Recruitment SMART

300,000 hours back. 20% better hires. Here's how one of the Middle East's largest defence groups rebuilt its talent engine.

A three-year partnership with Recruitment Smart turned a hiring bottleneck into a competency-led talent engine, now powering every internal and external hire across the Group's engineering function.



RECRUITMENT SMART × MIDDLE EAST DEFENCE GROUP

Client

One of the Middle East's largest defence & advanced technology groups

Advanced Technology & Defence · Middle East

Partnership	3 years · AI-powered talent intelligence
Challenge	Manual shortlisting bottlenecks, low trust in AI decisions, and no unified view of workforce competencies at scale.
Solution	AI-driven shortlisting, explainable scoring with recruiter feedback loops, and a human + AI competency assessment engine.

Headline Results



Competing for the world's scarcest engineers.

The client is one of the world's leading advanced technology and defence groups, headquartered in the Middle East. With operations across autonomous systems, cyber, electronic warfare, missiles and platforms, the Group competes for a narrow band of highly specialised talent - in a market where every week of delay has strategic cost.



Three Problems Most Talent Teams Will Recognise. One Ceiling Almost None Of Them Break.

01

200 applications. One recruiter.

Manual sifting consumed the hours that should have gone into qualifying conversations. Roles stayed open longer; strong candidates went elsewhere.

02

AI calls leaders couldn't defend.

When the system recommended a candidate, hiring leaders couldn't see why - making adoption uneven and slowing decisions when speed mattered most.

03

Nobody knew what the workforce could do.

The Group wanted a validated, comparable map of skills, gaps and depth - not survey self-assessments. That intelligence didn't exist at the scale the Group needed.

Why a 3-year client doubled down (instead of going to market)

The Group didn't choose a new vendor in 2025; they deepened an existing relationship. Three years of working together meant Recruitment Smart already understood the Group's roles, risk profile, and the compliance posture required in a regulated, security-sensitive industry. That context shortened time-to-value substantially:



Proven track record

Earlier phases had already removed friction in sourcing and ranking, making the next layer of investment lower risk.

Explainability by design

Recruitment Smart's roadmap explicitly addressed the transparency gap - not just the speed gap.

Methodological rigor

A phased, audited deployment model that matched how the Group itself ships technology.

Scale on day one

Capacity to validate, deploy and analyse across 1,500+ employees and 20+ disciplines without a multi-year build.

Not three tools. One engine that fixes the funnel.

Rather than three disconnected tools, Recruitment Smart layered three capabilities into a single workflow - each one resolving a specific blockage upstream of the next.

LAYER 1

The shortlist that builds itself

Candidates above a defined confidence threshold were fast-tracked to recruiter review in near-real-time. Below-threshold applications still flowed through, but no longer competed for attention at the top of the funnel.

LAYER 2

AI that shows its work

Every recommendation surfaced its scoring logic: which competencies matched, which signals weighed most, where the model was less certain. Recruiters could agree, override or annotate - and those signals fed back into the model.

LAYER 3

The first honest competency map

Not a survey - a structural answer. An assessment engine combining AI-driven video interviews with expert-validated question banks across the entire engineering function.

The output is a **live competency map** the Group uses for hiring, reskilling, succession and workforce planning - backed by evidence, not assumption.

16,000+

Expert-approved questions

1,500+

Assessments completed

800,000+

Minutes of interview content analysed

- 20 Disciplines
- 49 Sub-disciplines
- 15 Role families each

The Group can now answer workforce questions - where the depth is, where the gaps are, and who's ready for the next role - with data rather than estimation.



What most "AI in HR" stories quietly skip.

What separated this deployment was the discipline around how it was validated. A phased, gated model with explicit Go / No-Go criteria at every step, and external review before candidate-facing use.

PHASE 1	SME Validation 46 senior engineering experts validated AI scoring.	✓ ≥85% AI–SME alignment achieved
PHASE 2	Engineer Testing Live testing with engineers and managers.	✓ ≥80% manager–AI alignment · ≥4.0/5.0
PHASE 3	Full Internal Deployment 1,500+ employees across 20 disciplines.	✓ 95%+ completion · fairness audits passed
FINAL	External Deployment Steering committee approval secured.	✓ Extended to all engineering openings

! Bias audits, fairness reviews and ROI assessment were **not appended at the end** - they were built into the gate criteria. That is what let the Group's leadership approve every stage with confidence rather than caution.

The numbers the Group's leadership now defends in the boardroom.

The combined effect of automated shortlisting, explainable AI and competency assessment showed up at every stage of the hiring funnel.



88%	~20%	>30%
Reduction in overall hiring effort	Reduction in time-to-hire (external)	Reduction in time-to-assessment

**Productivity multipliers vs. the pre-AI baseline - e.g. 3.3× faster = the same work in roughly 30% of the prior time.*

OUTCOMES

What 300,000 hours actually changes.

300,000+

Recruiter Hours Reclaimed Annually

Time redirected from manual sifting into qualifying conversations and closing top candidates.

20%

Improvement in hiring quality

Measured against the Group's own quality-of-hire benchmark, with continuous gains as the feedback loop trains the model.

20

Engineering disciplines mapped, live

The Group can answer where the depth is, where the gaps are, and who's ready next - with data, not estimation.

Stronger trust in AI

Explainability shifted hiring from "do we believe the score?" to "what does the evidence tell us?"

One unified talent engine

The same validated standard now applies to every engineering hire - internal mobility or external join.

Where the partnership goes from here.

The stack now runs across both halves of the Group's hiring engine: internal mobility for 1,500+ engineers, and external evaluation for every engineering opening - comparing both on like-for-like data for the first time.

- Quality of hire tracked at 6- and 12-month performance intervals.
- Succession depth across critical role families.
- Using the competency map to drive targeted reskilling - not just hiring.

Hiring that keeps up with ambition - with the rigour a regulated industry demands.





Your hiring funnel probably has the same three leaks.

We can show you where — in 30 minutes.

Book a walkthrough with the Recruitment Smart team →

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