



The candidate experience - perception versus reality

A US Market Research Report



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Introduction

Over the last few years candidates have changed their approach to job seeking.

As well as a pool of candidates actively looking for a job, there is another group who are willing to consider moving for the right job, on their terms - known as passive candidates.

Clearly the potential is there for recruiters to tap into a pool of talent actively looking to move into a new opportunity, or who could be tempted to move for the right offer.

But the dynamic of recruitment has changed, and it is now candidates who feel they should be setting the terms of engagement.

In this report - based on a survey of more than 1,000 people in the United States, carried out by independent research house Sapio Research - we will uncover what candidates expect from the recruitment process, and highlight how these expectations match up to reality.

This report highlights

- How candidates actively search for roles
- How candidates prefer to be contacted by recruiters
- The consequences of ignoring candidates' contact preferences
- Whether employee loyalty is really dead when it comes to changing jobs
- How open candidates are to their data being collected and stored
- Why creating a personalized recruitment process is key
- The impact of recruitment's technology revolution



Key highlights

- **25% of candidates say personal referrals** are the number one source for job hunting
- **70% of candidates not actively looking for a new job** would be most tempted by a higher salary
- **59% of young people** (18-24 years old) think it is ok to stay in a job for less than a year
- **50% of workers expect to have three or fewer jobs** during their career
- **More than a third of applicants (34%)** expect to hear back from a recruiter within 24 hours of making a job enquiry
- **70% of candidates would be happy for recruiters to keep their data on file for up to two years**, if it led to a more personalized recruitment experience
- **More than a third of candidates (34%)** receive speculative communications from recruiters on at least a weekly basis
- **59% of people would ignore a recruiter** who contacted them too much (even if they liked the look of the job on offer)
- **23% of candidates feel being contacted by a recruiter** more than once a month is too much

The death of job boards has been predicted prematurely

A few years ago, there was talk that job boards were on their deathbed.

Even within the last 18 months in the recruitment industry we've heard constant mumblings that job boards have had their day, especially with the advent of Google for Jobs.

But the reality seems to be very different. In fact, job boards remain the most popular method of looking for a job - with 40% of candidates stating they would first turn to a job board when looking for a role.

Of those who would use a job board, 27% would turn first to a general job board and 13% would prefer to look at a specialist job board as their first option.

20% - the proportion of candidates who found their current role on a job board

This research has also revealed that not only are job boards as important as ever, they are not even at risk of decline in the future, with younger people using them at the same rate as seasoned job hunters.

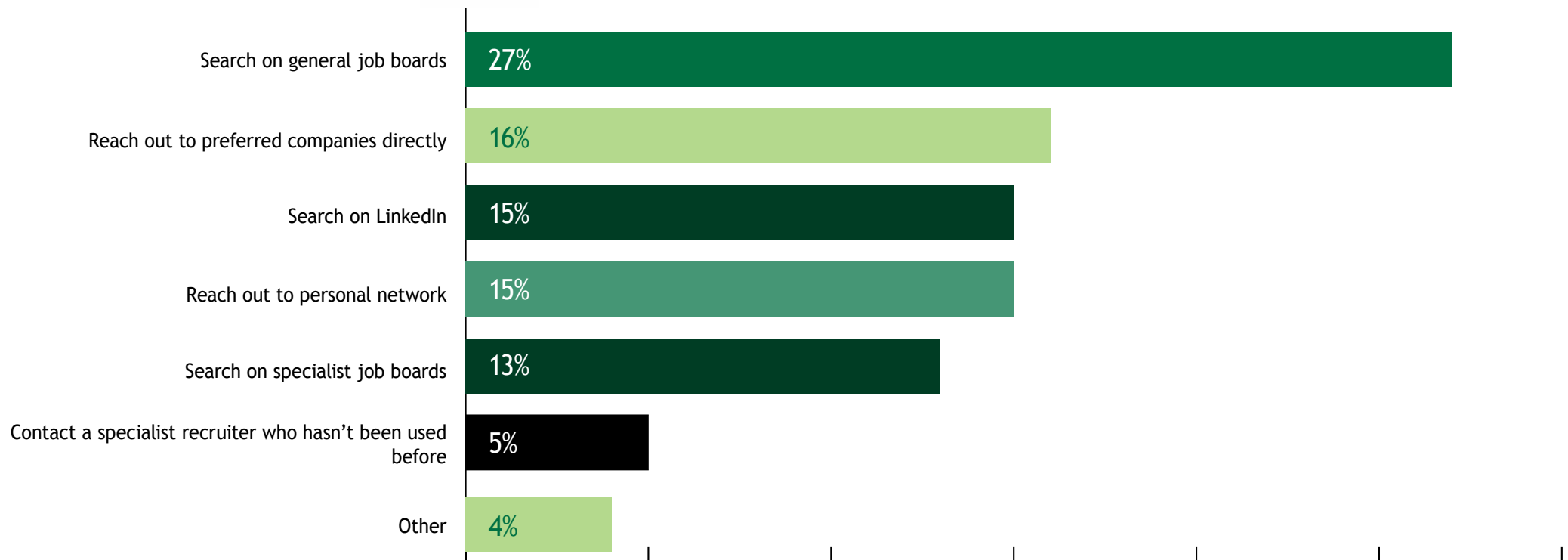
Clearly there is a disconnect between the industry perception and the reality of what candidates prefer.

Knowing where to find candidates, or understanding where candidates are looking for jobs, is one area recruiters need to understand, but there is a disconnect developing.

While much of the recruitment industry has been talking about the end of job boards for some time now, this research clearly shows that candidates still find them as important as ever.

- Toby Conibear, Chief Commercial Officer, DaXtra Technologies

How are people searching for jobs?



LinkedIn - the future of recruitment, or just hype?

Today, most professionals or jobseekers have a LinkedIn profile.

But, while it has become an increasingly popular professional network, it has yet to penetrate the minds of candidates as the best place to secure a job.

In fact, only 21% of candidates say they would be most likely to use LinkedIn to look for job opportunities.

Recruiters are also facing a conundrum when it comes to this platform. Anyone who has used LinkedIn will no doubt have received a message from a recruiter. But recruiters are running a risk with this tactic, as only 4% of candidates say they want to hear from recruiters via LinkedIn.

However, candidates are not dismissing LinkedIn entirely - they see it as a platform for demonstrating their professional credentials, growing their network and promoting themselves and their company.

It is likely that while candidates may not view LinkedIn as primarily a recruiting ground, they do harbor a fear of missing out on an opportunity and are eager to represent themselves properly to potential employers.

Is LinkedIn a useful recruitment platform?



26%

of professionals and jobseekers in the US don't use LinkedIn at all



20%

view LinkedIn primarily as a tool for building their professional network



11%

use LinkedIn for professional development (such as reading articles or joining groups)


This is supported by the fact that at the time we surveyed candidates for this report, 59% had updated their LinkedIn profile within the last three months.

However, there remains a significant percentage of the population who still don't use the social platform. More than a quarter (26%) said they don't use LinkedIn at all.

Interestingly, while candidates seem not to view LinkedIn as a job-seeking platform, those on the hunt for a new job are more likely to be active on the platform than those who aren't actively looking.

This is evidenced by the fact that just 14% of active jobseekers say they don't use LinkedIn, compared to 31% of passive candidates and 39% of those not interested at all in a new job.

So, while they may not be using LinkedIn to search for jobs, candidates clearly see a benefit to being visible on the network for when opportunities arise.



LinkedIn is an interesting platform in the recruitment industry. It has become increasingly popular among recruiters looking to actively source or engage with passive candidates. But clearly candidates are not approaching LinkedIn in the same way and see it as more of a way to promote themselves or grow their personal brand.

Whether it ever becomes the place for candidates to actively seek out new jobs remains to be seen.

Toby Conibear, Chief Commercial Officer, DaXtra Technologies

What's it going to take to convince candidates to move?

A new recruitment challenge has become convincing passive candidates to make a move from a job they might be happy in.

Perhaps not surprisingly, this research has found that money - more of it - remains the most effective enticement for convincing someone to walk away from their current employment, with 62% of respondents saying a higher salary would swing their decision.

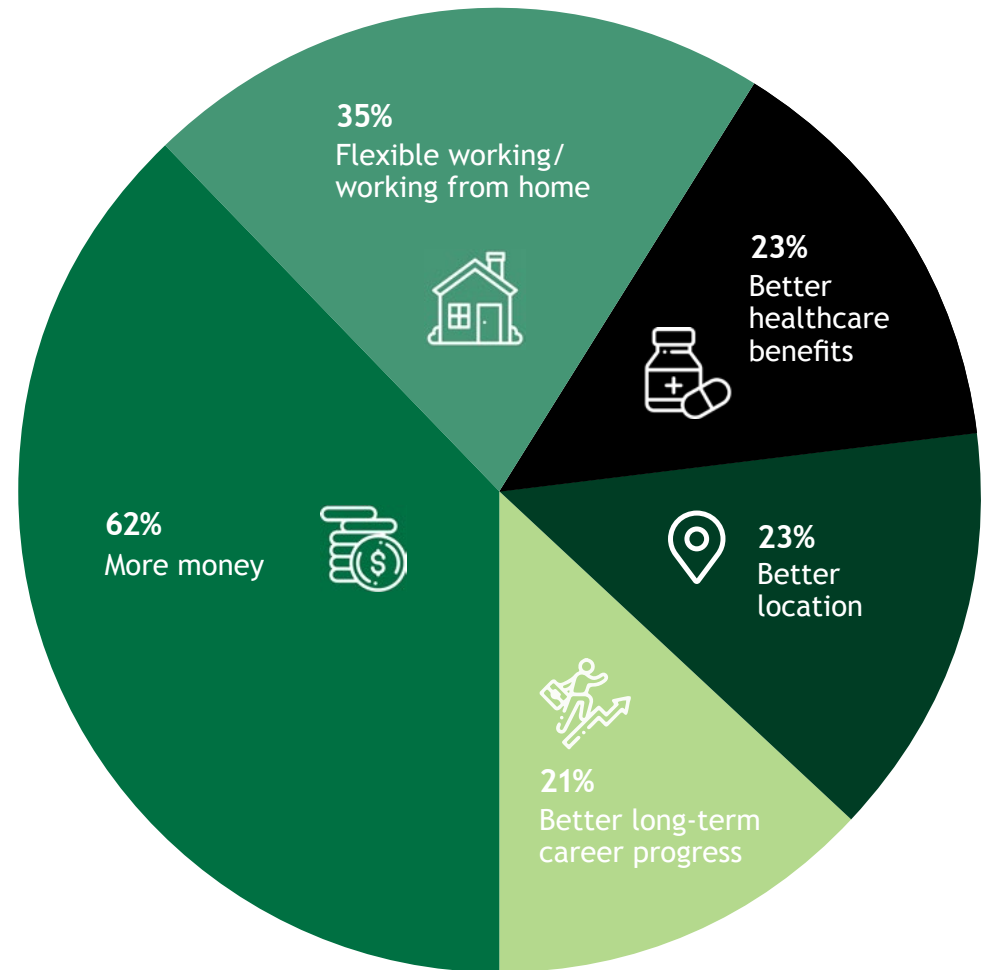
An increased wage is particularly effective for those candidates who are not actively searching for a new role but are open to opportunities - 70% of passive candidates said the offer of more money would likely convince them to move.

Female candidates are more likely to be enticed by a higher wage than male candidates (68% vs 56%).

Interestingly, and perhaps an indicator of how important work-life balance is becoming, the possibility of flexible working comes in second as the thing most likely to convince a candidate to move - 35% of candidates would be likely to move jobs for this.

Flexible working is also much more likely to convince a female candidate to move, with 42% valuing flexible working, compared to 27% of male candidates.

The top five enticements that could convince a candidate to change job





Is it a surprise that money remains the main motivator for candidates to move jobs? No, but it is interesting to see how important flexible working is becoming in the minds of candidates, more so than improved healthcare benefits or even long-term career progress.

We're definitely seeing a shift towards a better work-life balance and the ability to not have to travel into an office to work. With technology enabling this kind of working, this is a trend that is going to continue.

- Terry Bustamante, Sales Director, DaXtra Technologies

Creating job listings that will attract candidates

With passive candidates now forming part of the talent pool, it is essential that recruiters are creating job listings that will entice people to move from their current job. This research has now uncovered the details candidates view as most important on a job listing - and revealed that many recruiters are failing to meet these expectations.

Despite 90% of candidates stating that they view salary as the most important detail to include in a job listing, 38% said that this is the detail most likely to be missing (more than anything else).

Clearly recruiters are not giving candidates all the information they want.

It is understandable that recruiters wouldn't want to reveal salary in the early stages - and historically it has never been a problem.

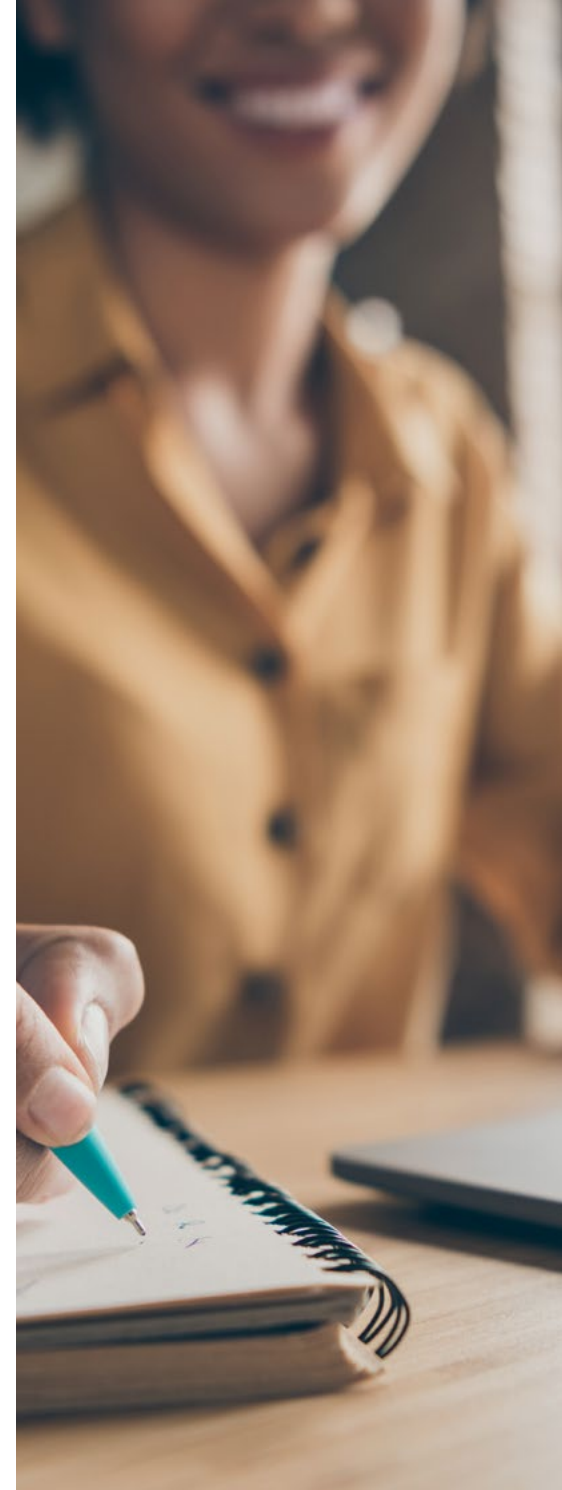
But recruiters need to understand that to attract and engage with the best candidates, they must give them all the information they are asking for - or risk losing them.

- Toby Conibear, Chief Commercial Officer, DaXtra Technologies

Which details do candidates regard as important on a job listing? (Top 10)



Which key pieces of information are most often missing from job listings? (Top 10)



The inbound future of recruitment

Recruiters are constantly under pressure in today's job market.

But while some candidates might not be actively looking to move from their current job, they could be enticed by the right offer. The challenge is making contact with these passive candidates and keeping them engaged until they are ready to move.

With so many methods of communication available, which do you choose?

If you listen to what candidates say they want, email is the best way to contact them, with 53% of active jobseekers and 48% of passive candidates preferring this method.

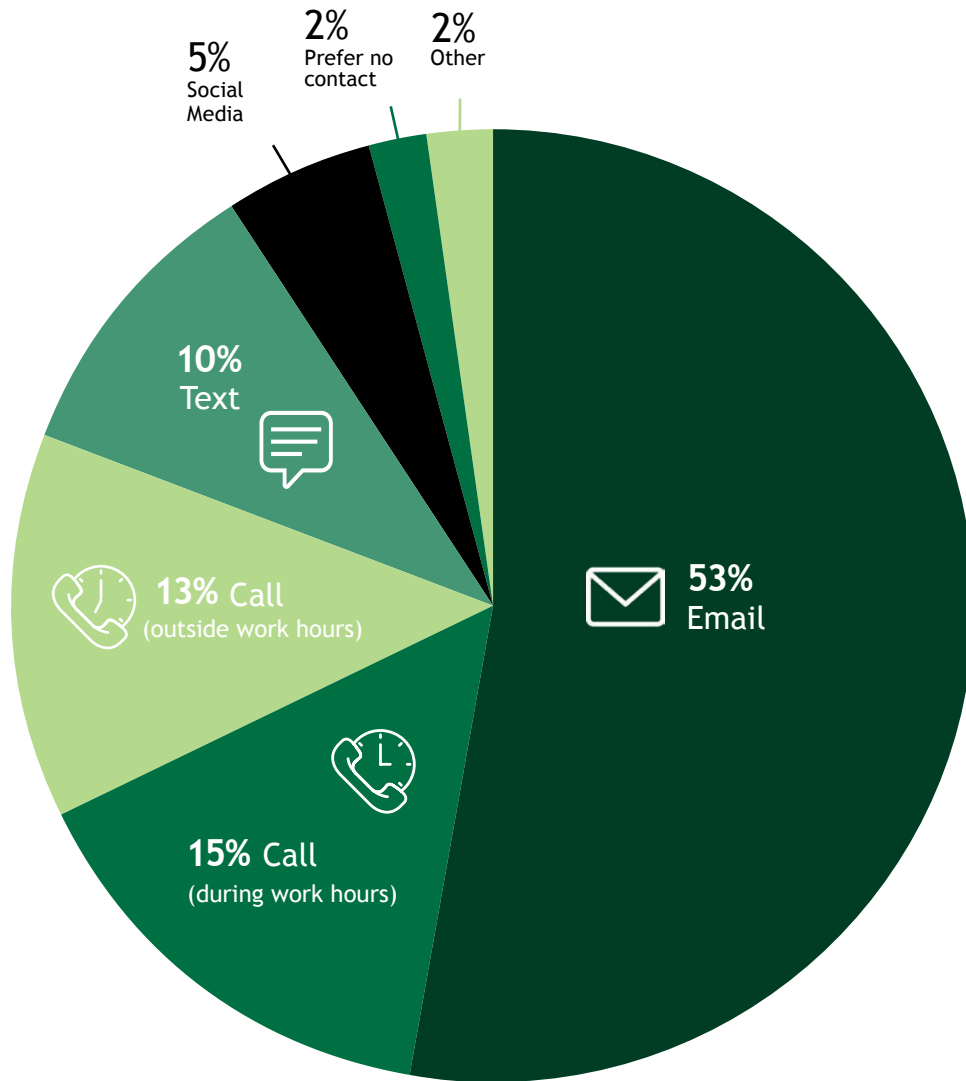
There is also no generational divide when it comes to preferred communication methods. Candidates of all ages in this survey stated that email is their preferred method of communicating with recruiters.

If you look at how marketing has developed with the inbound methodology - providing prospects with useful information and moving them down the sales funnel to eventually become customers when they're ready - this is now becoming the standard model of recruitment.

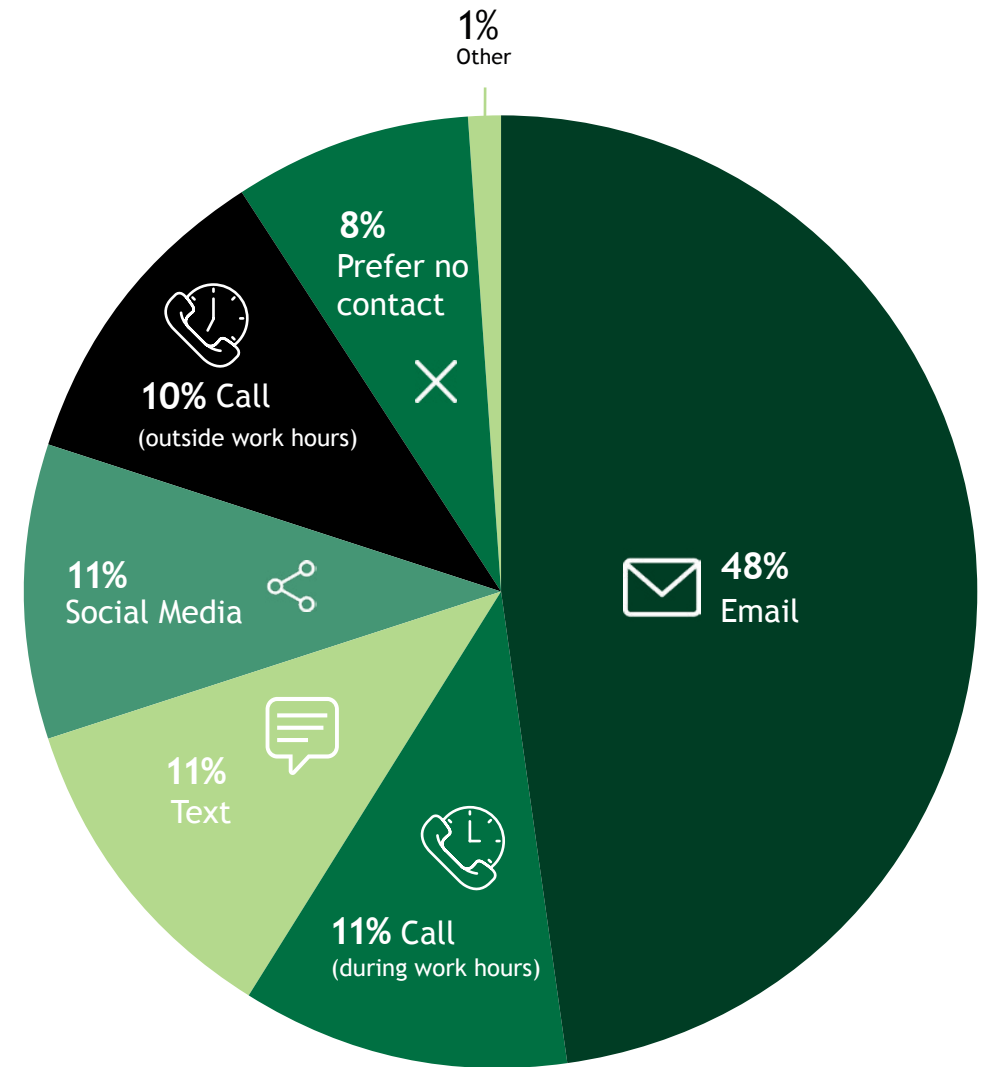
There could be any number of reasons that candidates prefer email over any other communication method. Whether it's because emails are easy to ignore, or because it gives them an opportunity to consider an offer in their own time, it is vital that recruiters take note of these preferred communication methods.

- Colleen Barraclough, VP of Operations - North America, DaXtra Technologies

How do active candidates prefer to be contacted?



How do passive candidates prefer to be contacted?



Speed of response is key for recruiters

On the communication front, this research has revealed a major failing amongst recruiters when it comes to meeting the expectations of candidates, and this revolves around the speed with which recruiters respond to candidate enquiries.

Despite 34% of applicants expecting to hear back from recruiters within 24 hours of making an enquiry, just 23% of candidates say they usually hear back within this time.

This demand for speedy responses is also not something likely to vanish anytime soon, with millennials (candidates aged 25-34) being particularly impatient. 44% of this age group expect responses quickly.

A third of candidates (34%) expect to hear back no later than three days after making an initial enquiry.

Given the pressure on recruiters, failing in this one area could severely reduce the number of candidates they can attract.

And many recruiters need to do better, with 21% of candidates saying they have been made to wait up to two weeks to hear back.

Speed of application is important too

When it comes to the length of an application form, candidates have preconceived expectations of how long it should take to complete. The vast majority of candidates (83%) say they would expect to take no more than 30 minutes filling out an application form.

Nearly a third (31%) expect the application form to take no more than 10 minutes to complete.

And in this area, expectations are being met.

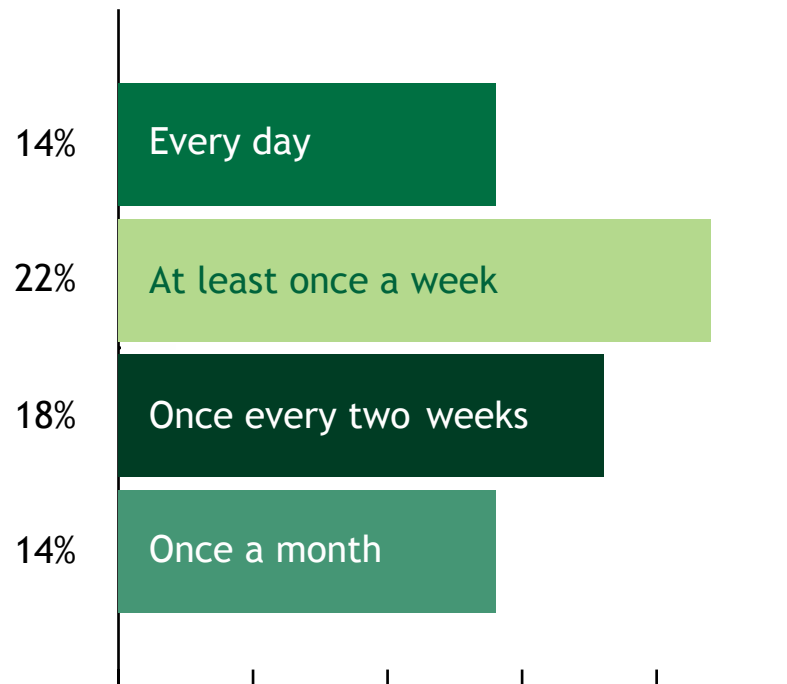
While, on average, candidates will give up filling out an application form if it takes longer than 27 minutes, it takes candidates an average of 20 minutes to complete a form.

Recruiters also risk alienating candidates by contacting them too often.

How often is too often? Well, candidates say that if a recruiter contacted them more than twice a month, they would consider that to be too intrusive.

This is not something to be taken lightly, considering that 59% of candidates claim they would ignore a recruiter they felt was contacting them too often, even if they liked the look of the job on offer.

How often are you speculatively contacted by recruiters?



These figures suggest that more than half (54%) of recruiters are either contacting candidates too often - or are right on the edge of the twice monthly contact that candidates deem acceptable.

It is a fine line between actively engaging with candidates and being seen as communicating with them too much, and it is becoming more of an issue for recruiters because there are fewer candidates actively looking for a job. Considering that candidates say they would ignore a recruiter who contacted them too often, even if they liked the job, it is essential recruiters find a balance.

Perhaps the more surprising fact though, is the number of candidates who are being made to wait weeks for a response when they do try and engage with a recruiter. Speed of response is definitely something some recruiters need to work on.

- Chris Wirt, Director of Sales - Eastern US and LATAM, DaXtra Technologies



Is company loyalty dead?

Much has been made in recent years about the emergence of “job hopping” and the erosion of company loyalty, particularly among younger employees.

This research has revealed that loyalty has not disappeared completely as half of candidates expect to have three or fewer jobs in their entire career.

However, while hopes are high among candidates that they will stay in their jobs for long periods, they are very willing to move jobs quickly if they are unhappy.

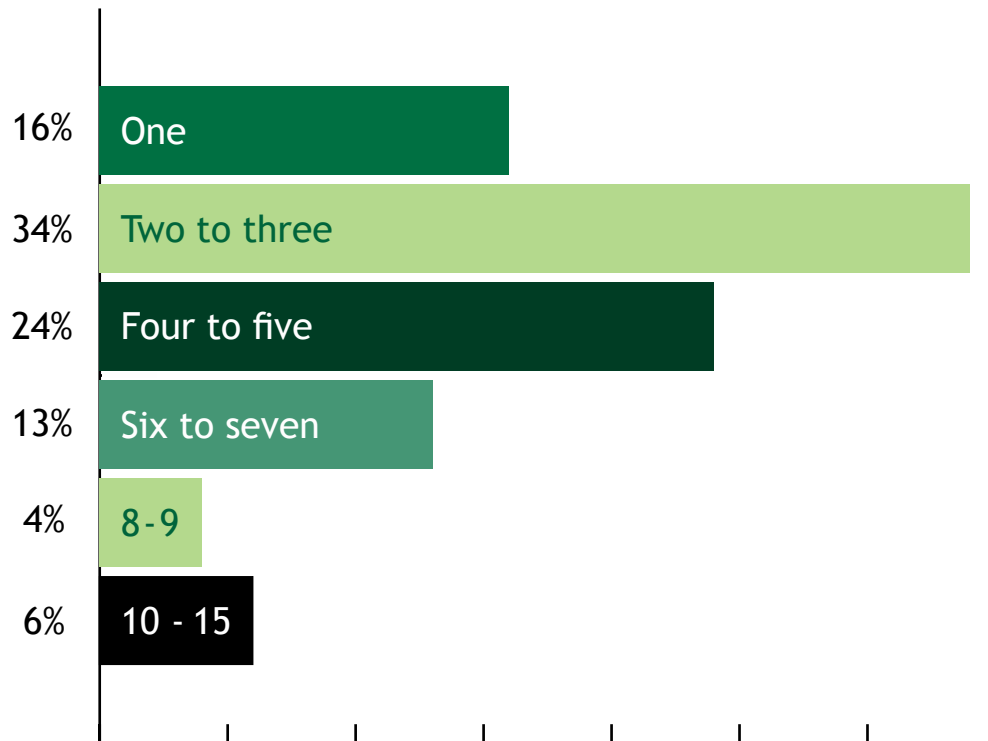
41% would consider moving after less than 12 months.

It is also possible that the “job hopping” label often aimed at younger people isn’t completely undeserved; especially considering **59% of 18-24 year olds think it’s acceptable to be in a job for less than a year before moving on.**

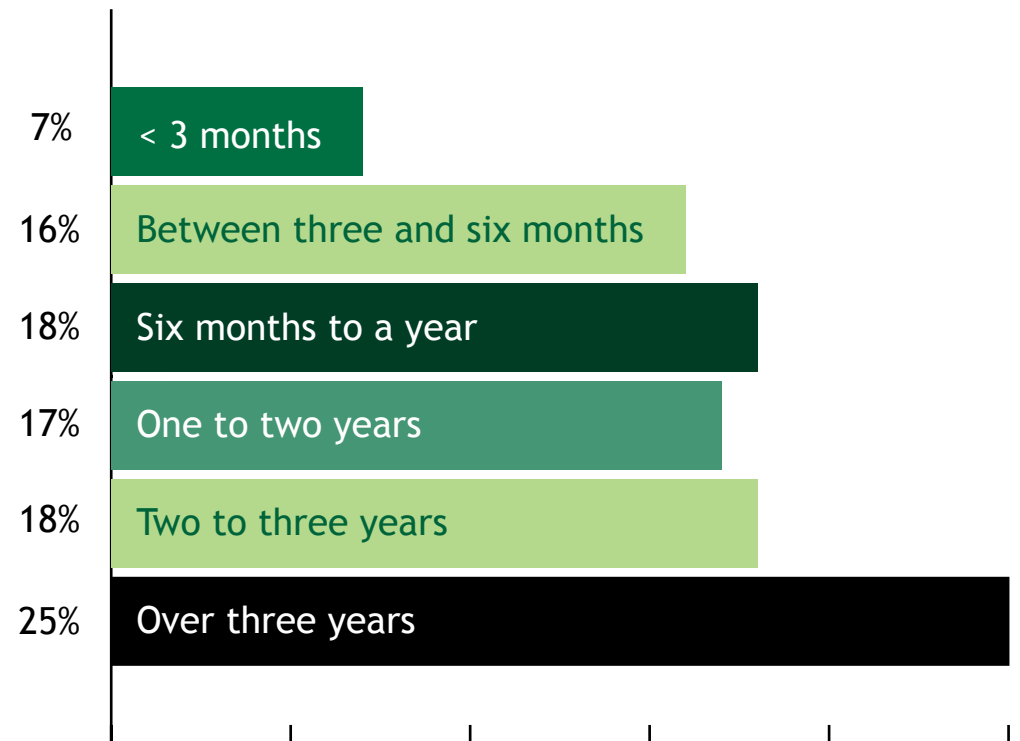
This is compared to 50% of 25-34 year olds, and just 17% of 55-64 year olds.

If a candidate has had lots of jobs that last for less than two years, that raises red flags for recruiters and could harm a candidate’s chances.

How many jobs do candidates expect to have in their career?



How long would you consider to be a reasonable amount of time to be in a job before looking for a new one?



It would be unfair to label young workers as disloyal because this research has shown that they do have a desire to stick with companies once they've been hired. But they are definitely quicker to move on if they don't like the company they're working for, and this is likely driven by the fact that they know they can get jobs more easily.

But they should be wary about moving around too much because a crowded resume with lots of jobs lasting just a few years is a red flag for recruiters.

- Colleen Barraclough, VP of Operations - North America, DaXtra Technologies



Data - would you sacrifice privacy for personalization?

Nothing has been more controversial in the last few years than what happens to our personal data.

More specifically how our data is obtained, stored and used by companies.

But when it comes to recruitment it appears candidates are happy for their information to be stored by agencies, as long as it leads to an improved, more personalized, service in the future.

Indeed, 70% of candidates would potentially be willing for their data to be stored for up to two years if it improved the quality of future services.

There is a willingness among candidates to have their data stored and used by recruiters in the future if it leads to a more personalized recruitment process. But it is worth noting that the number of candidates willing to have their data stored decreases significantly among younger candidates. This is something the industry should pay close attention to moving forward.

- Terry Bustamante, Sales Director, DaXtra Technologies

A changing trend?

However, while data storage isn't an issue right now, this research suggests it could be in the future as younger people appear to be more skeptical about data storage.

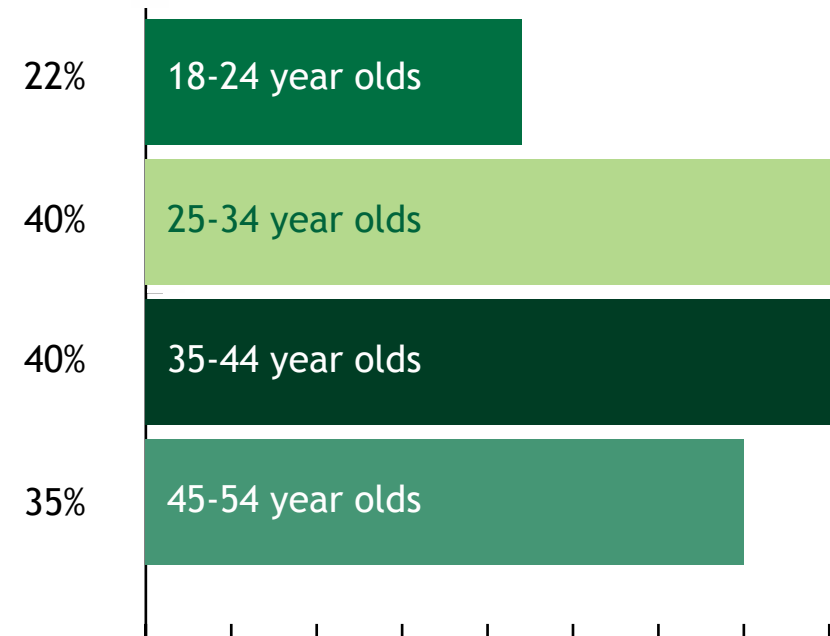
Just 22% of 18-24 year olds say they would definitely be willing for their data to be stored.

This compares to 40% of 25-34 and 35-44 year olds, and 35% of 45-54 year olds.

Recruiters could also face a future challenge when it comes to data in the form of incoming legislation aimed at protecting personal data.

While Europe's GDPR is not in force in the US, legislation will inevitably come in the future, and will fundamentally change how recruiters can store and use candidate information.

Would candidates be willing to have their data stored by recruitment companies for future use?



Rise of the recruitment robots


As recruitment technology continues to evolve, new communication methods are changing how recruiters can engage with candidates, especially in the early stages of the process.

Chat functions - including those powered by chatbots - have become increasingly popular and, according to this research, are something which candidates are ready to embrace as part of the recruitment process.

More than half (54%) of candidates say they would be happy to use live chat during the recruitment process. Speed of responses to basic questions is viewed as the biggest benefit of chat by 59% of candidates.

What is interesting about attitudes towards chatbots, is that many candidates expect the technology to be able to carry out multiple functions - some potentially harboring unrealistic expectations about what the technology can do for them.

58% of candidates expect live chat to answer questions quicker than a recruiter



Chatbots are clearly becoming more popular among candidates and this makes sense if you look at what chat functions are expected to do. Speed of response and getting basic information quickly is a key thing that candidates want, and this is what they see live chats as being able to offer them.

- Chris Wirt, Director of Sales - Eastern US and LATAM, DaXtra Technologies

48% of candidates expect live chat to be available when it's convenient for them

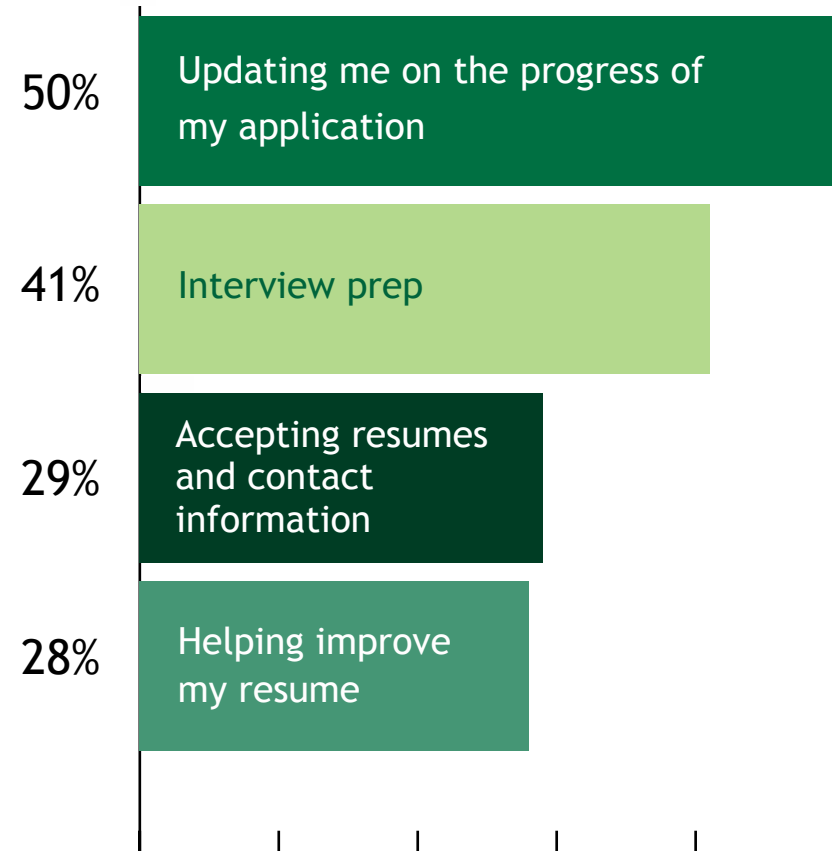
When it comes to the basic benefits that candidates expect to get from a chat function, 58% would expect the system to be able to answer questions quickly while 48% like the idea of having the chat available 24/7 to answer questions when it is convenient for them.

Others (23%) say they simply don't want to talk to a person during the initial stages of the recruitment process. This is particularly true of younger candidates (18-24), 31% of whom would prefer a chat function to an actual recruiter.

However, when it comes to more advanced functions, this is when some candidates are perhaps overestimating what a chat function can do for them.

For instance, while 52% expect a chat function to be able to provide them with basic job information, 41% would expect a chat function to be able to prep them for an interview, and 28% would even expect the function to help them improve their resume before submitting it.

Do we have unrealistic expectations of chat functions?



Conclusion

This research has identified some major gaps in the recruitment industry when it comes to the perception versus the reality - particularly when it comes to the end of job boards, and the use of LinkedIn.

Job boards have long been labelled as a dying medium for job searching, but it is clear from our findings that in reality, the opposite is true.

Candidates continue to rely on job boards just as they always have when looking for new employment, and this isn't likely to change anytime soon with younger candidates as willing to use job boards as older jobseekers.

With 20% of candidates in this survey having found their current job via a job board, and 40% stating they would turn to a job board first in the future, they clearly still have an important role to play.

That is in contrast to LinkedIn which, while becoming an essential tool for candidates to promote their “personal brand” is still not the main tool for job searching among candidates.

What is perhaps most surprising about the social platform, is the number of people who don't have an account at all - more than a quarter said they don't.

This survey has also highlighted some potential risks that recruiters are subjecting themselves to by failing to meet candidate expectations on communication, and job details during the recruitment process.

Many recruiters are on the verge of contacting candidates too often, a grave error given that candidates say they would ignore a recruiter deemed to be too persistent.

They are also failing to give candidates the information they expect about listed roles, particularly when it comes to salary, which candidates say is the most common missing detail - despite being the thing they most want to know.

With even the length of time it takes to fill out an application form impacting a candidate's willingness to apply for a job, anything that can be done to speed up and streamline the recruitment process should be a major focus of the industry.

What is clear from this report is that to attract the very best candidates, recruiters must step up to meet expectations when it comes providing job details, contacting candidates and speeding up the application process.



Methodology

This survey was conducted among 1015 knowledge workers and job seekers aged 18+, across five cities in the USA (Chicago, Dallas, New York, San Francisco and Washington D.C.).

The gender breakdown was 51% female and 49% male respondents in order to meet the requirements for a nationally representative sample of workers in the US.

Candidates were screened to determine their current job seeking activity and compiled into three groups:

- Actively seeking a new job
- Not actively seeking a new job but open to the right opportunity
- Not looking for a new job at all

As well as determining respondents' current job seeking activity, responses were also broken down by age and seniority of current roles from administration, through to junior, middle and senior management through to board of director level.

Interviews were conducted online by independent research company Sapio Research at the end of 2019 using an email invitation and an online survey.



About DaXtra

DaXtra Technologies is a world-leading specialist in high accuracy multilingual resume and job parsing, as well as semantic search, matching and aggregation technologies.

Since 2002, DaXtra has been at the forefront of innovative recruitment process automation solutions. Through our offices across Europe, USA and APAC, we support 2,500+ loyal clients who collectively process in excess of 100 million resumes each month. With 400+ ATS/CRM integrations available and the ability to parse documents in more than 40 languages, DaXtra is the software of choice for many multinational organizations, job boards, software vendors and recruitment firms alike.

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