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The Tech Candidate Journey:
Path to Application.

Introduction.

Think about the last application that came across your desk. We mean really think about it, because you're about to take a pop quiz.

Alright, let's begin.

- Where did it come from?
- How did the candidate first discover the opportunity?
- How much research did they do before applying?
- Where did they conduct their research?
- What did they see or learn that finally convinced them to apply?
- How did they apply?

Ok, how did you do?

If you're like many of us, you know where that application came from, but very little else. And while source of application is an important metric, it paints an incomplete and often misleading picture.

Earning a qualified application is always the goal, but it isn't enough. If you don't understand where that applicant came from, and what influenced their decision making process, there's no way to repeat the result in the future.

Simply put, you don't know what you don't know.

Introduction.

Imagine how much simpler recruiting would be if you knew the answers to just a few basic questions.

- How are candidates discovering job opportunities?
- How do they research them?
- How do they apply?

Once we truly understand the candidate journey, we can build sustainable recruitment programs that consistently meet and exceed hiring objectives without leaving our destiny in the hands of luck.

That's what we're here to discuss today.

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// **PUBLISHED:** July 2024

The Hiring Funnel.

Before we dig into the data, let's level set: Recruitment is now marketing.

SECTION 1

Once a decade, the recruitment industry sees a shift in candidate behavior. First, it was the job board era; candidates found job postings and applied online. Then, we saw a shift to the sourcing era; companies no longer waited for candidates to apply but reached out to them proactively.

Now, we're in the recruitment marketing era.

With the proliferation of social media and influencers, candidates now seek out employers the way they purchase products, book vacations or make restaurant reservations.

Think about the last time you booked a reservation at a restaurant. You may have heard about the restaurant from a friend or saw an ad online. Before booking the reservation you likely looked up their reviews or menu. You might have even waited a few months to book the reservation. And there are many different channels you could have booked the reservation: OpenTable, the restaurant's website or calling them directly.

The candidate journey today is very similar. It's not linear and it is different for every single person.

This requires talent leaders to shift their hiring mindset completely. Why?

1. Candidates must know you exist as an employer, which requires you to be where they are.
2. Candidates want to know about your culture, benefits and values before they even consider applying.
3. The journey for how candidates apply to your roles will look different for each candidate.

There must be **Awareness** of your company and **Interest** in working for you based on what candidates value most. Only then will candidates **Evaluate** whether they want to work for you and decide whether to **Commit** to applying for your role.

Talent leaders must strategically invest in every aspect of the hiring funnel to attract and convert the qualified candidates needed to grow their company.

Keep reading to get direct insights on each stage of this funnel from tech candidates directly.

AWARENESS

INTEREST

EVALUATE

COMMIT
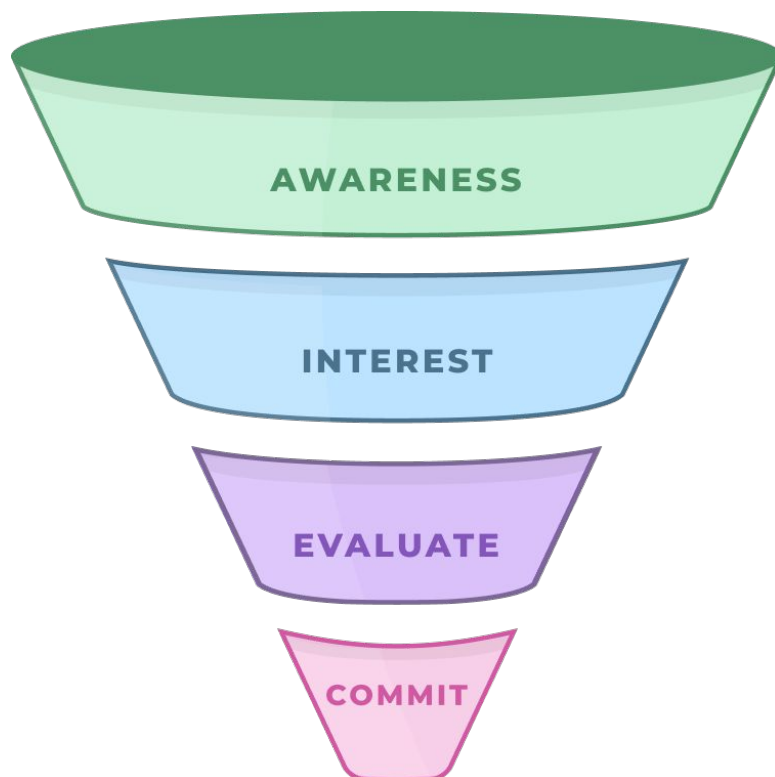
Build Awareness.

It's impossible for candidates to apply for your roles if they don't know you exist. Building awareness with candidates is the most important step to hiring the qualified talent you need. Without this, your job becomes more manual and time consuming, which no company can afford.

SECTION 2

We asked 1,000+ leaders what strategies are working to hire tech talent. The answer? Online tech-specific platforms and employer branding. This is a clear shift away from sourcing which was ranked last on the list.

All aspects of hiring become difficult without an awareness of you as an employer. Being where your ideal candidates are is a foundational element of a successful hiring process. So how are candidates finding employers today? We have the answer.

We recently surveyed 1,300+ technologists to get a candidate perspective on this topic. And the findings are clear, awareness as an employer is everything.

- **Social Media:** 70% use LinkedIn to source jobs and 40% utilize other social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, highlighting the importance of social channels within your talent strategy.

- **Careers Page:** 56% state they go directly to company websites to find jobs, further reiterating the importance of making yourself known to candidates that you exist as a viable employer.

- **SEO (Search Engine Optimization):** 55% find jobs through Google Search, emphasizing the importance of SEO as a channel to weave into your brand awareness strategy.

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The benefit of online platforms like Built In is it **allows your company to be always-on** which compared to sourcing and referrals that are very dependent on a recruiter's time and a candidate being receptive. Investing in employer branding allows you to be proactive and really impact the perception of your company **at all moments** of the candidate journey."

Katherine Keenan
Talent Brand Program Manager at Dropbox

Gain Interest.

Creating awareness of your employer brand is not enough to bring in the qualified talent you need. Once you've gotten in front of your ideal audience, you have to generate interest with them. Candidates, more than ever, want to work for employers that align with their own values. Talent teams must speak to who they are to keep the right candidates engaged.

In our recent survey of 1,300 tech professionals, we asked how often they respond to recruiters: 43% stated they would respond after some consideration and 36% noted they would respond immediately if interested. This highlights the importance of having an employer brand that speaks to who you are and what you do. If you don't, your sourcing team will struggle to get responses.

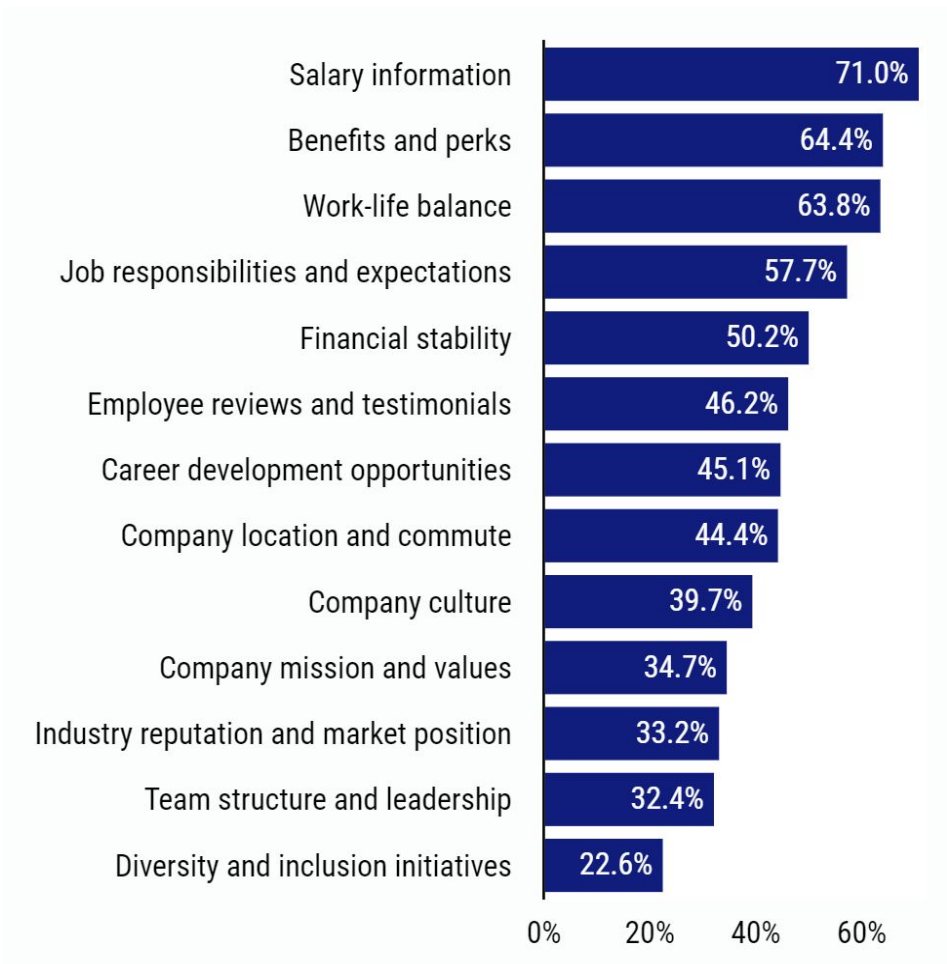**Q: How do you typically respond to recruiters who reach out to you?**

Respond after some consideration	**43.1%**
Respond immediately if interested	**35.8%**
Rarely respond	**14.3%**
Never respond	**4.0%**
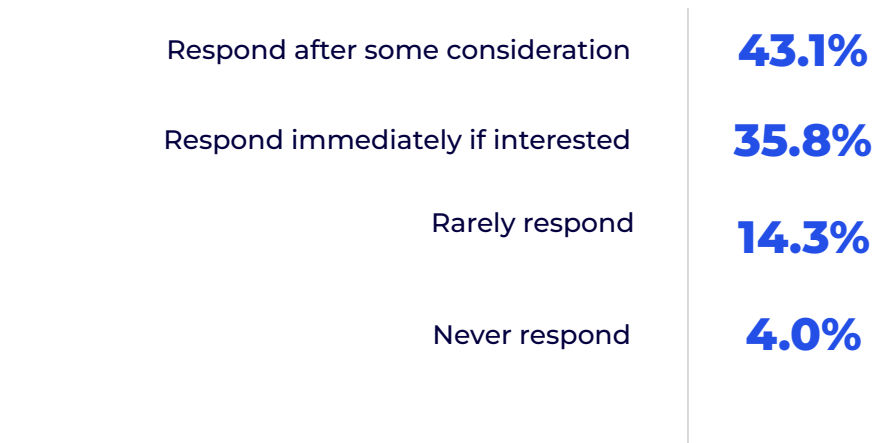
But how do you ensure you're sharing the right information to draw interest from your ideal candidates? Our survey gathered insights on what tech candidates look for most when researching potential employers. Here's the results:

Q: What information do you look for when researching potential employers?

Information	Percentage
Salary information	71.0%
Benefits and perks	64.4%
Work-life balance	63.8%
Job responsibilities and expectations	57.7%
Financial stability	50.2%
Employee reviews and testimonials	46.2%
Career development opportunities	45.1%
Company location and commute	44.4%
Company culture	39.7%
Company mission and values	34.7%
Industry reputation and market position	33.2%
Team structure and leadership	32.4%
Diversity and inclusion initiatives	22.6%

SECTION 3

Ensure candidates can find the information they want to know about you as an employer. You can do this through many channels: your careers page, social profiles, job descriptions, employee testimonials, content and more.

The more **transparent and vocal** you are about what it's like to work for you, the more likely you'll be to draw interest from talent.
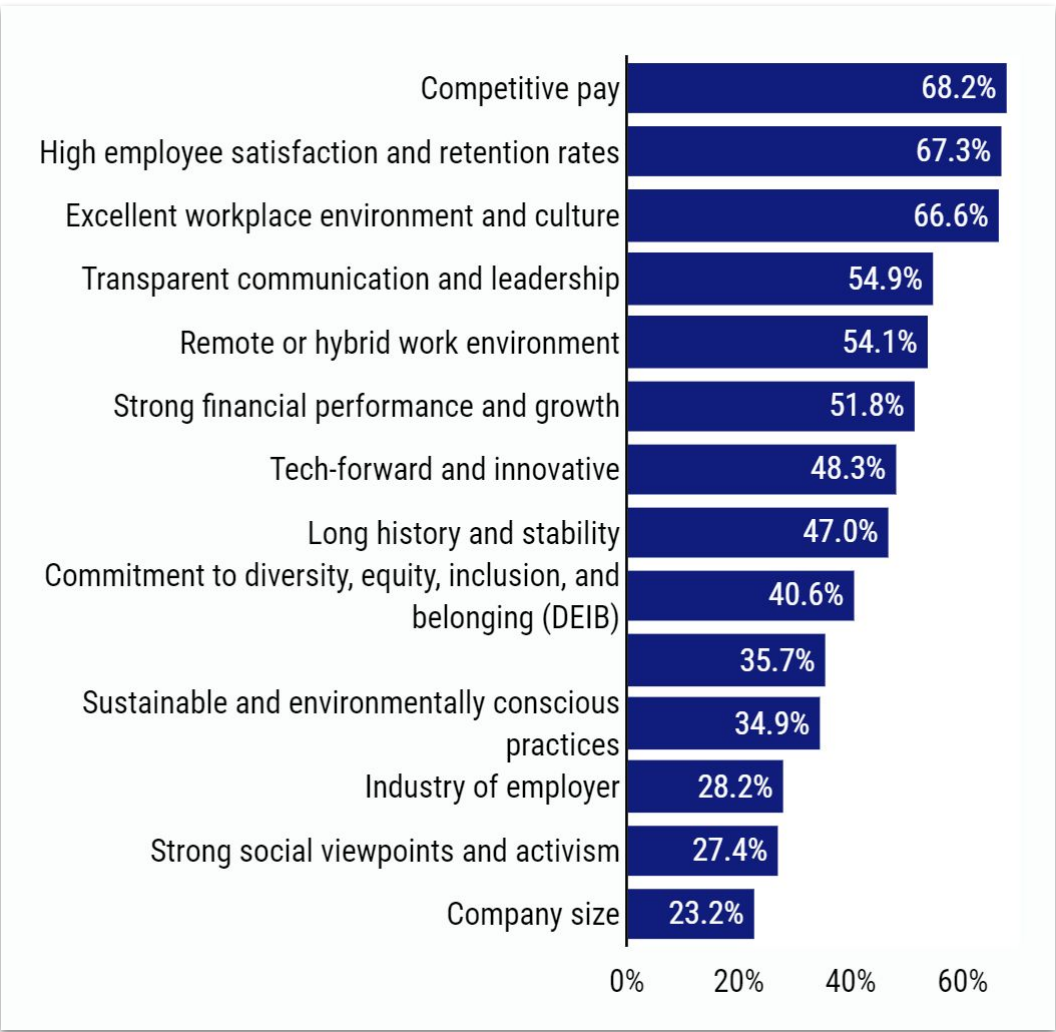
Prepare for Evaluation.

Now that candidates know who you are and what you stand for, it's decision time. Will they or won't they apply for your open role? This is a critical stage that can attract or detract your ideal candidates. Keep reading to hear insights on what makes or breaks a candidate's decision.

When we asked candidates what traits or qualities they found most compelling in an employer, compensation (68%), good retention (67%) and excellent culture (67%) ranked the highest. Showcase these attributes throughout your job descriptions and careers page to help increase your chances of candidates hitting apply.
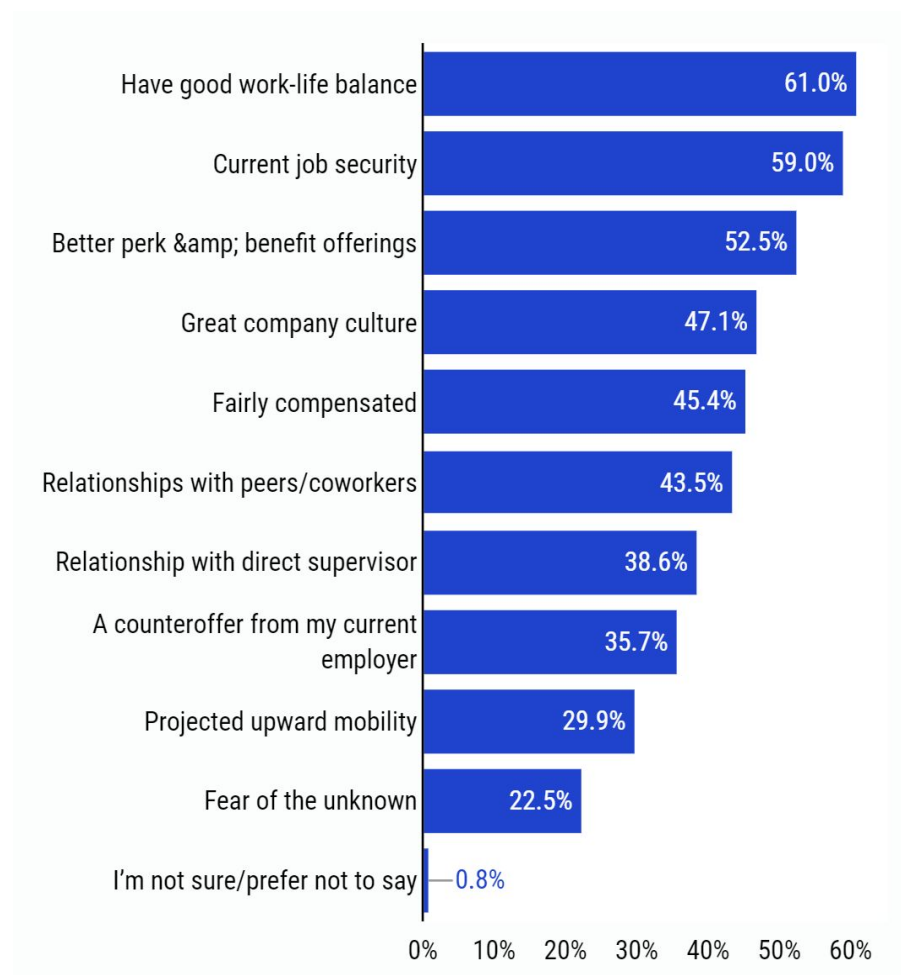
Q: **Which traits or qualities do you find most compelling in an employer?**

Trait	Percentage
Competitive pay	68.2%
High employee satisfaction and retention rates	67.3%
Excellent workplace environment and culture	66.6%
Transparent communication and leadership	54.9%
Remote or hybrid work environment	54.1%
Strong financial performance and growth	51.8%
Tech-forward and innovative	48.3%
Long history and stability	47.0%
Commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB)	40.6%
	35.7%
Sustainable and environmentally conscious practices	34.9%
Industry of employer	28.2%
Strong social viewpoints and activism	27.4%
Company size	23.2%

Keep in mind that at this point in the hiring funnel, you're likely competing against the candidate's existing employer. They are deciding whether your company or this new role would be more lucrative for them. Here's what would keep a technology professional at their current employer, even if they got an enticing job opportunity.

Q: **What would keep you with an employer even if a more lucrative offer came about?**

Category	Percentage
Have good work-life balance	61.0%
Current job security	59.0%
Better perk & benefit offerings	52.5%
Great company culture	47.1%
Fairly compensated	45.4%
Relationships with peers/coworkers	43.5%
Relationship with direct supervisor	38.6%
A counteroffer from my current employer	35.7%
Projected upward mobility	29.9%
Fear of the unknown	22.5%
I'm not sure/prefer not to say	0.8%

Ensure Commitment.

Congratulations! You've made it to the final stage of the hiring funnel when the candidates apply to your role. As we shared earlier, how, where and why a candidate applies to your roles is going to be very different for each candidate. Let's dive into what candidates tend to do when applying for a role.

SECTION 5

According to our recent survey, on average tech candidates have used **three different channels to apply for roles in the past year.**

Why? The evaluation of whether or not to apply for a role can end at different points.

One candidate could decide to apply for a role after reviewing a company's careers page and apply directly. Another could have seen a current employee's social post and apply through that channel.

Instead of reporting on simply where the candidate applies, be sure to account for all of the places candidates are researching your company. All of this information they are gathering is a part of their "why" for making the commitment to apply for your role.

Key Takeaways.

We covered a lot of data and insights but if you're going to take anything away from this guide, let it be this:

1. The Candidate Journey is Not Linear: The journey to submitting an application is not straightforward. Candidates discover job opportunities through various sources like social media, company websites and search engines. Their decision to apply is influenced by multiple touchpoints, including employer branding, social media presence and job content. This complexity highlights the need for recruiters to understand and strategically engage candidates across different channels.

2. Recruitment is Becoming More Like Marketing: In today's competitive landscape for tech talent, recruitment strategies must mirror marketing tactics. Building awareness of your employer brand is crucial, akin to how consumer brands attract customers. This involves maintaining an "always-on" presence, leveraging SEO for visibility in search engines, and ensuring your careers page effectively communicates your employer value proposition.

3. Importance of Candidate Interest and Evaluation: Beyond awareness, generating interest among tech candidates involves showcasing your company culture, values and benefits transparently. Candidates evaluate potential employers based on compensation, culture and retention rates. To convert interest into applications, recruiters must align job descriptions and company messaging with what candidates prioritize in their job search.

To be successful, talent leaders must shift their recruitment strategies towards proactive, multi-channel engagement that addresses candidates' varied needs and preferences throughout their decision-making process.

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