

2025

# Talent Acquisition Outlook Report

Annual Survey of Industry Trends and Priorities

# Is your TA strategy ready for 2025?

In a work world where talent is everything, the rules of the game have changed. As we look to 2025, talent acquisition leaders face a landscape transformed by technology, shifting workforce dynamics, and evolving candidate expectations. The question isn't simply if you're keeping up — it's whether you're ready and equipped to take the lead.

Since 2017, Symphony Talent has conducted an annual Talent Acquisition (TA) survey, providing valuable insights into the evolving recruitment landscape. The *2025 Talent Acquisition Outlook Report* is based on comprehensive survey data from nearly 400 TA leaders, decision-makers, influencers, and practitioners, offering a clear roadmap for future success.

Think about your current talent acquisition strategy. Is it still rooted in pre-pandemic paradigms, or has it evolved to meet the demands of this new era? Are you leveraging the full power of AI and data analytics, or are you leaving critical insights on the table? How are you addressing the growing skills gap in your industry?

This *2025 Talent Acquisition Outlook Report* isn't just a collection of statistics — it's your roadmap to the future of talent acquisition. Based on comprehensive survey data and insights from talent acquisition leaders, we've identified the key trends and challenges that will shape recruitment in the coming year.

From the rise of AI in recruitment to the growing importance of skills-based hiring, from the renewed focus on early career talent to the critical need for data visibility across the entire recruitment funnel — this report covers it all. We'll explore how leading organizations are adapting their strategies and provide actionable insights to help you stay ahead of the curve.

As you read through this report, challenge yourself to think differently. How can you apply these insights to your own organization? What changes do you need to make to your talent acquisition strategy to not just survive, but thrive in 2025 and beyond?

As we delve into the intricacies of the evolving TA landscape, we'll explore five key areas that will shape the future of talent acquisition:

- 1 The paradox of increasing hiring volumes and stagnant budgets
- 2 The widening gap in talent acquisition maturity across organizations
- 3 The shift towards data-driven precision in recruitment strategies
- 4 The transformative potential of AI and other emerging technologies
- 5 The critical imperatives for talent acquisition leaders in 2025 and beyond

The leaders who embrace change, drive innovation, and prioritize data will emerge not just as survivors, but as trailblazers in this new era of recruitment.

## Are you ready to help lead the way?

“

Talent acquisition is evolving faster than ever. We know that staying flexible and innovative is the only way to adapt in a landscape that's constantly shifting.

CHIEF HR/PEOPLE OFFICER, STAFFING & RECRUITING

# Executive Summary



As we move into 2025, talent acquisition is at another pivotal moment. One-third of TA leaders are dissatisfied with their efforts, up from 25% last year. The reasons are clear: competition for top talent is fiercer, budgets are shrinking, and an influx of unqualified candidates is creating challenges. Yet, within these challenges lies opportunity for those ready to adapt.

One glaring gap remains: data visibility. A striking 85% of TA professionals report subpar access to data across the recruitment funnel. Without insights from attraction to hire, decision-making is hindered — a risk that’s too costly in today’s environment.

AI and data-driven insights are set to reshape the future. TA influencers — sourcers, recruiters, brand marketing strategists, and HR generalists — already see AI’s potential in automating tasks and improving candidate matching. TA leaders are catching up, recognizing that AI will streamline processes, elevate candidate quality, and allow teams to focus on what truly matters.

Top priorities for 2025 include improving outreach to top talent, upskilling employees, and managing increased hiring demands. This goes beyond just filling roles — it’s about building a resilient, future-ready workforce.

Vendor partnerships also matter more than ever. TA leaders need partners who offer strategic insights and help them optimize every stage of a full-funnel recruitment process to make their day-to-day easier. It’s not just about the tools but about guidance that drives impact.

“

The competition for top talent is fierce, and expectations on us as TA leaders are at an all-time high. It’s clear that adaptability and strategic foresight aren’t just nice-to-haves — they’re essential skills for success.

**TA DIRECTOR, IT SERVICES/SOFTWARE**

Looking ahead, the key imperatives for 2025 are clear: boost data visibility, engage top candidates with precision targeting, upskill internally, partner wisely, and implement scalable solutions. Leaders who embrace these shifts will thrive; those who don’t risk falling behind.

The future of talent acquisition isn’t for the faint of heart. It requires courage, innovation, and a bold approach to challenge the status quo. For those ready to embrace it, the rewards will be transformative for their organizations — and for the future of work itself.

- **Kermit Randa, CEO, Symphony Talent**

# Forecast, budget, and investment

As we look ahead to 2025, the talent acquisition landscape is poised for significant change. But what does this mean for hiring volumes and recruitment budgets? Our survey reveals some surprising trends that every TA leader needs to be aware of.

Imagine this: your CEO has just announced ambitious growth plans for the coming year. They're counting on you fill the roles that will achieve these plans. But here's the catch — while hiring demands are on the rise, budgets aren't necessarily following suit. Does this scenario sound familiar?

You're not alone. Our data shows a fascinating dichotomy emerging in the talent market. On one hand, a majority of organizations anticipate an increase in hiring volumes, signaling a collective belief in future growth and expansion. On the other hand, this optimism isn't universally reflected in budget allocations.



“

With the ongoing economic uncertainty, we've had to tighten our recruitment budgets while still trying to meet increasing hiring demands.

TA MANAGER, HEALTHCARE

From leveraging data- and AI-driven recruitment tools to reimagining employer branding strategies, forward-thinking TA leaders are finding ways to stretch their budgets without compromising on talent quality.

But it's not just about technology. We're seeing a shift in how organizations approach talent acquisition strategically. Some are doubling down on internal mobility and upskilling programs. Others are exploring new talent pools, from early career hires to skilled workers without traditional degrees.

Industries such as healthcare and IT are leading in budget increases and adoption of AI-driven recruitment technologies, while sectors such as manufacturing face more conservative outlooks, focusing on optimizing resources for more targeted hires.

Consider your own organization's hiring forecast and budget allocation for 2025. How can you optimize your resources to meet increasing demands while staying within budget?

In the world of talent acquisition, creativity, data, and strategic thinking are your greatest assets.

**Will you be among the most successful TA leaders in 2025, those who can see beyond the numbers and identify innovative solutions to age-old challenges?**

# Hiring volumes and recruitment budgets

Most organizations expect to hire more in 2025, but this optimism doesn't always translate to bigger budgets.

Here's what we found:

**53%** of organizations predict they'll increase hiring in 2025

**41%** plan to increase their TA budget

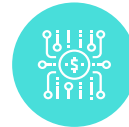
**30%** expect to maintain flat TA budgets despite higher hiring volumes

This gap between hiring needs and budget allocation creates a challenge. TA teams will need to find smart, cost-effective ways to meet increased demands.

Industry-specific trends offer further insights:



**Healthcare**, constantly facing talent shortages, leads the pack in both anticipated hiring growth and budget increases. The sector's unique challenges — an aging workforce, burnout-induced turnover, and ever-evolving skill requirements — demand an assertive approach to talent acquisition and retention.



**IT services and finance**, often leading the race for top talent, are not far behind. These knowledge-intensive industries recognize that their competitive edge lies in human capital, and they're willing to invest accordingly.



**Manufacturing**, while more conservative in its outlook, shows a clear trend toward modernization. The sector's focus on automation and advanced manufacturing techniques is reshaping its talent needs, driving a more targeted approach to hiring and development.

# Tech and media investments: Prioritizing recruitment technology

We're seeing a significant shift toward tech investment in talent acquisition. Here are the key findings.

**Percentage of respondents** who plan to spend over \$1 million on recruitment technology, reflecting the growing importance of advanced tools in enhancing recruitment processes:

**16%** of IT/Software organizations

**13%** of Healthcare

**9%** of Education

Media spending is also evolving.

**49%**

of organizations reporting annual recruitment media budgets over \$100,000. Many are targeting high-impact channels and brand visibility efforts to stand out in a crowded job market.

## The takeaway?

Smart spending is key. Organizations are becoming more selective about where they allocate their recruitment dollars, prioritizing solutions that offer clear returns on investment. They're focusing on technology and services that automate tasks, improve the candidate experience, and provide deeper recruitment insights.



## Challenges in maturity, efficiency and effectiveness

In the ever-evolving landscape of talent acquisition, one thing remains constant: change. In 2025, TA leaders face a critical juncture. The question isn't just about finding talent — it's about how mature, efficient, and effective your TA function can be while working to attract qualified candidates and move them through the recruitment funnel.

Think about your current TA processes. Are they proactive or merely reactive? Do you have full visibility into your recruitment funnel, or are you navigating in the dark? These aren't just rhetorical questions — they're the key to understanding where you stand in the TA maturity curve.

Our survey reveals a stark reality: there's a widening gap in talent acquisition maturity across organizations. While some have embraced proactive and predictive strategies, a surprising 37% of organizations are still operating at an “agile” stage, barely scratching the surface of more advanced, data-driven tactics.

But what does this mean for you? Simply put, if your talent acquisition strategy is still stuck in reactive mode — filling positions as they open rather than anticipating future needs — you're playing catch-up. The organizations pulling ahead aren't just responding to hiring demands; they're shaping them.

“

Achieving greater talent acquisition maturity requires significant investment in both technology and strategy, which is a challenge in the current economic climate.

**DIRECTOR OF TALENT ACQUISITION, MANUFACTURING**



In this section, we'll explore the challenges that TA leaders face in achieving true maturity. From data visibility issues to rising dissatisfaction among TA professionals, we'll uncover the hurdles that are holding organizations back. But more importantly, we'll show you how leading organizations are overcoming these obstacles.

You'll discover why full-funnel data visibility is no longer optional, but the foundation for making strategic, proactive decisions. We'll delve into why a third of participants are dissatisfied with their current TA efforts, and what this means for the future of recruitment.

As you read through this section, challenge yourself to honestly assess your own TA function. Where do you fall on the maturity curve? What steps can you take to move from reactive to predictive?

In the race for top talent, standing still is moving backward. The insights in this section will help you identify your challenges and chart a course towards greater maturity, efficiency, and effectiveness in your TA function.

**Are you ready to take your TA strategy to the next level?**

# Self-identified maturity: The state of TA evolution

Our survey reveals a significant divide in how advanced different organizations' TA practices are. Here's what we found:

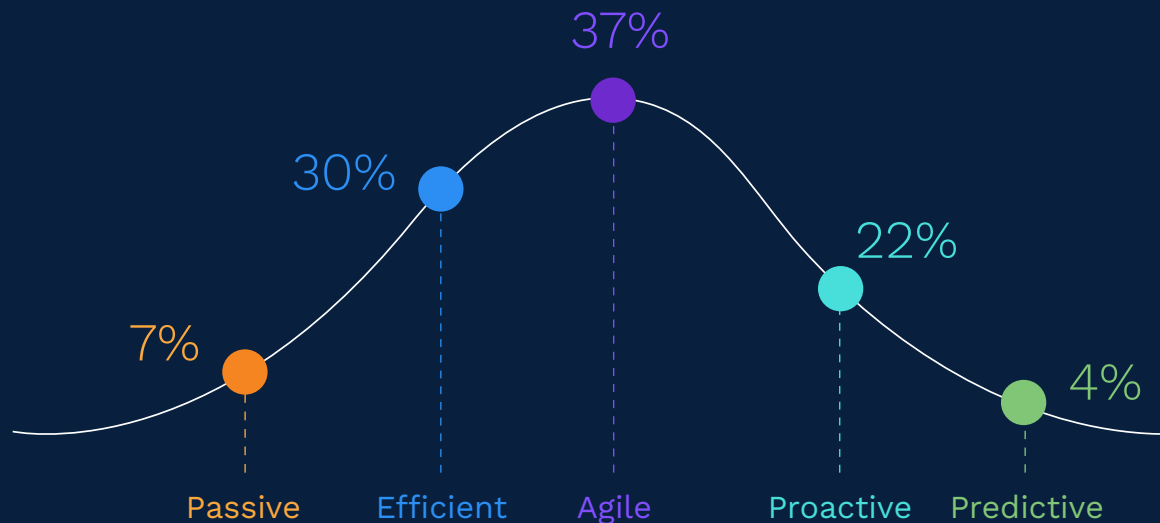
**22%** of organizations are at the "proactive" stage of TA maturity, meaning they're actively anticipating future needs

**74%** of TA teams are still in a reactive stage (passive, efficient, or agile)

To understand this better, let's break down the five levels of TA maturity:

- 1 Passive:** Organizations scramble to fill roles as they open, with little long-term planning.
- 2 Efficient:** Organizations use standard processes to improve experiences for hiring managers, recruiters, and candidates.
- 3 Agile:** Organizations can quickly respond to critical hiring needs but may lack long-term predictive capabilities.
- 4 Proactive:** Organizations actively build talent pools for future needs, staying ahead in talent sourcing.
- 5 Predictive:** The highest level, where organizations use data and automation to optimize all aspects of recruitment.

## Talent acquisition maturity rankings





# Current TA efforts: Rising dissatisfaction

Our data show growing discontent among TA professionals:

- There's been an 8% year-over-year increase in dissatisfaction with current TA efforts. The dissatisfaction is rooted in several systemic issues: process inefficiencies, a high influx of unqualified candidates, and limited technology usage to enhance recruitment quality.
- This sense of frustration reflects the increasing complexity and pressure within talent acquisition and underscores the need for data-driven solutions and process automation.



There's a sense of frustration across our team — we know what we need, but we're not fully satisfied with the results.

**TALENT ACQUISITION MANAGER, FINANCIAL SERVICES**

Interestingly, even industries known for robust TA practices, such as healthcare and IT services, report some of the highest satisfaction ratings while also facing unique challenges:

- Healthcare struggles with chronic skill shortages, high burnout rates, and rapid technological changes.
- IT companies, while leading in TA tech adoption, face high candidate expectations, pushing for constant innovation in recruitment.

The main drivers of dissatisfaction seem to be:

- Inability to meet hiring goals quickly and efficiently
- Slow processes
- Lack of qualified candidates
- Inadequate use of technology

## Satisfaction with current TA efforts



# Improvement opportunities: Key growth areas

Across industries, organizations identify several key areas for improvement. These aren't isolated initiatives. They're interconnected strategies that require honest assessment of current capabilities, alignment with business goals, investment in data-driven technologies, and a culture of continuous learning within TA teams.

30%

**More proactive planning:** Building and maintaining healthy talent pools for key roles.

26%

**Better use of technology/Automation:** Streamlining processes to eliminate redundant administrative activities.

17%

**Increased resources/Training:** Investing in more senior recruiters to handle increased hiring volumes.

15%

**Leadership/Organizational changes:** Improving insight into projected turnover rates and headcount needs.

13%

**Broader talent reach:** Expanding sourcing efforts, particularly for hard-to-fill roles.

3%

**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts:** Increasing the pool of diverse candidates.

“

Economic uncertainty is forcing us to rethink our recruitment strategies in order to stay competitive.

**SENIOR TALENT PARTNER, RETAIL**



# Economic and operational challenges on the rise

Our data shows intensifying economic uncertainty and operational challenges:

- Budget and resource constraints have become a top concern, with a 38% increase compared to last year.
- This is particularly problematic for manufacturing, for instance, where tight budgets limit investment in recruitment technology and workforce development.

Manual processes remain a significant challenge:

- There's been a 33% increase in concerns around time-intensive, manual hiring processes.
- Every hour spent on data entry or manual screening is time not spent engaging with top talent.

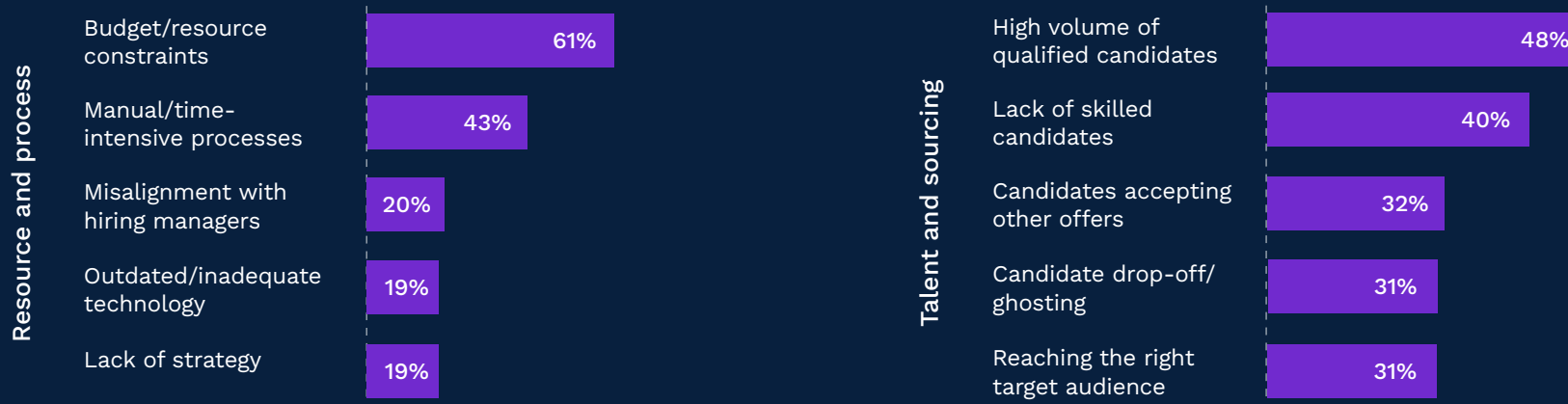
When it comes to talent and sourcing, perhaps most alarmingly, managing high volumes of unqualified candidates has become the top concern:

- This issue has jumped from third place in 2024 to first in 2025.
- It's particularly pronounced in specialized fields like IT services and healthcare, where the skills gap continues to widen.

On a positive note, organizations have significantly improved their ability to reach the right target audience:

- There's been a 30% decrease in this issue compared to last year.
- This suggests that TA teams are becoming more effective in using data and technology to target qualified candidates.

## What are the most pressing recruitment concerns your organization is facing?



# Visibility into data: A key barrier to TA maturity

Data visibility across the recruitment funnel is essential for achieving TA maturity, yet 85% of organizations report below-average access to comprehensive data. Without full-funnel visibility, TA leaders struggle to track the ROI of different recruitment channels, optimize engagement strategies, and make informed adjustments.

The consequences of poor data visibility are severe:

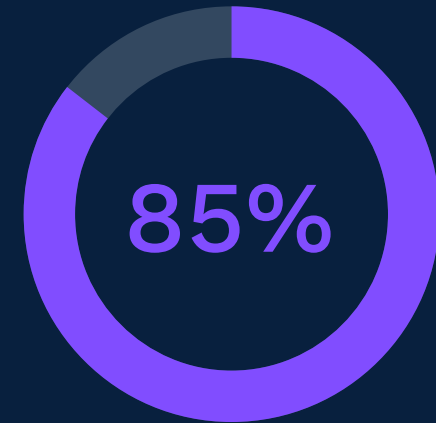
- **Missed opportunities:** Organizations risk overlooking high-potential candidates or emerging talent pools.
- **Inefficient resource allocation:** Teams often focus on low-yield activities while neglecting high-impact strategies.
- **Compromised decision-making:** Without comprehensive data, TA leaders rely on intuition or outdated metrics.
- **Inability to adapt:** Organizations struggle to adjust their strategies to evolving market conditions.
- **Loss of competitive edge:** Organizations with superior data visibility can act faster and more decisively.

For TA leaders, investing in platforms that offer end-to-end transparency is a strategic priority, essential for gaining a competitive edge.



Without full-funnel visibility, it's hard to track performance or optimize recruitment strategies effectively.

**RECRUITMENT OPERATIONS LEAD, FINANCIAL SERVICES**



85% of organizations report that their visibility and accessibility to data throughout the TA funnel is average or below average.



**This is a significant increase from 78% in 2024.**

# Data challenges: Linking awareness metrics to hiring outcomes

The top data challenge facing TA teams is linking awareness metrics to hiring outcomes. This stems from the fragmented nature of the recruitment funnel:

- Some organizations excel at gathering specific data points (website traffic, application rates, time-to-hire metrics) but struggle to connect these into a coherent narrative spanning the entire candidate journey.
- Many TA professionals are data-rich but insight-poor. They can measure how many people viewed job postings or clicked on ads but struggle to translate that into meaningful predictions about hiring success.

To overcome this, organizations must invest in solutions that provide visibility across all stages of the funnel, from awareness to hire. This approach enables TA teams to:

- **Pinpoint** which media channels generate the highest-quality candidates
- **Identify** where candidates drop out of the funnel
- **Make** data-driven adjustments to optimize the recruitment process
- **Forecast** future recruitment needs more accurately
- **Ensure** hiring strategies align with broader business goals

## What challenges do you face in tracking and analyzing data from the earliest stages of talent acquisition (attraction) through to hire?

Challenges in linking awareness metrics to hiring outcomes

33%

Difficulty integrating data across platforms to track applicant progress

31%

Limited visibility into the effectiveness of employer branding efforts

31%

Inadequate tools for measuring and analyzing candidate touchpoints

29%

I do not have any challenges tracking and analyzing data throughout the funnel

27%

Difficulty accurately assessing candidate fit based on skills and cultural alignment

22%

Limited visibility into how to boost offer acceptance rates

20%

# What strategies are organizations focusing on now?

The talent acquisition landscape is shifting beneath our feet. The strategies that worked yesterday may not be enough to secure the talent you need tomorrow. So, what are forward-thinking organizations prioritizing in their TA strategies?

Take a moment to reflect on your current TA priorities. Are you still relying on traditional recruitment methods, or are you exploring innovative approaches to attract and retain top talent? How are you leveraging technology and data to streamline your processes and enhance candidate experiences?

Our survey results paint a compelling picture of where TA leaders are focusing their efforts. The big question isn't just about what's happening now — it's about what's happening next. And the answer might surprise you.

Organizations are doubling down on upskilling and reskilling their existing workforce while simultaneously trying to improve brand visibility. But dig a little deeper, and the real story emerges: the companies that thrive will be the ones focusing on precision. Precision in what? In everything — from how they attract talent to how they qualify candidates.

“

Our biggest wins have come from moving away from 'tried and true' to strategies that meet candidates where they are today.

**SENIOR RECRUITER, EDUCATION**

“

Supporting our hiring demands without compromising on candidate quality is a major focus for us moving forward.

**HEAD OF TALENT ACQUISITION, HEALTHCARE**

It's no longer enough to cast a wide net and hope for the best. The focus has shifted toward targeting the right people, at the right time, with the right message. Across sectors, nearly 40% of all TA leaders are prioritizing candidate qualification during the hiring process. This key insight reveals that the industries feeling the most pressure are the ones demanding quality over quantity.

In this section, we'll explore the strategic priorities shaping the future of talent acquisition. From the growing importance of unified candidate insights to the rise of skills-based hiring, we'll uncover the trends that are redefining how organizations approach recruitment.

You'll learn why expanding your talent network is essential, and how leading organizations are leveraging advanced technologies — from AI-driven candidate screening to predictive analytics — to streamline their TA functions and engage with candidates more effectively.

**Consider how your own strategic priorities align with these trends. Are you ahead of the curve, or do you need to recalibrate your approach?**

# Key trends in future TA priorities

Our data shows that TA priorities have remained relatively consistent year-over-year, with only slight shifts:

- Focus on supporting growing hiring demands has risen by 4%.
- The need to better manage the existing talent pool has increased by 3%.

Across industries, there's a growing emphasis on improving candidate qualification during the hiring process to ensure alignment with specialized skill needs:

- Nearly a third of TA leaders across sectors highlight candidate qualification as a main focus, reflecting the demand for specific skill sets in key industries, a trend seen across multiple fields beyond manufacturing.

## What is your organization's top priority regarding talent acquisition in the next 18-24 months?



# The growing importance of unified candidate insights and full-funnel data

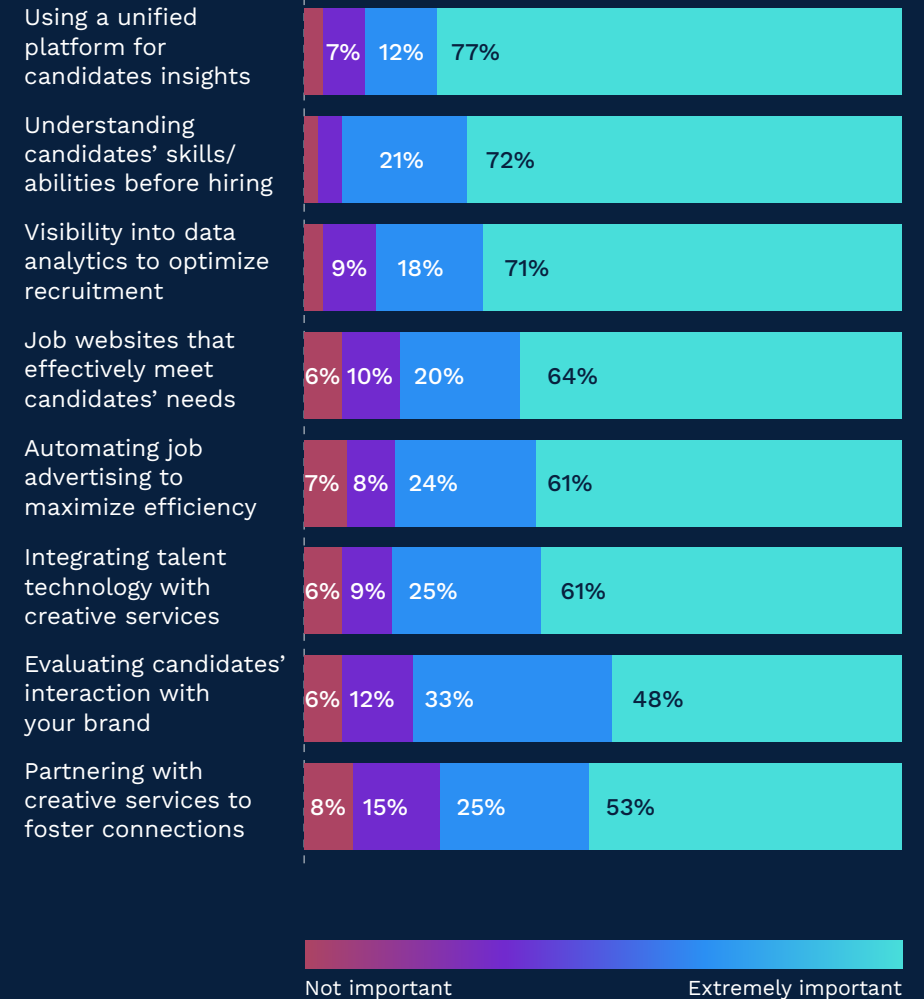
Asked to rank each objective on a scale from ‘Not important’ to ‘Extremely important’, our data reveals that TA teams are balancing a wide range of high-priority objectives, each critical to achieving success in today’s complex hiring landscape. For instance:

- 77% of respondents place a high degree of importance on using a unified platform to understand candidates at every stage of the TA funnel.
- 71% say visibility into data analytics that inform where to optimize recruitment efforts is ‘Important’ or ‘Extremely important.’

These trends reflect a broader shift towards integrated data platforms and enhanced data visibility in talent acquisition, enabling teams to gain deeper insights and optimize efforts across the funnel — especially for organizations looking to reach higher levels of TA maturity.



## How important are the following talent acquisition objectives for your organization?





# Leveraging technology for better TA outcomes

96%

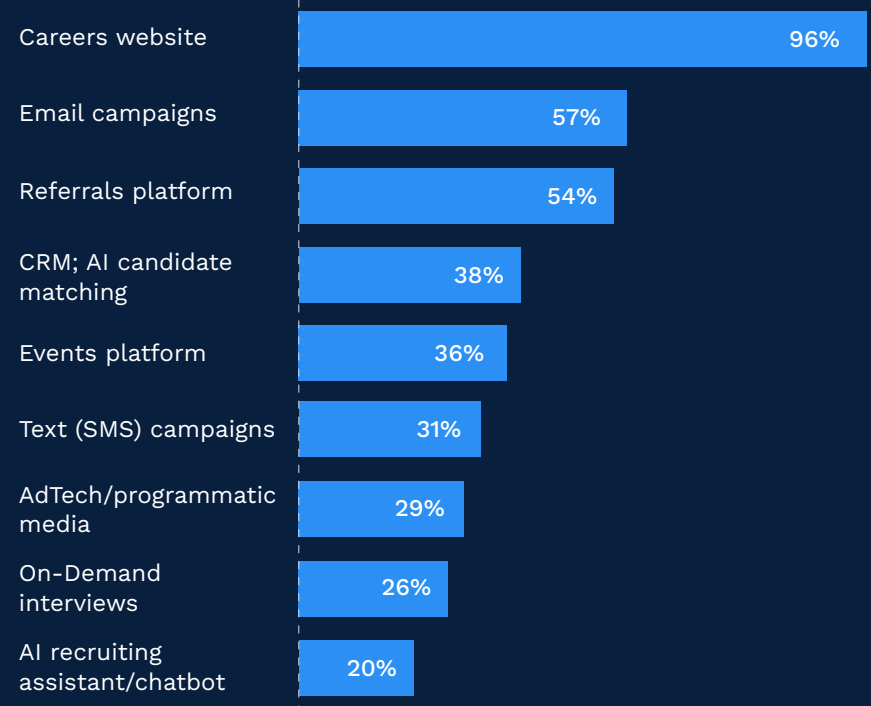
**Career website use is at an all-time high** — increasing from 87% in 2024 to 96% in 2025, underscoring the need to optimize them to showcase the employer brand and deliver a superior candidate experience.

20%

**1 in 5 organizations** now use AI recruiting assistants to streamline hiring.



Which technology solutions do you currently use to target, reach, and engage with talent?

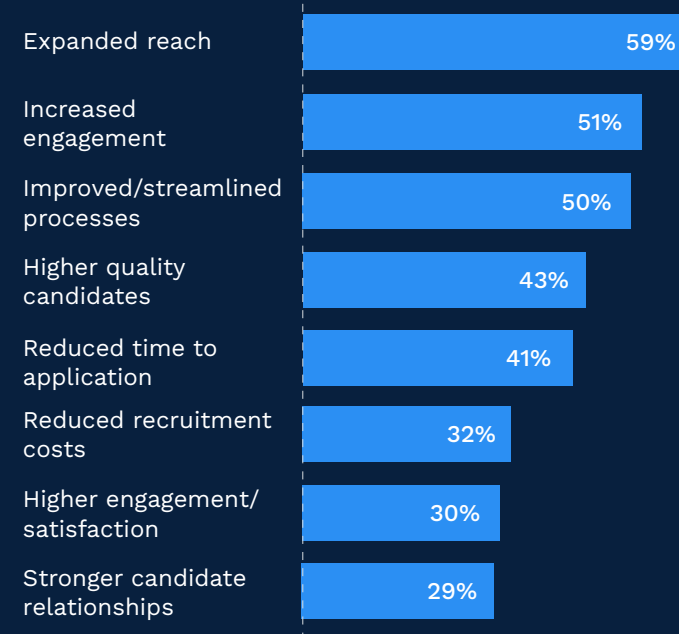


Comparing 2024 against 2025 data shows several shifts:

- **Expanded reach:** Dropped from 63% in 2023 to 59% in 2024, as organizations continue to refine their targeting strategies and reach more qualified candidates.
- **Increased engagement:** Significantly increased from 38% in 2023 to 51% in 2024, reflecting the growing importance of personalized, data-driven candidate interactions.
- **Reduced time to application:** Declined from 53% in 2023 to 41% in 2024, possibly due to inefficiencies in certain processes despite the adoption of new technologies.
- **Improved/streamlined process:** Increased from 44% to 50%, indicating that organizations are seeing greater efficiency gains from their tech investments.
- **Higher quality candidates:** Held steady at 43%, showing consistent value in using technology to source and screen better applicants.
- **Reduced recruitment costs:** Slightly decreased from 35% to 32%, as some organizations still face challenges in realizing cost savings from tech investments.
- **Higher team engagement/satisfaction:** Dropped from 34% to 30%, reflecting potential strains on TA teams as they adapt to new technologies.
- **Stronger candidate relationships:** Declined from 35% to 29%, suggesting that while technology aids efficiency, it may also reduce the personal touch in candidate interactions.

These shifts suggest that while technology is making a significant impact, organizations must balance automation with human engagement to maximize benefits.

What benefits have you experienced by leveraging technology to attract and engage talent?



# Adopting new technologies, driving innovation

The talent acquisition landscape is being reshaped by groundbreaking technologies and innovative approaches. The question isn't whether these changes will affect your organization, but how quickly you can adapt and leverage them to your advantage.

Take a moment to consider your current recruitment tech stack. Are you still relying on traditional applicant tracking systems, or have you embraced AI-driven solutions? How are you using data to drive your decision-making process? The answers to these questions could determine your success in the talent market of tomorrow.

Our survey reveals a fascinating contrast in the world of talent acquisition. On one hand, we're seeing a rapid adoption of cutting-edge technologies like AI and machine learning. On the other, there's a renewed focus on the human aspects of recruitment, with empathy and soft skills gaining prominence.

This section will explore the emerging trends and innovations that are set to redefine talent acquisition in 2025. From the transformative potential of AI in recruitment to the rise of skills-based hiring, we'll uncover the strategies that leading organizations are using to stay ahead of the curve.



“

Increased use of automation for redundant administrative activities allows us to focus more on strategic recruitment goals.

**RECRUITMENT OPERATIONS SPECIALIST, HEALTHCARE**

You'll discover why AI is more than just a buzzword —it's becoming an indispensable tool for talent acquisition teams. We'll delve into how predictive analytics are helping organizations anticipate future talent needs, and how virtual reality is revolutionizing the candidate experience.

But technology is only part of the story. We'll also explore how the most innovative organizations are rethinking their approach to talent. You'll learn why skills-based hiring is gaining traction, and how it's helping organizations tap into previously overlooked talent pools. We'll examine the growing importance of employer branding in a digital-first world, and why creating a compelling employer value proposition is more crucial than ever.

As you read through this section, challenge yourself to think beyond the status quo. How can you incorporate these emerging trends into your talent acquisition strategy? What innovations could give you a competitive edge in attracting top talent?

In the fast-paced world of talent acquisition, those who embrace innovation will lead the pack. The insights in this section will help you navigate the technological landscape and position your organization at the forefront of recruitment innovation.

**Are you willing to put the effort in to become a trailblazer in talent acquisition?**

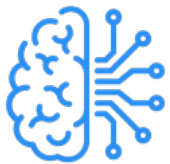
# The impact of AI: Hopeful influencers vs. hesitant decision-makers

Our survey reveals a notable divide in AI perceptions across talent acquisition roles. Influencers, who engage directly with talent daily, are more optimistic about AI's potential to enhance efficiency. Meanwhile, decision-makers show greater caution, weighing AI's long-term implications such as potential biases, data security, and ROI.

## Key insights:

46%

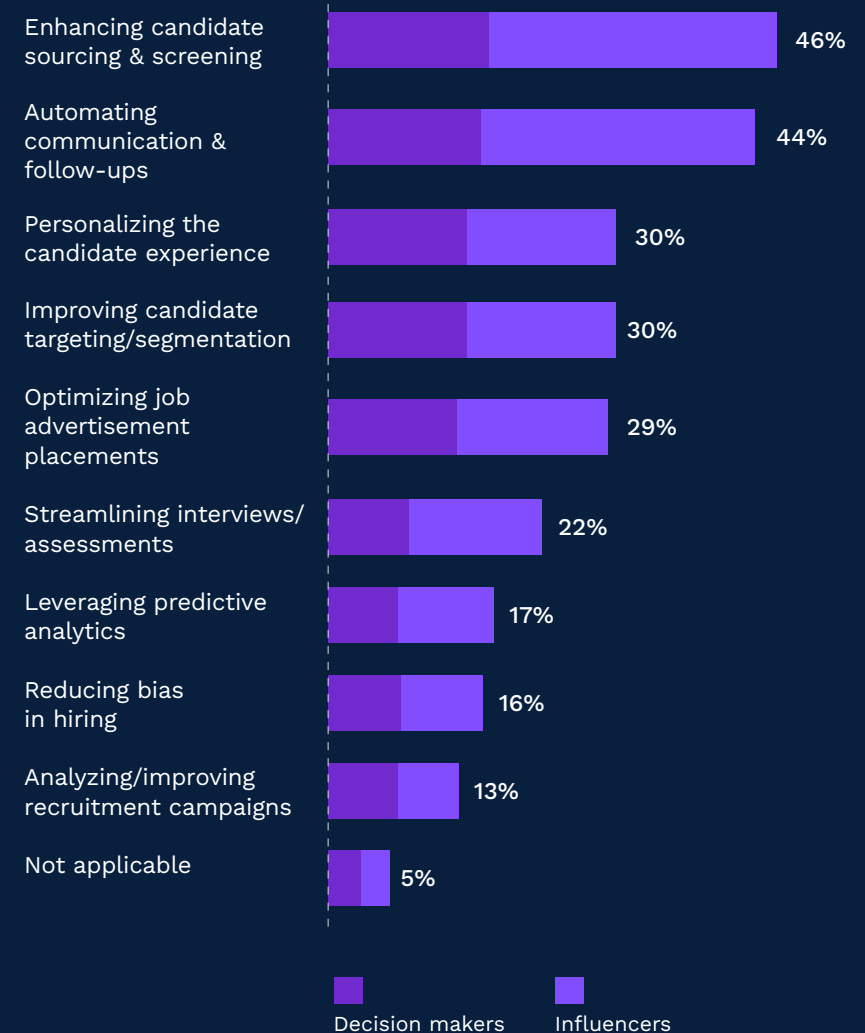
of respondents believe **AI will have its most significant impact on candidate sourcing and screening**. Influencers align strongly with this view, seeing AI as a tool to streamline the process.



Among influencers, a slightly higher percentage highlight **AI's role in candidate matching**, while decision-makers remain more balanced, recognizing AI's application across both sourcing and matching.

Despite differing perspectives, one thing is clear: **AI is here to stay**. As organizations adopt AI, they must ensure human oversight remains central — balancing automation with personalization to make thoughtful, informed hiring decisions.

As the role of AI in TA continues to evolve in 2025, what areas do you believe will see the most significant impact?



# Prioritizing employees in employer brand innovation

Our data shows a growing emphasis on employee-focused brand innovation, reflecting a shift from traditional marketing approaches to “people-first” branding. Organizations are increasingly prioritizing areas like career development, employee well-being, and DEI initiatives.

## Key areas of focus include:



**Career development programs**



**Mental health resources**



**Flexible working arrangements**



**Wellness programs**



**DEI initiatives**

This shift aligns with broader trends toward cultivating a brand identity that highlights employee growth and well-being as central elements. This approach not only fosters inclusion and adaptability within the workforce, but it also enhances DEI initiatives by broadening the talent pool to include candidates from varied backgrounds.

When comparing general TA priorities to those of “predictive” TA teams, we find:

- 1 General focus across respondents: For the next 18-24 months, improved outreach to top talent (25%) ranks as the top priority. This demonstrates an increased emphasis on proactive talent sourcing.
- 2 Comparative focus for predictive TA teams: Almost all “predictive” teams rate a unified platform for candidate insights as extremely important, emphasizing the value of integrated technology solutions for more advanced teams.

These findings suggest that more mature TA functions prioritize sophisticated tech solutions alongside employee-centered brand development, balancing outreach with a robust internal culture.



We’ve made employee well-being a central part of our employer brand to attract and retain top talent.

**HR DIRECTOR, NON-PROFIT**

# The rise of skills-based hiring: Soft skills at the forefront

Skills-based hiring is becoming a defining trend for 2025:

- **Organizations are placing greater emphasis on soft skills and practical capabilities:** 41% of respondents identifying these as the top emerging trend impacting skills-based hiring over the next 12 months, compared to just 15% who prioritize traditional degrees or certifications.
- **This shift is driven by the need for adaptable, well-rounded candidates** who can thrive in dynamic environments.

Key findings:

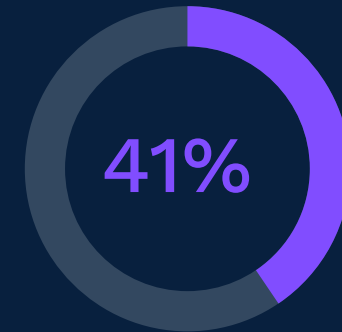
- Employers recognize that while technical skills can be taught, soft skills are harder to cultivate but often make the biggest difference in long-term employee success.
- This approach helps organizations tap into diverse talent pools, as they're no longer limiting searches to candidates with specific degrees or backgrounds.
- Skills-based hiring is helping organizations future-proof their workforce, ensuring they have adaptable talent to navigate changing business landscapes.



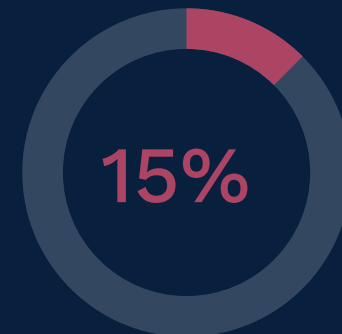
Skills-based hiring allows us to tap into a more diverse talent pool and find candidates who align with our company's culture.

**TALENT ACQUISITION LEAD, GOVERNMENT**

Which emerging trends do you believe will have the greatest impact on skills-based hiring in the next 12 months?



41% of respondents identify **greater emphasis on soft skills and practical capabilities** as the top emerging trend



Compared to 15% of respondents who prioritize traditional degrees or certifications

# Where insights meet actions: How TA leaders should move forward

As we've seen, the landscape of talent acquisition is evolving at an unprecedented pace. The insights we've explored throughout this report aren't just food for thought — they're a call to action. But what exactly should you, as a TA leader, do with all this information?

Reflect for a moment on the challenges and opportunities we've discussed. The rise of AI in recruitment, the shift towards skills-based hiring, the growing importance of employer branding — how do these trends align with your current strategy? More important, how will you leverage a data-driven strategy to drive your organization forward?

This final section is where insight meets action. We'll distill the wealth of information presented in this report into five key imperatives that every TA leader must embrace to thrive in 2025 and beyond.

From prioritizing data visibility across the entire recruitment funnel to leveraging precision targeting for attracting top talent, these imperatives represent the critical steps you need to take to transform your TA function. We'll explore why upskilling and reskilling have become non-negotiable in a rapidly changing job market, and how strategic vendor partnerships can provide the insights you need to optimize your recruitment processes.

“

Having data is great, but putting it into action remains the hardest part. The value lies in knowing what to do next — and doing it well.

**VP OF HR, FINANCIAL SERVICES**

But these imperatives aren't just about adopting new technologies or processes. They're about fundamentally rethinking your approach — your mindset — to talent acquisition. You'll learn why scalability is the key to adapting to economic and hiring challenges, and how to build a TA strategy that can flex with changing demands.

As you read through these imperatives, consider them your roadmap for the future. How will you implement them in your organization? What obstacles might you face, and how can you overcome them?

In the world of talent acquisition, knowledge is power — but only if it's applied. The TA leaders who will excel in 2025 are those who can translate insights into action, who can pivot quickly in response to changing conditions, and who can inspire their teams to embrace new ways of working.

**Are you ready to lead the change into the future of talent acquisition?**



# Five imperatives for TA leaders in 2025

Talent is everything ... and it's everywhere. Talent acquisition will continue to evolve, and organizations must evolve with it. The insights from this report highlight key areas where talent acquisition teams need to focus their efforts. By focusing on these imperatives, TA leaders can position their organizations for success in the rapidly evolving talent landscape of 2025 and beyond.

Focus on five core priorities:



**Boost data visibility**



**Leverage precision targeting**



**Focus on upskilling and reskilling**



**Form strategic vendor partnerships**



**Adapt to economic fluctuations  
with scalable solutions**

1

## Prioritize data visibility across the funnel

With 85% of TA professionals reporting inadequate data visibility across the recruitment funnel, it's time for leaders to address this critical gap. The days of relying on fragmented metrics and siloed data are over ... we hope. Without a complete view from attraction to hire, TA teams are effectively navigating in the dark. In 2025, real-time insights at every stage of the recruitment journey seem no longer a luxury but a necessity.

TA leaders must invest in solutions that offer end-to-end transparency, enabling them to track candidate interactions, identify drop-offs, and measure the effectiveness of their campaigns with pinpoint accuracy. From career site visits to offer acceptance, every step in the funnel offers valuable data that can be used to optimize strategies in real time.

The future of talent acquisition will belong to those who can see clearly across the entire funnel ... and then act swiftly on the insights they uncover.

2

## Leverage precision targeting to attract top talent

In a competitive market where a third of participants are dissatisfied with their current talent acquisition efforts, precision is everything. The days of casting a wide net and hoping for the best are long gone. Instead, TA leaders need to focus on granular targeting, using the most advanced tools at their disposal to ensure they reach high-potential candidates while minimizing the noise of unqualified applicants.



Leveraging AI-driven platforms and predictive analytics, TA teams can fine-tune their outreach efforts to engage the right candidates with tailored messages that resonate. Precision targeting ensures that the right candidates — those with the potential to make a lasting impact — are brought into the organization.

### 3 Focus on upskilling and reskilling

With talent shortages becoming an ever-present challenge, upskilling and reskilling current employees is no longer just a buzzword — it's a critical strategy for meeting hiring demands while maximizing internal talent. In 2025, TA leaders must build robust programs that support internal mobility and allow employees to grow into new roles. This dual benefit — filling roles and fostering retention — makes upskilling a powerful tool in the TA leader's toolkit.

### 4 Embrace vendor partnerships for strategic insights

In today's fast-paced talent acquisition landscape, partnerships with vendor solutions are about more than just tools and efficiency — they are about gaining strategic insights that can transform how organizations approach recruitment. The right vendors can provide invaluable guidance on optimizing full-funnel performance.

### 5 Adapt to economic and hiring challenges with scalable solutions

Budget constraints and increasing hiring demands are two sides of the same coin, and for TA leaders, scalability is the answer. In 2025, the ability to scale recruitment efforts efficiently will separate the leaders from the laggards. Scalable solutions, such as AI-driven recruitment platforms, will ensure that recruitment processes remain smooth and effective, regardless of



New technologies, particularly AI, will be critical for driving innovation in our recruitment efforts next year.

**TALENT ACQUISITION, FINANCIAL SERVICES**

# Insights in action: Personalized checklists by role

## HR Executives

- ✔ **Maximize ROI from TA investments:** Ensure that all investments in technology and tools provide clear, measurable returns.
- ✔ **Focus on internal mobility:** Develop a structured approach for upskilling and reskilling to reduce reliance on external hires.
- ✔ **Strengthen employer branding:** Invest in initiatives that promote your company's values, employee well-being, and commitment to DEI.
- ✔ **Enable full data visibility:** Support initiatives that provide end-to-end recruitment data, ensuring your teams can make well-informed, strategic decisions.
- ✔ **Adapt to future hiring challenges:** Plan for economic fluctuations and surges in hiring demand with scalable, efficient processes.

## TA Leaders

- ✔ **Boost data visibility:** Ensure that your team has full access to recruitment data from attraction to hire.
- ✔ **Leverage AI for strategic targeting:** Use AI tools to improve candidate matching, reduce time-to-hire, and ensure precision outreach.
- ✔ **Invest in upskilling/reskilling programs:** Develop and implement strategies for internal workforce development to meet future talent demands.
- ✔ **Build strategic vendor partnerships:** Choose partners who provide actionable insights, not just tools, and can help optimize full-funnel performance.
- ✔ **Plan for scalability:** Ensure that your recruitment processes and technologies can scale with fluctuating hiring volumes and economic challenges.

# Insights in action: Personalized checklists by role (cont.)

## Recruiters

- ✔ **Use AI for candidate matching:** Implement AI-powered tools to automate repetitive tasks, allowing you to focus on strategic, high-touch candidate interactions.
- ✔ **Enhance candidate engagement:** Personalize outreach with AI-driven insights and ensure faster responses to top-tier candidates.
- ✔ **Streamline your hiring process:** Use technology to reduce time-to-hire while ensuring a smooth candidate experience from application to onboarding.
- ✔ **Prioritize data-driven decisions:** Regularly review data to assess the performance of your recruitment campaigns and refine your outreach strategies.
- ✔ **Stay ahead of talent trends:** Continuously update your understanding of emerging recruitment trends, especially around soft skills and upskilling.

## Sourcers

- ✔ **Utilize multiple sourcing channels:** Tap into diverse job boards, social media, niche networks, and professional groups to expand reach, especially to passive candidates.
- ✔ **Streamline your process:** Use automation and AI tools to manage high volumes efficiently, allowing you to focus on building relationships with high-potential candidates.
- ✔ **Implement skills-based hiring:** Emphasize core skills rather than resumes alone to ensure candidates meet job requirements, reducing bias and improving candidate quality.
- ✔ **Enhance candidate engagement:** Personalize outreach with AI and data-driven insights to passive candidates with tailored messaging to increase engagement and improve conversion rates.
- ✔ **Prioritize data-driven decisions:** Regularly review sourcing metrics to assess the effectiveness of each channel and refine your strategies.

# Who provided the insights for this report?

This report is built on data collected from a diverse range of talent acquisition professionals across multiple industries. Insights from TA leaders, HR executives, recruiters, and influencers provide a comprehensive look at the key trends and challenges faced by today's TA teams.

Role within organization:



Role	%
TA Leaders (Director/VP level)	38%
TA Managers	29%
HR Executives	18%
Recruiters	12%
Other	3%

Industry breakdown:



Industry	%
Technology IT Services	24%
Heathcare	21%
Other Industries (education, government and non-profit sectors)	20%
Financial Services	15%
Manufacturing	12%
Retail	8%

These insights reflect a broad spectrum of perspectives, ensuring that the strategies outlined in this report are relevant across industries and roles. The diversity of respondents ensures that TA leaders can benchmark their own strategies against their peers and see where they stand on the path to TA maturity.

# A strategic blueprint for 2025

The data is clear: 2025 will be a transformative year for talent acquisition leaders. With hiring demands increasing, talent pools shrinking, and technology evolving faster than ever, the insights from this report are not just informative — they are imperative for action.

But what, exactly, should TA leaders do with all this information?

First, they need to understand that data visibility is no longer optional; it's the foundation for making strategic, proactive decisions that will shape the future of talent acquisition. Without full visibility into every stage of the recruitment funnel, opportunities are missed, and inefficiencies are magnified. Next, leaders must leverage the precision of modern technology to target top talent with laser-like precision, ensuring they engage with the best candidates while minimizing wasted effort.



Our hiring processes are being affected by the need to do more with less due to ongoing resource constraints.

**SENIOR RECRUITER, MANUFACTURING**

Beyond external hiring, TA leaders are also tasked with looking inward — upskilling and reskilling the current workforce to fill critical roles and maintain organizational agility.

And as the market continues to shift, it's vital to build strategic vendor partnerships that do more than streamline processes; they must provide actionable insights that enhance full-funnel performance.

Lastly, scalable solutions will be the key to thriving in a volatile economic environment, ensuring that hiring teams can flexibly adapt to both budget constraints and surges in hiring demand.

Thank you for taking the time to explore these critical insights. We'd love to hear your thoughts! Share your feedback with us or let us know how these insights align with your talent acquisition strategy. We're here to support you on this journey — feel free to reach out for any guidance along the way!

[SPEAK TO AN EXPERT](#)

“

In 2025, waiting and hoping for talent to come to you is not an option. The real game-changers will be the ones who turn challenges into opportunities — those who leverage data, AI, and a proactive full-funnel approach to create a talent ecosystem that draws people in. The organizations that lead will stop chasing talent and start cultivating environments where the best talent chooses to be.

**KERMIT RANDA, CEO, SYMPHONY TALENT**



### **About Symphony Talent**

Symphony Talent delivers award-winning, innovative recruitment marketing and talent acquisition solutions that empower organizations worldwide to attract, engage, and retain top talent. Through a comprehensive suite of full-funnel technology, creative services, and data analytics, we provide clients with the insights and automation needed to optimize every stage of their hiring process — from attraction to hire — while enhancing candidate experiences and improving business outcomes.

Our solutions portfolio, enriched with AI-powered tools and data-driven insights, allows talent acquisition teams to build standout employer brands, engage right-fit candidates, and streamline hiring with efficiency. Symphony Talent doesn't just provide tools; we serve as a trusted partner, offering strategic insights that enhance recruitment performance and agility. In an evolving market, our solutions equip organizations to stay responsive, data-informed, and ready to meet the demands of tomorrow's talent landscape.

Visit [symphonytalent.com](https://www.symphonytalent.com) to learn more.