The State of Employer Branding and Recruitment Advertising 2021

Focus on building a compelling employer brand to help attract and retain the best possible talent

JUNE 2021

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Executive Summary

What a difference a year makes. Our previous report, *The State of Employer Branding and Recruitment Advertising 2020,* was released early in 2020. At the time, it was predicted that the global economy would continue to grow and the competition for talent would remain high. Just thirty days later, the pandemic hit us like a tidal wave with drastic changes to our lives and businesses. More than 22 million U.S. jobs disappeared in 2020, with unemployment skyrocketing from an early year low of under 4% to close to 15% by April! Nearly every industry and region suffered through both a loss of jobs and, even more tragically, a loss of lives.

The data for this report was collected March through May 2021, during a somewhat V-shaped economic recovery. Unemployment in the U.S. is 5.8% as of May 2021, down from 13.3% one year ago. And, while the global impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is far from over, business optimism is on the rise in some regions, especially the United States.

In some areas, many organizations are growing their businesses and their workforces again. If competition for the best talent continues to rise, the winning organizations will be those that have mastered their recruiting and hiring processes.

How many organizations have accomplished this already? And what do best practices look like as the pandemic recedes? To find out, HR.com ran its third annual comprehensive survey of HR professionals. As in the past, we divided our report into two critical components of the talent acquisition process: employer branding and recruitment advertising.

About this Survey

The State of Employer Branding and Recruitment Advertising survey ran during April and May 2021. We gathered 375 usable complete and partial responses from HR professionals in virtually every industry vertical through both an internal and external panel.

Respondents are located all over the world, but most of them reside in North America, especially the United States.

The participants represent a broad cross section of employers by number of employees, ranging from small businesses with fewer than 50 employees to enterprises with 20,000+ employees.

Questions for the survey were guided by an independent panel of HR professionals and employer branding and recruitment advertising experts who we thank for their invaluable insights.

Below is a high-level summary of major findings:

Major Findings for Employer Branding

Major Finding **1**

Only about half indicate that their employer brand is well known, but two-thirds nonetheless say their brand attracts high-quality job candidates.

- Eighty percent of organizations have an intentionally cultivated employer brand. However, just 54% say their employer brand is well known.

- Nearly one-fifth (17%) say they don't have an employer brand, but are developing or considering one.

- Sixty-seven percent of HR professionals say their employer brand does a good or excellent job of attracting high quality job candidates.

Major Finding **2**

The three most-cited barriers to successful employer brand creation are:

- lack of personnel devoted to it (36%)
- lack of time (31%)
- lack of interest from leadership (30%)

About Employer Brands and Job Advertising

An **employer brand** is the brand that an organization communicates as its identity to current and, especially, potential employees. Most firms have a brand, even if they haven't intentionally cultivated it. The brand signifies what it is like to work at that organization.

Recruitment advertising is the process by which organizations market and advertise job openings. So, an employer brand might be thought of as the message whereas recruitment advertising represents how this message is delivered. Both have the goal of attracting highly desirable job applicants.

Major Finding **3**

HR often plays the primary role in the design of employer brands and the strategic plan for how to use those brands, but others often play a decisive role as well, indicating there is no consensus about how this is accomplished in today's organizations.

- Forty percent of respondents say day-to-day management of the employer brand is mostly an HR responsibility, while 30% say the same for the design and strategy.

- Among the others who play a key role are members of senior leadership, the marketing department and the communications department. In addition, nearly a fifth use cross-functional teams to manage and strategize about the employer brand.

Major Finding **4**

A little over half of organizations measure their employer brands, but there is no consensus on how to do it.

- Only 56% of HR professionals say their organizations measure or otherwise evaluate their employer brands.

- Among those that do evaluate their brands, they are most likely to do so through:

  - engagement levels (70%)
  - interview questions (48%)
  - employee key performance indicators (KPIs) (45%)

Major Finding **5**

Organizations with strong employer brands are:

- three times more likely to say they've intentionally cultivated a brand that is well known
- three times more likely to say their employer brand engages and retains current employees
- nearly three times more likely to say their brand reflects the organization's values and mission
- considerably more likely to use employee KPIs and Net Promoter Scores to measure and evaluate their employer brand

Major Findings for Recruitment Advertising

Major Finding 1

Virtually all respondents say their organizations advertise for new job openings, but the successful usage of these job ads is less common.

- Ninety-nine percent of respondents say their organizations advertise for new job openings, but only two-thirds of HR professionals say their job advertising initiatives are good or excellent at attracting quality candidates.
- Even fewer (58%) say their job ads provide a high return on investment.

Major Finding 2

Recruitment advertising efforts are highly dependent on five advertising venues:

- company's website (78%)
- internal postings or emails (53%)
- major job boards (52%)
- job search mobile apps (50%)
- social networking sites (48%)

Major Finding 3

Most organizations measure the success of job advertisements and recruitment campaigns, with four metrics being used most widely:

- applicants per opening (39%)
- advertising costs per hire (37%)
- applicant completion rates (32%)
- candidate experience (31%)

Major Finding **4** **The four most-cited barriers to successful job advertising are a lack of:**

- financial resources (33%)
- time (27%)
- vision (26%)
- understanding about the topic (26%)

Major Finding **5** **Compared with those will failing recruitment-advertising efforts, those with successful initiatives are:**

- five times less likely to say they face internal barriers to good recruitment advertising
- nearly five times more likely to use programmatic advertising to a high or very high degree
- over four times more likely to say their job advertising initiatives have a good or excellent return on investment
- far more likely to say they use metrics such as advertising costs per hire and application completion rates
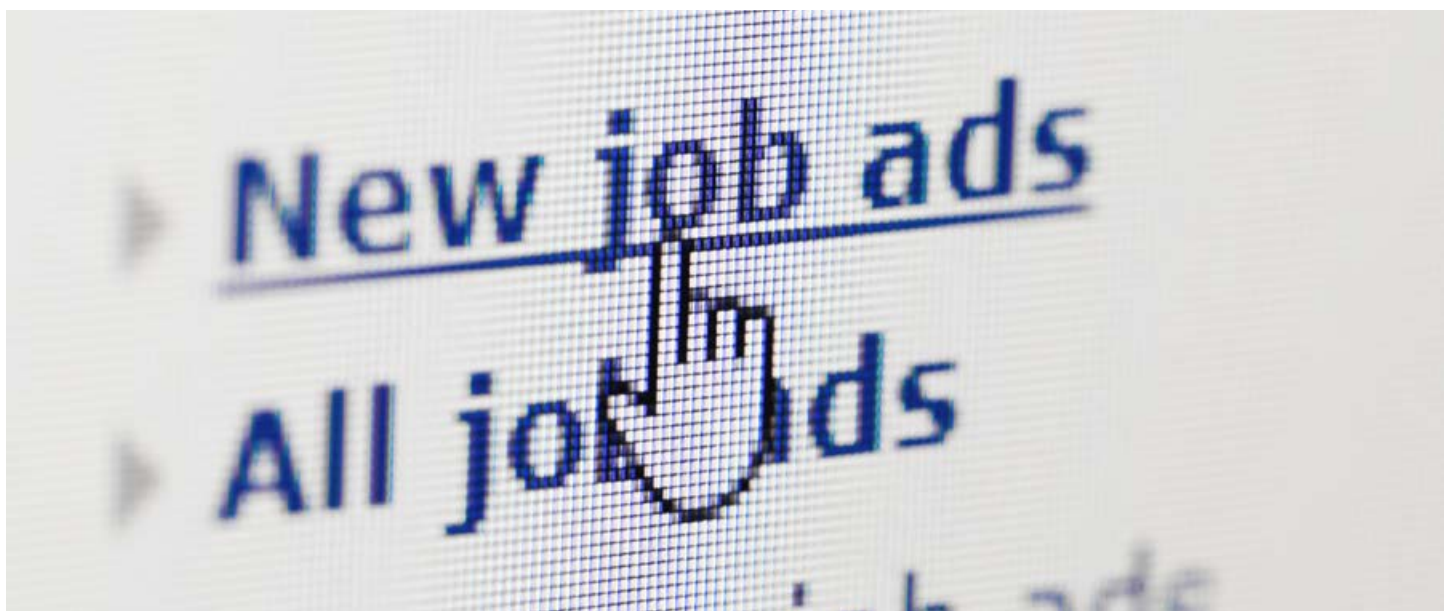
On Employer Branding

In this section of the report, we look at the findings associated with creating and implementing a strong employer brand. An employer brand is the foundation piece of successful recruiting and hiring. Strong brands attract candidates in the first place, make them more likely to want to come to work for you, and, if hired, help engage and retain employees over the long term.

The Prevalence and Quality of Today's Employer Brands

Finding: Only about half of organizations intentionally cultivate and manage an employer brand that is well known

> The impact of the pandemic has led to more people thinking about their future careers and the type of company they want to work for. It is one reason your employer brand is becoming more critical.
>
> **- Laurent Scholten,**
> Founder & CEO, Wonderkind

Unless it is very small or very new, every organization has an employer brand. Sometimes that brand is intentionally cultivated. Sometimes, however, it is not and only exists as a reputation in the marketplace that the employer may not even be fully aware of.

The goal for organizations is to ensure that their employer brand is a good one. There are two phases to establishing a positive employer brand that attracts and retains talented people. The first is determining how you'd like your brand to appear to people inside and outside your organization. This should not be left to chance. Multiple stakeholders in your organization need to weigh in on key brand components. These include aspects of your culture as reflected in areas such as your organization's purpose, mission, work climate, benefits programs and more. This first phase requires answering the question: Why would a candidate want to work for us rather than other organizations?

We found that 80% of respondents indicate their firms have an intentionally cultivated employer brand.

The second phase involves leveraging that cultivated brand in the marketplace, making it reasonably well known within the industry. Yet, only a little over half of respondents (54%) indicate that their employer brand is well known.

About a fifth of organizations still do not have an intentionally cultivated employer brand

Survey Question: Does your organization have an employer brand that is being intentionally cultivated?

Response	Percentage
Yes, one that's well known	54%
Yes, but it's not well known	26%
No, but we're developing or considering one	17%
No, and we have no interest in one	3%
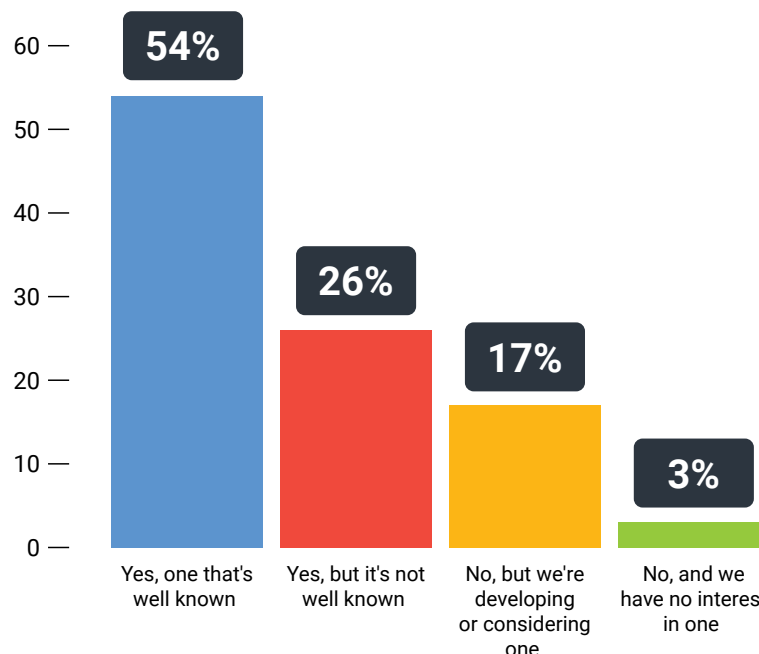
Finding: About two-thirds feel their employer's brand is either good or excellent at attracting quality job applicants

A strong employer brand serves both external and internal purposes.

Among the primary internal purposes are attracting and retaining employees. Thirty-one percent of respondents report that their employer brand does an excellent job at attracting external candidates, and another 31% say their brand does a good job. Thirty-three percent feel their employer brand does an excellent job at retaining and engaging current employees, and 36% say it does a good job of this.

Among the external purposes is burnishing the organization's reputation. Fully 70% say their employer brands are either good or excellent at enhancing reputation.

Survey Question: Whether or not it has been intentionally created, how would you rate your employer's brand in terms of its ability to:

	Good	Excellent	Total
Reflect the organization's values and mission	38%	34%	72%
Enhance the organization's reputation	35%	35%	70%
Engage and retain current employees	36%	33%	69%
Support and amplify the overall external company brand	41%	29%	70%
Attract quality job candidates	36%	31%	67%

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80

■ Good ■ Excellent

Seventy percent say their employer brand is good or excellent at enhancing the organization's reputation

Barriers to Employer Branding

Finding: Lack of personnel is the most widely cited barrier to successful brand creation

Most organizations (78%) cite at least one barrier to successful brand creation. The lack of staff members who are specifically devoted to brand creation is the most widely cited barrier to successful brand creation, cited by 36% of respondents. This could be due, in part, to a lack of time (31%), interest from leadership (30%), and financial resources (26%).

Survey Question: What are the barriers to successful employer brand creation in your organization? (select all that apply)

Barrier	Percentage
Lack of personnel devoted to it	36%
Lack of time	31%
Lack of interest from leadership	30%
Lack of know-how about the topic	27%
Lack of financial resources	26%
Lack of technology	19%
Lack of genuine need	14%
We don't have any barriers	22%

Only 14% of HR professionals see a lack of genuine need as a significant barrier to the creation of a successful employer brand

Measuring Employer Brands

Finding: More than half of organizations (56%) evaluate the strength of their employer brand

Organizations cannot easily manage what they don't measure, and an employer brand is no exception. A solid understanding of the strength of your employer brand allows you see what is working well and to identify opportunities for improvement. While measuring employer brands can be challenging, 56% of organizations measure or evaluate their brand.

Although evaluating the strength of employer brands is challenging, it is clearly possible

Survey Question: Does your organization measure or otherwise evaluate its employer brand?

16%

29%

56%

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
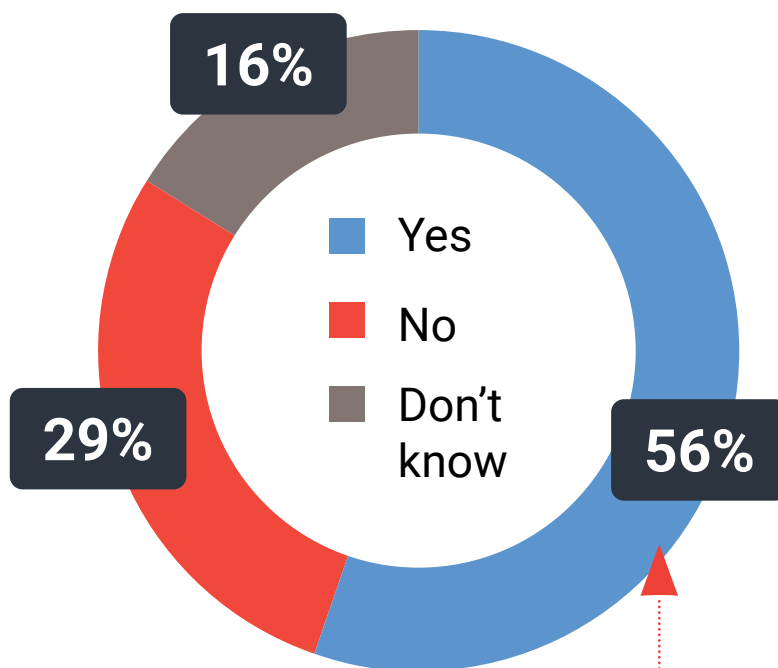
Finding: Engagement is the most commonly used way of evaluating brands

Among organizations that measure their employer brand, 70% cite the ability to engage current employees and prospects as a way to do it. This is the only metric cited by more than half of respondents.

Engagement is, however, far from the only metric. Many respondents use a full range of other metrics such as interview questions, key performance indicators, employee surveys, and more. It is interesting to note, however, that only 42% use quality of hire and/or quality of applicants, metrics that we consider important.

Forty percent use Net Promoter Scores, or NPS. These are widely used in consumer research to gauge customer loyalty. Such scores look at the difference between your "promoters" and "detractors" using a single ten-point scale. For employer brand, the question is usually something like "on a scale of one to ten, how likely are you to recommend working here to a friend or job candidate?"

Survey Question: How does your organization evaluate/measure its employer brand? (select all that apply)

Metric	Percentage
Ability to engage people (e.g., employees and prospects)	70%
Interview questions (e.g., What attracted you to our company?)	48%
Employee key performance indicators (KPIs)	45%
Employee surveys	43%
Quality of hires and/or applicants	42%
Online participation (e.g., in communities, networks, events)	42%
Conversion rates (e.g., number of website visitors to applicants)	41%
Net Promoter Scores (e.g., likeliness of workers to recommend their employer)	40%

Less than half use employee surveys to gauge their employer brand

Determining Responsibility for Employer Branding

Finding: Responsibility for employer branding often involves multiple stakeholders

Employer Brand Design and Strategy

Although HR often plays a role, there is no consensus about who is ultimately responsible for the design of employer brands and the strategic plan for how to use those brands. HR is most likely to be the group responsible for design and strategy, but other stakeholders may play a role as well. In fact, HR plays *no* role at all among about half of organizations. Aside from HR, senior leaders and marketing departments are about equally likely to have the greatest responsibility for the employer brand strategy and development.

In about a fifth of cases (18%), joint teams are most responsible. In 81% of such joint teams, members of the HR department are on that team, followed by members of marketing (62%) and communications (59%) departments.

Day-to-Day Management of the Employer Brand

HR is more likely to have the primary responsibility for the day-to-day management of the employer brand, cited in 40% of cases. Even here, however, other stakeholders often play a role. In fact, members of the senior leadership, marketing and communication teams are about equally likely to have such responsibility.

In 17% of cases, joint teams are most responsible. In 81% of such joint teams, members of the HR department are a part of that team, followed by members of marketing (66%) and communications (55%) departments.
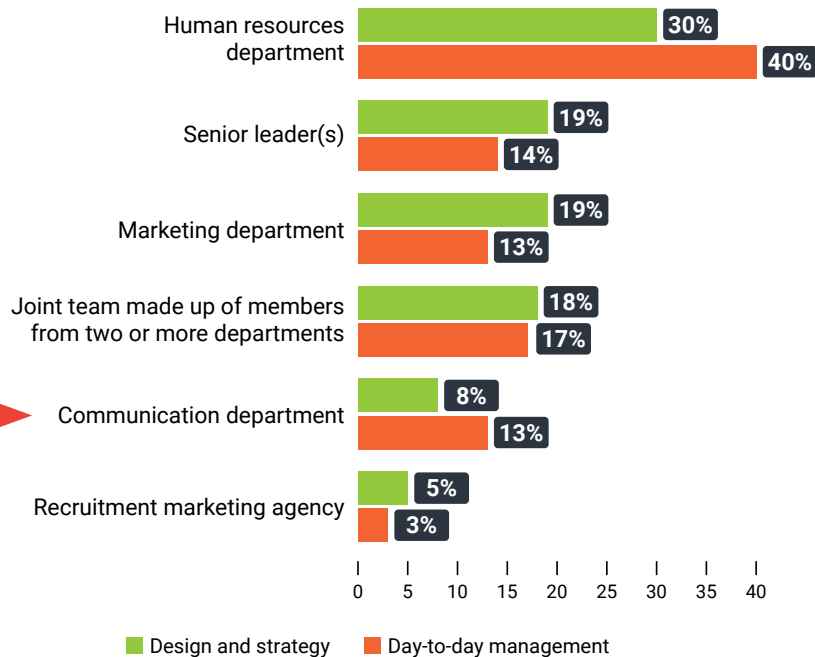
On Collaborations

Our view is that while HR should take the lead role in developing and maintaining a strong employer brand, it can and should benefit from collaboration with other stakeholders, especially marketing experts. After all, the best practices for employer branding tend to parallel those required for your overall company brand.

Communication departments do not typically play a primary role in designing or managing the employer brand

Survey Question: Who is most responsible for the following aspects of your organization's employer brand?
(select one that best applies)

	Design and strategy	Day-to-day management
Human resources department	30%	40%
Senior leader(s)	19%	14%
Marketing department	19%	13%
Joint team made up of members from two or more departments	18%	17%
Communication department	8%	13%
Recruitment marketing agency	5%	3%

■ Design and strategy   ■ Day-to-day management

Characteristics of Well-branded Organizations

For this report, we conducted various analyses to gain insights into which practices are most widely used by organizations with higher levels of success. Specifically, we analyzed responses and segmented the data into two groups:

- **Well-branded organizations:** Those who report that their organization's branding efforts do an excellent job at attracting high-quality candidates.

- **Less-branded organizations:** Those that report their organization's branding efforts do a moderate or poor job at attracting high-quality candidates

Of course, correlation is not the same as causation. While we cannot state that any particular practice will definitely lead to a successful employer branding, we do see intriguing relationships that might result in greater success.

Finding: High performers excel at creating a well-known brand

Eighty-eight percent of those who say their employer brands do an excellent job at attracting high-quality candidates also say they have intentionally cultivated a brand that is well known. This compares to only 26% of less-branded organizations, a difference of 62 percentage points. The key word here is "intentional." Well-branded organizations do not leave developing a reputable and engaging employer brand to chance; they work at it.

Survey Question: Does your organization have an employer brand that is being intentionally cultivated?

Percent responding good or excellent

88%	
26%	
38%	
9%	
30%	
3%	
0%	5%

Yes, one that's well known
Yes, but it's not well known
No, but we're developing or considering one
No, and we have no interest in one

■ Well-branded organizations　■ Less-branded organizations
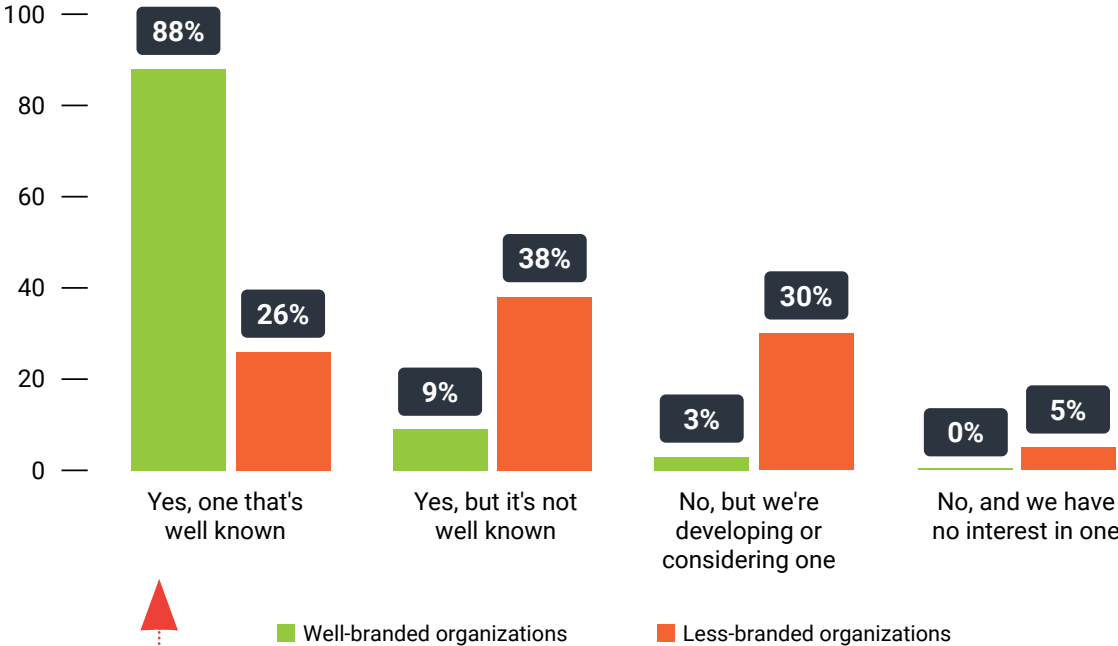
Well-branded organizations tend to have a cultivated and well-known employer brand

Editor's Note: Don't knows have been removed from this chart.

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Finding: Well-branded organizations tend to achieve better outcomes

In addition to attracting quality job applicants, well-branded organizations tend to achieve better outcomes in other areas as well. When compared with the less-branded organizations, well-branded ones are better able to attract/engage employees, amplify the overall corporate brand, reflect the organization's mission and values, and enhance the organization's reputation. It is interesting to note that brands used to attract candidates in the first place also aid in the engagement of current employees.

Survey Statement: Whether or not it has been intentionally cultivated, how would you rate your employer's brand in terms of its ability to:

Percent responding good or excellent

Category	Well-branded organizations	Less-branded organizations
Engage and retain current employees	95%	30%
Support and amplify the overall external company brand	96%	30%
Reflect the organization's values and mission	96%	35%
Enhance the organization's reputation	96%	33%

■ Well-branded organizations   ■ Less-branded organizations
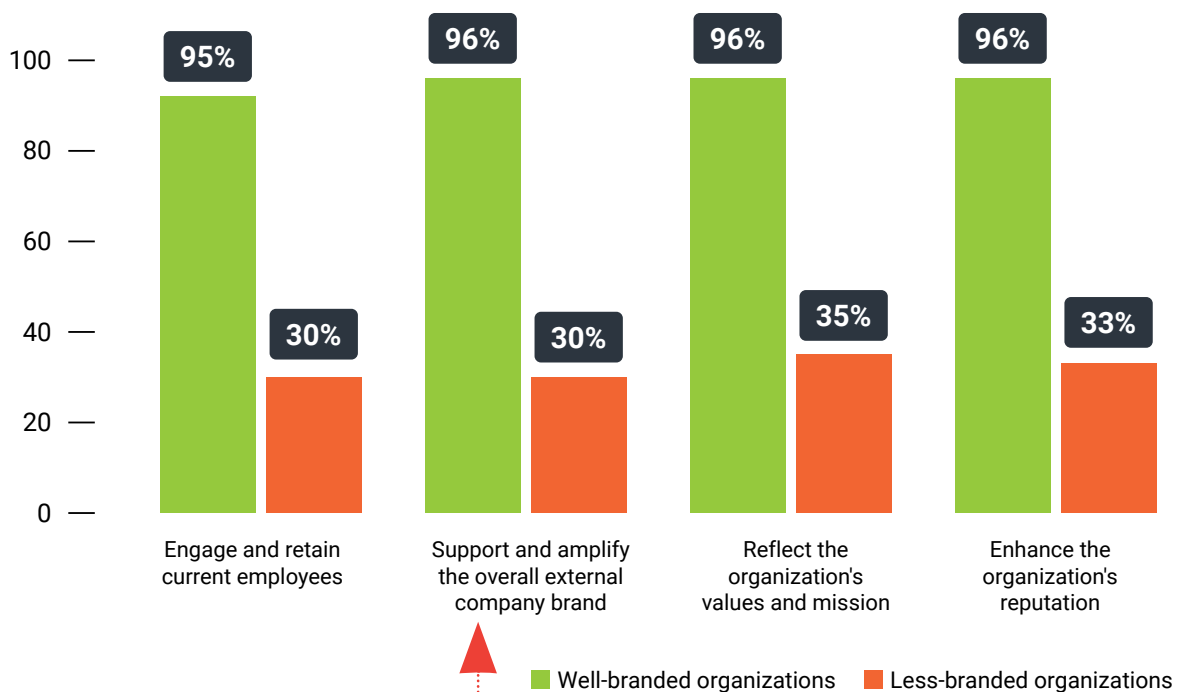
HR professionals from well-branded organizations believe their external brand is supported
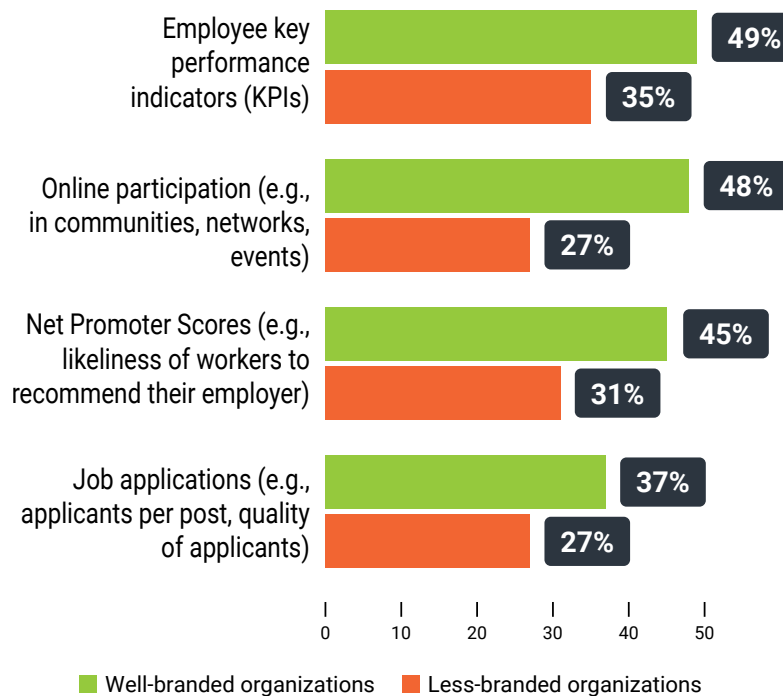
Finding: Well-branded organizations are more serious about measurement

Well-branded organizations are three times more likely to measure and evaluate the strength of their employer brand. Seventy-eight percent of them say they evaluate brand strength while only 10% of the less-branded organizations do so. Well-branded organizations are also more likely to use a wider range of metrics including key performance indicators, Net Promoter Scores and more.

Well-branded organizations are more likely to measure the employer brand through NPS scores

Survey Question: How does your organization evaluate/measure its employer brand? (select all that apply)

Metric	Well-branded	Less-branded
Employee key performance indicators (KPIs)	49%	35%
Online participation (e.g., in communities, networks, events)	48%	27%
Net Promoter Scores (e.g., likeliness of workers to recommend their employer)	45%	31%
Job applications (e.g., applicants per post, quality of applicants)	37%	27%

0   10   20   30   40   50

■ Well-branded organizations   ■ Less-branded organizations

On Recruitment Advertising

Once a compelling brand is cultivated, organizations need to leverage it to attract and hire skilled candidates. This is where recruitment advertising takes over. In this section of the report, we cover HR's view of multiple recruitment advertising elements including use of technology, metrics/analytics, sources for finding candidates, and key barriers.

The Prevalence and Quality of Recruitment Advertising

Finding: Virtually all organizations advertise job openings, but a return on that investment is not a given
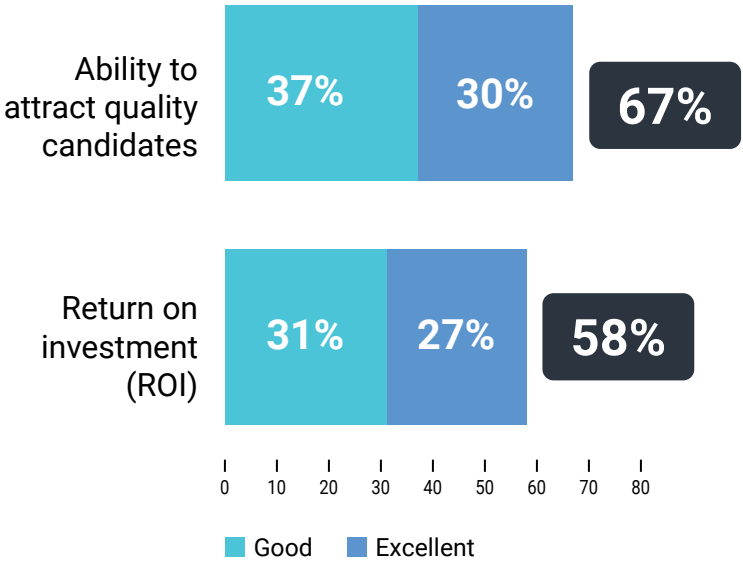
Ninety-nine percent of respondents say their organizations advertise for new job openings. About two-thirds feel they're able to attract quality job candidates via their efforts, but fewer feel as if they're doing well in terms of achieving a return on their advertising investment (ROI).

Thirty percent of respondents say their advertising does an excellent job of attracting high- quality candidates, and another 37% say it does a good job. They are less optimistic when it comes to ROI. Recruiting initiatives often require a significant investment, so a reasonable ROI should be both expected and measured. However, only 27% say their job advertising ROI is excellent, though another 31% say it is good.

Two-thirds say they are able to attract quality job candidates

Survey Question: Overall, how would you rate your employer's job advertising initiatives in terms of:

Ability to attract quality candidates
- 37%
- 30%
- **67%**

Return on investment (ROI)
- 31%
- 27%
- **58%**

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80

- Good
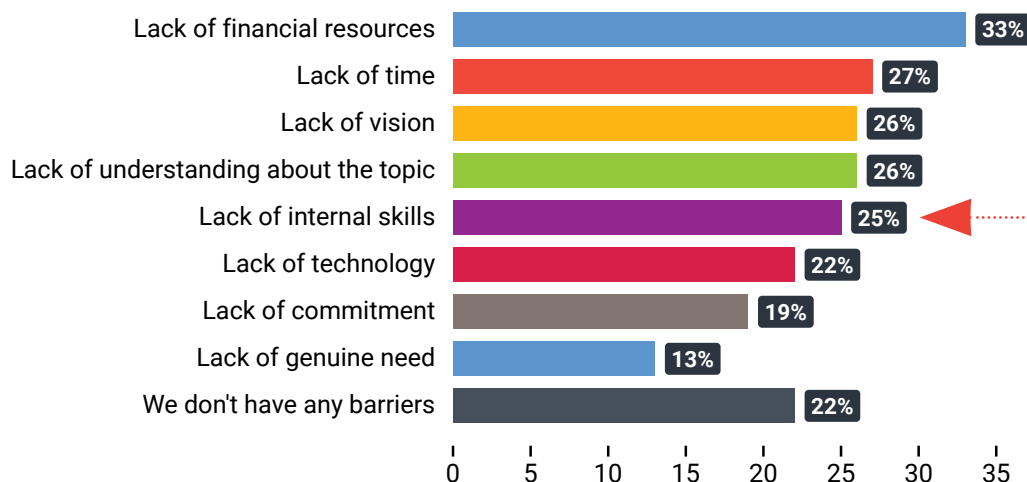- Excellent

Barriers to Recruitment Advertising

Finding: A lack of financial resources is the most common barrier to effective recruitment advertising

Only 22% of respondents say they do not experience any barriers to effective recruitment advertising. So, what impedes such advertising?

HR professionals are most likely to point to a lack of financial resources as a barrier in their organization. It is likely that some organizations advertise for job openings using inexpensive methods that, in the eyes of many participants, do not result in the best quality candidates. Perhaps this is one of the reasons respondents tend to be more skeptical about the ROI of their recruitment advertising.

But there are many other barriers as well. Approximately one in four cite insufficient time, a lack of understanding about the topic, a lack of internal skills, and a lack of vision as barriers. The lack of understanding and skills are of especially high concern. Virtually any HR department should contain at least one person who is knowledgeable and skilled in the area of recruitment advertising.

Survey Question: What are the barriers to successful job advertising in your organization? (select all that apply)

Barrier	Percentage
Lack of financial resources	33%
Lack of time	27%
Lack of vision	26%
Lack of understanding about the topic	26%
Lack of internal skills	25%
Lack of technology	22%
Lack of commitment	19%
Lack of genuine need	13%
We don't have any barriers	22%

A quarter cite a lack of internal skills as a barrier
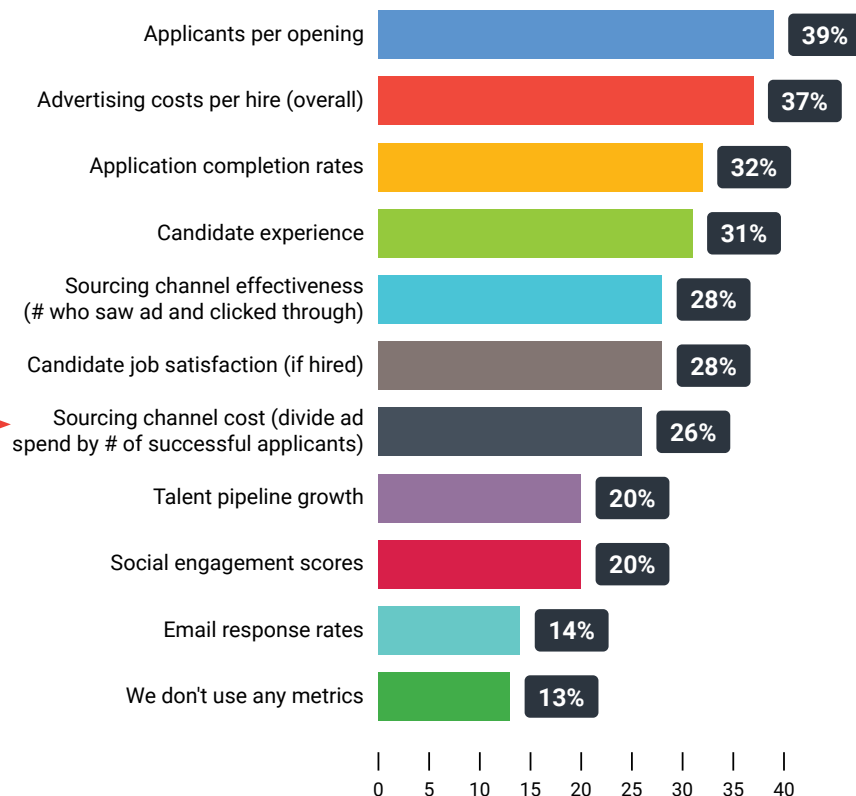
Measuring Recruitment Advertising

Finding: Applicants per opening and advertising costs per hire are the most widely used metrics for recruitment advertising impact

Most organizations use an array of metrics to gauge the impact of their recruitment advertisement initiatives. In fact, only 13% of respondents say their organization does *not* use any metrics in this area.

The most commonly used metrics are applicants per opening (39%) and advertising costs per hire (37%).

Just over a quarter source channel costs to determine the success of a job advertisement

Survey Question: What metrics does your organization use to determine the success of job advertisement and recruitment campaigns? (select all that apply)

Metric	%
Applicants per opening	39%
Advertising costs per hire (overall)	37%
Application completion rates	32%
Candidate experience	31%
Sourcing channel effectiveness (# who saw ad and clicked through)	28%
Candidate job satisfaction (if hired)	28%
Sourcing channel cost (divide ad spend by # of successful applicants)	26%
Talent pipeline growth	20%
Social engagement scores	20%
Email response rates	14%
We don't use any metrics	13%

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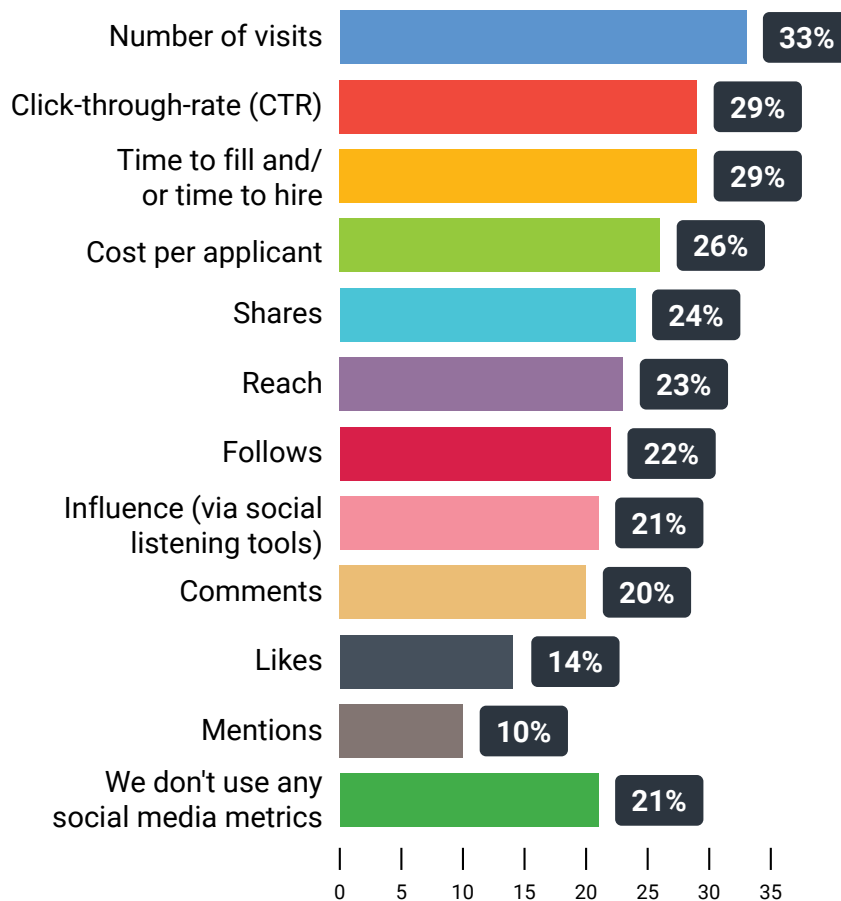www.hr.com | 877-472-6648 | copyright © HR.com 2021

Finding: The leading metric for social recruiting is number of visits

Seventy-nine percent of organizations say they use some form of metric for social recruiting, with the most widely cited ones being:

- number of visits to a site (33%)

- click through rates (29%)

- time to fill/time to hire (29%)

Survey Question: Which metrics does your organization use for social recruiting? (select all that apply)

Metric	Percentage
Number of visits	33%
Click-through-rate (CTR)	29%
Time to fill and/ or time to hire	29%
Cost per applicant	26%
Shares	24%
Reach	23%
Follows	22%
Influence (via social listening tools)	21%
Comments	20%
Likes	14%
Mentions	10%
We don't use any social media metrics	21%

The Top Sources for Advertising Job Openings

> ❝ Don't underestimate how much a candidate knows about your company before they decide to apply. Your career pages need to be more than just job postings. They need to reflect your values and culture.
>
> **- Carin Van Vuuren,**
> CMO, Greenhouse Software

Finding: Company websites represent the top channel for advertising new jobs

Seventy-eight percent of respondents post new jobs on their corporate website, making it far and away the most prevalent job-posting source. Every serious job candidate will eventually end up on your website. This is why we believe that the portion of your website devoted to "careers" should be more than just a list of open jobs. It is an opportunity to immerse candidates in your culture, to tell them about your values, and to realistically preview what jobs are like. However, your website is not likely to be the first step in a candidate search for a new job. Rather, they will probably be drawn to your website through other channels such as:

- major job boards

- job search mobile apps

- social networking sites

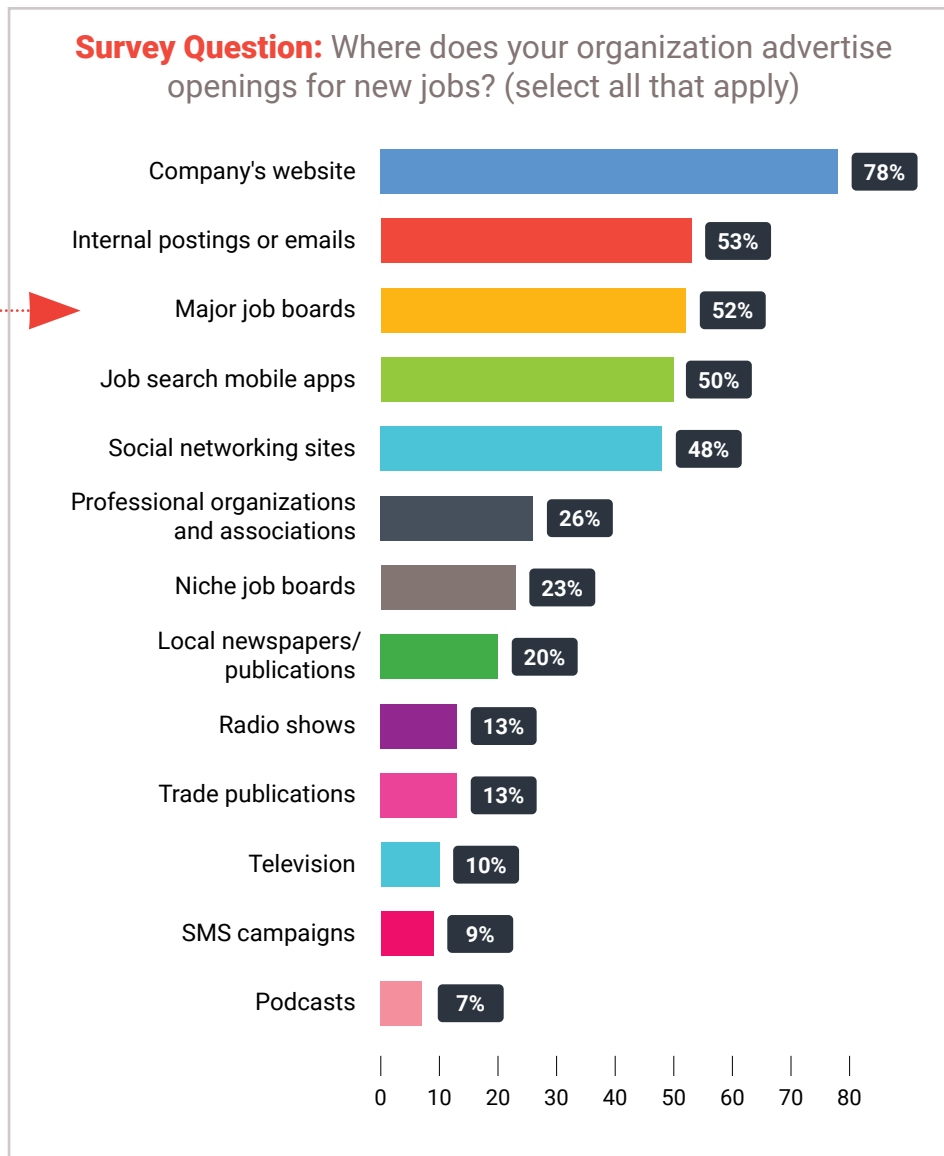Each of these channels is mentioned by around half of participants.

Other candidates will, however, come from inside the organization, which is why internal posting and email are cited by 53% of respondents. We believe internal postings are a must because filling positions with your own employees has been shown repeatedly to cost less and improve the quality of candidates. As an added benefit, it helps motivate and retain your best employees.

On Job Boards and Social Media Sites

In a set of parallel questions, we asked about the use of various job boards and social media sites, which are often the first destination for potential job candidates. On the job-board side, the most commonly used boards are Indeed (54%) and LinkedIn (48%). When it comes to the use of social media sites, LinkedIn (76%) and Facebook (73%) are most often mentioned.

Only 52% use major job boards to advertise new jobs

Survey Question: Where does your organization advertise openings for new jobs? (select all that apply)

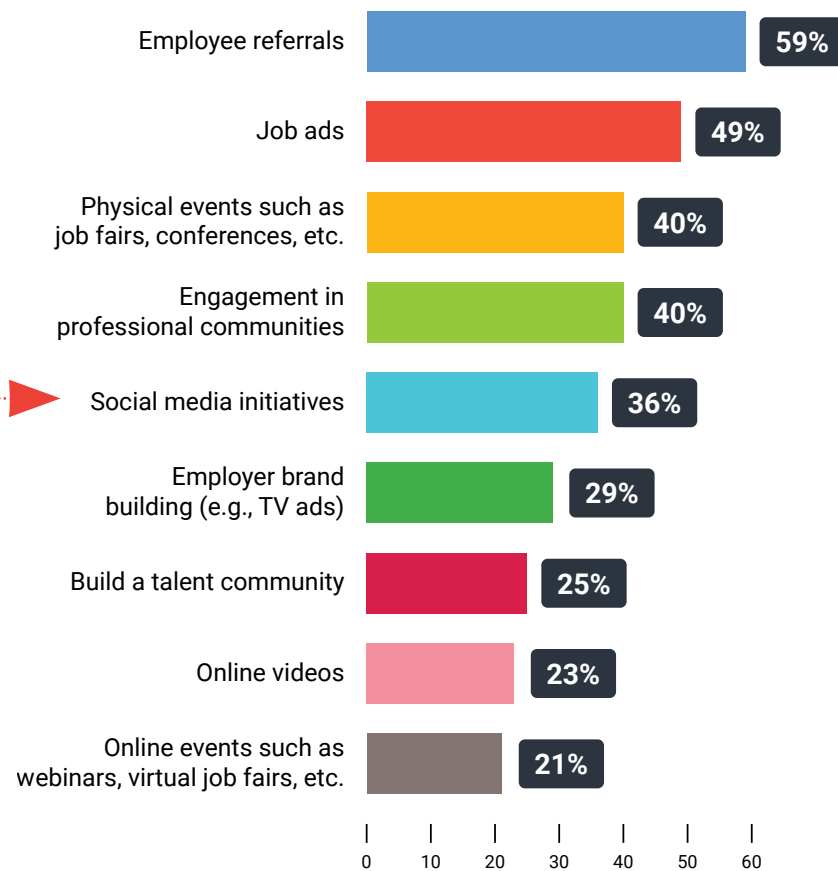| Category	%
Company's website	78%
Internal postings or emails	53%
Major job boards	52%
Job search mobile apps	50%
Social networking sites	48%
Professional organizations and associations	26%
Niche job boards	23%
Local newspapers/publications	20%
Radio shows	13%
Trade publications	13%
Television	10%
SMS campaigns	9%
Podcasts	7%

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80

Finding: Employee referrals are the most used method of attracting candidates

The finding above deals with recruiting *channels.* Ultimately, those channels are about *where* employers decide to advertise.

But we also looked at the *methods* that are used to attract employees. We found that employee referrals are the most frequently cited method, chosen by 59% of respondents. Job ads, which are used by 49% of participants, are only second on the list.

There are, however, plenty of other methods, from professional communities and physical events such as job fairs (both used by 40%) to online event such as webinars.

More than a third use social media to attract prospective employees

Survey Question: What methods does your organization use to attract prospective employees? (select all that apply)

Method	%
Employee referrals	59%
Job ads	49%
Physical events such as job fairs, conferences, etc.	40%
Engagement in professional communities	40%
Social media initiatives	36%
Employer brand building (e.g., TV ads)	29%
Build a talent community	25%
Online videos	23%
Online events such as webinars, virtual job fairs, etc.	21%

0   10   20   30   40   50   60

Finding: Pay-for-performance ads consume a considerable portion of many ad budgets today

There are generally two accepted ways to pay for advertising. In past years, most ads were paid based on display. If you choose, for example, to display an ad on a major job board, you often pay for the privilege of posting the ad.

Increasingly, however, organizations want more than the opportunity to display. They want the ads to bring them qualified applicants. Therefore, a growing portion of some budgets are being used for pay-for-performance ads.

In fact, 31% of respondents say that more than 60% of their total job advertising budget is based on pay-for-performance types of job ads. The proportion is about the same for pay-for-display ads (30%).
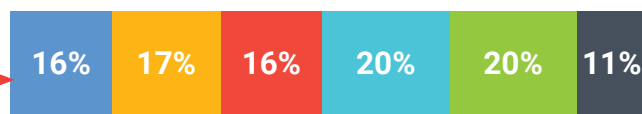
It should be noted, however, that the proportion of respondents who say their organizations do not use pay for performance at all (16%) remains larger than the proportion that do not use pay-for-display ads at all (10%).
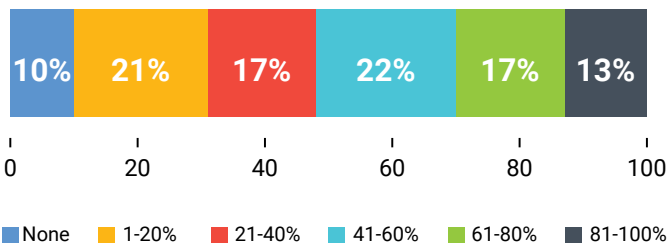
Sixteen percent do not use any pay-for-performance ads

Survey Question: What percentage of your organization's job advertising budget is used to pay for the following two types of job ads?

Pay for performance

| 16% | 17% | 16% | 20% | 20% | 11% |

Pay for display

| 10% | 21% | 17% | 22% | 17% | 13% |

0   20   40   60   80   100

■ None ■ 1-20% ■ 21-40% ■ 41-60% ■ 61-80% ■ 81-100%

Editor's Note: Graph data does not include Don't Know responses

Finding: Organizations may use external sources for a variety of reasons

Organizations can turn to a variety of external sources to improve recruitment advertising. We asked about two of those sources: employment agencies and recruitment process outsource providers, commonly known as RPOs.
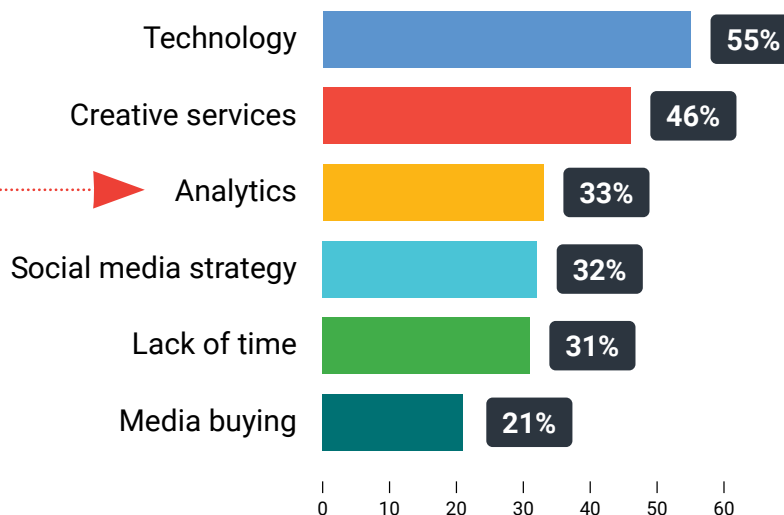
Why use such external resources? There are two top reasons. First, those external sources often leverage technologies that many organizations do not have access to. Indeed, among organizations that use external resources, more than half (55%) cite technology as a reason. When used well, such technologies can have a positive impact on both recruiting costs and quality of hires. These technologies can also provide useful metrics and analytics, which are cited by 33% of respondents.

The second most widely cited reason is creative services (46%). Outside agencies can be useful in developing ads, buying media, developing job websites and more. In short, external resources often have both the tools and the expertise that can help employers get better at recruitment advertising.

One-third state that analytics are a reason they use external sources for recruitment advertising

Survey Question: Why do you use an external source for recruitment advertising? (select all that apply)

Reason	Percentage
Technology	55%
Creative services	46%
Analytics	33%
Social media strategy	32%
Lack of time	31%
Media buying	21%

0 10 20 30 40 50 60

Finding: About a quarter of responding organizations use text messaging to a high degree for the purpose of recruitment

Only about a quarter of respondents (26%) are using texting to a high or very high degree for the purpose of recruitment. In contrast, about one in three say their organizations use it to a low degree or not at all.

Using texting has many potential advantages. It can be quicker and more personalized than other media. It can allow for easier on-going communication with prospective candidates, thereby increasing the overall candidate experience. And, it can be better at grabbing the attention of prospects, especially when it comes to younger generations.

The danger, of course, is it can be overused or misused. It is advisable to get a prospective candidate's permission to continue texting them, and opting out should be made easy. Keep an eye on the number of text messages sent to a prospective candidate. You don't want to turn a good experience into an annoyance!

Survey Question: To what degree does your organization use texting for recruitment advertising?

High degree   Very high degree

| 18% | 8% | **26%** |

0   5   10   15   20   25

Determining the Responsibility for Recruitment Advertising

Finding: HR typically has the greatest responsibility for recruitment advertising

Recruitment Advertising Design and Strategy

HR is the department most likely to play a primary role in recruitment advertising design and strategy, selected by 44% of respondents. Fewer (17%) say a joint team made up of members of two or more departments is responsible for the design and strategy.
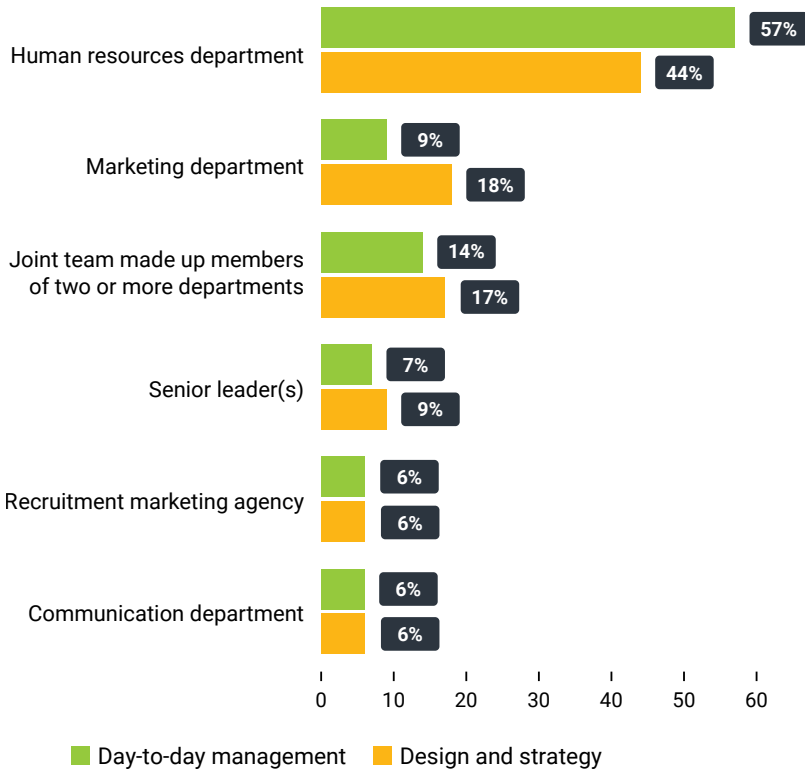
Among those organizations that use joint teams, personnel from the HR department are a member in 70% of cases, followed by personnel from marketing (61%) and communications (52%) departments.

Day-to-day Management of Recruitment Advertising

HR is most likely to have the primary responsibility for the day-to-day management of recruitment advertising, cited in 57% of cases. The other two most widely cited responsible parties are the marketing department (9%) and a joint team made up of members of two or more departments (14%). In 81% of joint teams, HR professionals are members, followed by personnel from marketing (55%) and communications (30%) departments.

Survey Question: Who is most responsible for the following aspects of your organization's recruitment advertising? (select one that best applies)

Category	Day-to-day management	Design and strategy
Human resources department	57%	44%
Marketing department	9%	18%
Joint team made up members of two or more departments	14%	17%
Senior leader(s)	7%	9%
Recruitment marketing agency	6%	6%
Communication department	6%	6%

■ Day-to-day management ■ Design and strategy

Using Recruitment Technologies

Finding: Most organizations use some form of recruitment technology, with applicant tracking systems being the most prevalent

Fully 82% of respondents say their firms use some form of recruitment technology. Applicant tracking systems (ATS) continue to be the most widely used recruitment technology, with 61% of responding organizations using one. They are especially likely to be used among larger organizations, with 82% of companies with 1,000 or more employees using one.[1]

ATS are a staple of most recruiting technology systems, and their origins can be traced back to at least a quarter of a decade. Their functionality has evolved over time from simply keeping track of resumes to matching applicant profiles with those required for a given position or role.

Other prevalent technologies are shown in the figure below. Thirty-eight percent use a platform to encourage and track referrals from current employees, and 22% use a recruitment marketing platform. The latter is an integrated solution that allows organizations to promote their brand, reach out to prospective candidates, leverage social media platforms, and track recruiting effectiveness.
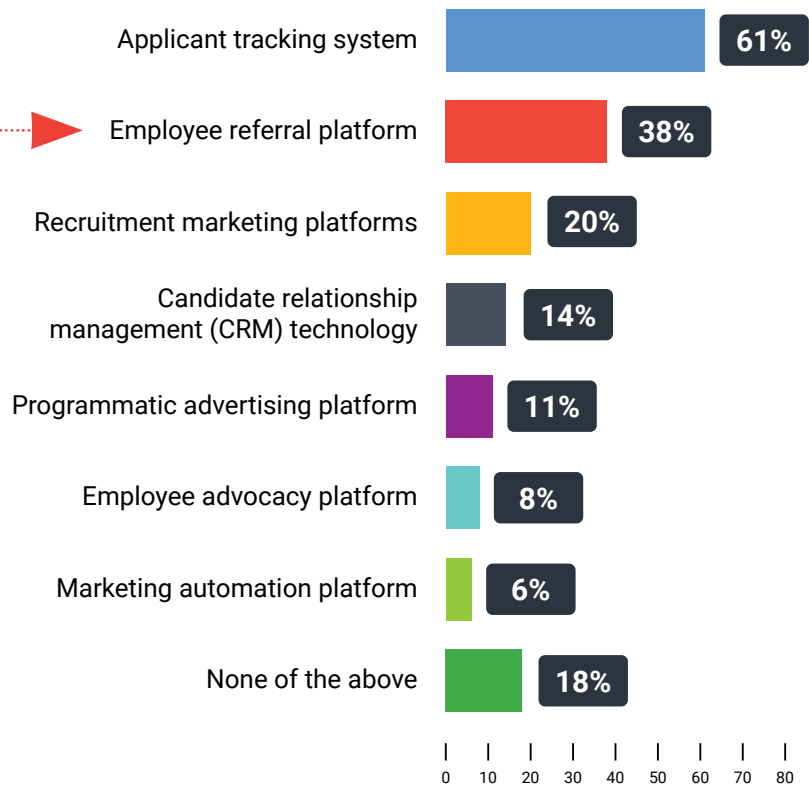

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[1]   Data is from HR.com's internal survey panel rather than combined internal/external panels.

More than a third say their organizations use employee referral platforms

Survey Question: Which of the following technologies does your organization currently use for recruitment?
(select all that apply)

Technology	Percentage
Applicant tracking system	61%
Employee referral platform	38%
Recruitment marketing platforms	20%
Candidate relationship management (CRM) technology	14%
Programmatic advertising platform	11%
Employee advocacy platform	8%
Marketing automation platform	6%
None of the above	18%

0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80

Editor's Note: Data is from HR.com's internal survey panel rather than combined internal/external panels.
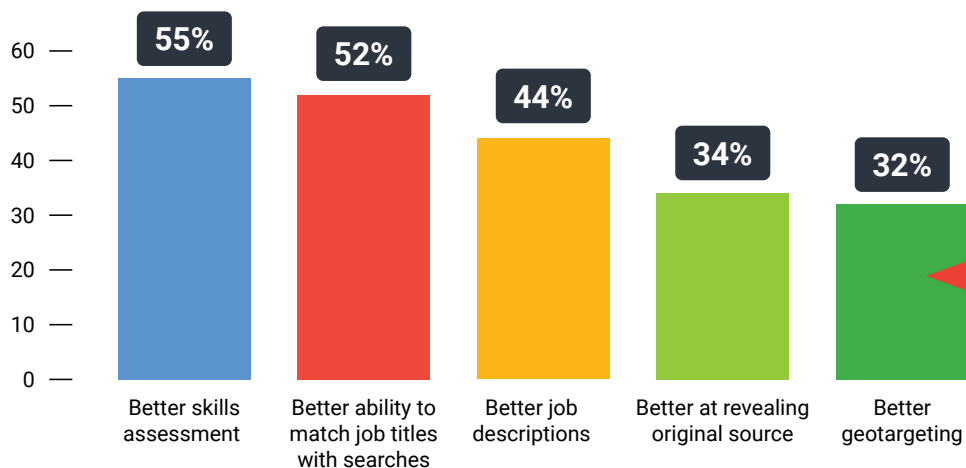
Finding: Organizations want better skills assessments and an improved ability to match job titles with searches

We asked respondents what they would like to see from job advertising technologies in the future. More than half want better skills assessments (55%) and an improved ability to match job titles with searches (52%).

Assessments have become more important in recent years as organization strive to gain a better understanding of skill sets among their workforces. Some assessments focus on hard/technical skills (e.g., finance, IT, project management) while others focus on soft skills (e.g., people-relation skills, collaboration, emotional intelligence). Some assessments try to gauge cognitive ability whereas others focus more on attitudes and behaviors.

There are also various technologies to help better match job titles to job openings. However, such matching can be difficult. Job titles are not always consistent from organization to organization, with companies calling similar job functions different things. Organizations are seeking technologies that can help them address this problem.

Survey Question: What would you most like to see from job advertising technologies and services in the future? (select all that apply)

	55%	52%	44%	34%	32%
	Better skills assessment	Better ability to match job titles with searches	Better job descriptions	Better at revealing original source	Better geotargeting

About a third want better geotargeting from their recruitment technologies

Characteristics of Recruitment-advertising Leaders

For this part of the report, we conducted various analyses to gain insights into which practices are most widely used by organizations with higher levels of success. Specifically, we analyzed responses and segmented the data into two groups:

- **Recruitment-advertising leaders:** those who report that their organization's recruitment-advertising efforts do an excellent job at attracting high-quality candidates.

- **Recruitment-advertising laggards:** those who report their organization's recruitment-advertising efforts do a moderate or poor job at attracting high-quality candidates.

Of course, correlation is not the same as causation. While we cannot state that any particular practice will definitely lead to recruitment-advertising success, we do see intriguing relationships that might result in greater success.
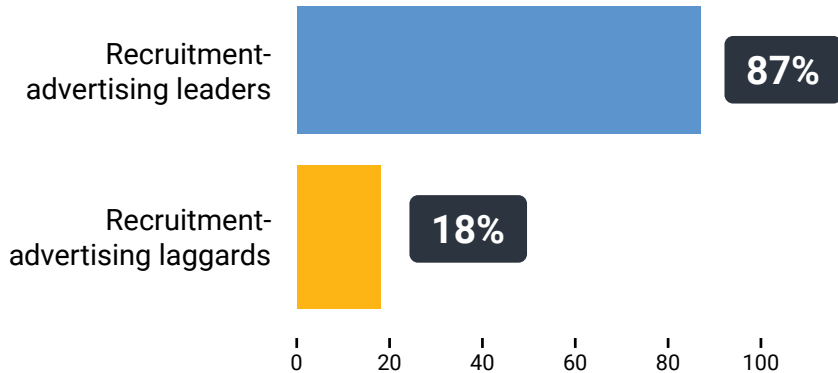
Finding: Recruitment-advertising leaders are more likely to report that their job advertising initiatives result in a good or excellent return on investment

Eighty-seven percent of the recruitment-advertising leaders rate their ROI as good or excellent. This compares to only 18% for recruitment-advertising laggards.

Survey Question: Overall, how would you rate your employer's job advertising initiatives in terms of return on investment (ROI):

Percent responding good or excellent

Recruitment-advertising leaders **87%**

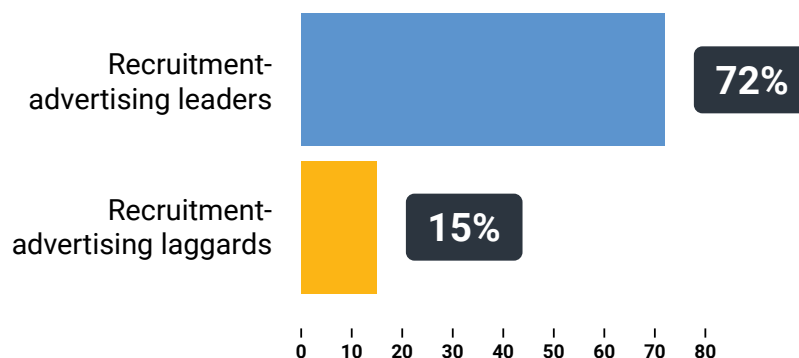Recruitment-advertising laggards **18%**

0   20   40   60   80   100

Finding: Recruitment-advertising leaders are more likely to use programmatic advertising

Programmatic advertising typically involves an automated way of displaying ads to specific types of people to whom you wish to show your advertising. Programmatic ads are placed using artificial intelligence and, sometimes, real-time bidding for online display, social media advertising, and other types of ad campaigns. The underlying idea is to pay for the performance of ads rather than to pay for the display of ads.

We asked responding HR professionals about whether they use programmatic advertising, and we found that 72% of recruitment-advertising leaders use programmatic advertising to a high or very high degree. By comparison, only 15% of recruitment-advertising laggards do.

Survey Question: To what degree does your organization use programmatic advertising for the purpose of recruitment?

Percent responding high or very high degree

Recruitment-advertising leaders	**72%**
Recruitment-advertising laggards	**15%**

0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80

Finding: Recruitment-advertising leaders make far greater use of texting to attract candidates

Fifty-seven percent of recruitment-advertising leaders use texting for recruitment advertising to a high or very high degree. To compare, only 6% of recruitment-advertising laggards say the same. In fact the majority of laggards (58%) report using no texting at all.
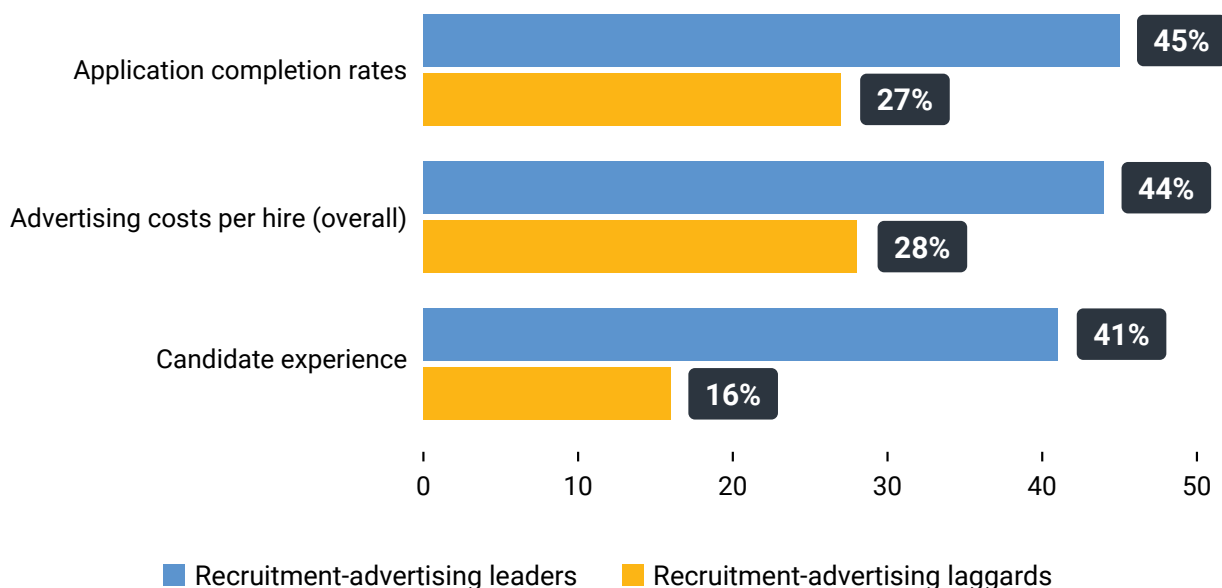
Finding: Recruitment-advertising leaders are more likely to embrace certain metrics to gauge the impact of their recruitment advertising efforts

Recruitment-advertising leaders are far more likely to use certain metrics compared with recruitment-advertising laggards. Although recruitment-advertising leaders are more likely than laggards to use most of the metrics cited in the study, the gaps are especially large in three areas:

- application completion rates
- advertising cost per hire
- candidate experience

Survey Question: What metrics does your organization use to determine the success of job advertisement and recruitment campaigns?

Metric	Recruitment-advertising leaders	Recruitment-advertising laggards
Application completion rates	45%	27%
Advertising costs per hire (overall)	44%	28%
Candidate experience	41%	16%

■ Recruitment-advertising leaders   ■ Recruitment-advertising laggards

Recruitment-advertising leaders are also considerably more likely to use social recruiting metrics, from basic click-through-rates to measures of social influence.

Survey Question: Which metrics does your organization use for social recruiting?
(select all that apply)

Click-through-rate (CTR): Recruitment-advertising leaders 41%, Recruitment-advertising laggards 22%

Number of visits: Recruitment-advertising leaders 41%, Recruitment-advertising laggards 22%

Shares: Recruitment-advertising leaders 35%, Recruitment-advertising laggards 11%

Influence (via social listening tools): Recruitment-advertising leaders 32%, Recruitment-advertising laggards 6%

- Recruitment-advertising leaders
- Recruitment-advertising laggards

Finding: Recruitment-advertising leaders are less likely to say their organizations experience barriers to successful recruitment advertising

Whereas only 6% of recruitment-advertising laggards say they do *not* experience barriers to successful recruitment advertising, the same is true for 33% of leaders. Laggards are much more likely to say that one of the barriers they experience is a lack of financial resources (43%) compared to just 20% of recruitment-advertising leaders.

Key Takeaways

Key Takeaway **1**

Define the elements of your employer brand. Be sure you have a solid understanding of what will attract a prospective employee to your organization in the first place. Be able to say why they will choose to come to work for your organization rather than one of your competitors. Of course, compensation and benefits will still be critical. But so will factors such as work-life balance, your company's reputation, workplace culture, quality of leadership and more. For example, corporate social responsibility and diversity/inclusion are also becoming increasingly important components of a strong employer brand.

Key Takeaway **2**

Target your employer brand internally as well as externally. A strong employer brand is as critical to engaging and retaining current employees as it is to attracting new ones. Factors such as opportunity for advancement and access to learning and development often play a key role in creating positive employee experiences. In many ways, the pandemic served as a test of employers' commitments to their workforces. How your organization handled layoffs, workplace safety and virtual work during the crisis all had an impact on the employer brand. Engaged employees are more productive and more likely to stay. They are the ambassadors of your employer brand. With the growth of social media, the reputation of any company's culture is more easily tarnished.

Key Takeaway 3

Measure the things that matter. When it comes to employer brand and recruitment advertising, there are numerous measurement tools available. One measurement tactic that we think may still be underutilized is the use of Net Promoter Scores. Multiple organizations use this methodology to assess customer experiences. Using it for recruitment and branding involves asking job candidates and employees how likely they are to recommend your organization as a good place to work (or to seek work). If scores are lower than you would like, look for various ways to improve the employment and candidate experience. Among other possible metrics are time to hire, overall cost per hire, percent of qualified candidates who accept job offers, quality of hire, and volume/cost efficiency of recruiting channels. Once hired, other possible measures include time to full productivity, engagement and attrition.

Key Takeaway 4

Form a strong marketing partnership. Many aspects of attracting and hiring new employees directly parallels finding and attracting new customers. It is likely your organization's marketing team can bring a wealth of knowledge and experience applicable to your recruiting and branding process. After all, marketing professionals are focused on experience creation, external branding, social media, building web traffic, and analytics—all practices that can correspond to employer branding and recruitment marketing. And, they often leverage many of the channels that HR uses for recruiting (e.g., company website, Facebook pages, LinkedIn, etc.) A strong HR/Marketing partnership can increase the effectiveness of your hiring process.

Key Takeaway 5

Ensure positive candidate experiences through the entire application and recruitment process. A prospective employee's first impression of your company will be formed by their experience with your recruiting process. Make sure every step of the process is engineered to be a positive one, from when jobseekers first become aware of a possible opportunity to when they go through the onboarding process. Cumbersome applications, lack of communication, poor treatment during interviews and more may lead a candidate to abandon their interest in working for your company or fail to accept your offer. In some cases, your candidates may be your current or future customers. Treating them poorly may not only lead to a loss of good candidates but also to a loss of business!

Key Takeaway 6

Turn your corporate website into a candidate magnet. Before they even apply for an open position in your organization, job seekers often do "homework" on their own. They can, for example, learn about your culture by going to Glassdoor. A quick search will bring up a wealth of information including financial performance, bios of the executive team and how customers are treated. Eventually, however, they will end up exploring your corporate website, especially your career landing pages. Be sure your corporate website is optimized for mobile users. We recommend going beyond just posting jobs. This is an opportunity for a candidate to learn about your culture, your mission and purpose. Preferably, they should hear these messages from employees themselves. Make much of the information visual and interactive. Many candidates will be more engaged when they are watching rather than reading. Some companies have gone as far as offering "day-in-the-life" previews for different jobs.

Key Takeaway 7

Encourage employee referrals. One of the most effective recruitment marketing strategies is to turn your workforce into both brand ambassadors and "headhunters." Internal candidate referrals tend to do better than many other recruitment strategies on a number of key metrics: time to hire, cost per hire, and candidate quality. Highly engaged employees are much like highly satisfied customers. They talk to others about how their company is a great place to work and how satisfied they are with their jobs. Many organizations have formal referral programs with built in employee incentives. Offer employees tools and information about your brand. This may include information about open positions and messaging that they could use or modify for their own social media channels.

Key Takeaway 8

Develop a profile of your ideal job candidate for every position. Finding and hiring the best candidates starts with painting a clear picture of what you are looking for. This is done by evaluating the characteristics, skills, and motivations of your current top performers already in identical or similar roles. The output of this analysis often finds its way into job descriptions and forms the basis of job sites that promise to match candidates with your job profiles. And, once you have these requirements clearly defined, be sure they serve as the foundation of your hiring processes such as screening, interviewing, reference checking, and if applicable, tests and simulations. Be careful, however, not to allow this process to lead to "group think" and a lack of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Key Takeaway 9

Build a robust recruiting tech stack. Especially for mid-size to large organizations, recruitment often benefits from the use of strong recruitment technologies. The totality of these technologies is sometimes referred to as the "recruitment tech stack." The stack that your organization builds will depend on your recruitment strategies. For example, a stack for high-volume hiring across a range of roles may look different than a stack for hiring a low volume of new sales associates. Regardless of needs, thinking through a stack's components and architecture enables you to consider and integrate solutions across every aspect of your hiring process, including applicant tracking, sourcing, recruitment advertising and marketing, making personalized career sites, candidate screening and onboarding. The good news is that there is an array of innovative applications to choose from for every step of your recruitment process. The challenge will be choosing the ones that best meet your needs and budget as well as those that ensure, where needed, interoperability among your chosen applications.

Key Takeaway 10

Explore artificial intelligence applications. Recruiting was one of the first HR applications to leverage AI, and its use continues to evolve at a rapid pace. It can assist with, and even replace, components of your hiring process while increasing both efficiency and accuracy. Programmatic job advertising, for example, tends to have AI components. But there are many other recruitment-related, AI-powered applications as well. The potential benefits of AI may include more accurate matching of candidates against job qualifications, chatbots that automatically answer basic candidate questions, improved job ads, and establishing relationships with passive job candidates. Organizations should make sure, however, that AI-base applications do not discriminate against candidates based on characteristics such as gender and ethnicity. If you are not using some of the applications currently, it may be worthwhile to explore how they can help you with your recruitment strategy.

About PandoLogic

PandoLogic is the leading programmatic job advertising and vendor management platform in North America. Referred to as the "best-kept secret in HR," its programmatic job advertising platform, pandoIQ, automates and optimizes job ad placements to help companies meet hiring needs while maximizing recruitment ad spend. Evaluating 100T job data points and making 7,000 micro-decisions per minute, pandoIQ eliminates inefficiencies and waste by reaching the right candidates on the right sites at the right time for the right price via a single performance-based platform. One vendor, one source of truth, better results. Learn more at **www.pandologic.com.**

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