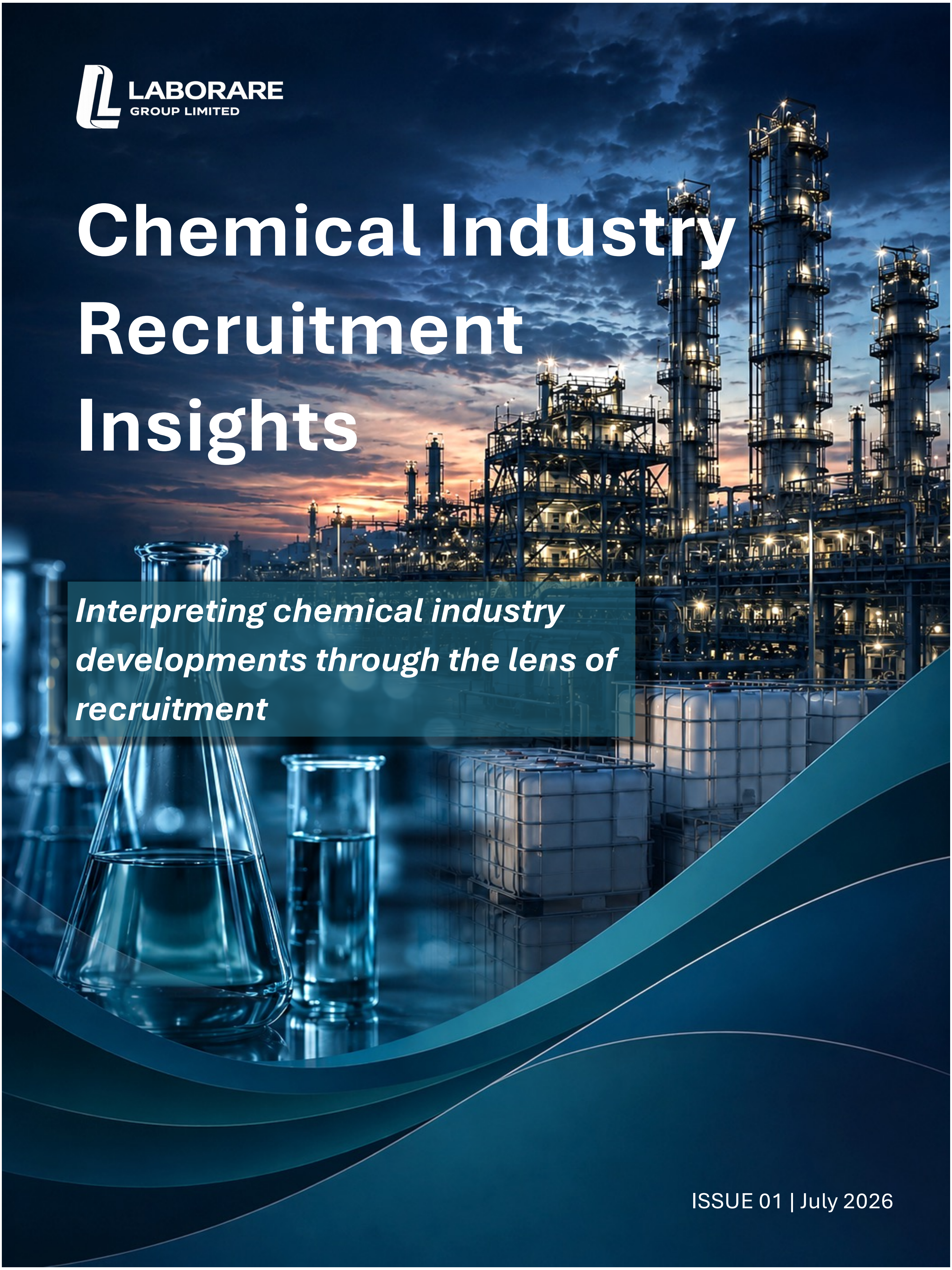


LABORARE
GROUP LIMITED

Chemical Industry Recruitment Insights

Interpreting chemical industry developments through the lens of recruitment

ISSUE 01 | July 2026

LABORARE
GROUP LIMITED

Contents

An overview of the themes explored throughout this edition

From the Editor

Every month the chemical industry produces an enormous amount of information.

Investment announcements, acquisitions, leadership appointments, market analysis, regulatory developments, distributor interviews, manufacturing updates, technology launches.

Read individually, each provides a snapshot of a particular organisation, market or product. Read collectively, they begin to reveal something much more interesting.

Together they help us understand how the industry is evolving.

At Laborare, that is where our interest begins.

As specialist recruiters working exclusively within the chemical industry, our role is different.

We spend our time understanding how organisations build capability.

Behind every investment programme, restructuring initiative, product launch or commercial strategy sits the same fundamental question.

What knowledge, experience and leadership will be required to deliver it?

That question forms the foundation of this publication.

Chris Straker
Managing Director
Laborare Group

“What knowledge, experience and leadership will be required to deliver it?”

For this first edition we reviewed publicly available reporting from July across the chemical industry—not to predict recruitment activity or speculate about the plans of individual organisations—but to identify the broader themes that may influence future capability requirements.

Some months those themes may centre on investment. Others may focus on regulation, innovation, sustainability or supply chains.

Whatever the subject, our aim remains the same. To connect industry developments with recruitment insight.

Because while organisations may adopt different strategies, they all rely upon one constant.

People.

This publication reflects Laborare Group’s interpretation of publicly available industry reporting. It is intended to stimulate discussion about capability and recruitment trends rather than predict the plans or hiring activity of individual organisations.

Executive Brief

One of the most interesting aspects of this month's reporting was the absence of a single dominant narrative.

There was no clear message that the industry is accelerating.

Nor was there overwhelming evidence suggesting widespread decline.

Instead, the reporting pointed towards something far more nuanced.

Adaptation.

Across publicly available reporting this month, organisations discussed investment alongside restructuring. Innovation alongside operational efficiency. Growth opportunities alongside continued economic uncertainty.

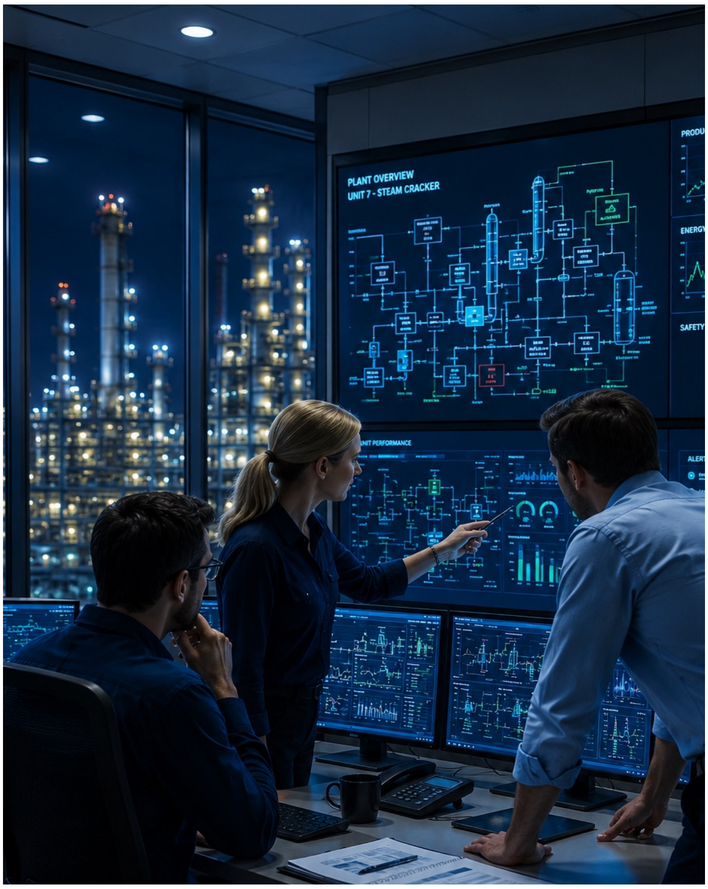
Manufacturers highlighted strategic investment in selected technologies and higher-value products.

Distributors increasingly described their role through technical expertise, regulatory support and customer partnership rather than simply product availability.

Market commentary continued to reference supply chain resilience, changing global trade dynamics and the importance of operational flexibility.

Taken individually, none of these developments define the direction of the market.

Taken together, however, they suggest businesses continue to strengthen capability where they believe it will create long-term competitive advantage.



Recruitment Perspective

Investment announcements are often interpreted as indicators of future recruitment. In reality, they are more accurately viewed as indicators of future capability.

As projects develop, organisations frequently review leadership structures, commercial capability, product management, technical support, procurement and supply chain functions.

The timing and scale of recruitment will differ for every organisation, but investment often signals where capability may become increasingly important.

EVIDENCE BEHIND THIS OBSERVATION

These observations are based on recruitment themes across publicly available reporting during the month, including investment announcements, distributor interviews, market analysis and strategic updates from across the chemical industry.

Five Recruitment Observations

shaping recruitment this month

Our analysis of this month's investment reporting highlights five key observations with clear implications for capability, talent and recruiting organisations.

> Investment decisions today shape the capability requirements of tomorrow

1

Selective investment rather than widespread expansion

Investment continues across various specialist, strategic, and advanced materials and manufacturing initiatives, although restructuring activities are still apparent in other areas.

Recruitment Perspective

Investment announcements are often interpreted as indicators of future recruitment. In reality, they are more accurately viewed as indicators of future capability.
Long before facilities become operational, organisations often begin reviewing commercial leadership, product management, technical support, procurement and supply chain capability.

2

Distribution becoming more technical and value-driven

Many distributors are positioning themselves as technical enablers, offering regulatory guidance and closer customer collaboration rather than simply product providers.

Recruitment Perspective

As distributors compete through technical expertise, organisations increasingly value professionals who combine commercial judgement with technical understanding.

3

Complexity continues to shape capability needs

Supply chains, regulations, sustainability and global trade dynamics continue to create a complex environment for decision-makers

Recruitment Perspective

Increasing complexity rarely creates demand for more people. It often increases demand for more experienced people – particularly those who can operate across technical, commercial and operational boundaries.

4

Technical expertise is moving closer to commercial decision-making

The demand for professionals who can combine technical knowledge with commercial judgement continues to grow

Recruitment Perspective

Hybrid technical-commercial professionals continue to become increasingly valuable as organisations bridge product knowledge with commercial decision-making.

5

Capability, not capacity, is the recurring theme

Across investment, restructuring and innovation, the strongest signal from businesses is strengthening the knowledge, experience and leadership they rely on.

Recruitment Perspective

Capability development doesn't always lead directly to recruitment, but it often shapes future organisational priorities.

Reading Beyond the Headlines

What this month's developments may tell us about capability

Industry headlines often attract attention. Public announcements influence perception.

Acquisitions are frequently interpreted as signs of growth, while periods of uncertainty can quickly prompt speculation about recruitment and market confidence. Yet public announcements rarely tell the whole story.

Behind every investment, restructuring programme or strategic decision sits a series of commercial, technical and operational considerations that are not always visible from the headline alone.

Those decisions influence how organisations develop capability, allocate expertise and prepare for future growth.

From a recruitment perspective, those underlying decisions are often more significant than the announcement itself.

Capability planning begins long before recruitment becomes visible.

Public announcements explain what organisations are doing. They rarely reveal the capability required to deliver it.

What the reporting may be telling us.

Industry reporting offers valuable insight into where organisations are directing investment, attention and expertise.

Rather than predicting recruitment activity, it helps identify the capabilities businesses may increasingly value as their strategies evolve.

Investment is Only the Visible Part of the Story

Manufacturing investment is frequently measured through financial value, production capacity or construction timelines.

Those are important indicators.
However, they represent only one part of a much larger picture.

Long before a facility begins production, organisations begin asking a different set of questions.

Public announcements rarely answer these questions. Nevertheless, they often shape the capabilities organisations will need to develop over time.

The answer may involve internal development, organisational change or external recruitment. Every organisation follows its own path.

What investment announcements consistently demonstrate, is that successful projects rely upon considerably more than physical assets alone.

People remain fundamental to their success.

Questions behind the investment

- How will products be positioned?
- Which customer segments will be prioritised?
- How will regulatory requirements be managed?
- Will technical capability need to expand?
- Will supply chain structures need to adapt?

Capability before capacity

Perhaps the most interesting theme emerging this month is the growing emphasis on capability rather than simply capacity. Many of the announcements reviewed during the month focused on operational efficiency, specialist products, customer support, innovation or technical expertise rather than broad manufacturing expansion.

That distinction feels significant.

As industries mature, competitive advantage increasingly comes from how effectively organisations apply knowledge, rather than simply increasing production.

From a recruitment perspective, this naturally shifts attention towards individuals capable of connecting technical understanding with commercial judgement. Product managers, application specialists, technical sales professionals, regulatory experts, commercial leaders.

These are not new roles. What appears to be changing is the strategic influence they hold within organisations adapting to increasingly complex markets.

Building Capability Takes Time

Investment decisions often create the need for capability long before they create the need to hire.

New product lines require process knowledge, quality systems and operational readiness.

Entry into new markets requires regulatory understanding, customer insight, and local presence.

Product innovation requires technical expertise, formulation knowledge, and application understanding.

Supply chain changes require new relationships, new systems, and new ways of working.

Each of these requires capability to be developed before new roles are filled. That development may happen through training, internal moves, partnerships or external hiring.

Recruitment becomes part of that process, not an immediate reaction to an announcement.

> **Capabilities are built in stages. Recruitment follows strategy, not headlines.**

What this means for organisations

- **Capability planning should start early**
  Understanding what capability is needed helps organisations prepare before recruitment becomes urgent.
- **Internal development plays a key role**
  Many capabilities can be built internally with the right investment in people process.
- **External hiring is part of a broader plan**
  Recruitment is most effective when it supports a clear capability roadmap, not when it reacts to short-term demand.
- **Communication shapes outcomes**
  Clear internal communication helps teams understand change and prepares them for new ways of working.
- **Timing creates advantage**
  Organisations that build capability early are in a stronger position to execute their investment successfully.

A broader perspective

Reviewing this month's reporting reinforced something we have observed consistently through many years of chemical recruitment.

Recruitment rarely follows headlines directly. It follows strategy.

Strategy evolves gradually through hundreds of decisions concerning products, markets, customers, investment, leadership and capability. Industry reporting allows us to observe those decisions taking shape.

Our role is not to predict recruitment.
It is to understand how those developments may influence the capabilities organisations increasingly value.

SECTOR SPOTLIGHT

The Evolution of Chemical Distribution

Why expertise is becoming as important as supply

Chemical distribution has evolved from moving products to creating commercial value through technical expertise, market knowledge and customer partnership.

Historically, distributors were primarily responsible for moving products efficiently from manufacturers to customers.

That responsibility remains fundamental, but this month's reporting suggests many organisations increasingly define their value through technical expertise, application support, regulatory guidance and customer collaboration.

Rather than competing through product availability alone, distributors are increasingly becoming knowledge partners, helping customers solve complex commercial and technical challenges.

Products remain central. Increasingly, however, expertise is becoming an equally important source of competitive advantage.

Customers increasingly expect technical support alongside reliable supply, while markets continue to demand greater flexibility.

In that environment, knowledge itself becomes a competitive advantage.

Recruitment Perspective

As chemical distribution evolves, so do the capabilities organisations require.

Commercial success increasingly depends on professionals who can combine technical expertise with customer understanding.

Rather than replacing traditional commercial roles, organisations are broadening the capabilities those roles require.

The organisations that combine technical expertise with commercial capability are increasingly those best positioned to differentiate themselves.

Relationships Remain Central

Despite continuing advances in digital technology, data analytics and automation, one characteristic continues to define successful organisations across the chemical industry.

Relationships.

Whether between suppliers, distributors or customers, trust remains central to commercial success.

Reading this month's reporting, many organisations emphasised collaboration, long-term partnerships and technical dialogue rather than transactional selling.

That observation is particularly relevant when viewed from a recruitment perspective.

Commercial success increasingly depends upon individuals capable of combining technical expertise with strong relationship building.

Knowledge remains important.
Experience remains important.

Increasingly, however, organisations appear to value professionals capable of translating that knowledge into meaningful customer conversations.

Looking Beyond Products

One of the strongest impressions from reviewing distributor commentary this month was that many organisations increasingly compete through expertise rather than product availability alone.

Products remain essential. So too does logistics. Yet technical knowledge, regulatory understanding and customer support increasingly appear central to how businesses describe the value they provide. Reporting suggests this trend is continuing to gather momentum.

Nevertheless, it raises an interesting question.

As customer expectations continue to evolve, will organisations increasingly differentiate themselves through the knowledge of their people as much as the products they supply?

From a recruitment perspective, it is a question worth watching.

Structural Change is Reshaping the Industry

Why recent plant closures tell only part of the story

Across the chemical industry, headlines have increasingly focused on plant closures, restructuring programmes and capacity reductions.

Viewed in isolation, these developments can appear to suggest an industry in widespread decline.

The wider picture is considerably more nuanced.

Many of the same organisations announcing restructuring continue to invest in specialist technologies, advanced materials, higher-value products and technical capability.

Rather than signalling a uniform contraction, current reporting increasingly reflects a structural shift in how different parts of the industry compete.

Beyond the headlines

Several commentators have described this as a widening distinction between commodity production, where scale and cost efficiency remain critical, and specialist markets, where competitive advantage increasingly comes from technical expertise, customer collaboration and application knowledge.

For many organisations, success is becoming less dependent on producing more and increasingly dependent on creating greater value.

> **Structural change rarely reduces the importance of people. More often, it changes which capabilities become most valuable.**

Recruitment Perspective

As competitive advantage shifts towards knowledge, capability and specialist expertise, organisations often place increasing emphasis on attracting individuals who can combine technical understanding with commercial judgement.

That does not necessarily result in immediate recruitment activity.

However, it frequently influences succession planning, leadership development and future capability requirements long before vacancies become visible.

Questions worth considering

- Which capabilities will become increasingly valuable if markets continue to specialise?
- What skills may become increasingly difficult to replace?
- Where will organisations choose to invest beyond manufacturing assets?
- How will technical expertise become a greater competitive differentiator

AI is Accelerating Innovation

Technology may speed discovery. People will determine commercial success

Artificial intelligence is rapidly changing how new materials, formulations and chemical technologies are developed.

Across the industry, organisations are using AI, machine learning and advanced modelling to accelerate molecular discovery, formulation development, process optimisation and manufacturing efficiency.

The ambition is clear: reduce development timelines, improve efficiency and bring innovation to market faster.

What once took years may eventually take months.

Yet while much of the discussion focuses on technology, another challenge is emerging alongside it.

Capability

As AI becomes more deeply embedded within chemical innovation, organisations are increasingly likely to value professionals who combine scientific expertise, digital understanding and commercial judgement.

Not simply chemists.
Not simply data scientists.
Not simply commercial professionals.

But individuals capable of connecting all three.

Recruitment Perspective

Developing breakthrough technology is only part of the journey.

The ability to explain it, commercialise it, support customers and translate innovation into business value increasingly depends on people with hybrid technical and commercial capability.

As AI accelerates innovation, those capabilities may become an even greater source of competitive advantage.

Questions worth considering

- How will AI reshape the skills organisations value most?
- Where will the next generation of technical-commercial leaders come from?
- Are existing career pathways evolving quickly enough?
- Which capabilities will become increasingly difficult to recruit?

> **Technology can accelerate discovery. People remain responsible for delivering impact.**

EU Pay Transparency Directive

The EU Pay Transparency Directive was adopted in 2023, giving EU Member States three years to transpose its requirements into national law.

That implementation deadline passed on **7 June 2026**.

While some Member States had already introduced legislation before the deadline, others are still finalising their national implementation. Although the legal approach may differ between countries, the direction of travel is now firmly established.

For organisations operating across Europe, the focus is increasingly shifting from understanding the legislation to implementing governance, process and reporting needed for compliance.

The Directive strengthens employee rights, reinforces equal pay obligations and requires organisations to demonstrate greater transparency and accountability.

Key Implications

Stronger transparency requirements
Employers will need to publish pay ranges in job advertisements and provide clearer information to employees.

New employee rights
Employees gain the right to request pay information and gender pay comparisons.

Increased reporting obligations
Gender pay gap reporting will become more detailed and public for many organisations.

Higher compliance and legal risk
Employers will carry the burden of proof in equal pay claims. Pay secrecy clauses will become ineffective.

Broader governance impact
The directive touches HR, Legal, Compliance, Risk and the Board. In some jurisdictions personal liability for directors may apply.

Recruitment Perspective

The Directive extends beyond salary disclosure in job advertisements. It influences how organisations evaluate roles, determine remuneration, structure offers and communicate pay throughout the recruitment process.

The Directive also prohibits employers from asking candidates about their current or previous renumeration during recruitment, shifting the focus toward the value of the role rather than salary history.
For specialist recruiters, robust market benchmarking and transparent, evidence-based remuneration frameworks become increasingly important.

Other Recent Industry Developments

Additional themes worth noting

Innovation continues to advance

Progress across sustainable technologies, recycling solutions and digital process optimisation continued to feature strongly in reporting

Supply chain resilience remains priority

Geopolitical uncertainty, trade policy changes and logistics challenges continue to influence how organisations plan and invest

Specialist markets attract continued attention

Advanced materials, performance chemicals and specialty ingredients remain focus areas for investment and commercial development

Talent shortages persist in specialist areas

Demand for technical, regulatory and commercial professionals with niche expertise remains significant across multiple markets

Sustainability and regulation remain central

Reporting consistently highlights the growing impact of environmental regulation and customer expectations on strategy

Recruitment Perspective

Taken together, these developments reinforce an important point.

Recruitment demand is rarely created by a single headline. It emerges from the combined effect of investment, regulation, innovation, supply chain change and evolving market priorities.

Some trends create immediate hiring activity.

Others reshape the skills, leadership and commercial capability organisations will require over time.

Understanding those wider market signals helps organisations plan ahead, rather than simply react when vacancies arise.

> Markets evolve. Organisations that anticipate capability needs will be better positioned to succeed.

Looking Ahead

> One of the strongest messages from this edition wasn't that the market was simply improving or deteriorating. It was that organisations continue to invest selectively despite ongoing uncertainty. Those investment decisions will shape the capabilities businesses need in the months and years ahead

The organisations making the greatest progress are not always those with the largest balance sheets. They are those aligning investment, expertise and people with long-term strategy

For recruitment professionals this reinforces the importance of looking beyond headlines and understanding the capability that underpins long-term success.

As the industry continues to evolve, the ability to attract, develop and retain the right people will remain a competitive advantage.

About Laborare Group

Laborare Group is a specialist recruitment partner to the global chemical industry, supporting manufacturers, distributors and specialty ingredient businesses across international markets. We connect exceptional people with leading organisations across the globe. To discuss how we can support your talent strategy, **please get in touch.**

LABORARE
GROUP LIMITED

Follow Laborare Group on LinkedIn

Connect with Chris Straker