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THE STATE OF
HIGH-VOLUME RECRUITMENT

Data, trends, and strategies for high-volume hiring success

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RECRUITMENT

INTRODUCTION:

According to a new study from Aptitude Research, 65% of companies have high-volume recruitment needs today. And, as hiring ramps up and companies look to scale, this percentage will likely increase. High-volume hiring is a critical area of talent acquisition that is too often misunderstood. Companies face unique pressures when recruiting high-volume candidates that require different strategies and solutions.

High-volume recruitment refers to the practice of filling a large number of positions in a short period of time. It encompasses more than hourly or gig workers and includes industries such as aerospace and defense, technology, and financial services. These companies must find quality talent while managing hundreds, or even thousands, of applicants. Unlike traditional corporate hiring, high-volume needs are extremely time-sensitive with speed-defining success. Over the past year, high-volume hiring intensified as many companies were forced to reduce time to fill from several weeks to several days. Unfortunately, for most companies, the result was time-consuming and ineffective.

As companies rethink their talent acquisition strategies for the next year, high-volume recruitment must be a priority. This report is based on data collected in February-June 2021, and looks at the state of high-volume recruitment and provides key recommendations for companies at any stage of the process.

According to
Aptitude Research,

65%

of companies have high-volume recruitment needs today.

What does this report cover?

Definition:
What is the definition of high-volume recruitment and how are companies changing the way they recruit for these positions?

Challenges:
What are the unique set of challenges companies face in high-volume recruitment?

Applicant Drop-off:
Where do most applicants drop-off of the process and what can companies do to ensure greater conversion rates?

Market Trends:
How do issues such as pay and vaccinations play a role in hiring for high-volume roles today?

Strategies:
What strategies should companies consider from recruitment marketing to onboarding?

Technology:
What capabilities can help improve high-volume recruitment?

Recommendations:
What should companies consider as they plan for the future of their high-volume recruitment needs?

aptitude research **Methodology**

Quantitative Research: 420 responses from Talent Acquisition Director Level and above across all industries and company sizes.

Qualitative Research: A series of interviews with companies pre-COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 from December 2020-July 2021

TOP FINDINGS:

1   "High-Volume" Is a Broad Category:

The greatest confusion around high-volume recruitment is the definition. Companies often look at a narrow definition of high-volume recruitment that is limited to hourly or gig workers. In fact, one in three companies define "high-volume" as hourly recruitment. The reality is that high-volume hiring is broader and impacts 65% of companies. It includes any company filling over 1,000 positions in a short period of time. As hiring ramps up this year, this study found that companies in a range of industries (including aerospace and defense, financial services, technology, and healthcare) all identified high-volume needs.

2   Candidates Are Dropping Off at the Apply Phase:

The area where most candidates drop-off is the apply phase (43%). Companies are losing quality talent early in the process. Although companies have invested in interviewing and onboarding over the past year, recruitment marketing and easy apply continue to be a challenge in high-volume recruitment. Companies must rethink how they are attracting candidates and reevaluate the apply process to see why they are losing talent early. One in three companies state that the apply process takes longer than 30 minutes for high-volume roles, and one in two companies do not have a mobile-optimized apply process.

3   A Traditional ATS Is Not Enough:

Sixty-five percent (65%) of companies with high-volume recruitment needs are not satisfied with their current ATS. Most traditional ATS systems are designed for corporate hiring and lack capabilities to support high-volume recruitment such as programmatic advertising, scheduling, or communication. High-volume recruitment technology must be simple, intuitive, and mobile responsive. Eighty-two percent (82%) of companies with high-volume hiring needs are increasing their investment in technology this year.

4   Pay Is a Challenge:

Pay and wages have long been a topic of debate in high-volume hiring. According to Aptitude Research, 70% of companies believe they are losing talent because of pay. Companies with low hourly rates or companies that do not offer competitive rates will not retain talent. **Aptitude Research found that one in two candidates drop off when they find out the pay for a position, and 30% of candidates learn about pay during the apply stage.** Not disclosing pay until later in the recruitment process is not the solution. Companies must consider their approach to compensation and the direct impact on talent acquisition and recruiting efforts.

5   Quality Is as Important as Efficiency:

Companies face pressure to fill high-volume positions as quickly as possible. Efficiency becomes the priority for many organizations with high-volume needs. They want to improve and streamline the talent acquisition process to reduce time to fill. Despite this focus on efficiency, 61% of companies stated that quality of hire is the most critical metric for success. As companies focus on improving the time it takes to fill positions, they must ensure they are engaging and hiring the right talent.

DEFINING **HIGH-VOLUME RECRUITMENT**

The term "high-volume recruitment" is widely misunderstood and is often applied exclusively to gig workers and hourly roles. According to a survey conducted by Aptitude, 33% of companies do indeed classify hourly workers as "high-volume" hires. But the actual definition extends far beyond this subset of workers.
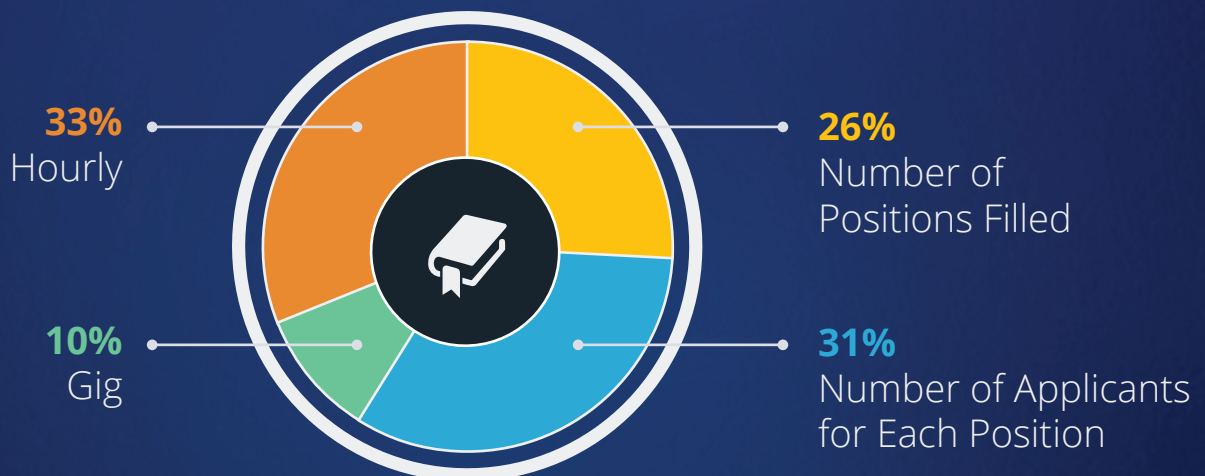
High-volume recruitment refers to the recruitment of a larger number of people within a relatively short period of time. The same survey from Aptitude revealed more than half of respondents define "high-volume" based on the number of applicants for each position (31%) or the number of positions filled (26%; see Figure 1).

In this report, high-volume hiring is defined as hiring for more than 1,000 positions at a time or receiving more than 1000 applications per position.

Industries outside of gig that might also employ high-volume recruitment include (but are not limited to):

- **Companies looking to scale business quickly or that have experienced sudden growth**
- **Customer service and call center representatives**
- **Healthcare staff**
- **Seasonal financial services (e.g., tax professionals, accountants)**
- **Data entry specialists and statisticians**

Figure 1: *Definition of High-Volume Recruitment*

33%
Hourly

26%
Number of
Positions Filled

10%
Gig

31%
Number of Applicants
for Each Position

This broad definition of high-volume recruitment makes it clear why most companies are impacted by it in some way. Aptitude Research found that 82% of companies are continuing or increasing their high-volume recruitment efforts this year, while only 14% of companies are decreasing their high-volume hiring (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: *Increased Number of High-Volume Hiring*

4%
Don't Know

24%
Remain
the Same

14%
Decreasing

58%
Increasing

HIGH-VOLUME RECRUITMENT
IN THE MODERN WORKFORCE

As hiring activities pick up, most of the discussions focus on the labor shortage and the challenges that companies face with finding talent available and interested in working. Many companies believe that with extended unemployment benefits and the global pandemic, people would prefer to not work. The reality, however, is more complex. Aptitude Research found several factors that contribute to trends in high-volume recruitment today, including:

Safety

Vaccinations

Pay

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Safety

Aptitude Research surveyed over 400 employees at the end of 2020, and the greatest challenge facing workers was the fear of returning to work. Many employees and candidates want flexibility in their job and are not ready to return to an office environment for the long-term. Conversely, employers are still planning for the future of the workplace and want to consider what options they have available. Employees face new pressures, including childcare, that make a traditional work environment challenging. This fear of returning to work, for many individuals, is greater than the fear of losing their job or financial loss (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: *Challenges Facing Employees Today*

Fear of returning to work	39%
Financial stress	35%
Fear of losing my job	34%
Communication with my boss	26%

According to Aptitude Research,

59%

of companies are asking their high-volume workers to get vaccinated.

Vaccinations

According to the CDC, "The federal government does not mandate (require) vaccination for individuals. For some healthcare workers or essential employees, a state or local government or employer, for example, may require or mandate that workers be vaccinated as a matter of state or other law."

Although the government is not mandating vaccinations, employers can still ask job applicants about their COVID-19 vaccination status as they try to protect staff and customers. According to Aptitude Research, 59% of companies are asking their high-volume workers to get vaccinated in 2021.

Companies must consider the questions they ask during the interview process and onboarding process to ensure that they are only addressing the safety of their workers. Any follow-up questions that would reveal a disability would be a violation of the American Disability Act (ADA). Companies must also consider that some candidates do not want to get vaccinated for religious reasons.

Pay

Pay is not a new topic in high-volume recruitment, but it is one that plays a major role in decision-making today. According to Aptitude Research, 70% of companies believe they are losing high-volume talent because of pay. Companies with low hourly rates or companies that do not offer competitive rates will lose candidates in the process. Aptitude Research found that 44% of candidates that drop-off in the process do so when they find out the pay for a position, and 30% of candidates learn about pay during the apply stage. Not disclosing pay until later in the recruitment process is not the solution. Companies must consider their approach to compensation and the direct impact on talent acquisition and recruiting efforts.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is a top priority for organizations today, yet only 66% of companies with high-volume recruitment needs are focused on DEI this year, compared to 82% of traditional corporate hiring. As companies look to fill positions as quickly and cost-effectively as possible, they can not ignore bias in the talent acquisition process. Every high-volume candidate must receive a fair and equitable experience when being considered for a role. Yet, when talent acquisition leaders are asked what steps they take to reduce bias, most companies focus on training programs. While these programs can provide insights and education, they often just check a box in reducing bias. They do not fundamentally address the problem.

Figure 4: *Reducing Bias in Talent Acquisition*

|	2019	2020
USE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION SOLUTIONS	47%	46%
TRAIN RECRUITERS AND HIRING MANAGERS	40%	63%
USE BIAS-FREE JOB DESCRIPTIONS	37%	48%
USE D&I STATEMENT ON CAREER SITES	31%	48%
CREATE A CONSISTENT INTERVIEW PROCESS	22%	55%
USE AI SOLUTIONS	12%	27%

TOP CHALLENGES:

In addition to these trends in the modern workforce impacting high-volume recruitment, companies face several challenges, including candidates not interested in applying for jobs, high drop-off rates, and the ability to find quality hires. Retention of talent and competition for talent are also points of frustration for companies today (See Figure 5).

Figure 5:
Top Challenges in High-Volume Recruitment

48% FIND QUALITY HIRES

42% CANDIDATES NOT INTERESTED IN APPLYING

39% HIGH DROP-OFF RATES

22% RETAIN TALENT

21% COMPETE FOR TALENT

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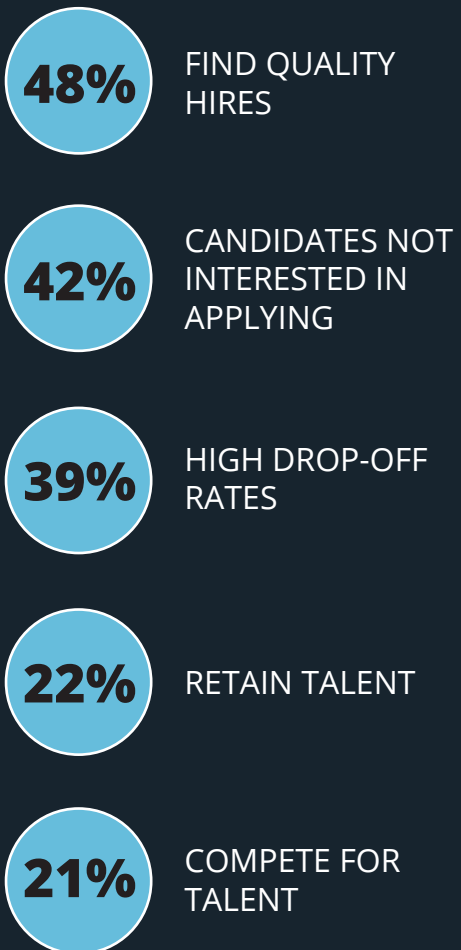
Finding Quality Hires:

Even high-volume companies that are focused on speed understand the importance of quality in the hiring process. Quality of hire impacts productivity, retention, and performance of a new hire and requires companies to define what success looks like in a role. Sixty-four percent of companies hiring for high-volume roles have no standardization around how quality of hire is measured.
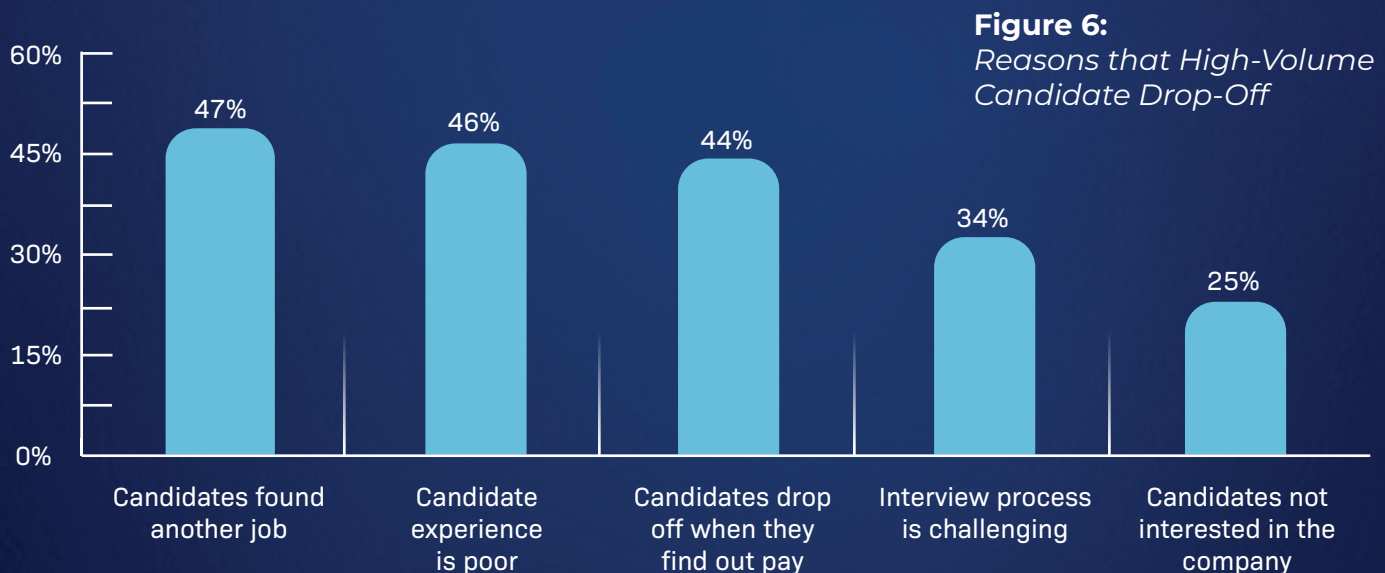
Candidates Not Interested in Applying:

With the labor shortage, companies are not seeing as many candidates applying for jobs this year. Sixty-seven percent (67%) stated that they are getting less candidates applying for jobs this year than last year. Many candidates are not returning to work for the reasons discussed earlier in this report. Also, companies must consider the impact that COVID-19 has had on an individual's health and personal life. For example, studies have reported that 2.2 million women left the workforce in the past year related to the pandemic.

High Drop-off Rates:

A long time challenge in high-volume recruitment, companies have struggled with high drop-off rates and understanding what influences these decisions. The area where most candidates drop-off is during the apply phase (43%). Companies are losing quality talent early in the process. Although companies have invested to improve interviewing and onboarding over the past year, recruitment marketing and easy apply continue to be a challenge in high-volume recruitment. One in three companies state that the apply process takes longer than 30 minutes for high-volume roles, and one in two companies do not have a mobile-optimized apply process.

When asked why candidates are dropping off early in the process, they cited that they had found other jobs, had a poor candidate experience, or were not interested due to low pay. Companies also identified issues with the employer brand and not wanting to work for the company, as well as a challenging interview process (see Figure 6).

Figure 6:
Reasons that High-Volume Candidate Drop-Off

Reason	Percentage
Candidates found another job	47%
Candidate experience is poor	46%
Candidates drop off when they find out pay	44%
Interview process is challenging	34%
Candidates not interested in the company	25%

The next section of this report will address the strategies companies should consider to overcome these challenges and improve the drop-off rate.

KEY **STRATEGIES**

Companies with high-volume recruitment needs must consider different strategies and technology solutions. High-volume recruitment requires simplicity, efficiency, and effectiveness. Currently, 82% of companies are rethinking their strategies and technology around high-volume recruitment this year. When asked what areas companies will reevaluate, recruitment marketing, screening, and sourcing remained top of the list (see Figure 7). Companies are focused on early phases of talent acquisition. They are looking for ways to identify the right talent, but often neglect how hiring decisions are made in the interview, assessment, and onboarding phases.

As companies look at each of these areas, they should consider the following:

Improve the Manager or Recruiter Experience:

The candidate experience is directly impacted by a good or bad hiring manager or recruiter experience. Managers and talent acquisition professionals are under pressure to balance a heavy workload without support, and they must remain flexible.

Req Workload:
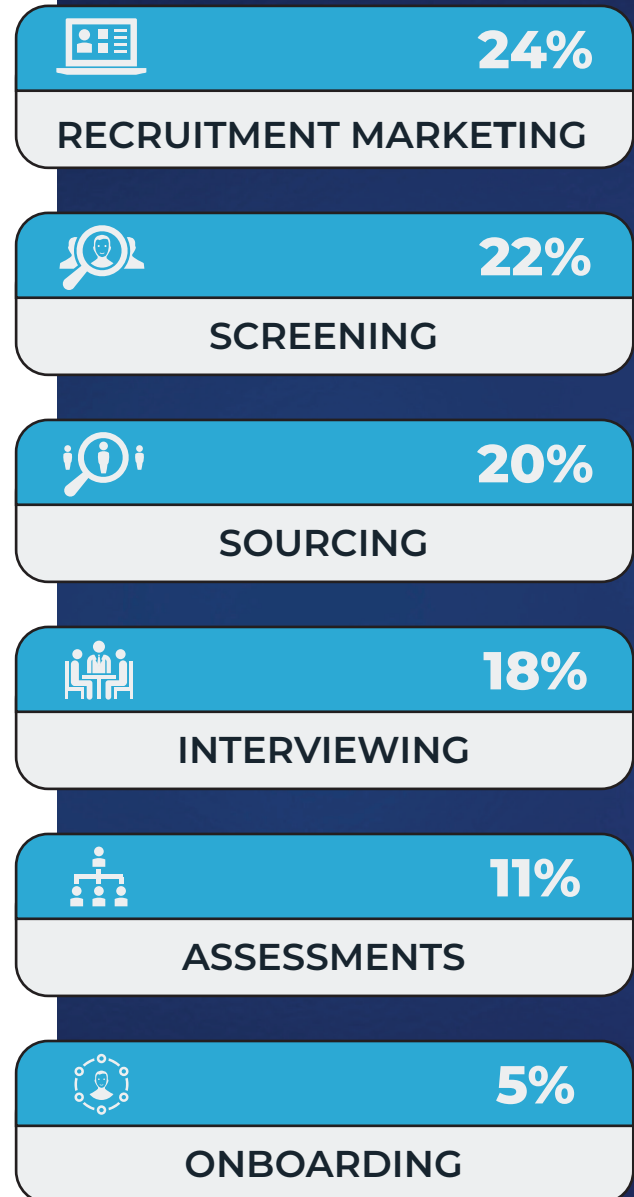**Thirty percent (30%) increase in requisition workload since 2020.**

Doing More with Less:
Limited resources on TA function with 40% layoffs and limited budgets.
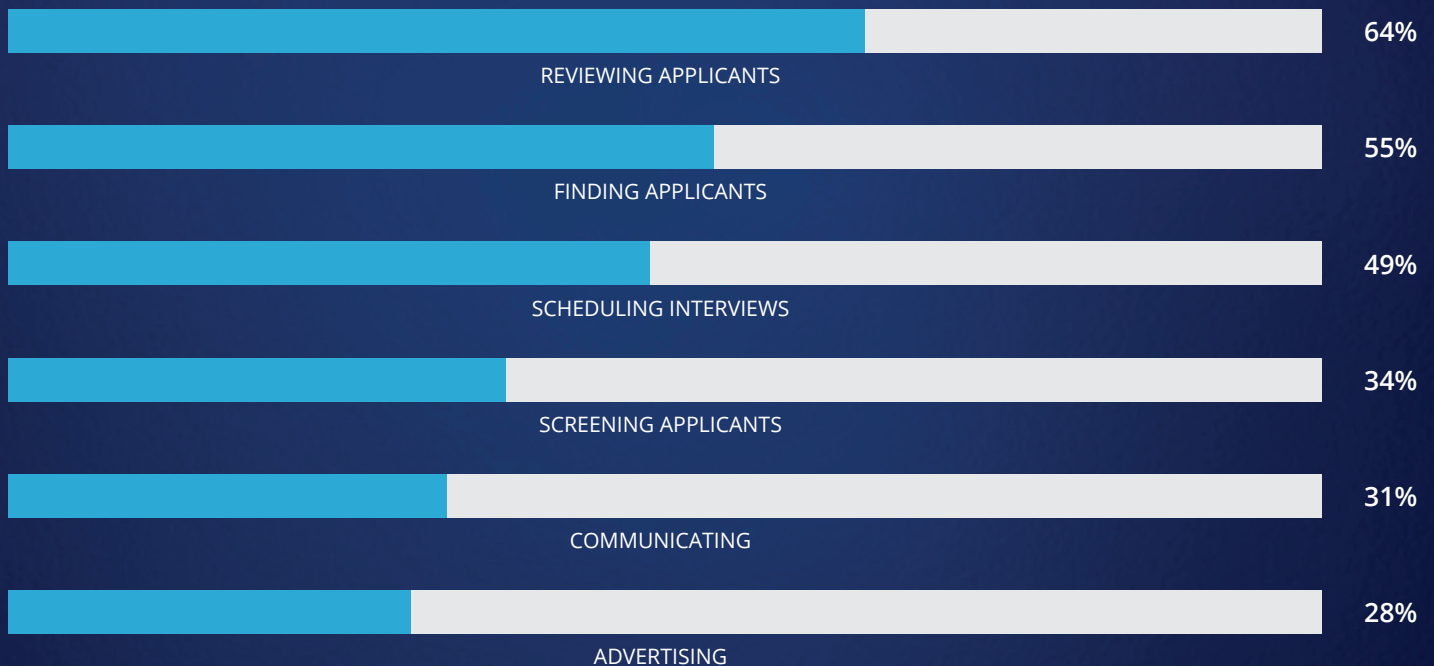
Administrative Tasks:
Spend an average of 16 hours a week scheduling and 10 hours a week finding candidates in the ATS.

Figure 7: *Areas of Talent Acquisition That Companies Are Reevaluating*

24%
RECRUITMENT MARKETING

22%
SCREENING

20%
SOURCING

18%
INTERVIEWING

11%
ASSESSMENTS

5%
ONBOARDING

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The role of the recruiter has become incredibly complex and 30% of recruiters are feeling burned out this year. Recruiters spend most of their time reviewing and finding applicants and scheduling interviews.

Figure 8: *Recruiters' Administrative Tasks*

Task	Percentage
REVIEWING APPLICANTS	64%
FINDING APPLICANTS	55%
SCHEDULING INTERVIEWS	49%
SCREENING APPLICANTS	34%
COMMUNICATING	31%
ADVERTISING	28%

Understand the Candidate Journey:

The candidate journey for high-volume roles is different than traditional hiring. Companies do not always have the same touchpoints or opportunities to engage talent throughout the process. Candidates have different expectations around the experience, including greater simplicity, transparency, and feedback. Companies must understand the candidate journey and go through the process. At a basic level, companies should consider:

- **Applying for a job to experience what the candidate will go through**
- **Shortening the apply process so that candidates can easily apply for a job**
- **Investing in scheduling and self-scheduling solutions during the interview process**
- **Providing relevant and engaging information to new hires on what to expect in the new role**
- **Communicating with candidates using the tools they want to use**

Figure 9: *Traditional Recruiting vs. High-Volume Recruiting*

	Traditional Recruiting	High-Volume Recruiting
Recruitment Marketing	Focus on career site and content relevant to traditional hires	Focus on employer brand and create pipelines of ready-now talent Ensure communication options through SMS/text, conversational AI, or messaging
Sourcing	Sourcing expertise and focus heavily on sites for professional hiring	Automate job advertising and job posting Candidates can apply in minutes through text-to-apply with geolocation to provide opportunities
Screening	Manually screen candidates and engage with them throughout the process	Automated screening of candidates Synchronous and asynchronous videos in the process
Assessing	Traditional assessments that take one hour or longer to complete and require analysis	Shorter assessments that are game-based and engaging
Interviewing	Interview process through video or in-person interviews Automated interview scheduling	Automated interview scheduling Synchronous or asynchronous video interviews or in-person interviews
Onboarding	Orientation Forms management or new hire portal to engage with company culture	Simple forms management New hire engagement with information critical to starting a position

Address the Drop-Off Rate:

Companies can improve the drop-off rate by first understanding why candidates are not moving forward. Companies must consider why candidates are dropping off and what inefficiencies that they can improve. A few strategies to improve the drop-off rate include:

- **Improving and reducing the application process to several minutes**

- **Shortening any assessments used to several minutes**

- **Automating the screening process so candidates can move forward**

- **Communicating with candidates frequently throughout the process**

Define Your Metrics:

Success for high-volume recruitment may look different from traditional corporate recruitment. Companies must consider the metrics and KPIs that will influence their recruitment efforts and drive success within their organization. Several metrics that companies should consider in high-volume recruitment include:

Efficiency Metrics:

- Conversion rates
- Time to fill
- Time to apply
- Recruiter productivity
- Time to interview
- Cost savings

Quality

- Quality of applicants
- Quality of hire
- First year retention

Experience metrics:

- Candidate experience
- Diversity of sources
- Diversity of hires
- Hiring manager experience
- Recruiter experience

TECHNOLOGY OPTIONS:

Traditional recruitment technology and applicant tracking systems (ATS) are not designed for high-volume candidates. They do not always offer the capabilities to support companies filling large positions. One strategy that companies should consider is investing in technology solutions designed for high-volume to automate and simplify the process.

Most companies are still confused by what should be automated and how it can improve decision making. While automation has transformed many other business areas, including marketing, supply chain, and sales, recruitment is still immature in its adoption of these solutions. Only 27% of enterprise companies are planning to automate more than 50% of their talent acquisition processes this year, and most of those companies are just automating the application process. Automation can significantly improve high-volume recruitment by improving efficiency and reducing the administrative burden placed on recruiters and hiring teams.

Sixty-five percent (65%) of companies with high-volume recruitment needs are not satisfied with their current ATS. Most traditional ATS systems are designed for traditional corporate hiring and lack capabilities to support high-volume recruitment such as programmatic advertising, scheduling, or communication. High-volume recruitment technology must be simple, intuitive, and mobile-responsive. The less systems that companies need to manage, the better. Eighty-two percent (82%) of companies with high-volume hiring needs are increasing their investment in technology this year.

A few capabilities that these companies should consider include:

Programmatic Job Advertising:
Unlike traditional job advertising models that are slow and time-consuming, a programmatic approach solves an immediate need for companies today – greater efficiency. Companies state that the key driver for technology decisions is reducing time to fill and improving overall efficiency. By streamlining advertising and targeting the right candidates, the process of attracting and recruiting talent improves significantly. Aptitude Research found that for companies using programmatic job advertising, 90% are either continuing to invest or will increase their spend this year (see Figure 10).

Figure 10: *Investment in Programmatic*

10%

33%

57%

● Increasing   ● Decreasing

● Remain the Same
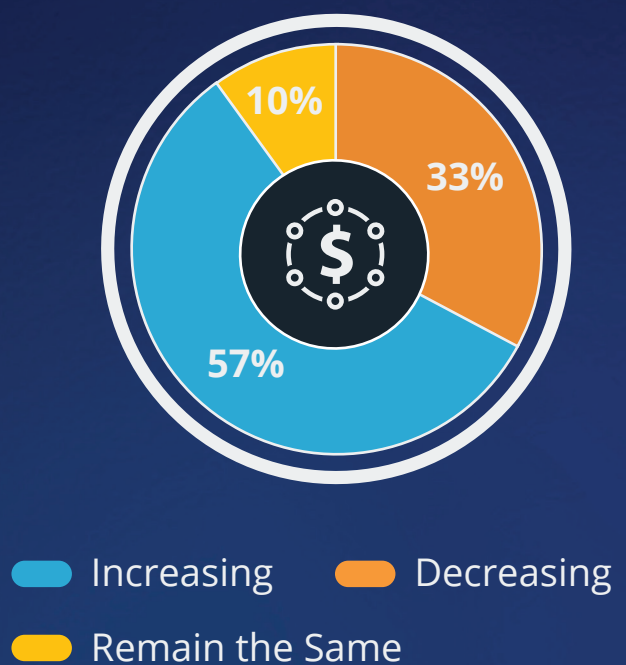
Automated Screening:

Aptitude Research found that organizations that invest in strategic screening solutions significantly improve the candidate experience and retention of quality employees. Candidates receive a fair process when automation is used, reducing the human decision-making process. According to a recent talent acquisition survey by Aptitude Research, hiring organizations cite screening as a top replacement need in 2021.

Some of the trends impacting screening for high-volume candidates include:

- **Over 80% of organizations use screening**
- **Thirty-nine percent (39%) do not screen for every job**
- **Nearly three-quarters (76%) are confident they get senior support for background screening**

Interviewing:

Digital interviewing includes scheduling, video, and communication capabilities for companies looking to better manage, track, and measure the interview process. The pandemic accelerated the investment in digital interview solutions. In February 2020, less than 60% of companies were using or planning to use video interview providers. One year later, 74% of companies are using or planning to use video interview providers. When recruiters and managers have digital interviewing tools, they can improve both the candidate experience and coach managers on best practices. Digital interviewing platforms, whether on demand or live, can help ensure better consistency within an organization when it comes to interviewing and evaluating candidates.

- **Companies have increased their investment in interviewing from 60% in 2019 to 74% in 2021**
- **One in two companies state that interviewing is their greatest priority this year**
- **One in three companies state that scheduling is the most important capability in interviewing solutions**

Candidate Communication:

As companies continue to recruit remotely, communication is an important consideration. Talent acquisition must provide more information to candidates, recruiting teams, and hiring managers to meet expectations. Companies must consider multiple forms of communication such as text, video, chat, and messaging.

KEY **RECOMMENDATIONS**

As companies look to improve their high-volume recruitment strategies this year, below are some recommendations to consider:

Simplify the Process:
Most high-volume candidates are dropping off at the apply stage, especially when applying for a job can take over 30 minutes. Companies must look closely at their recruitment process and ensure that it is as simple as possible. The apply process is a great place to start for companies looking to simplify the process for candidates.

Invest in Technology for High-Volume:
Companies that are leveraging traditional ATS providers will face challenges with the candidate experience, efficiency, and communication. High-volume technology solutions address the unique challenges that companies face and provide a simple and intuitive candidate experience.

Don't Ignore Quality:
Efficiency is the primary concern for many high-volume hiring needs, but companies should not ignore quality. Companies need to consider attracting the right talent and then, defining, measuring, and improving quality of hire.
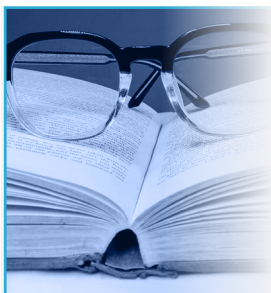
Define Success:
Success for high-volume recruitment may look different from traditional corporate recruitment. Companies must consider the metrics and KPIs that will influence their recruitment efforts and drive success within their organization.

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Aptitude Research is a leading human capital management (HCM) research and advisory firm. Our in-depth research and vendor assessments help HR leaders develop a deep understanding of the HCM technology landscape, including talent acquisition and engagement, to ultimately make better purchase decisions.

Our flagship research, The Aptitude Index Report: Talent Acquisition Systems (2021), delivers a comprehensive look at talent acquisition trends and technology. This knowledge, combined with ourconsulting and advisory services, enables companies to save time, money and improve the recruiting, hiring and workforce management experience.

Founded by leading analyst Madeline Laurano and based in the Boston area, Aptitude Research provides a wealth of HCM expertise to companies, vendors and investors. View our recent and upcoming research at **www.AptitudeResearch.com** or connect with us on **Twitter** or **LinkedIn**.

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