

eBook

Four ways to use conversational AI screening

And how to know which one is right for you

greenhouse





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Introduction

For two decades, the direction of recruiting technology aimed to remove every point of friction between a candidate and an application. For the most part, it was very successful. One-click apply. Pre-filled profiles. Mobile-optimized forms. The logic was that if fewer barriers were in place, more candidates could apply and recruiters had access to more options.

The solution worked but quickly became the problem to solve. Today, roles routinely draw thousands of applications within days of posting. Recruiters can't meaningfully review everything that comes in, risking scenarios where strong candidates get lost because no one has the bandwidth to reach them. At the same time, AI-generated CVs have made the pile harder to parse, meaning a polished application no longer reliably signals a qualified candidate. What's turned applications frictionless has made a recruiter's job that much harder.

Conversational AI screening addresses this by introducing the right kind of friction that is in itself itself a signal. Candidates who engage demonstrate intent, while those who don't might not be qualified candidates, whether due to lack of the right experience or because they were potentially fraudulent.

This guide presents four distinct use cases for conversational AI screening, each built for a different hiring motions and organizational needs. While teams can use conversational AI for any number of these cases, most teams will identify one or two that match their needs best. Let's dive in.



Use case 01

Finding the needle in the haystack



How conversational AI helps recruiters manage their pipeline

There is a particular kind of recruiter frustration that rarely makes it into public conversation. It's not the fear of a bad hire, or of a role that stayed open too long. It's the persistent suspicion that somewhere in the pile of applications there was a great candidate that was never reviewed. That's the result of a mistrust of a process that fails to really assess all candidates.

This is a common scenario. When roles draw hundreds or thousands of applications, recruiters develop heuristics to move faster: familiar company names, linear career paths, keywords that match the job description. These are pattern-matching heuristics developed to adapt to pressure and not necessarily optimized for evaluation. As a result, the candidates who benefit most here are the ones who fit the pattern, not necessarily those who would do the job best.



The conversational AI application

Recruiters review inbound applications and, most often with the help of an ATS, identify the pool of candidates worth a closer look as they normally would. That group is then invited to a [structured conversational AI screen](#). When done right, every candidate gets the same questions and is scored against the same recruiter-defined rubric. Recruiters then decide who moves forward.

The impact here is on pipeline and breadth. Candidates no longer benefit from “gaming” the system, the ATS; or a recruiters’ own heuristic. Instead, candidates who might be overlooked due to career shifts or a nontraditional background get a real chance. Queues and candidates don’t get stale, and recruiters work more efficiently.

The friction also introduces an important drop-off. When a conversational screen is introduced as a required step, you’ll encounter candidates who won’t take the interview. That group is consistently and disproportionately composed of candidates who applied broadly with low intent, submissions that rely heavily on AI generation; and people who were never genuinely interested in this specific role. This massively clears up the recruiter pipeline, making hiring much more manageable.

Ready to begin your interview?



Click the connect button below
to start your voice conversation

Connect

The result for recruiters:

More of the applicant pool gets a real evaluation. The shortlist is built on actual signal rather than CV inference. Confidence in who advances goes up because every candidate on the list had the same structured conversation scored against the same standard — not because a recruiter happened to have time for them that day.

Real-world impact

Blissway, a 25-person technology company, received nearly 18,000 applications in a single year. For a team that size, the real challenge was spending limited human attention on the right candidates without sacrificing the ones worth finding. Conversational AI screening allowed them to:

- Cut time-to-hire by 27%, from 88 days to 64
- Identify excellent "“needle in a haystack”" hires whose CVs alone would not have cleared the bar



Use case 02

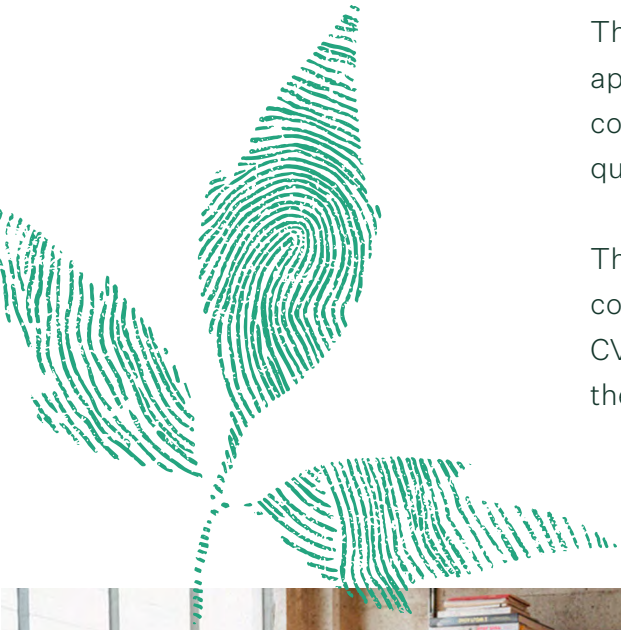
The conversational application: thinking post-CV



A transformative way of thinking about candidate screening

The first use case works within the existing process. A candidate applies, a human or ATS reviews the application, and the conversational screen follows. It's an improvement on the status quo, not a departure from it.

This second use case is a fairly significant departure. It moves the conversation to the front of the process, alongside or in place of the CV as the first signal. Completing a voice interview is part of how they apply and is the basis for the initial evaluation.



The conversational AI application

Operationally, when a candidate submits their application, the AI interview is the first stage they enter, mechanically bundled with the application itself rather than sequenced after it. The structural impact is significant on both ends of the funnel.

For serious and qualified candidates, the format gives them an immediate opportunity to explain their thinking and add additional context a CV can't hold. For unqualified candidates, the same pipeline benefits as the above still hold. The recruiter is now managing a pipeline filtered by something more meaningful than keyword matching.

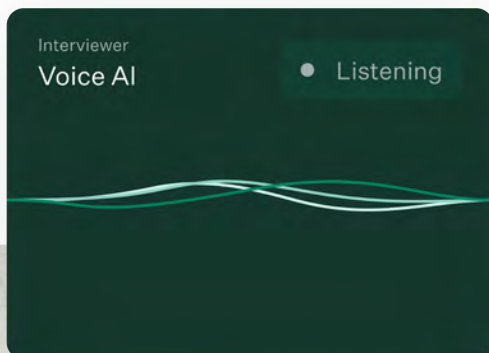
When the conversation comes first, the CV becomes a contextual supplement rather than the primary basis for evaluation. That shift matters most for candidates who have historically been underserved by CV-first screening. Meaning the issue keeping recruiters up at night; – the idea that a good candidate was missed at the outset – is no longer something to worry about.



The change management reality

This use case requires more internal preparation and more deliberate candidate communication. How it's framed in the job posting and application flow as well as how the use of the AI is communicated matters considerably. Meaningful and valuable engagement is more likely to occur when candidates understand this new process and why it exists.

Getting this right requires thinking of communication as part of the overall candidate experience. It's explained thoroughly, expectations are set (and met), and any opt-out path is visible and available. You'll find that this will result in a more engagement candidate pipeline. Our own research found that a larger share of candidates want transparency than want to do away with AI interviewing, while 44% of candidates say they'd feel more comfortable with AI in the hiring process if they were told upfront about its usage.





Real-world impact

Zapier put this to the test with candidates they expected resistance from: on senior technical roles. Over a 75-day trial, the team made a 25-minute conversational AI interview part of the application itself. They were surprised to find:

- Opt-out rate remained low, at roughly 6%
- Senior candidates averaged 31-minute conversations, using the time to explain their thinking rather than recite their background
- 97% of candidates rated the experience as excellent

For Zapier, that added up to an estimated 228 in recruiter hours saved, without narrowing the funnel.



Use case 03

Precision shortlist screening



Needle assessment: Finding the best candidate from a small pool

The third case comes later in the hiring process, compared with the others. The volume has already been managed, and a shortlist exists. All candidates on it look qualified, and it's now up to the recruiter — often a generalist, not a subject matter expert, and stretched across multiple requisitions — to meaningfully differentiate between similar, qualified candidates.

Confidence here is low. The recruiter isn't doing anything wrong, but the tools available to them — often a CV and yet another interview — aren't built for the precision decision-making required at this stage.

The conversational AI application

This use case is particularly valuable for specialized or senior roles. A well-configured conversational AI screen can probe technical depth, ask follow-up questions based on candidate answers; and surface the difference between a candidate who has done the work and one who can describe having done it. It evaluates on a level of specificity a generalist recruiter may not be positioned to match.

With conversational AI deployed, recruiters will have comparable evidence and a more informed judgment about who moves onto the next stage.





What this use case is not

Precision shortlist screening is not a way to automate the hiring decision at the late stages of a process (nor should conversational AI automate any hiring decision). The candidates being evaluated here are ones a human has already determined are worth a closer look. The conversational screen adds a structured layer of evidence to that judgment, it doesn't remove or replace it. The recruiter still makes the call on who advances. AI interviewing just makes the call better informed.

Clover Health used conversational AI as a supplemental evaluation layer between initial review and the recruiter screen for technical roles, high-volume roles; and roles where application fraud or over-reliance on AI was an issue. The result was a meaningful shift recruiter screening because the AI already covered the diagnostic ground so recruiters arrived at conversations already informed.

Check-in calls that previously ran 30 to 45 minutes now average around 15 minutes, a reduction by 50% or more. The time that used to go towards basic information gathering now goes towards the judgment work that actually requires a human: assessing motivation, understanding how a candidate thinks about the role; and making the case for why the opportunity is worth their attention.

Use case 04

The optional pre-conversation





Building context without punishing opt-outs

The first three use cases are best applied for an inbound hiring process; candidates come to you after finding the role, apply and move through the pipeline. Use case 4 is for outbound, active sourcing.

When a recruiting team is actively reaching out to candidates, the dynamic changes in a way that shapes how conversational AI can be used. These candidates received an invitation and are actively sought after, so inserting friction via conversational AI may be off-putting or might mean losing the candidate in the first place. Communication and presentation are key here.

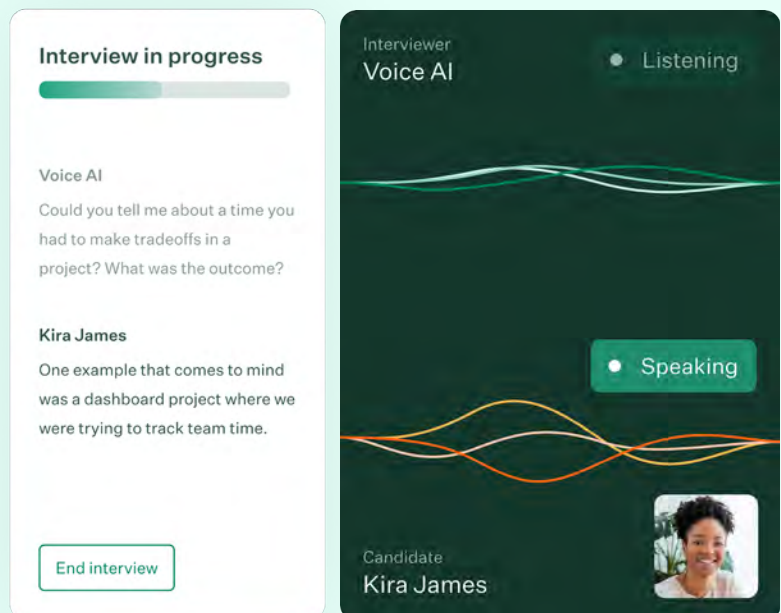


The conversational AI application

Adjusting the framing requires the opt-in pre-conversation to be offered as an opportunity that's optional, not a gate. The hiring company wants to hear from the candidate, and the conversational AI screen is a way for a candidate to learn more about the role, add context beyond their CV and prepare for the first human conversation. It's also important to let the candidate know that this opportunity is entirely on their own terms and that the human interview is already scheduled regardless of whether they take this step.

In these cases, you're getting signals that can be combined with the human interview to better assess the candidate. If the candidate opts to take the conversational screen, you now have richer signals and context. If they don't, it's not an automatic red flag but can be part of the overall assessment.

A note on candidate experience: Candidates are constantly evaluating an organization as much as the organization is evaluating them. An outreach that includes a well-framed, optional pre-conversation sends a different signal than a cold calendar invite to a screening call. It says the team is thoughtful about the candidate's time, that the process respects their agency and that there is substance behind the outreach. The difference in respect for the candidate experience will make an impact on how successful it will be.



From evaluation to execution: Getting started with your optimal use case

If you're just starting out with using voice AI interviewing, two questions follow in sequence: which one fits, and how do you get started in a way that optimizes implementation and execution?

Identifying the right fit

The answer depends on where the hiring pain is most acute and where the team has room to build confidence in their hiring process. Here's a helpful heuristic on finding the right use case.

The volume challenge

For recruiters managing pipelines that outpace their capacity, use cases 1 and 2 are the natural starting points. Use Case 1 slots into existing processes with the least disruption, while use case 2 delivers a larger upstream benefit but requires more deliberate candidate communication and internal implementation.



**The candidate differentiation challenge:**

If you have a shortlist but not enough signal to move through it confidently, use case 3 is where conversational AI can offer the most value. This is also the use case most valuable for specialized or senior roles where a generalist recruiter screen may not go deep enough.

The outbound sourcing challenge:

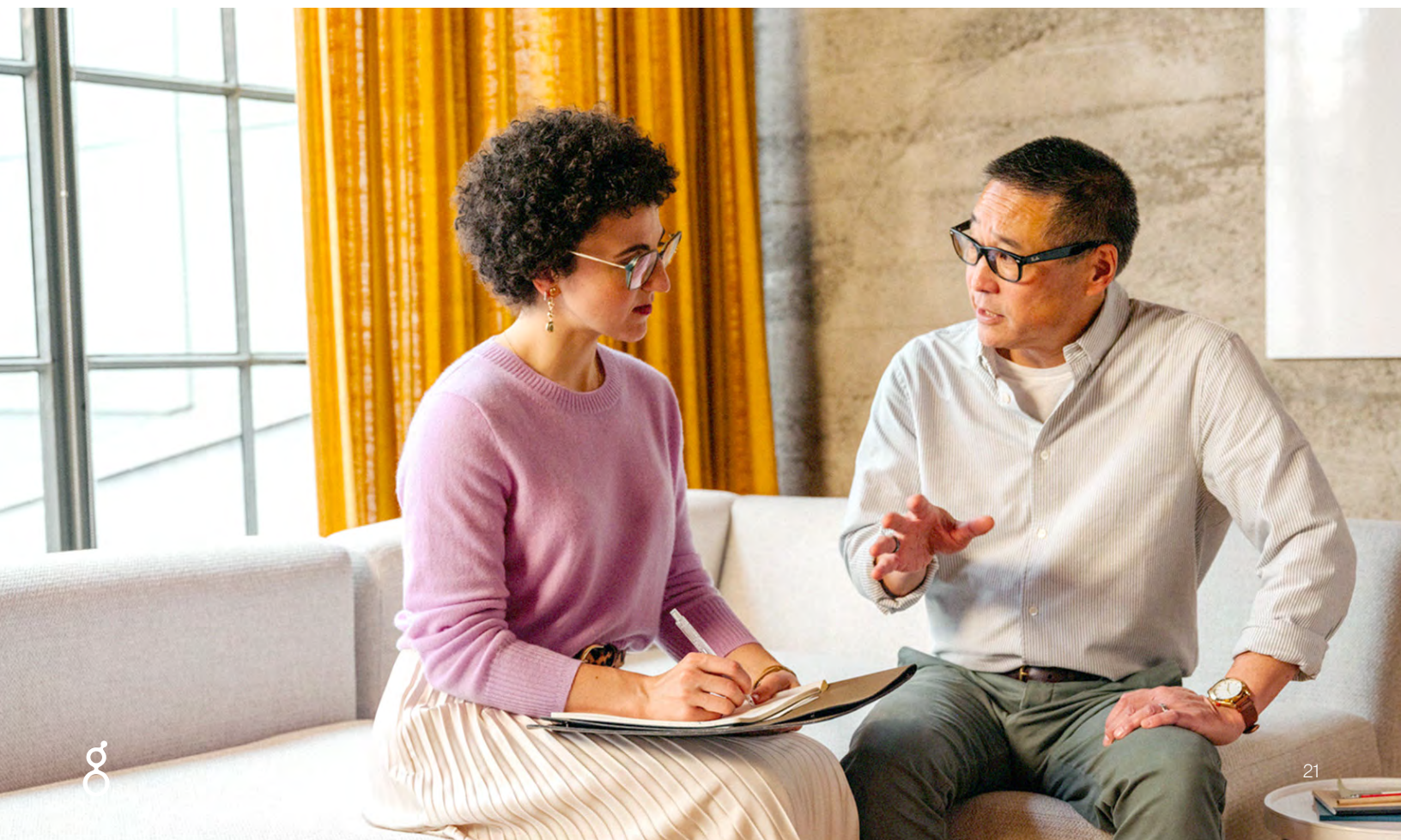
If your sourcing motion is primarily outbound and your team spends meaningful time reaching out to passive candidates and senior profiles, use case 4 is the appropriate deployment. It is not a volume tool and should not be treated as one.

Generally, use cases 1 and 3 are generally easier to introduce because they work within an existing process structure. Use cases 2 and 4 involve more change in the application process up front, and requires more deliberate internal alignment. While most organizations will find a benefit from more than one use case, the recommendation is still to start with one.

Getting started: A roadmap for implementation

Matching the use case to your team's actual pain, setting up the tool properly before scaling it; and building internal confidence before expanding is the best way to get the most out of conversational AI. The recommended starting point is small by design: one department, a handful of recruiters, a defined set of roles.

Sequence by pain not ambition. The first deployment should be where the screening problem is most acute. Roles with high application volumes are a natural entry point. Senior or specialized roles and teams where skepticism in a process change runs high, are better added once the tool has earned trust somewhere else first.





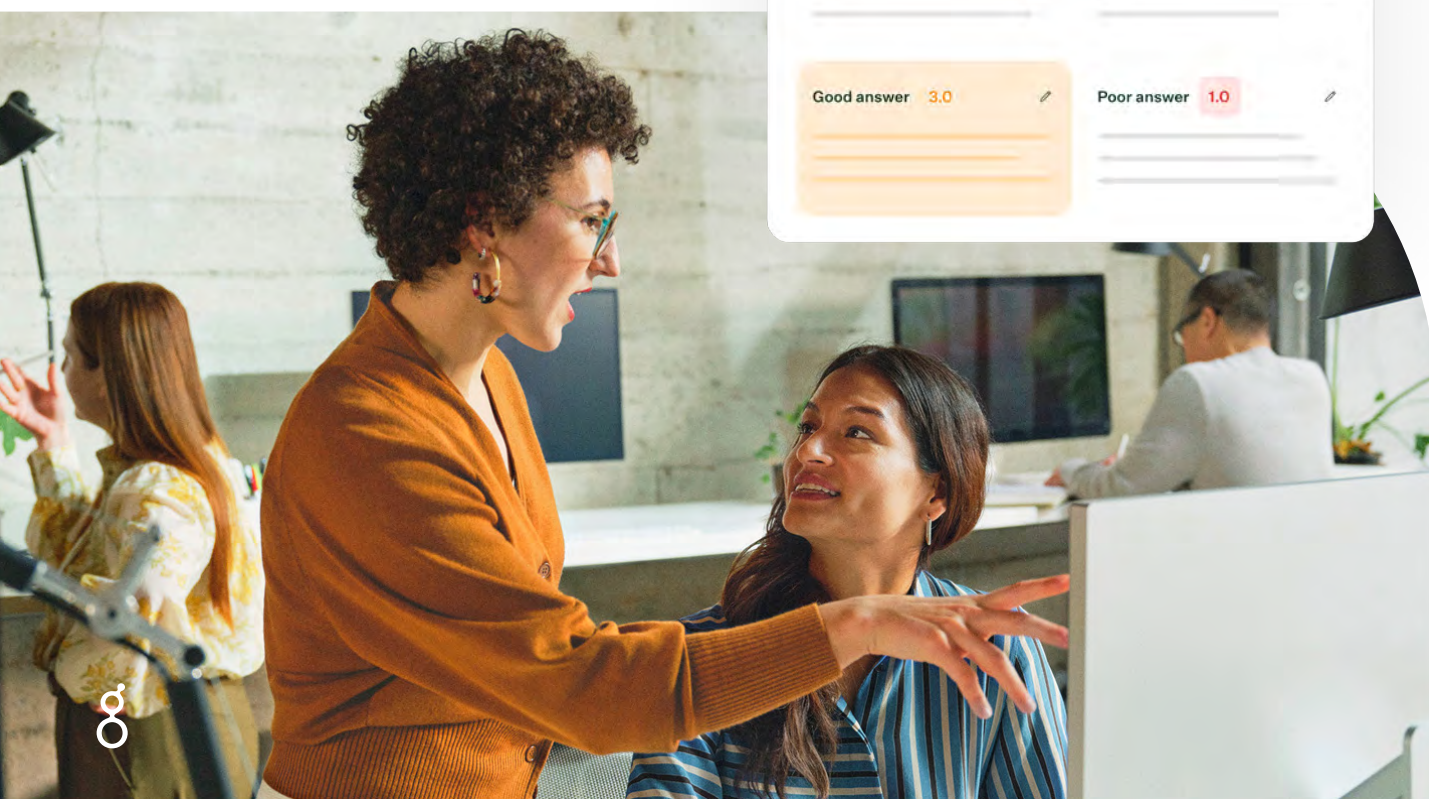
Treat setup as real work. The quality of what conversational AI screening produces is directly proportional to the quality of how it is configured. Auto-generated questions and rubrics are a starting point, not a finished product. The recruiter or hiring manager who defines the quality of answer makes the output of the screening trustworthy. As usual, this goes back to structured hiring. A role configured well the first time runs better on every subsequent open.

Get hiring managers involved before the first candidate is screened. Hiring manager calibration is necessary to make the tool reflect actual hiring judgment. A hiring manager who helps to calibrate the screen already has built-in confidence, making downstream decisions faster and easier to defend.

Define success before you start. Time-to-screen, candidates advanced from conversational screening versus traditional review, recruiter capacity reclaimed, and candidate satisfaction are all measurable from day one. Having metrics to test pre- and post-deployment is necessary to make the case for further expansion.

Interview rubric

Great answer 4.0	OK answer 2.0
Good answer 3.0	Poor answer 1.0



Conversational AI is one of the most impactful hiring tools available today

The impact of conversational AI is clear, so the questions to answer are: what use cases fit your hiring needs, and how can you implement it so it scales successfully over time? The four use cases in this guide are the answer to the first question. Even if the underlying technology is the same, knowing which deployment fits your hiring motion is the prerequisite to everything else.

The framework in the final section is the answer to the second. Starting with one use case, on a defined set of roles, with clear success criteria is key even if you have ambition for more. At the outset, your goal is to have the technology earn the trust of the rest of the TA team and; the hiring managers, as well as the candidates who are interacting with Voice AI. The organizations building that trust incrementally are the ones that will scale it with confidence and find the most success with it.

**Ready to see conversational AI
screening in practice?**

[Request a demo](#)



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