

2024 Candidate Preferences.

Strategies to Hire & Retain Top Tech Talent



Introduction.

To hire and retain sought-after talent you need to stand out as an employer. You must meet the expectations of candidates and provide value every step of the way, from when a candidate first hears about you to hiring and onboarding. You must then continue to meet the expectations of those candidates when they become employees to maintain and improve employee satisfaction.

We surveyed 1,300+ technology professionals to help you understand the state of candidate preferences. What was once most important to employees has shifted over time, and although salary and benefits are still highly valued, work arrangements and culture also play a big factor in determining employee satisfaction.

Understanding these types of preferences allows you to align your recruitment, hiring and retention strategies to attract and retain top talent.

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SECTION 1

Employee Loyalty is Low.

Employee loyalty has several benefits for employers, from better productivity and employee morale to higher profits and reduced employee turnover. Today, however, employment loyalty is low.

SECTION 1

3 out of 4 employees are either actively looking for a new role or are open to the idea. The majority (55%) of these individuals are employed while being open to new opportunities, and another 26% are actively looking for new opportunities while employed. That leaves very few (18%) who can be considered loyalists—those who are employed and not seeking new opportunities.

Another factor that further emphasizes that employers cannot rely on employee loyalty is the high percentage of employees (86%) who are considering applying for new jobs within the next 12 months. Only 15% of tech employees are not actively searching for a new position.

These statistics show that companies must find ways to retain top talent or be prepared to fill critical roles very quickly.

In a world where employee loyalty is lacking, offering a total rewards package and policies to meet those needs are necessary to retain and attract tech talent.

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SECTION 1

Factors That Cause Employees to Seek Out New Jobs.

Our study shows that securing a higher income and work-life balance are the main motivations for employees to search for a new job. Three in four employees (75%) would search for a new job to make more money, and 49% prioritize work-life balance over other factors. A positive company culture (38%) and opportunities for upward mobility (33%) are also critical for employee retention.

Though not quite as much, concerns about employer stability (24%) and the risk of layoffs (23%) can also drive employees to seek out new job opportunities.

Q: What are the main reasons you would search for a new job today?



SECTION 1

Why Employees Choose To Stay.

Employees who choose to stick with their company are happy because their organization understands what these factors are so that they can incorporate them into their total rewards package and work environment to improve retention.

Work-life balance and job security are among the most significant factors that drive employees to stay, with 61% prioritizing a good work-life balance and 59% highly valuing current job security. Benefits and compensation are also crucial, with 53% prioritizing better perks and benefits offerings and 45% wanting fair compensation. Company culture (47%) is another significant driver of retention.

Though relationships rank below personal factors, relationships with peers and coworkers (44%) and direct supervisors (39%) are still important to many. Counteroffers from current employers (36%) are among the least likely to retain employees.



SECTION 2

The Job Search is Changing.

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

SECTION 2

Now, we're in the recruitment marketing era.

This becomes especially critical when hiring tech talent. 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.

Why? The candidate's journey today is not linear, and it is different for every person. 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.

This is also confirmed based on the recent insights we gathered from 1,300+ tech professionals. We found that 14% of tech employees rarely respond to recruiters and 4% never respond. This indicates that the majority of employees generally respond to recruiters, but not before taking time to consider the offers. If companies don't have any level of awareness or relationship with candidates, it's unlikely the candidates will give the offer serious consideration.

To help build brand awareness and trust with candidates, employers need to understand how employees are approaching their job search today. This includes how closely they're assessing employers before applying to jobs, responding to recruiters, and accepting offers. Employers need to invest their efforts in showing up and reaching tech candidates where they are looking and applying online.

SECTION 2

Where Employees Research Employers and Jobs.

On average, employees use at least four tools and platforms to research job opportunities. They are no longer solely using a company's careers site or LinkedIn. Yes, to research and get to know employers before they apply, 67% of candidates still use professional networking sites like LinkedIn, and 56% use company websites. However, Google search comes in right behind company websites, with 55% of candidates using it to research companies during their job search. Third-party job boards (41%) and social media platforms (40%) are also widely used and play a significant role in job searches.

Similar to when candidates apply for roles, there isn't a single go-to platform that all candidates apply through. On average, tech candidates have used three different channels to apply for roles in the past year alone. Why? The evaluation of whether or not to apply for a role can end at different points in the job search and assessment process.

One candidate could decide to apply for a role after reviewing a company's careers page and apply directly from there. Another could see a current employee's social post and apply through that channel. Another still might find a job through a job board and apply there. That said, instead of reporting on simply where the candidate applies, you need to also account for all the places candidates are researching your company, like Google search, LinkedIn, job boards, reviews sites and social media, all mentioned previously.

SECTION 2

Information Employees Are Researching.

In addition to where, it's vital to account for the type of information candidates are seeking when conducting online research. All of the information prospective employees are gathering about your organization is a part of their “why” for committing to apply for your role.

When researching potential employers, employees look for a variety of information, with salary (71%), benefits (64%), and work-life balance (64%) being the most important. Understanding these types of priorities can help employers present their opportunities more effectively in their job descriptions and postings.

Here is a breakdown of factors that play a significant role in the decision-making process of employees when they're researching and applying to companies like yours:

- Salary information (71%)
- Benefits and perks (64%)
- Work-life balance (64%)
- Job responsibilities and expectations (58%)
- Financial stability of the company (50%)
- Employee reviews and testimonials (46%)
- Career development opportunities (45%)
- Company culture (40%)
- Diversity and inclusion initiatives (23%)

As you consider these factors, one question is: Where and how can you emphasize these factors and ensure employees researching your company see them?



SECTION 3

Compelling Traits of a Top Employer.

To attract and retain top talent, employers need to understand and work to acquire the traits that employees find valuable and make them want to come to work every day. So, what is it that makes an employer stand out to candidates?

SECTION 3

Important Employer Qualities.

Competitive pay (68%), high employee satisfaction rates (67%), and a positive workplace culture (67%) are the top qualities employees find compelling in an employer. Transparent communication and leadership (55%) and remote or hybrid work (54%) are also highly valued, reflecting modern workforce priorities. Traits like a positive work environment and transparent communication and leadership help to build trust and engagement, which are critical to today's workforce.

Employees also desire to work for progressive, innovative and stable companies, making financially stable companies (52%) and tech-forward (48%) attractive options to potential employees. Though important to a lesser degree, emphasis on diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (40%) and sustainable practices (35%) are still important to many and reflect current societal values that attract a conscientious workforce.

Q: Which traits or qualities do you find most compelling in an employer?



SECTION 3

Benefits and Perks.

Employers that emphasize the well-being of their employees by offering comprehensive benefits and perks are also vital to employees. We know perks and benefits are a top consideration when researching future employers, but which ones matter the most?

Employees prioritize a range of benefits, with health insurance and retirement plans being the most important. Remote work opportunities and company bonuses also rank highly, reflecting the changing work landscape and employee preferences. Seventy-two percent of employees prioritize health insurance as the most important perk, with 61% seeking a 401(k) with company matching. Close behind in importance is remote work (60%).

Retirement contributions (53%), company bonuses (51%), PTO (48%), and mental health benefits (47%) form a significant cohort of closely-ranked valued perks, with the latter highlighting the increase in the importance of mental well-being and stress management at work. Additional perks and benefits coming in closely ranked with notable appeal are parental leave (30%), company equity (29%), and free meals or food stipends (27%).

All 10 of the mentioned benefits and perks have some level of appeal, showcasing a diverse set of employee needs across the tech workforce. Employers need to consider how to incorporate the varying benefits and perks important to the different demographics within their specific workforce by understanding what is most important across the board while making an effort to leave no one behind.

SECTION 3

Flexible Work Arrangements.

It's been mentioned multiple times now that having flexible or remote work opportunities is highly important to tech candidates. But what does that look like in today's current workforce?

Hybrid work is the most popular arrangement among employees, with full-time office work and full-time remote work being evenly split among the remaining current work environments. Here's a deeper dive into how most tech candidates work today and how they'd like their work environment to look:

- 41% of employees have flexible work arrangements, including:
- Flexibility to work from home at least once a week (17%).
- The 3-2-2 model (15%).
- The 2-3-2 model (9%).
- 29% of employees work 100% remotely (18%) or have the option to work from home but have office space available for meetings and gatherings (11%).
- 28% of employees work all five days in the office.

SECTION 3

The Net Promoter Score (NPS) score for current work environments is 29, with 47% promoters when compared to passives (35%) and detractors (18%), suggesting that most employees generally like their current work environment. Here's a breakdown of the 0 to 10 ratings:

- 47% of employees rated their satisfaction as 9 or 10, indicating high satisfaction (promoters).
- 35% of employees rated their satisfaction as 7 or 8, indicating moderate satisfaction (passives).
- 18% of employees rated their satisfaction between 0 and 6, indicating low satisfaction (detractors).
- 26% of employees rated their satisfaction as 10, the highest level of satisfaction.
- Only 0.2% of employees rated their satisfaction as 0, the lowest level of satisfaction.

Even though the overall rating indicates that many like their current work environment, this data shows a diverse range of preferences for the ideal work environment, with a significant portion favoring remote work and flexible office arrangements. Understanding these preferences can help your organization shape policies that enhance employee satisfaction.

When considering the six work options presented, the most popular single option was 100% remote, with 23% desiring it.

SECTION 3

A total of 42% of employees prefer fully remote work (23%) or remote work, with office space available for team meetings and gatherings as desired (19%).

However, another 44% of employees favor flexible work arrangements:

- 15% for the 2-3-2 model.
- 15% for flexibility to work from home at least once per week.
- 14% for the 3-2-2 model.

Finally, only 15% of employees prefer to work all five days in the office, making it the least preferred option.

These stats indicate that any trend for employers to move to a full-time in-office setup is likely to make it difficult to attract and retain top talent. Some level of a hybrid working arrangement, at a minimum, is necessary.



SECTION 4

A Candidate Experience That Converts.

The candidate experience has a significant impact on time-to-hire, brand evaluation and bringing top talent on board. Even if a candidate finds you online, loves what they see and decides they would love to work for you, if their experience during the application and hiring process isn't a good one, you risk losing a top candidate.

SECTION 4

So, don't drop the ball when it matters most.

Job seekers face various challenges during their job search, with nearly half (47%) struggling with receiving timely responses from employers. Negotiating salary and benefits (38%) and preparing for interviews (37%) are also significant hurdles. Additionally, tracking job search activities across multiple channels (35%) and navigating application processes (30%) present additional challenges.

In addition to the challenges they experience, it's essential to appreciate what is important to candidates during the hiring process. Transparency in the recruitment process is highly valued by job seekers, with over half (56%) finding it extremely important and another 36% rating it as very important. Clear communication about the job role, salary and timeline can significantly enhance the candidate's experience.

Use these insights to ensure your candidate experience succeeds in hiring the top talent you attract to apply for your open positions. Addressing and eliminating current candidate issues and incorporating what's important to them can help improve the job search experience for candidates, increasing your chances of bringing top talent on board.

CONCLUSION

As candidates and employees continue to speak up for what they desire in an employer, organizations must take notice. Attractive total rewards and benefits packages are vital to hiring and retaining top talent, as are a positive work culture, a thoughtful candidate experience, and more.

With the help of this report, your company can take action to adjust its current practices and policies to strengthen employee satisfaction and recruiting and hiring efforts. Now's the time to make changes that show candidates and your employees that you're a top employer that cares about what they need.



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