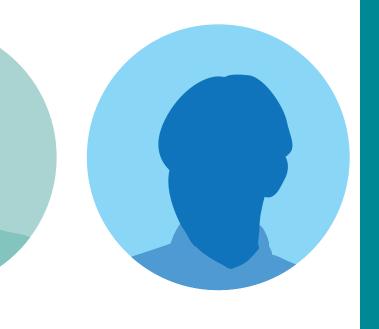




# HR and Hiring Managers:

Where They
Differ and
Agree on
TA Performance

**JULY 2018** 



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# Introduction

In a time when worldwide unemployment rates are reaching historic lows, recruiters are under increasing pressure to fill positions quickly. Hiring managers, faced with their own challenges, are not always the most sympathetic partners in the hiring process. But how do they really feel about the state of recruiting in their company? How do HR recruiters' opinions about the internal hiring process vary from opinions of the hiring managers, and how do both groups feel about each other and the support of their mutual goals?







# Methodology

In order to determine the opinions of both hiring managers and HR recruiters, *HRO Today* conducted a research study sponsored by Orion Novotus to conduct a survey of both hiring managers and recruiters.

Survey respondents were invited to participate in the study via an email invitation between April 10 and May 10, 2018. Respondents were from two different groups. The first group was comprised of 339 hiring managers chosen randomly through the QuestionPro Panel network. All were age 18 or older and screened for survey qualification for hiring frequency and use of a dedicated HR department to fill recruiting needs. The second

set of respondents was comprised of 60 Human Resources practitioners from the *HRO Today* magazine subscriber list, e-newsletter mailing list, and *HRO Today* Services and Technology Association. This survey is not based on a probability sample and therefore no estimate of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

Much of the analysis in this report focuses on average scores taken from 1–5 Likert scales, where study respondents select a value in the range corresponding to their option. One is the most negative response, while five is the most positive response to the statement.

# **Key Takeaways**

Recruiters underestimate hiring manager satisfaction, consistently rating their perceptions of the process and hiring manager satisfaction lower than hiring managers themselves. While there is opportunity for even greater support, hiring managers feel the recruiting process works.

HR AND HIRING MANAGERS: WHERE THEY DIFFER AND AGREE ON TA PERFORMANCE

- Responsibility for onboarding needs better definition. Hiring managers look to recruiters far more than recruiters look to themselves when making sure new employees have the tools needed to succeed.
- There is frustration over the lack of applications presented for open positions, with low satisfaction scores from both sides. The continued tight labor market has made sourcing candidates an even greater priority.
- Recruiter satisfaction with their Applicant Tracking Systems is only moderate, with opportunities to improve across ATS capabilities.







# **Executive Summary**

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Overall, satisfaction scores from both hiring managers and recruiters are high, with an average score of 4.23 out of 5.00. Recruiters underestimate hiring manager satisfaction, indicating they'd expect an overall satisfaction rating of 3.71 for the talent acquisition support they receive. A finding consistent throughout the specific areas of this study is that hiring managers are more satisfied with each of the TA processes than recruiters feel they will be. This perception may be the result of negative verbal feedback, lots of complaints and a lack of positive feedback given to recruiters. But both parties agree there's still considerable room for greater satisfaction, and improved deliverables. Less than 40 percent (39.8 percent) of hiring managers reported they were "Very Satisfied" with TA support, so while few are dissatisfied, the TA function as a whole still has opportunity to deliver exceptional results.

Optimal communication between hiring managers and recruiters is essential. However, less than one-third (31.1 percent) of Hiring Mangers and only 13.3 percent of recruiters "Agreed Completely" that there is an appropriate level of communication between the two groups, which is an insufficient level of agreement for such an important area.

Hiring managers are fairly ambivalent about the qualities of the applicants examined, with an average agreement score of 3.94 across the five areas examined. Recruiters were even less likely to agree with the statements evaluated, assigning an average agreement score of 3.56, with no area specifically higher than 4.0.

The area both hiring managers and recruiters were most likely to disagree with was "There are sufficient applications presented for each position," with an average agreement rating of 3.83 for hiring managers and 3.09 from recruiters. Recruiters in particular feel the impact of a very competitive job market and the resulting problem of sourcing the right volume of quality applicants. In the US, the May 2018 unemployment rate fell to 3.8 percent, well below the rate of 5.0 the US Federal Reserve considers "Full Employment." Finding candidates to present to hiring managers is the responsibility of recruiters, so they are likely to most greatly feel the impact of a tight labor market.

Attitudes about employee retention were also examined. Recruiters are far less satisfied than hiring managers with the retention rates of hires from the last 6–12 months. Only 6.7 percent of recruiters indicated they were "Very Satisfied" compared to 24.8 percent of hiring managers, a difference of over 18 percentage points.

There is disagreement about the responsibility for new candidate onboarding. Nearly one-half (46.2 percent) of hiring managers feel it's mostly an HR function, while less than one-quarter (24.1 percent) of recruiters think it's HR, and instead, over one half of recruiters (57.4 percent) feel both parties are mutually accountable. Not surprisingly, recruiters are reluctant to agree that new employees have everything they need to succeed. When asked to identify the aspect of the recruiting process that needs the most improvement, recruiters' main area of concern was the onboarding process.





Satisfaction with Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) was only moderate. Hiring managers' satisfaction with ATS was an average of 4.00, while recruiters were even less satisfied, with an average score of 3.54.

Recruiters were asked to rate five aspects of the tools and technology they use in talent acquisition. Satisfaction with all five elements was low, with none of them averaging 4.0/5.0, and all rated fairly

close together. The area most highly rated was "Offer delivery and new hire processing technology," with an average satisfaction score of 3.58, while "Pre-employment behavioral assessment" was the lowest with an average satisfaction score 3.25. Of course, in a tight labor market, tools that limit the number of candidates coming through the pipeline will be regarded with some degree of prejudice.







# **Detailed Findings**

Study participants were asked about their satisfaction with TA support from the Human Resources department. Overall, scores from both hiring managers and recruiters are mediocre, with an average score of 4.23 out of 5.00 from hiring managers and 3.71 from recruiters themselves. A finding consistent throughout this study is that hiring managers are more satisfied with the TA process than recruiters themselves are.

While overall scores are good, there is opportunity for even higher satisfaction with TA support. Less than 40 percent (39.8 percent) of hiring managers reported they were "Very Satisfied" with TA support, so while few are dissatisfied, the TA function as a whole could still improve. Recruiters are even more inclined than hiring managers to agree that optimal support hasn't been reached, as only 13.8 percent indicated they thought hiring managers were very satisfied.

## Overall Satisfaction with TA support from HR







# Satisfaction with Components of Talent Acquisition

Study participants were asked to indicate their state of agreement with each of a series of statements about the talent acquisition process in their company on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being "Agree Completely" and 1 being "Disagree Completely." Those areas have been broken out into two categories below. TA Processes and Candidate Qualities.

### Satisfaction with TA Processes

When looking at satisfaction with TA processes, the pattern again emerges that recruiters generally believe they are less effective across all areas examined than are the hiring managers themselves. The average score for these six areas is 3.98 out of a potential 5.00 among hiring managers, and 3.72 among recruiters. Two elements, "The opinion of hiring managers is valued" and "Recruiter responsiveness" both have higher levels of agreement among recruiters than hiring managers, while the remaining 4 statements had higher levels of agreement among hiring managers.

Study findings for the statement "The opinion of hiring managers is valued" show an average score of 4.24 among recruiters but only 4.16 among hiring managers. Clearly the hiring manager plays a pivotal role in any recruitment search. Building a healthy relationship with hiring managers can provide many benefits including quicker turnarounds on feedback, improved candidate quality, decreased time to fill, and improved sourcing efficiency.<sup>1</sup>

In our study, recruiter responsiveness was rated fairly highly, 4.08 from hiring managers and 4.31 by recruiters. Responsiveness is a key element of communication. Simple acknowledgment of a question certainly helps with the perception of responsiveness, but more information is still needed, and it's one of the areas where technology can impact TA the most. A pipeline report submitted to the hiring manager on a regular basis is an opportunity to showcase sourcing activity.

While hiring managers were more generous than recruiters in their assessment of "There is an appropriate level of communication between the recruiter and myself throughout the recruiting process," neither score was high. The average score from hiring managers was 4.07, and a very mediocre 3.76 from recruiters. There are multiple elements involved in getting hiring managers meaningfully involved in the hiring process. Initially, an environment that fosters consistent communication has to be established. Ensuring the hiring manager knows the status of the open position at all times requires constant communication across multiple channels. Optimal communication may require the recruiter to adapt her style rather than asking the hiring manager to change. Cater to your hiring manager's needs and communicate through a medium and cadence that suits her preferences.<sup>2</sup>





Technology plays an important role in the ability of the TA recruiter to meaningfully communicate with hiring managers. Tools should include mobile access anytime from any authorized device with integrated communications across email, desktop chat and telephone. Prescheduled pipeline updates are an important part of communication, but the ability to generate ad-hoc reports is an essential part of the communication process.

Of course, obtaining high levels of communication and hiring manager buy-in to the process isn't the only goal of TA. Positions must be filled in a timely manner.

The prioritization of any particular metric to evaluate the success of a recruiting program vary greatly, with only time to hire being used by over one-half (56 percent) of recruiters. The top three most commonly used KPIs are:<sup>3</sup>

- 1. Time to hire
- 2. Number of hires
- 3. Source of hire

TA Processes: Average Agreement Scores	Hiring Managers	Recruiters
The opinion of hiring managers is valued	4.16	4.24
Recruiters are responsive	4.08	4.31
There is an appropriate level of communication between the recruiter and myself throughout the recruiting process	4.06	3.76
Recruiters are flexible to the changing needs of hiring managers	3.94	3.04
Positions are filled in a timely manner	3.81	3.31
A referral program is a key part of our talent acquisition program	3.78	3.64





### Satisfaction with Candidate Qualities

Study respondents were asked about their level of agreement with five statements about candidates. Overall, hiring managers are only moderately pleased with the applicants with whom they have interacted, with an average score of 3.94 across the five areas examined. Recruiters were even less impressed with elements specific to candidate recruitment efforts, with an average agreement score of 3.56.

Hiring managers were more likely to agree that the applicants presented have a level of professionalism commensurate with the position requirements, with an average score of 4.02. Recruiters largely agreed, as the average score from them was 3.78.

If a new hire isn't able to perform in a way that the position demands, than all the metrics around recruiter responsiveness, communication and flexibility are of minimal value. According to a recent study by *HRO Today*, just over one-quarter (27 percent) of recruiters are using the Quality of Hire metric as a key performance indicator when evaluating the success of their recruiting programs. Quality of Hire is a way to measure the performance of new hires, which had a fairly mediocre agreement score of 3.98 for hiring managers and 3.80 among recruiters.

The lowest area of agreement was "There are sufficient applications presented for each position," with an average rating of 3.93 for hiring managers and only 3.09 among recruiters. Recruiters in particular feel the impact of a very competitive job market where it's problematic to get enough quality applicants. In the US, the May 2018 unemployment rate fell to 3.8 percent, well below the rate of 5.0 the US Federal Reserve considers "Full Employment." A very competitive labor market also impacts the quality of applicants if recruiters are struggling to find enough candidates to meet the needed criteria. Their resulting average score of 3.71 suggests the tight labor market has made presenting qualified candidates problematic.

Candidate Qualities: Average Agreement Scores	Hiring Managers	Recruiters
The applicants presented have a level of professionalism commensurate with the position requirements	4.02	3.78
The applicants presented are qualified	4.01	3.71
Performance of new hires is satisfactory	3.98	3.80
Candidates are adequately prepared for interview process	3.85	3.42
There are sufficient applicants presented for each position	3.83	3.09
Average Score 5-point Scale	3.94	3.56





## Satisfaction with Retention Rates

Study participants were asked how satisfied they were with the retention rates of hires from the last 6–12 months. Recruiters are far less satisfied than hiring managers with retention. Only 6.7 percent of recruiters indicated they were "Very Satisfied" compared to 24.8 percent of hiring managers, a difference of over 18 percentage points. Average scores also illustrate the difference, with a fairly pedestrian average score of 3.44 from recruiters and 3.97 from hiring managers. The difference in opinion may be partly attributable to recruiter's broader view when supporting the entire company vs. hiring manager's focus on their own individual departments.

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#### Satisfaction with Retention Rates







In times of low unemployment rates, retention becomes more of a concern for employers as it's easier for employees to move to new positions. Companies have to compete not just to get new recruits but also to keep their own workforce from leaving. US government data bears out the retention challenges employers are facing. According to data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, three million employees have left their job voluntarily every month since June 2017.

Of course, it's not just the number of employees who leave; it's the types of employees who leave. A study conducted by the Center for America Progress study in 2012 estimated the cost to replace a highly-trained employee can exceed 200 percent of their annual salary.<sup>6</sup>

Worldwide unemployment rates have decreased over the last several years, which means employers have to work harder and spend more replacing workers, particularly highly trained ones.





# Understanding Position Requirements vs. Hiring Manager Communication

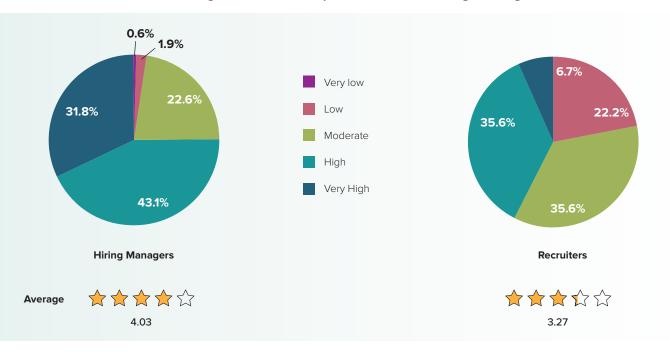
The communication between recruiters and hiring managers was addressed by asking each group to rate the other on a 1–5 scale. There was a subtle difference in the wording of question, so the exact wording is shown below:

Typically how high is your recruiters' understanding of the position requirements for the role being filled? Vs. How well do hiring managers communicate what they are looking for in a candidate?

As we've seen throughout much of the study, hiring managers were more positive than recruiters, with 31.8 percent scoring recruiter understanding of position requirements as "very high" compared to 6.7 percent of recruiters rating hiring manager communications about the position as "very high."

Mutual accountability and closely defined expectations will lead to better communication overall, avoiding the trap of hiring managers feeling like they are not getting updates, and recruiters frustrated about unresponsive hiring managers. In its research study, "Strategies to Improve the Recruiter and Hiring Manager Relationship," iCIMS offered some insight into how to facilitate hiring manager/recruiter communication. Those solutions include meetings to discuss job requirements, mutually preparing screening questions, collaboration on search strategies and reviewing resumes together while continuously "tweaking" position criteria.<sup>7</sup>

### Recruiters' Understanding of Position Requirements vs. Hiring Manager Communication







# **Onboarding**

## Responsibility for New Employees and the "Dropped Baton" Problem

Study participants were asked whose responsibility is it to ensure that new employees feel the organization has prepared for their arrival.

Successfully facilitating a new employee's transition into their role isn't a new concept, and it's a much discussed topic as a result of a very competitive job market. But who has the responsibility for it remains very much open. Nearly one-half (46.2 percent) of hiring managers feel it's at least mostly up to HR, while about one-third (33.5 percent) feel both parties are mutually responsible. Conversely, less than one-quarter (24.1 percent) of recruiters think it's HR, and instead, over one half (57.4 percent) feel both parties are mutually accountable.

The stakes for the onboarding process are higher than ever. In a study of over 1,000 workers, 31 percent reported having quit a job within the first six months. According to the research participants, the top reasons for leaving were a poor onboarding experience, a lack of clarity surrounding job duties and expectations, or a less than stellar boss.<sup>8</sup>

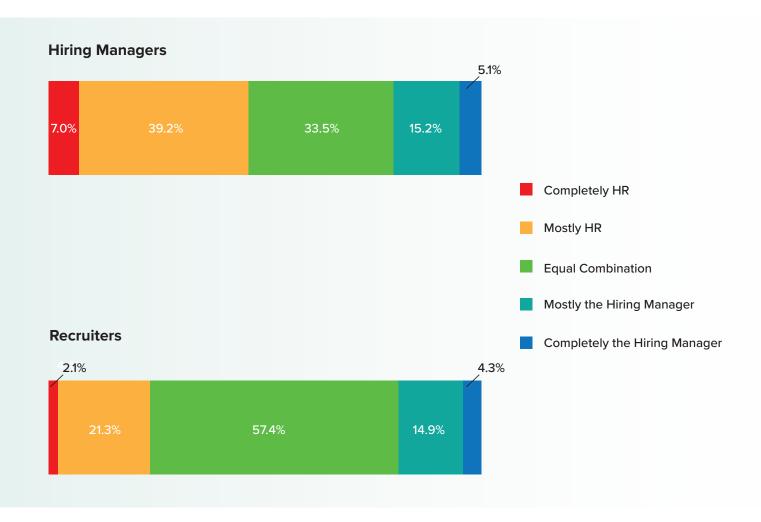
The first step in creating a smooth onboarding experience is a detailed list containing what needs to be accomplished to ensure the transition for new employees is optimal. Then the assignment of responsibility for each action item needs to be implemented. HR and hiring managers have to work together and take mutual ownership of the process. An article from LinkedIn points out one simple way hiring managers can be a greater part of the onboarding process: "Too often the process is for the hiring manager to interview the candidate and not talk to them again until the start date." For example, a simple email from the hiring manager reaching out to the candidate expressing excitement about them joining the team offers a warm welcome and good start to the onboarding transition.

A strategic onboarding program can also make a significant difference for newly hired employees by providing clarity around their role, a community of trusted colleagues, and a clear path to success.





# **Responsibility for New Employees**







## **Onboarding (Continued)**

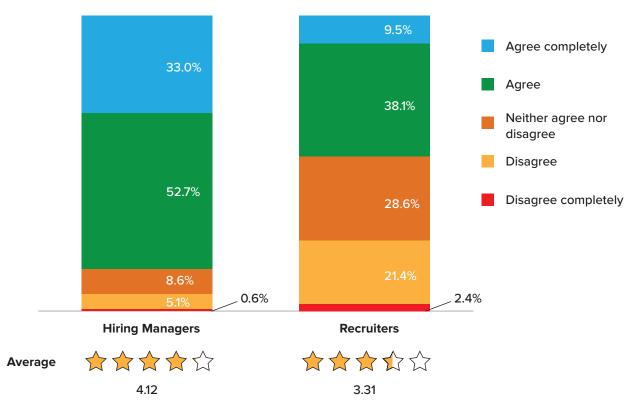
Study respondents were asked the extent of their agreement with the statement "Our onboarding process makes new hires feel they have everything they'll need to succeed in their new role."

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Recruiters and hiring manager's perceptions of this area differed greatly. In fact, 85.7 percent of hiring managers agreed with the statement, while only 47.6 percent of recruiters felt similarly, a difference of over 38 percentage points. Opinions between the two groups vary so much that it may be that hiring managers don't really know what new hires need to succeed in their roles from an onboarding perspective. Another possibility is that recent hires confide concerns to HR they don't share with their managers. Study results also show that communication between hiring managers and recruiters is not optimal, and there's no agreement even as to the extent of responsibility in onboarding.

There is an old adage that says "you don't get a second chance to make a first impression" and onboarding is the way employees can get a sense of what it will be like to work in the organization. The National Systems Contractors Association (NSCA) offers some sound advice about onboarding best practices. Best practices include: providing a simple welcome, making sure all the needed tools are there from the start, arranging introductions, providing a company orientation, mentoring, and finally, collecting feedback about the onboarding process.<sup>10</sup>

## **Onboarding Process Prepares Candidates to Succeed**







# **Applicant Tracking Systems**

Study participants were asked about their satisfaction with the Applicant Tracking System (ATS) used to interact with HR on the status of new hires. Overall, hiring managers' satisfaction was much higher than recruiters', who have far greater exposure to the systems. But the percentage of respondents "Very Satisfied" with their ATS is low. Only 25.0 percent of hiring managers and 13.5 percent of recruiters are very satisfied, suggesting there is considerable room for improvement for both sets of users.

Traditional applicant tracking systems lean more towards administrative needs such as creating job listings, email templates, interview scheduling, report creation and managing information related to background screening and onboarding activities. Ensuring compliance regulations is also a common feature from ATS systems.

More advanced systems identify a candidate's alignment with both the job at hand and the hiring organization's culture. If an identified prospect is an excellent fit, recruiters can leverage social media to build a talent pool so that when a position with requirements that match the candidates background opens up, they are already engaged with the organization, resulting in less time to hire.

ATS Satisfaction	Hiring Managers	Recruiters
Very satisfied	25.0%	13.5%
Satisfied	55.3%	45.9%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	15.1%	27.0%
Dissatisfied	3.5%	8.1%
Very dissatisfied	1.1%	5.4%
Average Score 5-point Scale	4.00	3.54





# Satisfaction with Tools and Technology Used in Talent Acquisition

## Surveyed: Recruiters Only

Recruiters were asked to rate five aspects of the tools and technology they use in talent acquisition. Satisfaction with all five elements was low, with all of them averaging below 3.6. The area most highly rated was "Offer delivery and new hire processing technology," with 68.4 percent satisfied. Recruiters previously indicated that less than one-half (47.6 percent) agreed that their onboarding process makes new hires feel they have everything they'll need to succeed in their new role. So while the technology to manage the onboarding process is regarded somewhat more highly, the area overall is problematic. Ideally the technology should facilitate the steps for onboarding new hires, from the initial offer of employment to the timeline for orientation, introductions, goals, training, assigning projects and all other relevant areas of the onboarding process.

Satisfaction with the remaining four technologies was similar, with all just over 50 percent of respondents satisfied, and few considering themselves "Very Satisfied." The second highest-rated tool used in TA was "Screening for Skills." Just over one-half (53.7 percent) were satisfied with this area, again suggesting there is opportunity in the delivery of these tools. Recruiters are trying to reduce their time to hire, while increasing the quality of each candidate. To accomplish this goal, technology and pre-screening recruitment tools are being used more frequently. Skills-based assessments are used by recruiters to test candidates for a wide range of skills using specific tests or tasks at different difficulty levels depending on the role. From programming abilities to clerical skills, the technology enables recruiters to better determine which candidates should continue in the hiring process.

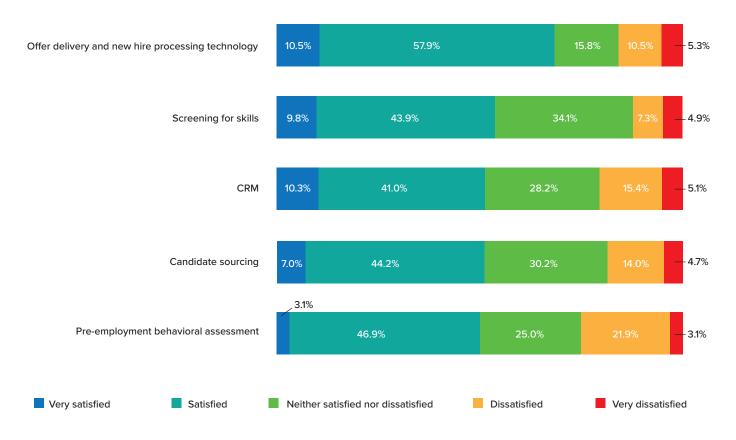
Satisfaction with CRM (Candidate Relationship Management) was a very mediocre 3.36. Moving beyond an ATS, a CRM allows recruiters to manage candidates. The better CRM systems easily pull in contacts from multiple sources and manage the company career site, events, job fairs, referrals, social media channels and more, all integrated into one database. CRMs can also help manage the candidate experience, with targeted communications that nurture the candidates in a talent pool.

Candidate sourcing and pre-employment behavior assessments had the lowest satisfaction scores of all the tools examined. Candidate sourcing tools strive to automate some of the administrative tasks of recruiting, provide a better candidate experience, and reduce bias. Artificial Intelligence will play an increasingly large role in candidate sourcing. Satisfaction with pre-employment behavior assessments was the lowest of any of the tools examined. These assessments measure candidate qualities like aptitude, skills and personality. Adoption of these tools is lower than any of the other areas examined. Recruiters often view these tools in a negative light, particularly in a tight labor market where the tools limit the number of candidates.





# Satisfaction with Tools and Technology Used in Talent Acquisition



Satisfaction with Tools and Technology Used in Talent Acquisition	Average Score
Offer delivery and new hire processing technology	3.58
Screening for skills	3.46
Candidate Relationship Management	3.36
Candidate sourcing	3.35
Pre-employment behavioral assessment	3.25





# Which aspects of the recruiting process need the most improvement?

## **Hiring Manager Responses**

In an open ended question, hiring managers were asked what aspect of the recruiting process most needs improvement. Responses ranged considerably, but two overriding themes quickly emerged. Most critical is "Increasing the Number of Qualified Candidates" or "increasing the number...". There is a caveat to this however, as many just wanted to focus on the total number of candidates, and would be satisfied with additional screening duties.

Cited nearly as frequently is the need for greater timeliness. Timeliness referred to the speed of hiring applicants, interactions between HR and hiring managers, and making offers.

Screening was also frequently cited, both the need for better screening and faster screening.

# **Key Themes of Open-Ended Comments: Hiring Managers**

Area of improvement	Count
Increasing number of candidates	33
Timeliness	30
Screening	16
Communications	10
Hiring Manager Interactions	10
Sourcing	5
Candidate quality	4
Onboarding	4
Miscellaneous	15





# **Hiring Manager Responses**

"During both the recruiting process and the hiring process things need to move in a timelier manner. It hinders a successful process when HR is too slow to hire a qualified candidate." — Hiring Manager, Healthcare, 3,000–9,999 employees.

"We need to better facilitate communication between the hiring managers and the HR Manager."

— Hiring Manager, Engineering, 10,000–24,9998 employees.

"More hands on training related to the actual job duties. A great deal of time is spent learning about the company and overall role, but there needs to be more focus on the employees' actual duties and processes they need to know." — Hiring Manager, Automotive, 3,000–9,999 employees.

"We need to have a much greater means of communication with HR regarding the actual requirements for the position. This involves actual exposition of the job requirements as well as the experience and education of the applicant." — Hiring Manager, IT, Technology, Software, 500–2,999 employees.





# **Recruiter Responses**

Recruiters were also asked what aspect of the recruiting process within their organization needs the most improvement.

The onboarding process was cited as needing improvement more than any other area. Other areas included more involvement and training from hiring managers and more candidates to fill open positions.

"What's needed is a more robust onboarding plan which carries the new employee beyond 90 days."

— HR Department Recruiter, Manufacturer, Less than 500 employees

"Better job descriptions from hiring managers and reasonableness on years of experience, specific qualifications." — HR Department Recruiter, IT, Technology, Software, Less than 500 employees

# Conclusion

In a tight labor market, there is even more pressure on recruiters to present enough qualified candidates in a timely manner to hiring managers. Those hiring managers are largely satisfied with the level of support they receive, more even than recruiters feel they do. By fostering communication through clearly defined expectations and responsibilities, satisfaction levels among hiring managers and greater new employee retention can be achieved.





Company Characteristics		
Primary Industry:	Hiring Managers	Recruiters
Advertising/Sales/Marketing/Communications	6.5%	2.4%
Aerospace/Aviation	0.0%	2.4%
Automotive	5.2%	0.0%
Biotech/Medical Equipment	2.6%	0.0%
Business Services	2.6%	0.0%
Chemicals	1.3%	0.0%
Construction	6.5%	2.4%
Consumer Goods, Electronics	2.6%	0.0%
Education	5.2%	2.4%
Engineering	5.2%	4.8%
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	7.8%	9.5%
Government	5.2%	2.4%
Health Care/Health Sciences	13.0%	9.5%
IT, Technology, Software	9.1%	16.7%
Manufacturing	11.7%	16.7%
Media/Entertainment/Hospitality	3.9%	2.4%
Non-Profit	1.3%	0.0%
Pharmaceuticals	2.6%	0.0%
Professional services	1.3%	11.9%
Retail/Wholesale	3.9%	4.8%
Telecommunications	0.0%	2.4%
Transportation	1.3%	7.1%
Other	1.3%	2.4%

Number of FTEs employed globally:	Hiring Managers	Recruiters
Fewer than 500	37.6%	41.5%
500 – 2,999	27.1%	14.6%
3,000 – 9,999	16.2%	14.6%
10,000 – 24,999	8.9%	17.1%
25,000 – 49,999	5.4%	9.8%
50,000 – 99,999	2.2%	0.0%
100,000+	2.5%	2.4%





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