

greenhouse

Cut through pipeline chaos

A recruiter's guide to bring
simplicity back to hiring



What's inside

03

Introduction

04

Section 1

A snapshot
of today's hirings

11

Section 2

The real business risks
of inefficiency

15

Section 3

Bringing clarity to
the top of the funnel

22

Your mission

Learn to cut
through the noise



Why hiring today feels harder than ever

If identifying the right candidates feels harder than ever, you're not alone. The talent landscape has changed – and not for the better.

Talent acquisition (TA) teams are caught between conflicting forces. Leadership expects them to do more with leaner teams, while application volume keeps rising. Candidates still expect speed, efficiency and clear communication. The result? Stress for recruiters, substandard experiences for candidates and growing risk for the business.

Recruiters are overwhelmed by sheer volume and are now expected to detect candidate fraud – a responsibility most aren't trained for. Clarence Lal, Global Head of Talent Acquisition at Planet Labs PBC, mentions, "We're (also) seeing a huge uptick in phishing campaigns." Moving too slowly can damage the employer brand, but moving too quickly with fraudulent candidates introduces risk to the business.

Candidates are conflicted too. They want personalised experiences, but many lean on AI to speed up applications. As [The Wall Street Journal](#) noted, jobseekers are using AI tools to mass-apply for hundreds of roles in just a few clicks – flooding recruiters with well-meaning but often unqualified applicants.

Top-of-funnel chaos and inefficiency translate directly into lost revenue, higher costs, strained teams and increased risk. But within that challenge lies an opportunity: recruiting can not only hire faster and better, but also shift its role from a perceived cost centre to a recognised driver of business value.

This guide shows how you can navigate today's chaotic landscape without compromising candidate experience. Let's dive right in.

Section 1

A snapshot of today's hiring challenges

Today's chaotic hiring landscape by the numbers

Here are a few of the current trends that are leading to increased pressure for recruiters and talent acquisition (TA) teams.



Recruiting teams are leaner than ever

24% ↓

The average number of recruiters per org dropped from 10.6 in 2021 to 8.1 in 2025 (a 24% decrease).*

*Data source: Greenhouse platform data (all users), August 2025





Kira James

Applied: Aug 12

App status Pending review

1.2K candidates

Application volume is overwhelming these reduced recruiting teams

239% ↑

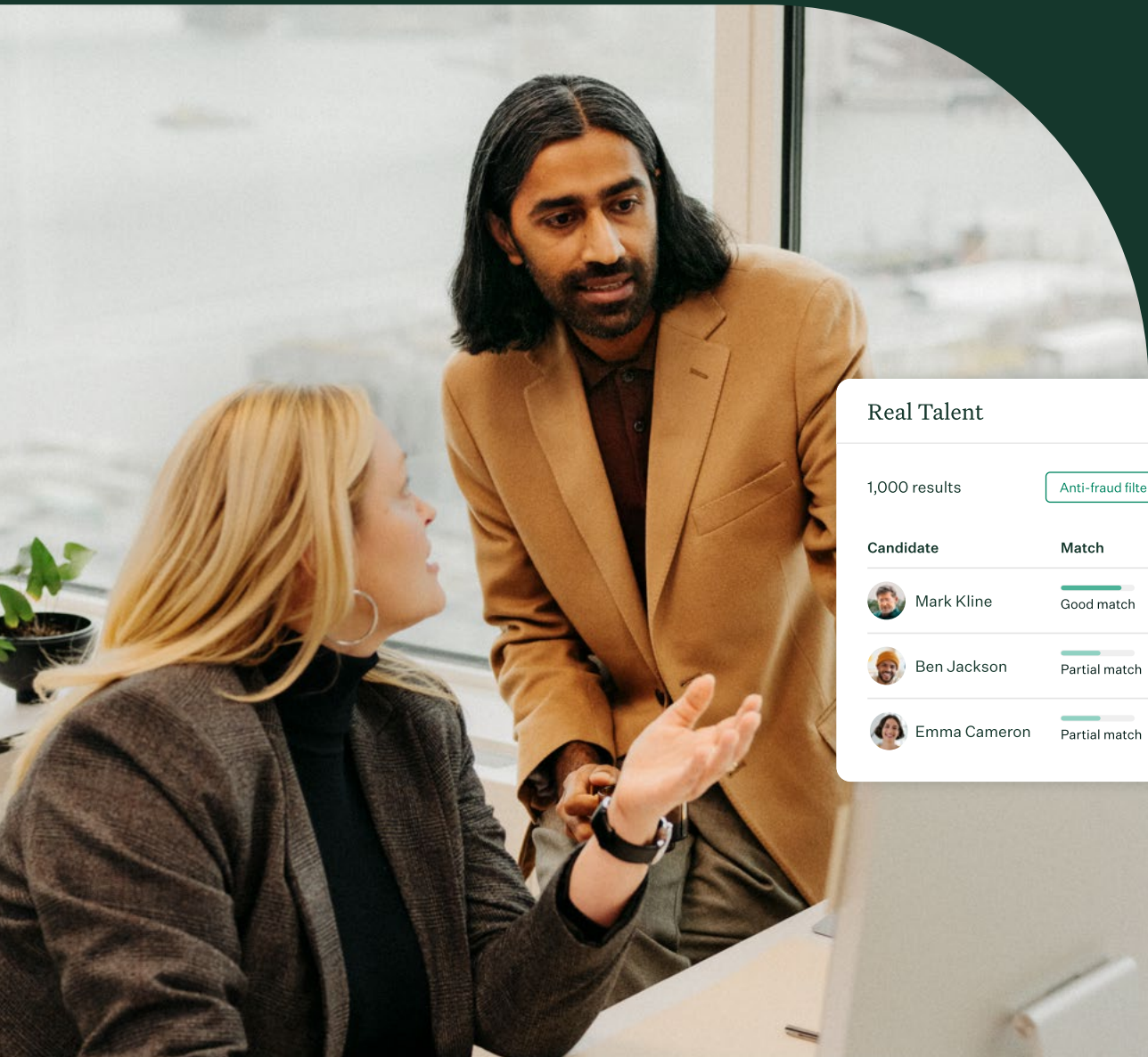
Recruiters now manage about one-third fewer roles than in 2021 (down from 16 per recruiter to 10), but each role attracts far more candidates – rising from an average of 28 applications per job in 2021 to 95 per job in 2025 (a 239% increase).

The result? The average recruiter is handling three times the number of applications.

Many candidates are using AI to ease their application process



A plurality of candidates in the [2025 Greenhouse Workforce Report](#) say they’ve used AI agents to apply for roles on their behalf.



Real Talent

Calibrate match score

1,000 results

Anti-fraud filters

Advanced filters

Candidate	Match	Fraud filters
Mark Kline	<div><div></div></div> Good match	Not verified
Ben Jackson	<div><div></div></div> Partial match	Verified CLEAR
Emma Cameron	<div><div></div></div> Partial match	Fraud alert

Candidate fraud is on the rise

28%

of US candidates even say they've used AI to generate fake work samples or portfolios. Additionally, according to [Gartner](#), one in four job candidate profiles worldwide will be fake by 2028.




Filter for fraud

Emma Cameron



Fraud detected

A large, stylized fingerprint graphic in a dark teal color, positioned in the upper left corner of the page.

Friction is thinning candidates' patience and eroding trust

7%

The Workforce Report also showed only 7% of global jobseekers think the market favours candidates, yet a poor candidate experience will still turn off top applicants. Half of US candidates have ghosted employers, and nearly half globally abandon applications when forced to re-enter CV information. This isn't candidate leverage – it's inefficiency eroding trust on both sides.






The US talent market has also shown signs of slowing. There were fewer jobs and higher unemployment than expected in July 2025, according to the [US Bureau of Labor Statistics job report](#). Laura Ullrich, the director of economic research in North America at the Indeed Hiring Lab, described it as a “low hire, low fire” job market.

In this environment, TA leaders are under even greater pressure to do more with less. While tools promise to help alleviate TA team stress, they often add to the noise instead. On one side, vendors are consolidating categories by merging capabilities and expanding feature sets, making it difficult for companies to know which solutions truly streamline hiring. On the other, recruiters are being pushed to adopt AI without clear strategies or guidance, creating more confusion than efficiency. Together, these trends make it harder for TA leaders to find the right tools to cut through the noise and take back control of the top of the funnel.

The real business risks of inefficiency



A large, stylized fingerprint graphic in a dark teal color, positioned in the upper right corner of the page, partially overlapping the quote.

“Our concerns are just much more focused around efficiency, anything to go faster because we have to deal with a very high candidate volume to get a hire.”

Adam Sibson

Director of Talent Acquisition at Whatwapp

Hiring inefficiencies don't just frustrate recruiters – they ripple across the business. When critical roles sit unfilled longer than they should, costs climb and teams stall. When the wrong candidates are hired, productivity suffers and employee turnover rises. And when candidate experiences break down, employer brand and trust take a direct hit. These aren't just recruiting headaches – they're real roadblocks to growth. In the next section, we'll look at how inefficiencies in the funnel show up as tangible risks to cost, productivity and reputation.

Extended time-to-hire drives up recruiting costs

Chaotic, inefficient processes slow everything down – from scheduling interviews to gathering feedback. The result is longer time-to-hire, which drives up costs in several ways. Your company might need to turn to external sources – like costly agencies – to fill critical roles. And the longer a role remains unfilled, the more business impact you lose. [Employee lifetime value \(ELTV\)](#) – the total contribution an employee makes during their tenure – shrinks when start dates are delayed, because you're shortening the window of time they can deliver results.

Delays also create ripple effects across existing teams. While you wait to fill a role, current employees are forced to absorb the extra workload, which can lead to burnout, employee turnover or mistakes that slow the business down even further. In other words, inefficiencies at the top of the funnel hurt future performance while actively damaging today's team health.

Mis-hires cost your company both directly and indirectly

Rushed and inconsistent hiring processes also increase the risk of mis-hires. When recruiters are buried under chaotic application volume, it's harder to evaluate candidates thoroughly or consistently. Hiring someone who's not the right fit for your organisation can add up quickly in both direct costs, like hiring manager and other interviewer time and job ads, plus indirect expenses, like training costs and productivity losses.

And beyond these immediate expenses, a mis-hire undermines ELTV. Instead of ramping into long-term contribution, the hire either underperforms or leaves early, cutting off the value you expected them to generate. The time and resources spent hiring, onboarding and managing them are sunk costs – and you have to start over to find the right person.

Meanwhile, the role remains unfilled longer, existing employees pick up the slack, and team productivity and morale suffer.

iNIZIO

The hidden cost of fragmented recruiting

Inizio is a scaled commercialisation platform that unlocks, activates and optimises value for pharma and biopharma. Each of its 33 subsidiary companies had its own recruiting/HR teams and unique hiring processes, and they were relying on nearly 200 external agencies to fill in recruiting gaps. While agencies may sometimes play a valuable role, the sheer volume and fragmentation made the process unsustainable (and expensive). When Global Head of Talent Acquisition (TA) and Operations Lori Hawthorne ran an analysis, she discovered this was costing the company millions of dollars.

[Learn more about how Inizio streamlined its approach and reduced agency spending by more than 50% here.](#)

Damage to your employer brand costs your company in terms of reputation – and potentially revenue, too

Clearly, inefficiencies aren't the result of slow-moving recruiters, but of the chaos clogging the funnel and causing delays. Candidates already in process can slip away simply because feedback takes too long or updates never arrive. As Rama Sudha, Senior Talent Partner at PubNub, put it, "Sometimes the perfect candidate might be the 1,800th in the list, but getting there can take me two or three days of going through everyone else first."

That delay risks losing top talent, erodes candidate trust in your process and can damage your employer brand. And speaking of harming your employer brand, the [Greenhouse Workforce Report](#) also showed that more than half of candidates (54%) who have a negative experience say they're likely to or will definitely talk about it with their significant other, close friends, colleagues and peers. And that's not all – a [Survale Report](#) showed that 25% of technology candidates reported that as a result of a bad candidate experience, they would never do business with that employer again.



Bringing clarity to the top of the funnel



Your roadmap to success: Strategies and steps to overcome the chaos

Now that the risks are clear, the next step is turning awareness into action. Start by identifying the most pressing inefficiencies inside your own company – whether it's sluggish time-to-hire that risks missing top candidates in a sea of applications, overreliance on agencies that drives up costs when budgets are already lean, or too many candidates voluntarily dropping out of the application process because chaotic, inefficient experiences make them lose faith in your process. Estimating the real cost of these issues gives you a foundation for change and makes the case for solutions that simplify your funnel, protect your brand and prove recruiting's value to the business.

Top-of-funnel chaos can feel overwhelming – too many applicants, too many tools and too little time. But complexity doesn't have to be the norm. By taking a structured approach, you can cut through the noise, protect your teams from burnout and create space to focus on the right candidates. The strategies that follow outline where to start: consolidating your tools, simplifying workflows, leveraging automation and AI wisely, and keeping the candidate experience (and the human element) at the centre.





Select software that enhances and automates your teams without overloading them

The right technology can centralise candidate data, communications and analytics while eliminating silos and reducing chaos. But adding more tools isn't always the answer – a bulky tech stack can overwhelm your team.

Here are a few points to keep in mind as you choose your tools:

☐ **Consolidate to cut costs and increase value**

Look for solutions that reduce repetitive, manual work, streamline scheduling and unify data – so you stop spending budget across multiple tools and start saving money while moving faster.

☐ **Scale with a platform that flexes as you grow**

Ask if the solution makes life easier for recruiters and candidates alike, and whether it can adapt to your needs as your organisation scales – without adding complexity.

☐ **Future-proof your tech with a true partner**

Choose a provider that proactively innovates, so you're not left chasing features across vendors or piecing together point solutions later.

☐ **Watch out for hidden operational costs**

If recruiters are spending hours syncing data across disconnected systems or new hires are slowed by complex workflows, inefficiency is eating into ROI. A unified platform helps avoid these pitfalls and keeps hiring sustainable.

☐ **Focus on solving root issues, not adding patches**

If unqualified applicants are flooding your pipeline, another sourcing tool won't fix the problem. The right solution addresses inefficiencies at the source – like better screening and cleaner reporting – rather than layering on short-term fixes.

“[Because of AI] I think everyone will tell you that the number of applications for every business has skyrocketed in the past 9 to 12 months. We’re no different in that respect.”

Ashley Jones

Senior Director, Global Talent Acquisition at E2open



Prioritise top-of-the-funnel simplification

That surge isn’t unique. As Berend Buitink, Head of HR Tech (AI) at bol.com, explains, “We’ve [also] observed a measurable increase in AI-assisted applications.” And with that surge comes a new set of risks – from fraudulent profiles and phishing attempts to AI-generated work samples that recruiters now have to evaluate with little precedent or training.

You can’t completely eliminate the influx of applications, but you can take a smarter approach to managing it. Simplification at the top of the funnel means putting the right guardrails in place: filtering out fraudulent or incomplete applications, identifying patterns of misuse before they waste recruiter time and using clear criteria to surface the candidates most aligned with your open roles. This isn’t just about efficiency – it’s about protecting your teams from burnout and ensuring they can focus their energy where it matters most. When recruiters aren’t buried in noise, they can spend their time building relationships and delivering a stronger candidate experience.

Pro-tip: Look for talent-matching tools that can help clean up your inbound pipeline by prioritising qualified candidates and filtering out low-quality or suspicious submissions.

Look for ways to automate on both the recruiter and candidate side

Momentum is everything in hiring. Even strong candidates can lose interest if interviews drag on or communication stalls. Automating scheduling, rescheduling and panel coordination helps recruiters keep processes moving, reclaim hours of manual work and avoid bottlenecks that frustrate both hiring managers and candidates. Extending that same efficiency into onboarding ensures new hires start strong, without piling more admin onto already lean teams.

But automation isn't just for recruiters. Candidates benefit when routine touchpoints (like reminders, confirmations and status updates) happen consistently and on time. These small moments of communication build trust and make the process feel professional and respectful.

That said, automation should never come at the expense of the candidate experience. Before you adopt any solution, ask yourself: Will this reduce friction, or add to it? Will it make the process clearer for candidates, or create confusion and mistrust?

“We don’t need more friction or hoops to jump through; we need a hiring process that allows people’s true selves to come through more clearly and completely.”

Daniel Chait
Greenhouse CEO





Consider AI strategically

It's hard to ignore the role of AI today – but separating the signal from the noise is a whole other challenge. New tools launch constantly, and without a clear strategy, teams risk wasted spend, recruiter overwhelm or a candidate experience that feels impersonal.

The key is to treat AI as an enabler, not a replacement. Used purposefully, it can cut through application overload, flag fraud and automate repetitive tasks, while recruiters stay in control of critical judgment calls.

Here are a few tips to keep in mind:

☐ **Match AI to the right tasks**

When evaluating tools, consider how often a task occurs, the cost of errors and how difficult they are to fix. Repetitive, high-volume activities like scheduling interviews, sending reminders and filtering out fraud are prime opportunities for AI.

☐ **Keep humans in control**

Look for solutions that enable human-guided automation rather than handing over decisions entirely. AI should surface insights, flag risks and reduce noise, but recruiters and TA leaders must remain the ones making judgment calls.

☐ **Leverage AI for insights, not just automation**

Because AI relies on large data sets, the right tool should also provide robust reporting. Strong analytics can help recruiters and leaders uncover patterns, measure outcomes and make more confident, more strategic decisions.

Elevate the conversation with executives

Solving inefficiencies isn't just about improving recruiter workflows. It's about making the case for change in terms the business can't ignore. Speaking in terms of business impact helps you transform a list of recruiter frustrations into real business problems that resonate at the executive level.

Use data to identify top-of-funnel chaos and its effect on the candidate experience and you create urgency and clarity for why change can't wait. Simply pointing out problems isn't enough. Executives want hiring processes that reduce wasted costs, accelerate time-to-impact and protect reputation.

When you frame inefficiencies as financial drain, productivity loss or brand damage, you not only argue for fixes. You position recruiting to shift from a perceived cost centre to a recognised driver of business value.



Your mission:

Learn to cut through the noise

Feeling overwhelmed by the sheer volume of work, new tools, AI hype and constant change is a common experience. We hear from TA teams every day who worry about falling behind or choosing the wrong solutions.

Don't forget that candidates are feeling this way, too. The recent [Greenhouse Workforce Report](#) also showed that more than a quarter of jobseekers say AI has made the process more competitive and stressful.

The hiring landscape is more complex than ever, but it's also full of opportunities. The leaders will be the teams who are able to cut through the noise and use tools, tech and software that effectively solve their problems – without complicating the candidate experience.

AI in particular can be a powerful enabler when used with purpose, clarity and human oversight. Applied thoughtfully, it doesn't replace recruiters – it amplifies their impact, helping teams move faster, make better decisions and build stronger trust with candidates.

The challenge now is clear: cut through the noise and harness AI wisely, so you can take back control of your hiring (and your sanity).

Want to know what to do next?

Download our follow-up guide [From chaos to clarity](#) to see how each of the best practices in this report connects directly to real-world solutions inside Greenhouse.



Greenhouse is the leading hiring platform to help companies get measurably better at hiring. Our AI-powered software supports every stage of the hiring process, from sourcing to onboarding, giving businesses everything they need to hire top talent quickly, consistently and fairly – today and as their business grows.

To learn more, visit
[**greenhouse.com**](https://greenhouse.com)