



# Talent-led transformation in a post-pandemic world

How can global business leaders deliver on ambitions of growth and reinvention?



regional analysis: **ASIA-PACIFIC**

boyden

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**In this regional analysis of Boyden's global report, *Talent-led transformation in a post-pandemic world*, we highlight findings and trends in Asia-Pacific with sector insight from Boyden partners.**

Business confidence in Asia-Pacific is broadly strong, with forecasts for GDP growth in 2022 at 5.7%. Variations across the region, involving Covid vaccine access, potential new variants, policy shifts, weak domestic demand, reliance on exports, supply bottlenecks and inflation, result in growth forecasts ranging from 3.2% in Japan and Singapore to 8.5% in India.<sup>1</sup>

Our study data show the majority of respondents, 70%, are very confident/confident in their organisation's growth potential through 2022, with 74% of all respondents in growth or expansion mode.

However, confidence in having the right talent to align with organisational strategy is much lower, with just 44% very confident/confident. Leaders are having to reinvent talent, which means revising talent strategies, investment, performance measurement, and the cultural environment.

Lack of alignment goes up to board level. Half of respondents believe a different matrix of skills is needed on the board. However, only a third of respondents expect to invest in board assessment, compared to 38% globally and 45% in North America.

Leadership development for high potentials is the top priority for investing in talent. Respondents in this region then place more emphasis on redeploying or retraining existing people than on hiring new talent. This correlates with concerns around recruitment, the increasing use of flexible, competency-based teams and more interim solutions.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nevertheless, there is an ongoing need for new talent, with 41% of respondents expecting an increase in hiring, particularly into operations roles, matched by a perceived need for more operational skills on the board.

How can organisations attract the best talent? Respondents point to a strong company reputation, purpose, and workplace of the future.

## SECTOR INSIGHTS:

**Consumer & retail** participants are more confident than the average, with 78% very confident/confident in their organisation's growth potential. This sector is more likely to hire more diverse and more globally focused executives. It is also the sector giving the most consideration to new approaches to measuring executive performance.

**Industrial** respondents are the least confident, with 58% very confident/confident in their organisation's growth potential. They are less likely to hire new leaders and more likely to hire interim managers. Talent retention is expected to be most challenging in the industrial sector.

**Professional services** is the most bullish sector, with 84% very confident/confident in their organisation's growth prospects. Yet it is also the sector with the greatest disparity in confidence: Only 37% are very confident/confident in having the right talent to align with strategy. Talent recruitment is expected to be most challenging in professional services, perhaps explaining why this sector places the highest emphasis on leadership assessment/development.



# Table of Contents



## 01. A barometer on confidence Pg. 5

+ Business approach; A closer look: business approach

## 02. The *right* talent Pg. 9

+ A closer look: the *right* talent; Reinventing talent; Performance measurement redefined

## 03. Hiring priorities Pg. 14

+ A closer look: hiring priorities; How to attract the best talent

## 04. Reinventing the board Pg. 18

+ A closer look: reinventing the board; Board assessment

## 05. Talent look ahead Pg. 23

+ A closer look: talent look ahead



Throughout this report, under the segment 'A closer look', we highlight key sector and leadership insights from Boyden experts across Asia-Pacific.

# 01.

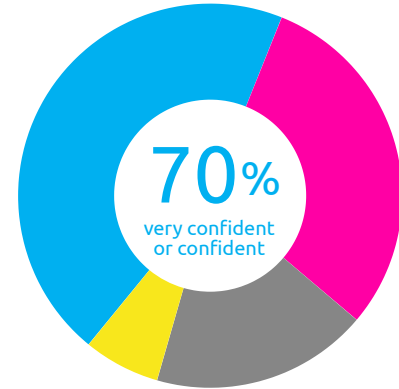


## A barometer on confidence



The majority of respondents in Asia-Pacific, 70%, are very confident/confident in their organisation's growth potential through 2022.

Respondents in professional services are the most bullish, with 84% very confident/confident, followed by consumer & retail with 78% very confident/confident. Industrial respondents are less confident than the average, with 58% very confident/confident in their organisation's growth potential.




Very confident (30%) Confident (40%)  
Somewhat confident (29%) Very unconfident (1%)

### SECTOR OUTLIERS:



## BOYDEN QUOTE



Amidst rising inflation, supply chain challenges, as well as Omicron and future Covid variants, the high optimism levels from APAC CEOs should be viewed in comparison to 2020. Managing uncertainty has become the norm. Many consumer and industrial companies are undergoing transformations in their business models centred on digitalisation to what could be an endemic normal.

*- Victor Filamor  
Boyden China and Singapore*



# Business approach



We asked respondents how they would describe their business approach. With confidence so high, 42% describe it as 'growth or expansion mode' and 32% as a 'learning or transformation opportunity'; 9% have 'already adapted to the new environment'; 13% are 'waiting to get back to normal' and 4% are in 'survival mode'. The region scores highest compared to others in 'waiting to get back to normal'. From a sector perspective, technology leads 'growth or expansion' in both Asia-Pacific and Europe, while industrial appears more often in 'survival mode,' with the lowest talent confidence and highest need for different skills in the boardroom.

42%

growth or expansion mode

Led by technology sector

32%

learning or transformation opportunity

Led by financial services sector

9%

already adapted to the new environment

Led by social impact sector

13%

waiting to get back to normal

Led by healthcare & life sciences sector

4%

survival mode

Led by industrial sector



# A closer look: business approach

Boyden experts comment on sector-specific outlooks:



## FINANCIAL SERVICES

Due to the pandemic, every industry has changed and financial services is no exception. It is experiencing a massive shift based on data and investment in digital technology. Internal corporate functions are being transformed, offering an opportunity to advance client-centric strategies and efficient business models, with a flexible workforce combining onsite, remote and virtual working.

- Krista Espaldon  
Boyden Singapore and China



## SOCIAL IMPACT

The emergence of post-Covid business models is coinciding with the return of talent mobility. We anticipate a thirst among higher education and not for profit organisations for leaders with an international understanding of their sector and the ability to differentiate their organisation in approach, offering and delivery.

- Alun Parry, Boyden Australia



## HEALTHCARE & LIFE SCIENCES

For healthcare and pharmaceutical businesses, the pandemic created tremendous growth opportunities, but patients are the ultimate concern. Beyond Covid, we are keen to see the focus back on treating patients with other diseases that require equal medical attention, because we are all in this business to alleviate human suffering.

- Ivan Lim  
Boyden Singapore and China





# 02.

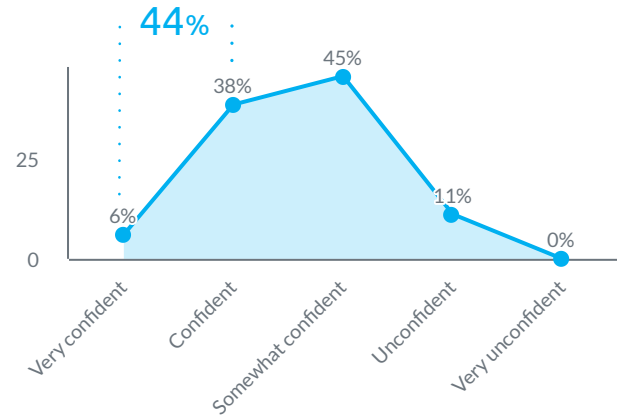


## The *right* talent



### Do organisations have the right talent in place?

While 70% of respondents are very confident/confident in their organisation's growth potential, just **44%** are very confident/confident that they have the right talent to align with organisational strategy. This breaks down to just 6% who are very confident and 37% who are confident.



### + Sector analysis reveals concerning gaps:

#### Professional Services

84% .....> 37%

are very confident/confident in growth potential  
are very confident/confident in having the right talent

#### Consumer & Retail

78% .....> 53%

are very confident/confident in growth potential  
are very confident/confident in having the right talent

#### Industrial

58% .....> 21%

are very confident/confident in growth potential  
are very confident/confident in having the right talent



# A closer look: the *right* talent

With growth potential under threat from a lack of alignment between talent and strategy, Boyden partners share their perspectives:



## PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Generated by US-China political uncertainties and the global pandemic, professional services, particularly legal, are meeting higher demands in banking and finance, private equity, private wealth, restructuring, investigations and dispute resolution. An already tight supply of talent is currently exacerbated by travel restrictions in Hong Kong, Singapore, China and the rest of Asia.

- Caroline Lim, Boyden China



## CONSUMER & RETAIL

The consumer sector continues its huge digital/ecommerce transformation. Given rapid digital adoption and increases in digital consumption, an online presence is a 'must have' for organisations in addition to offline. Talent that supports this presence, both back-end and front-end, is in demand and will shape the future of FMCG.

- Shalini Kandhari, Boyden India



## INDUSTRIAL

Industrial clients are seeking talent in renewables, and in digital transformation. The electric vehicle industry and charging infrastructure is growing rapidly, and the expertise needed is in short supply. Digitalisation skills are being sought across all industries transforming to Industry 5.0; R&D talent is universally in demand and being acquired globally.

- Dinesh Mirchandani, Boyden India



# Reinventing talent

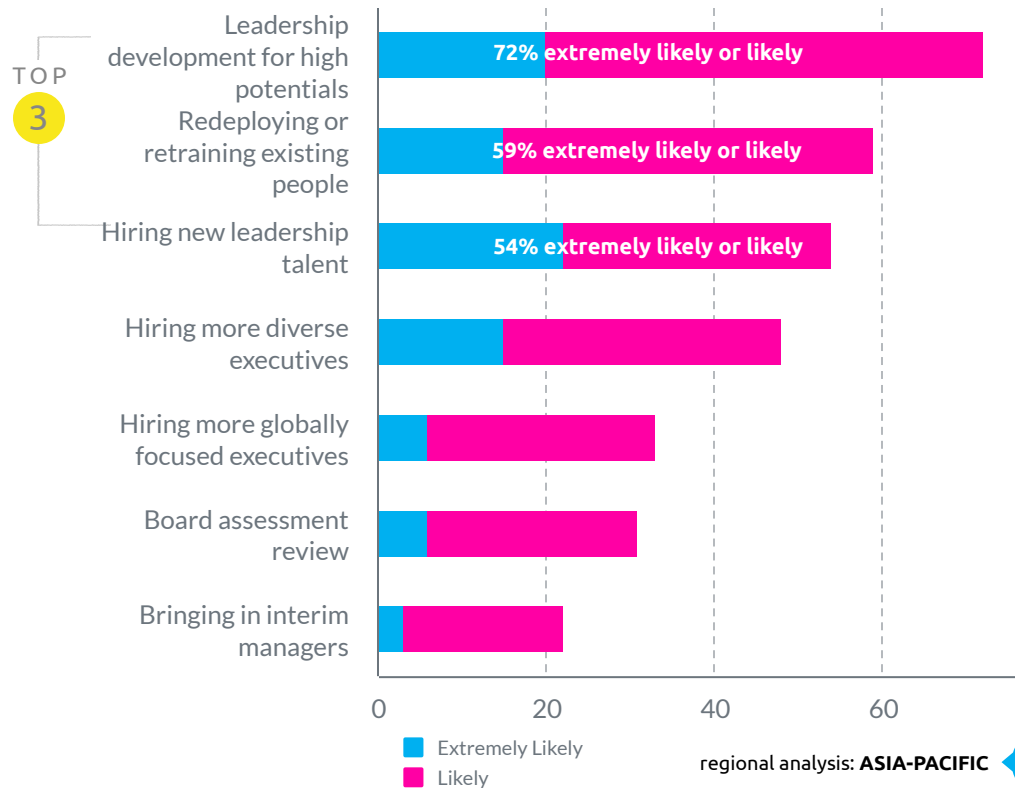


We asked respondents how likely they are to make talent-related investments through 2022. Results indicate investment is directed towards the lack of alignment with strategy:

While the results overall are in line with global responses, there are interesting sector differences:

➤ **Consumer respondents** are *more likely* to hire more diverse executives, with this being their third priority (56% vs 50% APAC average); and *more likely* to hire globally focused execs (41% vs 33% APAC average).

➤ **Industrial respondents** are *less likely* to hire new leaders (46% vs 56% APAC average); and *more likely* to hire interim managers (29% vs 22% APAC average).



# Performance measurement redefined

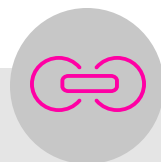


Lack of alignment is also being addressed through different approaches to measuring performance. We asked, **'In this disrupted environment, is your organisation considering new approaches to measuring executive performance?'** In Asia-Pacific, 44% answered yes, compared with 51% globally.



The pandemic has created a new paradigm in understanding the relationship between performance measurement, organisational culture and business results. This is revealed in the motivations for redefining performance measurement, with a strong focus on behaviour. Asia-Pacific is distinctive in focusing on the use of flexible, competency-based teams, the second driver in this region. "Covid fractured our society, driving leaders to search for the core and critical drivers of sustainability and success in this new reality. Leaders are increasingly focusing on the real culture and capability in their organisations, the real 'People P & L'. This is the new performance metric for our new world." - Barry Bloch, Boyden Australia

The **top five drivers** for redefining executive performance in Asia-Pacific are:



Aligning culture and behaviours with business objectives

64%



Increased use of flexible, competency-based teams

50%



Incentive targets and other KPIs for remuneration and promotion

48%



Enhanced communications

43%



Fostering an innovative environment

36%





The last two years have shown that a company's most valuable asset, its people, has become its most vulnerable asset. Leadership development, previously considered 'nice to have', is now seen as an existential strategy. Organisations which are focusing on the people side of transformation, through assessing, developing or retraining leadership traits are gaining a competitive advantage.

- Petra Owusu  
*Boyden China and Singapore*



# 03.



## Hiring priorities



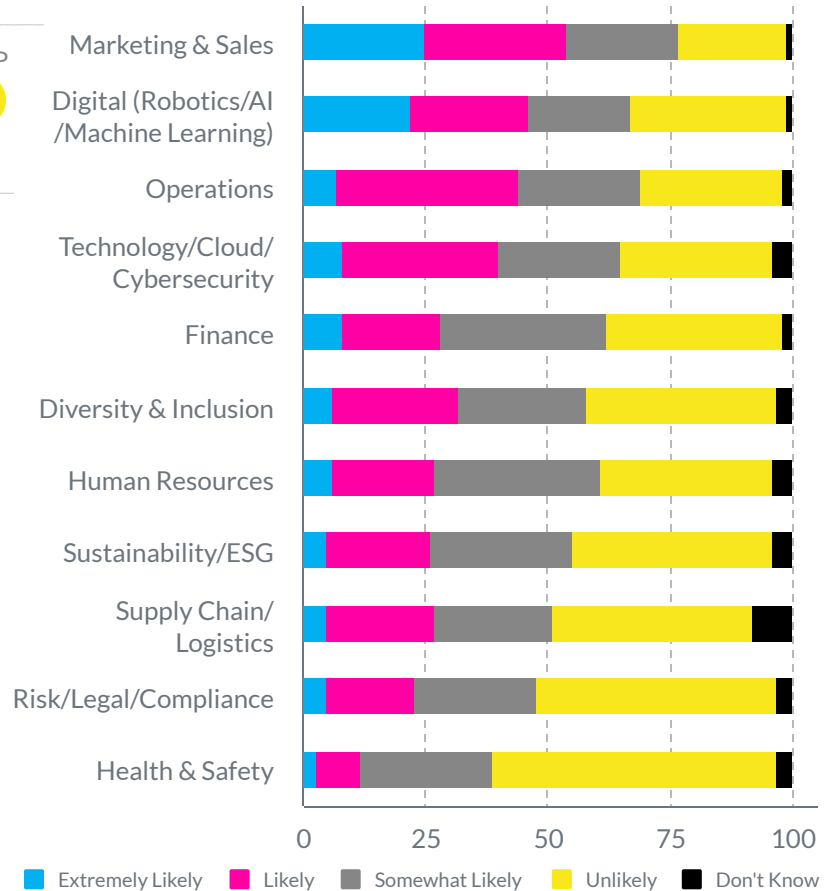
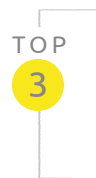
After leadership development for high potentials, and retraining/redeploying talent, **hiring new leadership talent** is the third priority for talent-related investment; 54% of respondents indicate they are extremely likely/likely to make this investment.

**Into which leadership roles are they hiring?** Marketing & sales and digital roles are global priorities. However, Asia-Pacific is distinctive in having operations as the third priority; 44% of respondents are extremely likely/likely to hire into this area.



### Globally, top 3 areas for hiring are:

1. Marketing & sales
2. Tech/cloud/cybersecurity
3. Digital (robotics/AI/machine learning)



# A closer look: hiring priorities

Responses reveal some areas of concern. Critical roles such as DEI and ESG leaders receive limited attention, and with disruption in the global supply chain, organisations remain exposed. Hear from Boyden experts:



## DIVERSITY (DEI)

While there is gender diversity at director and C-level, particularly in companies with double-digit growth, many companies continue to focus solely on traditional competencies rather than including diversity per se. Today, given there is greater emphasis placed on communication skills and culture, along with a customer-centric mindset, having a recruitment strategy with a lens on diversity can prove to be a competitive advantage.

- Tanya Lau, Boyden China



## ESG

This research confirms what we know from experience: Purpose drives talent. The environmental, social, and governance framework of an organisation is a strong magnet for both attracting talent and for retention. Candidates aren't interested in working for companies that don't have purpose built in, especially in the era of this pandemic.

- Gary Ong, Boyden Indonesia



## SUPPLY CHAIN

Disruption in the global supply chain has been a widespread consequence of the pandemic. While the data suggests hiring supply chain leaders is not a priority, we see a need to augment technology and digital teams to address myriad issues, including supply chain. We anticipate more tech savvy leaders being hired into supply chain roles.

- William J. Farrell,  
Boyden Taiwan and South Korea

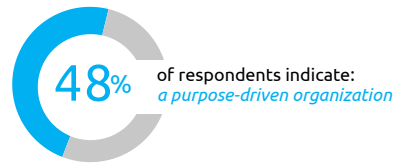


# How to attract the best talent

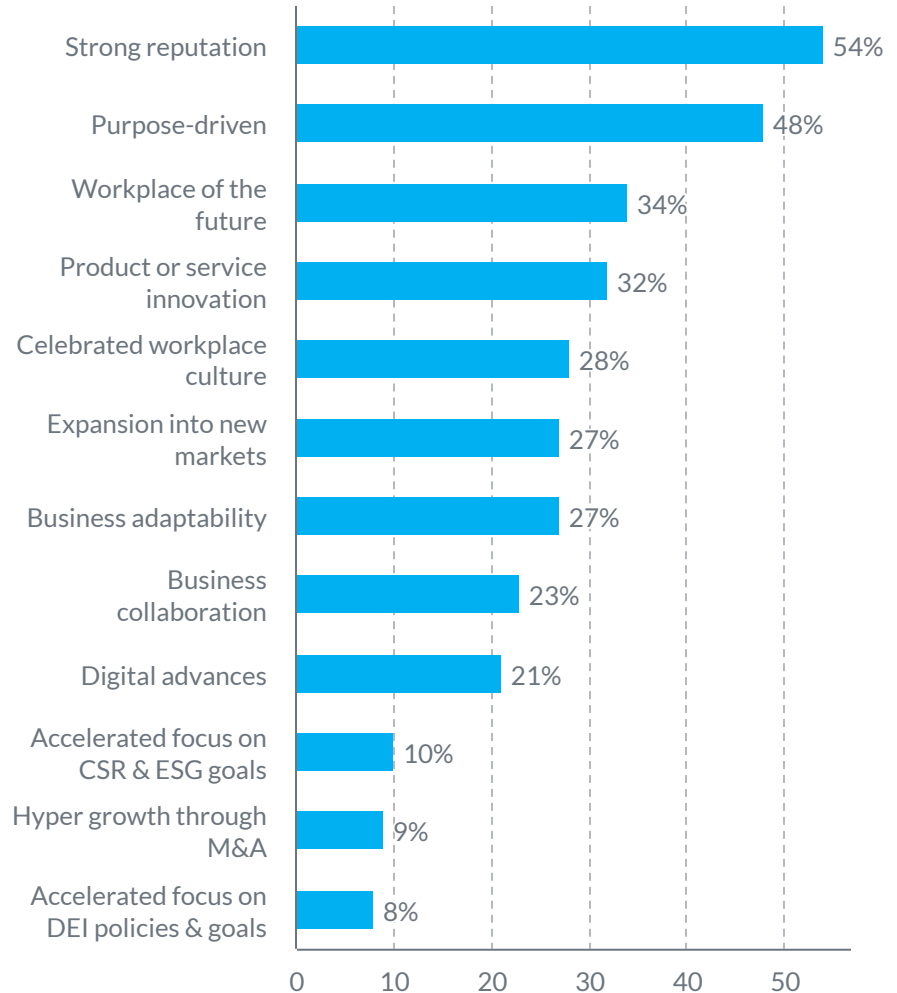


In hiring into these mission-critical areas, how can companies attract the best talent?

Two very clear factors stand out:



By sector, results are fairly consistent, except in **financial services**, which counts 'digital advances' among the top three factors in attracting the best talent.





## BOYDEN QUOTE



Japan's ageing population, low birth rate and culture of life-long employment promotes a raging war for talent, particularly among healthcare & life sciences organisations developing Covid vaccines and treatment therapies. To attract talent, Western companies use pay-for-performance or work-life balance. In Japan, successful companies know a solid corporate reputation is the single most important factor.

*- Stephen L. Irish, Ph.D.  
Boyden Japan*



# 04.



## Reinventing the board



**When reviewing current board composition, is a different matrix of skills needed to guide future organisational direction and growth?**

50%

Yes 50%

No 25%

Unsure  
25%

Inadequate alignment of talent goes right up to board level, with half of respondents saying a different matrix of skills is needed on the board and a high proportion, at 25%, saying they are unsure. One quarter, 25%, think the skills matrix does not need to change.

From a **sector perspective**, 60% of **industrial** respondents think a different matrix of skills is needed on the board. However, only 33%, matching the regional average, are extremely likely/likely to conduct a board assessment review.

**Publicly quoted** organisations also see that a different board matrix of skills is needed, with 60% of respondents in agreement; only 37% are extremely likely/likely to conduct a board assessment review.



# A closer look: reinventing the board

Boyden's board experts are working closely with clients to review board compositions as business, innovation and talent strategies accelerate out of the peak of the pandemic:



## INDUSTRIAL

The evolving global business environment needs board directors to mentor, guide and complement management in the long term. But in Asia, an emphasis on governance has broadened board director responsibility and accountability. For example, specific skills and experience in HR and finance were essential, additional capabilities for two high-profile board assignments we recently completed.

- Abhay Joshi, Boyden India



## TECHNOLOGY

A key objective for the right matrix of skills among board members, particularly among fast-growth tech-driven organisations, is creating boards that understand the sensitivities and clear differences in the cultural background of each country in the Asia-Pacific region. This is especially important among Southeast Asian countries where tech capabilities are so strong.

- Seiji Iwamura, Boyden Thailand



## PRIVATE EQUITY & VENTURE CAPITAL

ESG as a driver of value creation is commanding more attention on the board agenda, with major sustainability trends – circular economy, net zero and clean technologies – creating investment opportunities. Professional diversity and diversity of perspectives also requires more social diversity in race, nationality and age, along with need for broader business acumen skills in ESG, risk management and strategy.

- David Law Man Co, Boyden China





The need for different skills reflects major organisational change. For example, in chemicals, organisations are developing innovation engines built on exceptional research & development, requiring board expertise and the best global R&D talent. They are also bringing in stronger supply chain leaders. Private equity firms that acquired family-run businesses are also strengthening their leadership teams.

- Nita Keswani  
Boyden India



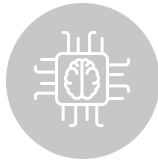
# Board assessment



Just one third, **33%** of respondents, are extremely likely or likely to invest in a board assessment review. This compares to 38% of global respondents, 45% of respondents in North America, and 33% of respondents in Europe.



Respondents in Asia-Pacific cite a comprehensive list of required skills, indicating the need for a vital recalibration of the board. They point to the need for more global experience, understanding and thinking, with more data-driven leaders and a need for senior executives who can build people capability, as well as skills in: *innovation, DEI, digital/AI, sustainability/ESG, tech mindset, sourcing, merchandising, design, transformation, new business models and investment planning.*



## BOYDEN QUOTE



Increasingly boards are seeking external support to undertake reviews and obtain feedback from directors and key management to assess the effectiveness of the board as a working cohort. Chairs previously resistant to this are rapidly changing their views as they strive for a higher level of board functionality and effectiveness. We see this pattern continuing.

*- Allan Marks  
Boyden Australia*



# 05.

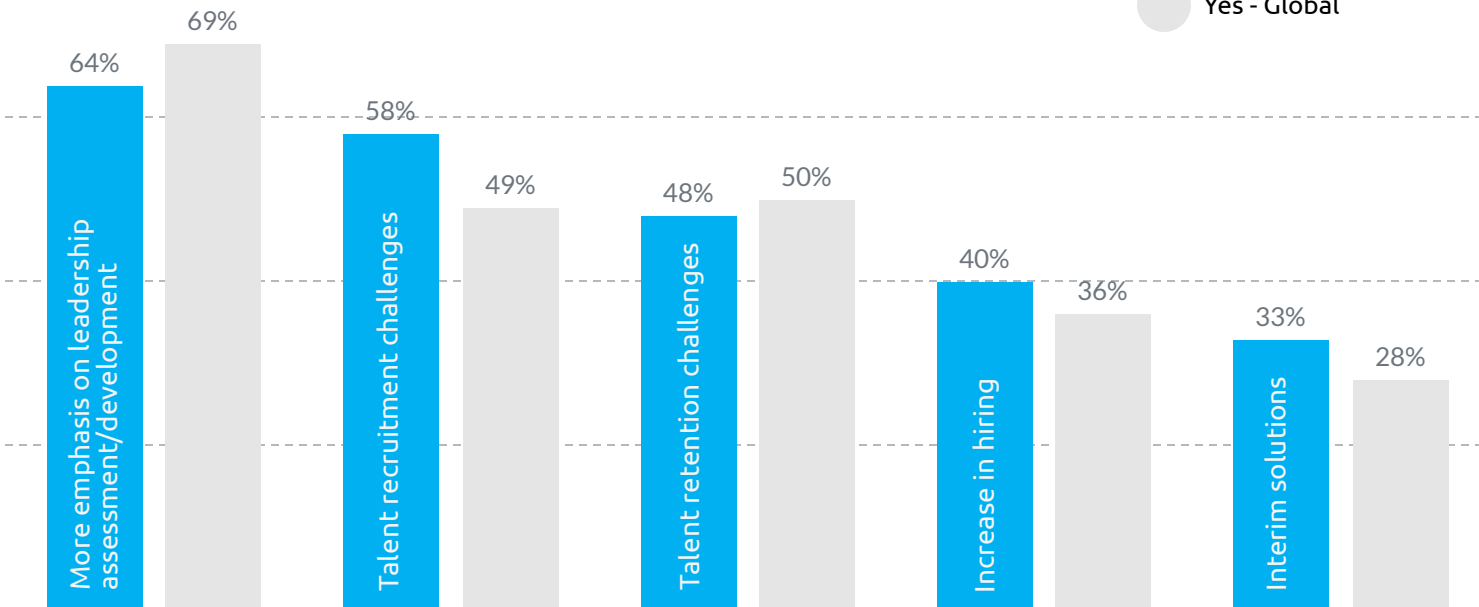
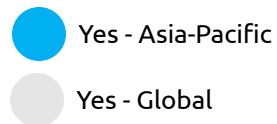


## Talent look ahead



In looking ahead, we asked respondents what talent-related initiatives or issues they anticipate through 2022. Those in Asia-Pacific are particularly concerned about talent recruitment and anticipate greater use of interim managers.

*Do you expect to experience any of the following?*



# A closer look: talent look ahead

Boyden experts weigh in:



## FINANCIAL SERVICES

China is one of the biggest fintech markets in the world and job opportunities are booming. As fintech continues to drive transformation worldwide, the need for young and ambitious talent will grow. Building and maintaining talent pools will be key to providing the right skills and keeping pace with the market.

- Veronica Wong, Boyden China



## HUMAN RESOURCES

Talent shortage is a pressing issue in Asia-Pacific, caused by a reduced inflow of international talent, and executives in the region being less open to change. Leaders need to make hiring decisions faster, be open to paying more, or consider less experienced candidates, which is driving investment in leadership development programmes.

- Mirko Petrelli  
Boyden Singapore and China



## SOCIAL IMPACT

Many of our university clients approached the challenges of the pandemic by restructuring and prioritising digital transformation. In today's more optimistic environment, the need for senior strategic leadership across the sector has created a competitive market, alleviated by interim management while the right leader can be identified, engaged and hired.

- Philip Graham, Boyden Australia





# A closer look: talent look ahead



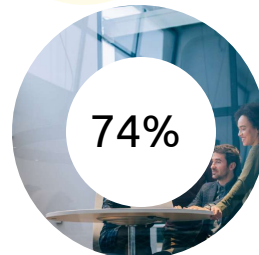
Through 2022, as many as 64% of respondents expect to see more **emphasis on leadership assessment/development**, correlating with the expected investment in leadership development for high potentials, at 72%.

Challenges in **talent recruitment** are expected by 58% of respondents compared with the 49% global average. **Retention challenges** are globally consistent. An increase in **hiring** is expected by 40% of respondents in Asia-Pacific, compared with 36% of global peers. Nearly a third expect to see more emphasis on **interim solutions**, above the 28% global average and in line with concerns over talent recruitment.

## Sector breakdown reveals:

- Emphasis on leadership assessment/development is at its highest in professional services (83%)
- Talent recruitment is expected to be most challenging in professional services (68%)
- Talent retention is expected to be most challenging in industrial organisations (57%) . In addition, 50% of respondents within the industrial sector expect an increase in executive talent hiring.

## Organisation type breakdown reveals:



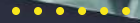
74% of respondents in private, family-owned businesses expect executive talent recruitment challenges.



63% of respondents in private, family-owned businesses expect challenges in talent retention.



38% of respondents in both publicly quoted and private independent organisations emphasise interim solutions.



Identifying, assessing and acquiring the right leadership is more important today than ever, requiring sector expertise, AI and high-level market experience. With the Great Resignation disrupting talent planning, hiring for potential, beyond experience, is critical. Companies with a strategic, structured and agile approach have the best chance of achieving their societal aspirations and growth objectives.

*- Neil Morrison  
Boyden China and Singapore*



# CONCLUSION

Respondents in Asia-Pacific are distinguished by their sharper focus on global capabilities, experience and mindset, reflecting a quest to understand fast-paced shifts and opportunities in the global economy.

The need for a different, more wide-ranging matrix of skills on the board calls for a comprehensive strategic review, as well as a full board assessment, while recruitment concerns prompt questions around talent pipelines, recruitment and retention strategies.

From our research, the consumer & retail sector is arguably the most progressive and forward looking, while the industrial sector is grappling with change, how to identify the right leaders and retain talent. Professional services is particularly bullish, but in need of a comprehensive review of talent and recruitment to take advantage of market opportunities.

As business leaders enter their third year of Covid-based disruption, with all the associated pressure on leadership capabilities and personal stamina, 'self-leadership' has never been more important. Modelling self-preservation to colleagues is paramount, as is leaning on external partners who have the expertise and dedication to clients to help deliver talent-led transformation.

Boyden Global Study

Methodology & Demographics

# REPORT CONTRIBUTORS



**Barry Bloch**  
Partner, Australia



**Krista Espaldon**  
Principal,  
Singapore and China



**William J. Farrell**  
Managing Partner, Taiwan  
and South Korea; APAC  
Leader, Industrial Practice



**Victor Filamor**  
Partner, China and Singapore  
APAC Co-Leader,  
Consumer & Retail Practice



**Philip Graham**  
Principal, Australia



**Stephen L. Irish, Ph.D.**  
Managing Partner,  
Japan



**Seiji Iwamura**  
Partner, Thailand



**Abhay Joshi**  
Partner, India



**Shalini Kandhari**  
Partner, India



**Nita Keswani**  
Partner, India



**Tanya Lau**  
Partner, China

# REPORT CONTRIBUTORS



**David Law Man Co**  
Partner, China  
APAC Leader, Private Equity  
& Venture Capital Practice



**Caroline Lim**  
Partner, China



**Ivan Lim**  
Partner, Singapore and China  
APAC Leader, Healthcare &  
Life Science Practice



**Allan Marks**  
Managing Partner, Australia  
APAC Leader, CEO & Board  
Services Practice



**Dinesh Mirchandani**  
Managing Partner,  
India



**Neil Morrison**  
Managing Partner, China and  
Singapore; Global Sector Co-  
Leader, Infrastructure &  
Transportation



**Gary Ong**  
Managing Partner,  
Indonesia



**Petra Owusu**  
Principal,  
China and Singapore



**Alun Parry**  
Managing Partner,  
Australia



**Mirko Petrelli**  
Managing Partner, Singapore and  
China; APAC Leader, HR Practice



**Veronica Wong**  
Partner, China