

The 2024 SAP Hiring Manager's Playbook

THE RESULTS

In 2024, we launched the biggest UK&I survey of SAP contractors ever to be undertaken. Hundreds of contractors had their say - and we've compiled this information together for SAP hiring managers, guiding them on the latest SAP contractor preferences, trends, rates and needs.





Introduction

The SAP contractor community is critical to the success of business transformation programmes. But because they're part of the temporary workforce, their voices often aren't heard in the boardrooms of the businesses that need them.

This report aims to change that.

After surveying hundreds of SAP contractors across the UK & Ireland, we now have substantial data on:

- How much contractors are paid
- Their preferred working patterns
- What would make them likely to accept or reject a role
- What makes them stick around for the duration of the project

We hope this will be a useful internal tool for your SAP project - giving you the objective data and insights you need for your workforce planning meetings.

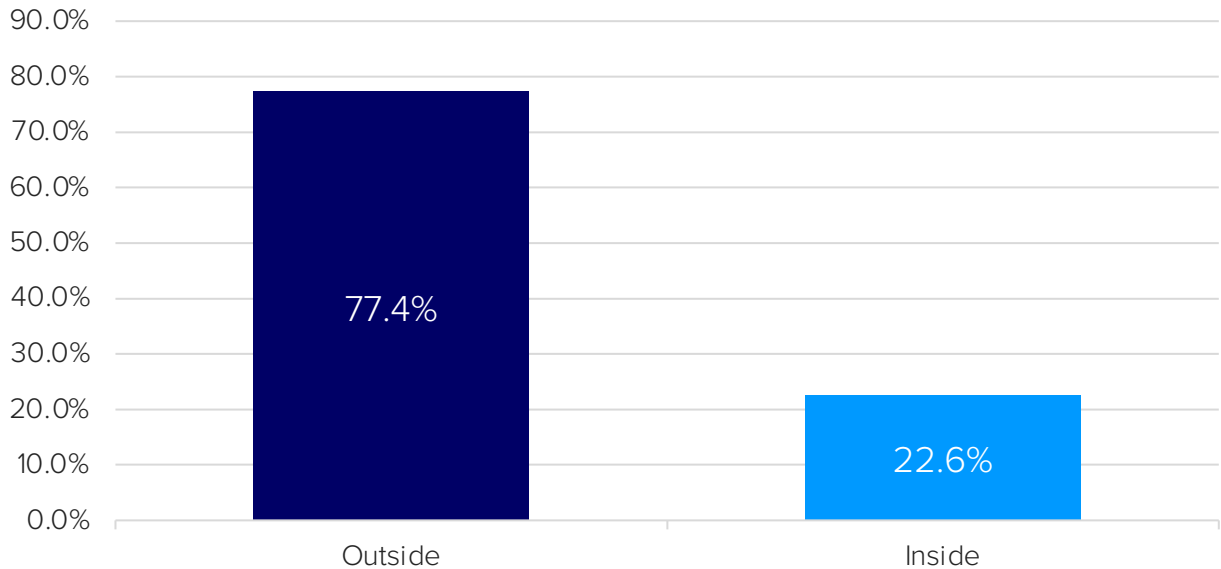
We will be repeating this survey annually through SAP Network+ (it's like LinkedIn, but for SAP people and employers). If you haven't yet joined, simply scan the QR code (it's free).



SAPNETWORK+
ELEVATE YOUR PROFILE

Join today by scanning the code **(it's FREE)**

In your last role, what was your position's IR35 determination?



What this means for hiring managers:

77.4%

of SAP contract opportunities are determined to be **outside of IR35 regulations**.

This is as expected, due to the project-driven nature of most SAP contract positions.

This is good news if your project roles are determined to be outside IR35 - there is a clear preference for working in this environment. This means you'll find it easier to recruit better contractors.

If your hand is forced to recruit **inside IR35**, you may just have to work a bit harder to recruit. Here's a couple of practical things you can do to make it easier:

Day Rate

SAP contractors who are open to working inside IR35 often do so at a **20-30% uplift on market rates** to cover the increased tax burden. If you have budget flexibility to offer a higher day rate you will reach a wider candidate pool.

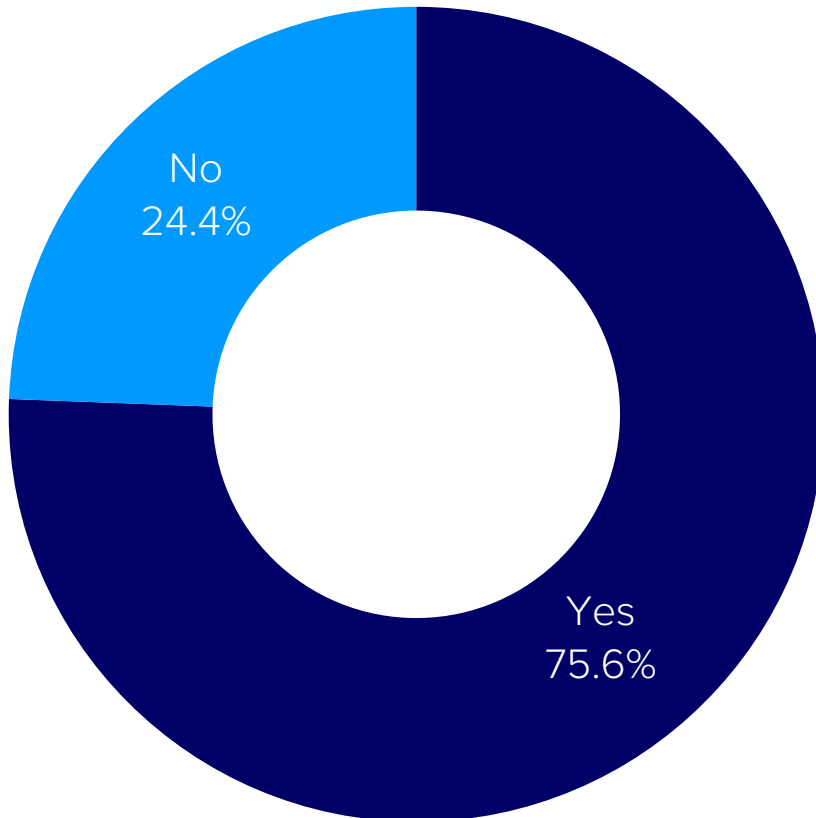


Location

We will find later in the report that the vast majority of SAP contractors **highly value flexibility when it comes to work location**. Offering a hybrid working pattern will be well received by the contractor community and may negate the inside IR35 determination.



If **inside IR35**, would you leave/have left the role for a position that is/was **outside IR35**?



What this means for hiring managers:

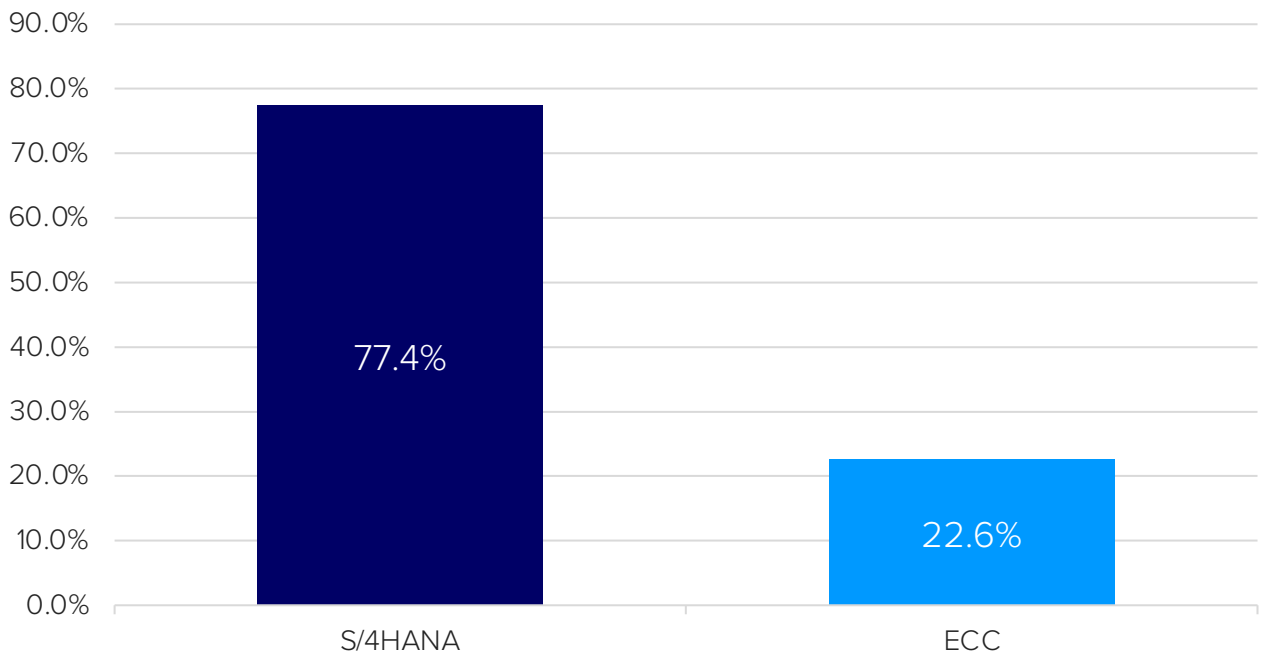
75.6%

of contractors working **inside IR35** would leave your programme for a competitive opportunity that is **outside IR35**.

Caution - if your contract roles are determined to be inside IR35, you're at risk.

This means you need to think about contractor retention. Consider introducing retention bonuses, focusing on creating a positive programme environment and flexible working.

What programme environment are/were you working in?



What this means for hiring managers:

77.4%

of contractors are/were working in an **S/4HANA environment**.

Positive news if you're in the market for SAP contractors with existing commercial experience of S/4HANA. Even more so if you know where to look and, more importantly, how to attract them.

Unfortunately, this is not so positive if you're maintaining an ECC landscape with no publicised roadmap to S/4HANA. **The ECC technology landscape seems to be less appealing to interviewing contractors.**

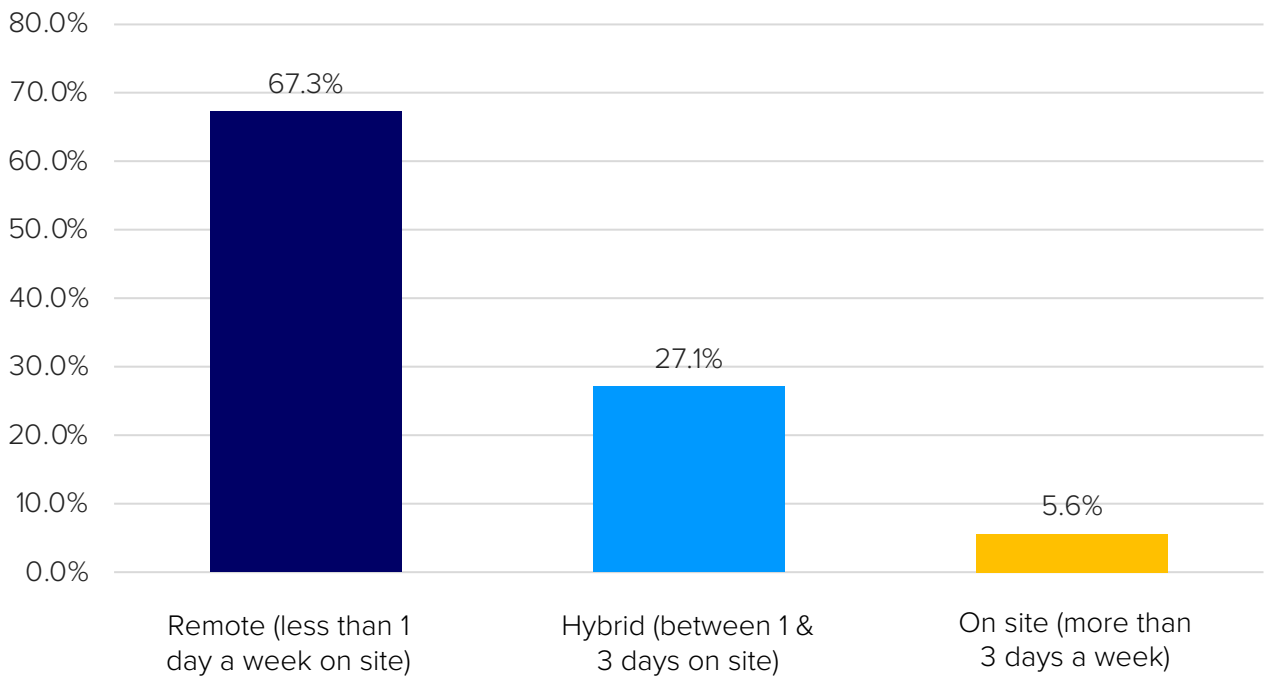
Gartner's research (2022/2023) stated 66% of ECC users hadn't started their S/4HANA journey.

If you're running an ECC environment, there's a strong chance that SAP experts in your team (including permanent staff) will have at least one eye on potential S/4HANA opportunities outside your organisation. They'll want to bring their skills up to date if those opportunities aren't available internally.

What you can do

Publicise your intentions and timelines involved in moving your ECC landscape to S/4HANA internally and during your interview processes. It will encourage your team and the people you're trying to hire to stay with your organisation, knowing that there are future opportunities for growth and development in the S/4HANA space (even if it's not in the immediate future).

What is/was your working pattern?



What this means for hiring managers:

The COVID lockdowns of 2020-21 reshaped the tech working landscape.

5.6%

Today, only 5.6% of contractors **work more than 3 days a week on site.**

67.3% **work fully remotely** (in our definition, this is less than 1 day per week on site).

67.3%

If you can **offer location flexibility** when recruiting contractors, it goes without saying that you will reach a wider talent pool.

A common pain point for contractors while on site was spending their day on video calls that could have

been done remotely. They would much rather use the on site time for in-person team collaboration sessions.

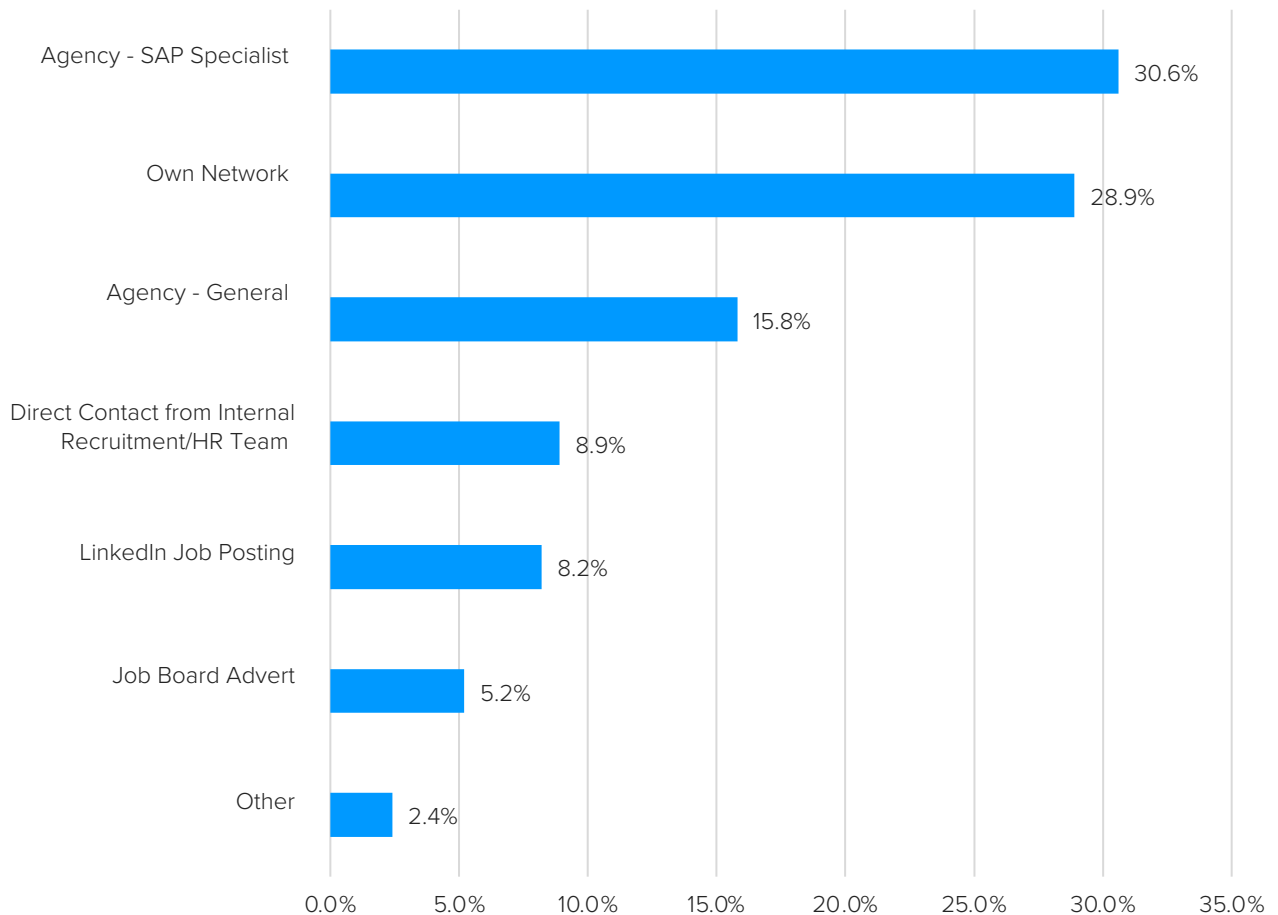
All of this being said, on site work isn't dead.

While SAP remote and hybrid working patterns are here to stay, many contractors recommend an on site commitment throughout the launch and design phases of the programme. This maximises collaboration and helps contractors build the key relationships needed to effectively deliver their part of the project before moving to a more flexible working model for programme delivery.

A significant number of SAP experts will, in fact, reject roles requiring zero on site presence.

They believe that face-to-face interaction with the business and wider team is essential for a successful programme.

How did you get your current/most recent role?



What this means for hiring managers:

Working with a specialist SAP recruitment agency is the most popular way for contractors to find new projects.

So, if you are not using a niche SAP recruitment business to supply contractors, you may be missing out on a much needed section of the workforce.

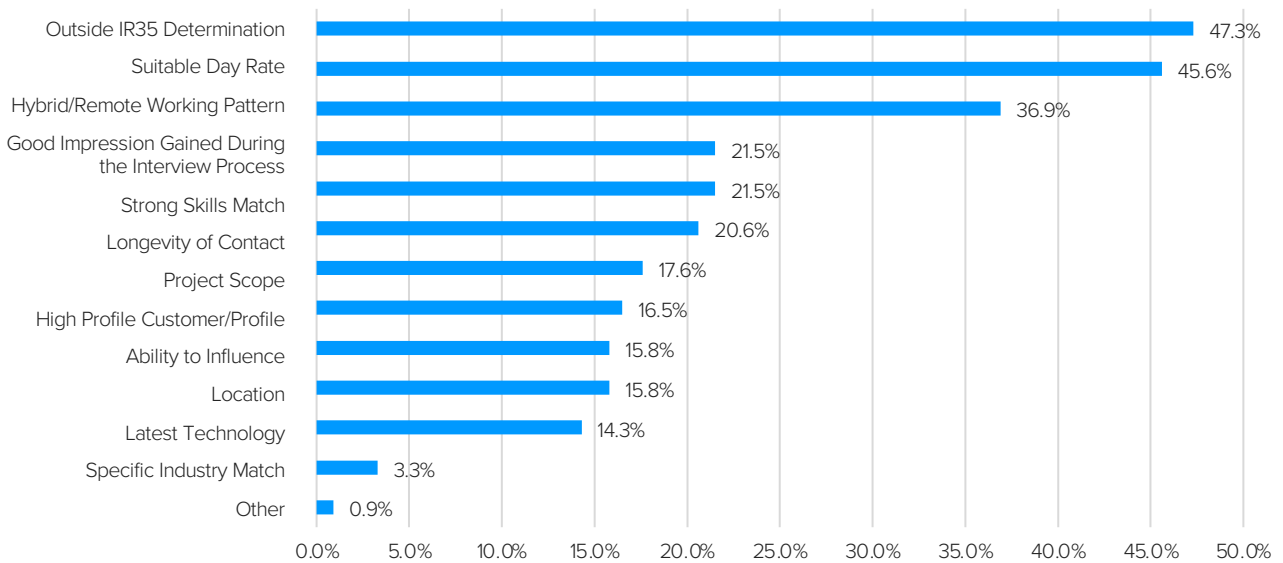
This is closely followed by utilising their network of previous contacts (28.9%) and far outranks contact from in-house recruitment teams (8.9%), LinkedIn job postings (8.2%) and responding to adverts (5.2%).

If your internal recruitment teams or existing suppliers aren't getting the results you need, you will undoubtedly get a more accurately matched resource by engaging with a specialist recruitment business like bluewaveSELECT.

These businesses know the SAP space, can speak your language, and have built their reputation on speed to market, accuracy, and high service levels.

What influences you most when **accepting** a project?

Multiple answers were accepted.



What this means for hiring managers:

An **outside IR35 determination is the number one determining factor** for SAP contractors when accepting a position. Great news if you are recruiting in this environment.

As we already know, this does make it more challenging if the business you work for determines contract roles to be inside IR35.

23%

of the **contract roles** we recruit for are **inside IR35**, which still represents a significant minority.

A **suitable day rate is just behind the IR35 determination** when evaluating contract offers. SAP contractors want a fair (not extortionate) rate for what they are being asked to do. If your budget allows you to pay market rate for what you need, you should be fine.

Third on the list are **remote and hybrid working options**.

We know that 5.6% of SAP contractors **work on site** for more than 3 days per week.

5.6%

If you can **show location flexibility**, this will be highly regarded by the contracting community.

The impression that contractors gain during the interview process received votes from 21.5% of people.

The great news is that this is something you and your hiring community can directly influence.

Creating a good impression for candidates is not difficult. **Speak passionately** about the company and the project, **explain the skills gap** and explore how the contractor can fill this for you. If a contractor is interested in the project, believes the skills match is a good one and has built a good rapport with you during the process, it may prove to be the deciding factor over other offers of a similar commercial proposition.

You can also contribute to a good impression by **providing timely feedback**, ensuring that any follow-up interviews happen at a **decent pace** and ensuring that your fellow interviewers are also **on brand when it comes to promoting the opportunity**.

Did you have multiple contract offers when you accepted your last position?



Yes 55.1%

More than half of SAP contractors receive multiple offers when looking for a new contract assignment.

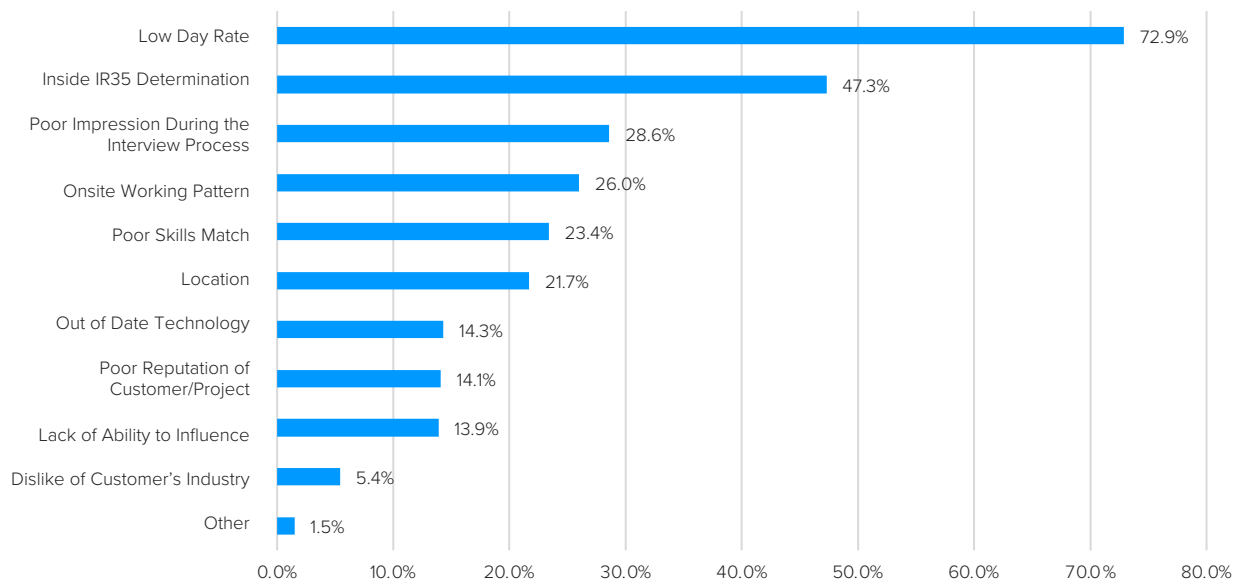
This is an important fact to consider when interviewing contractors as a significant number will be involved in other, competitive, interview processes.



No 44.9%

So, if you think that the contractor is a great match for your requirements, let them know and move quickly to secure them. The interview process should be a two-way conversation in search of a good fit and commercial proposition for both parties. You should also take the time to highlight the positives of your opportunity from their perspective - it could be the differentiator that tips them your way.

What influences you most when **rejecting** a project?



What this means for hiring managers:

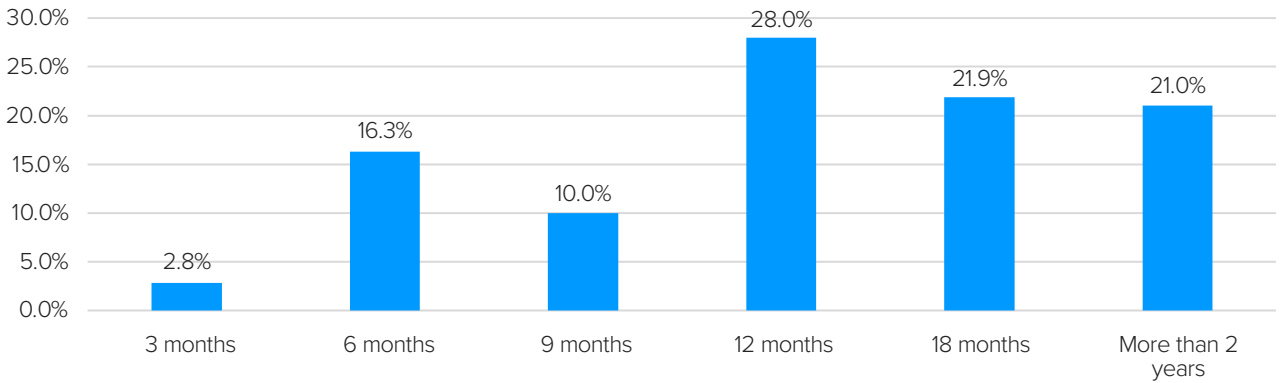
SAP contractors are nothing if not consistent - we could simply invert the last question's answers for this one.

The top four answers were low day rate (72.9%), inside IR35 determination (47.3%), a poor impression during the interview process (28.6%) and full time onsite working (26%).

From a hiring manager's perspective, sometimes your hands are tied with the inside IR35 determination, budget and even on site requirements.

The one thing you can do is create that excellent impression during the interview process. It might just land you the contractor you need.

What is the average duration of your SAP assignments, including contract extensions?



Over 70% of SAP contractors stay on a project for 12 months or longer, with 21% extending for over 2 years. This indicates that when the circumstances are right, contractors have a strong preference to see a project through to completion.

Explaining the longevity of your project will give prospective contractors peace of mind that they can get involved with something meaningful over time, even if you can only offer three or six month contracts at a time.

At what point before you get a confirmed extension do you look at other opportunities in the market?



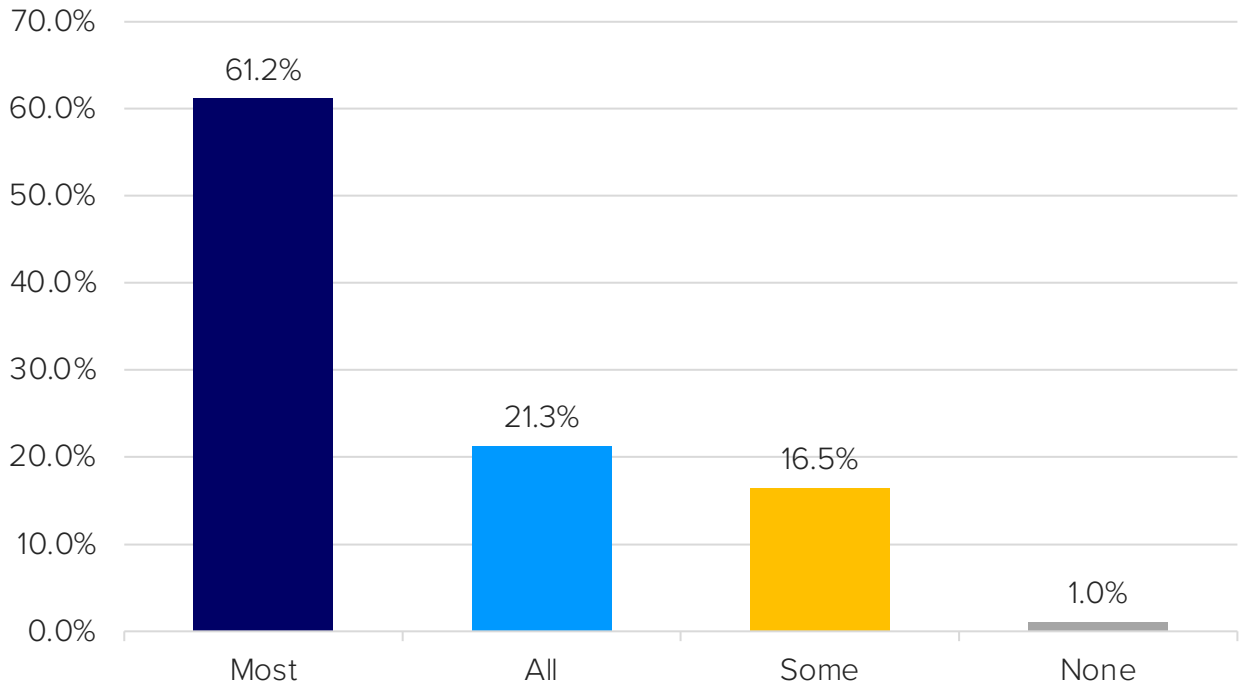
What this means for hiring managers:

Renewing contracts four weeks before the end date is common practice on SAP projects.

So if you want to maximise the opportunity to retain key contract resources, you can beat the market by initiating the extension process 6-8 weeks before the end date (before they begin to look at competitive options).

The best contractors in the market consistently receive calls about new opportunities, so don't risk losing them to a slow and reactive extension process. The market is buoyant and will only get busier as we move further towards the 2027 S/4HANA deadline.

How many of your previous customers would you work with again?



What this means for hiring managers:

82.5%

of SAP contractors would work with most or all of their previous customers again.

This is great news for a hiring manager.

Unless you're a greenfield site moving to SAP for the first time, you will have worked with decent SAP contractors who you would work with again - and who have the added benefit of an existing knowledge of your systems and processes.

29%

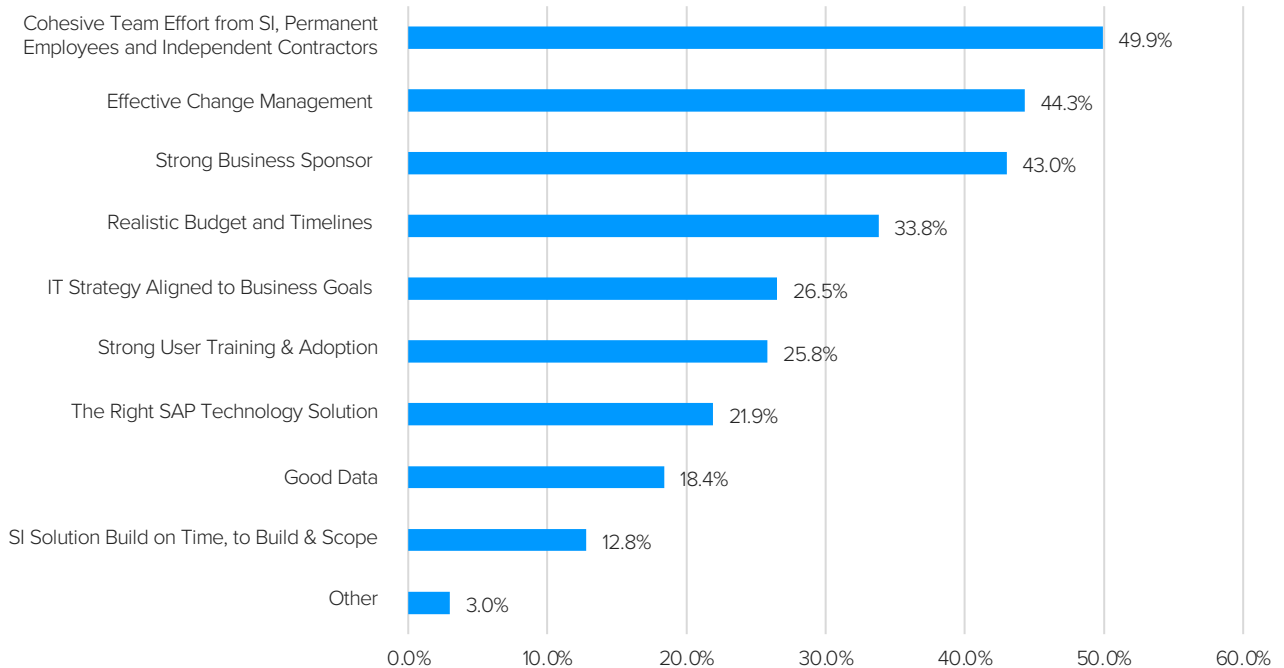
Don't forget that almost 29% of SAP contractors secured their current assignments via their own network.

So if you create and maintain a good working environment, you will find that proven, accurately matched contractors are already available in your internal ATS.

If you're too busy to personally approach old contacts directly, consider instructing your in-house recruitment team or agency to enquire about their availability and interest on your behalf.

What do you believe are the main reasons that SAP projects succeed?

Multiple answers were accepted.



What this means for hiring managers:

It's commonplace for SAP contractors to have worked on multiple programmes over the years, often for a dispersed client base, spanning several industries. This gives them a unique insight into what contributes to a successful SAP programme.

49.9%

If you promote **a cohesive team effort across the whole programme so that FTE teams, third-party partners and independent contractors are all pulling in the same direction with the same goal (nearly 50% of votes)**, it seems you're well on the way to a successful programme and delivering the desired business benefit.

44.3%

Effective Change Management

43%

Strong Business Sponsor

Similarly, if you have an effective change management plan in place (44.3%) and a strong business sponsor giving you the authority and backing you require (43%), these are really positive signs.

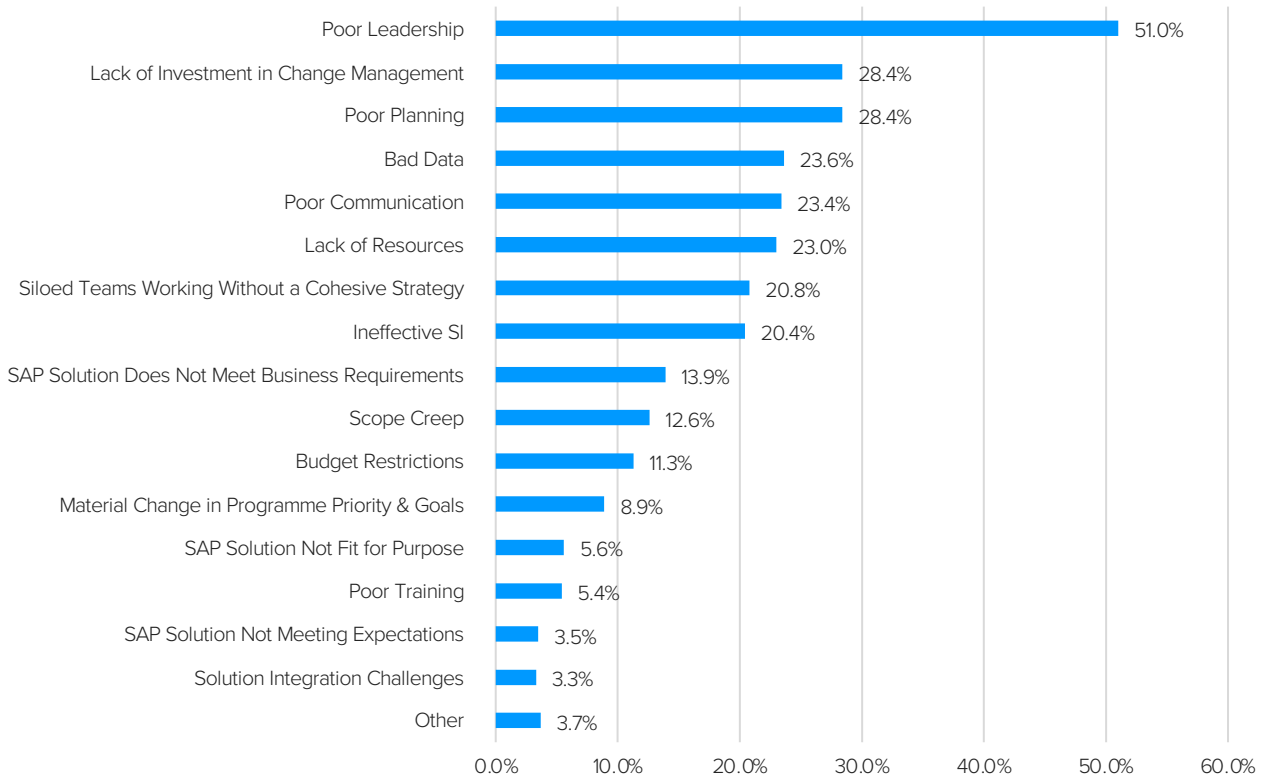
Use this to your advantage and communicate how your programme meets these successful delivery traits during the interview process.

Sell the dream of working on your project and with your company.

Don't forget that most contractors will have multiple offers, and you need to win them over.

What do you believe are the main reasons SAP projects fail?

Multiple answers were accepted.



What this means for hiring managers:

Again, opinions and insights offered by the SAP contractor community (with experience gained from hundreds of SAP programmes over the years) should be valued.

51%

of SAP contractors believe the number one reason for programme failure is **poor leadership**.

This is followed by **lack of investment in change management** (28.4%) and **poor planning** (28.4%) - both of which could arguably sit in the poor leadership column.

That means all of the top three reasons for failure are human rather than technology-based.

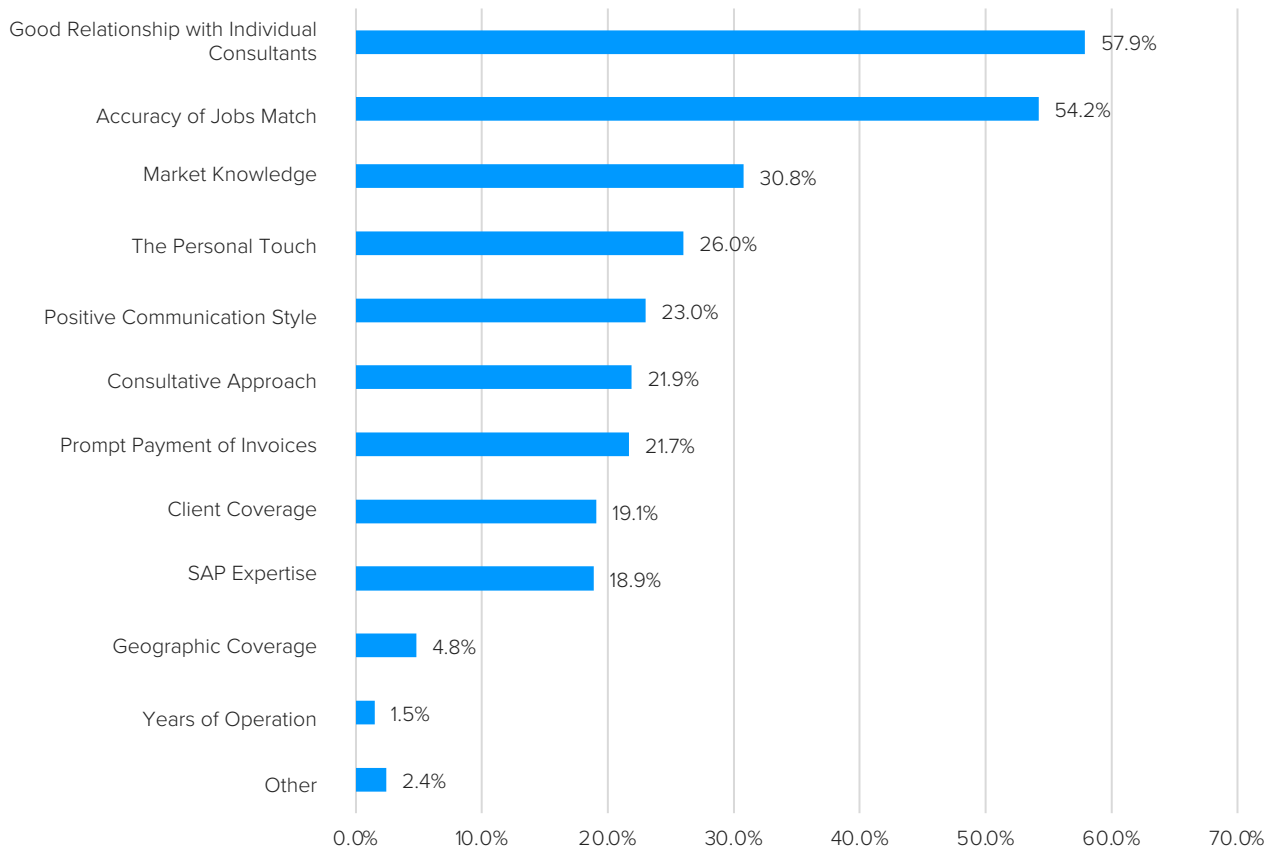
13.9%

In fact, only 13.9% of SAP contractors felt that programmes failed due to the **chosen SAP solution not being fit for purpose**.

It's important to communicate the effectiveness of your programme leadership during the interview process, along with other key success criteria from this list that you think will appeal to contractors. This will help you stand out from the crowd (and other offers).

In your opinion, what makes a **good** recruitment agency?

Multiple answers were accepted.



What this means for hiring managers:

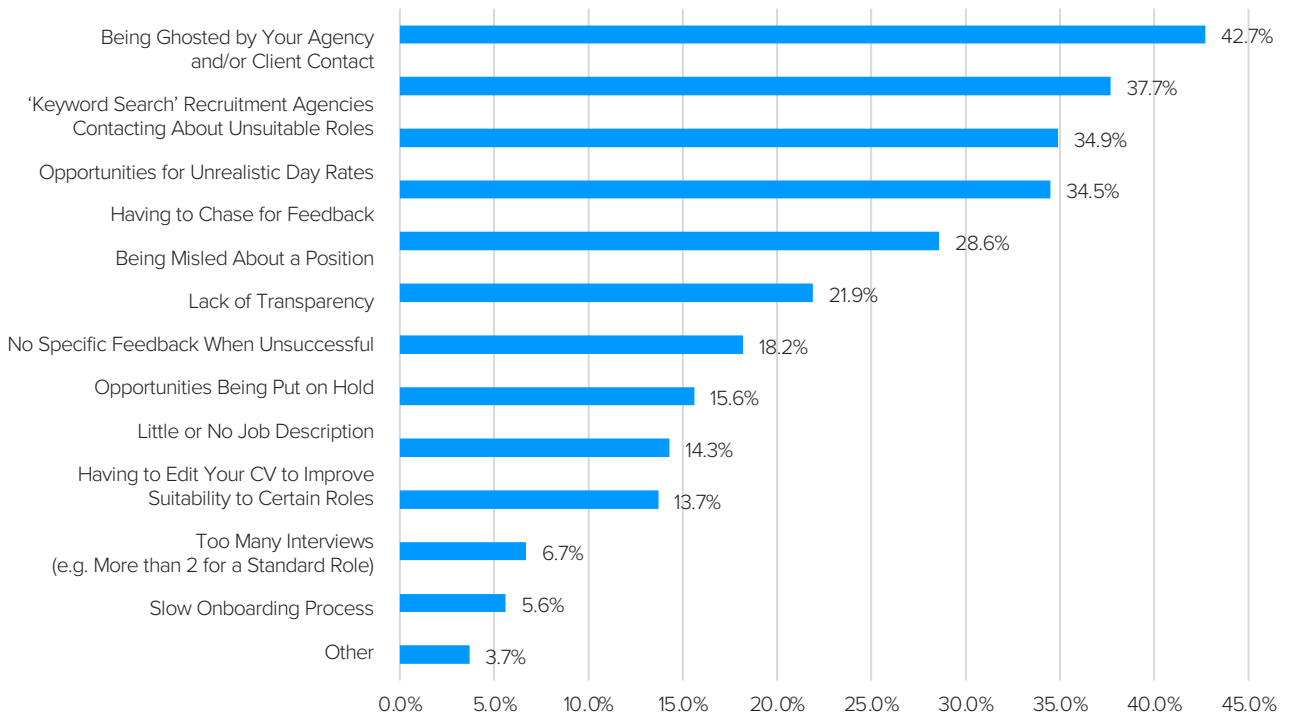
57.9%

of SAP contractors rate the effectiveness of a recruitment business based on relationships built with individual consultants. The view from a hiring manager's perspective is likely to be similar.

If you build close relationships with specialist SAP recruitment consultants you will get peace of mind that they will go the extra mile to represent your position, team and brand in the market. They will have a personal commitment to getting you the best possible result.

What are your pet peeves with the recruitment process?

Multiple answers were accepted.



What this means for hiring managers:

It's shocking that we still hear about SAP contractors being ghosted by recruiters and TA teams.

42.7%

In fact, it's currently the **number one recruitment process pet peeve at 42.7%**.

This number jumps to over 75% if we include 'having to chase for feedback' (34.5%).

It's important for your brand and future hiring efforts to respond to every application if recruiting directly.

Even if it is an automated response in the first instance. And ensure there is a human response for candidates who have made the interview process - particularly those who are subsequently rejected. This all contributes to an excellent candidate journey and leaves all contractors with a positive impression.

Contractors know they won't get every job that they go for - they would just like the courtesy of an explanation so they can understand why. This means they can cross the opportunity off their list and take the feedback on board to improve.

If recruiting via an agency, be sure to **ask what approach they take** to rejecting candidates and press them to do this consistently, with your brand in mind.

Second on the list of pet peeves (or improvement opportunities, depending on your viewpoint) are **recruiters and TA teams that use a keyword approach to candidate searches.**

37.7%

Imagine a Programme Manager who mentions they were responsible for delivering an end-to-end SAP solution that covered R2R, O2C, P2P, H2R etc - and they get called by your internal recruitment team or partners for a hands-on R2R job, just because the keyword is in their CV. This is particularly annoying for contractors, especially if it happens more than once.

Working with specialist SAP recruitment partners and/or upskilling your internal teams on SAP specifics will help with this accuracy. It will ultimately stop your time (and contractors' time) from being wasted interviewing unsuitable candidates, as well as improving the candidate journey.

Survey Summary

“It’s well-documented that there are a shortage of available SAP resources - so we hope that this guide has provided valuable insight into what good looks like from a contractor’s perspective.”



Vincent Dunlop | Co-Founder | Director

The perfect **commercial** environment for SAP contractors



**Outside IR35
Determination**



**Suitable Day
Rate**



**Hybrid Working
Pattern**

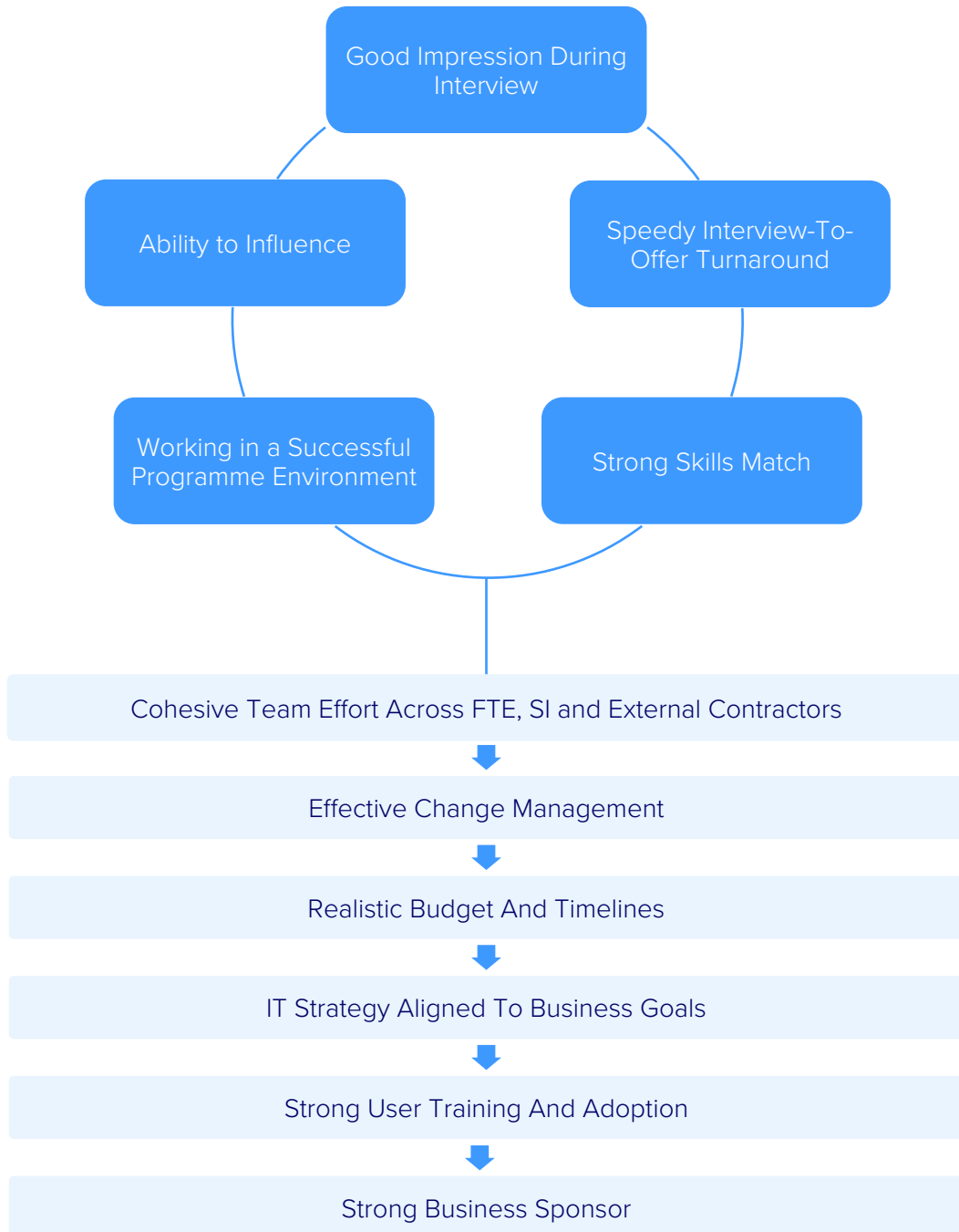
You have the best chance of engaging with the highest quality SAP contractors if you’re operating in the perfect commercial environment of **an outside IR35 contract determination**, along with **market rate day rate** and a **hybrid working pattern**.

Once you’ve identified a good match for your open vacancy, make a point to **promote as many of these elements as you can during the interview process**. This will maximise your chance of securing them in a competitive environment.

Even if your hands are tied on certain commercial aspects, you can still influence the contractor’s decision-making process by promoting the ones that do describe your programme. SAP contractors are also looking for a **good fit on an operational level**.

The perfect **operational** environment for SAP contractors

Take advantage of the positive non-commercial aspects of your programme and recruitment process to recruit SAP contractors effectively and at pace.





Get accurately matched **SAP** people who are as good as they say they are.

GLOBAL CONTRACT, PERMANENT AND EXECUTIVE SAP RECRUITMENT



99% of roles
filled first time



Highest rated



100% SAP
focused



5000+ SAP
professionals
placed



A force
for good