2024

High-Volume Hiring Candidate Experience Report

Contents

About the Survey

Sense and the CandE Benchmark Research Program conducted a global survey of recruiters, talent acquisition (TA) professionals, and organizational leaders regarding the state of high-volume hiring and candidate experience. Nearly 250 anonymous responses were collected online in the fall of 2023.

Survey Respondent Demographics

Titles included:

Manager	33.62%
Director	23.28%
Recruiter	13.79%
C-Suite	8.62%
VP	6.47%
Other	6.47%
Specialist	5.60%

Company sizes included:

Up to 500	34.48%
501–2,500	24.14%
2,501–5,000	13.36%
5,001–10,000	10.78%
10,001–25,000	9.05%
25,001–100,000	5.17%
Over 100,000	3.02%

The highest-represented industries among survey respondents included healthcare, technology, construction, education, finance/insurance, and manufacturing. There were minimal responses from professionals in various other industries.

It's important to note that specific data relationships are limited for any of the above categories due to the sample size of the survey.

Introduction

High-volume hiring is defined as the process of sourcing, screening, interviewing, and onboarding a large number of candidates, usually hourly workers, in a short time period. High-volume hiring is common in thriving industries such as retail, hospitality, customer service, and manufacturing. As the post-pandemic recovery continues to lead to a surge in demand for goods and services, businesses are racing to scale their operations and grow their workforces.

Gone are the days of lengthy applications and weeks-long hiring processes. Today, companies are seeking faster and more efficient ways to bring in a large number of talented people as quickly as possible. And this aligns with the expectations of job seekers, who are demanding streamlined hiring experiences and consistent communication at each stage of their journey, from pre-application to onboarding.

In order to meet hiring goals and delight candidates, employers are depending on recruiting technologies more than ever. AI-powered recruiting automation is boosting efficiency and accelerating the hiring process. Hiring organizations have also made a greater commitment to candidate experience from writing clearer job descriptions to ensuring prompt communication and timely onboarding. By prioritizing positive interactions, employers are generating bigger talent pools and keeping candidates invested throughout the hiring process.

Gone are the days of lengthy applications and weeks-long hiring processes.

According to 2023 CandE Benchmark Research, the highest-rated employers tend to leverage recruiting technologies like automated texting and AI to improve the recruiting process and candidate experience. These technologies help hiring companies better communicate with a large number of candidates with minimal human intervention required.

However, today's talent market is still quite volatile. While there are positive aspects of the market (such as historically low unemployment levels and millions of open jobs), they're offset by mounting talent shortages in some professions, lower retention rates, higher levels of ghosting/no-shows, and overall increasingly demanding hourly job candidates.

Sense and the CandE Benchmark Research Program wanted to understand how TA teams are taking advantage of these opportunities and responding to these ongoing challenges. Can employers hire thousands of workers each year and still deliver a personalized candidate experience? What role exactly does technology play in streamlining processes and workflows? And what are the best practices for using these innovative platforms?

Through our comprehensive survey of nearly 250 talent acquisition professionals and organizational leaders, we answered these questions and gained deep insight into how they're approaching high-volume hiring and candidate experience in 2024.

Research Highlights

Here are a few highlights from our survey findings:

What's the hiring outlook for this year?

For survey respondents that focus specifically on hourly hiring, 62% expect hiring to increase in 2024, and only 5% anticipate a decrease.

Recruiting budgets in the next two years

62% of high-volume hiring teams expect their budgets to increase in the next two years.

Average time to fill high-volume hiring positions

The majority of respondents said it takes 3-6 weeks to fill high-volume hiring positions.

Top sourcing channel for connecting with candidates

Employee referrals were identified as the most effective candidate sourcing channel.

Top channels for communicating with candidates

For hourly hiring, texting, email, and messaging apps were cited as the best methods for communicating with candidates.

How many hourly employees are hired annually?

41% of respondents hire approximately 500 hourly employees annually, and 24% hire 500-1000.

Research Highlights

57%

What type of roles are top priority? More than half of survey respondents **(57%)** are hiring for hourly wage positions.

54%

High-volume hourly hiring challenges: The top high-volume hourly hiring challenge is candidate ghosting during the interview stage **(54%).**

52%

Time spent on manual administrative tasks: 52% of respondents said multiple hours were spent on manual administrative tasks.

65%

Top task respondents spent the most time on: Communicating with candidates **(65%)** was cited as the most time-consuming task.

32%

Candidate dissatisfaction with hiring: 32% of candidates complained there was not enough personalized communication throughout the recruiting process.

56%

Number of candidates applying for jobs: For hourly hiring, **56%** of respondents said the number of applicants has increased in the past year.

51%

Steps taken to improve candidate experience: 51% of respondents used technology to streamline the hiring process and better interact with candidates.

51%

Investment in recruiting technology: 51% of respondents said they'll be increasing their recruiting technology investment in 2024, with a specific focus on chatbots and texting platforms.

High-Volume Hiring Outlook & Challenges

The 2024 hiring outlook is bright. We found that 58% of survey respondents expect hiring to increase this year (and only 7% anticipate a hiring decrease). For hourly hiring specifically, 62% expect hiring to increase and only 5% anticipate a decrease.

Additionally, 54% of survey respondents expect their budgets to increase in the next two years. And looking at hourly hiring specifically, 62% said their budgets will increase in the next two years. This is welcomed news for industries where hourly hiring is becoming more competitive, as budget increases will help meet headcount expectations and attrition recovery for high-churn roles.

Given that nearly 60% of respondents said they hire more than 500 employees annually, and just over a quarter hire more than 1,000 annually, an increased investment in hiring will be needed to meet workforce needs.

But the reality is larger budgets will only take hiring companies so far. TA teams must invest in a streamlined hiring process and an outstanding candidate experience if they hope to meet their goals and succeed in the increasingly competitive high-volume hiring landscape.
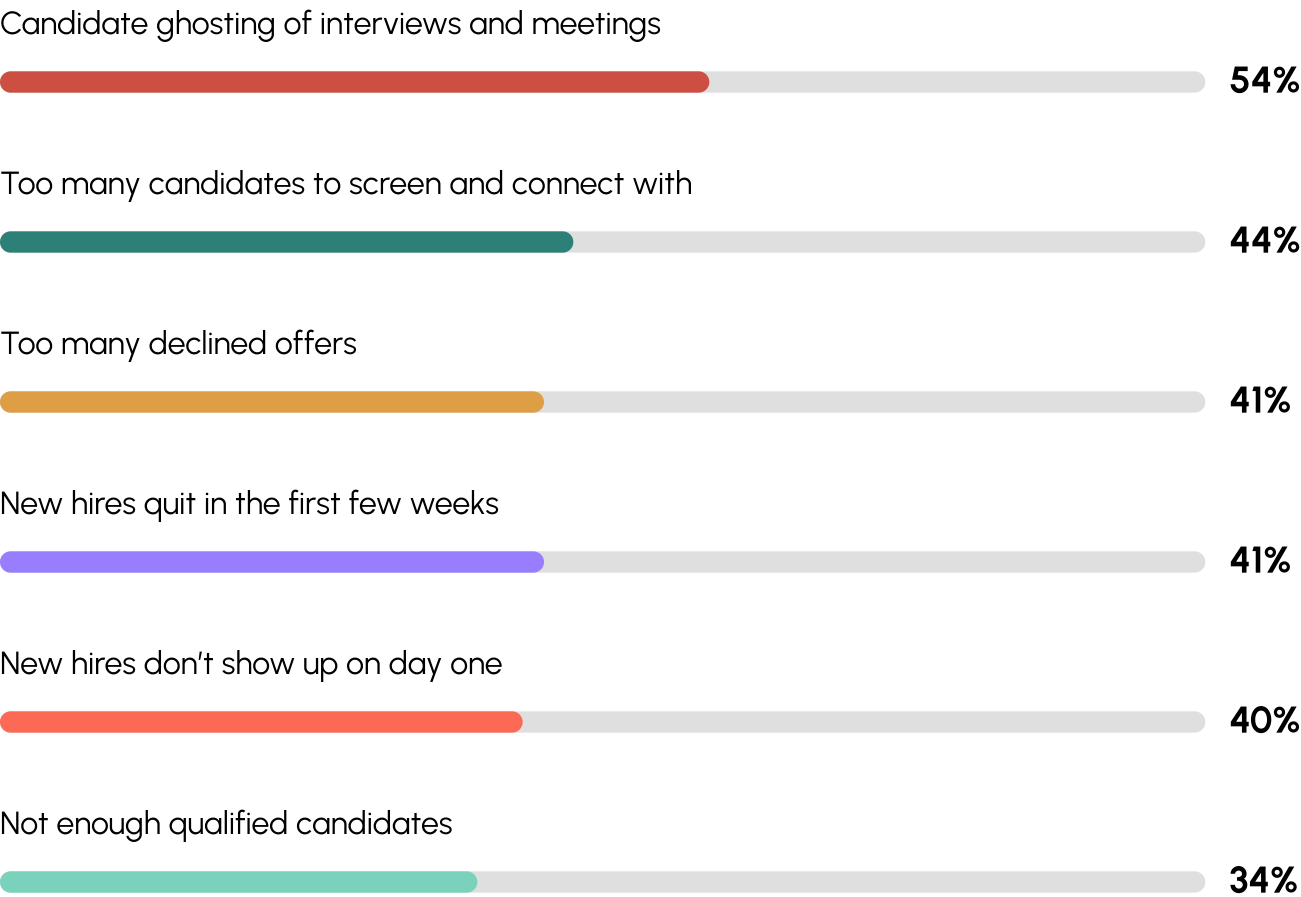
The key challenges that respondents indicated they face can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

Hourly High-Volume Hiring Challenges
(respondents selected all that applied)

Candidate ghosting of interviews and meetings

54%

Too many candidates to screen and connect with

44%

Too many declined offers

41%

New hires quit in the first few weeks

41%

New hires don't show up on day one
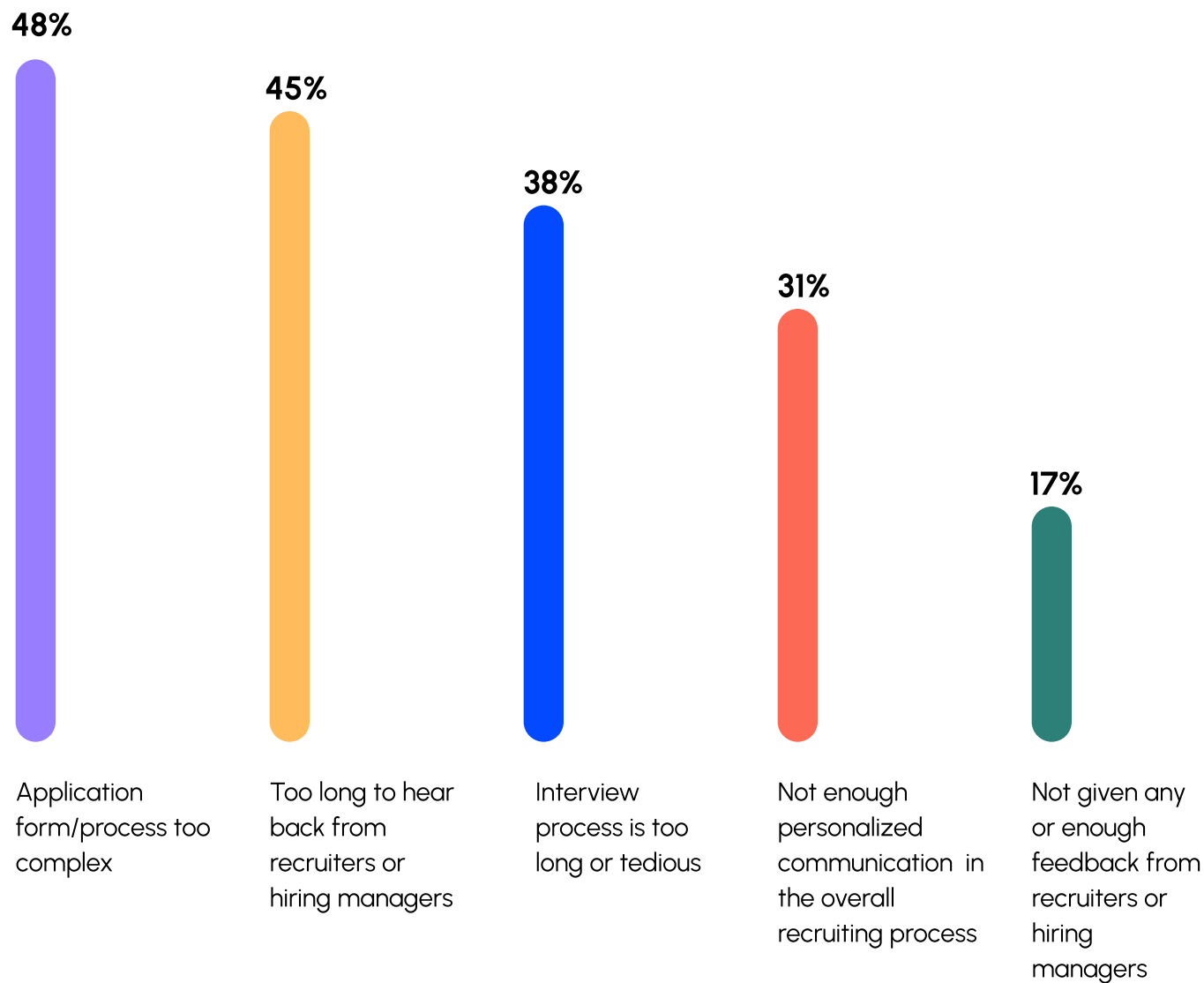
40%

Not enough qualified candidates

34%

These findings align with other CandE research conducted on hourly hiring in the past two years. What complicates these challenges further is that 52% of respondents said a lot of time was spent on manual hourly administrative tasks, and 65% said their most time-consuming task was communicating with candidates. Plus, 32% of the respondents said candidates complained there was not enough personalized communication in the overall recruiting process (see Table 2). Each year in CandE Benchmark research, the primary candidate complaints are centered around communication and feedback loops.

Table 2

Candidate Complaints
(respondents selected all that applied)

48%

45%

38%

31%

17%

Application form/process too complex

Too long to hear back from recruiters or hiring managers

Interview process is too long or tedious

Not enough personalized communication in the overall recruiting process

Not given any or enough feedback from recruiters or hiring managers

The majority of respondents also said it takes 3-6 weeks to fill high-volume hiring positions (see Table 3), and for hourly hiring, 56% of respondents said the number of applicants has increased. High-volume hiring is supposed to be all about speed and efficiency, but if recruiters don't have the resources and technologies to accelerate hiring when they're tasked with filling dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of roles, then their competitors will definitely have the advantage.

Table 3

Total Time To Fill High-Volume Hourly Hiring Positions

3 to 4 weeks
51%

1 to 2 weeks
8%

7 to 8 weeks
8%

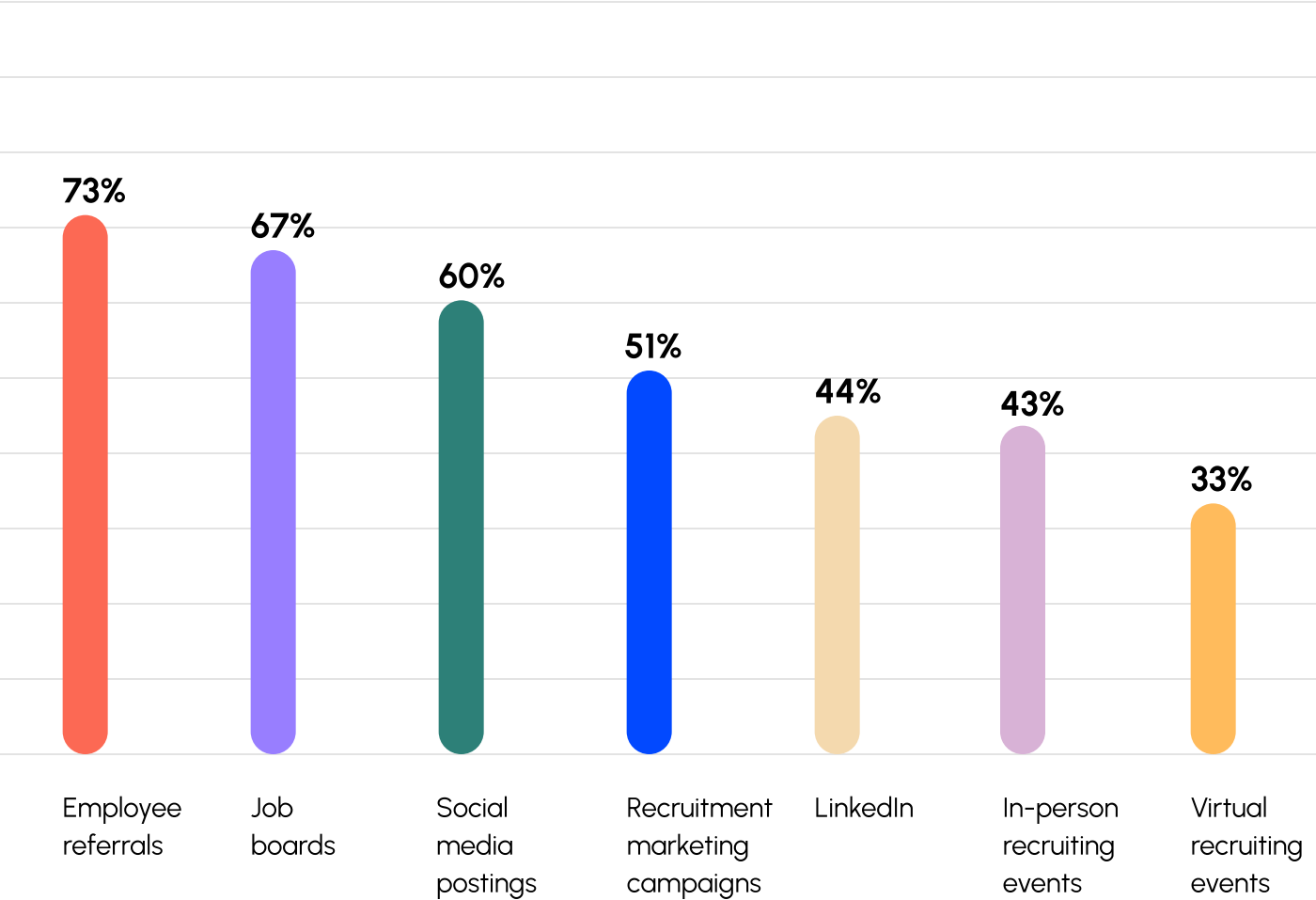5 to 6 weeks
32%

More than 2 months
1%
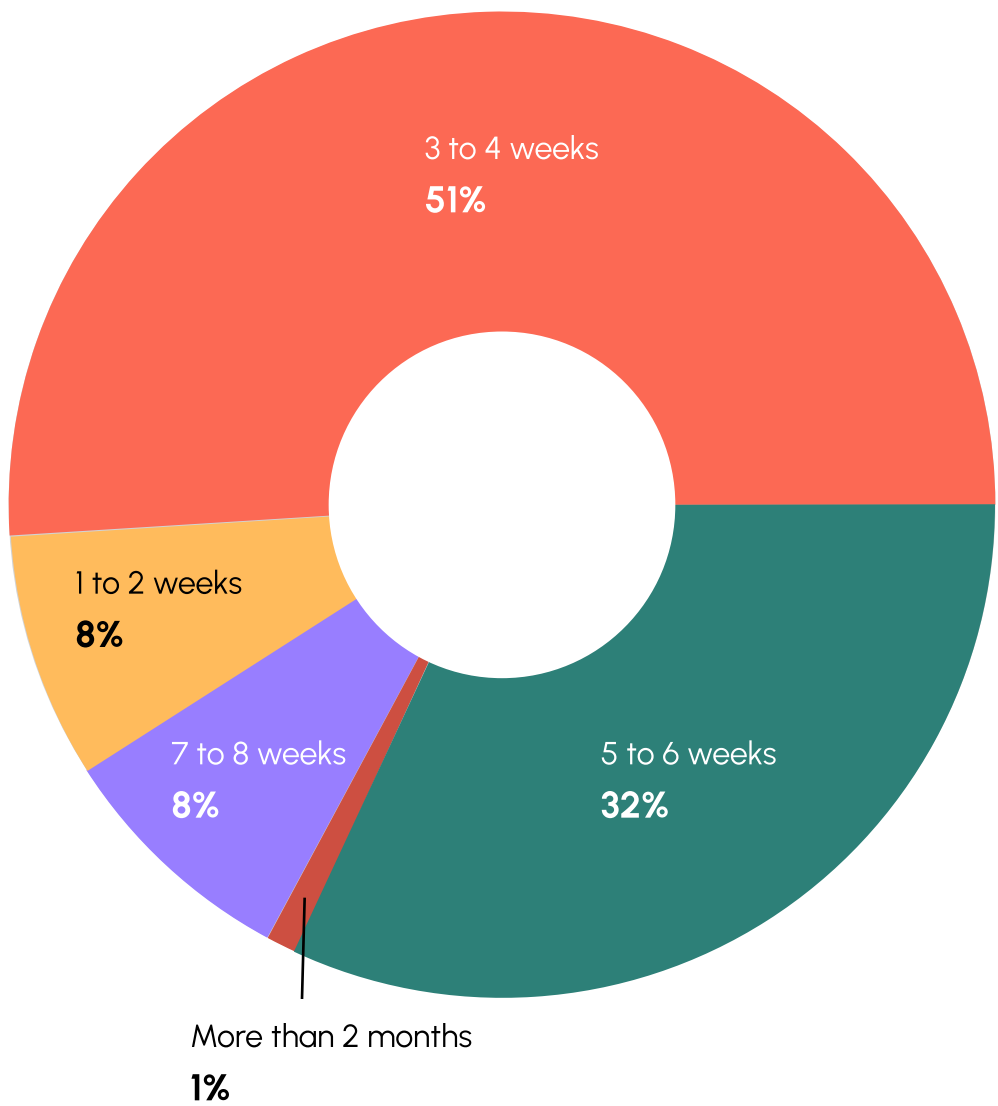
All of these challenges make the hiring process more cumbersome and lead to a poor candidate experience (not to mention poor recruiter and hiring manager experiences, too). When the company's livelihood depends on being optimally staffed with qualified hourly employees who are excited to work there, then efficient processes and innovative recruiting technologies must be prioritized and invested in.

Before we further explore how recruiting AI and automation can help employers overcome many of the challenges they face, let's first highlight what solutions and resources our survey respondents are using today. Particularly, we found that employers are taking advantage of a wide array of sourcing channels to attract talent (see Table 4).

Table 4

Most Effective Sourcing/Channels For Connecting With Candidates
(respondents selected all that applied)

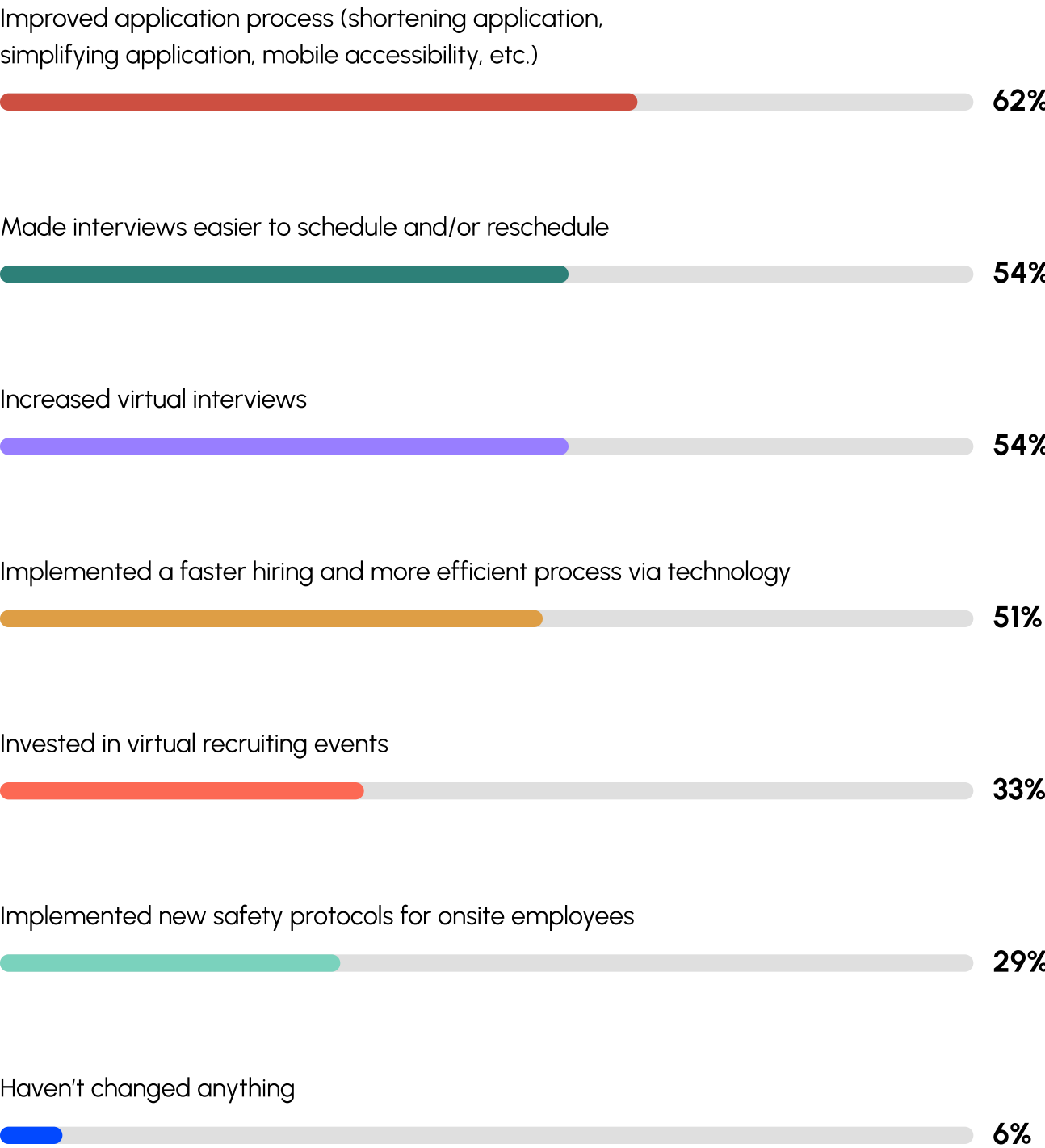| Employee referrals	Job boards	Social media postings	Recruitment marketing campaigns	LinkedIn	In-person recruiting events	Virtual recruiting events
73%	67%	60%	51%	44%	43%	33%

Employee referrals are always a key source of quality candidates and hires. However, a poor candidate experience diminishes the effectiveness of referrals and discourages current employees from recommending your organization to their peers. The good news is when employees have a positive experience during the hiring process, their willingness to refer others increases by 30-50%, according to CandE Benchmark Research.

And speaking of a positive candidate experience, when we asked employers how their company has improved in this area over the past 12 months, we found that improving specific parts of the candidate journey was a top priority. (see Table 5).

Table 5

How Candidate Experience Was Improved Over The Past 12 Months
(respondents selected all that applied)

Improved application process (shortening application,
simplifying application, mobile accessibility, etc.)

62%

Made interviews easier to schedule and/or reschedule

54%

Increased virtual interviews

54%

Implemented a faster hiring and more efficient process via technology

51%

Invested in virtual recruiting events

33%

Implemented new safety protocols for onsite employees

29%

Haven't changed anything

6%

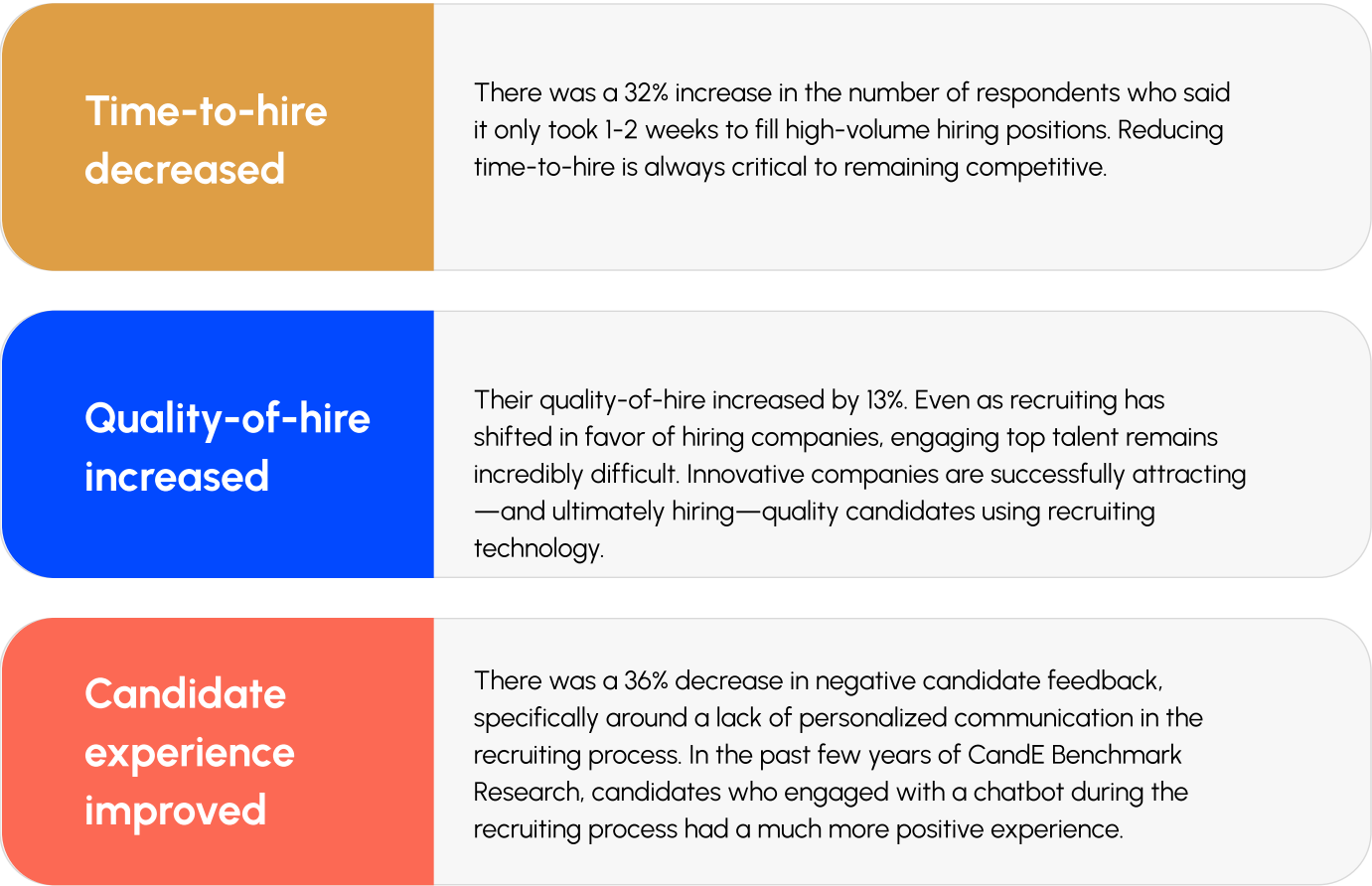# AI Drives the Competitive Difference

Looking back at Table 5, many of the ways companies improved candidate experience was by leveraging AI. Primarily, AI was cited by the 51% of respondents who implemented a faster and more efficient hiring process via technology. Additionally, 54% of respondents said they made it easier to schedule/reschedule interviews (AI chatbots are often used for automated interview scheduling).

Even more, AI-powered recruiting automation plays a key role in the other priorities indicated by our survey respondents. Texting, email, and messaging apps (e.g., WhatsApp) were cited as successful channels for engaging candidates—all of which are part of an integrated AI recruiting platform. All in all, AI and automation help employers reach more candidates, accelerate hiring, increase recruiter productivity, and provide a great talent experience.

As mentioned in the introduction, the highest-rated employers in the latest CandE Benchmark Research tend to leverage AI solutions to improve recruiting and the candidate experience, more than all other participating companies in our research. These solutions improve communication and feedback loops with candidates throughout the hiring journey. In fact, 51% of respondents for this high-volume hiring research said they'll be investing in recruiting platforms in 2024 that include AI, texting, and chatbot functionality.

When we analyzed this research further to see how those respondents utilizing AI technologies improved their recruiting and hiring results, we found that:

Time-to-hire decreased	There was a 32% increase in the number of respondents who said it only took 1-2 weeks to fill high-volume hiring positions. Reducing time-to-hire is always critical to remaining competitive.
Quality-of-hire increased	Their quality-of-hire increased by 13%. Even as recruiting has shifted in favor of hiring companies, engaging top talent remains incredibly difficult. Innovative companies are successfully attracting —and ultimately hiring—quality candidates using recruiting technology.
Candidate experience improved	There was a 36% decrease in negative candidate feedback, specifically around a lack of personalized communication in the recruiting process. In the past few years of CandE Benchmark Research, candidates who engaged with a chatbot during the recruiting process had a much more positive experience.

Here are the key ways AI-powered recruiting automation can improve your high-volume hourly hiring and help you gain a competitive advantage:

AI Chatbot

Engage every candidate who visits your website by answering their questions, learning about their skills/background, directing them to relevant roles, and collecting their application details.

- AI-powered job matching will understand candidates' qualifications and present them with roles they're a great fit for.

- AI chatbots encourage candidates to apply by offering them a fast and personalized experience. They don't have to search for the right role/hiring location or endure a clunky application process.

Pre-screening & interview scheduling

Instantly pre-screen candidates and schedule interviews with qualified talent, within minutes of them learning about your opportunity.
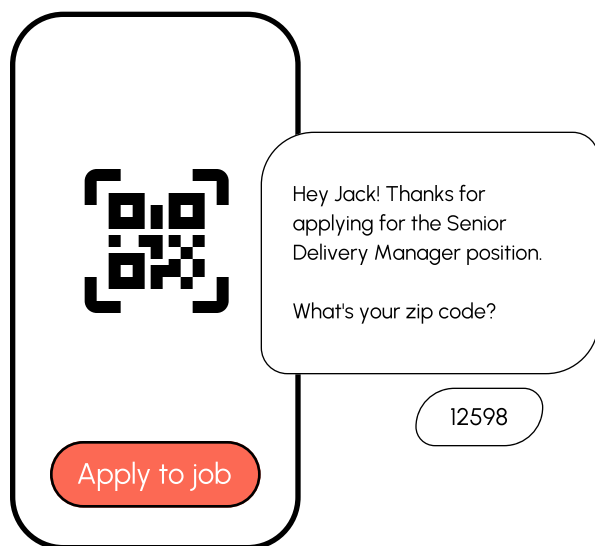
- After a candidate applies, the AI chatbot will ask them a series of pre-screening questions to determine if they meet the role requirements.

- If they're qualified, the chatbot will share available dates/times for an interview that they can select from.

Recruitment marketing campaigns

Showcase your company as a great place to work with recruitment marketing campaigns that seamlessly support your broader hiring strategy.

- Build custom landing pages and forms to generate leads from recruitment marketing efforts (e.g., events, job fairs, webinars, content downloads, etc).

- Create a stunning career site that lists all your available positions along with your employer branding messaging.

Everything you need to build a great company

Hey Jack! Thanks for applying for the Senior Delivery Manager position.

What's your zip code?

12598

Apply to job

QR code-accessible application/text-to-apply

Attract candidates in your brick-and-mortar locations by enabling them to apply from their phones.

- Candidates can apply by scanning a QR code or texting a dedicated number—without needing to come into the location to complete an application or visit your company website once they return to their computer.

- After scanning the QR code or texting the number, an AI Chatbot will instantly respond and collect their application details, pre-screen them, and schedule an interview if they're qualified.

Match past candidates in your database with new jobs

Tap into your database and reconnect with candidates who previously applied and weren't hired—such as "silver medalists" or candidates who are a better fit for the roles you're hiring for today.

- Use AI job matching to surface every qualified candidate in your database, then re-engage the talent pool at scale with automated, personalized messaging.

- Keep your company top-of-mind by sending general updates to your talent database using automated messaging campaigns.

:: sense | CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE BENCHMARK RESEARCH & AWARDS PROGRAM
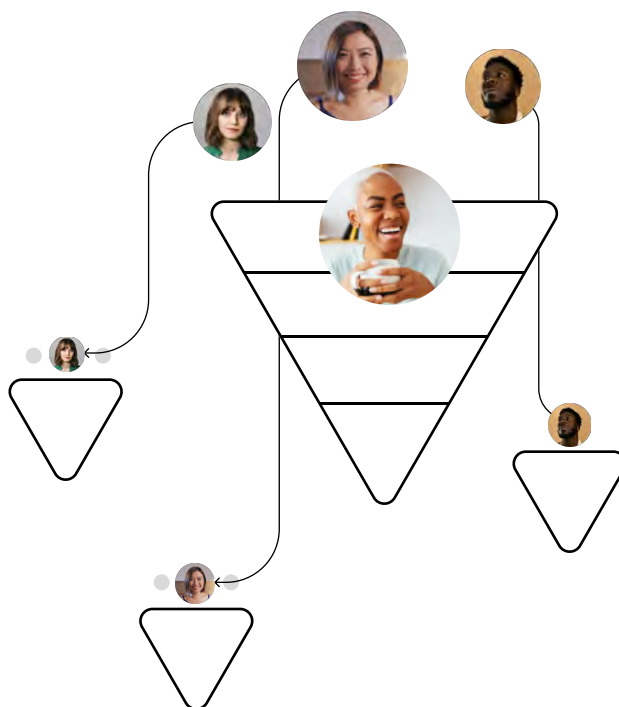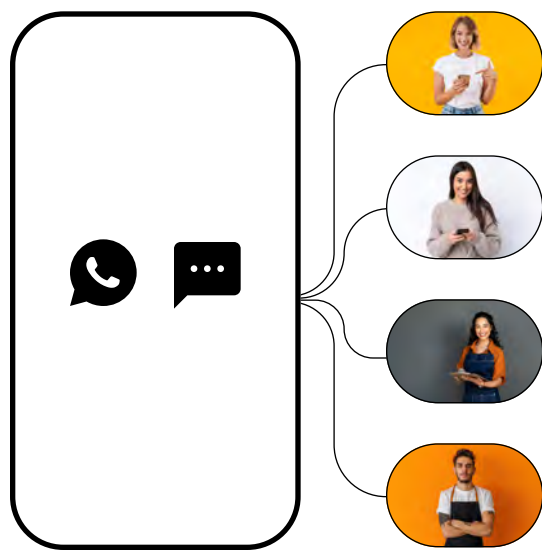
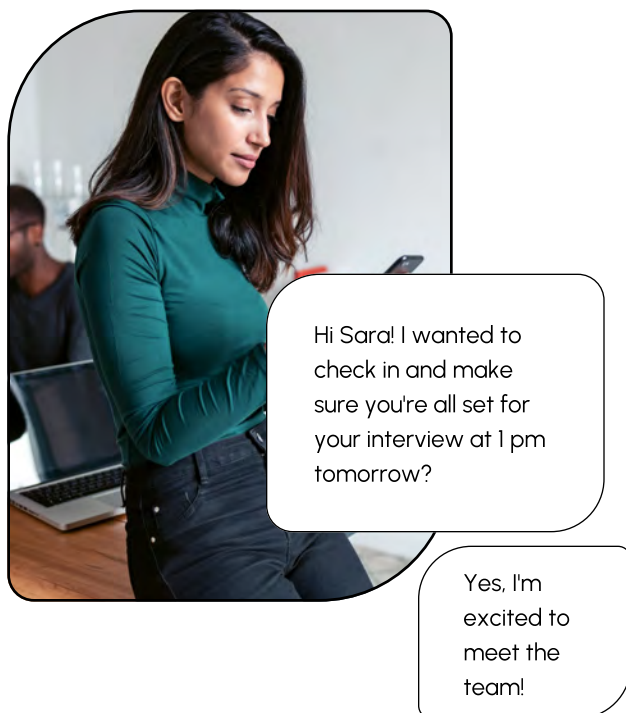## Source candidates with mass texting and WhatsApp

Share relevant opportunities with entire groups of candidates via text and WhatsApp messages that are personalized for each individual recipient.

- Use templates with placeholders that are automatically populated with names, locations, and job titles so messages feel as if they were written for each candidate.

- As candidates respond and express interest, recruiters can engage them in 1-on-1 conversations or the AI chatbot will respond to schedule an interview.

Continuously engage candidates with automated messaging

Send automated updates, interview reminders, and check-ins to candidates throughout the hiring process.

- Prevent ghosting/drop-off and improve the candidate experience by letting them know where they stand in the hiring process.

- Candidates can also respond and ask questions or raise concerns so they don't feel compelled to ghost.

Hi Sara! I wanted to check in and make sure you're all set for your interview at 1 pm tomorrow?

Yes, I'm excited to meet the team!

Benefits to recruiters:

· Increased efficiency: AI automates repetitive tasks like screening resumes, answering candidate questions, and scheduling interviews, freeing recruiters to focus on more strategic initiatives.

· Reduced drop-off: Chatbots and automated messaging personalize the hiring experience and provide regular updates, keeping candidates invested in the opportunity.

· Wider talent pools: AI enables recruiters to reach more candidates, leading to bigger pools of qualified talent.

· Data-driven insights: AI collects and analyzes data on candidate interactions, providing valuable insights that can be used to improve the recruiting process.

Benefits to candidates:

· Convenience and accessibility: AI-powered recruiting automation offers a convenient and accessible way to apply for jobs, especially for those on the go or with time constraints.

· Personalized experiences: AI personalizes the end-to-end hiring process, starting the moment a candidate expresses interest in your company to long after they join your team.

· Instant updates: Chatbots and automated messaging provide updates and answer questions, giving candidates a better understanding of where they stand in the process.

· More information about the opportunity: Chatbots and recruitment marketing messaging helps candidates know if your opportunity is right for them by providing clear and concise information about your company and the hiring process.

AI-powered recruiting automation continuously engages candidates at each stage of their journey. The accelerated and personalized hiring process improves the experience for everyone involved and helps hiring companies fill a high volume of critical, front-line roles with qualified talent.

Conclusion

As high-volume recruiting and hiring become more competitive, employers must prioritize speed and efficiency. The sheer number of disruptive changes we've experienced since the pandemic were enough to break the best of recruiting teams. And sadly many were broken. Hospitality and retail suffered tremendous losses early on during the pandemic but then bounced back quickly. Sustaining the rebound hasn't been easy, though. Organizations that continue to recruit and hire with leaner teams, drawn-out processes, and outdated technologies will be passed by those that embrace AI and automation.

AI-powered recruiting automation is simplifying outreach, speeding up the hiring process, and improving the overall candidate and recruiter experience.

About The CandE Benchmark Research Program

The Candidate Experience (CandE) Benchmark Research and Awards Program is the first program of its kind focused on the elevation and promotion of a quality candidate experience. Also known as The CandEs, the program was founded by Talent Board in 2011 and is now part of ERE Media. The CandE Benchmark Research Program delivers annual recruiting and hiring industry benchmark research that highlights accountability, fairness and the business impact of candidate experience. More information can be found at https://www.eremedia.com/candidate-experience.

About Sense

Sense, the leading AI-powered Talent Engagement Platform, redefines the recruitment process by seamlessly blending personalized, omnichannel candidate experiences with enhanced recruiter efficiency. Trusted by over 1,000 organizations, Sense offers a comprehensive suite of features, including Recruiting Automation, Talent CRM, Career Sites, Campaigns, Candidate Scoring & Matching, AI Chatbot, Text Messaging, Interview Scheduling, and Referrals. Optimize every step of the talent acquisition journey with Sense, where cutting-edge technology converges with intuitive functionality. Learn more at sensehq.com.