

Trends in Recruiter Hiring

In a pool of dozens of applicants, what skills should a recruiter look for to secure the best match? Fresh data from our applicant assessment software can provide some answers.

The recruitment process is a complex event with many forces at play. In this edition of The Selection Quarterly, we dive into the candidate matching process of recruitment agencies. Using data from our applicant assessment software, we track characteristics that separate the agency recruiters that get hired from those that are not selected for the job. We thereby gain insights in the characteristics that truly matter for an agency recruiter.

The applicants in our sample fill out an online assessment, after which their candidate profile is shared with the hiring recruitment agency. This objective assessment eliminates any recruiter bias that might otherwise influence the hiring decision. Therefore, a hiring choice depends on objectively measured applicant characteristics, and we may credibly compare the applicants that get the job to those who do not.

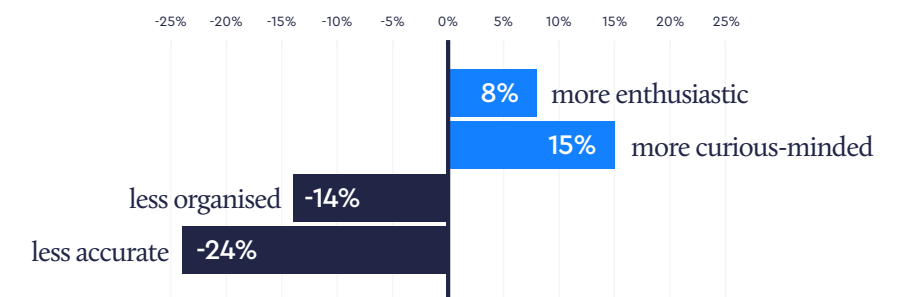


Recruiters Versus the Rest

Although the average hired applicant is more organised than the non-hired one, all recruiter applicants together are found to be 14% less organised and 24% less precise than applicants

from all industries combined in the data. On the other hand, exhibiting above-average levels of enthusiasm and curiosity certainly fits the nature of the recruiter role.

Compared to the average applicant (all industries), office recruiter applicants are:



Hired Applicants: The Survival of the Brightest

Intelligence, whether measured in abstract, numerical or verbal reasoning, is positively correlated with a hiring decision for our sample of recruiters. Looking at the data, the average hired recruiter scores 15 percent higher in abstract reasoning, 12 percent higher in verbal reasoning, and 16 percent

higher in total intelligence compared to the average non-hired candidate. When recruiting companies can objectively measure their applicants' intelligence, it appears that they are more likely to hire the more intelligent ones. Numerical intelligence, however, weighs the least in a positive hiring decision.

Hired recruiters score, on average:

Compared to applicants that are not selected.

15%

on abstract reasoning score



16%

on total intelligence score



8%

more organised



13%

more diligent



Beside intelligence, the data show that hired recruiters excel in a different set of skills than non-hired applicants.

Pride Meets
Recruiter Prejudice

Despite the above comparisons, the hired do not score higher on all measured characteristics. Our data show that hired recruiters have, on average, less self-confidence and a lower ability to manage stress. This fits the description of an 'insecure overachiever'. As an individual who consistently seeks to exceed expectations in search for more confidence, the insecure overachiever is like a gold mine to recruiters. The data provides evidence of recruiters favouring characteristics of insecure

overachievers in their recruitment practices. Alternatively, it could be that some competencies of the rejected applicants work against those valued by recruiters. For example, an abundance of self-confidence could suppress precision, honesty, or accountability, all found to increase the likelihood of a positive hiring decision. One need not be Jane Austen to know that too much pride comes with prejudice!

Personality test results for hired applicants show, on average:
Compared to non-hired recruiter applicants.



Summary

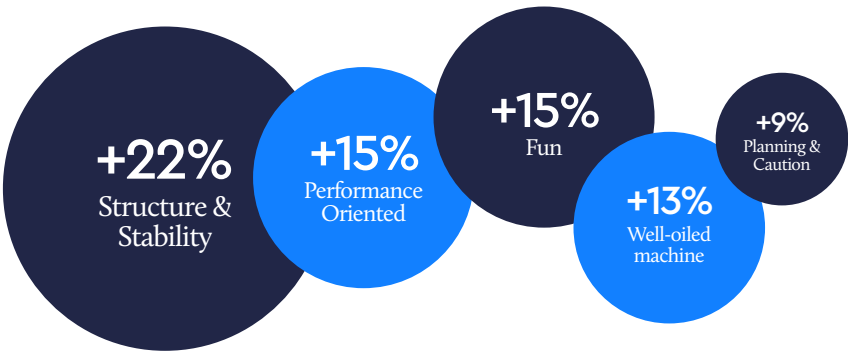
Our results portray interesting insights about the difference between hired and non-hired office recruiters. First, higher intelligence, measured in any metric, increases the likelihood of a hire. Second, hired recruiters are on average more organised and hard-working than non-hired applicants. Compared to all applicants in our data, however, recruiter applicants are slightly less organised and much less precise. Finally, hired recruiters score lower in self confidence and the ability to manage stress, making them most compatible with organisational cultures that work like a well-oiled machine.

In Sync, In Success:
The Importance of
Culture and Values
in the Recruitment
Process

The data unveil remarkable differences between the hired and non-hired applicants when it comes to their preferences about company culture. Hired recruiters seem to prefer stable, structured, and result-oriented cultures. Above that, they also value fun as a part of their job 15% more than the average non-hired

applicants. Consequently, the hired are 13% more compatible with a culture that functions like a "well-oiled machine". A company that operates smoothly and in which colleagues are well-coordinated with each others' activities, it seems just fit with the applicants that are in general more organised, diligent, and precise.

Organisational cultures that appeal to hired
recruiters in the data





Our Research

The Case for Hiring *Curious* Recruiters

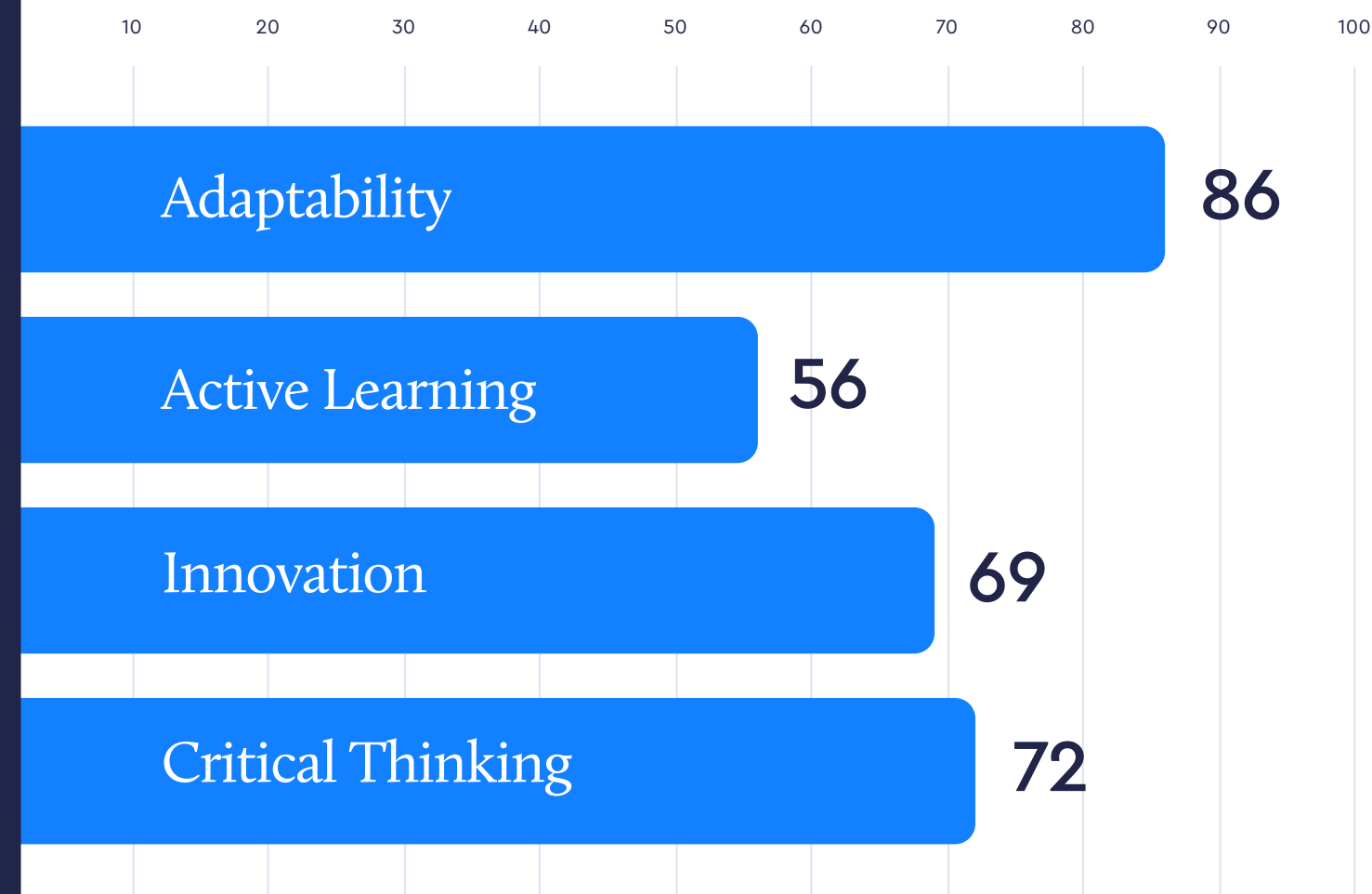
“I have no special talent. I am only passionately curious”

Albert Einstein

According to the current market outlook, passionate curiosity is on the rise, at least when it comes to recruitment. We dove into the trends in agency recruiter hiring. Here's why it pays off to hire curious recruiters.

Our client data show that recruiter applicants are **15% more curious than the average applicant across industries**. This curiosity has the power to enhance adaptability to new challenges. Moreover, recruiters who embrace curiosity are better equipped to understand diverse perspectives, and improve their overall effectiveness at work.

Essential skills associated with agency recruiters:



*average self-reported importance

Source: O*NET

Curious recruiters embrace the growth mindset

In a 2023 contribution to Forbes, the futurist Bernard Marr calls curiosity the essential future skill “that everyone must nurture”. Curiosity is the driving force that sparks critical thinkers, innovators, and active learners. These three skills are all among the top skills associated with agency recruiters, at least according to the U.S. portal for occupational information, O*NET.

According to Marr, curiosity is a key ingredient of what the psychologist Carol Dweck coined as the

growth mindset. Individuals with a growth mindset see challenges as opportunities to learn and possible mistakes as a necessary part of the learning process. This has many implications to recruitment. From sourcing the right talent to navigating the newest technologies, recruiters often face complex problems. A growth mindset fosters a problem-solving attitude, encouraging recruiters to approach challenges with a focus on learning and innovation. Dweck's philosophy sounds awfully lot like that of Einstein, does it not?

Curious recruiters are more open-minded

An important responsibility of recruiters is to ensure equal opportunity in the recruitment process. "Ensuring gender equality in the workplace" and "supporting the employability of people with disabilities" are listed as essential skills for recruitment consultants in the European Classification of Skills, Competencies, and Occupations (ESCO). According to a report by Workable, good recruiters keep an open mind. Standing for diversity makes a recruiter stand out.

When it comes to the pursuit of fair hiring, curiosity can help challenge active biases. Curious recruiters may push for a passionate candidate who is fit for the team but whose background would not support a hire. Curiosity about different perspectives and backgrounds contributes to building more robust and innovative teams.

Curious recruiters are highly adaptable

Research has demonstrated a clear link between knowledge-seeking curiosity, workplace learning and higher job performance. In today's context, curious recruiters are more likely to explore new technologies and tools to enhance efficient sourcing and screening. Adapting to the opportunities of recent AI tools, for one, can prove major advances in the efficiency and job performance of any recruiter.

Adaptability is among the top ten essential recruiter skills as per O*NET, and can sometimes be measured even before a candidate is hired. Instead of asking a candidate about their past performance, the venture investor Natalie Fratto proposes, one should present them with "what if" scenarios.

Such questions measure the candidate's ability to think outside of the box, a skill that passionately curious, knowledge-hungry individuals are more likely to master.

What if you're assigned to recruit for a niche industry you're not familiar with?

What if a key client suddenly changes their hiring criteria?

What if a critical team member unexpectedly resigns in the middle of a project?

What if you're managing a high-volume recruitment project with tight deadlines, and a personal emergency arises?



In Conclusion

Curious recruiters are simply *better* recruiters

At the end of the day, it would be wrong to claim that Einstein had no special talents beyond curiosity. Similarly, curiosity is not the only important trait in the job market. Yet it is a critical one. From the insights discussed above, we learn that by sourcing curious candidates, recruitment agencies can support the growth mindset, enable adaptability, and support equal opportunity within their organisation.