

# Hiring Amid the Apply-Anyways Candidate Culture

Identify qualified talent in  
an overload of applicants

SPARK HIRE 





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# Introduction

The life cycle of the talent market rotates at an alarming rate. To stay relevant in a candidate-driven market, HR, hiring managers, and recruiters must keep a constant pulse on candidate expectations and how your organization stacks up against competitors.

One critical metric hiring and recruiting teams use to track the effectiveness of hiring practices and tools is Time to Hire. This single measurement of success impacts everything from applicant dropout to the candidate experience to offer acceptance to new hire attrition and more – hiring velocity can even affect employee performance and retention.

It's widely accepted to suspect the talent shortage and skills gap as culprits when hiring teams fail to fill crucial roles in a timely manner. But glaring discrepancies between candidate and hiring team experiences in the hiring process indicate there may be an unexpected underlying influence on hiring (or not) outcomes.

## About Our Research

Hiring velocity or the speed at which your hiring team can fill empty seats with high-quality talent is critical for company growth. To understand the barriers and opportunities of improving important hiring metrics by increasing speed to hire, our team at Spark Hire sourced insights from over one thousand HR, hiring, and recruiting professionals.

### Through our research, we sought to reveal



**If hiring speed is a concern among HR, hiring professionals, and recruiters**



**Common challenges for speed to hire**

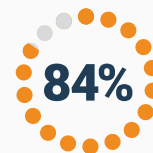


**How HR, hiring professionals, and recruiters globally believe they can reduce hiring time**

# Methodology

In October 2022, we distributed an elective survey to attendees of the BambooHR Summit collecting valuable insights from 1,126 respondents. Responses were received from 6 continents, and 29 countries including 382 reported as Other HR Professionals, 253 Managers, Human Resources, 93 Directors of HR, 85 considered Other Human Resources, 79 Associate or Entry-level, 71 Recruiters, 30 Sr. VPs of HR, 24 Sr. Managers, Human Resources, 24 C-Level professionals, and 170 who responded as Other HR specified.

## Key Takeaways



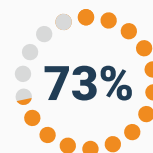
of respondents agree **Time to Hire** is a KPI their hiring team is **actively looking to improve**



The majority of respondents agree that **getting timely feedback from hiring managers** is a **major challenge** to the hiring process



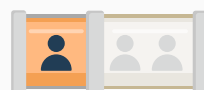
**Candidate drop-out** was the **#1 most cited challenge** to the hiring process



**Not enough qualified candidates** was stated by **73% of respondents** who chose to provide an 'other' response



**1 in 3** agree the biggest improvement they could make to their speed to hire is to **screen more candidates more efficiently**



**More than 1/3** of respondents agree they **lack the resources** they need to **build a healthy candidate pipeline**

# What is the Unqualified-Applicant Overload Crisis?

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In today's rapidly evolving job market, recruiters and hiring professionals face an overwhelming reality: the percentage of unqualified candidates applying to open jobs is higher than ever.

Research shows that the sweet spot for receiving a job interview that converts to a job offer is 21-80 applications.<sup>1</sup> As a result, candidates are recommended to apply to two to three jobs online daily.<sup>2</sup>

In the years directly preceding the 2020 Global Pandemic, the main issue plaguing hiring professionals was an inability to fill entry-level positions because of talent being overqualified.<sup>3</sup> Fast forward three years and we now struggle to fill empty seats due to a 'skills gap' and talent shortage of qualified applicants.

In fact, according to results from recent Spark Hire research, **73% of respondents who chose to fill in a response regarding the biggest challenge to their speed to hire stated that there are not enough "qualified" candidates, while a "high volume" of applicants caused notable delays.**

We compared responses across diverse industries from education

to government to IT, manufacturing, real estate, healthcare, and more. Results from our investigation aligned with annual data from the Workable Hiring Pulse Report showing a spike in both the time it takes to fill a job and the average number of candidates per hire – the latter more than doubling from January 2022 to January 2023.<sup>4</sup>

Recruiters, HR, and hiring professionals find themselves inundated with applications from candidates who are not qualified for the job. This slows early screening processes, making it harder for hiring teams to identify the highly-qualified talent quickly and advance them before potentially being offered a job by a competitor.

On average, only 42% of candidates will complete the hiring process from the application to the offer stage, and 66% of candidates will accept the first job offer.<sup>5</sup> With that in mind, 10% of over 3,600 candidates surveyed globally in 2022 admitted to dropping out of the hiring process because they received and accepted another offer.

Respondents stated, "HR professionals need to understand that candidates are always applying for multiple jobs."<sup>6</sup>



# The Impact of the Apply-Anyways Candidate Culture on Hiring

Delays in the hiring process can have a significant impact on everything from the candidate experience to your employer brand. Additionally, wasted time and resources spent sorting through unqualified candidates drain HR teams and deplete recruiting and hiring budgets, frequently leading to burnout and financial strain for recruiting, HR, and hiring teams.

Research has revealed, an overwhelming 98% of HR professionals admit to experiencing burnout, and 97% have felt emotionally fatigued by their job.<sup>7</sup> Add to this equation decreased productivity, morale, and motivation as current employees are forced to take on hefty workloads to cover for vacancies, and you have the perfect catalyst for skyrocketing turnover.

**Respondents to our survey who are actively trying to improve their Time to Hire agreed at an alarming rate (87%) that getting timely feedback from hiring managers is a major challenge.** Considering the implications of a slow hiring process caused by an influx of unqualified applicants, it's not surprising that recruiters, HR, and hiring managers have more on their plates than they can complete in a day.

Each day waiting on timely feedback costs your team quality contenders for open roles. In fact, 58% of candidates expect to hear back after their application in one week or less<sup>8</sup> – and top candidates are off the market in as little as ten days.<sup>9</sup>

Of those who make it into the hiring process, 45% of respondents in a recent report stated they have considered dropping out of the hiring process – more than a quarter didn't complete the hiring process on their own accord. The top reasons: the process was taking too long (39%), the hiring process was too complicated (37%), and there were too many touchpoints (27%).<sup>6</sup>





Not surprisingly, **candidate drop-out was the #1 most cited challenge to the hiring process** according to our recent survey.

What did surprise us, however, was while at least half of the respondents who are working to reduce their Time to Hire feel confident with their resources to build a healthy talent pipeline, **nearly 40% agree candidate drop-off is a top challenge to their hiring process.**

When top talent drops out of the hiring process due to long wait times, recruiters, HR, and hiring managers are resolved to select from apply-anyways candidates that may not be the best fit or the highest performers to add to their teams. Poor hiring decisions can have devastating consequences on your company culture, team morale, productivity, and performance.

Managing a disengaged or low-performing team adds to managers' workloads, increasing delays in hiring process collaboration. You essentially oil the machine that's unraveling your workforce.

Our research confirms that the root cause of this crippling hiring pattern and bottlenecks when collecting feedback from hiring managers could be complicated or complex hiring processes.



**1 in 4 respondents agree there are too many steps in the hiring process at their company**



**The majority (56%) of respondents who state Time to Hire is a KPI their team is actively trying to improve agree there are too many steps in their hiring process**



**Similarly, more than half feel their candidate screening process takes too long (54%)**

Unfortunately, candidate expectations are high and the apply-anyways candidate culture isn't going anywhere. More and more companies are encouraging candidates to apply even if they do not fit all of the requirements because they recognize the opportunity to discover high-potential or overqualified candidates.

As this trend gains momentum and more companies strip down requirements, more candidates will continue to apply to your open positions who may not meet your qualifications. The only solution is to improve your hiring process to accurately and quickly screen applicants and move high-quality candidates into the interview process faster.

## Improving Speed and Quality of Hire ‘Anyways’

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Tracking Time to Hire is not a groundbreaking metric. Most companies are painfully aware of the impacts of slow hiring times. Unfortunately, many hiring teams lack the resources and guidance they need to move the needle.

Our survey revealed **84% of respondents agree Time to Hire is a KPI their hiring team is actively looking to improve**. We also learned that **more than a third of the total respondents agree they lack the resources they need to build a healthy candidate pipeline** regardless of their current speed to hire goals. Worse yet, a whopping **87% of those working to improve this KPI confirmed their internal resources are insufficient to reach their hiring goals**.



**84%**

are actively looking to  
**improve their Time to Hire**



**87%**

of those looking to improve  
this KPI **lack internal resources**  
to reach their hiring goals.

To get a pulse on the pain points recruiters, HR, and hiring professionals have identified in their hiring processes, we asked respondents to offer insights into how they believe they can best reduce their hiring time and improve hiring outcomes.

The top 3 ways respondents agree they can improve speed to hire include:

- Screening more candidates more efficiently
- Learning more about candidates early in the hiring process
- Getting more timely feedback from hiring managers to advance top candidates faster



## Screen more candidates more efficiently

It's not surprising as recruiters and hiring teams struggle against a seemingly constant current of unqualified candidates that 1 in 3 respondents agree the biggest improvement they could make to their speed to hire is to screen more candidates more efficiently. It is **the #1 biggest improvement suggested overall**.



**1 in 3**

agree the biggest improvement they could make to their speed to hire is to **screen more candidates more efficiently**

The solution is simple. Adopt a structured interview process that allows recruiters and hiring managers to evaluate candidates based on the same key criteria to qualify for the job. Use this unbiased process to filter qualified candidates into the hiring process faster while ensuring you don't compromise on quality or fit.

Outdated candidate screening processes and tools are often the bottlenecks at this stage. And when you jam up the hiring process at the first step, you drastically decrease your chances of catching top talent at the top of your funnel.

If your team is experiencing delays moving from the applicant to the initial interview stage, you need to determine if the hangup is scheduling conflicts, the time your team spends on phone interviews, or if the issue is your team doesn't have the bandwidth to review enough candidates. Then, determine what process and tools you can update to be more efficient.

The best way to mitigate all of these conflicts is to update early interview practices and implement all-in-one hiring tools to create a seamless transition from early candidate screening to the offer stage. Look for intuitive software that allows your team to schedule, screen, evaluate, and communicate with candidates and team members to get offers out fast.



### Ensure a fair and efficient process



#### DON'T

work with a screening process that only allows one person to evaluate and provide feedback



#### DO

have a screening process that allows multiple people to evaluate and provide feedback

## Learn more about candidates early in the hiring process

Of the total respondents who are actively working to reduce their Time to Hire, **82% agree learning more about candidates earlier in the selection process would improve their hiring speed.**

While your ATS and candidate assessment tests can help to filter talent, there are limitations to some hiring technology that can cause high-quality candidates to slip through the cracks. The more reliable solution is to speed up early screening processes by getting talent in front of hiring decision-makers for 'human' assessments sooner.

One way to ensure a fair and efficient process is to **reduce or avoid screening processes that only allow one person to evaluate and provide feedback.** This reduces unconscious bias and the workload on one person, but also allows more people to connect with candidates early in the hiring process.

**Creating more meaningful connections** and making candidates feel seen early in the hiring process **improves your candidate experience** and encourages more top-rate talent to continue to in-person interviews.

You can also **provide a convenient channel for candidates to expand on application materials**, such as resumes/CVs/cover letters as a first step before in-person interviews to ensure only the best-fit candidates advance. Some highly-qualified candidates may not present themselves as well on paper as others you advance who end up not fitting the culture or values of your company.

By providing a way to assess for fit and expand on skills and experience personally in the first stage of consideration, your team saves time and resources and ensures the top candidates advance quickly.

## Get more timely feedback from hiring managers

When it comes to communication and collaboration between hiring decision-makers, there is a glaring problem. This issue was selected as a top response when considering challenges to the hiring process, the most time-consuming part of the hiring process, and how to improve and speed up the hiring process.

In fact, 85% of respondents looking to improve their hiring time agree getting timely feedback from hiring managers would reduce their Time to Hire. And of those not actively trying to improve their hiring time currently, **getting timely feedback from hiring managers was noted as the most time-consuming step in the hiring process after reviewing applications and resumes.**

The problem, in this case, is also part of the solution. You need to increase hiring managers' contributions to hiring decisions.

Have hiring managers weigh in at every stage of the hiring process – from evaluating what the team needs to updating job descriptions so new hires bring the most value to rating and providing feedback before extending offers – to help them feel more invested in the process.

**The #1 way to help hiring managers contribute to the hiring process is to optimize productivity by implementing solutions that allow them to multitask, reduce scheduling conflicts, and provide feedback conveniently.** Empowering hiring managers to weigh in on hiring decisions efficiently and effectively facilitates growth in their teams which helps better distribute workloads and adds long-term value for the company.

85%

of respondents looking to improve their hiring time agree getting timely feedback from hiring managers would reduce their Time to Hire



## Conclusion

Our research revealed Time to Hire is a widespread concern for recruiters, HR, and hiring managers, and the recent adoption of the apply-anyways approach to getting a job interview and offer is creating a major obstacle to improving speed to hire. Additionally, the majority of recruiters and hiring teams feel ill-equipped to navigate high-volume hiring or effectively build a healthy talent pool.

It could be hypothesized that if hiring velocity improves, candidates will hear back from recruiters and hiring professionals faster, reducing the pressure on talent to apply to jobs they are not qualified for.

**Until optimal hiring velocity is a metric hiring teams everywhere manage rather than stretch for, we can all take actionable steps to**



Update antiquated hiring practices



Build a hiring process that facilitates collaboration



Replace outdated hiring tools



Empower hiring decision-makers to identify quality candidates faster



# About Spark Hire



Spark Hire empowers more than 6,000 organizations to improve speed and quality of hire by making more informed and collaborative hiring decisions every day. Millions of candidates across 100+ countries have experienced exceptional convenience and personal connections through Spark Hire's innovative video interview software. With the easiest-to-use product, unmatched customer service, and fair & transparent pricing, Spark Hire has been the #1 rated video interview platform on the market for over a decade.



## Resources

1. [How many applications does it take to get a job?](#) [2023], Zippia
2. [How Many Applications Does It Take to Get a Job?](#), Indeed
3. [The Risks and Reward of Hiring Overqualified Talent](#), Spark Hire
4. [Monthly Hiring Pulse Report](#), Workable
5. [2022 Recruiting Benchmarks Report](#), NACE
6. [Hiring Reimagined](#), Sterling
7. [It's Official: HR Professionals are Finally Burnt Out](#), Workvivo
8. [2022 Candidate Experience Report](#), Greenhouse
9. [12 Recruiting Stats that Will Change the Way You Hire](#), OfficeVibe