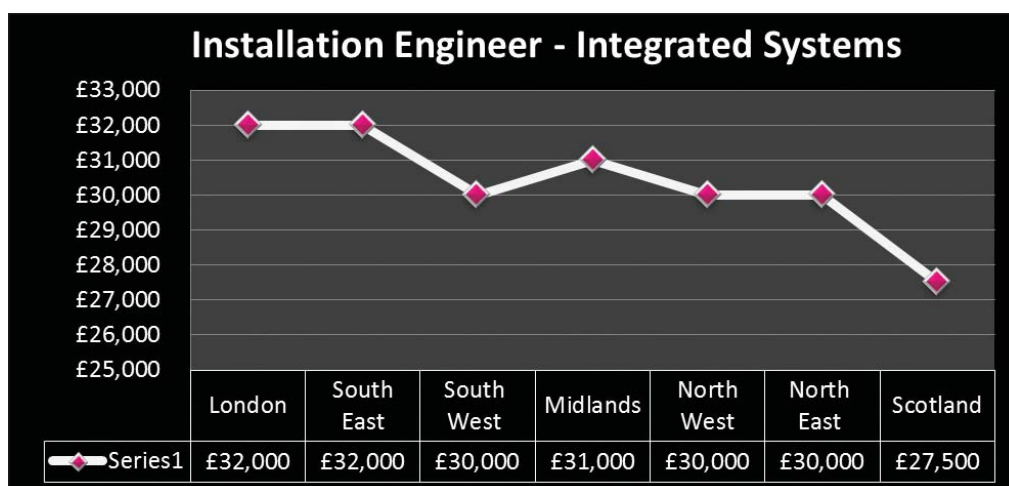


# Challenging times for retaining staff



Annually SSR Personnel undertakes a global salary surveys measuring remuneration data across all roles in the security technology sector. Here CEO Peter French talks to PSI about the latest results and what they mean for security installers and employers

The survey primarily looks at skills development and migrating people from one sector to another. Five years ago London and the South East outpaced national wage inflation by 25% but a requirement to up skill due to changing technology and lack of qualified experienced people is leading to a people shortage. Also with a decreasing pay gap between the north and the south and property prices in many of our metropolitan cities climbing above their pre-financial crises levels for the first time, there is pressure on most companies to increase pay rates for experienced employees. This is causing localised wage inflation as we seek quality people in sales and technical roles.

The security sector has a long record of growing people into roles as attracting those from other sectors, certainly at the senior level, is not that successful. The “why?” is perhaps the expectations of new applicants into what is perceived to be a growing sector, but once inside discover a low-tech environment with lower total compensation than parallel industries such as IT and telecommunications .

“Premium products of yester year, CCTV and

access control, have become a mass bundled product, in some respects dumbing down the knowledge required to present the service to end users,” says Peter.

### Technical knowledge

Skills shortages in engineering, installations commissioning and service are increasing as the array of products sold to customers require far more technical understanding of networking and the Internet of Things (IoT) as we hang a greater range of devices onto networks and collect more data for analysis. Companies need to develop the technical skills of their existing workforce or risk losing out to their competitors from parallel industries.

“Each of us with an interest in the business of security has a role to play,” explains Peter. “At SSR we maintain a workforce of time share installers, commissioning, service engineers and project managers for hire to companies with increased workloads for a defined period. The security technology sector has been traditionally resistant to this form of delivery and NSI resistance to that category of worker, is not helpful. You would find that all those

*“Premium products of yester year, CCTV and access control, have become a mass bundled product, in some respects dumbing down the knowledge required to present the service to end users”*

workers could find a full time role, but they, as do 5 million others in the UK, wish to have flexibility in their working life; a trend that the Office for National Statistics reports as growing around 1.6% a year. This works particularly well for the workers who are looking for flexibility as they get a variety of challenges and projects.”

Installers train engineers on new products but as the range of uses expands through building automation to “Smart Cities”, is the engineer of tomorrow being developed or attracted to the security and fire sector?

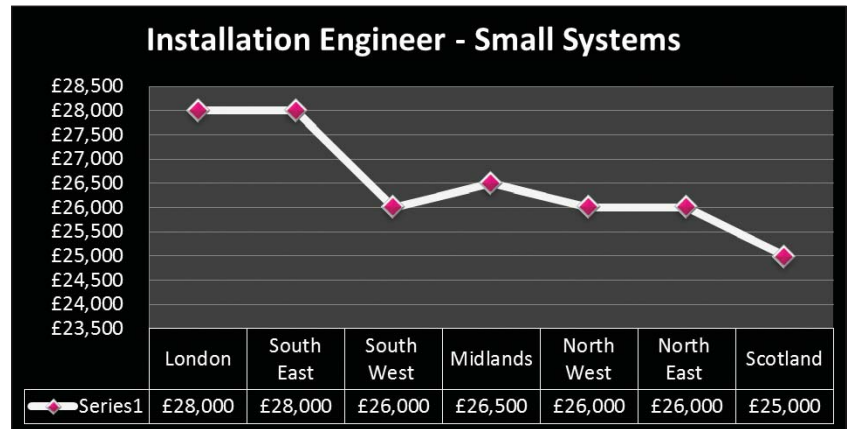
“The new Apprentice levy should be a catalyst for companies to train their people of tomorrow,” says Peter. “Research continues to show the benefits of hiring apprentices.”

A recent National Apprenticeship Service survey of employers who had apprenticeship schemes found that:

- 82% of employers said that they took on an apprentice to build the skills capacity in their organisation
- 81% said that employing apprentices generated higher overall productivity for their company
- 66% said that their apprenticeship programme made them more competitive in their industry
- 92% said that their apprenticeship programme better motivated staff and increased job satisfaction
- 74% said that apprentices tended to be more loyal, remaining at their company longer than non-apprentices

Under the new Levy rules apprentices under the age of 25 will no longer be subject employer National insurance contributions.

“If your annual group salary bill is more than £3M you will be paying the levy and should now have your people development programmes in place, but we have found that many organisations do not,” reveals Peter. “All qualifying training and development programmes can be offset against the levy. You should ensure you choose a training partner that can assist you with a total programme that includes leadership development. Our independent training arm has been key in reaching out to non-levy paying employers as the Government will share the cost of training - this is called ‘co-investment’. From May 2017, you only pay 10% towards to the cost of



approved apprenticeship training and government will pay the rest (90%).”

### Training and delivery

Selecting the right training and delivery method are paramount to the overall success of any programme. As a minimum, training partners should offer a variety of training programmes such as ; Business Administration, Customer Services, information Technology and Digital, Management, Team Leading.

“There were 688,000 job vacancies in the services sectors for February to April 2017, accounting for 88.5% of all vacancies,” concludes Peter. “We estimate that there were approximately 15000 vacancies in the security sector. Overall salaries have increased since January 2005 to March 2017 by 34.8%. Over the same period the Consumer Prices Index, including owner occupiers’ housing costs, increased by 31.2%.”

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