# greenhouse

# The 2026 AI in Hiring Report

How recruiters, hiring managers and job seekers are using AI – and why trust now hinges on transparency

Julia Mendoza
Candidate

✦✧ Interested

✦✧ Sentiment updated

Source smarter

Make decisions faster

View all candidates

✦✧ Summarize scorecards

# AI-powered hiring platforms are now central to modern talent acquisition

Recruiters are leveraging automated technology to manage rising application volumes, hiring managers depend on AI tools to evaluate candidates efficiently and job seekers use advanced job search AI to stay competitive in a market they feel is increasingly shaped by factors outside their control.

While AI has made hiring quicker, it's also made it more complex. Early signals in the funnel are shaped by AI, but both candidates and hiring teams are questioning how much they can trust what gets prioritized and why.

To understand how AI is reshaping the hiring experience across both sides of the process,

Greenhouse surveyed 1,200 job seekers, 219 recruiters and 446 hiring managers based in the U.S. We asked about their experiences, behaviors and expectations to uncover how AI is influencing trust, authenticity and decision-making at every stage of the hiring funnel. We also gathered perspectives from Greenhouse leaders and outside experts to interpret what the results mean for hiring teams.

The findings reveal how AI is creating new efficiencies, new risks and new expectations across the hiring journey. They also highlight a pivotal tension on the candidate side: widespread AI use paired with declining trust when hiring processes feel opaque or impersonal.

# Executive summary

AI is reshaping how recruiters, hiring managers and candidates behave, and also playing a bigger role in how applications are reviewed, surfaced and assessed. As a result, new tensions are emerging around authenticity, trust and control on both sides of the hiring process.

At the same time, the data shows that candidates aren't anti-AI when it comes to potential employers, and many of them use AI themselves. However, their willingness to trust the hiring process depends strongly on how employers use AI and how clearly they explain its role.

## Key findings

**74%**
of candidates in the U.S. now use AI in their job search

**87%**
of candidates say companies should disclose their use of AI in hiring

**46%**
of candidates say their trust in the hiring process has decreased in the past year

**91%**
of recruiters and hiring managers have spotted or suspected candidate deception

**21%**
of recruiters are "very confident" their systems aren't filtering out qualified candidates

**74%**
of hiring managers say they are more worried about fake credentials than last year

**70%**
of hiring managers say AI helps them move faster and make stronger decisions with fewer recruiter resources

**49%**
of hiring managers say using AI in the hiring process has improved candidate quality

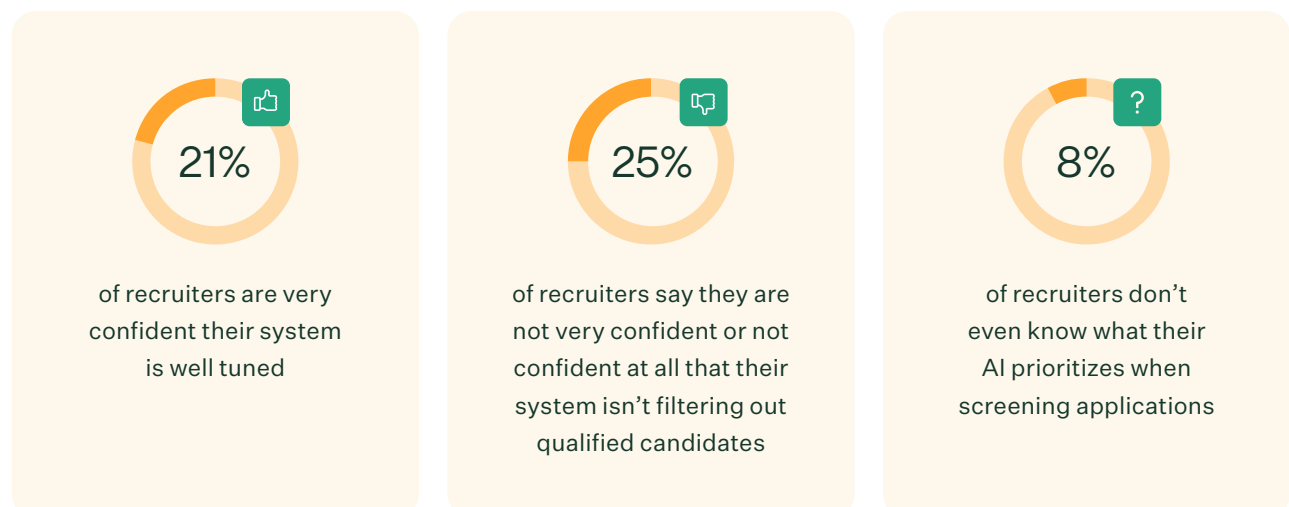# Application volume surges while recruiter confidence in AI lags

Recruiters manage more applications than ever: **62%** of recruiters say the volume of applications they sift through now has increased compared to 12 months ago.

**Recruiters are now being forced to triage under pressure and make tough calls about what gets evaluated:**

## 53%

of recruiters say they review fewer than half of all applications they receive

## 21%

of recruiters review fewer than a tenth of applications per role

**As review capacity tightens, recruiters are relying on AI more heavily to help prioritize which applications get human evaluation. While AI is stepping into this high-stakes role, trust in its output remains uneven:**

### 21%

of recruiters are very confident their system is well tuned

### 25%

of recruiters say they are not very confident or not confident at all that their system isn't filtering out qualified candidates

### 8%

of recruiters don't even know what their AI prioritizes when screening applications

# How top talent teams respond

This combination of rising volume and low confidence is pushing talent teams to rethink how they adopt AI, not just whether they use it.

Leading teams treat AI screening as a structured hiring problem first, not a tooling problem. That starts with calibrating AI against clear competencies and clean inputs, then validating performance before rolling it out broadly. It also means choosing tools that can show the "why" behind recommendations, so recruiters can pressure-test results and stay accountable for who moves forward.

These teams are also setting themselves up to use AI well by strengthening the foundation underneath it. When workflows are disconnected or data is messy, AI can accelerate inconsistency instead of reducing it.

The goal is to make AI useful in the moments that matter most: narrowing the funnel responsibly while freeing recruiters to spend more time on high-judgment evaluation further down the process.

Done well, that structure also preserves the candidate experience by keeping the most meaningful touchpoints human. When AI takes on rote, administrative tasks, recruiters have more time to focus on relationship-building, says Becky McCullough, VP of Talent Acquisition & Mobility at HubSpot. "Human connection matters most in the moments where recruiters can help candidates understand the role, explore fit and navigate decisions – the parts of the process that rely on trust, context and real conversation."

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> Think about AI content as an opinion from a smart coworker rather than a universal truth. When we understand that AI models are a thinking partner instead of a replacement for our own critical thinking, we can use them to increase our efficiency and augment our creativity while retaining ownership of important evaluations or judgment calls.
>
> **Ariana Moon**
> VP of Talent Planning & Acquisition, Greenhouse

# High application volume demands AI, but structure builds trust

As application volume surges, AI is becoming a triage layer, but recruiter confidence hasn't caught up. That gap is keeping AI tools from being as useful as they can actually be. This is especially true when recruiters or hiring managers need to add validation steps, erasing many of the efficiency gains introduced by AI.

To make AI work as intended, companies need to build trust and confidence. That means grounding AI in structured hiring and clean, connected inputs, with validation and accountability built in. In these cases, AI is supporting, rather than substituting, human judgment when recruiters decide next steps, a key factor in successfully integrating AI throughout the recruiting function.
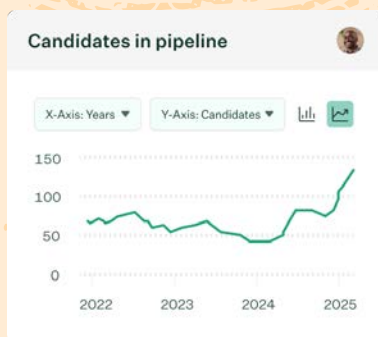
# AI-enabled fraud is reshaping recruiting

**Candidate fraud** is rising fast, and both recruiters and hiring managers link it directly to AI. In the past year, **91%** of recruiters have suspected candidates cheating, faking credentials or misrepresenting themselves. In some cases, they've even caught them outright.

More than one in four recruiters **(28%)** say they catch or suspect candidate deception multiple times a month. Over **50%** say AI makes it easier for candidates to cheat, use fake credentials or misrepresent themselves. In other words, as recruiters use AI to improve and automate their processes, it's also contributing to an environment mired in skepticism as it becomes more difficult to trust the signals recruiters rely on.

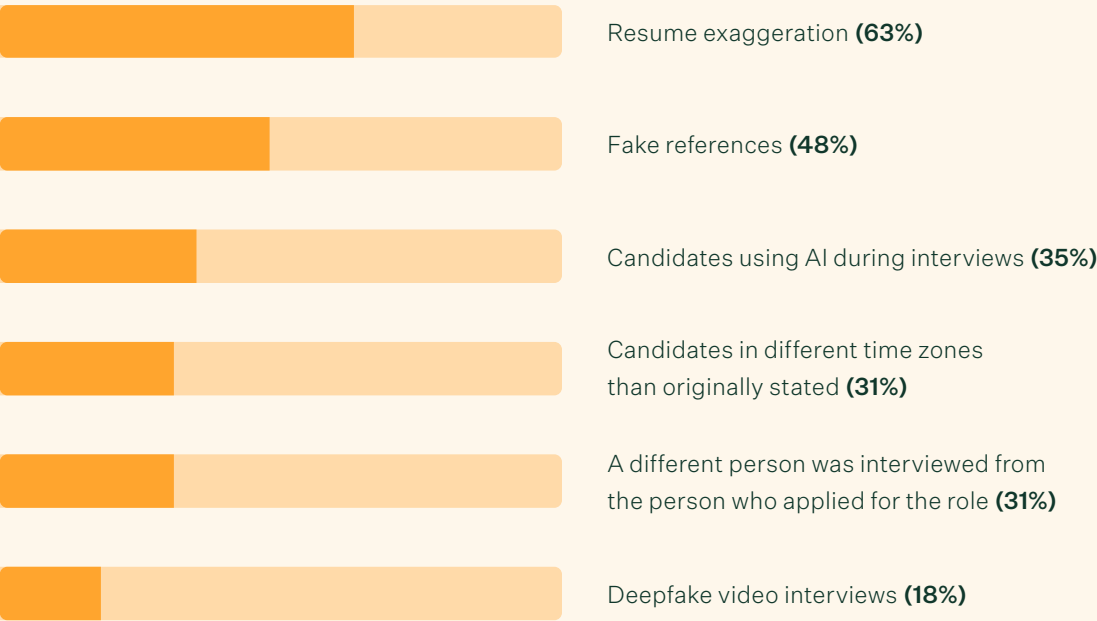# Recruiters are most likely to spot low-level fraud, but more damaging tactics are harder to detect

The most common issues recruiters report catching include resume exaggeration **(63%)** and fake references **(48%).** However, they're catching fewer AI-enabled tactics that pose much more serious risks to candidate quality and even an organization's security. [Fig. 1]:

Candidates using AI during interviews **(35%)**

A different person was interviewed from the person who applied for the role **(31%)**

Deepfake video interviews **(18%)**

These tactics go far beyond resume inflation. A deepfake interview or impersonation attempt doesn't just lead to a bad hire; it can introduce threat actors into protected environments. In the best-case scenario, they can result in hiring someone who is fundamentally unqualified – a mismatch scenario that drains time and resources – or, in more severe cases, expose employers to identity fraud, unauthorized system access and data security breaches.

These are new risk scenarios recruiters now have to account for, requiring yet another layer of adaptation as AI reshapes the hiring funnel. With **18–35%** of recruiters reporting these issues, the risk is too significant to ignore.

### [Fig. 1] Most common forms of candidate fraud observed by recruiters

Resume exaggeration **(63%)**

Fake references **(48%)**

Candidates using AI during interviews **(35%)**

Candidates in different time zones than originally stated **(31%)**

A different person was interviewed from the person who applied for the role **(31%)**

Deepfake video interviews **(18%)**

# Candidates, meanwhile, admit to tactics recruiters rarely see

The fraud recruiters detect is only part of the picture. Candidates report using an even wider range of AI-enabled strategies, including ones recruiters may not even know to look for:
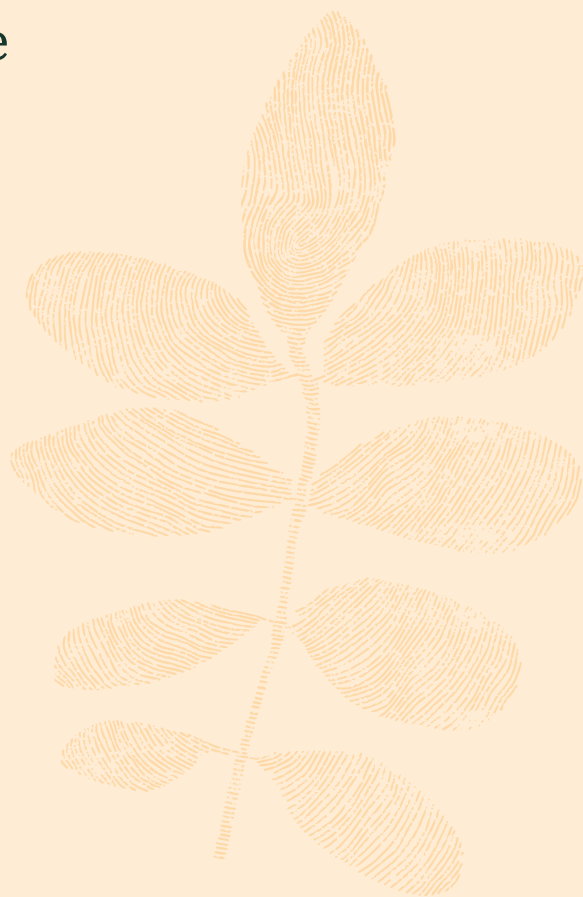
## 41%

of candidates admit to using prompt injections – hidden instructions embedded in their resumes or applications – to bypass AI systems or models.

## 36%

say they have altered their voice, appearance or background for interviews, double the rate caught by recruiters.
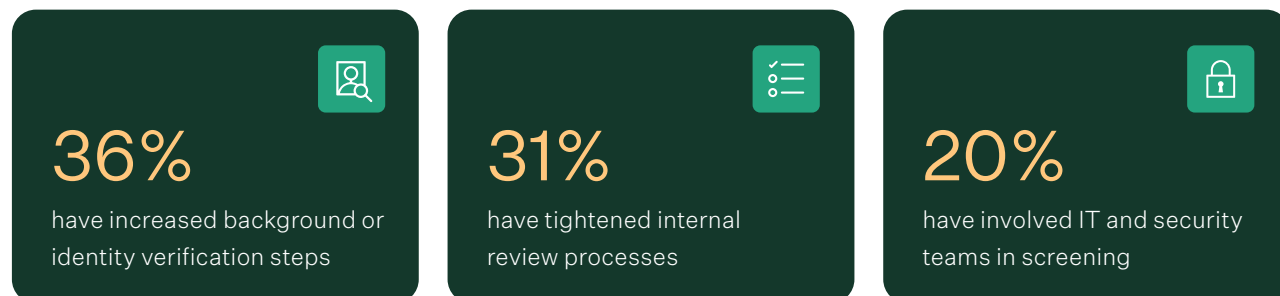
Additionally, these findings reflect only job seekers who admitted to fraudulent behavior. They don't capture the additional layer of risk created by threat actors who use AI-generated identities or AI-driven tools to probe candidate portals or seek to get hired simply to compromise a company – actions that may never surface in recruiter-facing workflows and won't be captured by job-seeker surveys.

This gap between what recruiters catch, what they fear and what candidates are actually doing highlights a widening disconnect. It's creating an environment that erodes trust through the entire funnel, with recruiters growing increasingly skeptical of AI signals *and* of the candidates who pass initial screening.

# Process changes are already underway, but they come at a cost

**34%** of recruiters say they spend up to half their week filtering spam and junk. That's time that used to go toward sourcing and engagement.

**Many say the increase has forced process changes:**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **36%** have increased background or identity verification steps | **31%** have tightened internal review processes | **20%** have involved IT and security teams in screening |

As AI-enabled fraud increases, recruiters are grappling with a growing trust gap. Ariana Moon, VP of Talent Planning & Acquisition at Greenhouse, describes this as a "trust chasm," where recruiters question the authenticity of applications while candidates worry algorithms are deciding their fate. The challenge, she notes, is shifting focus away from noise and toward signals that reflect real, qualified talent – without sacrificing fairness or candidate experience.

> "
> As fraud becomes more sophisticated, TA leaders can strengthen verification by treating it as an end-to-end discipline rather than a point-in-time check. Effective fraud management requires cross-business collaboration to design a cohesive process that spans the full candidate journey – from application to onboarding – so verification feels consistent, predictable and fair.
>
> **Becky McCullough**
> VP of Talent Acquisition & Mobility, HubSpot

# AI-enabled fraud has turned hiring into both a talent challenge and a security challenge

Traditional resume checks and reference calls are no longer enough. TA teams need layered, consistent verification steps – including identity checks, rigorous evaluations and AI-driven anomaly and fraud detection.

While these may seem like costs to a recruiter's workflow, if designed as "healthy friction" points, they actually protect the process, preserve a positive experience for genuine candidates and elevate higher quality candidates. That creates a healthier pipeline, not just a safer one.

Pairing these safeguards with bias-aware, trustworthy workflows and clear communication with applicants will allow hiring teams to rebuild confidently and ensure candidates who advance are both real and qualified.
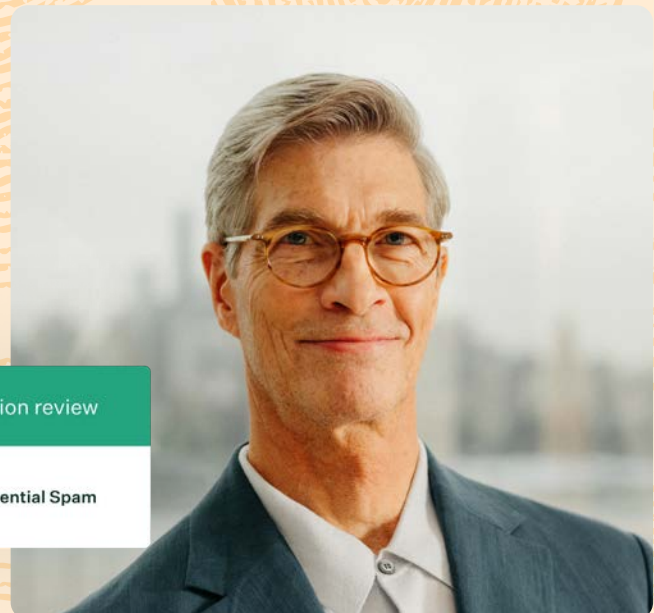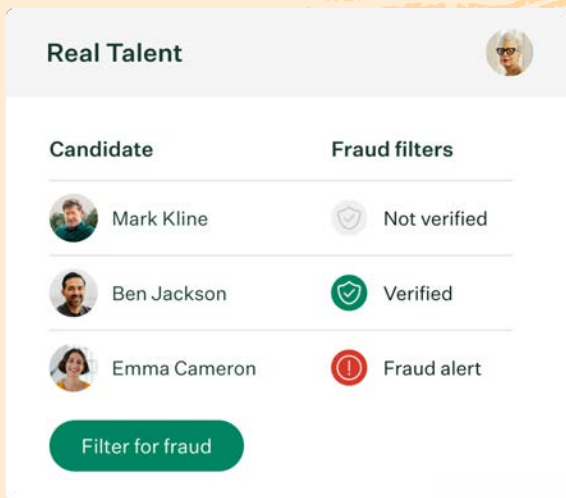
# Hiring managers are tightening verification in an AI-first environment

With concerns about candidate authenticity ranking as hiring managers' top challenge **(46%)** [Fig. 2], verification now sits at the center of hiring decisions – and so does AI.
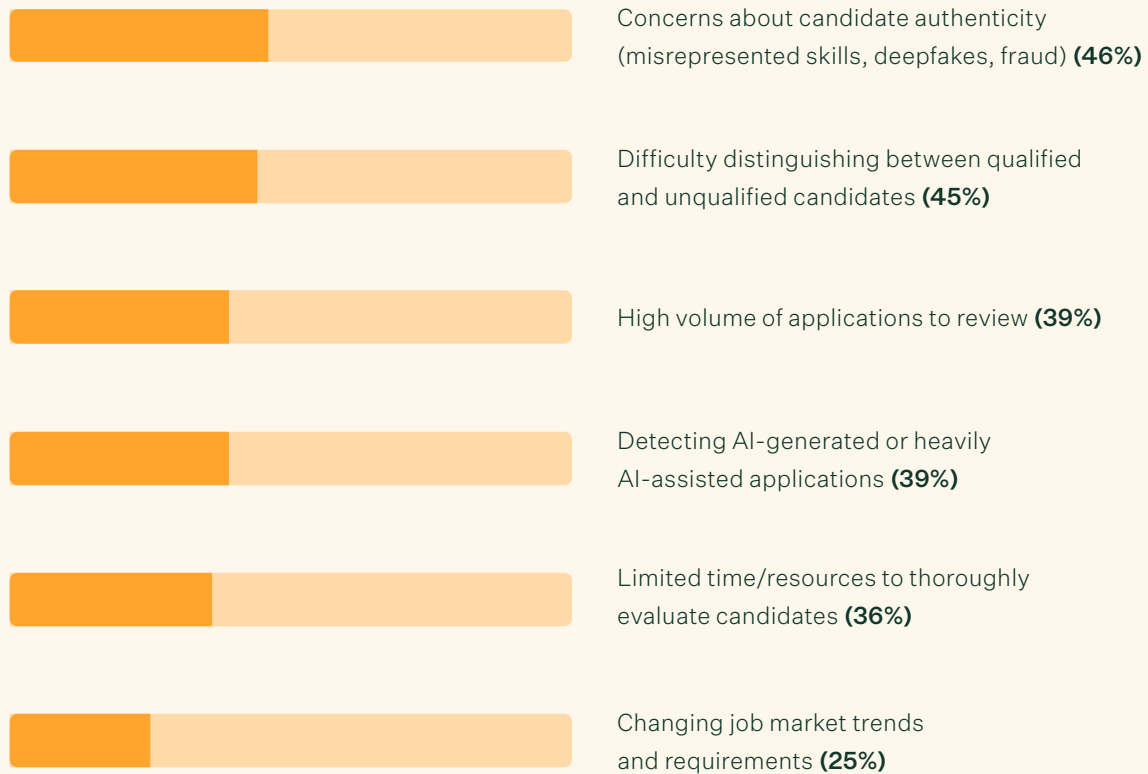
The other challenges listed showcase how the technology is shaping both the risks hiring teams face and the tools they use to manage them. Over a third **(39%)** of hiring managers say detecting AI-generated or heavily AI-assisted applications is a top challenge, showing why AI is amplifying scrutiny of candidates. At the same time, **39%** of hiring managers say high application volumes are a major issue, a challenge that should be addressed by adopting AI tools focused on automation and increasing recruiter efficiency.

However, the second highest concern for hiring managers is the difficulty distinguishing between qualified and unqualified candidates **(45%)** [Fig. 2]. The narrow one-point difference between the No. 1 challenge (authenticity) and No. 2 (quality concerns) shows that even with new risks like deepfakes and AI-generated materials, a long-standing challenge remains unchanged: Hiring managers still struggle to consistently identify the right candidate for true job fit.

AI may accelerate screening, but only human-in-the-loop hiring technology and structured, bias-aware evaluation criteria can ensure the right candidates are surfaced with confidence and accountability.

**[Fig. 2] Top challenges hiring managers face in today's hiring process**

Concerns about candidate authenticity (misrepresented skills, deepfakes, fraud) **(46%)**

Difficulty distinguishing between qualified and unqualified candidates **(45%)**

High volume of applications to review **(39%)**

Detecting AI-generated or heavily AI-assisted applications **(39%)**

Limited time/resources to thoroughly evaluate candidates **(36%)**

Changing job market trends and requirements **(25%)**

# AI-enabled misrepresentation is adding urgency to those authenticity concerns:

**74%** of hiring managers say they are more worried about fake credentials than last year. Nearly all **(91%)** have encountered candidates who misrepresented skills or experience using AI.
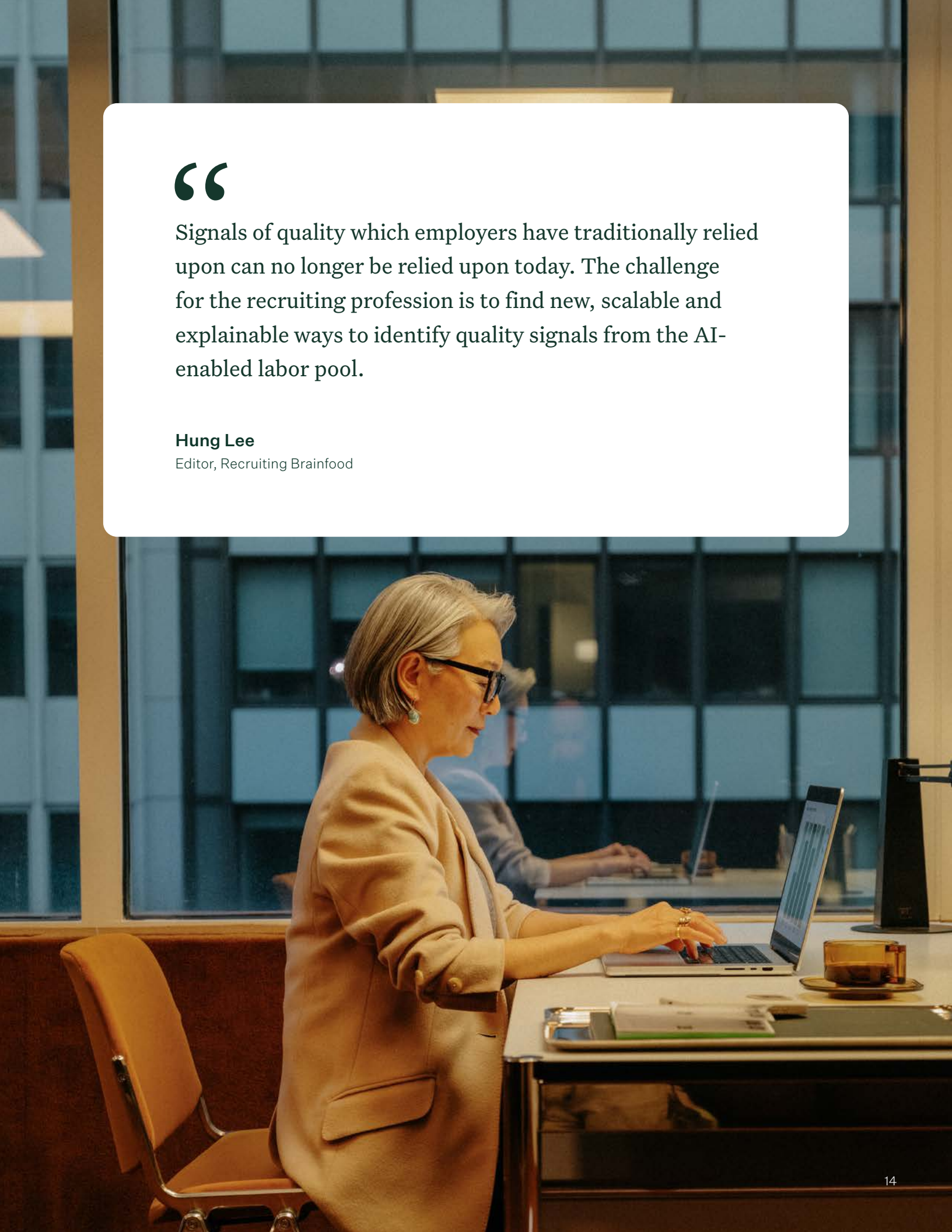
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Signals of quality which employers have traditionally relied upon can no longer be relied upon today. The challenge for the recruiting profession is to find new, scalable and explainable ways to identify quality signals from the AI-enabled labor pool.

**Hung Lee**
Editor, Recruiting Brainfood

# Hiring managers are leaning into direct assessment

As candidate deception grows more sophisticated, hiring managers are becoming more hands-on to validate who's really behind each resume. **68%** of hiring managers say their level of involvement in the hiring process has increased compared to a year ago.

Many are also reintroducing more direct evaluation steps: **39%** say they are conducting more in-person interviews. Additionally, **61%** are using software to detect AI during interviews, and another **third** are considering it. Taken together, nearly all hiring managers are either already using or actively exploring AI-detection tools alongside more human-led assessments.

Moon notes that while AI is powerful at "processing text," it is "still blind to subtext" – things like hesitation, rehearsed answers or genuine excitement. Those nuances still require human judgment, especially in high-stakes decision points.

> "
> There are unique moments in the hiring process that are still inextricably human-to-human. While the AI of today is great for matching buzzwords, it takes human insight to understand the explicit and implicit preferences of a hiring manager within the unique context of their team and company.

**Ariana Moon**
VP of Talent Planning &
Acquisition, Greenhouse

## AI is accelerating decisions when humans stay in the loop

Even with added scrutiny, hiring managers still see meaningful upsides from AI:

- **Seven in 10** say AI helps them move faster and make stronger decisions with fewer recruiter resources

- **Nearly half (49%)** say using AI in the hiring process has improved candidate quality, and only **1%** say candidate quality has declined

As Lee observes, the teams that benefit most are the ones that have "a plan on what to do with the efficiency gain" – using AI to handle repetitive tasks like resume parsing and initial match scoring so human recruiters can focus on nuanced, high-impact evaluations further down the funnel.

# In an AI-first hiring landscape, hiring managers are tightening verification, not stepping back

Trustworthy, explainable tools combined with structured, human-in-the-loop evaluation let teams move faster and make accurate, defensible decisions, keeping human judgment at the center while AI does the heavy lifting in the background.

Handled thoughtfully, this approach also protects what candidates still use to evaluate an employer: real human interaction that reveals values, culture and fit. AI can support communication, but it should create more space for meaningful conversations, not replace them.
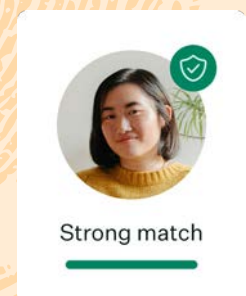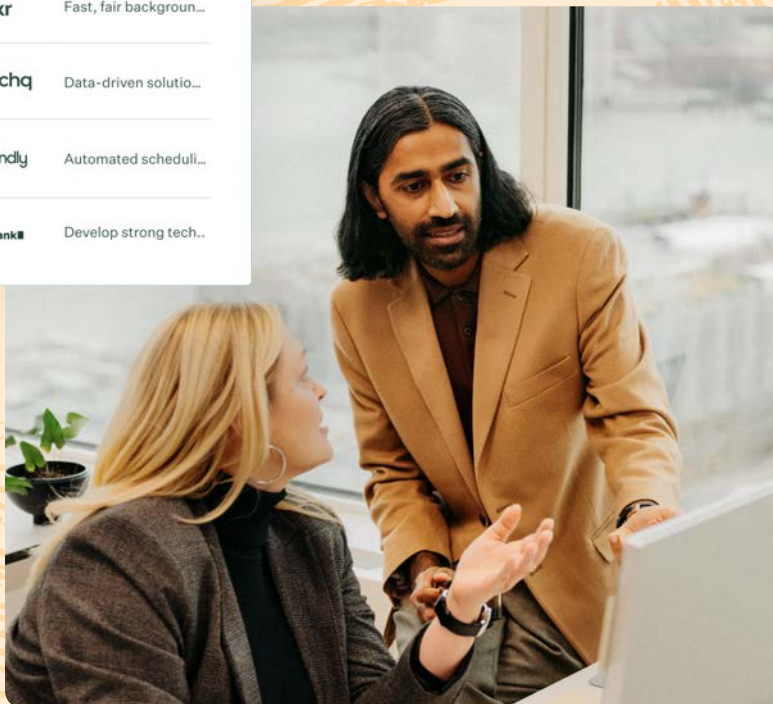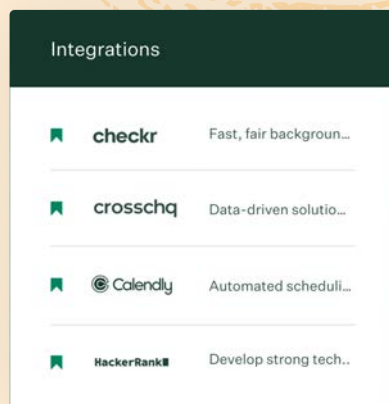
# How employers can use transparency to strengthen the candidate experience

There's a tension in how candidates view AI in the hiring process. Almost three in four candidates **(74%)** use AI in their job search, yet many also worry employers use the same technology in ways that blur context, fairness and trust.
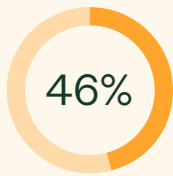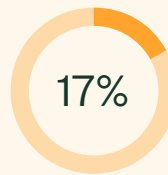
**46%** of job seekers say their trust in the hiring process has decreased in the past year, and **42%** say that trust has decreased due to AI use
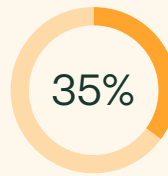
**35%** say AI has simply shifted bias from human prejudice to algorithmic filtering
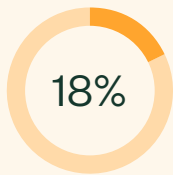
**18%** believe AI amplifies bias because it learns from historical patterns

**17%** say AI is less fair because it misses context

At the same time, candidates aren't rejecting AI outright. **28%** believe AI can evaluate candidates as fairly or more fairly than humans. Over one in four **(27%)** also say their trust in the hiring process has *increased* due to AI use.

The takeaway is less about whether AI belongs in hiring and more about how it's used. When AI feels like a black box, it raises suspicion. When it's applied consistently and explained clearly, it can strengthen perceptions of fairness and professionalism.

# AI interviews reveal a trust divide

Nothing dramatizes this tension more than candidates' opinions of AI-led interviews. More than half **(54%)** of candidates have been interviewed by an AI system – chatbot, automated video analysis or voice-based assistant – as part of a job application process.

Of these, nearly one in four **(23%)** said the AI interview experience left a negative impression or made

them withdraw their application. However, a higher percentage – almost one in three **(31%)** – said they actually viewed the company more positively for using innovative or efficient tools.

This is where transparency becomes a differentiator: AI can either erode trust or boost employer brand depending on how and where it's implemented and framed.

**Candidates are using AI because employers are, too**

What's driving AI use among candidates? They believe they need to stay competitive with other candidates **(37%)** and to level the playing field with employers **(47%).** More than one in four **(27%)** say that if companies use AI, candidates should too.

In other words, candidates aren't using AI to get ahead. They think they have to use it just to get their foot in the door with employers.

# Transparency shapes whether candidates choose to engage

Clarity turns AI from a black box into a process candidates can understand. In fact, **87%** of job seekers say they want honesty from employers about AI use in hiring, with **68%** calling it "very important" or critical to deciding whether to apply.

We're seeing clear signals around the environment candidates are seeking when it comes to AI as they reward companies that do this well: **25%** say they view companies that use AI heavily in hiring as forward-thinking and efficient. Only **12%** consider heavy AI use a red flag, meaning any trepidation and concerns around AI use on behalf of the candidates are largely unfounded.

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> We need to evolve beyond the black box experience of recruiting and fully embrace a glass box mindset – one that's about transparency. If we're using AI to help us sort through thousands of applications, we should own this and be able to defend why we do so with logic and confidence.

**Ariana Moon**
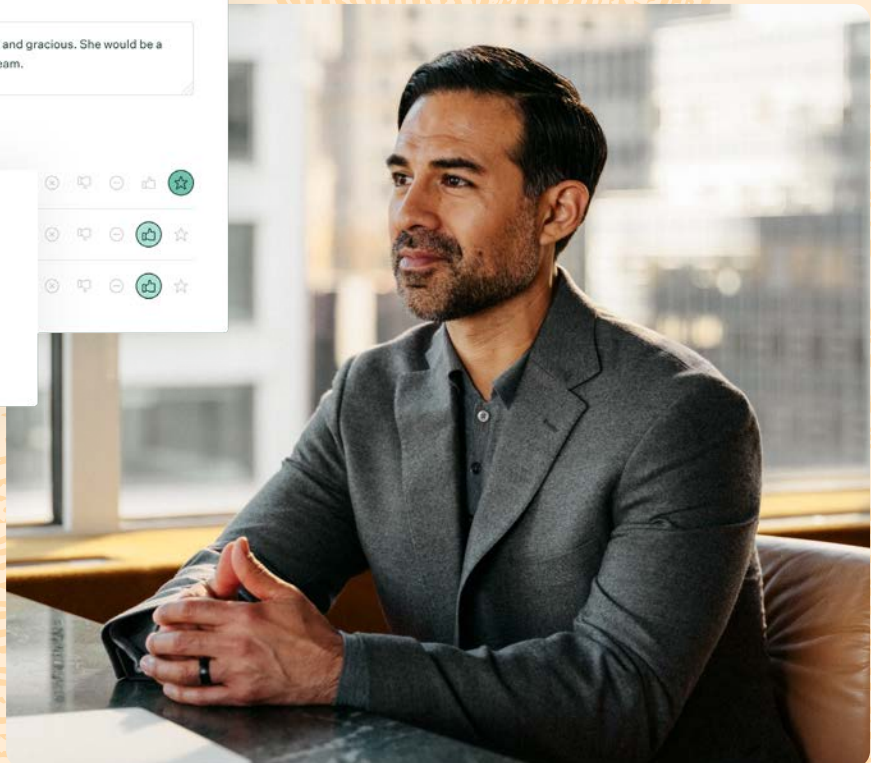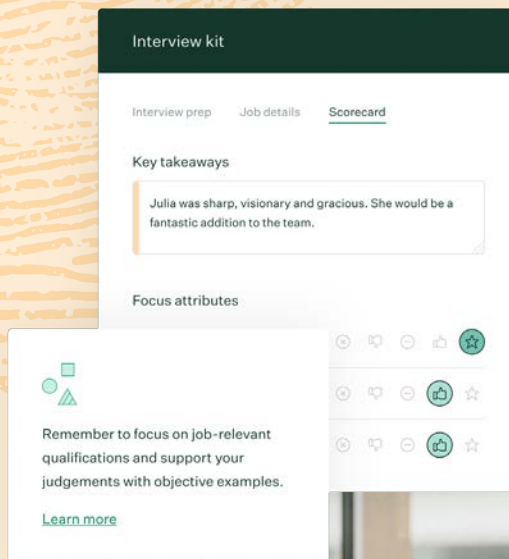VP of Talent Planning & Acquisition, Greenhouse

# Candidates aren't asking employers to avoid AI

They just want hiring to feel fair, predictable and understandable, no matter what tools are used. For hiring teams, the path forward is clear. They should apply AI transparently, so it becomes a trust-builder, not a risk.

**In particular, candidates want to understand:**

- When AI is used
- How it informs decisions
- What parts of the process remain human

# Embrace an AI-shaped talent landscape with intention

AI is now embedded in every stage of hiring – expanding reach, reducing manual tasks and helping teams operate with fewer resources. AI is also reshaping the talent landscape itself, changing how candidates show up, how signals are generated and what hiring teams need to verify. But speed and efficiency gains do nothing to address the trust crisis emerging on both sides of the process.

To move forward, teams need to use AI in ways that clarify decisions rather than obscure them, automate workflows without replacing decision-making and increase transparency for candidates instead of adding uncertainty. That requires applying structure, surfacing the criteria AI uses to support recommendations and giving recruiters and hiring managers the visibility they need to confidently stand behind every recommendation. It also means telling candidates clearly where AI is involved and where humans remain accountable.

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Cultivating a readiness to explain to a skeptical audience is not just an exercise in PR but a training exercise to ensure organizations don't lose sight of the purpose of the innovation – getting the best results, not just the fastest results.

**Hung Lee**
Editor, Recruiting Brainfood

Trust also depends on building the right checkpoints into the process so teams can validate authenticity without creating a clunky experience for legitimate candidates. When verification is introduced thoughtfully and communicated early, it protects the integrity of hiring while reducing ambiguity for candidates.

The next phase of hiring will belong to organizations that break the AI doom loop – replacing guesswork with transparency, pairing AI with human judgment and designing workflows where technology strengthens trust. Those that do will hire more effectively and create a more confident, human-centered experience for every candidate and every team.

Our research points to a clear reality: AI can be a quality multiplier or create an environment of risk and mistrust depending on how it's deployed. Hiring leaders will stand out based on how they can maximize and optimize AI use, which requires careful consideration and implementation beyond adopting the loudest AI-powered feature or vendor.

*The summary below captures where AI creates the most value and where teams need to stay vigilant.*

# AI in hiring: Potential vs. pitfalls

## AI can unlock

**Scale and speed:** Takes on repetitive work so teams can move faster with fewer resources

**Signal discovery:** Surfaces qualified candidates that might otherwise be missed in an overwhelming pool

**More time for human moments:** Frees recruiters and hiring managers to focus on nuanced, high-stakes conversations and authentic interactions

**Stronger integrity checks:** Enables healthy friction like ID checks or live problem solving to protect the process

## AI can undermine

**Black box decisions:** Trust drops when teams and candidates can't see what AI is prioritizing or why

**Bias at scale:** Messy inputs can create messy outcomes faster

**Blind to subtext:** Great at processing text but still blind to subtext

**AI-enabled fraud:** Lowers the barrier for misrepresentation and impersonation

# Contributing experts

### Ariana Moon
VP of Talent Planning & Acquisition, Greenhouse

Ariana is the VP of Talent Planning & Acquisition and a member of the Senior Leadership Team at Greenhouse. She has led talent initiatives across multiple industries and, in her current role, helped scale Greenhouse's global headcount by 10x. In 2022, Ariana was named one of the top 20 Talent Leaders In Tech US, amongst leaders from Workday, Google and Reddit, and in 2023 and 2024, she was named one of the top global 100 Talent Leaders by HIGHER. She has served as Chair of the Greenhouse ERG for Asian-Pacific Islanders and on the customer advisory boards of leading tech companies CodeSignal and BrightHire. Outside of work, Ariana is an avid yoga practitioner, dancer and proud boy-mom residing in Las Vegas.

### Hung Lee
Editor, Recruiting Brainfood

Hung Lee curates Recruiting Brainfood, a weekly newsletter for the talent industry trusted by over 30,000 recruiters and HR professionals worldwide. He is an industry professional with over 20 years experience as an agency recruiter, recruitment manager, internal head of talent, recruitment trainer, startup founder and strategic advisor for rapid growth businesses in the London tech startup scene.

### Becky McCullough
VP of Talent Acquisition & Mobility, HubSpot

Becky McCullough is the VP of Talent Acquisition & Mobility at HubSpot, where she leads teams responsible for hiring thousands of employees globally and ensuring career growth opportunities within the company. Her responsibilities include talent acquisition, global mobility and immigration, strategic workforce planning and M&A. Since joining HubSpot in 2015 when the company had under 1,000 employees, Becky has helped scale the global recruiting function, build a People Analytics function and develop a holistic people strategy while overseeing Learning & Talent Development.

Prior to HubSpot, she led experienced hire recruiting for McKinsey & Company's North American offices and was an executive search consultant with Heidrick & Struggles. Becky has an MBA from Columbia Business School and a BA in Psychology from Tufts University. She lives in the Boston suburbs with her husband, three children and two dogs.

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## Methodology

Greenhouse conducted a survey of 1,865 respondents across the U.S., which included 1,200 job seekers and 665 recruiters and hiring managers.

## About 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**