



EMMA BRADY
talent specialists

PEOPLE | INDUSTRY | OPPORTUNITY

GLOBAL
TALENT
FOR A
BRIGHTER
BEAUTY
INDUSTRY

THE Industry Pulse 2026

REAL PEOPLE. REAL PERSPECTIVES.
A STRONGER FUTURE.

A comprehensive look at the views of
71 senior professionals across hair, beauty,
cosmetics and personal care.

TALENT
LEADERSHIP
CULTURE
OPPORTUNITY
CHALLENGES
THE ROAD AHEAD

*Insights
today.*

*A stronger
industry
tomorrow.*

EXPERT ANALYSIS BY

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GLOBAL SEARCH DIRECTOR

EBTALENTSPECIALISTS.COM

HAIR | BEAUTY | COSMETICS | PERSONAL CARE



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PEOPLE | INDUSTRY | OPPORTUNITY

THE INDUSTRY PULSE 2026

About the Respondents

REAL PEOPLE. REAL PERSPECTIVES.

This report is based on the views of professionals working across the global hair, beauty, cosmetics and personal care industry.

The respondents include people from a wide range of businesses, roles and markets, giving a well-rounded and honest view of what it's really like to work in our industry today.

Their insights highlight the opportunities, challenges and changing expectations that are shaping the future of talent in hair, beauty and personal care.

Thank you to everyone who took part and shared their thoughts so openly.

“*Thank you to everyone who took part and shared their experiences. Your insights help shape a stronger, more connected future for our industry.*”

EMMA BRADY
GLOBAL SEARCH DIRECTOR



Professionals

From across the hair, beauty, cosmetics and personal care industry



A range of roles

Including sales, marketing, education, operations, HR, finance and leadership



Global perspective

Responses from across the UK, Europe and international markets



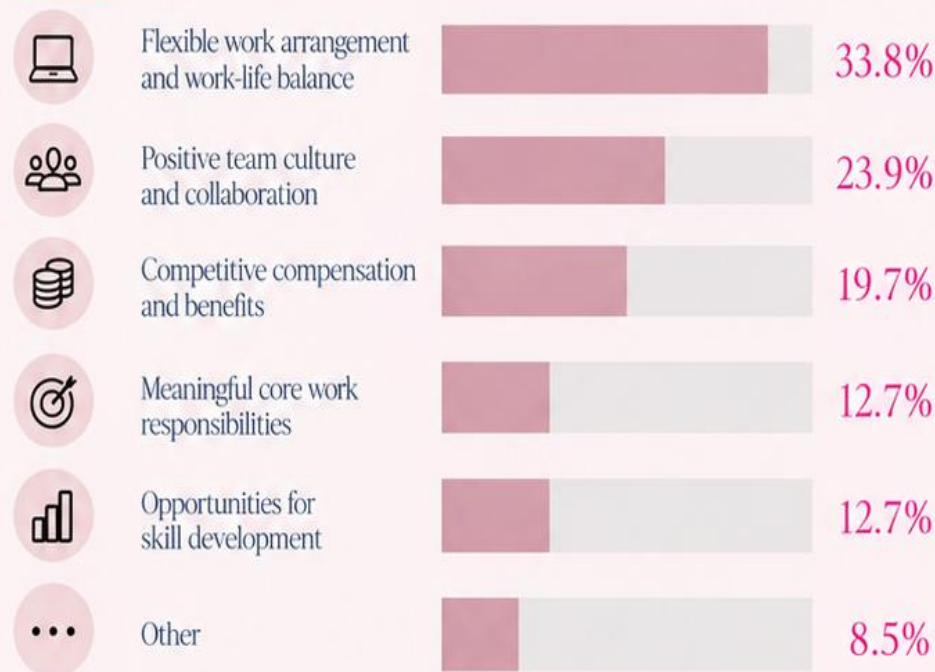
QUESTION

01

What do you enjoy most about working at your current employer?

71 RESPONDENTS

TOP REASONS



“Flexibility remains the biggest driver of job satisfaction, with a third of respondents (33.8%) saying it’s what they enjoy most about their current role.”

KEY INSIGHT

33.8%

of respondents said flexible working and work-life balance is what they enjoy most about their current role.



Flexibility and a positive team culture (57.7% combined) are the standout factors, highlighting the importance of a supportive and balanced workplace in today’s market.

EMMA’S VIEW

Flexibility has become part of the retention package.

What stands out to me is that people are telling us the everyday experience of work matters. Flexibility and a positive team culture are valued more highly than compensation alone.

We often assume people leave because of salary, but these results suggest the reasons people stay can be very different from the reasons they might initially take a call from another company.

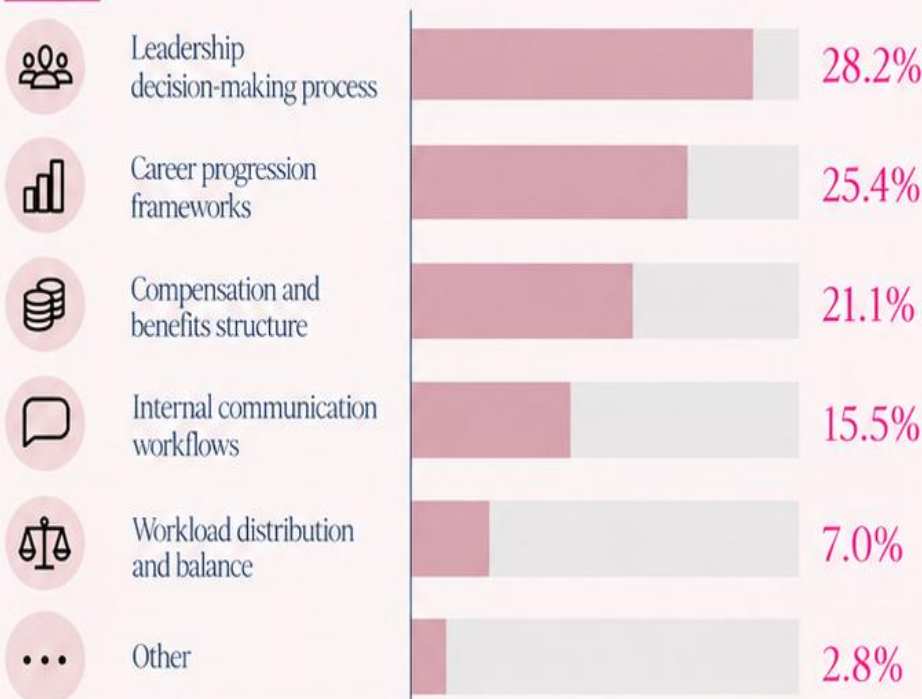
QUESTION

02

If you could change one thing about the company tomorrow, what would it be?

71 RESPONDENTS

TOP AREAS FOR CHANGE



“People want clearer leadership, real career progression and fairer reward structures — these are the changes that would make the biggest difference.”

KEY INSIGHT

28.2%

of respondents would change the leadership decision-making process if they could change one thing tomorrow.



Leadership, career progression and compensation together account for 74.7% of all responses, showing a clear desire for stronger direction, development opportunities and fairer reward structures.

EMMA'S VIEW

People want clearer leadership, more opportunities and fairer reward.

It's clear from these results that many feel decisions take too long, communication could be better, and there's a real appetite for clearer career progression and a more competitive and transparent reward structure.

These are the foundations that create confidence, engagement and long-term loyalty — and the businesses that get these right will be the ones that attract and retain the best talent in 2026 and beyond.

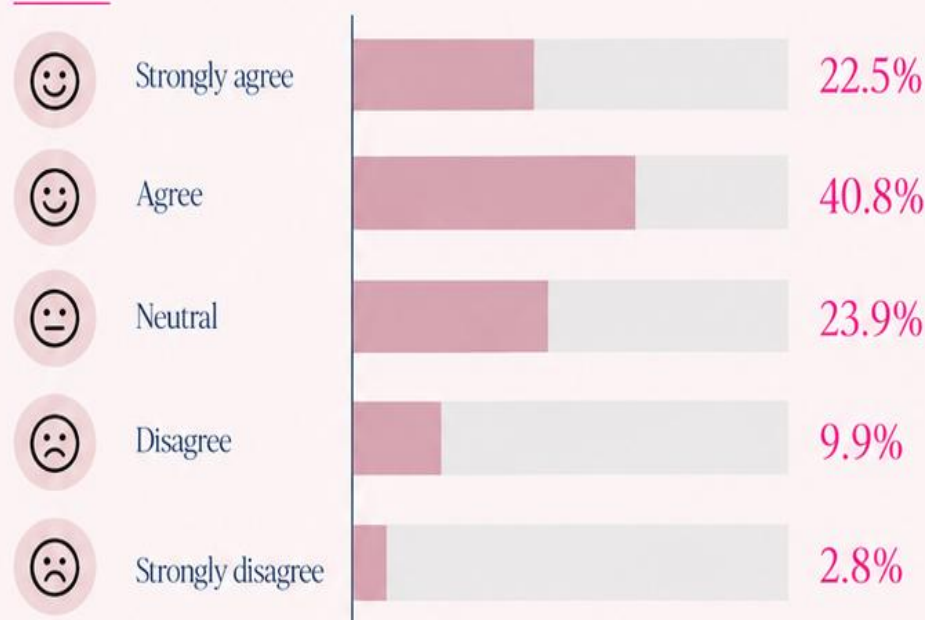
QUESTION

03

Do you feel your contribution is recognised and valued?

71 RESPONDENTS

RESPONSES



“

Over 60% of respondents feel their contribution is recognised and valued — a strong foundation for engagement.

”

KEY INSIGHT

63.3%

of respondents agree or strongly agree that their contribution is recognised and valued.



However, 1 in 10 respondents (9.9%) do not feel recognised, and a further 23.9% are neutral, suggesting there is still significant opportunity for employers to do more.

EMMA'S VIEW

Recognition drives retention.

It's encouraging to see that the majority feel valued — recognition is a powerful driver of loyalty, motivation and performance.

That said, the 33% who are neutral or feel undervalued is a clear opportunity. Recognition doesn't always have to be financial; it can be about visibility, trust, meaningful feedback and creating a culture where people feel their contribution genuinely matters.

QUESTION

04

Do you believe there are genuine career opportunities for you here over the next two years?

71 RESPONDENTS

RESPONSES



“

Almost 4 in 10 (39.4%) are neutral or don't believe there are real career opportunities over the next two years.

”

KEY INSIGHT

39.4%

of respondents are neutral, disagree or strongly disagree that there are genuine career opportunities for them over the next two years.



A significant proportion (39.4%) are either unsure or do not see clear career opportunities, highlighting a potential risk to future retention if progression pathways are not more visible and accessible.

EMMA'S VIEW

Opportunity needs to be visible and credible.

It's positive that almost a third (32.4%) do see opportunities, but the fact that nearly 40% are neutral or negative suggests many people aren't seeing a clear path for progression.

Career development doesn't have to mean a promotion — it can be about new skills, broader experience, stretch projects or greater responsibility. The key is making these opportunities visible, accessible and real.

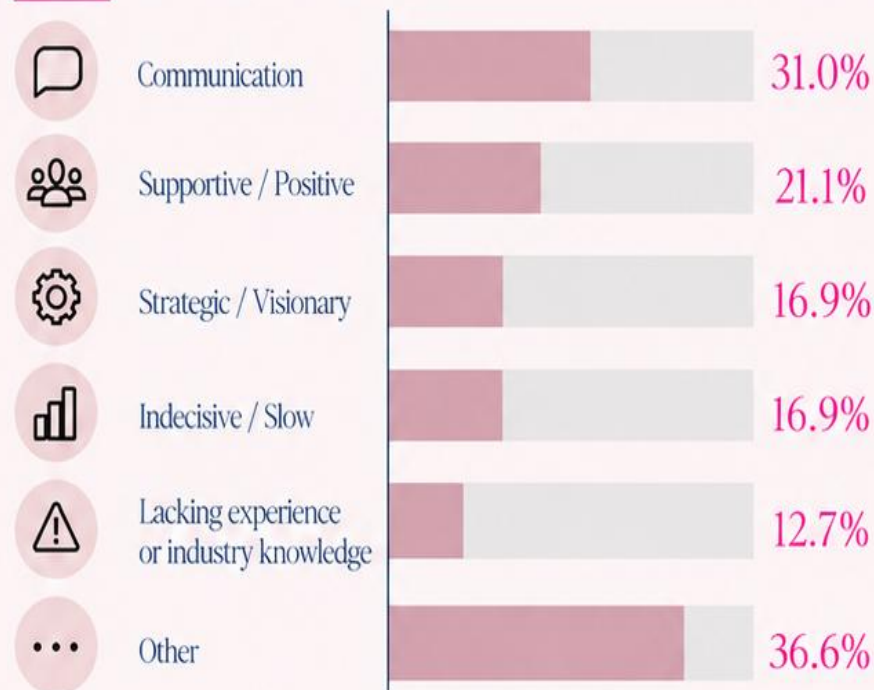
QUESTION

05

How would you describe the leadership team in three words?

71 RESPONDENTS

MOST COMMON THEMES



KEY INSIGHT

31.0%

of respondents described the leadership team with words related to communication.



Across 71 responses, communication was the most common theme (31.0%), followed by positive/supportive words (21.1%). However, 16.9% used terms linked to indecision or slow decision-making, and 12.7% felt the team lacked industry experience.

WORDS THAT STOOD OUT

Passionate Indecisive
Supportive Toxic **Visionary**
 Out of touch Hard-working Lacking direction
 Ambitious Caring Slow Strategic
 Inconsistent Collaborative Disorganised
 Empowering Reactive Authentic
 Old fashioned Progressive Approachable
 Unqualified Committed Chaotic
 Driven Needs better communication

EMMA'S VIEW

There is real respect for the people, but a clear call for stronger communication and direction.

The feedback paints a mixed picture. Many describe the leadership team as passionate, supportive and ambitious, which is a strong foundation. At the same time, a significant number are calling for clearer communication, faster decision-making and deeper industry expertise.

This suggests an opportunity to build on the strengths while addressing the areas that are creating frustration and uncertainty.

QUESTION

06

If another company approached you, what would make you take the call?

21 RESPONDENTS

KEY DRIVERS



“

A more competitive package, clearer progression and the opportunity to work on more impactful projects are the top reasons people would take a call from another company.”

KEY INSIGHT

57.1%

of respondents said a higher base salary and bonus would make them take a call from another company.



Over half (52.4%) would also be attracted by the opportunity to work on more impactful projects, showing that purpose and challenge are just as important as financial reward.

EMMA'S VIEW

People are looking for more than just pay.

While a competitive salary and bonus package is the strongest driver, this data shows that people also want clearer career progression, better work-life balance and a more positive culture. The opportunity to work on meaningful, high-impact projects is a major draw, highlighting the importance of purpose alongside financial reward.

Employers that can offer a compelling combination of growth, flexibility and meaningful work will be best placed to attract and retain top talent in 2026 and beyond.

QUESTION

07

What is the biggest frustration you experience in your current role?

71 RESPONDENTS

KEY FRUSTRATIONS



“

Limited career progression is the biggest frustration, highlighting the need for clearer development pathways and greater investment in people to retain talent.

”

KEY INSIGHT

32.4%

of respondents said limited opportunities for promotion is their biggest frustration in their current role.



Career progression is a key area of concern, with almost a third of respondents citing it as their biggest frustration. This is followed by inadequate tools and resources (16.9%) and lack of recognition (15.5%).

EMMA'S VIEW

Progression, support and recognition must be a priority.

These results show that many talented professionals feel held back by limited career progression, a lack of resources and insufficient recognition. Addressing these frustrations will be essential to build engagement, improve performance and retain key people.

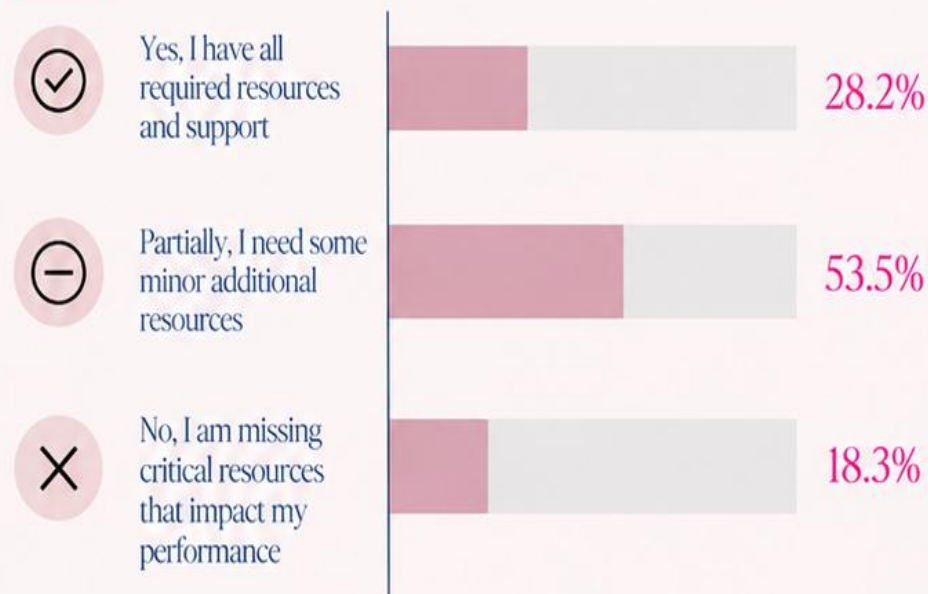
A clear focus on development, better support and a stronger culture of recognition can make a real difference.

QUESTION

08 | Do you have everything you need to perform at your best?

71 RESPONDENTS

RESPONSES



“If people don’t have what they need, it’s hard for them to do their best — and it’s hard for businesses to reach their full potential.”

KEY INSIGHT

71.8%
of respondents are either missing critical resources or need additional resources to perform at their best.



More than 7 in 10 respondents (71.8%) do not feel fully equipped to perform at their best, with 53.5% needing some additional resources and 18.3% missing critical resources. Only 28.2% feel they have everything they need.

EMMA'S VIEW

People cannot perform without the right support.

These results highlight a significant opportunity for employers to invest in the tools, resources and support their teams need to succeed.

Addressing resource gaps — whether through better systems, clearer processes, additional headcount or improved support — can directly impact performance, engagement and retention.

QUESTION

09

On a scale of 1–10, how likely are you to still be working here in 12 months?

71 RESPONDENTS

RESPONSES



“

Almost a third (33.8%) rate their likelihood of still being here in 12 months as 9 or 10, but 18.3% choose 1 or 2, showing a clear risk of future talent loss.

”

KEY INSIGHT

33.8%

of respondents rate their likelihood of still working here in 12 months as 9 or 10.



However, 18.3% rate it as 1 or 2, suggesting a notable proportion may be actively considering opportunities elsewhere.

EMMA'S VIEW

A positive foundation, but a talent retention risk remains.

While over a third of respondents see themselves still here in 12 months, nearly one in five do not, highlighting a real risk of losing valuable talent.

Understanding the reasons behind lower scores — such as limited progression, recognition or resources — will be key to improving retention and building a stronger, more engaged team for the future.

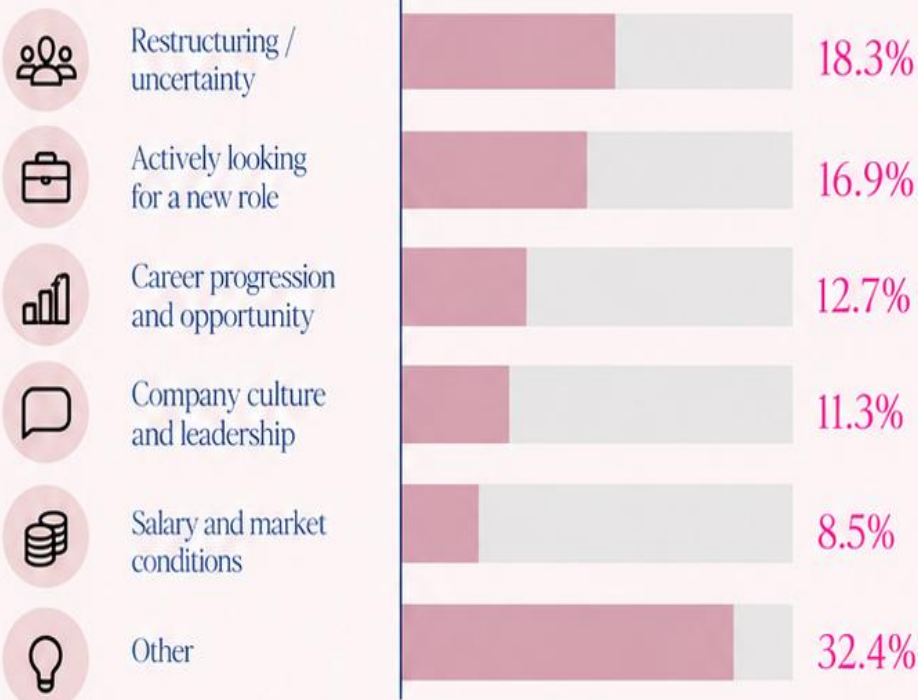
QUESTION

10

Please explain why you gave this rating.

71 RESPONDENTS

KEY REASONS



“

Restructuring, limited opportunities and uncertainty about direction were the most common reasons for lower confidence in staying, alongside active job searches and concerns about company culture.

”

KEY INSIGHT

35.2%

of respondents cited restructuring, uncertainty or actively looking for a new role as the main reason for their rating.



While many remain positive about their current role, a significant proportion are keeping their options open due to ongoing change, limited career progression and concerns about company direction.

EMMA'S VIEW

Clarity, stability and growth will be key to retaining talent.

The qualitative feedback highlights a mix of loyalty and optimism, but also real concerns around restructuring, leadership, progression and market uncertainty.

Transparent communication, a clear vision and visible investment in people and development will be essential to build confidence and reduce the risk of losing key talent over the next 12 months.

QUESTION

11

If you were the CEO for one day, what would you change first?

71 RESPONDENTS

TOP AREAS FOR CHANGE



“

Clearer leadership, better communication and a stronger, more people-focused culture are the areas employees would prioritise if they were in charge for a day.

”

KEY INSIGHT

49.3%

of respondents would prioritise leadership, organisational structure or communication.



Nearly half of respondents believe that stronger leadership, a clearer structure and more open communication would make the biggest positive impact on the business.

EMMA'S VIEW

People want bold, visible change.

The feedback shows a clear appetite for stronger leadership, more transparent communication and a healthier, more supportive culture. Many also want greater focus on strategy, brand direction and the development of people and teams.

These insights highlight a real opportunity for businesses to listen, act and create meaningful change — building a stronger, more engaged and future-ready workforce in 2026 and beyond.

Key Findings at a Glance

WHAT YOUR PEOPLE ARE TELLING US

THE PEOPLE
INSIGHT
FOR A BRIGHTER
TOMORROW

People
drive
change

1 | OVERALL SENTIMENT



70.4%

feel positive about working in the industry.

2 | JOB SATISFACTION



69.0%

are satisfied in their current position.

3 | FEELING VALUED



60.6%

feel their contribution is recognised and valued.

4 | CAREER OPPORTUNITIES



38.0%

believe there are genuine career opportunities over the next two years.

5 | LEADERSHIP



Mixed

Views range from 'supportive' and 'inspiring' to 'inconsistent' and 'out of touch'.

6 | WOULD TAKE A CALL



Key drivers:

- Higher salary & bonus
- Career progression
- Better work-life balance
- Positive culture

7 | BIGGEST FRUSTRATION



32.4%

cite limited opportunities for promotion, followed by inadequate tools & resources (16.9%).

8 | HAVE WHAT YOU NEED



71.8%

either have everything they need or need only minor additional resources.

9 | LIKELY TO STILL BE HERE



6.9/10

average likelihood of still working here in 12 months.

11 | IF YOU WERE CEO...



Top areas for change:

- Leadership & structure
- Communication
- Culture
- Brand strategy
- People development

WHAT YOUR PEOPLE SAID

“

"I am actively looking for other roles due to restructuring and lack of commercial direction and execution."

“

"I really like my job, but there is limited career progression and more recognition would make a big difference."

“

"Flatter hierarchies, transparent communication and a stronger, more people-focused culture would unlock so much potential."

“

"Create a working group of high performing employees and identify five priorities to bring change that would foster growth and improve the culture."

OUR VIEW

There is strong passion for the industry and many people enjoy their roles, but career progression, recognition, communication and leadership alignment are key areas to address. By listening and acting on this feedback, businesses can build a more engaged, resilient and future-ready workforce.

FINAL THOUGHTS

From Insight to Opportunity

A STRONGER, MORE PREPARED INDUSTRY

This report highlights both the passion and potential within our industry, alongside clear challenges around progression, recognition, communication and resources. It's a reminder that behind every statistic is a talented individual who cares deeply about this sector and wants to see it thrive.

At EB Talent Specialists, we see these insights as an opportunity — not just to understand where the industry is today, but to help shape what comes next.

HOW WE HELP



MARKET MAPPING

We track talent, identify emerging skills and map the global landscape to keep you ahead of market shifts.



FUTURE PLANNING

We provide insight to help you anticipate change, build talent pipelines and plan for what's next — not just react to it.



TALENT INTELLIGENCE

We combine real-time industry knowledge with deep networks to give you a clearer view of opportunities, risk and competitive movements.



MAKING CONNECTIONS

We bring the right people together — for shared learning, collaboration and growth — because the best ideas often happen through conversation.



FORWARD THINKING

We help businesses and individuals stay prepared, informed and ready to seize opportunities in a fast-changing industry.

OUR COMMITMENT

To continue listening, sharing data and insights, and supporting the people and businesses who are shaping the future of hair, beauty and personal care.

Thank you

To everyone who took the time to share their experiences and opinions. Your honesty and openness make this research possible and help drive meaningful change across our industry.

Emma

EMMA BRADY
GLOBAL SEARCH DIRECTOR

People drive change



“When we listen to people, we don't just understand the present — we can help build a stronger, more future-ready industry together.”

EMMA BRADY
GLOBAL SEARCH DIRECTOR

CONCLUSION

Emma's Thoughts

PEOPLE TODAY. A STRONGER TOMORROW.

The findings in this report don't suggest that people have fallen out of love with our industry. Far from it. There is still enormous passion for the brands, the people and the work itself. What's clear is that expectations are changing.

People want clearer progression, stronger communication, better leadership, greater recognition and the resources to do their jobs properly. Many are also keeping an open mind about their future, even if they are not actively looking right now.

For businesses, this creates a real opportunity to get ahead of the curve. By understanding sentiment, tracking emerging talent, and building relationships before a vacancy exists, you can stay one step ahead. Market mapping and ongoing talent intelligence give you the insight to plan for what's next — not just react when someone resigns or a new position is created.

The strongest businesses won't simply respond to the talent market. They'll understand it early enough to prepare for what comes next.

LOOKING AHEAD

HOW THESE INSIGHTS CAN HELP



MARKET MAPPING

Track talent, identify emerging skills and understand where people are moving, so you can spot opportunities early.



TALENT PIPELINES

Build relationships with high-potential talent before you need them, giving you access to the right people at the right time.



INDUSTRY INTELLIGENCE

Turn data and real feedback into actionable insight, helping you make informed decisions about roles, structure and future hiring.



MAKING CONNECTIONS

Bring the right people together — for shared learning, collaboration and growth. The best ideas often come from conversation.



FUTURE PLANNING

Anticipate change, understand what's next and stay prepared — so you can seize opportunities in a fast-moving industry.

A FINAL THOUGHT

When we listen to people, we don't just understand the present — we create a stronger, more inspiring future for our industry.

Emma Brady
GLOBAL SEARCH DIRECTOR