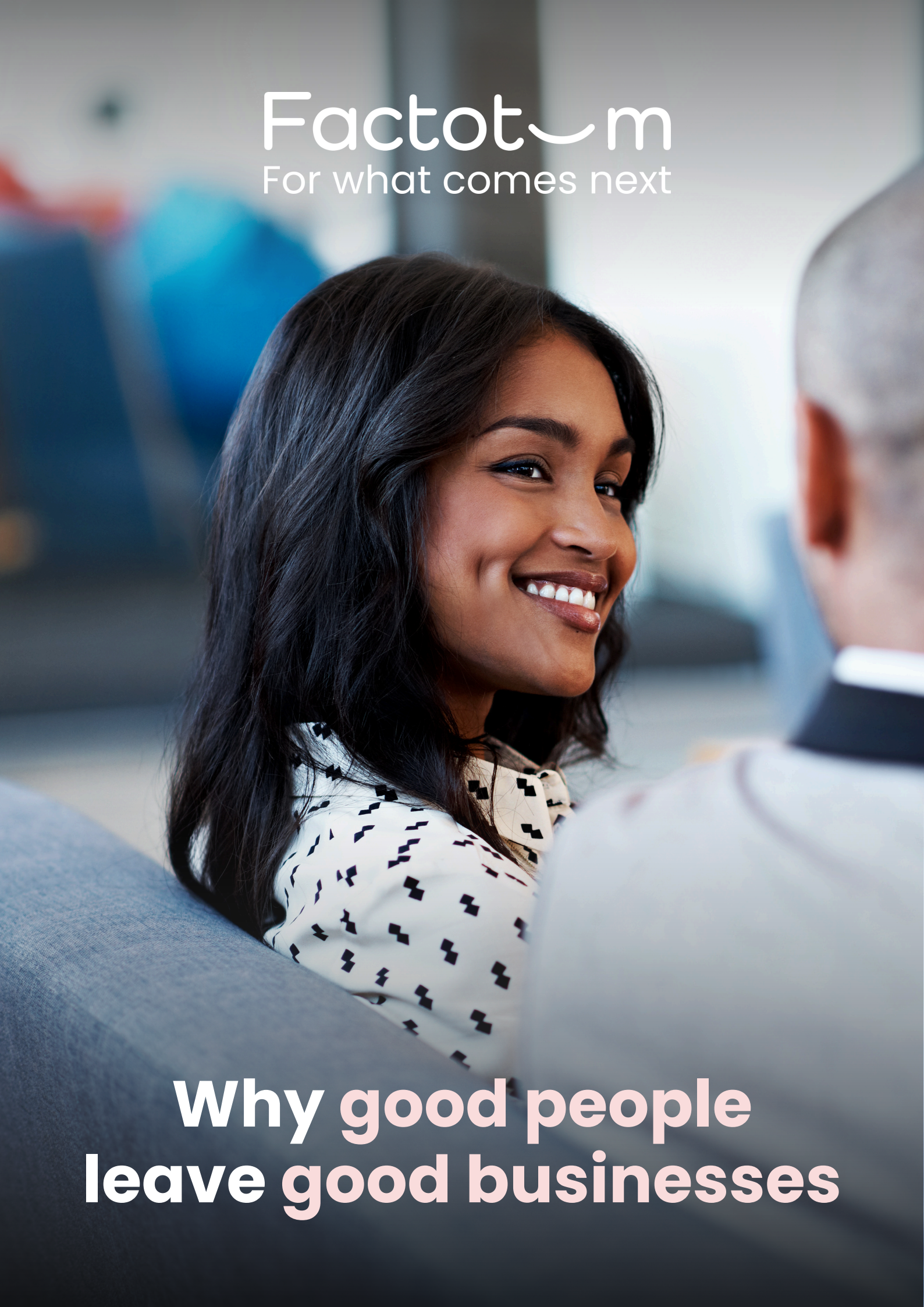
Factotum
For what comes next
Why good people leave good businesses

INSIDE THIS GUIDE

Good people rarely leave in a single moment.

FOREWORD

Resignation is the last step in something that started weeks or months earlier. A hire that was never quite right. A first six months nobody reviewed. Two years with no next step.

Some of the signs are surprising. People who are planning to leave often stop taking holiday. They save it up, as a buffer between jobs or to be paid for it when they go. HR can see that pattern. Payroll usually only sees it in the final pay, when it's too late.

This guide follows that path, with four people who each see a different stretch of it:

- **Lucie** on talent services
- **Richard** on finance and accountancy hiring
- **Angie** on HR
- **Theresa** on payroll

Each section ends with things you can try this week.

Read it in order, or jump to the window that sounds most like your business right now. Copy any of the tools. That's what they're for.

A note on the numbers. Where we quote data, the source is on the page and on the sources page at the back. Where a number is one expert's estimate from their own work, we say so.

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1 THE SITUATION

Your people are staying put. For now.

The market is quiet. People who might have moved are sitting tight.

707,000

UK vacancies, May to July 2026. The lowest outside the pandemic period since 2014.

ONS labour market overview, August 2026

24%

of UK workers still want to move jobs this year. Feeling underpaid is the top reason.

Ciphr and OnePoll, 2,000 employees, February 2026

41%

of HR professionals say they have seen new recruits leave within their first 12 weeks.

CIPD and Omni, resourcing and talent planning report, 2024

Some of that is loyalty. Some of it is a queue. When the market picks up, the people you've been taking for granted will be the first to take the recruiter's call.

By the time someone hands in their notice, the decision is weeks or months old. The letter is paperwork. So the useful question is not why they left, it's **when you could have seen it coming.**

Four windows to see it coming, then the notice

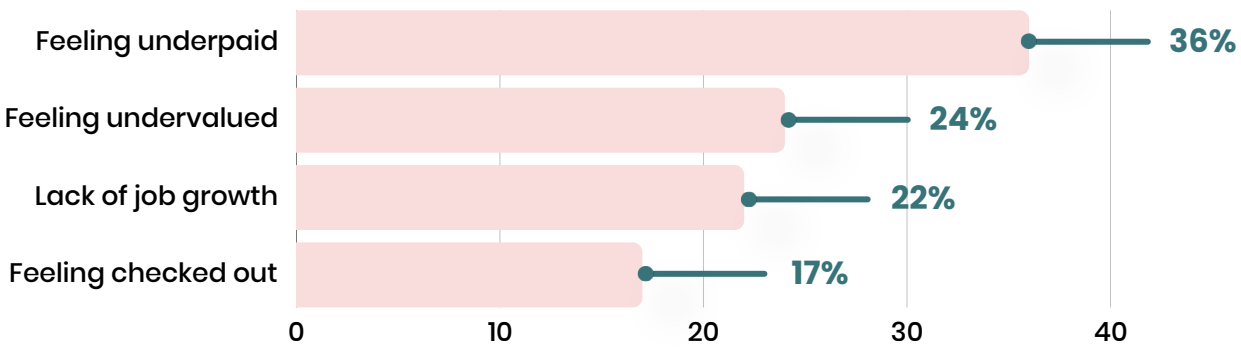
One
Before day one
Lucie, recruitment

Two
First six months
Angie, people

Three
Two to three years
Richard, finance hiring

Four
The quiet signals
Theresa, payroll

Why people say they want to move (share of those wanting to move)



Source: Ciphr and OnePoll survey of 2,000 UK employees, 4 to 8 February 2026.

READING BETWEEN THE LINES

- **Pay still matters most.** Richard, who places finance and accountancy staff, says nine times out of ten, people move for more money.
- **Recognition and growth are close behind**, and they cost far less to fix.
- **The quiet market is hiding the problem.** Some people only stay because there is nowhere better to go yet. In a normal year, about a third of UK employees change employer or leave work (CIPD analysis of ONS data).

2 WHAT A LEAVER REALLY COSTS

Most owners count the recruiter's fee. It is usually the smallest number.

Losing someone costs you four times over, and most of it never appears on an invoice.

THE COST	WHAT TO COUNT
Finding them	The fee or advert cost, plus the hours you spend reading CVs and interviewing.
The empty seat	The output you lose while the role is unfilled, the overtime or agency cover you pay for, and colleagues absorbing the work.
Getting them up to speed	Training and onboarding time, theirs and yours, and the weeks before they work at full pace.
Getting it wrong twice	If the replacement leaves too, you pay all of it again.

EXPERT VIEW — **RICHARD, ACCOUNTANCY ACTION**

Counteroffers are common. A candidate hands in notice and the employer adds £5,000 or £6,000 to keep them. It feels expensive. But replacing that person can cost £10,000 to £12,000, so the counteroffer is often the cheaper option.

EXPERT VIEW — **LUCIE, HEAD OF TALENT SERVICES**

For a critical hire, an empty seat can cost around £5,000 a week in lost output. Take eight or nine days to make an offer, lose the candidate and spend three more weeks searching, and that is about £15,000. Lucie's view: it is cheaper to understand the hire at the start than to fix it at the end. (These are Lucie's own estimates.)

Work out your own number:

LINE	YOUR FIGURE
Weekly value of the role to your business	£
Weeks it is empty (notice period plus time to hire)	
Cover costs: overtime, agency, contractors	£
Recruitment cost: fee, adverts, your time	£
Training and ramp-up: their time and yours	£
Total cost of one leaver	£

EXPERT VIEW — **THERESA, HEAD OF PAYROLL**

The real cost of losing someone isn't only the salary. People forget employer's National Insurance, and any pension contribution, on top of what someone is paid. If you're thinking about changing pay or benefits, ask payroll for the calculation before you decide, not after. Otherwise, you get the shock of what it actually costs once it's already been promised.

3 WINDOW 1

Before they start

Many early exits are decided before anyone starts. The person was never quite right for the role, or the role was never quite what was sold.

LED BY LUCIE, WITH ANGIE

Lucie has a phrase for it: the sausage doesn't taste as nice as the sizzle. People leave when the company they joined isn't the company they were sold. Something gets said in the process that isn't true on day one, or the role was never properly defined.

1 Decide how much this hire matters

> Lucie starts every search with three questions. How important is this hire? What is it doing to the business not having this person in the seat? How much are you losing every week? If the answer is a lot, the process needs to move like it does.

2 Write down what good looks like

> Lucie's advice is to work out not just why you're hiring, but what makes people successful in your company. A role brief takes an hour and answers six questions.

QUESTION	WHY IT MATTERS
Why does this role exist now?	Scaling, replacing or new? The answer changes who you look for.
What will they own in month one, month three and month twelve?	Vague roles produce people who are surprised on day one.
If you are replacing someone, what went wrong and what went right with the last person?	Lucie's point: do not repeat the same brief and expect a different result.
What do your most successful people here have in common?	These are your real hiring criteria. They're usually not on the CV.
Who needs to buy in, and have they?	If the team doesn't want the hire, the hire won't stay.
What can you honestly offer in return?	Pay, benefits, flexibility, progression. Say it in the advert and mean it.

3 Write an advert that sells

EXPERT VIEW — **ANGIE, HEAD OF HR SERVICES**

Angie recently saw an advert for a senior role with not one sentence about benefits. "Employees are looking for these." Her test: the advert should say what you want from them, and also what you can give in return. Why is this good for them?

WHAT TO PUT IN YOUR ADVERT

Use this checklist before it goes live.

- [ ] What the role will achieve in its first year.
- [ ] What you offer, near the top: pay range if you can share it, holiday, flexibility, benefits.
- [ ] Where the role could lead: up, sideways or deeper.
- [ ] What's genuinely hard about the role. Don't oversell. All sizzle and no sausage costs you the hire.
- [ ] What happens next, and when they will hear from you.

4 Pick the right route to market

Angie's point is that some industries can recruit through LinkedIn. Others, particularly the professions, need a specialist recruiter with the skills, experience and specialism to find the right people. Angie practised as a lawyer before moving into HR, and she has seen agents who did not have the skills to recruit lawyers. Ask any recruiter how many people in your field they have placed, and how recently.

5 Interview for the person, not just the CV

EXPERT VIEW — **LUCIE, HEAD OF TALENT SERVICES**

If you don't interview properly, you could hire someone with every skill and the wrong personality, and they won't lift anyone else. Emotional intelligence is hard to interview for. The only way is to give people scenarios and see how they react, especially the events that make things go wrong in your business: bad management, a misaligned role, a job that turns out to be something different.

EXAMPLE SCENARIOS TO ADAPT

Replace these with the real situations that test people in your business.

- A project we promised is going to be late and the client doesn't know yet. What do you do on your first day?
- You disagree with your manager's plan in front of the team. What happens next?
- A colleague leaves and your workload doubles. What do you do first, and who do you tell?
- You have been asked to do something that isn't in your job description and you aren't sure it is right. Walk me through it.

ANGIE'S FOUR RULES FOR THE ROOM

Use them in every interview.

1. **Choose who is in the room.**

   Ask someone else in the business to meet the candidate, someone who gives you a different view. Skill is one question, fit is another. A poor fit is often why you end up letting someone go.

2. **Think about your questions.**

   People answer "can you do this?" very differently. Some sell hard and some undersell. Ask for an example of when they did it.

3. **Meet in person.**

   Even for a hybrid or remote role, if you can. Body language doesn't come across on video the way it does in a room. If remote is the only option, always use video. Seeing the person is important.

4. **Score separately.**

   Have each interviewer note their view before you compare. The loudest voice should not decide.

INTERVIEWER SCORECARD (1 to 5)	SKILLS	FIT WITH THE ROLE BRIEF	FIT WITH THE TEAM	SCENARIO ANSWERS
Interviewer 1				
Interviewer 2				
Interviewer 3				

6 Every candidate is talking about you

> Lucie says the candidate experience starts with whoever sells the role and ends with how you reject people. Candidates who have a poor experience go back and tell friends and their communities. In niche fields, it's a small pond and the talent talks. Glassdoor is only the part you can see.

TRY THIS

- Reply to everyone who applies, including the people you turn down.
- Tell people at the start how long the process takes, then keep to it.
- Brief every interviewer on the role and on what the candidate has already heard.
- When you say no, keep the door open. One client Lucie works with now follows up every applicant with a thank you, and says they may be right for another project.

7 Move quickly

> Lucie's headline is that time kills deals. A client recently took eight or nine days to make an offer. In that time, the candidate was approached, lined up three interviews and was offered £10,000 more. Her colleague managed to pull it back. Many don't.



"Time kills deals."
-LUCIE, RECRUITMENT

Taking too long tells the candidate two things: you're not convinced about them, and the hire isn't that important to you. And even in a market that favours employers, the top one per cent get snapped up quickly. If you are approaching someone who is not looking, expect to chase. They are busy, and they need to be in the right mood at the right time.

TRY THIS

- Agree who decides, and by when, before the first interview.
- Block diary time for the decision so it doesn't slip.
- Make the offer within days of the final interview.

8 Have day one ready

This is the part clients skip. One client ignored Lucie's advice and hadn't put the basics in place. The new hire simply couldn't do the job.

- [ ] Laptop, logins and equipment on the desk on day one.
- [ ] A named buddy for the first weeks.
- [ ] Introductions to the wider team in week one.
- [ ] The tools and evidence they need to do the job. For a marketing hire, that means brand material, case studies and proof of success.
- [ ] Admin support they can ask.
- [ ] A planned onboarding of five to seven days, not a vague first week.
- [ ] Someone on the ground to greet them. If the owner or manager is overseas or remote, a new starter can get lonely very fast.

Worth asking yourself

If your last hire reread their job advert today, would they recognise the job they ended up doing?

4 WINDOW 2

The first six months

The safety net is getting shorter. Today you have up to two years to decide whether a hire is working out. From January 2027, you'll have six months.

LED BY ANGIE

Angie says most of the businesses she advises aren't ready for this. The rule itself is simple. Where people get caught out is the first six months: missed reviews, no records, and decisions left too late.

WHAT IS CHANGING

- From 1 January 2027, employees will be protected against unfair dismissal after six months' service instead of two years.
- It applies to people already in your business on that date. Angie's point: anyone hired on or before 1 July 2026 will already have six months' service on 1 January. Anyone hired since will reach it during 2027. The clock is running now.
- The cap on compensation for unfair dismissal will also be removed from January 2027.

Angie deals with clients who have six-month probation periods, and who miss the review deadline. A month slips past, and they are in month six with no review and no record. "You'd better have a very good reason for dismissing them." She recently advised a client whose hire had not worked out at nine months. That was manageable under the current rules. From January, it will not be.



> **"You cannot afford now to let that keep running for a year."**
>
> **-ANGIE, PEOPLE**

So don't make probation longer. Make it tighter, and do it properly, with feedback from the employee as well as the manager.

The first six months, month by month

WHEN	WHAT TO DO
Before day one	Agree the role brief and how success will be measured. Review the employment contract, which Angie recommends checking as part of this. Review your probation process.
Week one	Planned onboarding. Introductions. Make sure they have what they need to start (see Window 1).
End of month one	First review. Ask the new starter three questions (below). Let the manager see the answers. Then meet together to talk it through.
Month two	Second review, if the first flagged issues. Angie's rule is to identify challenges early, then act.
Month three	Standard probation review. Most people do three months. If you want longer, three months with the option to extend to five.
Month five	If you run a longer probation, review at five, not six. Put it in the diary on day one.
Month six	Informal check-in. Are goals still aligned? Are objectives being met? Do not wait a year for this conversation.

EXPERT VIEW — **ANGIE, HEAD OF HR SERVICES**

> Ask the new starter: Have you received the training you need? Have you met everyone you need to meet to do your role? Are you finding any challenges, and what are they? If you have an HR platform you can automate this.

Write it down

This is the point most owners underestimate. With protection starting at six months, and the window for most tribunal claims doubling from three months to six from 1 October 2026, the records you keep are what you will rely on.

Angie has seen a performance review happen with nobody making a note of it. Then "it's your word against the employee", and you're scrambling for evidence. The opposite problem is just as real. She has seen damaging things written casually in emails and messages. Internal chat on Slack, WhatsApp or email can be disclosed in a tribunal, even if nothing was meant by it.

TRY THIS

- Record every performance conversation: date, what was said, what was agreed, next review date.
- Make performance reviews a two-way conversation. Do not park issues until the next annual review.
- Add an informal six-month check-in.
- Review your social media and internal communications policies, including WhatsApp and Slack.
- Train your team on what to put in writing, and what not to.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Ministry of Justice figures for April to June 2026 show single tribunal claims up 28% on a year earlier, while the number resolved fell 6%. The open single-claim caseload is up 51%, the highest on record. Angie thinks the changes could bring more claims, or at least more cases going to ACAS first.

If it isn't working

- Talk early. A vague worry in month two is a problem in month eight.
- Be specific about what needs to change and by when. Write it down and share it.
- Give a fair chance to improve, and record what support you offered.
- Take advice before you decide. Speak to Factotum People before you act.

Worth asking yourself

Who have you hired since July 2026, and is their review already in the diary?

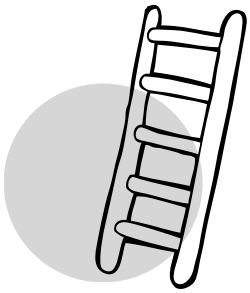
5 WINDOW 3

The two to three year mark

Without a next step, people move. Richard sees the same pattern from junior to mid-level, year after year.

LED BY RICHARD, WITH ANGIE AND LUCIE

Richard places finance and accountancy staff. From junior roles up to management accountant, people stay about two and a half years in a role. Administrative roles are similar, at two to three years. Qualified staff stay longer, because they tend to stay until they finish their qualifications, and those take two to five years.



> **"If there's no progression, if there's no opportunity, they tend to jump ship."**
>
> **-RICHARD, ACCOUNTANCY ACTION**

Where a client offers progression, pay increases and benefit increases, people stay longer. Richard is direct about money. Nine times out of ten, he says, people want to move because they want more of it. They are not going to leave for 23 days' holiday over 20. Benefits decide the close calls. Salary decides most of the rest.

The progression misconception

EXPERT VIEW — RICHARD, ACCOUNTANCY ACTION

Candidates always say they want progression in an interview, because they want to sound hungry. They don't always mean it. But if a client says "there is no progression here", it puts people off regardless. Progression matters as a signal, whether or not the person plans to use it.

Make pay a conversation you can have

Richard tells candidates who are thinking of leaving for money to raise it with their employer first, before they take recruiter calls or spend their holiday on interviews. Make that easy. Put a pay conversation in the diary every year, and know where your pay sits against the market before you go in.

EXPERT VIEW — **THERESA, HEAD OF PAYROLL**

People aren't always just chasing the money now. Hybrid working is something candidates will negotiate against salary. I'm also seeing more take-up of health and wellness benefits, and pensions matter more than ever. Nobody can really rely on the state pension, so it gets treated as a top-up, and employees want employers to offer more than the minimum.

TRY THIS

- Review your pay and benefits at least once a year, not only your salaries.
- Before you promise a pay or benefit change, ask payroll to run the numbers first, including employer National Insurance and pension contributions, not after you've announced it.
- Remind people what they already have. Someone who feels underpaid may not be counting their pension or other benefits.

The stay conversation

Have this before anyone resigns. Ask, listen and write it down. Resist the urge to defend.

- [ ] What is keeping you here?
- [ ] What would make you leave?
- [ ] What do you want to be doing in two years?
- [ ] What would make your day-to-day better?
- [ ] Is your pay where you think it should be?
- [ ] What have we not asked you?

Give progression more than one shape

Progression doesn't always mean becoming a manager, Angie says. And don't assume people don't want to advance. "They do." Work it out with them, and don't park it until the next review.

DIRECTION	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	GOOD FOR
Up	Leading a team or a function.	People who want to manage.
Sideways	Leading a project, or moving to a different area.	People who want variety and ownership.
Deeper	Becoming the specialist in something.	People who love the craft.
Wider	Learning new skills or working across teams.	People who are curious.

Build a package people can see

- **Flexibility is the big one.** Richard currently works with three clients who want people in the office five days a week. He says a candidate with two offers on the table, one five days in and one hybrid, will take the hybrid one. He asks candidates why they want hybrid. Childcare, caring for a relative or a long commute are all fair answers. Two days at home for no reason is harder to defend. But he accepts that the market has moved. It wasn't an option five or six years ago. Now many employers offer it as a benefit.

  Angie adds that the Employment Rights Act is changing the law on refusing flexible working requests. From late 2027, you'll need to show that saying no is reasonable. Better to get ahead of it than be forced into it. Her read of the adverts she sees is that most are hybrid and very few are fully remote. Since Covid, there is still no single right answer.

- **Holiday is an easy gap to close.** Richard still sees 20 days plus bank holidays on offer. In England, that is 28 days, the statutory minimum for a full-time employee. The market average he sees is nearer 23 days plus bank holidays.

- **Healthcare is expected and rarely offered.** It is expensive, so many clients skip it. Richard's advice is to be sensible. Some clients offer everything from fruit bowls to early finishes on Friday. Others offer the bare minimum and expect people to say yes.

- **What replaces salary.** Lucie says people want a role where they can leave a legacy. They want to build or create something meaningful, to be flexible, to work with people they like, and to feel that the employer cares about them. Charity involvement, wellness, health and mental health support mean something to them.

The benefits ladder

Costs nothing

Five minutes of non-work chat at the start of meetings. A relaxed dress code. Pets in the office. Flexible start times. A specific thank you. A real conversation.

Costs little

An extra day off. Flexible hours. A voucher. Lunch with the team. Moving holiday from 20 days to 23 plus bank holidays.

Costs more

A pay review. Healthcare. Wellbeing and mental health support. Training budgets.

When someone resigns

Richard's experience is that counteroffers are common, and that clients often offer a mix: progression, flexible hours, extra holiday, more money. It can be cheaper than replacing someone. It is also the most expensive way to find out you had a problem. Before you counter, ask three questions:

- [ ] What is the real reason they are going?
- [ ] Would we have offered this if they had not resigned?
- [ ] Does the offer fix the reason, or just the money?

Worth asking yourself

Who's coming up to two years with you, and do they know what their next step is?

6 WINDOW 4

The quiet signals

You do not need a resignation letter to know. Most of the signs are visible months earlier, if you look.

LED BY THERESA, WITH ALL FOUR EXPERTS

Some signals need no data at all. Between them, the four experts point to these.

SIGNAL	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	FLAGGED BY
The tenure milestone	Someone approaching two to three years in a role with no next step.	Richard
The last exam	Qualified staff tend to stay until they finish their qualifications. Plan the next step before the last exam.	Richard
The ceiling	Your strongest people run out of room. Some will start their own business.	Lucie
A change at the top	A new CEO, a new board or a new direction can end a role even when the person is doing well.	Lucie
A parked review	Progression conversations pushed to the next annual review.	Angie
A refused request	A rigid answer on flexible working from someone who needs it.	Angie

What payroll can show

EXPERT VIEW — **THERESA, HEAD OF PAYROLL**

I usually only see unused holiday when the client gives me the balance for someone's final pay. By then, they've already resigned. Some people deliberately save their holiday so they're paid for it when they leave. HR can see that pattern much earlier, which is why HR and payroll talking sooner matters. What payroll can notice is sickness affecting someone's pay when that's unusual for them, and pay queries or errors that go unresolved.

Neither is proof of anything on its own. Theresa's advice is for HR and payroll to share what each of them can see, then for someone to have a quiet word with the person and ask if anything's up. Payroll only sees names on paper, but you build a connection with the people you pay every month.

TRY THIS

- Ask HR to watch for saved-up holiday, and payroll to flag unusual sickness or unresolved pay queries. Treat either as a reason to check in, not to assume the worst.
- If morale seems low, don't assume it is only about salary. Remind people what benefits they already have, such as an employer pension contribution, since it's easy to forget what isn't on the payslip.
- Pick three signals from the list on the previous page and check them every month.
- Think about which window each person on your team is in, so nobody gets overlooked.
- Make stay conversations part of everyone's regular one-to-ones.

Worth asking yourself

If someone on your team started saving up their holiday, would anyone notice?

7 THE CHEAPEST FIX

Saying thank you, properly

Recognition costs the least and is skipped the most.

42%

of UK employees say they feel undervalued at work.

Perkbox, 4,000 employees, September 2025

54%

of those people were thinking of leaving in 2026.

Perkbox, September 2025

24%

of people wanting to move say it is because they feel undervalued.

Ciphr and OnePoll, February 2026

Richard's advice is short. Good people are hard to find, so invest in them. Tell them how well they are doing. Offer the odd day off, some flexible working, a voucher, lunch. Not enough people tell their employees how they are valued.

Lucie adds that many good people do not feel recognised, even though they are respected by their peers. Give them a way to give back: internal training, mentoring, being the example others follow.

Culture is your relationships

> Angie's example comes from hybrid teams. People rarely meet in person, so calls go straight to business. There is no "how's things" and no comment on the new haircut. Her fix costs nothing. Add five minutes to the start of a meeting for chat. Culture, she says, is our behaviour, and how we interact.
>
> Wellbeing is high on the list for people in their twenties, Angie says. Owners often assume it will cost a fortune. It doesn't have to. Allow pets in the office. Let people dress down if they don't see clients. When Angie practised as a lawyer, suits cost her a fortune, even on days she wasn't seeing clients. It's a tiny change, but it really helps. Ask what you want your culture to be, then change one small thing.

SAY IT	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE
Specifically	"The way you handled that client call made the difference" beats "good job".
Soon	Within a day or two, not at the annual review.
In writing	A short note, or a line to their manager's manager.
With something small	An extra hour off, a voucher, lunch. Richard's list.
With a way to grow	Ask what they'd like to learn next. Lucie's point about giving good people a way to give back.

Worth asking yourself

When did you last tell someone exactly what they did well?

8 PLAN FOR IT

Some will leave anyway

Not every departure is a failure. The best thing you can do is not be caught out.

LED BY LUCIE, WITH ANGIE

Lucie has a view that surprises people. Good people do not always leave for bad reasons. They are often entrepreneurial. They get the best out of a business, then want the next thing. They hit a ceiling. Someone who joined thinking "I want to be you when I'm older" realises one day that they are older.

EXPERT VIEW — **LUCIE, HEAD OF TALENT SERVICES**

> Other exits are out of your hands. A new CEO or board changes direction. The market shifts to whatever is hot, whether that is fintech, healthcare or AI. And sometimes a new manager changes everything for the worse. Good people leave for all of these reasons. The question is whether you saw it coming.

Succession planning

> Lucie's advice is to start once each area of the business shows repeated success. Understand what makes it work. Keep a cycle of fresh talent coming in. Buddy people up, so there is always another pair of hands, and so nothing depends on one person.

LUCIE'S TESTS

- Ask of each key person: if they left tomorrow, would we be in trouble? How do we reduce that risk?
- Hire people who are better than you. That's Lucie's motto.
- Support internal training, and use your best people as the example others learn from.
- Treat everyone as the next CEO. You do not know who it will be, and it changes how you treat people.

Fill this in

Start with the three roles you would least like to lose.

KEY ROLE	WHO COVERS TODAY?	WHO COULD STEP UP IN SIX MONTHS?	WHAT WOULD BREAK?

When long-serving people can't take you to the next stage

> Angie hears this from owners who are scaling. Some staff who have been with them for ten or fifteen years may not have the skills for the next stage. The owner starts to look at hiring. Her advice: be honest and early, look at development first, and get the recruitment right for any new role. Changing the terms of long-serving staff is also about to get harder, with new limits on fire and rehire planned for January 2027. **Talk to Factotum People before you start.**

Leave well

> How someone leaves shapes what they say about you, and in a small talent pool that travels. Thank them, hand over properly, and stay in touch.

9 THE RULES ARE CHANGING

What changes, and when

Angie sees clients caught out most by the changes that have already happened.

LED BY ANGIE, GENERAL GUIDANCE, NOT LEGAL ADVICE

WHEN	WHAT CHANGES	WHAT TO CHECK
Since April 2026	Statutory Sick Pay from day one, with no waiting days and no lower earnings limit. Paternity leave and unpaid parental leave are day-one rights. Raising sexual harassment counts as whistleblowing. Voluntary equality action plans for employers with 250 or more staff, covering the gender pay gap and menopause. Expected to become compulsory in 2027.	Sick pay and absence policies. Payroll settings. Leave policies. Whistleblowing policy. Equality action plan, if you have 250 or more staff.
1 Oct 2026	The time limit for most employment tribunal claims doubles from three months to six.	Employment contracts. Recruitment process. Performance monitoring. Keeping records of the reasons for any dismissal.
30 Oct 2026	A duty to take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment, including by third parties such as clients, and protection from harassment by non-employees linked to a protected characteristic, such as age, disability, race or sex.	Training, harassment policies, protocols for reporting and dealing with incidents. A third-party harassment policy. Where employees can go for support.
January 2027	Unfair dismissal protection after six months. Compensation cap removed. New limits on fire and rehire.	Recruitment process, probation management, records, employment contract.
2027, date to confirm	A day-one right to unpaid bereavement leave, including pregnancy loss, targeted for 2027. Stricter rules on refusing flexible working, expected in late 2027.	Whether you offer any bereavement leave today. How you handle flexible working requests.

This is general guidance, not legal advice. Specific situations need direct sign-off from People.

ANGIE'S POLICY CHECK

Angie says the most common gaps are clients who have not updated their sick pay policy, who are not aware of the day-one leave rights, and clients who don't realise the harassment duty is proactive. Some have not realised that a duty to take reasonable steps has applied since October 2024, and that it includes training.

- [ ] Whistleblowing policy. Sexual harassment now falls within it.
- [ ] Harassment policies, training for everyone, protocols for third parties, and clear signposts to support for employees. Angie's team can help with this. Training often lands better coming from someone outside the business.
- [ ] Sick pay and absence management. Day one, no waiting days.
- [ ] Parental leave and bereavement leave.
- [ ] Menopause. Not a stand-alone statutory right, but a growing priority. Make sure your handbook covers it somewhere, in absence management or adjustments. Equality action plans will need to include at least one action on it.
- [ ] Gender pay gap. With 250 or more staff, you already have to report it. You're also encouraged to publish an equality action plan, expected to become compulsory in 2027.
- [ ] Social media and internal communications, including WhatsApp and Slack.
- [ ] Contracts of employment, and your handbook.

EXPERT VIEW — **ANGIE, HEAD OF HR SERVICES**

> Review your handbook and policies every three months for now. With changes arriving in stages, and some dates still to be confirmed, a year is too long. Angie's team is running reviews for clients ahead of these changes.

This is general guidance, not legal advice. Specific situations need direct sign-off from People.

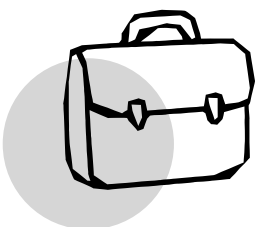
10 YOUR 90 DAY PLAN

You can do most of this without spending anything.

IF YOU ONLY HAVE AN HOUR

- On Monday, list the people you're meeting this week, and add five minutes of non-work chat to each meeting.
- Add one stay question to every one-to-one this month.
- Tell someone specifically what they did well this week.

WHEN	WHAT TO DO	DONE?
Week 1 to 2	Work out what a leaver costs you, using the worksheet. Think about which window each person on your team is in. Book harassment training if you haven't already.	☐
Week 3 to 4	Start adding stay questions to your one-to-ones. Say a specific thank you when it's earned. Add five minutes of non-work chat to your meetings.	☐
Month 2	Write a role brief for any open or upcoming hire. Rewrite the advert to include benefits. Agree who decides and by when. Plan the first week for the next starter.	☐
Month 2	Diarise probation reviews for every hire since July 2026. Review your record-keeping process for performance check-ins and probation reviews.	☐
Month 3	Review your handbook and policies against the checklist.	☐
Month 3	Run the succession quick test for your key roles. Agree one way to give your best people a next step.	☐



> **"Treat everyone in your business as the next CEO."**
>
> -LUCIE, RECRUITMENT

11 THE CHECK

Which window is your person in?

Pick anyone on your team. Tick what is true for them today. Any box you cannot tick is where to start.

ONE Before day one

- [ ] We wrote down what good looks like before we advertised.
- [ ] The advert said what we offer, not just what we want.
- [ ] We make offers within days.
- [ ] Their first week was planned before they arrived.

TWO First six months

- [ ] We reviewed at month one and asked them, not only the manager.
- [ ] The end of probation is in the diary.
- [ ] We wrote down every performance conversation.

THREE Two to three years

- [ ] We have talked about pay and the next steps before they asked.
- [ ] They can see a next step, up, sideways or deeper.
- [ ] Our holiday and flexibility are at or above the market.

FOUR The quiet signals

- [ ] We check for signals every month.
- [ ] We know what our payroll data can tell us.

+ Recognition

- [ ] We told them this month, specifically, what they are doing well.

WANT A SECOND PAIR OF EYES?

We work as part of your team on **hiring, onboarding, HR** and **payroll.** Talk to us about hiring well and keeping good people.

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12 ABOUT THE EXPERTS

Four teams, one relationship.

Everything in this guide comes from people who do this work every day, inside the same company. That is the point of Factotum. One company, filled with talent across six services.



LUCIE JEFFRIES — **HEAD OF TALENT SERVICES**

Over 30 years in executive search, and founder of Sydney Tyler, which joined Factotum in 2022.



RICHARD JAYE — **MANAGING DIRECTOR, ACCOUNTANCY ACTION**

Over 25 years in recruitment. Previously Director of TwentyFour Recruitment, which Factotum acquired in 2026.



ANGIE SADLER — **HEAD OF HR SERVICES**

A UK-qualified solicitor and mediator, and a former Chief Talent Officer and Group General Counsel at a global FinTech.



THERESA MERCADO — **HEAD OF PAYROLL**

Over 20 years in payroll, through RTI, auto-enrolment and furlough.

TALK TO US

If any window in this guide felt uncomfortably familiar, start with a conversation.

SOURCES

Where the numbers come from

UK vacancies and pay growth

Office for National Statistics, Labour market overview, UK: August 2026, released 18 August 2026.

Recruits quitting within 12 weeks

CIPD and Omni RMS, Resourcing and talent planning report, 2024. 41% of HR professionals said new recruits always, mostly or sometimes quit within 12 weeks.

Reasons for wanting to move

Ciphr, with OnePoll, survey of 2,000 UK employees, 4 to 8 February 2026. Ciphr is an HR and payroll software provider.

Feeling undervalued

Perkbox, survey of 4,000 UK employees, September 2025. Perkbox is a benefits platform.

Job churn

CIPD analysis of ONS Annual Population Survey data, January 2022 to December 2023.

Employment tribunals

Ministry of Justice tribunal statistics, April to June 2026.

Employment Rights Act 2025

Government implementation timeline updated 16 July 2026, as reported by employment law firms. Some dates still to be confirmed.

Holiday

Statutory minimum of 28 days including bank holidays for a full-time employee. Market average as reported by Richard.

Interviews

Lucie, Angie, Richard and Theresa, September 2026.

Estimates

Cost figures quoted from Richard and Lucie are their own estimates from their work, not published statistics.

Factotum

For what comes next

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