Malaysia, June 2026

Industry Insight Report

Hiring and Retaining the Right Talent

Banking, Financial Services, & Insurance | Engineering & Technical | Healthcare, Life Sciences & Pharmaceuticals | IT & Telecommunications

Contents

Welcome to PERSOL's Industry Insight Report for 2026:

Asia Talent Insights for Employers: Hiring and Retaining the Right Talent

This report brings together on-the-ground perspectives from PERSOL's recruitment teams across up to twelve Asia markets, covering four key sectors: Banking, Financial Services and Insurance, Engineering and Technical, Healthcare, Life Sciences and Pharmaceuticals and Information Technology and Telecommunications.

The Asia region is navigating a period of pronounced tension. Long-term structural demand for skilled talent remains strong, yet the near-term environment is marked by economic uncertainty, escalating trade pressures and rapid technological disruption. Artificial intelligence is actively reshaping workforce requirements across every sector, creating urgent demand for new capabilities faster than talent pipelines can respond.

The challenge for employers is no longer simply finding people. It is finding the right people and keeping them. Across every market and sector in this report, organisations are grappling with the same pressures: talent scarcity concentrated in the roles that matter most, salary expectations outpacing internal benchmarks and professionals who are more willing than ever to move when their expectations are not met.

Retention is proving just as difficult as hiring. Compensation matters, but it is rarely the whole story. Career progression, flexibility, leadership quality and organisational culture are shaping decisions at every level of the workforce.

This report explores what is driving these dynamics, where the most acute gaps exist and what leading organisations are doing differently. We hope it equips you to make smarter talent decisions in the year ahead.

Industry Insights

Banking, Financial Services & Insurance

Malaysia

Insights by **Brian Sim,**
Managing Director & Country Head - Malaysia

Malaysia's Banking, Financial Services and Insurance sector is operating in a constrained talent environment, with a significant majority of employers reporting persistent hiring and retention challenges. As digital transformation accelerates and financial institutions move toward more analytics-driven decision-making, workforce pressures are becoming structural rather than cyclical. Talent shortages are increasingly concentrated in specialist, risk-sensitive and digitally enabled roles critical to sustainable growth.

Specialist Risk, Compliance and Digital Roles Under Pressure

Demand is strongest for risk management professionals, particularly in credit risk and behavioural modelling, where domestic supply remains limited.

Regulatory compliance specialists – including AML/KYC and regulatory reporting experts – are also in short supply as supervisory scrutiny intensifies. Governance, risk and compliance (GRC) capability has become mission-critical, raising the technical threshold for hiring.

In parallel, Financial Planning & Analysis (FP&A) and strategic finance roles are gaining prominence. Employers increasingly seek professionals capable of advanced analytics, financial modelling and business partnering, yet multidisciplinary analytical talent remains highly competitive. There is a shortage of specialists in digital finance and FinTech who can lead automation, integrate data and develop digital products. This gap highlights a challenge where the push for digital transformation is advancing faster than the workforce is prepared to handle it.

Within insurance, underwriting and claims specialists are under pressure as product offerings become more complex and regulatory oversight deepens. Across these functions, the shift is toward higher-value, knowledge-intensive roles requiring both technical depth and strategic capability.

Digital Ambition Outpacing Talent Preparedness

Employer misalignment most often centres on competency depth and future-readiness. Regulatory knowledge in areas such as AML/KYC and governance compliance frequently falls short of rising expectations. At the same time, employers report gaps in strategic thinking and advanced analytical capability among finance professionals transitioning into higher-value roles.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Talent shortages in Malaysia's BFSI sector are concentrated in risk, compliance and digitally enabled finance roles, reflecting a structural shift toward higher-value capability.
- Governance, AML/KYC and advanced FP&A expertise are in short supply as regulatory scrutiny intensifies and strategic finance becomes more data-centric.

Industry Insights

Banking, Financial Services & Insurance

Malaysia

Insights by **Brian Sim,**
Managing Director & Country Head - Malaysia

English language proficiency – particularly in insurance and takaful segments – also presents friction where documentation quality and client communication standards are critical. More broadly, digital transformation is moving faster than workforce capability. While employers prioritise data analytics, automation, cybersecurity awareness and digital product literacy, many candidates require substantial upskilling before becoming fully deployable. This increases onboarding costs and prolongs time-to-productivity.

Retention Pressures in a Cost-Conscious Market

Retention dynamics are shaped by rising cost-of-living pressures and evolving workforce expectations. Salary expectations have increased materially, with many professionals seeking meaningful adjustments to maintain purchasing power. Employers, however, often face budget constraints, creating tension and heightened mobility risk.

Career visibility is equally influential. Professionals increasingly expect structured progression pathways, recognised certifications and access to digital training that directly link to advancement. A good work-life balance and flexible work options are now basic expectations, especially among younger employees. Additionally, initiatives that promote well-being, inclusive leadership styles and open communication are becoming key factors that make employers more appealing.

Looking Ahead

Over the next two years, sustained investment in targeted upskilling will be critical. Prioritising capability building in risk, compliance, digital finance, actuarial standards and ESG reporting can reduce overreliance on external hiring. Strengthened succession planning for risk, underwriting and operations leadership roles will also improve internal mobility.

At the same time, a clearly articulated employee value proposition – combining competitive benchmarking, skill-based allowances, structured development pathways and proactive well-being support – will be vital. Institutions that align digital ambition with workforce capability and embed visible progression frameworks will be best placed to stabilise and grow Malaysia's BFSI talent base in an increasingly competitive regional landscape.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Rising cost-of-living pressures and constrained salary budgets are intensifying mobility risk, but career visibility and flexible work arrangements are increasingly decisive retention levers.
- Institutions that invest in targeted upskilling, succession planning and a clearly articulated EVP will be better equipped to stabilise talent amid accelerating digital and regulatory demands.

Industry Insights

Banking, Financial Services & Insurance

Malaysia

Insights by **Brian Sim,**
Managing Director & Country Head - Malaysia

Malaysia's BFSI sector is experiencing sustained demand for senior risk, actuarial and commercial leaders, as regulatory complexity and balance sheet pressures reshape hiring.

Risk, Capital and Relationship Talent in Short Supply

At the executive level, the tightest markets sit in actuarial modelling, speciality underwriting and climate risk within insurance, alongside AML, financial crime, ESG and regulatory transformation. Advanced pricing, reserving and reinsurance expertise remains limited, particularly where digital and data fluency are required.

In banking, experienced credit analysts, portfolio risk managers and relationship managers across corporate, SME and private banking segments are highly mobile and heavily competed for. Finance leadership positions in areas like Financial Planning & Analysis (FP&A), treasury, capital planning and liquidity risk are facing similar challenges. Organisations are increasingly focusing on strengthening capital discipline and improving their regulatory reporting capabilities.

Hybrid Skill Demands Outpacing Supply

Expectation gaps are widening around 'dual-capability' talent. Employers seek commercially astute leaders who can also navigate analytics, digital product evolution and systems modernisation. In reality, the market remains siloed: strong business operators may lack digital depth, while technically strong professionals may lack client-facing or regulatory judgement.

Legacy technology environments also create friction, as senior candidates increasingly expect exposure to modern platforms and transformation mandates rather than purely maintenance-focused roles.

Mobility, Flexibility and Career Velocity Driving Attrition

Retention pressure is particularly intense for relationship managers, as well as for risk and compliance professionals. Flexible work models, faster promotion cycles and structured career mobility are now baseline expectations. Competitive pay remains decisive, but purpose-driven leadership and continuous learning investment are equally influential.

Looking Ahead

Institutions that build internal academies, accelerate rotational pathways and modernise work environments will reduce reliance on scarce external hires. Clear career architecture, innovation-led employer branding and competitive benchmarking will determine success in securing Malaysia's next generation of BFSI leaders.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Flexible work, career velocity and visible learning investment are now decisive retention levers for high-demand BFSI professionals.
- Employers seeking hybrid commercial-digital leaders face a market still divided between technical and business skillsets.

Industry Insights

Engineering & Technical

Malaysia

Insights by **Brian Sim,**
Managing Director & Country Head - Malaysia

Malaysia's Engineering & Technical sector is expanding in tandem with growth in data centres, semiconductor investment and advanced manufacturing. However, hiring conditions remain structurally constrained. Demand for specialised, deployment-ready engineers continues to outpace local supply, particularly where roles require cross-disciplinary integration and hands-on operational experience.

Specialist Engineering Scarcity

Data centre and facilities engineers are among the hardest roles to fill. Organisations require professionals capable of managing electrical, mechanical, cooling and critical infrastructure systems within high-availability environments. However, engineers with end-to-end operational exposure and cross-functional capability remain limited in the domestic market.

Semiconductor and process engineers present similar challenges. As fabrication and advanced manufacturing expand, employers seek candidates with hands-on cleanroom, wafer fabrication and process optimisation experience. Yet exposure to advanced nodes and modern fabrication technologies is concentrated within a small number of established facilities, narrowing mobility.

Automation and robotics engineers are also in strong demand, particularly as Industry 4.0 initiatives accelerate. These roles require integration of mechanical systems, programming logic and industrial automation platforms – a combination not widely developed locally. Industrial and manufacturing engineers with practical lean optimisation experience, alongside electrical and mechanical design engineers capable of full project lifecycle delivery, are similarly scarce.

Across these disciplines, cross-disciplinary expertise is rare. Engineers are increasingly expected to bridge systems integration, automation, monitoring and optimisation functions, yet most talent remains trained within single technical domains.

Practical Skill Gaps and Job Readiness

Employer expectation gaps centre on practical capability. Graduates frequently have strong theoretical foundations but often lack exposure to real-world project environments, which limits their immediate employability. Familiarity with CAD, CAE, PLC

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Specialist engineering demand in data centres, semiconductors and automation is outpacing Malaysia's local talent pipeline.
- Cross-disciplinary, deployment-ready engineers remain limited as practical experience lags industry expansion.

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Engineering & Technical

Malaysia

Insights by **Brian Sim,**
Managing Director & Country Head - Malaysia

systems and advanced process tools is uneven, particularly outside leading firms.

Soft skills present an additional constraint. Problem-solving under pressure, cross-team collaboration and effective communication are increasingly critical within complex project environments. Where these capabilities are underdeveloped, project execution risk rises.

In high-growth segments such as data centres and semiconductors, employers seek engineers comfortable with automation, IoT integration and monitoring frameworks. The convergence of digital and physical engineering skill sets has accelerated faster than local training pipelines.

Retention in a Competitive Market

Retention dynamics reflect both compensation and career development considerations. Skilled engineers expect market-aligned salaries, performance-based incentives and benefits that reflect sector growth. However, remuneration alone does not secure loyalty.

Career progression and access to emerging technologies are decisive. Engineers are more likely to remain where structured technical development pathways, mentorship and exposure to impactful projects are visible. Flexible work arrangements and work-life balance considerations are increasingly relevant, particularly for design and planning functions.

Looking Ahead

Strengthening Malaysia's engineering talent base will require sustained investment in capability building. Structured upskilling and reskilling programmes – particularly in data centre operations, semiconductor processes, automation and robotics – can reduce overreliance on a narrow external talent pool.

Clear technical career tracks, mentorship frameworks and cross-disciplinary development opportunities will improve retention and internal mobility. At the same time, competitive benchmarking and flexible benefits will remain essential in attracting mid-career specialists.

Partnerships between industry and universities will be critical in producing job-ready graduates with applied experience. Organisations that combine long-term workforce planning with practical skills development and meaningful project exposure will be best positioned to secure and retain Malaysia's most in-demand engineering talent.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Competitive pay is necessary but retention hinges on visible career pathways, technical development and meaningful project exposure.
- Long-term workforce planning, structured upskilling and industry–university collaboration will be critical to sustaining Malaysia's engineering talent pipeline.

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Engineering & Technical

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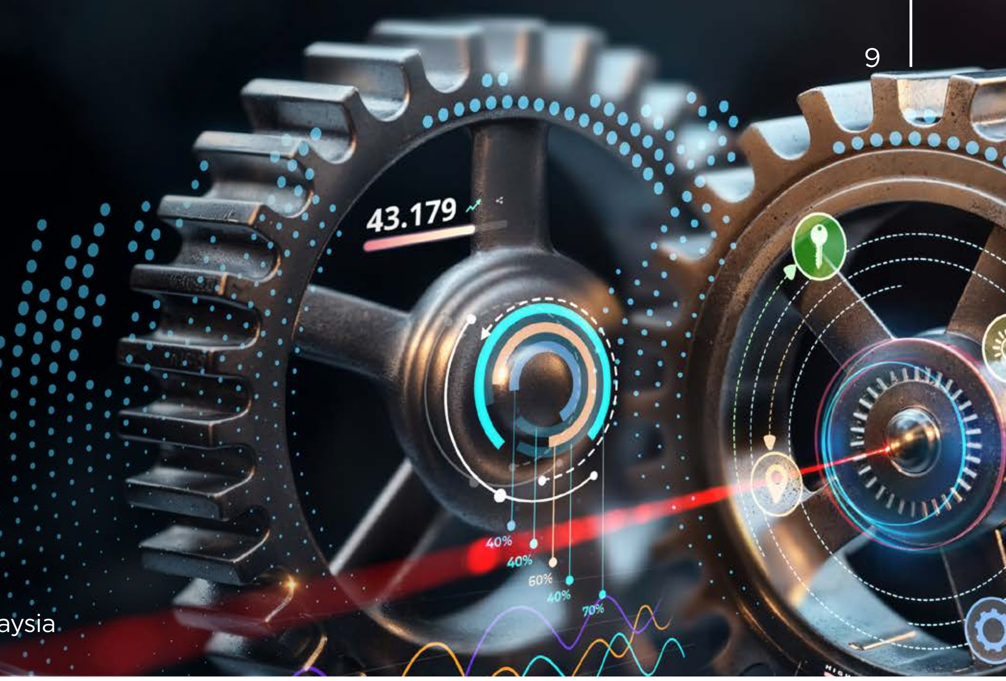

Insights by **Brian Sim,**
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Executive search data indicates sustained demand for senior engineering and operations leaders as Malaysia's manufacturing sector expands under global supply chain diversification strategies. Growth across electrical & electronics (E&E), semiconductors and precision engineering is intensifying competition for transformation-ready talent.

Transformation-Ready Engineering Leaders in Short Supply

At the senior level, the most difficult-to-fill roles include experienced mechanical, electrical, process and automation engineers, alongside plant managers and operations directors with proven lean manufacturing and Industry 4.0 track records. Supply chain leaders with global exposure in risk management, sustainability and digital logistics are also in short supply.

Advanced manufacturing requires skilled technicians in robotics and CNC machining, as well as data analysts capable of enabling smart factory environments. However, experienced semiconductor and automation specialists remain limited, while younger graduates often lack practical exposure to IoT, robotics and ERP-driven supply chain systems.

A cross-generational imbalance is evident: organisations need seasoned leaders to drive digital transformation, yet pipelines of job-ready early-career talent remain thin.

Digital Expectations Colliding with Regional Competition

Employers increasingly expect digital fluency in automation, IoT and analytics, but training ecosystems have not fully aligned. Multinationals demand international quality and safety compliance standards, while local exposure may be regional. At the same time, rigid shift structures and expectations of multi-skilled capability can deter younger professionals seeking flexibility and purpose-driven work.

Attrition to Singapore and regional hubs remains a defining challenge. Senior engineers and supply chain leaders are drawn by higher remuneration and broader leadership exposure, while mid-career managers face burnout balancing operational delivery with transformation mandates. Younger professionals prioritise structured upskilling, sustainability initiatives and visible career pathways.

Looking Ahead

Executive hiring outcomes will depend on competitive regional benchmarking, structured Industry 4.0 upskilling and stronger employer branding around innovation and sustainability. Clear career pathing, cross-functional rotations and leadership recognition will be critical to securing and retaining Malaysia's engineering leadership bench.

Industry Insights

Healthcare, Life Sciences & Pharmaceuticals

Malaysia

Insights by **Brian Sim,**
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Malaysia's Healthcare, Life Sciences and Pharmaceuticals sector is undergoing structural transformation, driven by rising healthcare demand, pharmaceuticals manufacturing expansion, tightening regulatory requirements and a shift toward higher-value, knowledge-intensive roles. While growth prospects remain strong, talent constraints across clinical, commercial and R&D functions are placing pressure on productivity, innovation and long-term sustainability.

Persistent Skill Shortages Across Core Functions

Shortages are most evident at mid to senior levels where specialist expertise and practical experience are critical. In healthcare and pharmaceuticals sales, demand remains high for medical representatives with therapy-specific knowledge and key account managers capable of navigating hospital and tender-based environments. Sales roles now require scientific fluency, compliance awareness and data-driven decision-making, alongside commercial acumen. Performance pressure and regulatory scrutiny contribute to burnout, while experienced performers are frequently targeted by competitors.

R&D functions face equally pronounced gaps. Formulation scientists, clinical research associates, regulatory affairs specialists, quality assurance professionals and bioinformatics talent are all in short supply. The domestic pipeline of industry-ready researchers is relatively limited and competition is intensifying from regional hubs such as Singapore and Australia, which are increasingly attracting talent. A persistent gap between academic training and commercial R&D expectations further constrains readiness.

In clinical healthcare, nursing shortages remain acute. Staff nurses, specialist nurses in ICU, oncology and dialysis settings and senior nursing leaders are difficult to retain. High workloads, shift-based schedules and limited progression beyond senior clinical roles contribute to sustained attrition, with migration to private institutions or overseas markets remaining common.

Misaligned Expectations and Market Reality

Expectation gaps are increasingly strategic in nature. In nursing, employers often require high patient throughput and rotating schedules while employees expect safe staffing ratios, predictable

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Nursing shortages remain structurally acute, driven by workload intensity, limited progression and ongoing migration to private and overseas employers.

Commercial roles now demand scientific fluency and compliance expertise, while R&D pipelines struggle to produce industry-ready talent in a regionally competitive market.

Industry Insights

Healthcare, Life Sciences & Pharmaceuticals

Malaysia

Insights by **Brian Sim,**
Managing Director & Country Head - Malaysia

rosters and clearer professional pathways. Where institutional support is perceived as inadequate, burnout risk escalates.

Within sales functions, organisations focus on aggressive growth targets and compliance adherence, yet professionals expect realistic KPIs, structured training and transparent advancement routes. Misalignment can erode engagement and accelerate poaching vulnerability.

In R&D, employers frequently expect rapid impact across multiple technical domains, while professionals seek structured onboarding, mentorship and manageable project timelines. Unclear role definitions and compressed delivery expectations undermine long-term retention.

Retention Under Pressure

Attrition drivers extend beyond compensation, though pay remains decisive in nursing roles. Across the sector, employees increasingly prioritise career clarity, development pathways, manageable workloads and organisational support. In R&D and sales, stagnation and limited progression are common triggers for exit. International markets offering stronger funding, clearer specialist tracks and better remuneration continue to attract Malaysian talent.

Looking Ahead

Sustainable improvement will require integrated workforce strategies rather than transactional hiring. For nursing, safe staffing, competitive benchmarking and defined clinical and leadership pathways are critical. In sales, transparent performance frameworks and diversified career tracks can stabilise high-performing teams. In R&D, dual technical and managerial career paths, structured mentorship and university partnerships will strengthen long-term capability.

Organisations that align performance expectations with workforce sustainability and invest in visible, structured career development will be best placed to secure and retain Malaysia's increasingly mobile healthcare and life sciences talent.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Misalignment between employer demands and employee expectations is accelerating burnout and attrition across nursing, sales and R&D functions.
- Integrated workforce strategies that combine safe staffing, transparent performance frameworks and dual-track career pathways will be essential to stabilising Malaysia's HLS&P talent base.

Industry Insights

Healthcare, Life Sciences & Pharmaceuticals

Malaysia

Insights by **Brian Sim,**
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Malaysia's HLS&P sector continues to face acute senior-level talent shortages across both clinical and commercial environments, with brain drain and rising global competition shaping hiring outcomes.

Scarcity Across Clinical, Regulatory and Digital Health Functions

Hospitals and public healthcare institutions remain constrained by shortages of specialists – particularly in oncology, cardiology and anaesthesiology – alongside nurses and medical officers. Resignations and overseas migration have intensified pressure on already stretched systems.

In commercial life sciences, scarcity is most evident in regulatory affairs, clinical trial management and pharmacovigilance within pharma. Biotech organisations face a tight supply of molecular biologists, genetic engineers and bioinformatics experts, while medical device companies struggle to secure biomedical engineers, product designers and compliance specialists familiar with international standards.

Healthtech firms are competing aggressively for AI engineers, data scientists and cybersecurity leaders and diagnostics laboratories report ongoing shortages of clinical research associates, certified lab technicians and biostatisticians.

Flexibility Demands and Global Standards Creating Talent Friction

Expectation misalignment is increasingly visible. Hospitals often maintain rigid schedules and long working hours, while professionals demand flexibility, recognition and manageable workloads.

Commercial employers expect global compliance fluency, entrepreneurial agility and digital capability in areas such as AI and telehealth. However, local training pipelines have not fully kept pace and multinational standards may exceed the exposure of regional talent.

Brain Drain and Career Ambition Accelerating Attrition

Burnout, compensation gaps and heavy patient loads continue to drive attrition from public hospitals to private institutions or overseas markets. In commercial settings, higher remuneration and broader exposure in Singapore and other global hubs intensify turnover risk.

Employees increasingly seek structured career paths, international project opportunities and meaningful recognition. Younger professionals prioritise purpose-driven work, flexibility and wellness support, while startups often struggle to compete with larger employers' stability.

Looking Ahead

To stabilise senior hiring outcomes, organisations must align compensation with regional benchmarks, introduce clearer progression frameworks and invest in flexibility, mental health support and international exposure. Strengthened employer branding and visible development pathways will be central to retaining Malaysia's high-value healthcare and life sciences talent.

Industry Insights

Information Technology & Telecommunications

Malaysia

Insights by **Brian Sim,**
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Hiring demand across Malaysia's IT and Telecommunications sector continues to face structural talent constraints, driven by rapid digital transformation, limited advanced skills pipelines and strong competition from regional and global employers. While demand for technology capability remains robust, hiring conditions are increasingly defined by depth of expertise rather than overall headcount.

Digital Skills Under Strain

Cybersecurity remains one of the most acute shortage areas, particularly in cloud security, SOC operations and threat intelligence. At the same time, demand for software engineers with experience in modern technologies, such as backend, full-stack and mobile development, continues to exceed supply. Employers are seeking hands-on proficiency in contemporary frameworks and languages, yet candidates with applied, production-level experience remain limited.

There is a growing shortage of cloud architects and DevOps engineers who have hands-on experience with AWS, Azure, or GCP, as well as knowledge of Kubernetes and CI/CD environments. In addition, data specialists such as data engineers, AI/ML engineers and data scientists who can deploy models at scale are in high demand but hard to find. In telecommunications, shortages are evident across network engineering, 5G, RF engineering and fibre-optic expertise, reflecting ongoing infrastructure expansion.

Intensifying competition from multinational tech firms and startups is further fuelling wage inflation and talent mobility, particularly for mid-career digital professionals.

Expectation Gaps and 'Plug-and-Play' Hiring

Employer expectation gaps are a persistent challenge. Many organisations seek advanced AI, cloud or cybersecurity skills but struggle to find candidates with immediately deployable, real-world capability. The rapid evolution of digital technologies has outpaced the readiness of local talent pipelines.

Role clarity is another friction point. Mismatches between advertised job descriptions and actual responsibilities frequently result in declined offers or early attrition. Candidates are increasingly sensitive to transparency around scope and accountability.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Cybersecurity, cloud and data expertise remain persistently supply-constrained.
- Malaysia's tech hiring challenge is now about specialised depth, not headcount volume.

Industry Insights

Information Technology & Telecommunications

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Managing Director & Country Head - Malaysia

Training assumptions also diverge. Employers often expect job-ready professionals, while candidates anticipate structured onboarding and upskilling support. In a fast-moving digital landscape, limited investment in development weakens both hiring success and retention.

Retention in a Competitive Talent Market

Retention pressures reflect high job mobility within Malaysia's tech workforce. Compensation expectations have risen in line with cost-of-living pressures and regional benchmarks, making salary competitiveness a central concern. However, pay alone does not fully explain attrition.

Anxiety around future skills relevance – particularly in relation to AI adoption and automation – is increasingly influential. Professionals are seeking clarity on how emerging technologies will reshape their roles and expect support to build future-ready capabilities.

Work-life balance and flexibility have also become core expectations. Hybrid and remote work models are now viewed as standard for many digital roles. Rigid return-to-office mandates risk undermining employer attractiveness, particularly among younger cohorts.

Looking Ahead

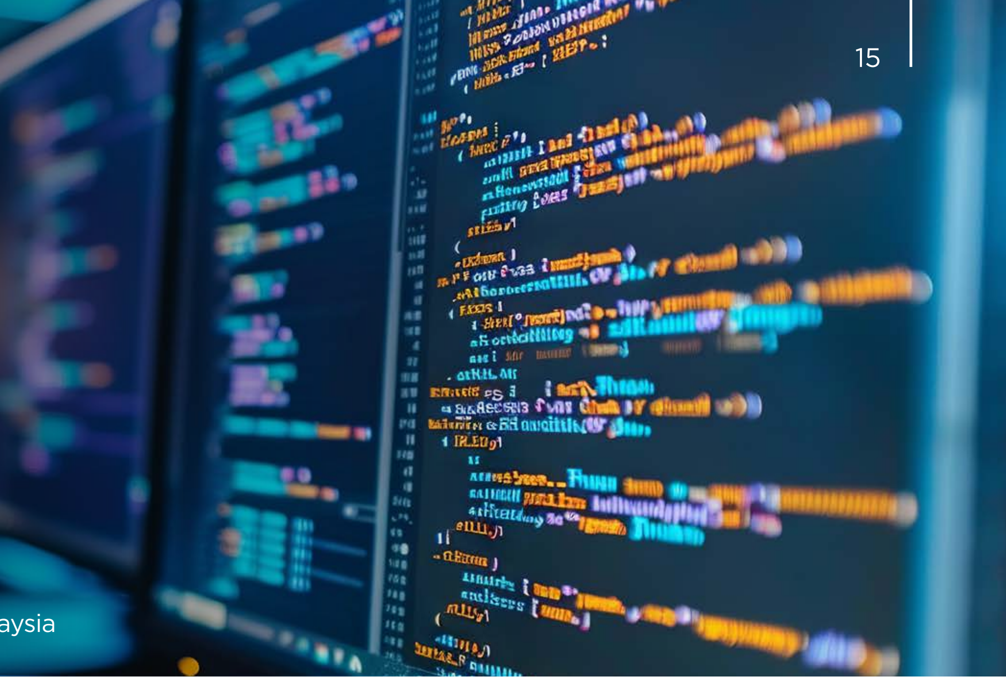
Success in Malaysia's IT and Telecommunications sector will depend on shifting from transactional hiring toward sustainable capability building. Skills-based recruitment approaches emphasising practical assessments alongside credentials can broaden access to viable talent.

Equally important is strengthening the employer value proposition through competitive benchmarking, transparent career pathways and flexible work models. Investing in structured graduate programmes, industry-academia collaboration and long-term digital upskilling will reduce overreliance on external hiring.

Organisations that combine agility in work design with sustained investment in local digital capability will be best placed to secure and retain Malaysia's increasingly mobile technology workforce.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Salary remains important, but AI-driven skills anxiety is reshaping retention decisions.
- Flexibility and hybrid work have become baseline expectations, not differentiators.



Industry Insights

Information Technology & Telecommunications

Malaysia

Insights by **Brian Sim,**
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In Malaysia's IT & Telecommunications sector, the past 12 months have seen strong demand for digital transformation leadership, set against a structurally constrained talent pool and rising regional competition.

Scarcity of Specialists in Cybersecurity and AI Roles

At the executive and senior specialist level, cybersecurity, cloud, data and AI leadership roles remain the most difficult to secure. Organisations are seeking senior professionals who combine deep technical authority with business insight, stakeholder management and regulatory awareness – particularly in banking and fintech environments.

Product and technology leadership is especially rare. The market often trails India by several years in emerging technologies, limiting the availability of leaders with large-scale AI, cloud-native or platform modernisation experience.

Unicorn Expectations and Salary Benchmarking Misalignment

Misalignment frequently centres on salary benchmarking and 'unicorn' expectations. Many employers seek candidates with 8–10 years' experience, regional exposure, advanced technical capability and a strong commercial mindset – without recalibrating compensation to reflect regional market realities.

Hybrid policies are another friction point. Strict onsite requirements risk losing senior talent to fintechs, Singapore-based employers or regional remote roles. In addition, internal equity concerns often result in outdated salary bands, further constraining attraction efforts.

Burnout and Brain Drain in Singapore Driving Attrition

Burnout is a recurring issue. Transformation programmes, regulatory compliance and legacy system migration place pressure on already under-resourced teams. Brain drain to Singapore, where currency strength enhances earning potential, compounds the challenge.

High-calibre professionals increasingly expect flexible work, transparent KPIs, meaningful project ownership and access to modern technology environments. They also prioritise learning budgets, certifications and clear career progression over purely transactional pay increases.

Looking Ahead

Executive hiring outcomes will depend on sharper employer branding, realistic salary benchmarking and faster hiring cycles. Organisations that clarify career pathways, invest in upskilling and visibly showcase innovation capability will strengthen their ability to secure and retain senior digital leaders in an increasingly competitive regional market.

Hiring and Retention Insights

Hiring and Retention Insights

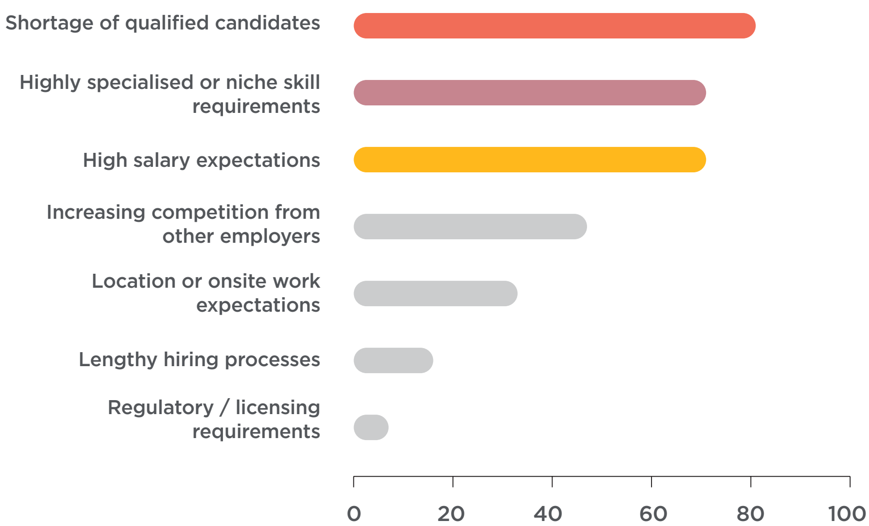
Most Difficult Roles to Hire

Hiring challenges across APAC are most pronounced in technical and specialist domains. Engineering and technical specialists (56%), Data & AI professionals (49%), and software/technology roles (45%) are consistently identified as the hardest to fill.

Leadership and senior management roles (44%) also rank highly, pointing to a growing shortage of experienced, decision-making talent. The data reflects a structural imbalance in the market, where demand for advanced technical expertise and leadership capability continues to outpace supply.

Key Hiring Challenges

The primary barrier to hiring is the shortage of qualified candidates, cited by 81% of employers. This is closely followed by:

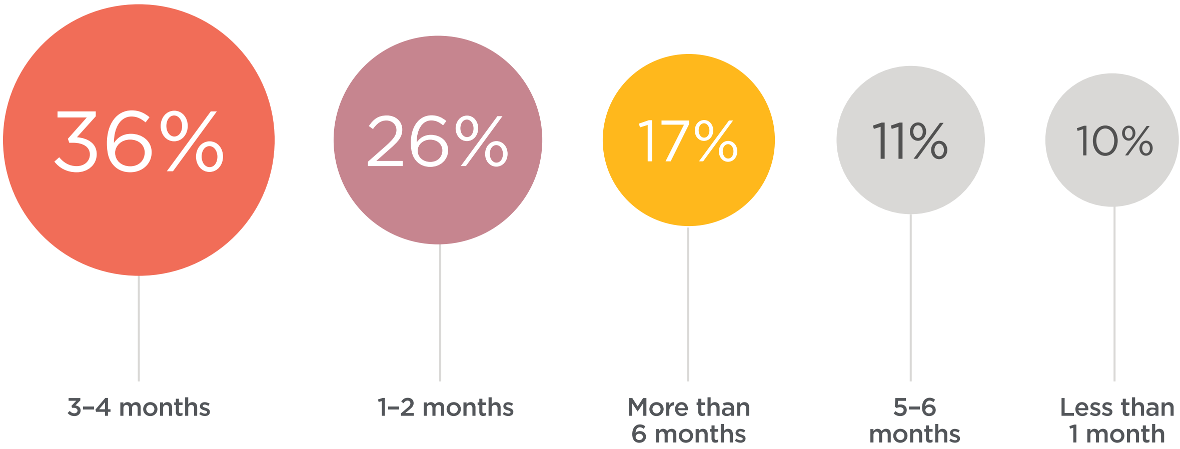


Additional challenges include increasing competition for talent (47%) and constraints related to location or onsite expectations (33%). Hiring complexity is being driven less by applicant volume and more by a capability mismatch, alongside rising market expectations for compensation.

Hiring and Retention Insights

Time to Fill Critical Roles

Overall, many employers find that they require at least three months to fill a vacant role. Organisations are prioritising precision over speed, reflecting both talent scarcity and higher hiring standards for critical roles.

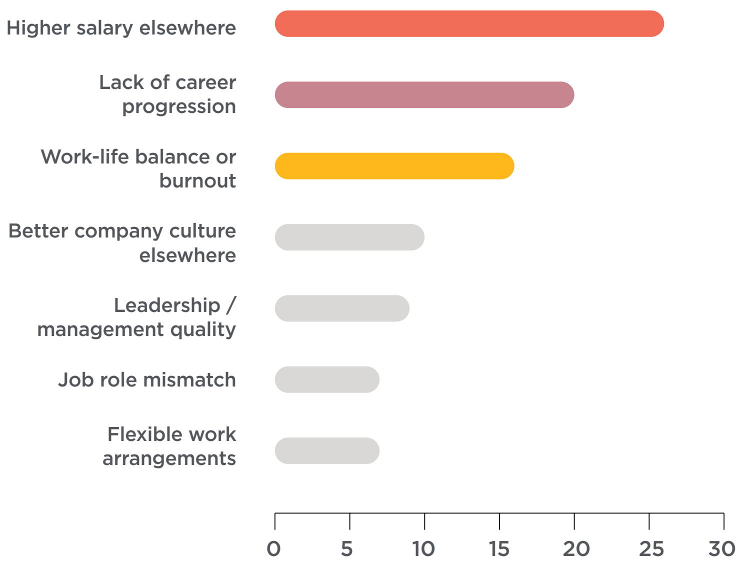


Top Reasons Employees Leave

Employee attrition is primarily driven by higher salary opportunities elsewhere (approximately 26% of respondents), making it the most significant factor by a clear margin. This is followed by a lack of career progression, work-life balance, or burnout.

Secondary drivers include company culture, leadership quality, and job-role alignment, indicating that both tangible and experiential factors influence employee turnover.

Organisations that focus only on pay will remain vulnerable to attrition. Sustainable retention will require a more balanced approach combining competitive rewards, clear career pathways, and a strong employee experience.



Hiring and Retention Insights

Talent Mobility and Retention Pressures

Though detailed breakdowns are scarce, the data suggest that retention issues are closely tied to market competitiveness and salary dynamics. Specifically, 24% of employers struggle to find candidates with the right skills, 16% face challenges due to candidates' salary expectations, and 10% report intense competition for talent.

As a result, employees, especially in high-demand roles, are experiencing greater mobility and choices in their careers. Retention is becoming as critical as hiring, with organisations needing to compete continuously to retain key talent. To do so, companies need to offer attractive packages that include flexible work options, competitive salaries, and comprehensive benefits. Creating a positive work environment and supporting employees' needs and well-being are also essential for encouraging loyalty and reducing turnover.

Hiring and Retention Insights

Strategies to Address Talent Gaps

Organisations are shifting toward more sustainable talent strategies, with a clear emphasis on internal capability development.

The APAC talent landscape is undergoing a fundamental shift. The challenge is no longer simply accessing talent but ensuring alignment between evolving business needs and workforce capabilities. This is where a strong talent solution partner becomes essential, as we can provide the insights and resources necessary to navigate this dynamic landscape effectively.

Organisations that will succeed in this environment are those that:

- **Invest in continuous skills development**
- **Offer competitive and holistic employee value propositions**
- **Build clear and compelling career pathways**
- **Adopt flexible and adaptive workforce models**

Ultimately, competitive advantage will be defined not just by the ability to hire talent, but by the ability to develop, engage, and retain it. A reliable talent solution partner plays a critical role in this process, helping businesses adapt and thrive in a rapidly changing market.

**This analysis captures directional insights from a targeted respondent sample (n=90).*

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