iCIMS
Talent Experience Report

2024

Data and insights to
build the experiences
candidates demand

iCIMS®

Letter from iCIMS Chief People Officer

Laura Coccaro
Chief People Officer
iCIMS

If there's one thing that HR has learned over the last few years, it's the importance of being prepared for the future — which we also learned is absolutely impossible to predict.

Today's talent acquisition landscape has been described as the Great Hesitation, with companies in a hiring holding pattern and workers staying put with their current employers. It's as if someone has pressed the PAUSE button on hiring activity.

So, without a crystal ball available to help predict the future, talent teams are left with more questions than answers. How is economic uncertainty going to impact your workforce? How do you stay ahead of unexpected hiring swings and fluctuations? And will you be ready to go when your company presses PLAY on hiring?

Now is the time for TA to flex that preparedness muscle and get ready for when those hiring gates swing back open. That means making sure the experience your organization is offering candidates is personalized, seamless and consistent — because they expect nothing less.

We can't predict what the rest of 2024 and beyond will bring, but as talent pros, we know how to be ready for whatever that is.

Table of Contents

Building a better candidate experience

While "every second counts" is the mantra for the restaurant kitchen featured in a popular TV series, it seems that in TA, every moment counts.

This report not only explores what candidates want right now, but how TA pros and recruiters across the country are delivering those experiences. From how often candidates expect to hear from a company and their preferred communication channels to the tools and processes TA teams are leveraging to meet those expectations, this report will give you the data and best practices to help you build a better experience for your candidates.

Candidates have come to expect more, and they're not afraid to ditch your brand in favor of another following a negative interaction. In fact, over half of the respondents to our survey said that they would be less likely to be a consumer of a brand following a bad candidate experience.

With candidate expectations higher than ever, teams can no longer function as just relationship managers. They need to be experience builders.
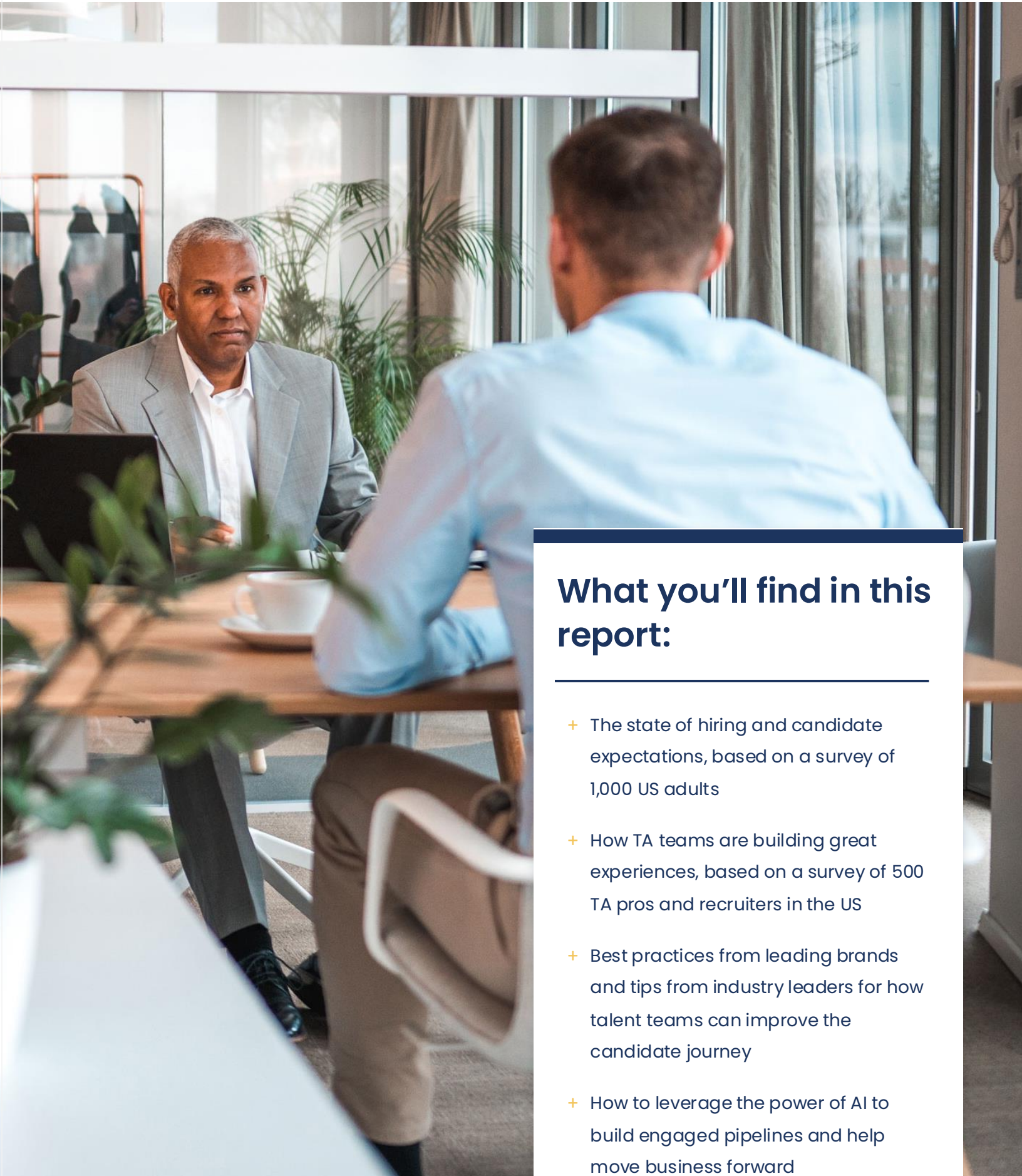
What you'll find in this report:

+ The state of hiring and candidate expectations, based on a survey of 1,000 US adults

+ How TA teams are building great experiences, based on a survey of 500 TA pros and recruiters in the US

+ Best practices from leading brands and tips from industry leaders for how talent teams can improve the candidate journey

+ How to leverage the power of AI to build engaged pipelines and help move business forward

iCIMS Talent Experience Report: Top Findings

JOB SEEKERS

51% of people would be less likely to be a consumer of a brand following a negative application or interview experience.

69% of people expect the job application process, from applying to receiving an offer letter, to take three weeks or less.

44% of people only expect communication from a recruiter when there are tangible next steps in the interview process.

Survey snapshot

- 500 US-based talent acquisition professionals

- 1,000 US consumers ages 18+

- iCIMS Insights data based on 5.5M+ hires and 200M+ applications annually across the iCIMS platform

Conducted in August 2024

TA PROS

87% of recruiters are concerned about candidates' use of AI during the application and interview processes.

64% of TA pros would like to see even more AI adopted in the recruiting and TA process.

2.39 hours On average, using AI saves TA pros 2.39 hours a week.

33% of TA pros fear technology will make their role obsolete.

How to use this report, by role

FOR THE HR LEADER

Laura Coccaro
Chief People Officer, iCIMS

Having access to robust data paints a clear picture of how workforce dynamics have evolved. Use this knowledge to refine your TA strategies and rethink how you leverage technology to meet today's expectations. Whether it's streamlining operations, fostering company culture or providing a personalized and consistent candidate experience, this data empowers HR teams to take a proactive approach in building a workforce that thrives.

FOR THE TA LEADER

Stephanie Sansone
Director Talent Acquisition, iCIMS

TA leaders need actionable insights to stay ahead in a fast-paced environment. Use the key recruitment trends and candidate behaviors to rethink sourcing, how you engage qualified talent and identify valuable metrics to deliver to your CHRO. The report gives you the information you need to anticipate future challenges and opportunities in recruitment.

FOR THE RECRUITER

Rosey Pullman
Sr. Global Talent Acquisition Partner, iCIMS

In a rapidly changing environment, every moment counts. This report provides insight into what candidates expect from the recruiting process and how recruiters and talent professionals can deliver on those expectations. Leverage GenAI tools to personalize and automate tasks to help you transition from a relationship manager to an experience builder.

FOR THE CEO

Jason Edelboim
Chief Executive Officer, iCIMS

Data-driven insights empower us to shape our company's future. Knowing the shifts in labor market conditions and candidate behaviors can inform better investment decisions and support strategic planning. Understanding the role of AI and emerging technologies in TA can help transform how we work, drive efficiency and improve outcomes. The right AI and tech partners may be the key to building a future-ready workforce.

FOR THE CIO

Keyur Ajmera
Chief Information Officer, iCIMS

Communicate with your CHRO to ensure your tech is responsible, trustworthy and offers the right AI capabilities to meet your recruiting needs. This collaboration will allow you to stay ahead of trends, gain alignment on tech investments and deliver efficiencies without risk and without sacrificing the right experiences for your candidates, recruiting teams or business.

Pouring the foundations of a good candidate experience

Experience matters. Why all the racket around providing a great candidate experience? Because a bad one could impact your bottom line. Over half (52%) of job seekers said a bad experience applying or interviewing for a job would change how they feel about that brand, and 51% would be less likely to be a consumer of the brand. But don't get on Gen Z's bad side — 62% said a bad experience applying or interviewing for a job would change how they feel about the brand, and 63% said they'd be less likely to be a consumer of that brand in the future.

Keep it short 'n sweet. Most job seekers (69%) say they expect the job application process, from applying to receiving an offer, to take three weeks or less — and companies are delivering. According to iCIMS data, overall time to hire was an average of 18 days in 2024 (up from 17 days in July 2023). Application time dropped from 13 to 12 minutes, an 8% dip from July 2023. Could this be why 40% of candidates described their most recent job search as quick and easy, and only 9% found it depressing and hopeless?

EXPERT TIP

Katie Coupe
Chief People Officer

seekout>

Clear and consistent communication is key to a positive candidate experience.

Effective communication — engaging with candidates in both a timely and clear manner — not only strengthens your employer brand but also creates measurable success via reduced drop-out rates and increased offer acceptances. Interviews are an investment for both your business and candidates, it's best to be honest and direct about the status of the role and progress throughout the process.

⭐ **Talent experience landscape**
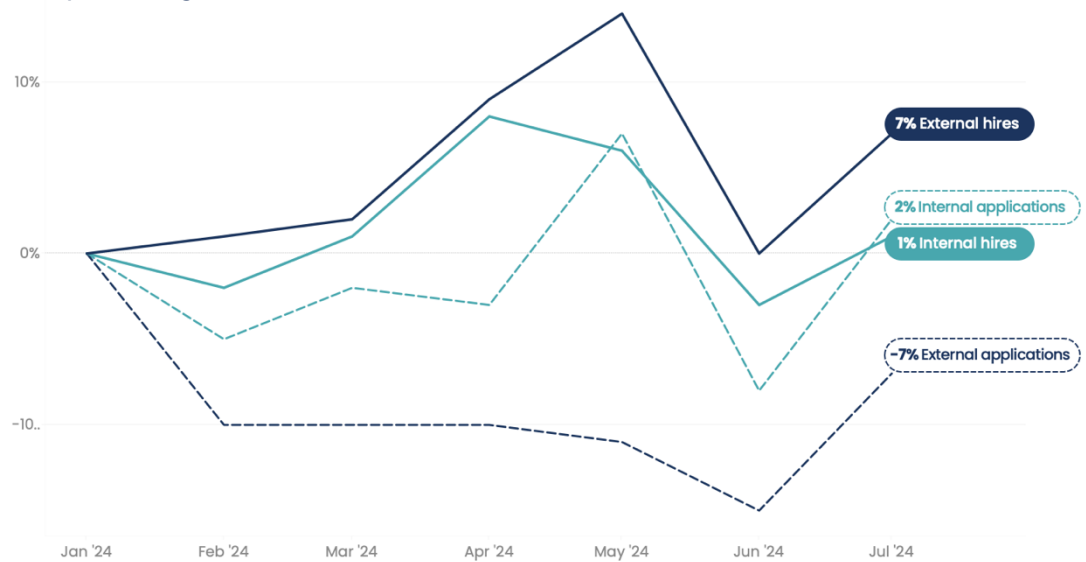
Welcome to The Big Stay

Job seekers and employers are stuck in a holding pattern.

Workers are hunkering down with their current employers and looking for internal jobs, according to iCIMS data. Internal applications were up 2% from January and external applications were down 7%. For employers, internal mobility doesn't seem to be a top priority, as internal hires are only 1% higher than January 2024, while external hires are up 7%.

Remote work remains appealing. Job seekers continue to look for roles outside of their home location, with 22% of applications in July coming from out of state. Employer activity over the last 12 months has been steady, with 12% of hires in July coming from out of state.

Let's talk about your specific TA challenges

Roadblocks moving the right applicants through the hiring process quickly?

A complex hiring environment demands a configurable, AI-powered platform that integrates seamlessly with other solutions in your tech stack, keeping candidates engaged and converting hires faster.

The AI-powered iCIMS ATS can automate recruiting workflows, maximize recruiter efficiency and accelerate hiring.

See it in action

## Internal vs. external applications and hires

January 2024–July 2024

7% External hires

2% Internal applications

1% Internal hires

-7% External applications

10%

0%

-10..

Jan '24   Feb '24   Mar '24   Apr '24   May '24   Jun '24   Jul '24

TALENT EXPERIENCES CREATED WITH iCIMS

benefit

Benefit Cosmetics brings new meaning to face time

Benefit Cosmetics is obsessed with making beauty radically feel good, and that comes to life through the global beauty brand's work culture. By switching to virtual video interviews, candidates have a low-pressure format to express themselves that's safe and easy. Hiring teams now receive 100 videos each week that they can quickly screen for potential BeneFam members before committing to an in-person session and avoid down time if a candidate fails to show.

Integrating video interviewing into its broader hiring experience allowed Benefit's hiring teams to assess applications with the click of a button, screening up to 100 video interviews each week and shaving 15–20 minutes off the old manual process.
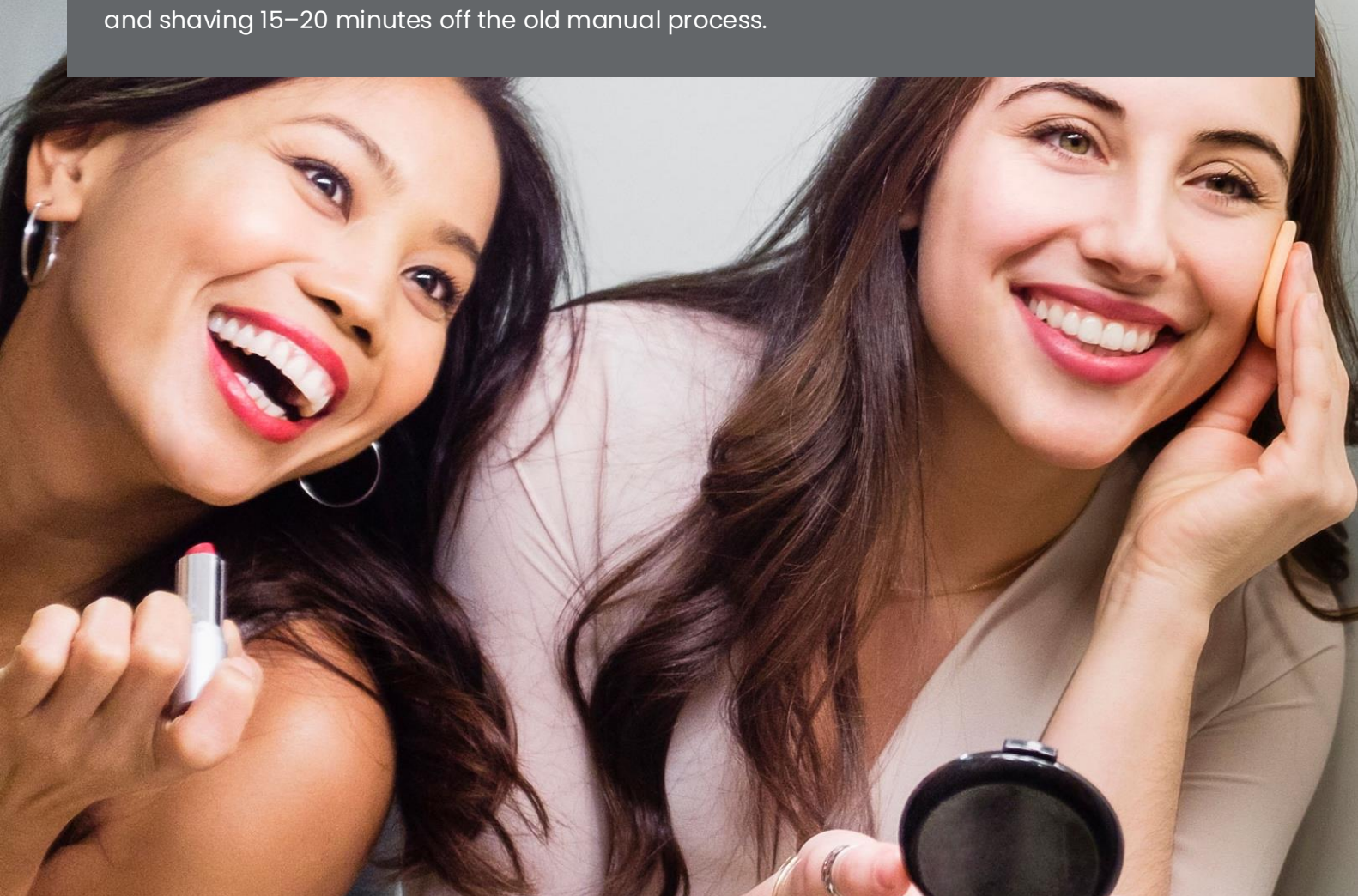
The waiting is the hardest part. When it comes to applying for a job, often the hardest part isn't filling out the application itself, but rather waiting to hear whether it has been received by recruiters. In fact, 23% of respondents say the most frustrating aspect of the application process is feeling like their application is going into a digital black hole. But candidates don't need much — 44% of respondents say that they only expect communication from a recruiter when there are tangible next steps in the interview process.

You used to call me on my cellphone. Recruiters are trying their best to keep candidates updated, with nearly half (45%) providing status updates to a candidate once every two weeks, either by email (48%) or phone call (30%). Half of job seekers say emails is their preferred form of communication to receive application status updates from a prospective employer.

EXPERT TIP

Erin Johnson
VP, Employer Solutions

JOBTARGET

Make every moment count — because candidates demand nothing less.

Amplify the best of what your company has to offer across all channels. Focus on touchpoints like your career site and company profiles on Indeed and LinkedIn. Build a talent pipeline and make strong connections with an always-on approach — whether that's via social media, Google Ads, hiring events or job fairs.

Candidates will be evaluating your organization throughout the journey. Make sure your employer brand shines every step of the way.

Most wanted. Job candidates want to feel wanted, and even more so, they want to feel sought out by a future employer. Almost one third (29%) of respondents reported that the number one thing a company can do to make them feel that way is for recruiters to reach out to discuss their career interests prior to them applying for a role. Twenty percent said a personalized text or email highlighting info they'd either expressed interest in or interacted with would also give them the warm fuzzies about an employer.

They've got what it takes. Most respondents (84%) say they feel they have the skills required to succeed at work in the future but nearly a third (27%) say they need some additional training and development. What skills in particular do job seekers see as important for 21st century workers? Eighty percent of workers think Gen AI skills are important for landing a job today. According to iCIMS data, 42% of respondents say that a lack of knowledge around would hinder future career opportunities.

EXPERT TIP

Erin Johnson
VP, Employer Solutions

JOBTARGET

Salary transparency isn't just a passing trend — this wave of change is here to stay.

Proactively align your hiring practices with legal requirements, candidate expectations and local market data. Include a salary range in your job posting and ensure that any discussions throughout the candidate's experience match the initial expectation that was set. Regularly review your job details and local market data to stay competitive so you can attract strong talent and maintain trust throughout the hiring process.

TALENT EXPERIENCES CREATED WITH iCIMS

Delaware North

Want to learn new skills and grow your career? Yes, chef!

Global hospitality giant Delaware North helps create memorable experiences at high-profile venues around the world, including Wembley Stadium, Kennedy Space Center and New York's Lincoln Center. To support clients who need a high volume of talent with culinary skills, Delaware North teamed up with the Culinary Institute of America to create their CHEFS™ program. The yearlong program is offered to new and current team members — or "Emerging Culinarians" — who rotate through Delaware North venues and work with chef mentors to receive pro chef certification and expand their career opportunities. *chef's kiss*
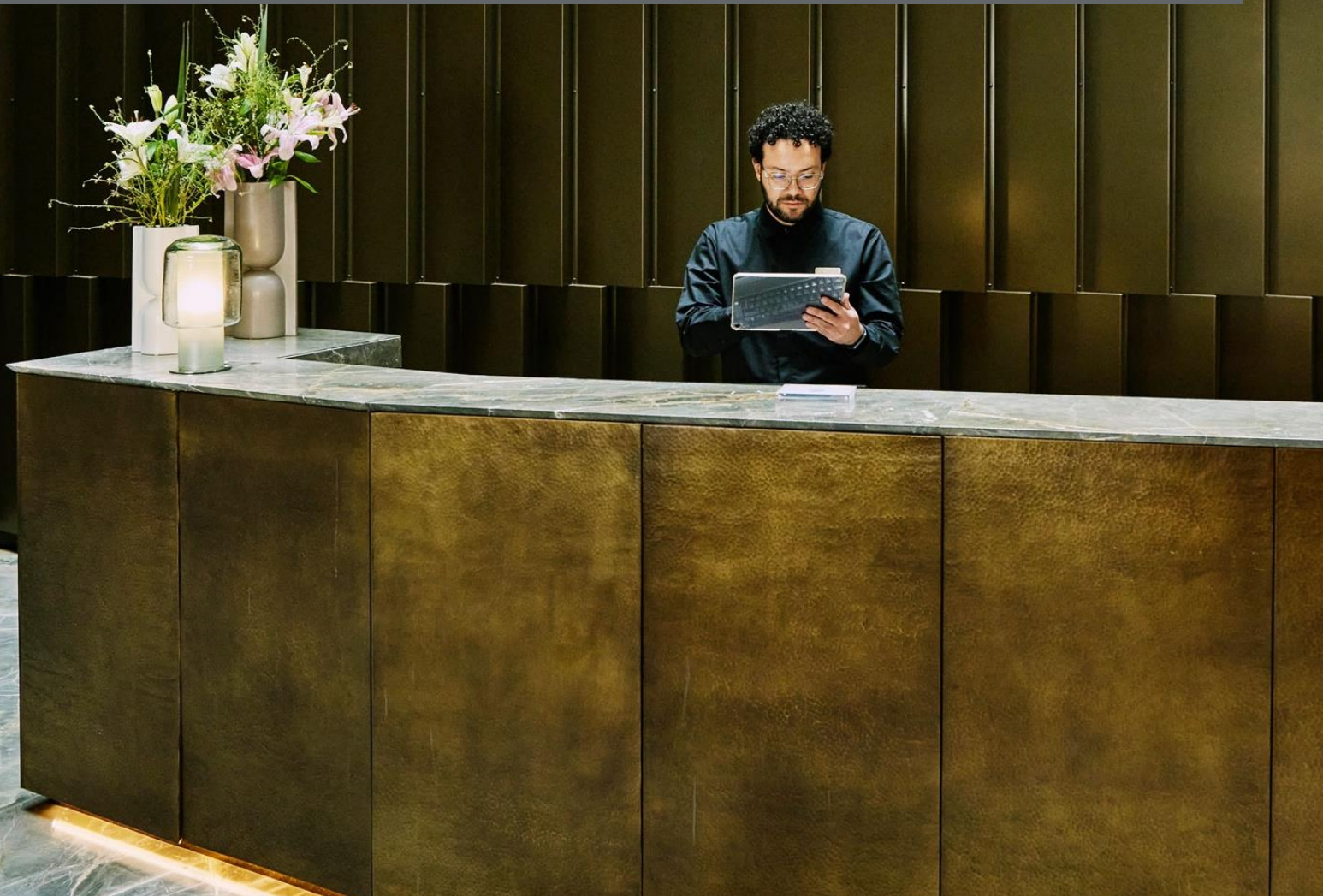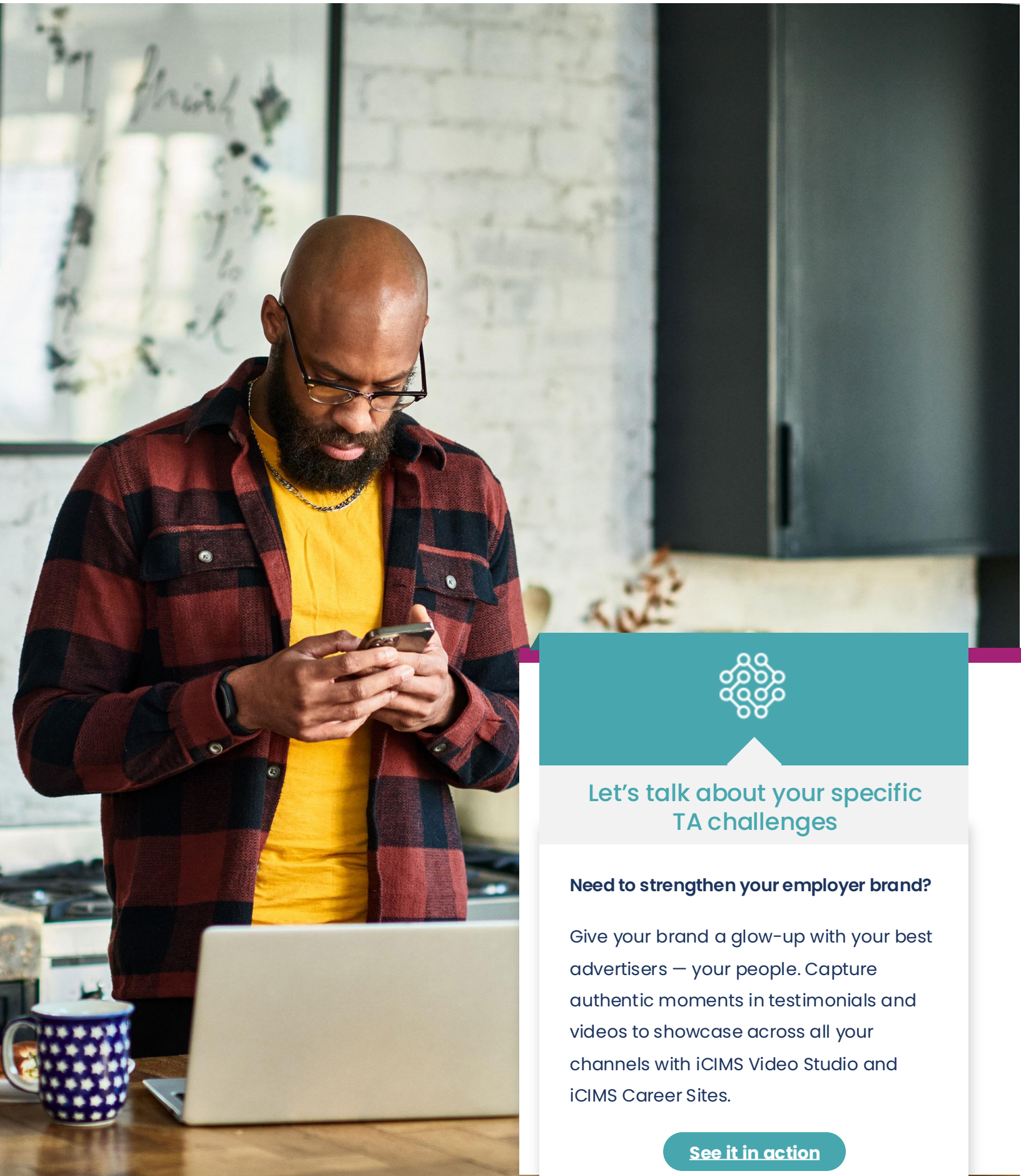
Let's talk about your specific TA challenges

Need to strengthen your employer brand?

Give your brand a glow-up with your best advertisers — your people. Capture authentic moments in testimonials and videos to showcase across all your channels with iCIMS Video Studio and iCIMS Career Sites.

See it in action

What's it really like to work there? 38% of job seekers say employee testimonial videos are their go-to source for an inside look at roles and workplace culture. Too bad 74% say that they haven't encountered an employee testimonial during the application process.

More trusted sources. According to 45% of TA pros, candidates researching their organization spend the greatest amount of time on career sites, which about one-third (32%) of job seekers trust as an accurate source of information for what it's like to work there.

"By continually investing in a strong candidate experience, organizations safeguard transparency, communication and respect in their hiring processes. This ensures access to top talent and leads to better hires, improved retention and higher ROI."

Evelyn McMullen
Research Manager

NUCLEUS RESEARCH

EXPERT TIP

NEIL COSTA
Founder & CEO

hireclix®

How to create a seamless — and effective — candidate experience

Sometimes, there aren't enough hours in the day for TA leaders to manage recruiting operations while also crafting holistic candidate experiences. Here are three pieces of advice for overcoming those challenges and making great candidate experiences.

+ Showcase your employer brand by driving interest on social media and popular websites.

+ Drive candidates back to a high-quality career site with consistent employer branding and clear calls to action.

+ Build momentum with candidates and earn their interest by reducing friction and having a modern look from start to finish.

⭐ **Talent experience landscape**

Women are roaring back to work

Back to business: Recent data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics found that more than three-quarters of women in their prime working years are now employed full-time, a record high and up from 56% in 2020. According to iCIMS data, applications by women increased 56% between July 2021 and July 2024. And businesses are actively trying to hire them, as nearly 80% of recruiters say they are taking specific steps to attract female candidates.

Thinking outside the box. The burst in applications from women isn't just for jobs in more "traditional" female dominated industries, like healthcare and retail. Since 2019, applications for jobs in finance (75%) and manufacturing (67%) have seen major increases. Applications for tech jobs skyrocketed 187% since July 2021, and 66% of women said that recent external market factors, such as the rise of AI and economic uncertainty, have not affected their desire to nab a tech job.

Gender gaps

Hurry. Up. Women don't want to dither around in the job search. A whopping 73% said they expected the job application process, from applying to offer, to take three weeks or less, compared to 65% of men who expect the same three-week turnaround.

Don't waste their time. Almost half (49%) of the women surveyed said they only expect communication from a potential employer when there are tangible next steps in the interview process. Conversely, 40% of men said the same.

Be prepared. More men (60%) than women (53%) said that they believed they had the skills required to succeed at work in the future.

Old School. Almost half (48%) of women said they don't have any experience using GenAI to write a resume or cover letter. On the flip side, 43% of men said that they have deployed GenAI in the job search.

Tech friendly. Forty-two percent of male respondents also felt that GenAI skills were very important for landing a job in today's job market, compared to 28% of women. And more men (17%) than women (7%) said they have applied for a job in the last six months where AI plays a significant role.

Let's talk about your specific TA challenges

Need to source talent faster at scale?

Build talent pipelines and find candidates that are best fit and hire-ready through a combination of behavior-based marketing automation, multichannel marketing campaigns, engagement scoring and AI. Experience iCIMS CXM.

See it in action

Hiring across generations

The challenges of hiring across generations.
From hiring a 60+ boomer to a 23-year-old zoomer, there's a lot of ground for recruiters to cover trying to connect with candidates across generational divides.

Tell me more. Younger applicants want more frequent communication, with 37% of 21–24-year-olds indicating they expect status updates on their applications once a week or more. On the other end of the age spectrum, almost half (47%) of respondents from 55–64 only expect communication when there are tangible next steps in the interview process.

You've got mail. What's the best way to send candidates application status updates? Half of respondents (50%) chose email — even 41% of the 21–24-year-old set picked email over texting. Fifty percent of 25–34-year-olds also selected email, and 57% of Gen Xers said, "Send it to my inbox."

Jump on it. Leverage modern marketing tech with automated email campaigns that create hyper-personalized talent journeys and effectively nurture and convert candidates.

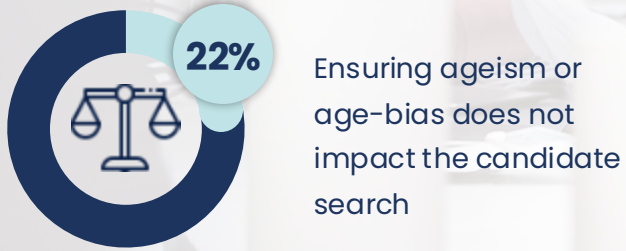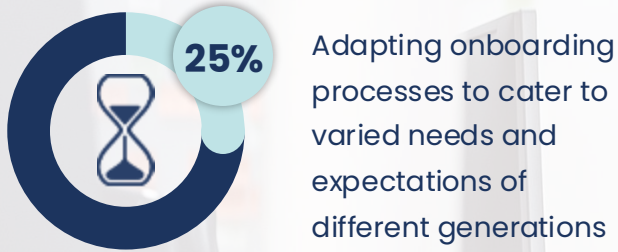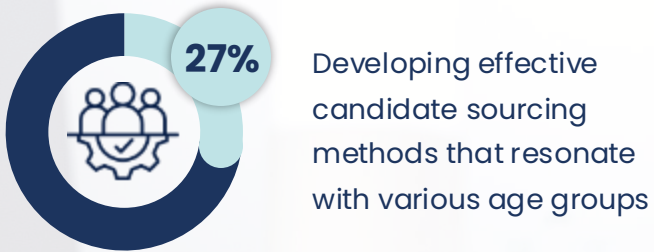## ★ Talent experience landscape

The 'unretirement' of older Americans

Second acts for Gen X and boomers.
Whether driven by economic factors or simply a desire to stay busy and productive, many workers are coming out of retirement. Forty-five percent of respondents say they know someone who has "unretired" and re-entered the workforce after the age of 55. Apparently, recruiters are taking notice, with 72% reporting they are actively recruiting employees over the age of 55.

The jobs grass is always greener. But despite the focus on recruitment, older Americans still feel as though they are at a disadvantage in the job search, as 67% of baby boomers say it's easier for a 25-year-old to land a job. Interestingly, more than one-third (32%) of Gen Z say it's equally difficult for both a 25-year-old and a 55-year-old to land a job.

We asked TA pros to share their biggest concerns around multigenerational hiring:

27% Developing effective candidate sourcing methods that resonate with various age groups

25% Adapting onboarding processes to cater to varied needs and expectations of different generations

24% Matching skill set and experience

22% Ensuring ageism or age-bias does not impact the candidate search

# Extreme candidate experience makeover: AI edition

POV: Recruiters

Is AI really a recruiting timesaver? Spoiler alert: Yes! In an iCIMS survey of CHROs in early 2024, about 90% see the role of the recruiter morphing into a strategic talent advisor to the business. Leveraging the right AI tools can create efficiencies that give them time back to focus on strategic initiatives. According to 500 TA pros, AI tools are saving them 2.39 hours a week on average and 64% would like even more AI in the TA process.

But do concerns persist? For all the benefits AI can bring to recruiters in streamlining their work, it also brings worry. One-third (33%) of TA pros fear AI tech will replace them or make their role obsolete. And 87% of recruiters say its adoption by candidates, using AI in the application and interview process, has raised red flags.
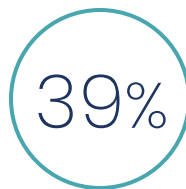
How are TA pros leveraging AI?

30% Help write job descriptions
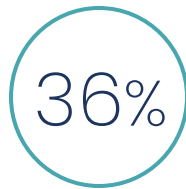
36% Match skills to job openings

36% Develop questions for an interview

39% Match former candidates to open jobs

Let's talk about your specific TA challenges

Need to improve productivity?

There are not enough hours in the day. Level-up your recruiting skills and put Gen AI to work to eliminate tedious tasks, such as creating interview questions and optimizing job descriptions.

Our AI-powered recruiting assistant, iCIMS Copilot, can jump-start tasks, unlock hiring efficiencies and create more equitable interview processes.

See it in action

Next-gen tools recruiters use (or wish they did)

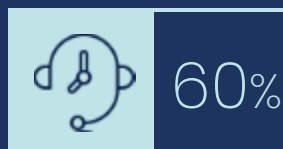**55%** Employee videos
(27% haven't but would like to)

60% Chatbots for scheduling
(23% haven't but would like to)

60% Text message applications
(24% haven't but would like to)

60% 24/7 chatbot support
(25% haven't but would like to)

"2024 has witnessed a significant acceleration in the adoption of generative AI features within the talent acquisition technology ecosystem.

Key use cases, such as job description generation and hyper-personalized candidate outreach, will help TA leaders build more efficient teams and dedicate greater focus to strategic candidate interactions. Ultimately, AI will enhance the overall candidate experience."

Sailesh Hota
Practice Director,
Everest Group

Extreme candidate experience makeover: AI edition

POV: Candidates

GenAI is rewriting the candidate experience. The core of today's workforce — Gen Z and millennials — is diving headfirst into AI. Fifty-one percent of millennials and 55% of Gen Z use some form of GenAI to help write resumes, cover letters or other queries for a job application. And 43% of respondents overall are open to using AI in the workplace.

Putting AI to work, at work. Forty-two percent of people we surveyed agreed that a lack of knowledge about GenAI would hinder future career opportunities, but more people would be motivated to up their know-how out of curiosity (29%) than to get promoted internally (9%) or land a higher paying job (15%). But the most important skill for landing a job in today's job market, according to workers, was for a candidate to have soft skills (59%) — beating out skill around GenAI (35%), digital marketing (40%) and software development (39%).

How are workers (really) using GenAI?

20% for writing
Example: content generation, proofreading

25% for research
Example: analyzing, summarizing

23% for enhancing customer interactions
Example: chatbots, virtual assistants

Methodology

iCIMS is a leading provider of talent acquisition technology that enables organizations everywhere to build winning workforces. For over 20 years, iCIMS has been at the forefront of talent acquisition transformation. iCIMS' AI-powered hiring platform is designed to improve efficiency, cut recruiting costs and build exceptional experiences for candidates and recruiters.

The iCIMS recruiter survey was conducted in August 2024 by Censuswide among 500 recruiters and TA professionals who work in-house at organizations with 1,000 or more employees worldwide.

The iCIMS consumer survey was conducted by Dynata among 1,000 US adults, aged 18 and older, in August 2024. Dynata utilizes a variety of sample sources, such as panel, web intercept sample and specialty lists, to deliver data insights that are diverse and representative.

Coming soon: iCIMS 2024 EMEA Talent Experience Report

UK 500

France 500
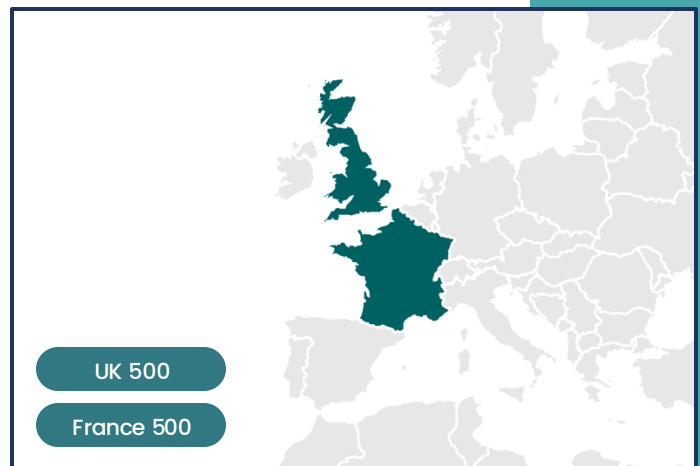
About iCIMS proprietary platform data

iCIMS Insights provides a deep understanding of the talent market through data drawn from the iCIMS platform. iCIMS' proprietary database of employer and job seeker activity includes hundreds of millions of data points across job openings, job applications and hires. iCIMS customers represent key sectors of the US economy, with expansive geographic, industry and occupational representation. iCIMS' expertise and data intersect to deliver unparalleled insights, helping business and HR leaders better understand workforce trends and drive competitive advantage.

Want more insights? Try iCIMS Insights+ and Insights Advisor.

Organizations can become even more strategic with workforce data through the iCIMS Insights+ subscription quarterly service. These industry-specific reports are current and give exclusive insight into changes in the market, key reporting metrics and trends. Subscribers also gain access to invite-only opportunities, including private think tanks and community events. iCIMS Insights Advisor empowers teams with one-on-one expert guidance, bespoke analysis and competitive comparisons, data-led prescriptive intel and more.

Learn more