you know the market

Salary data, market commentary and placement stories for that niche. Pay is one of the questions employers and candidates ask most, and assistants need a source.

03 Named consultants

Profiles that say which market each person covers and for how long. Twelve sectors with the same two paragraphs under each reads as a generalist with no depth.

04 Independent confirmation

REC or APSCo listings, trade press, client and candidate reviews and LinkedIn, all pointing the same way with the same name.

05 Earned, not bought

ChatGPT has shown labelled ads to UK users on its Free and Go plans since 11 August 2026, and OpenAI says ads do not change the answer. Being named in the answer is still earned.

The sources assistants *trust in your field.*

An assistant rarely names a firm on its own website's word. It looks for the same facts in places that have checked you independently. These are the ones that matter most for recruitment.

SOURCE	WHY IT COUNTS	WHAT TO DO
Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC)	Corporate members pass a compliance assessment every two years, and its directory is public.	Check your REC directory entry matches your website.
Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCo)	Members follow a Code of Conduct and pass a risk assessment every three years, and buyers can filter members by sector, specialism and region.	Set your sector, specialism and region tags in 'Find an APSCo Member' to match your niche.
AESC and Executive Grapevine	The AESC member firm directory is public and confirms standing in retained search.	Show your AESC membership on partner pages and keep your Executive Grapevine entry current.
APSCo OutSource	It is the trade association for recruitment process outsourcing, managed service providers and statement of work.	Show your membership on RPO service pages alongside programme case studies.
Companies House	It confirms the company behind the brand.	State the link between your registered company and your trading name on your site.
Recruiter, Recruitment International and your clients' sector titles	Trade press comment confirms you know a market from a source you do not control.	Offer comment under consistent names and bylines, in your clients' sector press as well as recruitment titles.
Google, Trustpilot and Glassdoor reviews	Client and candidate reviews shape the summary a hiring manager sees.	Ask clients and placed candidates for reviews that mention the niche in their own words.

Common mistakes

Listing every sector

Agencies that grow by adding desks often list twelve sectors with the same two paragraphs under each. To an assistant, that reads as a generalist with no depth anywhere.

Salary data locked in a PDF

Numbers in a PDF or an image are much harder for an assistant to read. Publish the guide as a web page, in prose as well as tables.

Out-of-date regulatory pages

Since 7 April 2026 the Fair Work Agency has taken over from the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate and the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority. Pages that still name the old bodies look stale.

Old names left live

Agencies that rebrand or merge desks often leave old names on directories and job boards, which gives the assistant two versions of the same firm.

Ten questions. *Be honest.*

-
- | | | | |
|-------|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 01 | Does your homepage opening name the one or two combinations of function, sector, level and region where you place most? | ☐ Yes | ☐ No |
| <hr/> | | | |
| 02 | Does each niche you lead with have its own page, naming the roles you fill? | ☐ Yes | ☐ No |
| <hr/> | | | |
| 03 | Have you published a salary guide for your main niche as a web page, with a method, a sample size and a date? | ☐ Yes | ☐ No |
| <hr/> | | | |
| 04 | Do you have at least five anonymised placement stories tied to your niche? | ☐ Yes | ☐ No |
| <hr/> | | | |
| 05 | Does each consultant have a profile that says which market they cover and for how long? | ☐ Yes | ☐ No |
| <hr/> | | | |
| 06 | Do your REC or APSCo listings use the same name, description and specialism as your website? | ☐ Yes | ☐ No |
| <hr/> | | | |
| 07 | Have you published a dated explainer on what the Employment Rights Act 2025 changes for your clients, with a 'last checked' date? | ☐ Yes | ☐ No |
| <hr/> | | | |
| 08 | Have you replaced every mention of the EAS or GLAA with the Fair Work Agency? | ☐ Yes | ☐ No |
| <hr/> | | | |
| 09 | Does your site explain how you charge, what changes the fee and what your guarantee covers? | ☐ Yes | ☐ No |
| <hr/> | | | |
| 10 | Do you ask every new client how they found you and record it in your CRM? | ☐ Yes | ☐ No |
-

Fewer than seven yeses means employers asking an assistant for an agency in your niche are probably being given other names.

What to do this month, *and next*.

This month

- 01 Choose the niche you lead with: the one or two combinations of function, sector, level and region where you place most and best, and rewrite your homepage opening to say so.
- 02 Publish a short salary guide from last year's placements in that niche, as a web page with a method, a sample size behind each range and a publication date.
- 03 Write one dated Employment Rights Act explainer covering the next twelve months for your clients, with a 'last checked' date and a link to the government timeline.
- 04 Write five anonymised placement stories: the kind of client, the role and why it was hard, how you ran the search, the outcome and a line from the client given with permission.
- 05 Match your name and description across Companies House, REC or APSCo, AESC if relevant, Google Business Profile, job boards and LinkedIn.
- 06 Replace any mention of the EAS or GLAA on your site with the Fair Work Agency.

The next ninety days

- 01 Split the Employment Rights Act material into three short pages: permanent hiring and the new qualifying period, temporary and contract clients on guaranteed hours and umbrella companies, and who enforces what.
- 02 Give executive search and RPO their own pages if you offer them: partner profiles and anonymised searches for retained work, and programme case studies with client-approved figures for RPO.
- 03 Explain retained against contingent on your own site, and say which model you offer.
- 04 Ask each consultant to write a short monthly LinkedIn article on their niche, and link to them from the agency's pages.
- 05 Set out your approach to the Conduct Regulations, the Agency Workers Regulations and IR35 plainly on the site.

How to tell it is working

- Track a fixed list of 20 to 50 questions your clients and candidates ask, each run several times a month in a clean session.
- Ask every new client how they found you and record the answer in your CRM.
- Count a win only when it repeats.
- Expect changes within weeks in assistants that search the web live, and months for answers drawn from a model's own memory.

Straight answers.

What is the average recruitment agency fee for a permanent hire in the UK?

Fees vary with the level of the role, the market, exclusivity and whether the search is retained or contingent. Permanent fees are most often a percentage of the candidate's first-year salary, with a rebate or replacement if the hire leaves early. A page explaining how you charge, what changes the fee and what your guarantee covers gives the assistant something accurate to quote.

Will publishing salary data upset our clients?

Rarely, if you publish ranges based on enough placements that nobody can be identified. Most clients welcome a credible benchmark, because it helps them set pay before they brief you. Say where the data comes from, how many placements sit behind it and when it was last updated.

Is it worth using a recruiter now that AI tools can screen CVs?

Yes, for roles where the best people are not applying. Screening tools sort applications that have already arrived. A good recruiter finds people who have not applied, judges fit and persuades them to move. Answer this question on your own site: what AI tools do in your process and what you do not trust them with.

Should our consultants post on LinkedIn, or should the agency?

Both, but consultants matter more. Semrush found in March 2026 that LinkedIn appears in about 11% of AI answers, articles make up 50 to 66% of LinkedIn citations, and many cited posts had only 15 to 25 reactions. A short monthly article from each consultant on their niche builds a record the agency's pages can link to.

helm⁺

Helm Club is a founder membership community, not a recruitment agency, but it shows how AI recommendations can become a real channel into a pipeline alongside LinkedIn and search.

1 in 5

new members this year came through an AI recommendation

PROBLEM	Between 40 and 50 per cent of founders who took a call joined. Only about four qualified calls a week reached the diary.
WHAT WE DID	Took ownership of every route to a call, from LinkedIn and search to AI assistants, paid per member added.
RESULT	One in five new members now arrives through an AI recommendation.

[READ THE CASE STUDY](#) ➤

helm⁺

The UK's M Club for Fou

Helm V

Exclusively
Originally The Supper Club, Helm is the UK
scale-up CEOs. With 400+ members averag
value in a

VISTAGE

✗ Established in 2006

The full guides, *free and dated*.

Why does ChatGPT recommend other recruitment agencies to employers?



What does ChatGPT tell candidates about working at my firm?



Does publishing our own research help ChatGPT recommend us?



Does ChatGPT prefer newer content, and how old is too old?



Why does ChatGPT describe my firm wrongly, and how do I fix it?



How do we find out whether ChatGPT is recommending our firm?



SOURCES

[Forrester, B2B buyers make zero-click buying number one \(January 2026\)](#)

[OpenAI, Testing ads in ChatGPT \(August 2026\)](#)

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[REC, The Fair Work Agency launches \(March 2026\)](#)

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[APSCo, Quality and compliance \(September 2026\)](#)

[Semrush, LinkedIn AI visibility study \(March 2026\)](#)



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