



# How to improve the quality of job applications you receive

High-quality applications are essential to hiring top talent quickly. To help you understand what's preventing better applications, we've gathered insights from 624 recruiters and 1,009 jobseekers in the UK.

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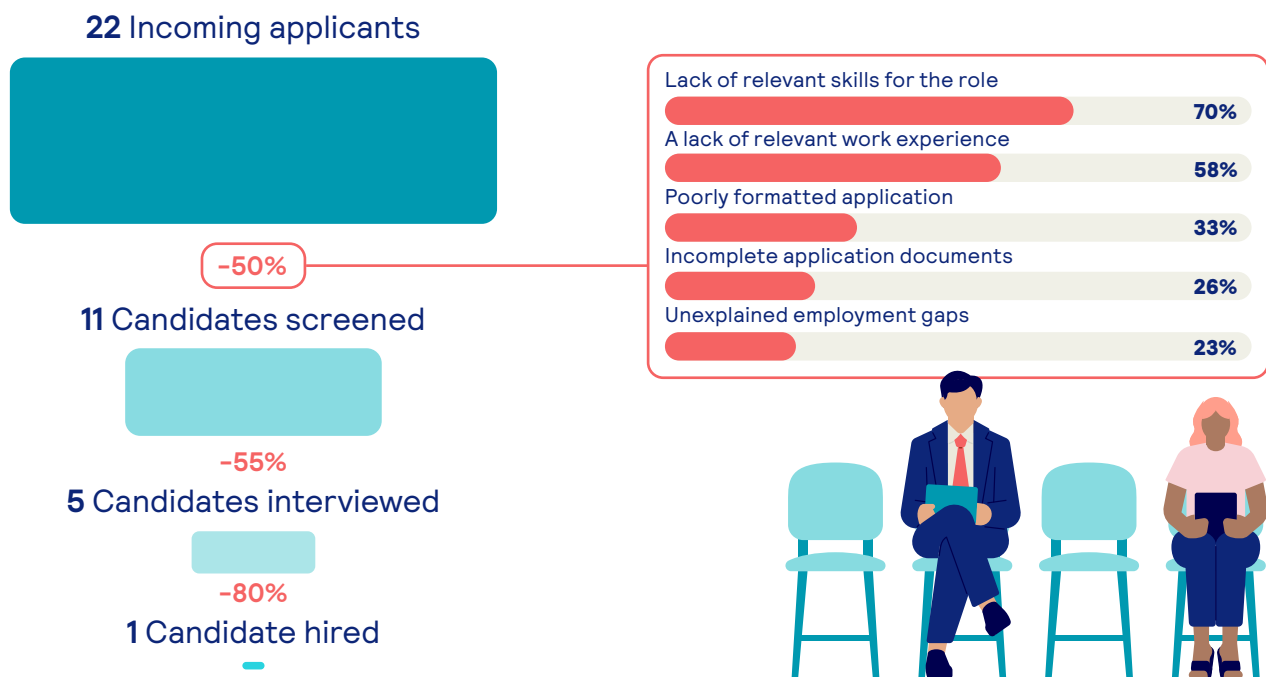
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# Less than **1 in 3** recruiters are happy with the quality of applications they receive

Poor-quality applications are a market-wide issue, with our research showing that just 30% of recruiters received high-quality applications for their most recent hire, leading to slower, more

resource-intensive hiring. Furthermore, as roles remain unfilled, businesses inevitably face a loss of productivity, added strain on existing staff, and rising costs.



## **Half of applications** don't make it to the first stage of hiring

Just 50% of candidates pass the first stage of hiring, highlighting the volume of low-quality applications recruiters contend with. A lack of relevant skills is the main reason for rejection, with formatting issues also hindering assessments.

Making the application process more user-friendly and accessible can help reduce incomplete or poorly formatted submissions. At the same time, certain filters, such as unexplained gaps in employment, may unintentionally introduce bias or lead recruiters to overlook otherwise well-suited candidates.

# 4 strategies to improve application quality

## 1. Define clear requirements from the start

Did you know that 23% of jobseekers will decline a job offer after an interview if expectations differ from those originally advertised? Setting clear, aligned expectations at the very beginning of the hiring process is critical to avoiding delays and attracting the desired quality of applicants.

For example, a dedicated two- to three-hour meeting between the Talent Acquisition team and the Hiring Manager is a great way to kick things off. These types of meetings allow for a deep dive into the role's responsibilities, must-have skills, and what success looks like in the position.

### Job profile must-haves:

- Main tasks
- Objectives
- Example projects
- Areas of responsibility
- Salary range
- Daily work routine & processes
- Soft skills
- Work experience

You can also go a step further and implement additional best practices that give recruiters more insight into the requirements of the position. For example:

**Invite them to team meetings to understand the dynamics and priorities of the role.**



**Offer job shadowing opportunities so they can observe the day-to-day firsthand.**



Wherever possible, provide recruiters with genuine, first-hand insights into what the role involves, helping define what's essential versus what's "nice to have."

The result? More targeted hiring, less wasted time, and a better experience for everyone involved.

## 2. Review the essential criteria for the role

Recruiters are often under pressure to identify the 'perfect candidate' quickly, which can lead to high expectations and rigid application requirements. While it's understandable to want the best match, this approach can unintentionally narrow the talent pool and cause strong candidates to be overlooked.

To stay competitive in today's hiring landscape, it's important to regularly reassess what's necessary for success in a role. That means distinguishing between qualifications that are essential to perform the job and those that are simply beneficial.

It's worth reflecting on what really matters. For instance, clear communication and proof of the right to work are understandably key. But requirements like experience at top-tier employers or lengthy tenure in previous roles can be exclusionary and may result in overlooking qualified candidates.

### Engaging cover letter

45% of recruiters still ask for cover letters. This deters 26% of candidates

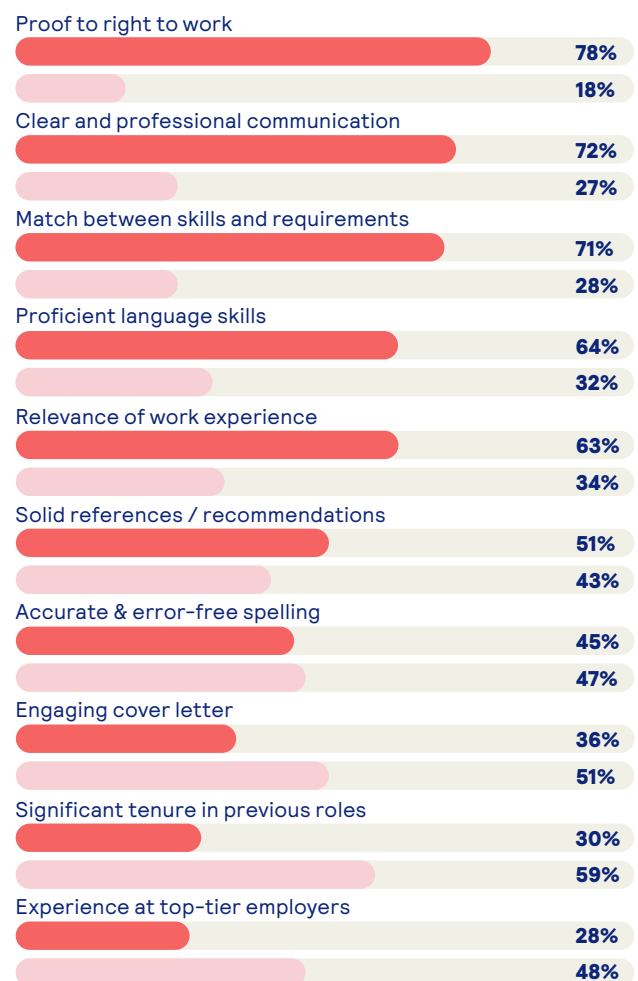
### Suggestion

Consider asking a few pre-screening questions with short answers instead of engaging cover letters

**40%**

of candidates feel uncertain about applying when job ads list too many essential requirements

### What do recruiters consider essential and beneficial?



■ Essential ■ Beneficial

### 3. Write clear and detailed job descriptions

We found that while 64% of recruiters rely on clear job descriptions to improve the quality of applications they receive, potential candidates are still experiencing uncertainty. In fact, 69% of jobseekers

say the expectations outlined in job ads were unclear during their most recent job search. What elements of your job adverts might be making top talent think twice before applying? Let's take a closer look.

#### Reasons for candidate uncertainty

The job ad is missing a salary range

44%

The job title is unclear

39%

Benefits on offer seem vague

29%

Little or no mention of career progression

28%

Lack of detailed competencies for the role

27%

Unsatisfactory description of work environment

25%

Previous research shows that nearly half (49%) of candidates choose not to apply for roles due to a lack of clarity in the job description. That's why crafting clear, compelling, and informative job ads is essential to attracting high-quality applications and streamlining the hiring process.

#### Best practices for clear job descriptions

**#1**

Use jargon-free language and a clear job title

**#2**

Where possible, include a salary range

**#3**

Highlight your organisation's values

**#4**

If applicable, include details of flexible working arrangements

**#5**

Clearly distinguish between essential and desirable skills and be specific

**#6**

Outline day-to-day responsibilities to give a realistic view of the role

Looking for further support? Check out our detailed guides to creating [job descriptions](#) and [job advertisements](#).

## 4. Use recruiting KPIs to identify potential obstacles

KPIs help recruiters spot issues in the hiring process, including job ad performance and candidate engagement.

By tracking key metrics, you can quickly identify what's working and what's not to make data-backed changes to improve reach and application quality.

Once problems have been identified, they need to be acted upon. So, let's explore the steps you can take to solve common challenges and improve the quality of your applications.



### KPIs in hiring

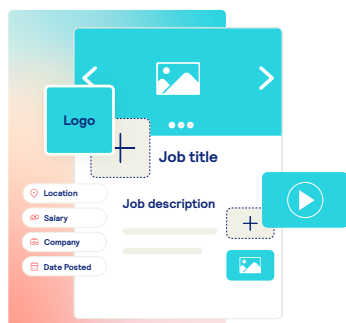
- Application confirmed
- Application interest
- Apply form open
- Listing views
- Impressions

Problem	Solution
The impressions of my job ad are low	<b>Ensure your job ad can be found by search engine algorithms:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Optimise your job title. 65% of candidates search by title (e.g. Software Engineer) and 20% by skill (e.g. JavaScript)</li></ul>
My job ad has a good number of impressions, but few listing views (the number of times someone clicks to view the full ad)	<b>Optimise the job title and opening lines of the ad:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Put the most important details first</li><li>• Include: qualifications, position, and area of responsibility (e.g. Junior Computer Scientist in Web Development)</li><li>• Specify location (particularly for smaller towns) e.g. "based in Reading"</li></ul>
My job ad is getting views, but application interest is low (i.e. few clicks)	<b>Ensure the ad is well-structured and covers key details candidates care about:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Salary range</li><li>• Requirements</li><li>• Benefits</li><li>• Flexible working arrangements</li><li>• Day-to-day responsibilities</li></ul>
The applications I receive don't match the required skills	<b>Revisit the job requirements in the advert:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• List separate essential and desirable skills</li><li>• Focus on five key soft and hard skills that can be easily demonstrated, for example, stakeholder management or leadership</li></ul>
Candidates click "apply" but drop out before submitting their complete form	Make sure your application process is user-friendly, and candidates can complete the process quickly, submitting the necessary information you need to assess applications

Learn more about KPIs in recruitment and how they can help boost application quality in our [dedicated article](#).



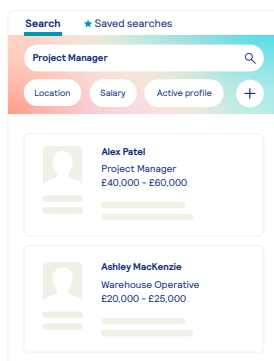
# Simply find the right talent for all jobs



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