2026

Easy Ways to Improve Your Recruiting Process

Beyond Qualifications: How to Identify Future High Performers

Recruit?
Recruit!

Easy Ways to Improve Your Recruiting Process

Finding the right people has become harder than ever. In 2025, nearly eight in ten UK businesses said they struggled to fill key roles. Similar shortages are hitting employers across the United States, Canada, and Australia.

CVs still arrive, but too often the skills don't match the work. Salaries are rising, budgets stay tight, and competition for talent keeps increasing.

For companies, the pressure is heavy. Hiring can drag on for months; specialist roles sometimes stay open long enough to stall growth and momentum. All the while, demands are changing. Candidates expect clear communication, flexible work, and quick decisions. Many will walk away if the process feels slow or impersonal.

Ghosting now runs both ways: 61% of job seekers say they have been ignored after applying, while 76% of recruiters report that candidates disappear.

What You'll Learn

This guide provides eight actionable recruitment strategies to help you fill roles faster and compete for talent in 2026:

- How skills-based hiring outperforms traditional credential screening by 5x and reduces turnover by 33%
- Practical ways to optimize your ATS and application process to prevent losing qualified candidates before human review
- Strategic AI and automation implementation that improves recruitment efficiency while maintaining personal connection
- Cost-effective employer branding tactics that can cut hiring costs in half and reduce turnover by 30%
- Data-driven recruitment metrics to transform hiring from guesswork into measurable improvement
- Candidate experience improvements that address the 92% ghosting rate and increase offer acceptance

These strategies work for small businesses and growing companies without requiring large HR teams or budgets.

1. Shift to Skills-Based Hiring

Many job ads still require a degree or a long list of past titles. That filter leaves out plenty of people who can do the work. McKinsey found that hiring for skills is about 5 times more effective at predicting job success than relying on education.

People chosen for what they can do, rather than what they studied, also stay longer, roughly a third longer on average.

Big employers like Google and IBM have already moved in this direction, using skills tests and apprenticeships to broaden their talent pools. Smaller companies can do the same without spending much. Start by rewriting job descriptions to focus on outcomes and abilities rather than diplomas. Replace lines like "bachelor's degree required" with the actual skills the role depends on.

Bring a short skills check into the early stages, like a task, a work sample, or a practical test. It provides proof of ability and helps candidates showcase their strengths. You could also connect with bootcamps or local training programs for people who have just built the skills you need.

2. Optimise Your Application Process for ATS and Human Review

Most employers now use applicant tracking systems. More than nine in ten do, according to recent research. These tools keep applications organised, but they can quietly block strong candidates. A CV that doesn't match the right keywords or uses an unexpected format might never reach a person at all.

For a small business, losing good people before you even know they applied is a problem you may never see. Technology can also make the process feel cold. Long forms and silence after an interview turn people away.

Recruiting can drag on if you're not careful, too. The average process now runs close to 24 days, and senior roles often stretch to months. Yet only a small share of job seekers, around 27 per cent, think three or more interviews are reasonable. More than half won't attend beyond two.

You don't need new software to make this better. Start by checking your ATS filters and removing rules that may block qualified people. Rewrite job ads with the same words candidates would use. Apply for one of your own roles to see where it feels slow or confusing. Send updates so applicants know what's happening. Keep interviews to what's essential.

3. Leverage AI and Automation Strategically

Artificial intelligence can remove busywork. It can scan CVs, handle interview scheduling, and answer early questions so you and your team can focus on people. Recruiters spend hours every week just arranging interviews, sometimes ten or more, and AI helps.

Many who use automation say it gives them space to think and plan rather than chase calendars. Still, candidates notice when a process feels robotic. Surveys show around four in ten say AI makes hiring feel impersonal, and many avoid companies that seem to rely on it too heavily.

The smartest use of technology is to speed up routine steps while keeping people at the points that shape culture and fit . A simple place to start is screening and scheduling. Let AI shortlist applicants for high-volume roles or send self-service booking links.

Keep conversations about the work and the team human. Train your staff to watch for bias and to step in if the system misses something. Used this way, automation supports recruitment efficiency without turning the process into a machine.

4. Build an Authentic, Measurable Employer Brand

Most candidates check you out long before they apply. They read reviews, scan LinkedIn, look at your website, and ask around. Eighty-nine per cent of HR leaders say employer branding helps them attract talent.

A weak brand can double what you spend to hire. A strong one can cut those costs in half and lower turnover by nearly 30 per cent.

Branding doesn't mean making glossy videos or expensive campaigns. For most small businesses, it's about honesty. People want to know what it's really like to work for you.

Please talk with your team about why they stay . Listen for what really matters to them and use that to explain what makes your workplace worth joining. Tell short, honest stories: a project that made an impact, why someone chose to stay, and how people can grow. Keep the message consistent across LinkedIn, your careers page, and job ads.

Track the results. Watch review sites, note how candidates describe their experience, and measure changes in application quality.

5. Expand Your Talent Pool with Remote and Global Hiring

 The idea that every role needs to be local is fading fast. Remote options have widened the field for employers willing to adapt. Job seekers looking for remote or flexible roles rose by about 20% last year. For small companies, hiring beyond your postcode can fill skills gaps. You can bring in the right person even if they're far away. It takes planning: clear policies, solid communication tools, and an onboarding process that works from day one.

Be upfront about flexibility in your ads. If a role can be hybrid or remote, say so early. Make sure your team has secure file sharing, reliable video calls, and meeting times that work across time zones. If you're hiring abroad, check pay and compliance rules or work with someone who knows them.

Done well, remote and global hiring isn't about chasing cheap labour. It's about reaching talent you'd otherwise miss and staying competitive when the local market feels thin.

6. Implement Data-Driven Recruitment Metrics

Many small companies still rely on gut feeling when they hire. Jobs get posted, people apply, and decisions are made without knowing the real cost or timeline. Other parts of the business don't work this way; marketing tracks almost everything. Recruiting should too.

Simple numbers on how long a hire takes, what it costs, where good candidates come from, how applicants feel, and how well new hires perform can turn hiring from guesswork into something you can improve.

You don't need complex dashboards to start. Record the basics in a spreadsheet if that's all you have. Look at the past few hires: how long did each take, how much was spent, which source brought the person you finally hired?

Review the data every few months. If one job board produces applicants but no hires, stop paying for it. If interviews keep dragging on, find out why.

7. Prioritise Candidate Experience Throughout the Journey

The way people feel while applying for a job matters. It shapes your reputation and can decide whether someone accepts an offer.

In the UK, 92 per cent of job seekers say they've been ghosted during hiring. Many stop applying to companies that ignore them. Some tell others to stay away.

Expectations are higher now. Candidates want clear steps, quick updates, and a process that doesn't drag on. If you're slow or silent, good people disappear.

Map the path a candidate takes through your business. Where are the gaps? When do responses stop? Set a few simple rules: confirm applications, update people after interviews, and explain delays rather than going quiet. Test your own application form; if it's frustrating, shorten it.

Once someone joins, ask how the process felt. Small changes like faster replies, clearer timelines, and fewer hoops can improve acceptance rates and encourage referrals.

8. Invest in Continuous Upskilling and Internal Mobility

Hiring outside isn't always the quickest way to fill a gap. Skills shift fast; many become outdated in about five years. Around 59% of workers will need retraining this decade. People are ready for it, too. Internal movement is growing as employees seek new opportunities to learn and step into fresh roles. Ninety-two per cent of workers over 50 say they're willing to learn new skills.

For smaller companies, helping people develop can be more reliable than chasing outside hires. It keeps knowledge in the team and builds loyalty. Start by mapping the skills your business will need in the next few years. Spot employees who could grow into future roles. Share clear career paths so they know how to progress. Offer training that's tied to the work, such as short courses, mentoring, or stretch assignments, where they can learn by doing.

Post new roles inside the company before looking outside. Ask managers to talk about development in reviews, not just past performance. If the job needs specialist skills, connect with local colleges or trusted online training programs.

Preparing for the Future of Hiring

Recruiting will continue to change. Skills shift, technology moves fast, and candidate expectations don't stand still.

What doesn't change is the need for a clear, reliable way to hire. The eight ideas in this guide are simple enough for small teams to use and strong enough to make a difference.

You don't have to tackle everything at once. Look at where your process breaks down. Maybe job ads are too rigid, interviews take too long, or candidates feel ignored. Pick a couple of areas to fix first. Track what happens and keep adjusting.

Focusing on recruitment efficiency, skills-based hiring, and a better candidate experience helps any business compete, even when budgets are tight. Supporting people to grow inside your company makes hiring easier over time, too. If change feels heavy while you're running the day-to-day, bringing in outside help for things like recruitment marketing or process design can take the pressure off without losing control.

A little about Sarah Bishop and Recruit Recruit Ltd

Whether you're a sole trader hiring your first team member, a VC-backed startup needing to scale fast, or a corporate looking for top-tier C-suite talent, one thing stays true:

Your business grows when your people grow.

I help founders, CEOs and business leaders build brilliant teams through:

- **Recruitment:** finding and placing the right people for the right roles or embedding a talent team into growing businesses
- **Sales & Leadership Training:** developing high-performing teams that sell, lead and deliver
- **Speaking & EmCeeing:** energising events and conferences with insight, humour and practical takeaways
- **Coaching:** supporting leaders to grow confidently, communicate better, and build culture that sticks

Over the years, I've supported businesses at every stage, from bedroom startups to scale-ups and established firms navigating change. What they all have in common? A vision to grow and the ambition to get the right people on board to make it happen.

I bring no-nonsense advice, energy, empathy and results, whether I'm:

- Hiring a game-changing leadership role
- Training a founder-led team to sell with confidence
- Speaking on stage about team-building, fearless follow-up, or people strategy
- Coaching a business owner through their first ever hire

So, let's talk If:

- You're ready to grow and want to hire with confidence
- You need training or coaching to get more from your team (or yourself!)
- You're planning an event and want a speaker or EmCee who brings both energy and value

Drop me a message or connect - let's build something brilliant together.

Now - #1 Bestseller on Amazon -
Scale Up!: The Founders' Guide to Accelerating Growth by Building Dream Teams by Sarah Bishop

Contact

Sarah Bishop
Founder & CEO
Recruit Recruit Ltd

www.recruitrecruit.co.uk

sarah@recruitrecruit.co.uk

01902 763 006

07827 860358