

Stepping Up

Workforce Practices That **Raise the Bar**
on Business Performance





As the global leader in talent solutions, we take pride in what we do, connecting great people to great opportunities, helping businesses win and careers soar. Today, with \$12.3 billion in revenues and 500+ global locations, Allegis Group and its network of specialized companies provide a full suite of complementary talent solutions that solves nearly every workforce challenge to empower business success while consistently delivering an unsurpassed quality experience.

Our companies include Aerotek; TEKsystems; Aston Carter; Allegis Global Solutions; Major, Lindsey & Africa; Allegis Partners; MarketSource; EASi; The Stamford Group; and Getting Hired.

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Introduction

To compete in today's markets, successful companies strive for a high level of performance in all aspects of business. Innovation, agility, and the continuous delivery of value to customers are critical priorities — and each one of them depends on the full contribution of the organization's people. Whether opening a plant, launching a product, or executing any activity that drives growth and success, every employer depends on an engaged workforce with the skills to get the job done.

As the global leader in talent solutions, Allegis Group understands the importance of people in business success. To help shed light on the practices that enable companies to build an engaged workforce, Allegis Group recently conducted its latest Talent Advisory Survey of more than 1,000 employers and nearly 7,000 candidates and employees around the world. The study tracks perspectives on the issues that influence talent acquisition effectiveness, revealing best practices that help organizations attract and retain the skilled and committed workers they need to grow and succeed.

In Achieving Business Impact, Relationships Matter

The results of the study confirm what many successful companies have found: high-performing talent acquisition organizations recognize the importance of the human touch in bringing together talent and opportunity. They invest time and effort to better know the people with the skills they seek. By putting the candidate or employee first, they level the playing field for employer-worker interaction, establishing trust on all fronts. The result is an engaged workforce that is committed to delivering positive outcomes.

Unfortunately, the portion of employers reaping the advantages of relationship-focused talent acquisition is small. Only 31 percent of employer respondents are very satisfied with their recruitment process, with 19 percent reporting some level of dissatisfaction. A lack of priority in the candidate experience leads to several issues, including an inability to find great talent (cited by 74 percent), an inability to achieve business objectives (65 percent), a poor employer reputation online (57 percent),

and greater recruiting costs (53 percent). At issue is an employer-first mindset that results in a recruiting dynamic that drives quality candidates away.

Shaping a High-Performing Talent Acquisition Practice

The responses from surveyed employers and workers reveal that the challenges of building great candidate relationships can be overcome, as evidenced by the small minority of organizations achieving strong business impact. That portion amounts to only seven percent of surveyed employers who strongly agree that their organization fills open positions quickly, attracts top-quality talent, and optimizes costs. The survey findings show that these high-performing talent acquisition organizations differ from others in their commitment to best practices in talent acquisition.

At the same time, approximately half (48 percent) of surveyed workers hope to be working with their current employer three years from now, are eager to contribute significantly, and would recommend their employer to friends and family. Over a variety of survey responses, there is a correlation between these highly engaged workers and employers who embrace talent best practices. In general, these workers are roughly three times more likely than other workers to have employers who delivered on the best practices embraced by high-performing talent organizations.

About the Report

This report connects the practices of high-performing talent acquisition organizations with the candidate experience of highly engaged workers to reveal paths toward stronger employer-worker relationships. Practices are explored across four fundamental phases of talent acquisition, including job definition, sourcing, screening, and onboarding. For each phase of talent acquisition, the responses from high-performing talent organizations are compared to the responses from others, revealing differences in their approaches to the process, and lessons for any organization seeking to boost its ability to build and sustain a highly engaged workforce.



Job Definitions:

Set the Stage for a Great Employee Relationship

Often overlooked or taken for granted, the job definition is one of the most important influencers on the employer-worker relationship. Done well, a job definition focuses on the goals of a role, includes requirements that are essential to achieving desired outcomes, leaves out non-critical qualifications, and forms the clear job description that a potential candidate needs to determine whether to apply. In short, a positive candidate experience begins with a job description that respects the applicant's desire for transparency about the role being considered. The Allegis Group Talent Advisory Survey reveals several paths to improving the value and effectiveness of job definitions and their resulting descriptions.

Provide Accurate, Up-To-Date Information

The first key to an improved job description is accuracy. In many cases, organizations rely on messaging and requirements that were developed long ago. As business conditions change or as the demand for skills evolves, the information grows out-of-date. Overall, only 23 percent of employers claim that they always provide accurate, up-to-date job descriptions, but high-performing talent organizations are over three times as likely as others (72 percent versus 20 percent) to say they always provide up-to-date, accurate information about the job. Highly engaged workers are three times more likely than others (34 percent versus 11 percent) to strongly agree that their current or most recent employer provided up-to-date information about their prospective job.

Along with updated requirements, a quality job description provides clear expectations for performance and outcomes. This clarity is achieved by aligning the job directly with a performance plan. Only 20 percent of employers claim they always align the job definition with a 30-, 60-, or 90-day plan, but high-performing talent acquisition organizations are four times as likely as others (65 percent versus 16 percent) to claim they always do so, and highly engaged workers are nearly four times as likely as others (31 percent versus eight percent) to strongly agree that their employers aligned their job description with detailed performance goals.

For employers, the solution to job definition issues is clear. Candidates struggle to understand true needs, so remove doubt by ensuring accurate and up-to-date job descriptions and establishing a consistent review schedule with all stakeholders. Connecting job descriptions with documented 30-, 60-, or 90-day goals helps to establish parameters for success, and the exercise of reviewing the description against those goals can reveal opportunities to further clarify requirements.

Prioritize and Streamline Job Requirements

When it comes to attracting talent, too many non-critical requirements can put the employer at a disadvantage. Those excess demands make prospective candidates feel unqualified and, as a result, deter them from applying. Today, however, only 26 percent of surveyed employers claim they always clarify must-have and nice-to-have skills. High-performing talent organizations are three times more likely than others (69 percent versus 23 percent) to do so, and highly engaged workers are more than three times as likely as others (32 percent versus 10 percent) to strongly agree that their current or most recent employer clarified must-have requirements.

Overall, employers on average stated the **minimum amount of required skills expected from candidates** at the outset for consideration of a given role at

72%

Candidates generally agree, with their estimate averaging at

73%



To avoid driving away qualified job seekers, employers should focus on prioritizing requirements and streamlining the job definition. Consider transferable skills and their application to the job. From data science and artificial intelligence (AI) programming to soft skills in management and communication, there are many transferable skills found across industries. By reducing the emphasis on years of industry experience, organizations can open themselves to quality talent with transferable skills. Review each requirement, consider whether it is essential to the outcomes that need to be achieved, and eliminate those that are unnecessary.

Such a review and reduction of unnecessary requirements includes input and agreement among all stakeholders. For every role, approach the talent acquisition process by aligning the understanding of real day-one expectations in the eyes of the recruiter, hiring manager, and candidate. When all parties are clear on those expectations, the result is a talent acquisition process that leads to employees who are truly aligned with the job.

Be Transparent and Competitive About Pay

One long-standing imbalance in the employer-employee relationship is the understanding of pay. Without knowing how much is being offered, applicants are left at a disadvantage that can send them to another potential employer that is more transparent about a pay range. Only 18 percent of surveyed employers claim that they always make salary ranges transparent in the job description, but high-performing talent acquisition organizations are nearly four times as likely as others (57 percent versus 15 percent) to do so. Highly engaged workers are roughly three times as likely (29 percent versus 10 percent) as others to say their current employer was transparent about salary in the job description.

With pay transparency comes a need to ensure that the compensation being offered is competitive, yet employers struggle to adjust pay rates to changing market conditions. Of those employers surveyed, only 17 percent say they always make the salary range competitive to the market. High-performing talent acquisition organizations are nearly five times as likely as others (61 percent versus 13 percent) to always make the salary range competitive, and highly engaged workers are nearly three times as likely as others (28 percent versus 10 percent) to strongly agree their current or most recent employer made the salary range competitive.

While complete transparency is not always possible, addressing salary issues in the job description can go a long way toward building a solid relationship with the candidate. A growing number of organizations practice a high level of pay transparency, including well-known brands such as Aldi, McKinsey & Company, Trader Joe's, and FedEx Freight.¹ Other organizations opt for a more general level of transparency, offering a salary range rather than a specific figure. This approach leaves room for negotiation and flexibility to account for performance. To ensure the salary being offered is competitive, employers must account for the market supply of talent with required skills in the given location. Innovative technology solutions can help organizations determine competitive pay rates. They do this by analyzing market benchmark data, the available talent supply, and the pay of existing workers in similar roles, enabling an informed approach to pay that is current and competitive.



Three Questions That Lead to a More Impactful Job Description

Kelly Van Aken
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Allegis Group EMEA

As providers of talent solutions to companies around the world, our teams frequently help clients solve long-standing problems with attracting and retaining the right people for the right roles. Often, we find that companies struggle to break out of a pattern of long hiring cycles or mismatched talent. Employers may try many ways to improve their recruiting, such as applying new technology or practices, but in many cases, the job description turns out to be the real cause of the problem. Very simply, vague, inaccurate, or confusing requirements prevent potential candidates from applying. The good news is that while better defining jobs and improving job descriptions takes a concerted effort, it is not rocket science. By reviewing every description with three questions in mind, employers can deliver improved results.

Is the Job Description Externally Facing?

The first thing a reviewer needs to check is the language. Frequently, job descriptions are created by an internal resource who understands the terminology used by the company for different projects or departments. The outcome is a series of vague, internal-speak phrases such as “assists the (Name of Project) team on the implementation of phase two value points.” No one outside the company understands such internal jargon. To solve the issue, the hiring manager, HR, and the talent acquisition partner should review the messaging and identify places where internal jargon appears. Can the jargon be replaced, or can it be cut? In either case, the result is a description that is less vague and more attractive to the talent the company seeks.

Does the Description Have the Specifics it Needs?

Another way to improve the job description is to ensure it has the necessary specifics while avoiding the requirements that are not. Together, the hiring manager, HR, and the talent partner should ask themselves the questions that are most important for someone to get the job. When you are talking about leading projects and guiding teams, are they big projects or small ones? If Java knowledge is required, is the role a hands-on position requiring active Java coding or is the person more of a reviewer? Is there a clear idea of what daily activity will be? At a higher level, is there a clear picture of the goals the role must accomplish? Finally, is every requirement and goal directly relevant to the strategic priorities of the role? If not, don't be afraid to cut the extras from the description. Nice-to-haves can be covered in the screening process.



Is the Job Description Informed and Current About Pay?

Finally, for every job description, consider whether it is up-to-date and directly relevant to current talent needs. Companies may find themselves reusing templated job descriptions that are several years old. The skills mentioned could be inaccurate or out-of-date, and the role may have evolved within the company. In addition, there is the issue of pay, a factor that can always vary over time, and if market conditions are not considered, then the pay being offered may not be competitive. Understand the median rate for the job in the location and take the time to determine whether what you are asking will attract the talent you need. It is not always possible to be transparent about pay in the job description, but when there is an opportunity to do so, including pay information can positively influence the employer's attractiveness to talent, and it can even improve how well a post ranks in Google jobs searches.

Adopt a Consistent Review Process

Commit to delivering an externally facing, specific, and informed job description, and the results will be a message that is positioned to attract the right talent. If a job description leads to better results, do not grow complacent. By the time the next role opens, market conditions may have changed, or the needs of the role may have evolved. Employer stakeholders should review descriptions on a consistent basis. For employers, there are no shortcuts to competing for workers in a time of talent scarcity, but keeping up with the needs of the job description provides valuable recruiting strength organizations need to secure the right talent, at the right time and cost.



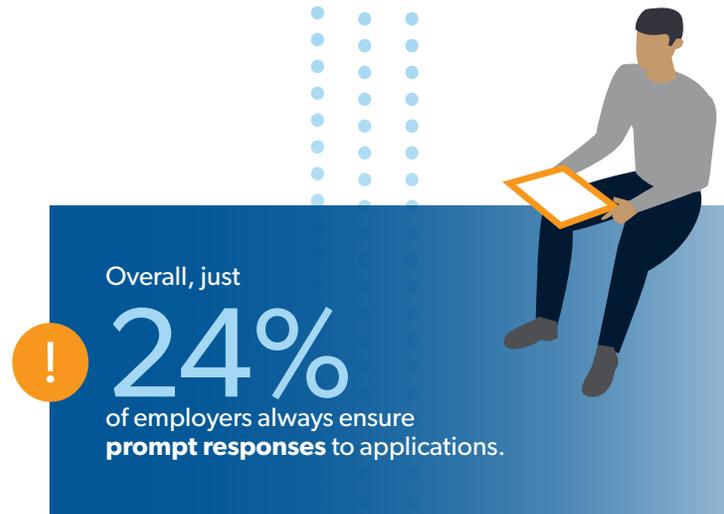
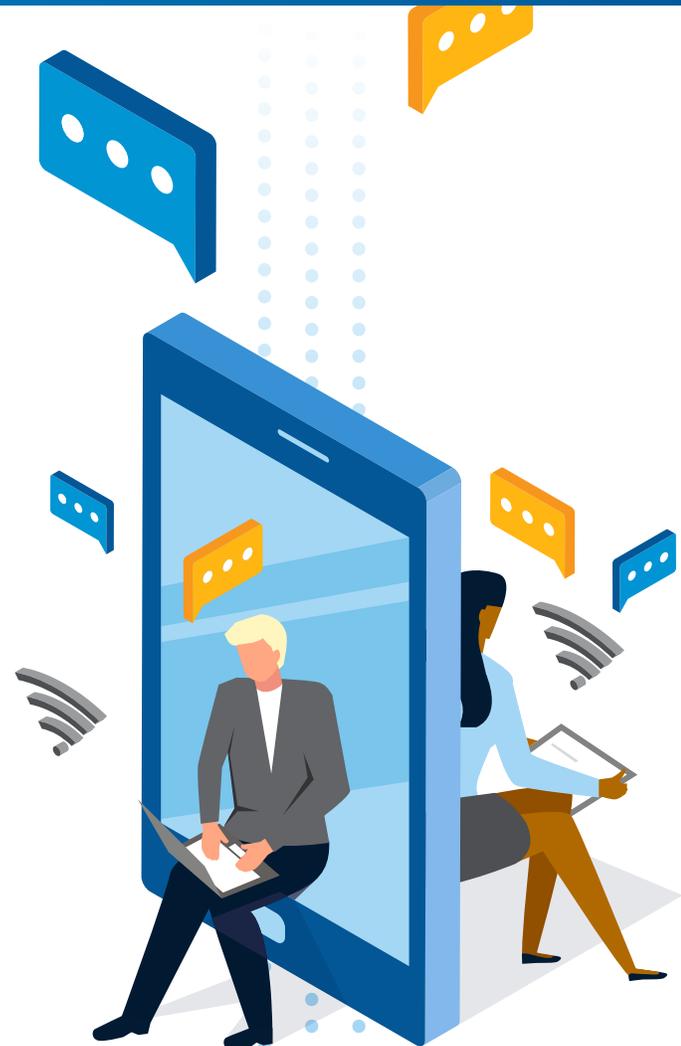
● Sourcing: Connect with Talent on Their Terms

Sourcing talent with in-demand skills is a complex and competitive process. The paths of connection to great talent are numerous thanks to the proliferation of social media channels, and the demand for many skills is increasing. High-performing talent organizations understand the importance of navigating those paths of communication to connect with talent and provide the level of responsiveness needed to drive a great candidate relationship. They also recognize that current employees may be the best source of new skills. Results from the Allegis Group survey point to three areas ripe for improvement in sourcing: boosting responsiveness, humanizing interaction, and cultivating employee skills.

Embrace Digital Talent Acquisition Tools

Responsive communication lies at the heart of a positive candidate experience, yet communication remains a common recruiting weakness, with candidates frequently left in the dark after submitting their applications. Overall, only 24 percent of organizations always ensure prompt responses to applications, but high-performing talent acquisition organizations are nearly three times more likely (64 percent versus 22 percent) than others to always do so. Highly engaged workers are three times as likely as others (36 percent versus 12 percent) to strongly agree their most recent employer responded quickly to their application.

An overwhelming volume of work involved in the recruiting process often prevents organizations from communicating adequately with candidates. However, by boosting data intelligence and automating many high-volume, low-value activities, innovations in digital recruiting technology help employers make great strides in improving responsiveness. Today, only 20 percent of surveyed employers say they always effectively use digital recruitment channels and technologies to connect with talent. High-performing talent acquisition organizations are three times more likely than others (55 percent versus 18 percent) to do so, and highly engaged workers are three times as likely as others (33 percent versus 11 percent) to strongly agree that their current or most recent employer effectively uses digital recruitment in their talent acquisition process.



Solving the responsiveness issue is paramount to an employer's ability to build effective candidate relationships. Organizations can address the issue by embracing digital resources to automate and improve responsiveness. For example, artificial intelligence (AI) technology is giving rise to a variety of tools to automate communication. Machine intelligence and automation provider HiringSolved applies AI to automatically build significant talent pools from social network data, eliminating or reducing a heavy research burden for recruiters. Candidate relationship management (CRM) tools such as SmashFly automate communication and track engagement with candidates across multiple channels. Chatbots such as AI-driven Olivia automate basic communication and interaction with candidates at the start of the application process. These and other digital recruiting tools give talent organizations the ability to eliminate the communications black hole and provide the responsiveness needed to develop relationships of trust with candidates.

Candidates Want Better Communication

According to the Allegis Group survey, employers have room to improve on several types of communication that are important to a positive candidate experience, including:



Acknowledgment:

73% of candidates believe organizations should always send candidates acknowledgment their application was received.



Updates:

55% of candidates believe organizations should always send candidates status updates on where they stand in the job application process.



Explanation:

63% of candidates believe organizations should always send candidates the reason behind declining a candidate for a job opening.



Let's schedule your interview.
When are you available?



Monday 10th

Thursday 13th



Personalize Candidate Communications

In a digital world of constant communication, it takes more than a form email to connect with a candidate. Personalized communications matter. Today, only 23 percent of surveyed employers say they always provide personalized responses to applications, but high-performing talent acquisition organizations are more than twice as likely as others (55 percent versus 21 percent) to always do so. At the same time, highly engaged workers are more than three times as likely as others (34 percent versus 11 percent) to strongly agree that their current or most recent employer provided personalized communications as they applied for the role.

Along with personalization, a two-way path of interaction is also important in forging candidate relationships. Unfortunately, barriers still exist, as only 27 percent of organizations always enable the candidate to initiate contact with a recruiter or hiring manager. High-performing talent acquisition organizations are more than twice as likely as others, (60 percent versus 25 percent) to do so, and highly engaged workers are nearly three times more likely than others (34 percent versus 12 percent) to strongly agree that their current or most recent employer enabled them to initiate contact with a recruiter or hiring manager.

As automated tools take on high-volume communications such as status updates, recruiters will have the opportunity to increase their focus on personalization for more important questions. To build personalization into the relationship with the candidate, employers can apply several principles. First, research the candidate. In a world where many skilled professionals are bombarded by communications, a call or email from a recruiter that shows familiarity with the candidate can be a pleasant surprise that stands out from the noise. Are you familiar with the school the candidate attended? Do you understand the tough commute where they live and work today? If so, mention it in the communication. Aside from niceties, be wary of using templated formats, avoid jargon, offer a clear call to action or next step, and be available to take a candidate's call or answer an email.²

“...it takes **more** than a form email to connect with a candidate.”



Train Employees to be a Prime Source of New Skills

Today, the average learned skill begins to grow outdated after only five years.³ With such a rapid pace of change, developing skills in current employees and helping them move their careers forward within the organization can be a more reliable and cost-effective alternative than securing skills through acquiring new talent. Unfortunately, only 20 percent of organizations always train and develop current employees to be qualified for open positions, with high-performing talent acquisition organizations three times more likely as others (58 percent versus 17 percent) to do so. At the same time, engaged workers are nearly four times more likely than others (31 percent versus eight percent) to strongly agree that their current or most recent employer is similarly committed to training and development.

Meanwhile, facilitating internal mobility remains a challenge. Only 40 percent of organizations always ensure job opportunities are internally promoted, with high-performing talent acquisition organizations more than twice as likely as others (80 percent versus 38 percent) to do so, and highly engaged workers are over three times more likely than others (33 percent versus 10 percent) to strongly agree their current or most recent employer did so. Stakeholders agree there is room to improve. In fact, 78 percent of employers and 83 percent of workers believe human resources teams need to make internal job openings more visible to all employees, and 81 percent of employers and 83 percent of workers agree management should do a better job of encouraging employees to apply.

The survey results highlight the need and desire for training and development, an opportunity to boost the employee experience that is missed as companies focus on new talent to meet skills needs. For employers, there are several keys to optimizing employee development. First, use training as a source of new skills. That training can come in the form of traditional classroom programs provided by the employer or through support for employees interested in external training. Development can also come through mentorships, online training, and micro-learning modules. As a partner in new skills development, the employer should be expected to allow training as part of the employee's normal work day and be prepared to budget for the effort. Beyond training, employers can boost career development by making internal opportunities visible and supporting a culture that promotes mobility.





Talent Communities **Help Build Trust** for an Engaged Workforce

Andrew Wren

Product Owner of Talent Communities and Mobile App, Allegis Group



Transparency builds trust, and trust builds relationships.

Nowhere is that idea more evident than in a well-executed talent community. An effective talent community is more than a place where workers can chat. If done well, it is a resource that breaks down the long-standing barriers to transparency that prevent great employer-talent relationships. Through our talent communities, for example, Allegis Group companies provide true transparency for nearly 400,000 users every day, including our clients and the talent we put to work. Based on our work with communities, we have seen several key ways the resource can transform the worker experience.

Make Processes Transparent

One of the primary advantages of a talent community is improved transparency. When contractors or contingent workers log in, they see all the relevant details of their employment right away. Pending decisions and status updates are immediately visible. These details are essential to the worker who wants to be proactive about managing projects and career next steps. Providing those details up front makes the community a place where a positive experience for a flexible worker or employee begins to take shape.

Provide Immediate Access to Key Contacts

Another advantage of the community is access to contacts. The online talent community should not only provide access to the important contacts any contractor or other worker needs to know, but it should also display those contacts prominently. In our case, we put any contact directly related to current or potential future opportunities right at the worker's fingertips on the first page the worker sees.

Create Visibility to all Opportunities

An additional feature of the community is access to opportunities. At any time, our community gives contractors the ability to explore their next career move or contract gig from across the entire organization, using smart search capabilities that best align their skills and interests to new opportunities. This capability benefits the worker who has more control of his or her career, and it benefits the employer who may fill future openings more quickly with a proven resource.

Enable a Human Connection

An effective talent community brings human support and connection to the worker experience. People have questions, whether about administrative needs or about the work itself. In the community, the employer should take an active role to ensure that a human is there to answer questions, moderate discussions, or point people in the right direction. Other community members will more fully participate, and workers will find connections to colleagues who ask and answer questions to keep the conversation going.

A Vision of Potential is Finally Realized

For years, talent communities have been hailed as a solution to the challenge of building and maintaining relationships between employers and workers. Today, the real potential of the talent community is being realized, and we're fortunate to experience first-hand the benefits of a world-class program.





Screening:

Be Intentional About Boosting the Employee Experience

In the past, when companies focused on narrowing large numbers of applicants to select a low number of hires, the balance of power was in the employer's hands. There was little perceived pressure on companies to accommodate candidates in the screening process. Today, however, the balance is even, and a candidate-first approach to screening can help a company stand out against the competition. Toward that end, an intentional focus by employers on fighting bias, giving candidates a voice in the process, and showing respect for the candidate's time are all areas for improvement in the screening process.

Take an Active Approach to Eliminate Bias

Unconscious bias is one of the most common pitfalls in the screening process. Without knowing it, interviewers may judge candidates on factors unrelated to the job (e.g., consider shared experiences or attendance at the same schools). Interviewers with the same backgrounds and perspectives may also bring their shared biases into the process. For example, a qualified worker with a long work history may be passed over for a programmer job associated with newer entrants into the workforce. Gender bias may influence hiring decisions for roles historically associated with male or female workers (e.g., truck drivers or nurses). Any number of seemingly small, hidden biases can add up to a major inhibitor of the candidate-employer relationship.

Today, bias remains an important issue that deserves attention from employers, not only because fighting bias is "the right thing to do," but also because bias can limit an employer's ability to attract and retain talent. Only 45

percent of surveyed employers say they always take steps to eliminate unconscious bias during screening and interviewing. High-performing talent acquisition organizations are more than twice as likely as others (89 percent versus 42 percent) to always take steps to eliminate bias during screening, and highly engaged workers are nearly three times more likely than others (37 percent versus 13 percent) to strongly agree their current or most recent employer took steps to eliminate potential bias in the process.

To fight bias in screening, employers can improve in several areas. First, consider who is participating in the interview. Instead of putting the decision into the hands of one interviewer, expand participation to a variety of stakeholders. Additionally, including people of diverse backgrounds can help ensure a balanced perspective. The structure of the interview itself can also influence bias. In particular, establishing a specific and consistent set of interview questions helps to streamline the process and ensure that prospective candidates are evaluated in an apples-to-apples comparison. Creative approaches to candidate assessment can also eliminate bias. For example, gamified assessments test candidates on job-related skills through an interactive interface. The evaluation is the same for every candidate, and the results are objective and measurable.



Employers, Don't Fight Bias Alone: A Partnership Approach to Better Hiring

Michelle Webb
Executive Director of Employee Experience,
TEKsystems, an Allegis Group Company

Professionals from diverse backgrounds working in an inclusive culture are critical to the successful outcome of any project or business activity. As a provider of IT services and talent solutions to clients across industries, we understand the importance of diversity and inclusion (D&I) and the importance of fighting bias across the talent lifecycle as a way to improve a company's D&I strength. Many tactics can help organizations reduce the impact of bias, but one of the most effective resources in the fight can be a solutions partner. As an external resource with deep expertise and capability, a talent and business solutions provider brings distinct advantages related to culture and employer brand, as well as the expertise to drive change.

Facilitating a Culture Shift

One benefit a solutions partner provides is an influence on culture. When the same people with similar perspectives work together over time in an organization, unconscious bias can go unrecognized and become part of a company's culture. Hiring managers will be tempted to hire people who come from the same background because that has worked in the past. Companies may advertise jobs in the same ways or seek talent in the same places. A solutions provider offers a fresh perspective that can be crucial in bringing about a change in culture. The provider may assemble teams through different channels, deliver new insights and language for job definitions, and, most importantly, bring an objective view unencumbered by internal politics that can resonate with stakeholders.



Moving the Needle on Employer Brand

Another advantage is the impact on the employer brand. Candidates are making decisions based on what they hear about the employers they are considering. Even if a company is working to foster and promote D&I, one contrary Glassdoor review can send the potential candidate away. An outside partner, if it has a strong D&I focus, can come in and bring its own employer brand into play. For example, our consultants work for our clients, but they work for us, too. When the provider has a strong reputation for being a diverse and inclusive employer, the client is better able to benefit from the skills of diverse talent.

Subject Matter Expertise

Finally, the expertise of a trusted partner can be a valuable asset in fighting bias. An employer may determine that it wants a more diverse workforce, and it knows there are many reasons to help explain why diverse candidates are or are not showing up. We often find that clients either lack access to diverse talent pools, or they are not doing a good job of attracting them. A provider can help pinpoint the issues and identify how to address them. The right conversations have to take place with the C-suite, and then the message must be shepherded to the other stakeholders. As a solutions partner, we can meet with leadership to best understand their hiring practices and their goals for addressing diversity, and then help them promote the D&I message to the organization.

Taking a Proactive Approach

We have seen how unconscious bias can impede the development of a diverse workforce and inclusive company culture. Our clients understand the issue, too, and they often ask us for help in improving their D&I strength. For any organization looking to improve its ability to attract and retain talent from all backgrounds and perspectives, a great partner can enable the proactive approach employers need. It's an effort that is good for people and good for business.



Give Candidates a Voice

The interview process is a two-way street. Just as the candidate answers questions from the employer, the employer should provide enough time to answer questions from the candidate. However, only 43 percent of organizations always provide enough time or insight to address all candidate questions. High-performing talent acquisition organizations, on the other hand, are nearly twice as likely as others (75 percent versus 40 percent) to do so, and highly engaged workers are three times more likely than others (39 percent versus 13 percent) to strongly agree that their current or most recent employer did so. Along the same lines, when an employer has a concern about the candidate's qualifications, the candidate should be given a chance to respond to that concern. Only 25 percent of surveyed employers always share their concerns with candidates, with high performers being much more likely to do so (67 percent versus 23 percent), and highly engaged workers are three times more likely than others (33 percent versus 10 percent) to say they were given a chance to address employer concerns.

Another key aspect of the interview is the salary discussion. Just as salary transparency can improve the effectiveness of a job description, fairness and transparency in salary negotiations during the interview and hiring process can also go a long way toward forging a trusting employee relationship. Only 34 percent of organizations say they always approach salary negotiations fairly in the interview process, but high-performing organizations are more than twice as likely as others (68 percent versus 31 percent) to do so, and highly engaged workers are three times more likely (31 percent versus 10 percent) to strongly agree that their employer was fair in salary negotiations.

Overall, the imperative for giving candidates a voice is clear. Candidates want a chance to put their real case forward and to ask and answer questions. Employers have ample opportunities to improve their candidate relationships by providing clarity on requirements, honesty in expressing concerns during interviews, multiple stakeholders in the interview, and an opportunity for fair and transparent discussions around pay. Together, these measures of commitment on the part of the employer provide a footing for a high-value relationship with a productive, engaged employee.



High-performing talent organizations are nearly

2x as likely

as others to always **provide enough time or insight** to address all candidate questions.

Respect the Candidate's Time and Effort

Time is probably the most undervalued element in the candidate-employer relationship. Just as the recruiter's time has been overwhelmed in the past by large volumes of resumes and high numbers of people to shepherd through a process, the candidate has traditionally been subject to multiple interviews on different days with indefinite outcomes. In some cases, multiple flights are booked, responses to other offers are delayed, or candidates are left hanging in the balance about a hiring decision.

For the employer, respect for the candidate's time can make the difference between engaged employees and lost talent, yet only 34 percent of surveyed employers say that they always efficiently conduct interviews and screening. High-performing talent acquisition organizations are more than twice as likely as others (78 percent versus 31 percent) to say they always conduct the screening process efficiently, and highly engaged workers are more than twice as likely as others (40 percent versus 15 percent) to say their current or most recent employer displayed the same level of efficiency.

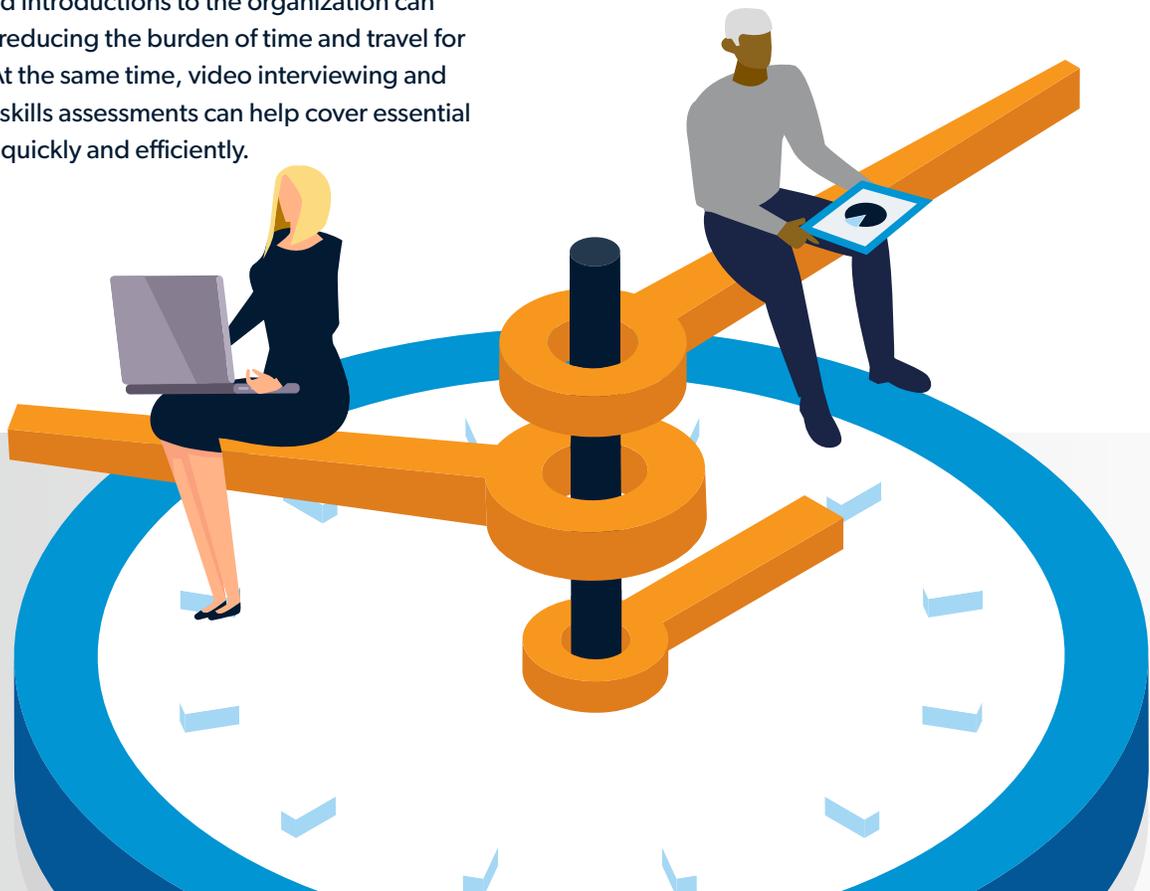
Candidates feel disrespected when companies take their limited time for granted, but employers can embrace measures that not only streamline and improve the experience for candidates but also reduce hiring time and effort for the recruiting organization. For example, consider interview days, where multiple interviews, screening assessments, and introductions to the organization can occur together, reducing the burden of time and travel for the candidate. At the same time, video interviewing and online or virtual skills assessments can help cover essential screening steps quickly and efficiently.



Only

34%

of employers always **efficiently** conduct interviews and screening.





Onboarding:

Open the Door to a Great Employee Relationship

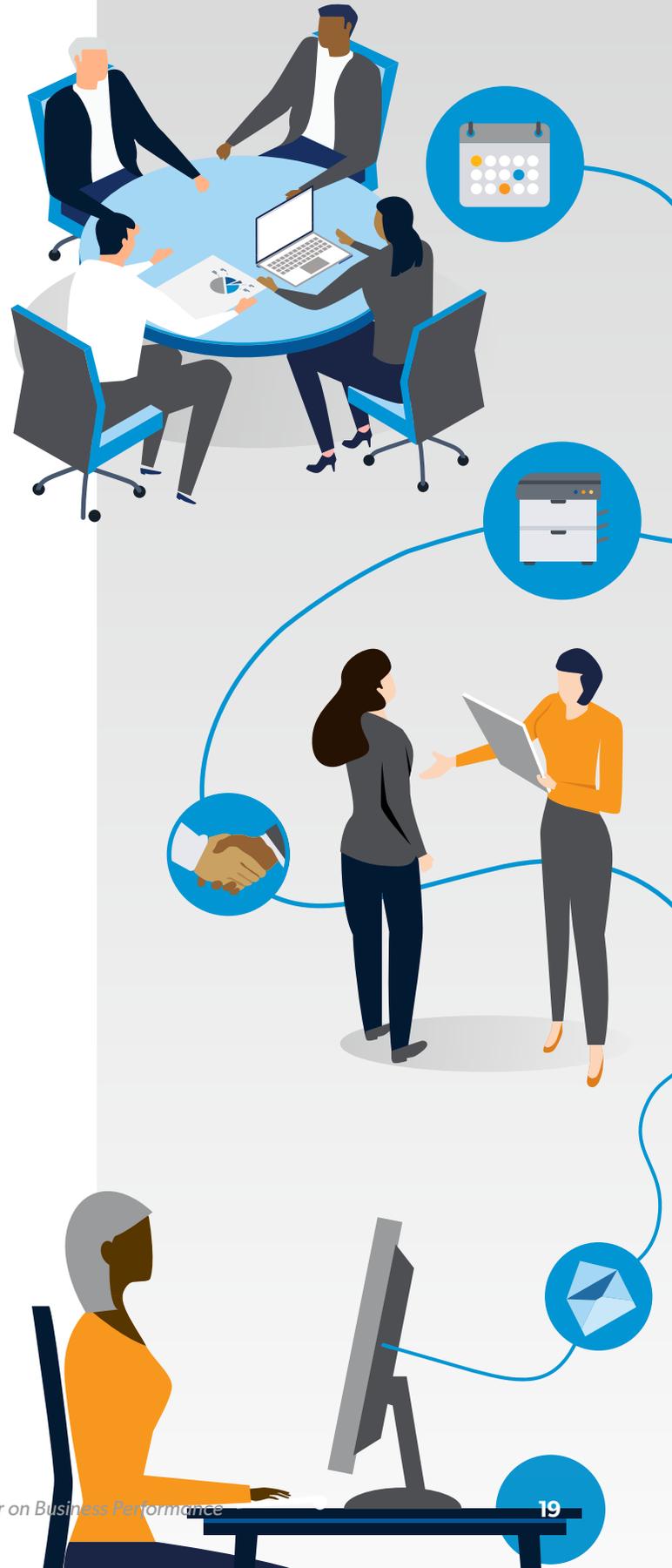
The onboarding process plays a large role in shaping the employer-employee connection. The experience and commitment of the new hire can be a positive reflection of the employer's attention to detail on day one, leading to an engaged and productive relationship. Onboarding, however, frequently turns up as a weak link in the equation as employers often continue to look at the process as an afterthought. Preparation for day one, support of peers and the organization, and clarity of expectations all play a key role in an effective onboarding process.

Be Ready for the Employee's First Day

Preparing for the employee's day one should be a priority for any employer, but companies still struggle in this area. Only 38 percent of employers say they are always prepared for the new hire's first day. This preparation includes basics such as a computer, email account, and phone setup. It also includes a facilities tour, introductions to coworkers, and a number of related first-day needs.

As survey results show, onboarding quality differs greatly between high-performing organizations and others. In fact, high-performing talent acquisition organizations are more than twice as likely as others (77 percent versus 35 percent) to say they are always prepared for a new hire's first day. Highly engaged workers are more than twice as likely as others (38 percent versus 14 percent) to strongly agree that their current or most recent employer was prepared for their first day.

To enable an onboarding process that forges a productive employee relationship, employers can focus on coordinating resources to deliver needed tools and basic information to the employee upon joining the company. Establish a process that includes multiple stakeholders, document the steps involved, and give ownership of the effort to a manager who is expected to deliver consistent and measured outcomes. Support that process with digital solutions. Today, technology is available that automates the workflow and communications that must occur between multiple participants in the process, from the new employee to HR, technical resources, and management. This approach, utilizing technology and established processes, replaces ad-hoc onboarding that has often led to new employees sitting at desks without phones, computers, or basic resources.



Technology Sets the Stage for a **More Human Onboarding Process**

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For years, companies have struggled to provide a positive experience for new workers in the onboarding process. Many of the challenges stem from a lack of a people-centric workflow and a check-the-box mentality. Rather than simply treat onboarding as a list of tasks, a strong employee relationship must begin with onboarding that focuses on delivering a positive experience for both the worker and the employer.

An example of a solution we use to streamline the onboarding process is Enboarder, a mobile-first technology that ensures a consistent workflow and coordinates the activities of everyone involved. The experience of both clients and workers using the technology reveals that the right solution can enable a positive result. The following are three ways companies can transform the onboarding process.

Make Interaction and Scheduling Easy and Fast

To deliver a positive human experience, an onboarding process must not only complete a list of tasks, but it should also ensure that they are completed in the right order, on time, and without struggle. By automating parts of the workflow, technology takes the guesswork and surprises out of the effort. People are notified of what needs to be done, where, when, and how, and everyone is kept up-to-date in a mobile-friendly way.

Provide Support and Guidance for the Hiring Manager

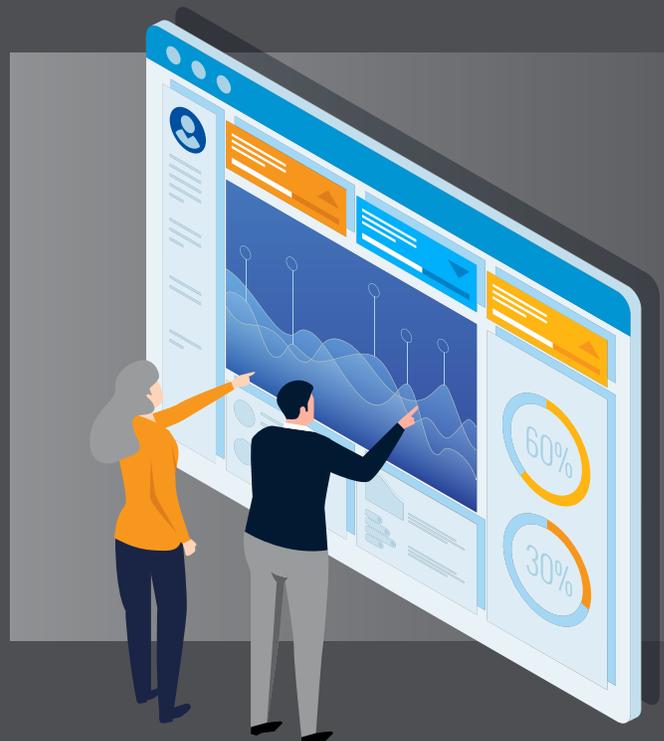
Hiring managers are extremely influential in the onboarding process, yet they are often left on their own with limited guidance from HR. By providing virtual coaching to the hiring managers, a technology solution can ensure that every hiring manager has the same guidance and provides a consistent, quality experience for every new worker. Guidance ranges from structuring conversations and timing for introducing the new employee to colleagues to working with IT and HR to ensure a smooth setup.

Get in Front of the Distractions

An effective onboarding platform must interact with people in the way they naturally communicate. That's why an important feature of today's leading technology is a text-based communication functionality. Sending notifications by text, the onboarding solution ensures that people get the message, without depending on them to log in to a site. By removing the dependency on a desktop or browser, the solution makes the whole process mobile-friendly.

Technologies Poised to Expand Their Influence

Looking ahead, advances in AI, cloud-based digital tools, and mobile technology will likely enable an expansion of workflow support past the onboarding phase and into other areas of the employee experience. These areas could include the start phase, performance review, and even offboarding. Workflow tools are not new, but as they become easier to use, organizations should expect to deliver more consistent and positive experiences during onboarding and across the employee lifecycle.



Provide the Support to Kick Off a Confident Relationship

Beyond providing a consistent day-one onboarding experience regarding technology and resources, high-performing talent organizations also focus on providing human support. Even when all the resources are in place and needed information is at hand, starting a new job is still an intimidating experience for any professional. Employers have ample opportunity to help new hires fit in, but only a minority of organizations have an established process for enabling new-hire support. Of employers surveyed, only 36 percent say they always engage new hires in a community of peers and helpers in the onboarding process. High-performing talent acquisition organizations are more than twice as likely as others (72 percent versus 33 percent) to always do so, and highly engaged workers are more than three times as likely as others (34 percent versus 10 percent) to strongly agree their current or most recent employer introduced them to a community of their peers.

Time spent with managers is also essential in the first week, but only 37 percent of organizations always ensure managers meet with new hires at the appropriate frequency, with high-performing organizations being twice as likely as others to do so (81 percent versus 34 percent). Highly engaged workers are more than three times as likely as others (35 percent versus 11 percent) to strongly agree their current or most recent employer ensured the hiring manager met with them at the appropriate frequency. Employers prefer that their managers spend an average 12 hours per week, yet they estimate their managers spend just 10 hours per week with new hires.

A sense of support and community helps employers bringing new hires into a state of productivity quickly. To facilitate the process, employers can take several measures. Introduce the new hire to coworkers early, including immediate team members and those outside their department with whom they may work. As a balance to the potential stress of multiple introductions, consider assigning a mentor to the new employee. This single point of reference can help answer questions about the company, the people, and their roles in the organization. Ensure management is involved. Early introductions from management and leadership send the message that the new employee is valued and can help foster engagement early in their tenure.

Establish and Document Expectations

For a new employee, clear performance expectations can make the difference between feeling lost in the new role and being in control and productive. For employers, the challenge in setting expectations is to ensure that they are clear, detailed, realistic, and actionable. In many cases, employers miss the opportunity to document the goals that can help start the employee's tenure on a positive note.

Most organizations still fall short when it comes to establishing performance objectives, with only 35 percent of total surveyed employers saying their organizations always set clear expectations in the onboarding process. High-performance talent organizations are more than twice as likely to do so (75 percent versus 32 percent), and highly engaged workers are more than three times as likely (35 percent versus 10 percent) to strongly agree that their current or most recent employer established performance goals.

Several considerations go into setting performance targets. First, document near- and longer-term needs through a 30-, 60-, 90-day plan. When that plan is connected to the job definition at the beginning of the recruiting process, the documentation of objectives at the onboarding stage are consistent with initial expectations. Include all facets of the job, such as basic tasks and activities, project objectives, and professional development expectations. Work with the new employee to ensure the goals are understood. Finally, along with setting expectations, the planning process can be a good time to start the new employee on an immediate, short-term project.⁴ This approach can help establish early wins for the employee, provide a basis for interaction with others, accelerate time to productivity, and boost overall engagement.



Employers have ample opportunity to help new hires fit in, but only a minority of organizations have an established process for enabling new-hire support.

The value of relationships in talent acquisition will continue to grow as employers compete for workers with in-demand skills. The ability to develop connections with candidates will not only determine how well the organization acquires talent but also how well it retains its workers and develops new skills and capabilities. As results from the survey reveal, many talent organizations have room to improve across all facets of recruiting, from job definition to sourcing, screening, and onboarding. As employers seek to become more competitive in all areas of talent acquisition, three fundamentals will remain relevant.

The Human Touch Will Continue to Matter

Technology will not replace human interaction in the process; instead, it will make human interaction more meaningful. The organizations that best compete for talent will be the ones that apply digital tools to make their human recruiters work smarter, faster, and with more understanding of the candidate. The recruiters and hiring managers who excel at high-volume tasks such as reviewing resumes will have less of an advantage than those who know how to advise candidates and work with the business to achieve outcomes.

The Balance of Power Will Remain Even

Even if labor markets change and more workers become available, the balance of power between the employer and candidate will likely remain even. The organization that is considerate of the candidate's need for clarity, open communication, and fair evaluation will continue to enjoy an advantage in competing for talent.

The Connections Between Talent and Opportunity Will Extend Beyond the Point of Hire

The core of great recruiting is the ability to connect talent with opportunity, but as demands to innovate and acquire new skills grow more pressing, employers will need to continue connecting their current employees with career opportunity in the form of training and internal mobility. Workers who learn and are allowed to develop new skills will bring expanded value to the organization, as well as a high level of engagement that helps drive the business forward.

Together, the human touch, the balance of power, and the connection to opportunity will all determine an employer's ability to attract and retain the people it needs to grow and succeed. Humanizing the talent acquisition process is no small task, and most organizations have progress to make, but the results, in terms of engaged workers and competitive talent capability, make the continuous improvement effort worthwhile.



Endnotes

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