



Hiring for the skills of
the future to drive
long-term success

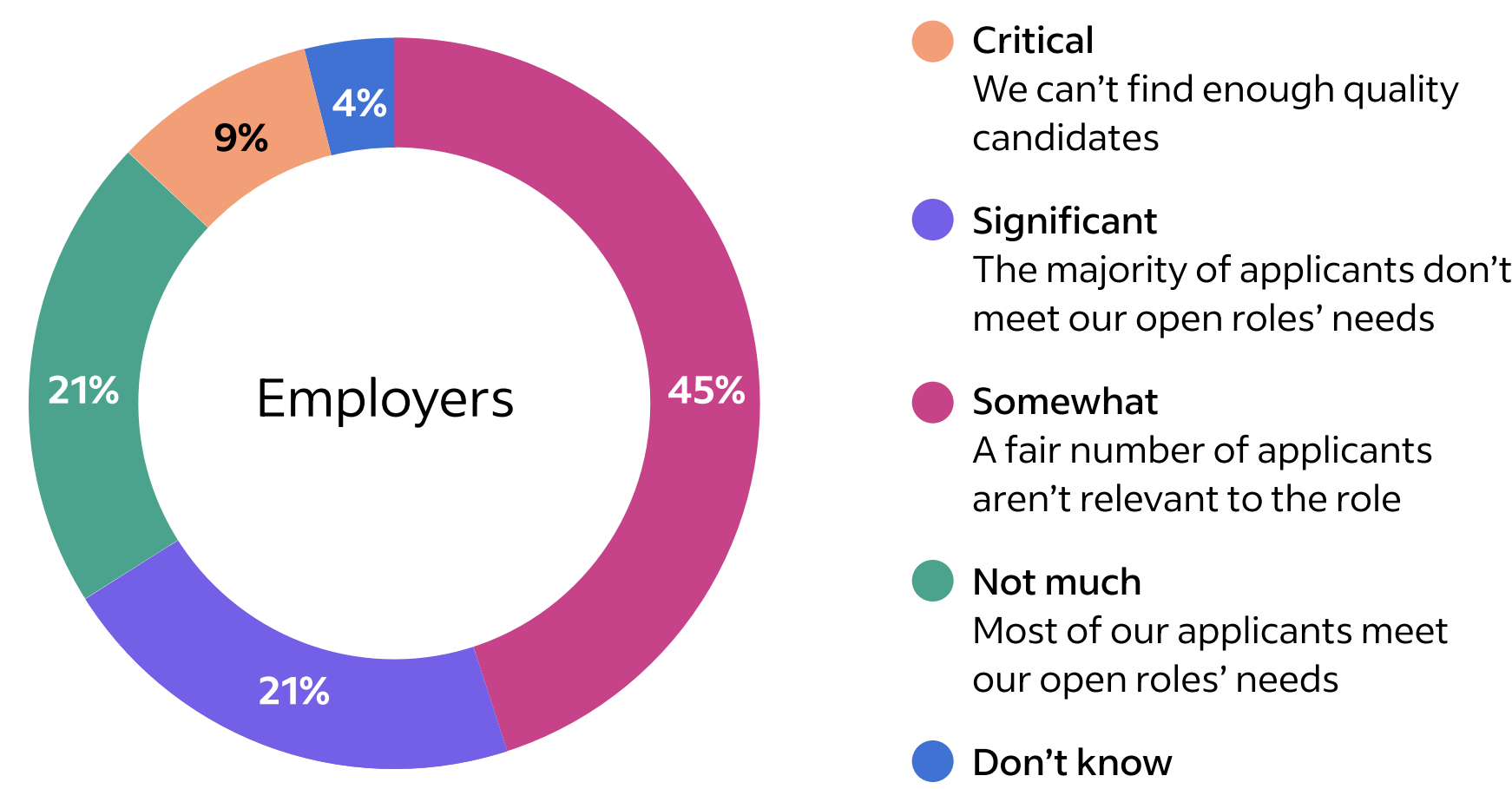


The challenge of hiring for skills

Job seekers believe the main reason they miss out on roles is that they’re in competition with an overwhelming number of qualified candidates for an underwhelming selection of jobs. So, instead of being selective and intentional about the roles they apply for, many job seekers cast a wide net. However, in applying to a large number of jobs indiscriminately, they’re often applying for jobs that don’t fit their skills and experience, or in many cases, not tailoring their resumes and cover letters with key qualifications to help them stand out.

Employers report that they’re scrutinizing applications, searching for quality candidates. According to Indeed research, “employers consider a candidate’s availability, location, and responsiveness in their quality assessment of the ‘total package.’” When these elements are lacking, employers perceive a lack of quality applicants, but the problem may simply be that qualified job seekers are sending low-quality applications.¹

Is a lack of quality candidates an issue for your organization? If so, how?²



How AI is reshaping hiring

AI is changing the hiring landscape for both job seekers and employers. For job seekers, the introduction of AI in the workplace means that the skills they need for future roles are currently being rewritten—so no one has them all yet.

As it stands today, generative AI is best suited to applying its skills to help with relatively straightforward work tasks that require only modest problem-solving and no hands-on execution. For jobs that require significant hands-on skills (for example, aviation or cooking), the usefulness of GenAI will remain limited. Knowledge workers' roles, or those that can be done remotely, are potentially the most exposed to change from generative AI, emphasizing the importance of continued upskilling and ongoing learning.

For employers, AI technology can now help hiring managers find qualified talent more easily and quickly by helping to curate great job postings and sorting for skills before other qualifications. For example, in the past, applicants would have to include the exact language used in a job description to be recognized as a potential match. With the help of AI, employers can identify whether a candidate has the right skills more quickly and effortlessly.



Employee has experience
working the register at a café



Employer wants
retail point-of-sale experience



Strategies for filling roles and skills gaps

1 Focus on adjacent skills and internal candidates

In a tight labor market, it can help to focus on sourcing within your existing employee base. Think beyond direct experience to consider the skills adjacency of your current staff—the skills they may possess that are closely related to the skills you seek for a specific role. For example, customer service professionals may be suitable for roles in sales or account management.

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I think a lot about skills adjacency and internal mobility. Many employers are focusing on proactively sourcing within their own employee base. That can help provide marginalized folks with an opportunity they may not have considered and can ensure they're part of the internal career cycle.”

Wendy Wick

Senior Vice President, PeopleReady

2 Rethink how you talk about roles

In the spirit of broadening your talent pool, look at the language you're using in job descriptions. Remove jargon and check for bias. If you're looking to attract folks who typically haven't had the opportunity to be in these types of roles, make sure the verbiage is understandable.

3 Change up where jobs are posted

It's also important to consider where jobs are being posted. If you're always fishing in the same pond, you'll get the same fish. Programmatic advertising can be great for helping diversify candidate sources.

4 Remove unnecessary requirements

A key step in a skills-first hiring strategy is removing unnecessary degree requirements or reducing years of experience requirements. This opens doors to candidates who may otherwise be overlooked for valuable opportunities to kick-start their careers. But to do this effectively, companies must clearly define the necessary skills for each role.

5 Identify required skills

Consider creating a list of skills required for every role in your company. This will help identify whether a degree is necessary for a role and write job descriptions that accurately reflect the capabilities needed for success. More importantly, it levels the playing field for candidates, internal or external, who don't have degrees or traditional experience.

6 Create a digital framework

Once skills have been identified, investing in a digital framework is required to put them to use—for example, creating digital profiles of every employee tagged with their specific skills. In this scenario, there's also great potential for a digital framework to support upskilling strategies. If you attach skills to projects or training courses, then employees who've completed those projects or courses could claim those skills as part of their employee profile.



7 Change your organization's mindset

When HR leaders remove degree requirements for roles, they may find it takes some added work to explain that the change wasn't about hiring less-skilled workers, but removing obstacles to attract a more diverse range of employees. A successful skills-first hiring strategy requires a shift in an organization's overall mindset and culture to influence individual behaviors and attitudes at every level.



Pro tip: Start by educating hiring managers and deploying resources on the ground to set up both managers and new hires for success. Add mentorship and job shadowing programs, employee resource groups (ERGs), or other supports as needed.

8 Build your own talent pipeline

Setting up apprenticeship programs can help companies reach high-potential workers as part of your skills-first hiring strategy. Apprenticeship models in fields like manufacturing and skilled trades have a history of successfully attracting and retaining diverse talent, but these can be adapted even to a corporate setting.



Pro tip: Create partnerships with educational institutions like colleges and universities, as well as nonprofits and workforce organizations, to bring people into your apprenticeship program.

9 Measure success and hold leaders accountable

To evaluate the success of your programs, establish metrics and track them. For example, measure completion and conversion rates for apprentices hired on as employees. Track new hires as well as retention rates, career progression, and promotions.

10 Start small and be focused

These changes can feel overwhelming, and if you attempt to address them all at once, you may feel defeated. Instead, divide the workload by job categories or high-volume roles and focus on one segment at a time. The sooner you get started, the more you will understand and value what the market brings and how you can better engage external populations and internal employees.



Sources

1 Indeed Internal Data, Application Quality, July 2024

2 Indeed Survey with YouGov 2024, Total N=5,650 job seekers and 3,651 employers



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