

Guide to Increasing Your Applicant Traffic

What employees value, expect from an employer, and look for in future roles is changing swiftly. Forward-thinking businesses would be wise to revamp the way they hire. To do so, they must reaudit potentially outdated strategies they've been using to address recruiting, hiring, retention, and DEI initiatives and revamp strategies to be ready for this new recruiting reality.

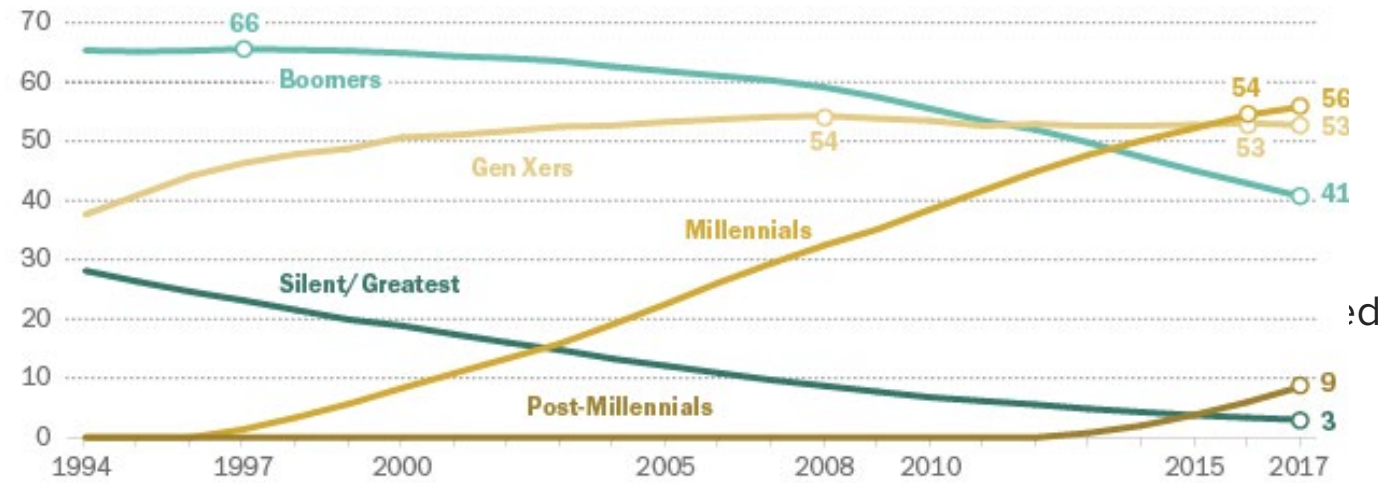
The good news is that by questioning “the way we’ve done things,” forward-thinking companies can transform how they find talent and increase their applicant traffic, even in today’s challenging hiring environment.

We’ve designed this guide to help you understand:

- What today’s job seekers want.
- The new rules of recruiting.

Millennials became the largest generation in the labor force in 2016

U.S. labor force, in millions



Note: Labor force includes those ages 16 and older who are working or looking for work. Annual averages shown. Source: Pew Research Center analysis of monthly 1994-2017 Current Population Survey (IPUMS).

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Source: [PEW Research Center](#)

What today's job seekers are looking for is a two-part question:

1. First, there's what job-seekers are looking for in a position. This information can help employers craft job postings that speak to what potential candidates are looking for in their future careers, shape their employer brand, and figure out their ideal prospective employees.
2. The second part of the question is what job seekers are looking for in the job application process, which has changed significantly in just the past ten years—60% of today's candidates will abandon a job application if it's too long or cumbersome. Good-bye hoop-jumping!

What Today's Job Seekers Want in a Career

Gallup does an annual [Millennial survey](#). Their latest survey found that when it comes to working, millennials overwhelmingly want:

- A company with a strong mission and purpose.
- Professional development opportunities.
- Their boss has a mentor/coach mentality.

When it comes to the entire working population (Millennials, Gen X, Gen Z, Baby Boomers), job seekers of all ages are looking for companies that prioritize diversity and a highly flexible environment.

Purpose

Purpose is important. A [McKinsey study](#) on where people find purpose found that 70% of employees say that their work defines their sense of purpose. Other research found that [9 out of 10 professionals](#) told researchers they would sacrifice as much as 23% of their future earnings for “work that’s always meaningful.”

Pro Tip: Have candidates answer a purpose-driven question as part of the application process.

Development

A lack of career development and growth opportunities is [the top reason](#) employees leave their job. Employers must let candidates know they can learn and grow in their roles to remain competitive.

Pro Tip: Emphasize the opportunities to grow in your role in your job posting. Better yet? Create content highlighting an employee’s professional growth in your organization. Employee-advocate company Everyone Social has a [guide for how to build an employee story](#).

Diversity

Diversity and inclusion are essential to job seekers of all ages today. A [Glassdoor survey](#) found one-third of job seekers said they wouldn’t apply to a company that doesn’t prioritize diversity. The Millennial survey found that 74% of millennials believe an organization is more innovative with a culture of inclusion.

Pro Tip: Go over your entire website to ensure you're using inclusive language (candidates don't just look at the job posting). Need help? Check out this [comprehensive, inclusive language guide](#).

What Today's Job Candidates Want Out of the Hiring Process

A whopping [92% of people](#) never finish online job applications! Organizations must consider what candidates want (and what's deterring them) and change their process accordingly. Today's job candidates value convenience and communication in the hiring process. Job candidates:

- Want to apply from their phones: Last year, Appcast found that [67% of job seekers](#) applied through their phones—40% of job seekers won't apply for a job if it isn't mobile-friendly. And it's not who you might expect—mid-career workers (33-44-year-olds) are the age group most likely to search for a job on their mobile devices.
- **Want a quick application process:** According to [CareerBuilder](#), 60% of job seekers quit in the middle of filling out online job applications because of their length or complexity.
- **Prioritize communication:** 30% of job seekers rated responsiveness as most important to their candidate experience.
- **Want to hear back:** 75% of job seekers report never hearing back one way or another from a job they applied to, and that experience sticks.

The New Rules of Recruiting

Get an Applicant Tracking System

An applicant tracking system (ATS) can be integrated into your hiring strategy to help increase applicant traffic.

Data shows that adopting an ATS will [improve your hiring process](#):

- 86.1% of ATS users said it increased the speed at which they hire.
- 78.3% of ATS users said it improved the quality of candidates they hire.

An ATS can speed up the hiring process, automate tasks, designate workflows, and take the stress of organizing and communicating with job applicants off your plate. An ATS will give candidates a four-star hiring experience that will reflect positively on your organization, encourage them to recommend the process and delight your job candidates. Most importantly, an ATS can help you efficiently accomplish all the recommendations in this guide.

Write Great Job Postings

A job posting is the first impression job seekers have of your company. Crafting your job posting is what makes your open roles stand out from the crowd.

Here are our tips for writing excellent job postings:

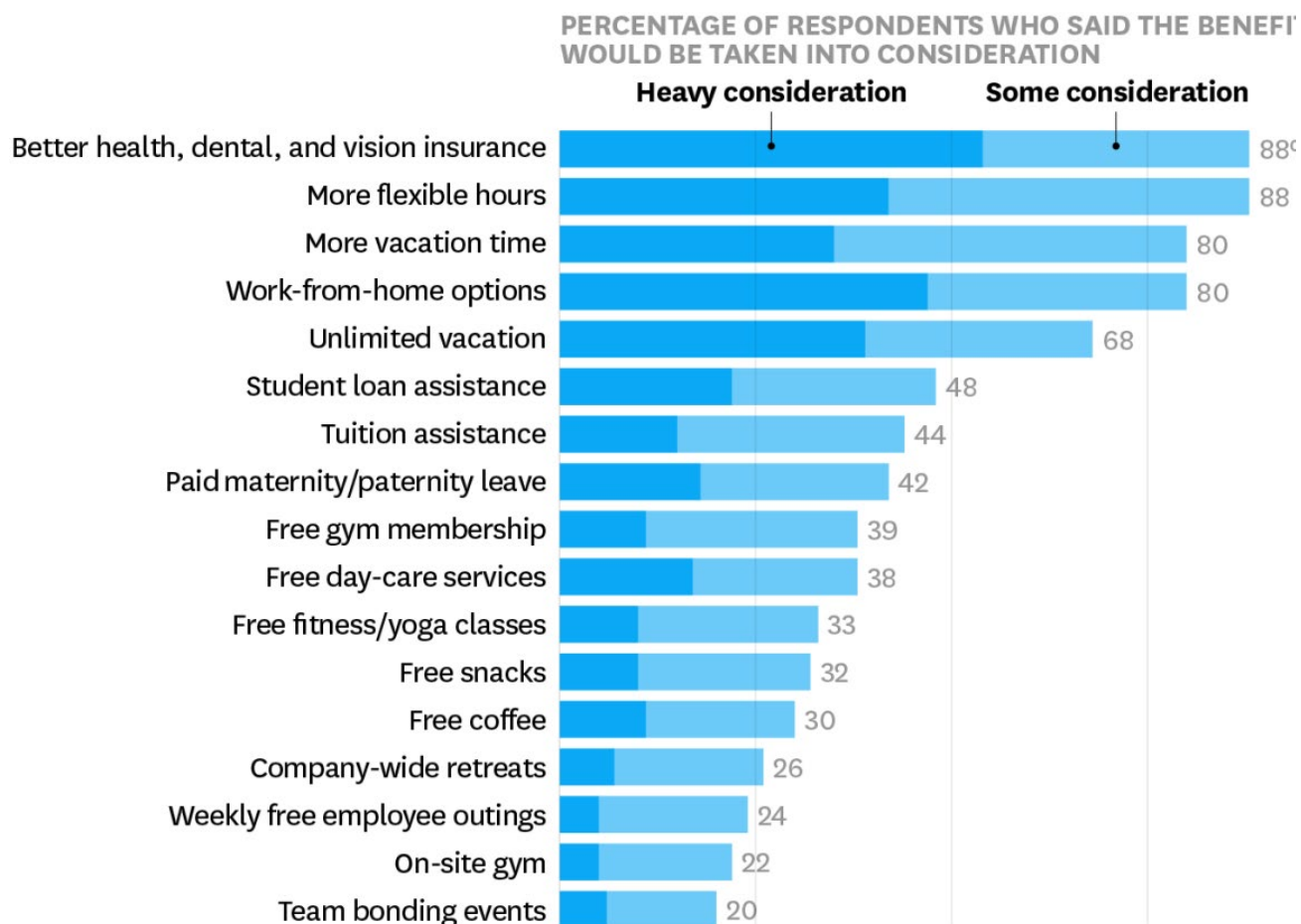
- **Use standardized job titles:** Using “Marketing Ninja” instead of “Marketing Manager” might seem cute, but it’s confusing.
- **The title should indicate the job:** Account Executive III is confusing, but Account Executive isn’t. Save the formal title and specifications for the job description.
- **Your posting should mirror company culture:** Make sure your language reflects the job and your company culture, and it’s targeting the kind of applicants you want to attract.
- **Use inclusive language:** You want as many qualified people as possible to apply for your job, so use language that includes everyone—we linked to a guide to inclusive language earlier in this guide.
- **Keep it concise:** [LinkedIn](#) found that job posts with 150 words or less got candidates to apply 17.8% more frequently than job posts containing 450-600 words. Keeping things concise is also better for the modern candidate who may be using a mobile device for their search—50% of job views on LinkedIn are on mobile devices.
- **Use job description keywords to stand out:** Hundreds of millions of job searches are conducted monthly through Google. While most reputable job boards do the work to ensure their postings are searchable in the major search engines, employers still have the most influence on ensuring your posting rises to the top of search engine results. This [Monster.com](#) article is an excellent guide to optimizing your job postings.
- **Consider adding multimedia:** [Infographics and videos](#) will help your posting reach the top of a search engine results page. It’s also a way to help your posting stand out from the crowd.
- **Format your post:** Use bold and bulleted lists to make your job description easy to read.
- **Be direct:** Candidates spend an average of 14-30 seconds on

your job posting, which means you need to cover the most important aspects of the job as soon as possible. [A study by The Ladders](#) tracked job seekers’ eye movement—candidates spent the most time reading the top and skimming the information at the bottom.

- **List your salary:** Include a salary range in your job posting. A joint Glassdoor/Harris poll found [67% of job seekers](#) look for salary when deciding whether or not to apply.
- **List benefits:** Much as salary is important to candidates, so are benefits. If you have them, list them! And remember that health insurance and PTO aren’t the only benefits to highlight. “High level of autonomy,” “room for growth,” and “flexible schedules” are all benefits to today’s job seekers.

Which Benefits Are Most Valued by Job Seekers?

When choosing between a high-paying job and a lower-paying one with better benefits, respondents said health insurance and flexible hours might tip them toward the latter.



Source: [Fractl](#)

- **Don't get too casual:** Some companies will go super playful, utilizing language like “Kickass rockstar wanted” or hashtags like “#Processobsessed.” While they're attempting to differentiate themselves from overly corporate-sounding language, [LinkedIn](#) found that candidates were 2x-4x less likely to apply to excessively casual job descriptions.
- **Keep true to your brand:** If your brand is overly casual, don't listen to us! These are just suggestions, after all. You need to be true to who your organization is.
- **Keep in mind what candidates are looking for:** We've covered what today's job seekers are looking for in a career. If your posting can speak to purpose, development, diversity, and flexibility, make sure it does!

Choose the Right Job Boards

[51% of today's job seekers](#) utilize job boards as part of their career search. Job boards are powerful for employers because they benefit recruiters trying to fill current openings and build a talent pipeline integral for keeping applicant traffic steady.

Define Your Needs

Too many prospective employers arbitrarily post on job boards without a strategy. When did you last think about what you need from a job board? Before your next post, create a list of required job board functionalities. Defining your job board needs allows you to choose which board works best rather than leaving it up to chance.

Understand Organic vs. Sponsored Job Boards

Some job boards are free to post at no cost. Organic postings will be organized by posting date in your chosen job board's search results or feeds. A job post published today will appear first in a job search conducted today, while a job posted a month ago will be later in the search results or feed.

Some free boards have premium or sponsored options to ensure posts appear more frequently and earlier in search results. Most sponsored posts have a time limit (30 days, for example), and after that, the post will revert to the unpaid version. Paid or premium boards require paying for every posting since these boards often have advanced networks or features.

Audit Competitors

What job boards are your competitors using? If your competitors gravitate towards a job board you've never utilized, there may be a reason. Research to see why. Conversely, what boards are your competitors eschewing? Posting to these (after researching and ensuring they work for your hiring goals) may give you a competitive advantage.

Consider Sponsoring Your Posts

Sponsored job posts can take your applicant traffic to the next level. Indeed reports that employers are 4.5x more likely to make a hire when they sponsor their job post, and ZipRecruiter finds sponsored posts receive 11x more applicants than organic posts. Let's explore the benefits of sponsoring job posts and discuss when it could give employers the competitive edge they seek.

The Benefits of Sponsored Posts

Increased Visibility: The primary benefit of sponsoring a job posting is increased visibility to generate a steady flow of candidates. Sponsoring a post on a job board will increase the visibility of a larger pool of potential candidates, which can be especially useful if you're targeting a specific group or filling a niche role.

Targeted Advertising: Many job boards allow you to target your sponsored post to specific locations, industries, or job types. This means you can reach the most relevant candidates for your open roles.

Faster Time-to-Hire: Sponsoring a post on a job board can help you fill your positions quicker, as it allows you to reach a larger pool of qualified candidates in a shorter amount of time and keeps your post top of mind for anyone using that job board. This is especially pertinent when you consider that [SHRM](#) finds it costs an average of \$454 a week (\$1800 a month) for a position to sit open.

Cost Effectiveness: Sponsoring a post on a job board is often more cost-effective than other advertising methods, such as Google or Newspaper ads or using a recruiter.

Utilize Referrals

85% of jobs are filled through networking. That's a powerful statistic to understand when revamping your recruiting strategy.

If you're already hiring amazing employees, why wouldn't you mine them to find more great hires? Setting up an employee referral program is incredibly easy and is proven to have great results:

- 47% of referral hires stay longer at companies.
- Employee voice is 3x more credible than a CEO's when talking about the company.
- Employee referrals statistically have the highest applicant-to-hire conversion rate.



Source: [Witszen.com](https://www.witszen.com)

We already talked about tailoring your recruiting to what candidates want. And job candidates want to be on social media:

- [79% of job applicants](#) use social media in their job search.
- 73% of millennials say they've found their last position through social media.
- 84% of organizations are now using social media for recruitment efforts.

The most important takeaway here is that if your organization is not utilizing social media, you should start. It's not only where job seekers are looking for new roles, but it's an excellent opportunity for you to demonstrate your employer brand.

Ensure Your Postings are Mobile Friendly

Mobile recruiting isn't going anywhere. Close to [90% of today's job seekers](#) utilize a mobile device as part of their search. You can't ignore the fact that 40% of applicants won't apply for a position if the job posting isn't mobile-friendly (and if you're here, we're assuming you can't afford to lose 40% of your potential applicants). You can improve your applicant traffic:

- **Ensure candidates know they can apply with their mobile device:** Promoting a job as mobile-friendly can improve the number of job applicants by 11.6%.
- **Create a QR code for your job application:** Creating a [QR code](#) means that job seekers with phones who see the posting in a paper, walking down the street, or as a current customer can quickly and easily access the application as soon as they see the code.
- **Ensure the entire application process is mobile-friendly:** We'll cover removing barriers more in the next section, but ensure that your job posting isn't only accessible via smartphone but that your entire application process is mobile-friendly.

Remove Common Barriers

Once you've optimized your job posts, reflected what job candidates want in your job description, marketed those to your target audiences, and got the postings in the right place, it's time to deliver your applicants a delightful candidate experience they'll reflect on positively, even if they aren't selected for the advertised role.

While abandoning a job application midway through occasionally can be chalked up to self-selection (the candidate realizes they aren't suited for the job), the bulk of candidates have predetermined they're suited for a role before applying. Abandoning a job application midway through indicates a barrier the candidate didn't deem your application worthy of overcoming.

Here are additional ways to remove barriers and drive more applicant traffic to your open positions:

- **Don't be redundant:** If you're having candidates upload a resume, ensure you have the technology in place to parse the resume...and then don't ask them to repeat the same information!
- **Cut down the number of questions asked:** Research shows applications with 20 screener questions lose 40% of candidates, with that percentage climbing as the questions do. When AT&T reduced screener questions on their applications by half, they saw candidate drop-off rate decline by 55% and the quality of their applicants increase.
- **Simplify your forms:** Since 60% of job seekers abandon applications because of length or complexity, you want every aspect of your application accessible, including the forms you have candidates fill out.
- **Make the interview process virtual:** You know what's a barrier? Taking off time from your current job to drive to an office, wait around for your turn, and then sit through a 20-40 minute in-person interview. You know what's a solution to that barrier? The virtual interview.

Brand Yourself

If you're marketing to customers, you should be marketing to job seekers! [HubSpot](#) defines employer branding as “your reputation among the workforce as well as your employees’ perception of you as an employer.” A good employer brand can reduce turnover by 28%, while 75% of active job seekers are likely to apply for a job with a strong employer brand.

Building a strong brand starts with the recruiting process, and if candidates have a bad recruiting experience—overwrought applications, miscommunication, or communication lags—they develop negative connotations with a brand.

Building and maintaining an employer brand takes time. This [Glassdoor guide](#) for building your employer brand is an invaluable resource.