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Optimising your TA function to **attract top tech talent**

Contributors

RE:STACK

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no more jargon.

OQC

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Here's a thing to admit

There's no rocket science in this report.

In fact, it's all pretty straightforward, and that's the point.

When we think about optimising a TA function, some of us will jump to thinking that there will be a silver bullet, all-in-one solution to fix everything. Or perhaps we default to considering the people we need to add to our team to make things run more smoothly.

But before we go down that road, we need to make sure we're not building and optimising upon shaky foundations.

Through hours of conversations with in-house TA managers who have been in your shoes, living and breathing the challenges you face on a daily basis, we have uncovered **four of the biggest causes of shaky TA foundations**:

#1 "We're making it too difficult for top candidates to see how great we are."

#2 "Our hiring managers are slowing things down."

#3 "We're spending too much time reviewing hundreds of irrelevant CVs."

#4 "Our candidates are being put off by our frustrating, time-consuming hiring process."

We're going to take a deep dive into each of these and share:

- The **issues** these challenges are causing in TA and the **numbers** to back this up

- The **data** you need to have these conversations internally and start building a **business case** for change

- Simple and **practical interventions** from the experts that you can make right now to **overcome these challenges**.

I genuinely hope you find this valuable. Enjoy!

Joe Osgood, Founder, Smart Sourcer

Let's dig in →

You're making it too difficult for top candidates to see how great you are

88%
of job seekers consider a company's **employer brand** when applying for a job.
[Source: LinkedIn]

Imagine that your organisation has a physical shop window.

Now imagine the job of that shop window is to convince any relevant passers-by to come inside and think 'I'd really love to work here'.

In reality, that 'shop window' is a social media post, a LinkedIn direct message, your careers page, or a post on a job board. And in many cases (particularly in tech hiring) this happens through a third party supplier, like an agency or sourcing platform.

In other words, it's the first interaction they have with your organisation.

3x
Companies that **invest** in **employer branding** are

more likely to make a **quality** hire.
[Source: LinkedIn]

69%
of candidates would **reject a job offer** from a company with a **bad employer brand**, even if they were unemployed.
[Source: CareerArc]

And if that first interaction doesn't contain a simple, clear and consistent message about the value of working for your organisation, those candidates will see your shop window and simply **keep on walking**.

Organisations need to reduce the friction for the candidate - so that when they glance into your shop window, they aren't having to squint or read three paragraphs to understand who you are, what you do and why your organisation is a great place to work.

"There's ample evidence that a great employer brand makes it **easier to recruit** and it also significantly impacts the bottom line.

For most companies, those numbers can equate to **millions in savings** and **reduced time** to recruit."
[Source: LinkedIn]

31%
Companies with a **strong** talent brand get a

higher LinkedIn InMail acceptance rate
[Source: LinkedIn]

How to make it easier for candidates to understand how great your organisation is

I spend my working life educating recruitment businesses on how to position themselves clearly, so that their ideal customers understand what they do, trust them and buy from them. **Marketing your business** to candidates should be no different.

So, try this - start your first interaction with a candidate with **three reasons** why they should consider working for your organisation. That should be the first thing they see. Give them a solid reason - at a glance - to continue scrolling down the page and respond to you.

Lisa Mahoney | Founder
no more jargon.

We're an innovative organisation, but we've found that candidates make incorrect assumptions about how forward-thinking a law firm would be.

Our data shows that employees rate the firm highly for innovation once they've been with us for a few months. So, one of our challenges has been convincing tech candidates of this at the outset.

What has worked well for us in turning this around is **sharing a diverse range of stories** from the people in those roles.

They need to be **real and authentic** and encompass their whole story - not just their experience of working at Allen & Overy.

Steven Murrell | Resourcing Manager
ALLEN & OVERY

Don't forget that tech candidates will have a keen interest in the **technology you're using** internally. They'll be looking for agile delivery and innovation.

Legacy technology is less likely to be a good sell for candidates when they're keen to upskill and progress in their careers. This narrows the candidate pool for TA teams. Companies should expand to talking about (or demonstrating) their up-to-date and **relevant tech** in the initial outreach to attract top tech talent.

smart sourcer   **Joe Osgood**
Founder

If you're using a recruitment agency or third party platform to represent your business, it's critical that you can **trust** them to do this effectively. If that agency or platform isn't asking you for details on **how to talk about your employer brand** at the outset, that can be a bit of a red flag. Especially if you're paying for the privilege of using their services.

smart sourcer   **Ellie Burrisson**
Customer Success

Your hiring managers are slowing things down

Organisations with **solid collaboration** between hiring managers and recruiters are

4x

more likely to exceed their talent acquisition goals than those with low collaboration.

[Source: Josh Bersin]

The hiring managers in your business have very little time.

Yet, they have the **best knowledge** of the skills and characteristics needed to be successful in their vacant position.

Knowing the **needs** of hiring managers at the outset and taking a **high quality brief** will of course improve the quality of the candidates you source.

And having those hiring managers proactively involved throughout the process will improve the **candidate experience** and the likelihood that a candidate will be an **accurate** fit for the role (and succeed in the business).

Collaboration between recruiters and hiring managers is the **#1 indicator of high-performance** talent acquisition.
[Source: Josh Bersin]

But it's challenging to get their buy-in.

51%

of hiring managers are **disengaged** in the recruitment process

[Source: Gallup]

Only **36%** of interviewing candidates will meet the hiring manager of the vacancy. This equates to **less than 1%** of the total job applicants. [Source: standout-cv.com]

Hiring managers are **more invested** in a recruitment process when they're **included and engaged throughout**, leading to them responding on average **53% faster** to interview or review requests. [Source: SmartRecruiters]

Often, applicant tracking systems don't offer an equal experience for hiring managers as they do for recruitment teams. Their UX isn't built to support hiring managers or they simply **aren't trained to use it effectively**, resulting in **low adoption rates** and frustration.
[Source: HR Grapevine]

How to get buy-in from hiring managers

Let's face it - a hiring manager isn't just a hiring manager. They're employed to do a job. They're probably struggling to manage a team because their top employee has just left and now they're being bombarded with how to follow a recruitment process to replace them.

So, in order to get them to engage, we need to make sure that we're **adding value** throughout the process. We're making everything **easier** for them. We're **pre-booking** CV review and interview slots. We're **communicating** with them in the way they prefer, whether that's a WhatsApp voice note, dedicated Slack channel, Teams message or email. Don't put yourself in a position where you're waiting for them to respond. Be **proactive**.

RE:STACK
Holly Langley
Founder

The best possible use of time in the recruitment process is the time spent with the hiring manager **getting them ready** for the start of a recruitment campaign. **Block time** out in diaries, make sure they're focusing on the right things and make sure they're going to get what they really need. Through no fault of their own, recruitment will slip down the to do list of your hiring managers. They have so many demands on them. Instead of just pinging CVs and waiting for them to come back to me, with some hiring managers I try to make it as **time efficient** as possible. This means **pre-booking** slots in their diary, so we can quickly **run through them together** or discuss feedback following an interview.

Steven Murrell | Resourcing Manager
ALLEN & OVERY

The best advice I can give, especially to someone who is new in their role, is to listen. **Listen and learn from the hiring managers**.

Don't go in and scrap everything. In my experience, nothing ever needs completely ripping up and starting again - and it can lead to a lot of resistance from the hiring managers. You need to **listen and understand what the business needs**. Find out from the business if something is working, rather than making assumptions.

OQC
Mark Stainer
Talent Acquisition Manager

You're spending **too much time** reviewing hundreds of irrelevant CVs

The **more time** you spend sifting through irrelevant CVs, the **less time** you have to convince the right people to join your organisation. It also creates a longer hiring process.

Yet, so many businesses continue to do things in the way they've always done them, because change feels too expensive or too difficult.

So, when the workload gets too heavy, they'll simply hire another recruiter or administrative support to 'fix' the problem.
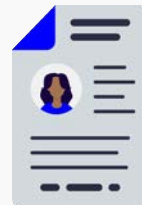
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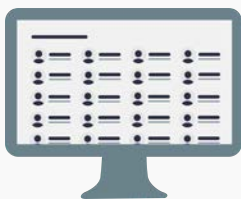
Technology jobs receive **206 applications** per role.

11 candidates (**5%**) are then applicable to progress to an **initial screening call**.

It takes on average, **5 minutes** for a hiring manager to review a CV.

It takes on average, **1 minute** for a recruiter to review a CV.

[Source: Smart Sourcer]

If we use those averages, a recruiter is spending **206 minutes** reviewing CVs for each role. And a hiring manager is spending **55 minutes**. That's almost **4 and a half hours** of resource time.

Then there's the time talent acquisition teams spend on candidate outreach.

For example, the average LinkedIn InMail response rate is between **18-25%** (depending on industry). Response times average at **18 hours** for an initial response (typically requesting further information), and a total of **1.2 weeks** from the initial InMail to a recruiter screening call. [Source: LinkedIn]

And let's not forget the additional calls and emails required to keep candidates and hiring managers engaged. All of this time and effort is then hinged on whether or not a candidate will actually accept an offer at the end of the process.

This is a huge waste of resource, time and money. Resources that could instead be invested into your **employer brand** or **tech** - and ultimately **make your life easier**.

How to **spend less time** reviewing irrelevant CVs, so you have **more time** to engage top quality candidates

In my last role, we implemented smart tech that auto-scores candidates and **ranks applications**, so that recruiters and hiring managers only see the top 10-15 people. Anyone who was automatically rejected from the process was given a **clear reason** why, and then given an **opportunity** to respond and re-enter the process if they felt this decision was incorrect. This also supports those with protected characteristics where we need to adapt the process. This saved us so much time and money and meant that every candidate that applied was hearing back from us, and not being **ghosted**.

Daen Fox
Talent Acquisition Leader

Businesses can use **smart tech** to increase the accuracy of the pool of candidates entering the process and massively **reduce the time** TAs need to spend on admin. It wi to spend on admin. It will ll **speed up** the end to end process and improve the chances of securing top tech talent.

For example, rather than sifting through hundreds of poor quality CVs or waiting on LinkedIn responses, tech can ensure that recruiters only ever receive a **handful of pre-qualified, best-fit candidates** that are ready to go. In fact, utilising smart tech hiring platforms like **Smart Sourcer** can bring your time to hire down from an average of 33 days to as little as **12 days**.

smart
sourcer

Joe Osgood
Founder

Here's a simple fix to **reduce** the amount of time hiring managers spend reviewing CVs (and to make sure they're not overlooking candidates with the right skills): instead of sending them a CV, send **three bullet points** on why they should consider a candidate. Spoiler alert: you can probably use **AI** to help you with this.
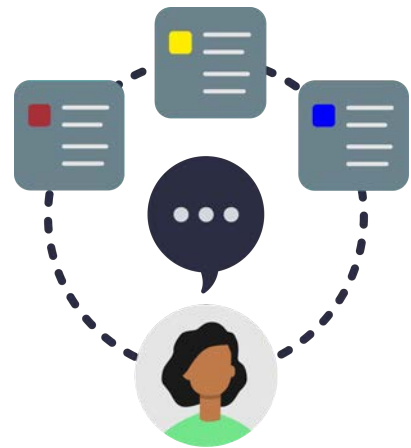
RE:STACK

Holly Langley
Founder

Your tech candidates are being put off by your frustrating, time-consuming hiring process

Tech remains a candidate short market.

Tech candidates continue to have the luxury of choice.

86%

of recruitment managers, believe the current job market is driven entirely by **candidates**.

[Source: G2.com]

Average time to fill

All industries
42.6 days

Technology industry
68 days

While a business is celebrating an offer being accepted, the candidate they hope to bring in is fielding multiple offers from organisations with higher salaries, more purpose, stronger benefits and a more enjoyable culture. Unfortunately, this means they're far more likely to fall out of the process.

And that's why the average time to fill roles takes **25.4 days longer** in technology vs other industries.
[Source: Revelo.com]

Meanwhile, growing tech companies need those skills more quickly than most.
Failing to bring in the right technical expertise means:

- Their existing team are feeling **burned out** by their workload - **potentially leaving** the organisation for a business with more process and rigour.

- They're not meeting **customer expectations** for when new product features will be available - potentially leading those customers to **go elsewhere**.

- They're **not growing as quickly** as they should be, raising difficult questions from shareholders.

How to prevent top candidates falling out of the process

> Never leave a candidate worrying about when they're going to hear back from you. **Pre-book feedback sessions** with them. And if you're going to miss a deadline, simply **communicate** this and reschedule. This shows an enormous amount of respect for their time and will be appreciated.
>
> **RE:STACK** **Holly Langley**
> Founder

> It's important to have a **documented hiring process** - but it's even **more important** to keep it **agile**. If you have an absolute superstar of a candidate, **skip or combine stages**. It's possible to get what you need without having your candidate jump through hoops or stick to your rigorous five-stage process. Show them the respect they deserve by moving quickly and providing **full and fast feedback**. Since we implemented a flexible process, **we haven't lost a single candidate**.
>
> **OQC** **Mark Stainer**
> Talent Acquisition Manager

> This may sound simple, but we use **interview scheduling tools** to significantly **reduce the amount of time** the candidate needs to spend on our recruitment process - it gives them the immediacy they need, booking in a slot that works for them.
>
> **ihr** **Daen Fox**
> Talent Acquisition Leader

> It's important to remember that before the perfect candidate enters your process, they have likely already dealt with a lot of **frustrating experiences**:
>
> - Having endless 'initial chats' with recruiters and **getting nowhere**.
> - Trying to manage **multiple interviews** from multiple sources in their diary.
> - Spending **hours** on technical tests and assessments.
> - Always feeling like they're on the back-foot with employers and having to prove themselves (before they've even decided if the opportunity is right for them).
>
> If they're experienced and in-demand, they need a **quick turnaround**. They need a shortcut that bypasses all the usual frustrations they encounter. Technology that helps candidates bypass these initial stages not only **reduces the duration** of the hiring process, it also demonstrates the **efficiency** of your internal processes, making it far more likely they'll **accept** an offer.
>
> **smart sourcer** **Joe Osgood**
> Founder

Final thoughts

If you've walked away from reading this report with one practical change you can implement today, mission accomplished.

There are three final points I'd like to make:

Organisational resistance seems to be a huge factor in whether or not a TA function is optimised. There's some really good data here that can help you navigate those conversations and win the battle for more time, money and resource. Perhaps screenshot a few of the key points and drop them into an email or presentation deck for your next meeting.

There's a consistent thread through the report around effective communication. The key thing that stands out for me is about anticipating needs. Anticipating what a candidate or hiring manager might need and making sure you've handled that need before they even realise they need it.

Smart tech will never be able to solve all of your problems - but it absolutely helps. A good place to start is to **find the biggest bottlenecks** and **time-drains** in the process and **focus your attention on fixing those.** Start small, whether that's the time it takes to book interviews and meetings or identifying quality candidates in a large pile of CVs. It's far too overwhelming (and expensive) to speed everything up at once.

Thanks for taking the time to read this.

Joe Osgood | Founder

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smart-sourcer.com