Introduction

The recruitment journey is continually changing. New technology, choosy candidates and a preference for 'pick your own' benefits means that in order to recruit the very best, employers need to adapt.

Through this series of four reports we look at each phase of the recruitment journey, with the help of feedback from over 3,000 UK job seekers and 100 employers and recruiters, to help better understand what today’s top talent wants and how employers can best position themselves to hire them.
In the first of our Understanding Top Talent reports, we started at the beginning of the recruitment journey, looking at how best to attract talent. Finding out how jobseekers hunt for jobs, and helping employers to think like the candidates they want to hire so they can tailor their approach accordingly. We identified the key ingredients in the perfect job ad, and looked at the tools that job hunters are using when looking for a new role. Read more here.

In this, our second report, we explore the next step in the recruitment process – the interview – and the key role it plays in successfully recruiting talent. How long should the interview and offer stage take? What interview techniques are now seen as effective and desirable? And, crucially, which approach will keep candidates engaged throughout and increase your chances of hiring them?

So your perfect job advert is live, you are receiving and processing applications, and are ready to start the interview process. But how do candidates want to be approached by employers and recruiters for interview when their application has been successful? Email is the number one choice for the majority of candidates (39%). No doubt we’ve all experienced (or witnessed!) that awkward moment when a recruiter calls a candidate while they are at work, and they have to think fast and make up excuses in front of inquisitive colleagues. So perhaps that’s why email is seen as ideal. That said, 27% would still like a telephone call. It will really depend on the role, and whether your candidate is in employment or not.

One third (27%) of candidates said they expect to hear within two weeks after application if they have been offered an interview, so whatever method you choose, speed is of the essence!
Time to hire

The majority of employers (59%) have vacancies open for one to two months before they successfully hire. A lucky one in six employers (17%) have vacancies open for up to a month, while another 20% are having to chase applications for three to six months. If you’re not finding the candidates you hoped for, it’s definitely worth revisiting the advert copy and thinking again about the language and content, along with what else you could highlight to make your role more appealing to candidates.

Perhaps have a look back at our first report in the series to understand the top things that most appeal to candidates – from location to work hours, flexible benefits to training and development. Make sure you’re showcasing your employer brand effectively. If it’s still a struggle to find people, there are tools that can be used to help shorten the recruitment time. Totaljobs’ Talent Match is a service that can suggest candidates to employers that might be suitable for the role. Or you may want to consider acting proactively and approaching candidates via a CV database.

Time to interview

The majority (59%) of employers are taking up to two weeks between advertising a role and holding the first round of interviews. 43% make an offer to candidates within one day of the end of the interview process, and another 49% offer within a week. 72% of employers say that it takes up to a month from receiving a candidate's application, to making a final job offer.

Jobseekers themselves clearly want a quick turnaround. One third (27%) said the end-to-end application to interview stage should take two weeks, while almost as many (24%) said they’d expect the whole process, from application to offer, to take a month. Either way that’s pretty swift and encouragingly is in line with the approach of the majority of employers.

However, perhaps unsurprisingly, nearly half of employers (46%) have actively reduced the length of time it takes to go through the interview stage with candidates, because they want to hire new staff more quickly – and it becomes increasingly challenging to find and compete for top talent. It’s not just about getting people into jobs quicker, one in three employers (28%) who have reduced the time it takes to recruit have done so because they say the lengthy process was putting candidates off and they were losing the applicants altogether.
What’s the maximum number of interviews you’d expect for one role?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jobseekers</th>
<th>Employers &amp; recruiters</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>12%</strong> One</td>
<td><strong>21%</strong> One</td>
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<td><strong>42%</strong> Two</td>
<td><strong>64%</strong> Two</td>
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<td><strong>21%</strong> Three</td>
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11% didn’t know
Effective Interview approaches

It's hard to know how many interviews to take people through during the recruitment process—especially given the stiff competition for top talent means that many employers are opting to speed up the whole process. The general consensus amongst employers and jobseekers is that two interviews is the preference—but the key issue here is speed. Over two thirds of employers (68%) will interview up to six people per role, which can take time. On average, employers will interview six people for each role.

One thing is clear however; candidates simply aren’t prepared to wait around to hear from employers or go through a multi-step process to get a job. They want to hear from an employer quickly and move through the interview stages swiftly. Employers who insist on a drawn out interview process with large gaps of time between each stage risk losing candidates to more agile competitors.

The face-to-face interview is a tried and tested method, still used by nine in 10 employers (91%), and expected by just as many candidates. But with new tech and innovation being adopted by employers, and a need for speed throughout the interview process, there are plenty of other ways to recruit top talent.

Not all interviews need to be face-to-face. Mixing it up with telephone interviews or Skype (which 10% of employers currently use) can all help reduce the time it takes to get to the offer stage. This is particularly vital given top talent is often interviewing with more than one company at a time. It also saves costs (and your time is money after all), and allows recruiters to see the candidate through a range of lenses.

Alternatively, using an agile psychometric test early on is a quick and easy way to identify cultural fit for the business before you get too far along the interview process. One quarter (25%) of employers told us they have used psychometric testing during interviews. There are plenty of great tools out there, including an app from Good & Co which helps candidates identify their professional style and understand which employers they would be a better fit for, in a fun and accessible way. Employers can leverage this insight to hire candidates that suit their culture and help build happier and sustainable workplaces.

Over two thirds of employers (68%) will interview six or less people per role, which can take time. On average, employers will interview six people for each role.
Focus on feedback

Feedback is an issue that crops up whenever we speak to jobseekers about the recruitment process. Nearly half (49%) say they don’t get feedback from employers or recruiters after an interview, yet three quarters (77%) expect it. On the flip side, only 13% of employers and recruiters we talked to said they don’t give feedback to unsuccessful candidates.

So who is right? There is a significant mismatch between what jobseekers and employers are saying. Regardless, even during busy times, a quick email or phone call to provide topline feedback to both successful and unsuccessful candidates can go a long way in helping them improve their performance for next time. It also helps present your business as one that cares about people and treats them with courtesy, enhancing employer brand in turn.

While the fundamental basics of recruitment haven’t changed too significantly, what’s clear is that time to hire is becoming increasingly compressed. A faster, more responsive process will go a long way to making sure you don’t miss out on in-demand talent who may be seeing other great companies as well as yours.

Employers seeking to attract and hire the best are in direct competition with other employers. Once you have attracted the candidates you want to interview, avoid losing them with overly complicated and time-consuming interview processes. Take note of the preferences stated by candidates in our research – these top tips on the most attractive and effective interview process may help you secure those precious hires before someone else does.
Recruiting Talent

✔ Decide on your candidate shortlist and approach them by email or telephone – just remember not to call when they will be at work!

✔ Set a timeframe for the interview process (and where possible, shorten it)

✔ Work out how many interviews you are going to ask candidates to undertake

✔ Look at a mix of interview options, perhaps embracing some new methods along the way

✔ Try to provide feedback to candidates, even if only topline

Next in our Understanding Top Talent series; we’ll be looking at the offer stage – Hiring Talent - the importance of flexible benefits and, crucially, when to offer them.

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