



The State of the

# RECRUITER EXPERIENCE



Authored by:

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# The State of the **RECRUITER EXPERIENCE**



## Introduction

In 2021, Aptitude Research published its first report focused on the recruiter experience. At the time, most research in talent acquisition centered on TA leaders and executives, those responsible for selecting and implementing technology. Less attention was given to the individuals responsible for doing the work every day. That report aimed to shift the conversation by providing a clearer understanding of how recruiters actually work, where they spend their time, and what challenges they face.

Five years later, the need for that perspective is even greater.

The recruiter role has evolved significantly. Recruiters are managing more complexity, working across more systems, and navigating new expectations around speed, quality, and experience. They are also being asked to adopt artificial intelligence, use data more effectively, and partner more closely with hiring managers, IT, and the business.

And yet, the environment around the recruiter has not kept pace.

Nearly half of recruiters (47%) describe their experience today as reactive and overloaded. Only 18% say their technology supports their workflows seamlessly. More than half report spending at least 50% of their time on non-strategic work, including scheduling, coordination, and manual tasks. At the same time, 61% cite poor integration as their biggest frustration with recruiting technology, and 57% say they leave their ATS to complete sourcing activities.



**47%**

describe their experience as reactive and overloaded



**18%**

say their technology supports their workflows seamlessly



**61%**

cite poor integration as their biggest frustration with recruiting technology



**57%**

say they leave their ATS to complete sourcing activities

Artificial intelligence is adding a new layer of complexity. Most organizations are still using AI to automate tasks rather than to improve outcomes. Few recruiters see AI as a strategic enabler of better hiring decisions, stronger candidate experiences, or more effective teams. That shift in mindset, from AI as a task tool to AI as a catalyst for how recruiting operates, is one of the most important changes organizations need to make.

Organizations see these challenges. Most have not redesigned the recruiter experience to address them. And most have not considered how AI can support the recruiter workflow.

This report builds on our 2021 research to provide a deeper understanding of the recruiter experience today, one shaped by artificial intelligence, new approaches to data and decision-making, and more complex internal relationships. It examines the current state of the recruiter experience and what it needs to become.



### SECTION 1:

#### **The Current State of the Recruiter Experience**

looks at where recruiting work breaks down today across process, technology, and roles.



### SECTION 2:

**AI as the Catalyst** examines how AI is being used today, why it is falling short, and what it will take for AI to fundamentally improve how recruiting operates.



### SECTION 3:

**The Future State of the Recruiter Experience** defines what a redesigned recruiter experience looks like and what organizations need to do to get there.

## SECTION 1: CURRENT STATE OF THE RECRUITER EXPERIENCE

*Seeing the Problem but Not Addressing It*



The recruiter experience today is defined by pressure, complexity, and misalignment. Organizations are investing in talent acquisition technology and placing greater emphasis on hiring outcomes. Yet the experience of the recruiter has not meaningfully improved.

Nearly half of recruiters (47%) describe their experience as reactive and overloaded. Another 18% say it is unsustainable. Only a small percentage report a recruiter experience that feels manageable.

At the same time, the disconnect between recruiters and leadership continues to grow. Sixty-four percent of recruiters say that executives do not fully understand the work they do. In our 2021 research, that number was 58%. The gap is widening. And the result is a function that is expected to deliver more but is not structured to support it.

Recruiters are being asked to move faster, improve quality, adopt new technologies, and deliver better experiences. The underlying workflows, systems, and operating models remain largely unchanged. Most organizations see the problem. They have not yet addressed it.



**47%**  
describe their  
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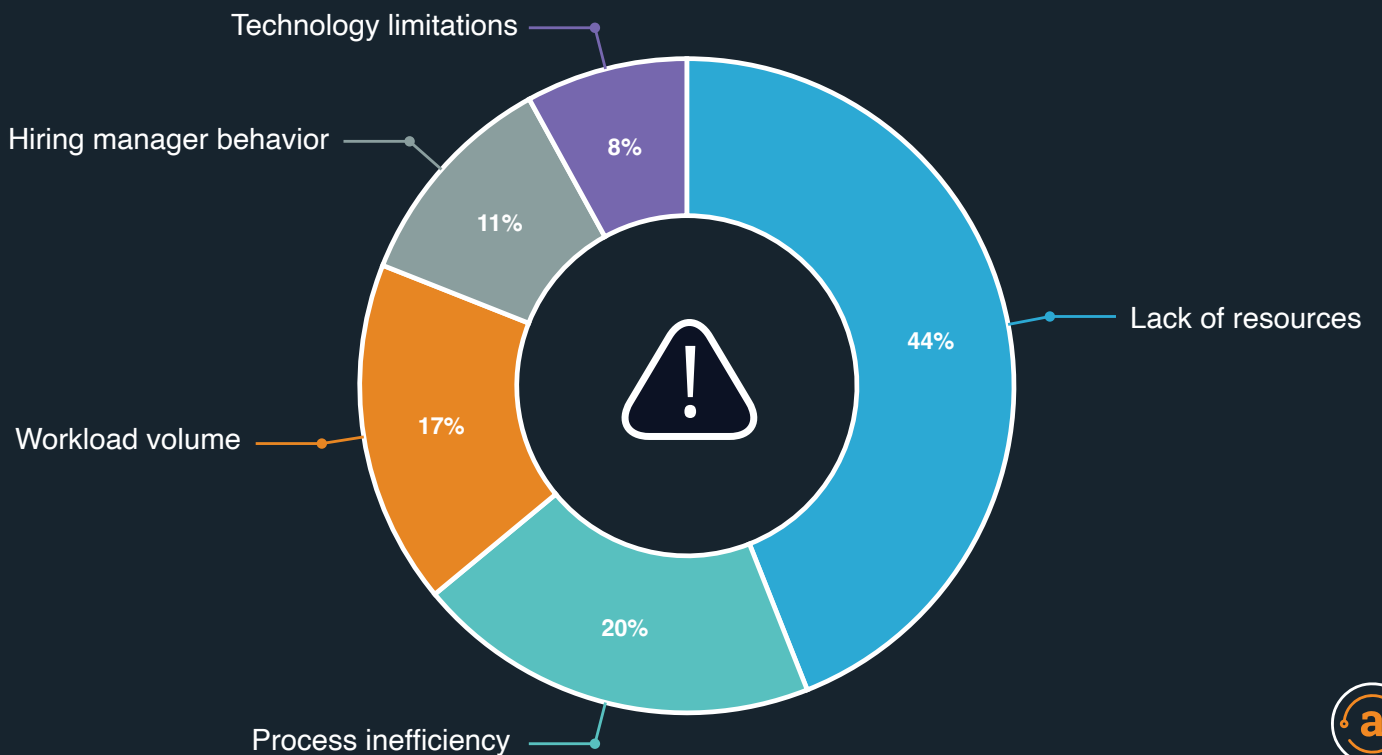
### The Challenges: Process, Technology, and Roles

The challenges shaping the recruiter experience are often described as separate issues. Pressure to move faster. Too much administrative work. Fragmented tools. Misalignment with hiring managers. Each of these is real. But they are not isolated. They are symptoms of a deeper structural problem.

### Top challenges recruiters identified:



### When asked about the single biggest blocker to their effectiveness:



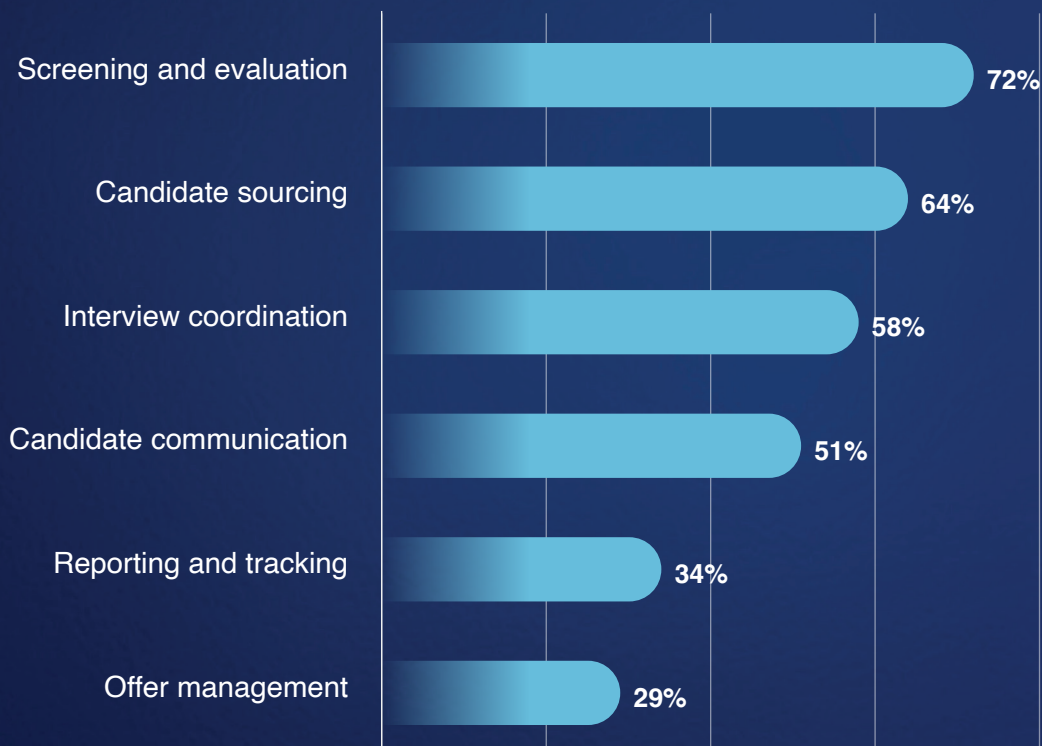
The most significant barrier is not technology. It is how recruiting is structured and supported. Recruiters are expected to operate as strategic partners. But the majority of their time is spent managing processes. They also do not have the resources they need. Everyone is feeling pressure to do more with less.

The recruiter experience is shaped by two structural gaps: process and technology. These gaps reinforce one another. Addressing one without the others produces limited results. Improving the recruiter experience requires all three to evolve together.

## Process: Where Recruiters Spend Their Time

Despite changes in technology and the introduction of AI, the core structure of recruiting work has not fundamentally changed. Recruiters continue to spend the majority of their time on operational tasks, many of which are repetitive, manual, and difficult to scale.

### Top challenges recruiters identified:



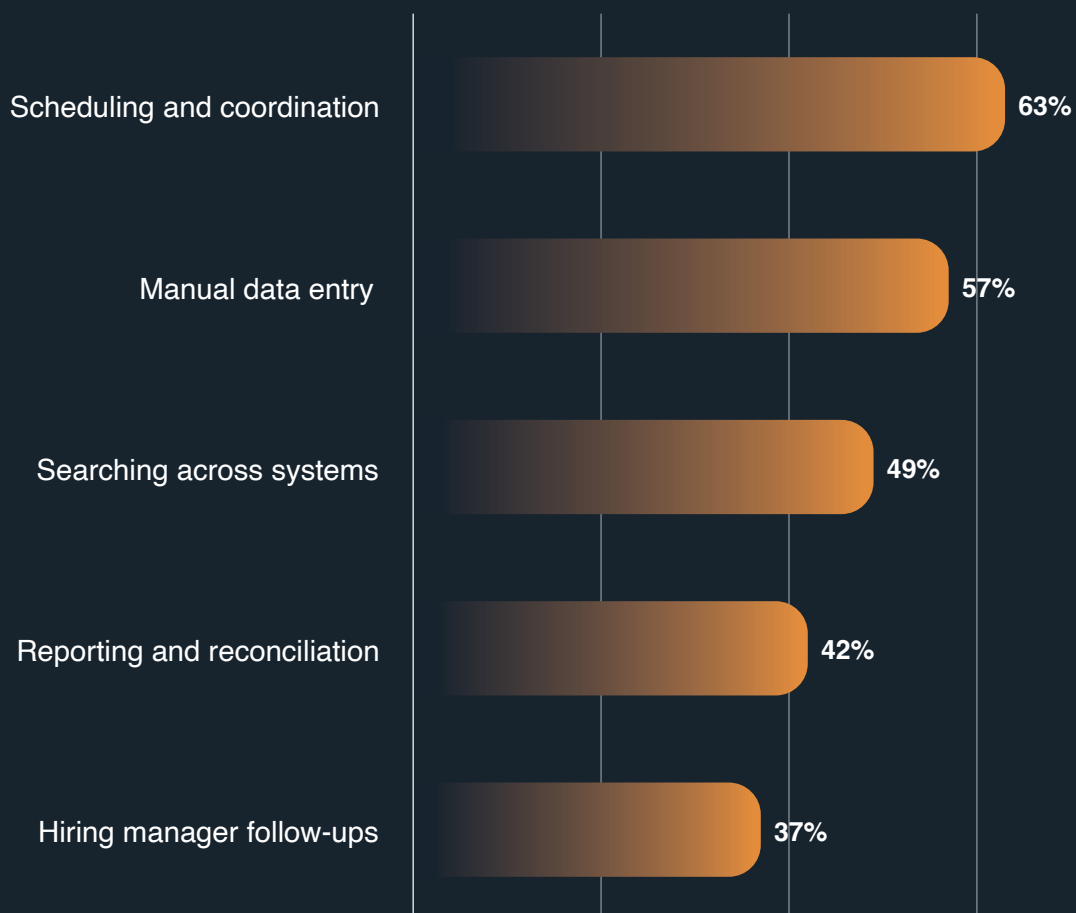
Screening and evaluation have become the most time-intensive part of the process. Recruiters are no longer primarily searching for candidates. They are managing increasing volumes of applicants and determining who to prioritize. This shift from searching for talent to filtering talent has significantly changed how time is allocated.

Interview coordination compounds the problem. Fifty-eight percent of recruiters report spending significant time on scheduling, and 63% identify it as one of the lowest-value activities in their role.



**More than half of recruiters** spend at least half of their time on work that does not directly contribute to hiring outcomes.

When asked where they spend time that delivers the least value:

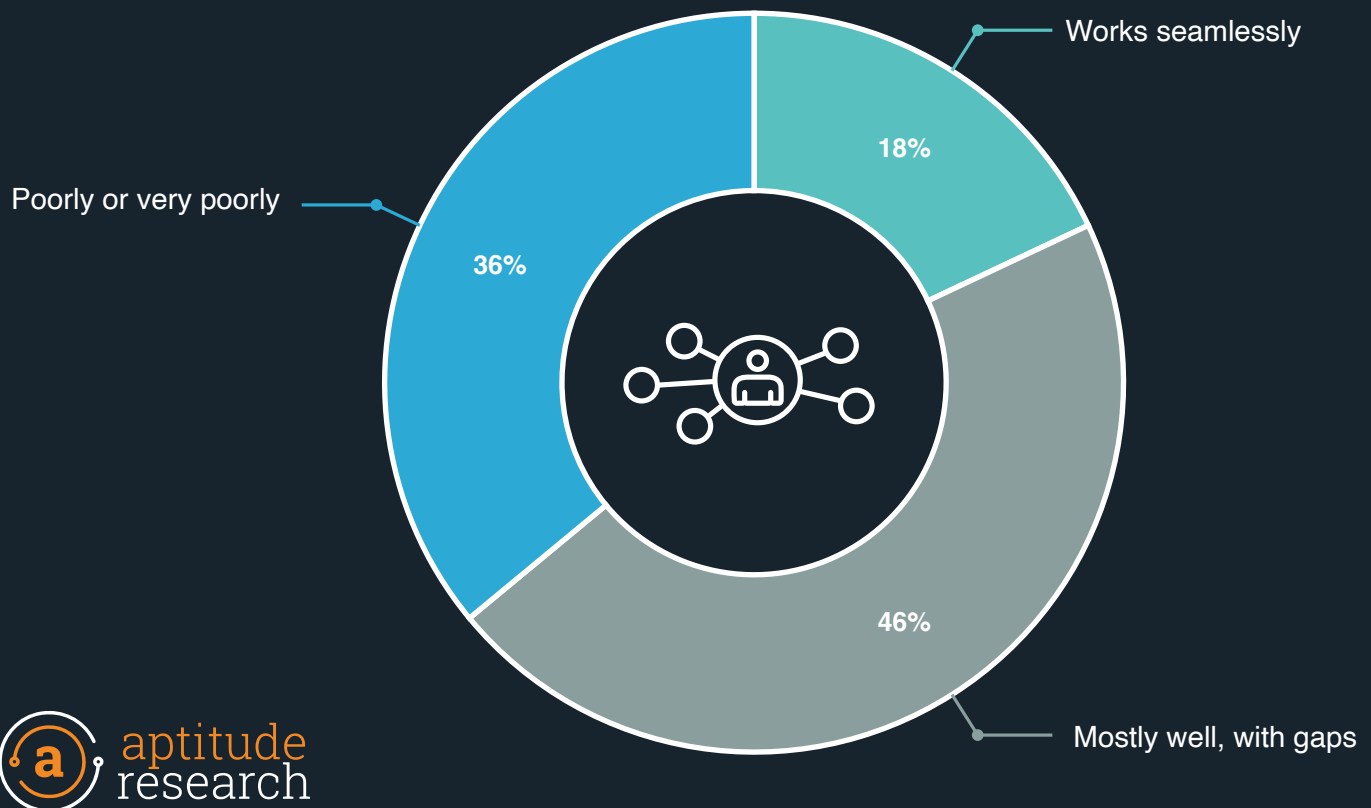


These activities are necessary but they are not strategic. They represent the operational overhead required to move candidates through the process. And they leave recruiters with limited time to focus on work that actually matters: engaging candidates, advising hiring managers, and guiding better decisions.

## Technology: Designed for Systems, Not Recruiters

Companies are using, on average, ten or more talent acquisition technology solutions. AI has been introduced into multiple parts of the recruiting process. The recruiter experience has not improved at the same pace. The issue is not a lack of technology. It is how that technology is designed and used. Today's recruiting environments are built around systems. They are not built around how recruiters work.

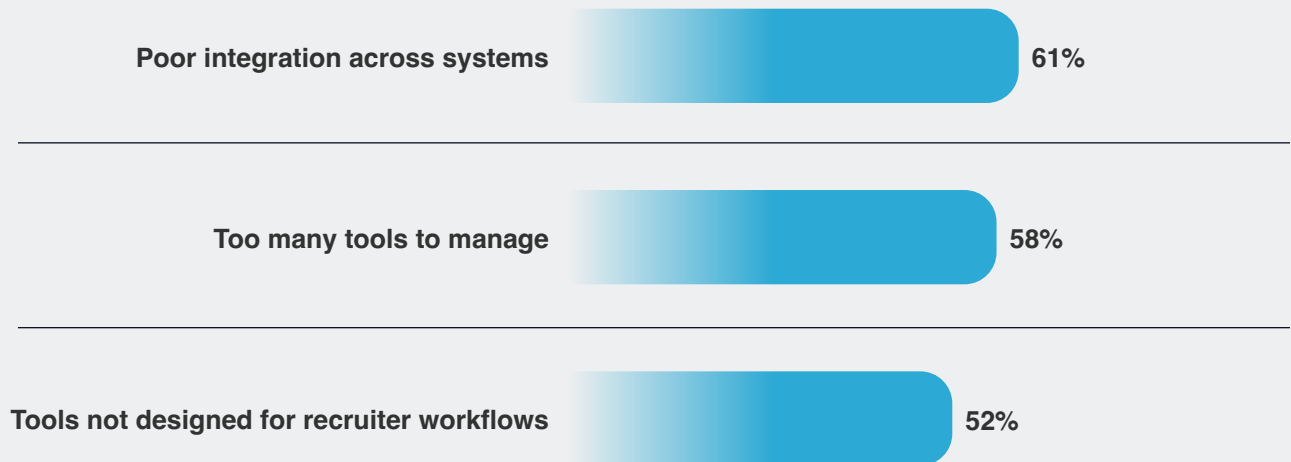
When asked how well recruiting technology supports recruiter workflows:



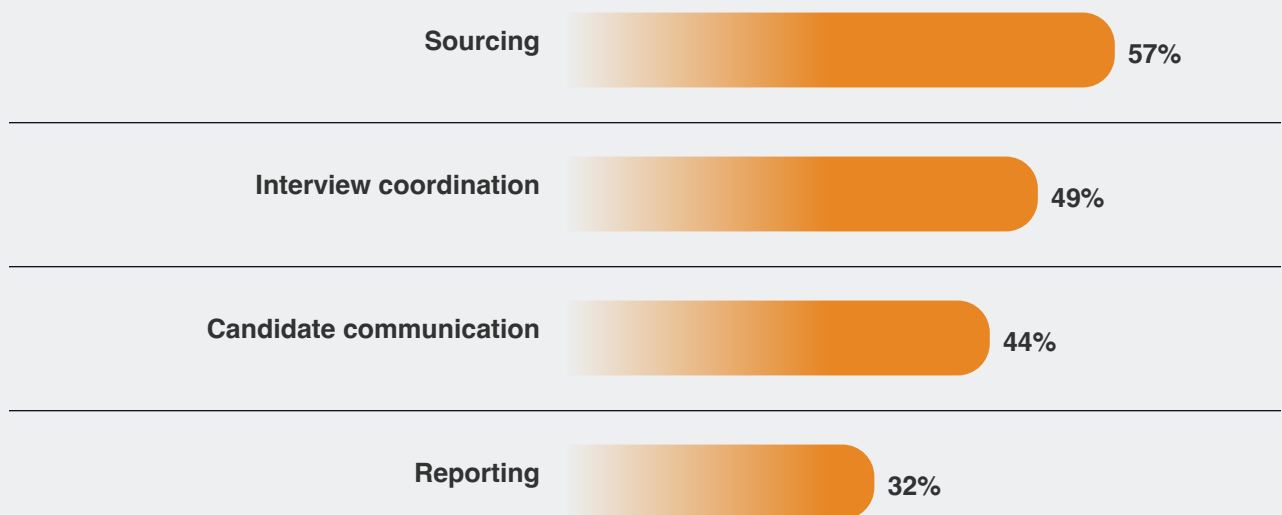
More than one-third of organizations report that their technology does not effectively support how recruiters work. Even among those who say mostly well, gaps exist across key stages. Recruiters move across multiple systems to complete tasks, manage handoffs, and track progress. The workflow itself becomes fragmented.

## Fragmentation Is the Defining Challenge

When asked about their biggest technology frustrations, recruiters identified:



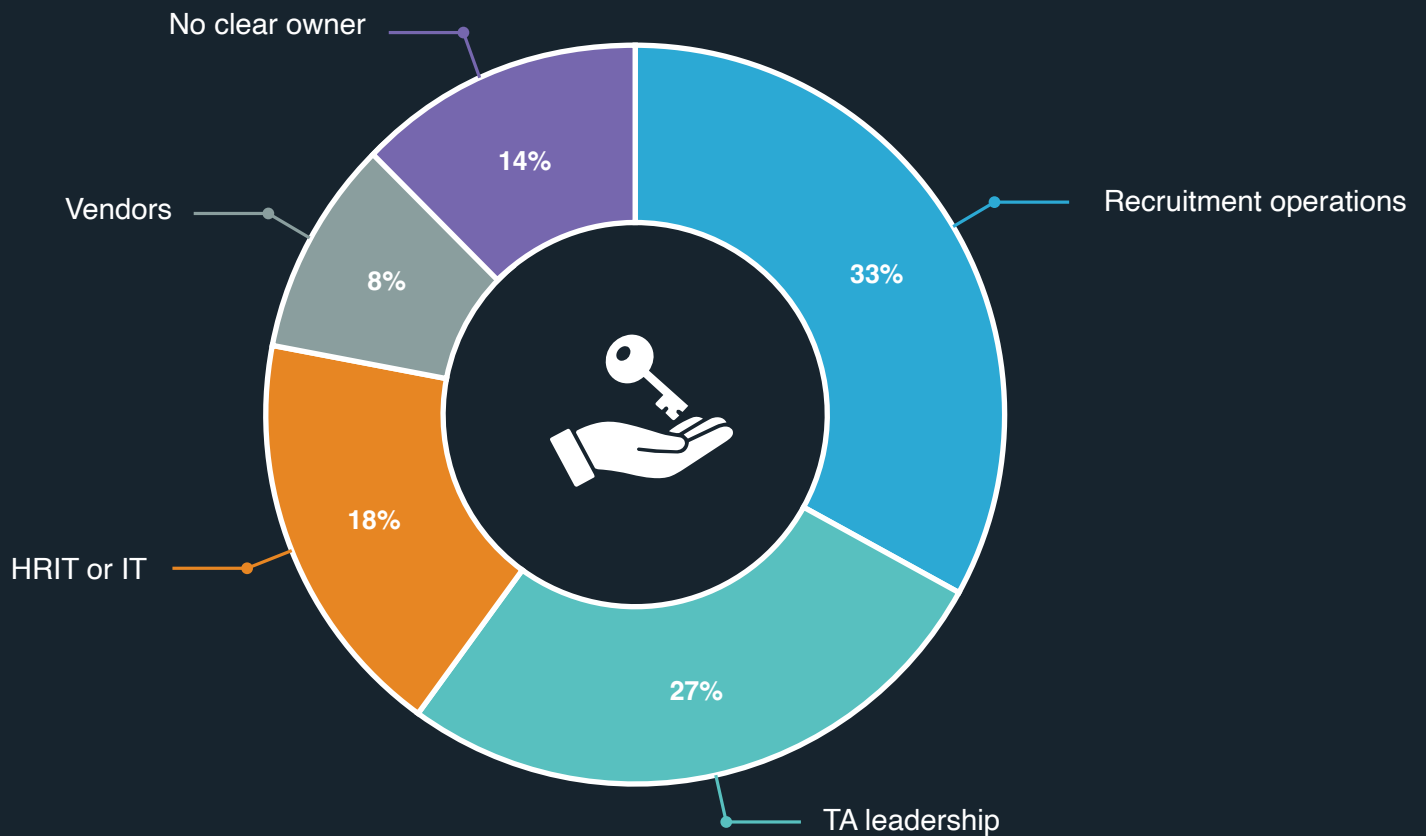
The ATS remains central to recruiting. But it is not the system where recruiting work actually happens. When asked where they leave the ATS to complete core tasks:



The ATS is a system of record. It is not a system of execution. When recruiters leave it to complete core activities, data fragments, workflows become inconsistent, and decision-making slows.

## Ownership of the Recruiter Experience Is Unclear

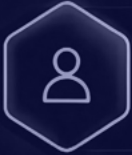
When asked who is responsible for improving recruiter workflows and technology:



The recruiter experience sits across multiple functions. No single group is fully accountable for improving it. Decisions are fragmented, priorities are misaligned, and improvements stay incremental. Technology has been added to the process. The process itself has not been redesigned.

## THE TA TEAM TODAY: *Understanding Roles and Relationships*

The structure of talent acquisition teams has expanded significantly. What was once centered on the recruiter now includes a broader set of specialized functions. Each role contributes to a different part of the hiring lifecycle. Despite this expansion, responsibilities are not always clearly defined or consistently aligned. Recruiters often remain responsible for connecting workflows and keeping hiring moving forward.



**Recruiter:** Manages the end-to-end hiring process. Screens and evaluates candidates, coordinates interviews, manages candidate communication, and follows up with hiring managers. Acts as the central point of execution and absorbs the work that falls between systems and stakeholders.



**Sourcer:** Conducts manual searches across job boards, professional networks, and internal databases. Builds candidate lists, runs outreach campaigns, and partners with recruiters on hard-to-fill roles. Most time is spent on identification and initial engagement.



**Employer Branding and Recruitment Marketing:** Owns career site content, job descriptions, paid campaigns, and candidate communication. Activity is often disconnected from the recruiter workflow and measured separately from hiring outcomes.

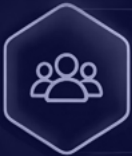


**Recruitment Operations:** Supports reporting, vendor management, and process documentation. Where the function exists, it is often under-resourced and reactive, focused on keeping systems running rather than redesigning how recruiting works.



**Recruiting Coordinator and Support:** Manages interview scheduling, logistics, and candidate-facing administrative tasks. Intended to relieve recruiters of operational work, though recruiters routinely absorb a portion of this work themselves.

### External Partners in the AI Era



**Hiring Manager:** Defines role requirements, participates in interviews, and makes final hiring decisions. Engagement is often inconsistent, recruiters spend significant time chasing feedback and aligning on expectations.



**HRIT and IT:** Provides reactive support for system access, integrations, and issue resolution. The relationship with TA is typically transactional rather than strategic.



**Security, Compliance, and Finance:** Involved primarily at vendor selection and renewal. Day-to-day visibility into recruiting workflows is limited.

## SECTION 2: AI AS THE CATALYST

### *Moving from Efficiency to Enablement*

Artificial intelligence is often positioned as the solution to the challenges facing recruiting today. In many ways, it is already making an impact. But the impact has been uneven.

In most organizations, AI has been layered onto existing workflows rather than used to redesign them. It is improving individual tasks. It is not fundamentally changing how recruiting operates. Recruiters are being asked to adopt AI while still navigating fragmented processes, disconnected systems, and unclear roles. The tools have changed. The model has not.

### **AI Today:** Improving Tasks, Not Outcomes

Most organizations remain in the early stages of AI adoption with a primary focus on efficiency. Aptitude Research finds that 38% of organizations are using AI primarily to automate tasks, while only 22% say it meaningfully supports decision-making.

Today, AI is most commonly applied to job description creation, candidate sourcing, and interview scheduling. These use cases deliver value. They help recruiters move faster and reduce some of the operational burden. But they do not fundamentally change how decisions are made or how workflows are structured.

Recruiters are still responsible for reviewing high volumes of candidates, coordinating across stakeholders, and managing the end-to-end process. AI may improve speed. It does not yet improve how recruiting operates.



# AI

is not limited by  
capability. It is limited  
by how it is applied.

## Why AI Is Not Delivering Greater Impact

The limited impact of AI is not a reflection of the technology. It is a reflection of the environment in which it is deployed.

Recruiting processes today are often unstructured and inconsistent. Without clear workflows or standardized evaluation criteria, AI outputs are difficult to apply consistently. Recruiters are left to interpret recommendations, validate results, and determine how AI should influence decisions.

Technology fragmentation further limits what AI can do. With 61% of recruiters citing poor integration as their primary frustration and more than half leaving their ATS to complete core tasks, data is distributed across multiple systems. This prevents AI from accessing a complete and reliable view of candidates and hiring activity.

Data quality and trust remain significant barriers. Thirty-seven percent of organizations cite lack of trust or transparency as a challenge in adopting AI, while 41% point to weak integration into workflows.

There is also a lack of clear ownership. AI sits across recruiting, HRIT, and technology teams, but no single function is fully accountable for how it is implemented, governed, or measured. The result is inconsistent usage and limited alignment with recruiter workflows.

### THE DATA BEHIND THE CHALLENGE



**POOR  
INTEGRATION**



**LEAVE THEIR ATS TO  
COMPLETE CORE TASKS**



**LACK OF TRUST  
OR TRANSPARENCY**



**WEAK INTEGRATION  
INTO WORKFLOWS**

“

AI without structure, integration, and trust **amplifies existing inefficiencies** rather than solving them.

”



## AI as the Enabler: Connecting Process, Technology, and Roles

Despite these challenges, AI represents the most significant opportunity to transform the recruiter experience. The value of AI is not in replacing recruiters or automating isolated tasks. It is in introducing structure, connecting systems, and enabling more consistent decision-making at scale.

Across process, AI enables a shift from reactive workflows to more structured and repeatable approaches. It supports earlier screening, prioritizes candidates based on defined criteria, and reduces the need for manual review of large applicant pools. Recruiting moves from managing volume to making better decisions.

Across technology, AI acts as a connective layer. It brings together data from multiple systems, supports a more unified view of candidates, and embeds insights directly into recruiter workflows. Recruiters spend less time navigating across tools.

Across roles, AI changes how work is distributed. Recruiters spend less time on coordination and manual tasks and more time on decision-making and stakeholder alignment. Hiring managers gain greater access to insights and more consistent evaluation frameworks. Recruitment operations plays a more central role in designing workflows, managing AI, and ensuring consistency.



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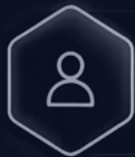
**AI BECOMES MOST VALUABLE WHEN IT IS  
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**NOT APPLIED TO THEM SEPARATELY.**

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## THE FUTURE TA TEAM WITH AI

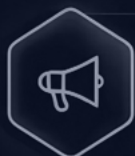
As AI becomes embedded in recruiting, the roles within the TA function are evolving. The question is not whether AI will change these roles. It will. The question is whether organizations are preparing their teams for that shift.



**Recruiter:** Shifts from execution to orchestration. Focuses on candidate engagement, stakeholder alignment, and hiring strategy. AI handles screening, prioritization, and coordination, freeing recruiters to advise hiring managers and guide better decisions. *Skills that matter most: AI literacy, data interpretation, consultative communication.*



**Sourcer:** Moves from manual search to AI-supported pipeline building. Focuses on high-value outreach, talent intelligence, and engagement strategies for specialized roles. *Skills that matter most: AI tool fluency, market analysis, persona development.*



**Employer Branding and Recruitment Marketing:** Leverages AI for content personalization, campaign optimization, and candidate journey design. Activity becomes more tightly connected to recruiter workflows and hiring outcomes. *Skills that matter most: AI content tools, analytics, candidate journey design.*

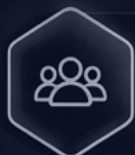


**Recruitment Operations:** Becomes the center of AI governance for TA. Owns workflow design, technology integration, AI oversight, and consistency across the hiring process. *Skills that matter most: AI implementation, process design, data governance, change management.*



**Recruiting Coordinator and Support:** The role evolves as automation absorbs scheduling and logistics. High-value coordinators shift toward candidate experience management and white-glove support for priority roles. *Skills that matter most: relationship management, communication, technology navigation.*

## Key External Partners



**Hiring Manager:** Required to engage earlier and more consistently. AI provides structured frameworks, evaluation criteria, and data that support more disciplined participation in the process.



**HRIT and IT:** Becomes a critical partner in AI integration, data governance, and system connectivity. The relationship with TA shifts from reactive support to co-design.



**Security, Compliance, and Finance:** Increasingly central to AI governance. Responsible for data privacy, algorithmic transparency, bias risk, and ROI measurement for AI investments.

## SECTION 3: THE FUTURE STATE OF THE RECRUITER EXPERIENCE

### *Understanding the Problem and Finally Addressing It*



The future of the recruiter experience is not defined by adding more tools, more data, or more AI. It is defined by redesigning how recruiting work gets done.

Today, recruiters operate in environments that are reactive, fragmented, and operational. The future state requires a shift toward workflows that are structured, connected, and designed to support decision-making. This is not an incremental change. It requires rethinking process, technology, and roles together. Organizations that address all three will move from managing recruiting activity to driving hiring outcomes.



Today, recruiters operate  
in environments that are  
**REACTIVE,  
FRAGMENTED,  
& OPERATIONAL.**

## Process: From Execution to Decision-Making

The future recruiting process is not built around tasks. It is built around outcomes.

Today, recruiters spend the majority of their time on screening, coordination, and administrative work. In the future state, these activities are reduced, automated, or guided by AI. The goal is not to eliminate recruiter involvement. It is to ensure that recruiter time is spent on decisions rather than tasks.

### WHERE RECRUITERS TIME SHOULD GO:



### WHAT AI SHOULD HANDLE:



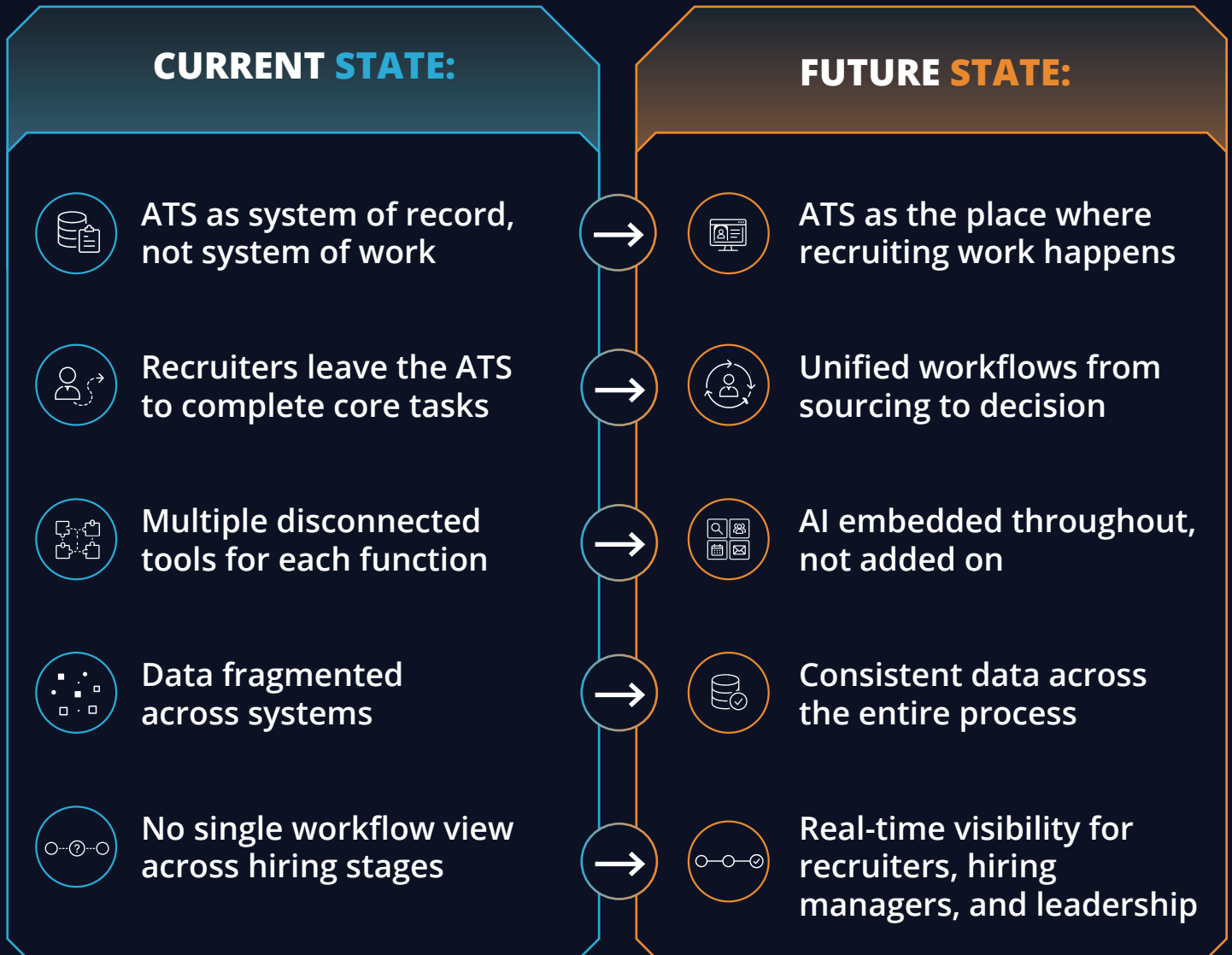
**This shift moves recruiting from execution to orchestration. From managing process steps to enabling better hiring decisions.**



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## Technology: From Systems to Workflows

The future of recruiting technology is not more tools. It is better alignment with how recruiters work. Technology must move from fragmented systems to connected workflows, and AI must be embedded into those workflows rather than added on top.



This reduces fragmentation and allows recruiters to operate more efficiently. The focus shifts from managing tools to enabling work.

## Hiring Manager: From Coordination to Partnership

The future recruiter experience requires a redefinition of the recruiter and hiring manager relationship. Today, recruiters coordinate and follow up. In the future state, they guide and advise.

This requires clearer roles and expectations, structured hiring processes, shared access to data, and consistent feedback loops. Hiring managers have greater visibility into candidate pipelines and interview data. Recruiters provide context, structure, and expertise. AI supports this relationship by providing consistent evaluation frameworks and surfacing insights across candidates. But AI does not create alignment. People do.

“

Recruiters become responsible for **guiding decision-making**, ensuring **consistency**, and **aligning hiring to business needs**. That is a **fundamentally different role** than the one most recruiters hold today.

”



In the future state, recruiters are not defined by tasks. They are defined by impact.

Operational work is reduced through automation and workflow design. Recruitment operations becomes even more critical, responsible for designing workflows, managing technology, enabling data, supporting AI adoption, and ensuring consistency across the hiring process. This function provides the structure that allows recruiters to operate at a higher level.

AI introduces new responsibilities and new opportunities. Recruiters are supported by systems that guide decisions, reduce manual effort, provide insights, and improve consistency. This enables recruiters to focus on higher-value work without increasing workload.

## What the Future Requires

The future recruiter experience is not about doing more. It is about doing the right work. Process designed around decisions. Technology that supports workflows. Hiring managers and recruiters operating as true partners. Data used to guide action rather than just report activity. Roles structured to support scale and impact.

This shift allows recruiting to move from a reactive function to a strategic one. Organizations that redesign the recruiter experience across process, technology, and roles will be better positioned to improve hiring outcomes, increase recruiter effectiveness, and scale hiring without adding complexity.

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The recruiter experience is not just changing.  
**It is being redefined.**

The question is whether organizations are ready to **lead that shift**, or whether they will keep layering tools onto a model that was **never built for this moment**.

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Aptitude Research is a leading human capital management 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 proprietary research delivers a comprehensive look at talent acquisition trends and technology. This knowledge, combined with our consulting and advisory services, enables companies to save time, money, and improve the recruiting, hiring, and workforce management experience.

Founded by Madeline Laurano and based in the Boston area, Aptitude Research provides HCM expertise to companies, vendors, and investors. View recent and upcoming research at [www.AptitudeResearch.com](http://www.AptitudeResearch.com).

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