The Broken Promises of Recruiting Technology

Unleashing the potential of recruiting teams and jobseekers

Technology can put stars in the eyes of people with tough business problems to solve. They imagine the automation of menial tasks, time freed up for more valuable projects, easier access to high-quality data, and the insights that will help them make better decisions. The possibilities are endless.

Solutions designed to replace tasks done by people have left an imprint on almost every industry they've touched, including recruiting. Thanks to technology, hirers have more tools at their disposal than ever to source, interview, and onboard top-tier talent.

In theory. While technology can be an asset in hiring, it's not a comprehensive fix to the age-old problems faced by anyone trying to fill a job opening with quality candidates.

Hiring was and continues to be an art, an inexact science at best. It's time-intensive, costly, and there aren't any guarantees that you'll get it right on the first, second, or even third attempt. Artificial intelligence (AI) technology has changed none of that. Some staffing professionals feel like the promises made by AI recruiting software have been overplayed.

Even with the proliferation and adoption of recruiting tools, the job of recruiters hasn't gotten much easier. Unsuccessful hires still occur — and they can cost companies about 30% of that position's first-year salary, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

Look at the struggles experienced by Amazon, which created a recruiting engine designed to find the best new employees in the least amount of time. Developers tested and tweaked the technology for almost a year, only to realize one significant problem: The system unknowingly taught itself gender bias. The dream of totally automating the recruiting and hiring process turned out to be more difficult to realize than imagined.

The fact is that improved hiring solutions haven't fixed the numerous struggles faced by recruiters (e.g., sourcing talent) or job seekers (e.g., connecting with companies that have openings). Hiring departments haven't seen their bandwidth lightened thanks to technology to the extent they were promised, leaving many to wonder what's holding it back.

That doesn't mean we should stop trying, though. Technology is a hiring asset, but

recruiters and candidates are — first and fore-most — people. The sooner a people-first mind-set drives recruiting technology, the faster we'll realize the promise in those solutions.

The disconnect: Recruiters and tech

On paper, building an efficient and modern re-cruiting tech stack sounds like a hiring team's dream. A LinkedIn study found that 68% of recruiters think their efforts will improve in the next five years if they continue to invest in hiring technology.

But that doesn't mean the technology arrives without its share of hurdles to overcome. As more advanced recruiting technologies become available, recruiters still face these challenges:

Multiple job sources, mounting fees:

One promise of recruiting technology is that finding candidates from the entire universe of talent would become simpler and less expen-sive. But in large part, recruiters continue to look where they always have, find the same candidates they always could, and pay even more than they once did.

Qualified candidates typically reveal them-selves when a wide net is cast, meaning recruiters have to subscribe to several job boards and a few other outlets to deepen their pool. But if a couple of those sources pan out consistently, the instinct is to stick with what works and disregard the rest.

At least until recently. In 2021,the "Great Resig-nation" and so many workers getting pickier about the jobs they'll take, a recruiter has to get creative about finding applicants. Depending on a handful of dominant job sources is no longer enough. The perfect candidate might not bother to keep their job profile updated, or they might be most visible on specialized pro-fessional networking sites. But broadening the search can be time-consuming and expensive, particularly when each site includes its own fees and posting process.
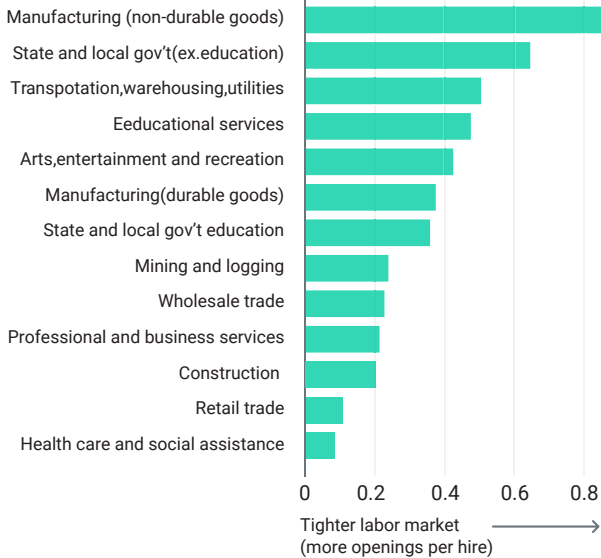

The Great Resignation continues a decade-long trend
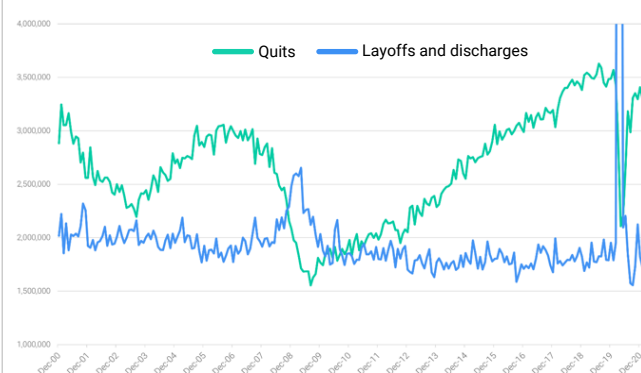
Moreover, many of today's most in-demand industries (e.g., manufacturing, transportation, and hospitality) aren't always well-represented on the big career networking sites. Recruiting technology needs to play a bigger role in identifying where these candidates can be found so recruiters can meet this talent where it is.

Industries that have stepped up the search for workers

April 2021 job openings per hire, change from pre-pandemic average

Industry	
Manufacturing (non-durable goods)	
State and local gov't(ex.education)	
Transpotation,warehousing,utilities	
Eeducational services	
Arts,entertainment and recreation	
Manufacturing(durable goods)	
State and local gov't education	
Mining and logging	
Wholesale trade	
Professional and business services	
Construction	
Retail trade	
Health care and social assistance	

0   0.2   0.4   0.6   0.8

Tighter labor market →
(more openings per hire)

Note: Each month's hires are compared to the prior month's openings; seasonally adjusted
Source: Bureau of Labour Statistics

If recruiting technology were built to truly meet the needs of recruiters, it would support services that aggregate multiple job sources, big and small, and allow recruiters to easily engage them from one interface. Separate fees could be rolled into the aggregator's fee — or offered as premium add-ons to the core service.

More sources lead to more money spent, naturally. That cost is worth it when you consider that a diverse and varied talent pool will give recruiters what they need to make an ideal hire.

As such, investing in recruiting technology becomes a matter of demonstrating ROI for the individual hiring company. Do all of these boards, sites, and platforms you're investing in give you the most recruiting bang for your buck? Recruiting technology should include metrics that quantify a recruiter's success with individual job sources, allowing them to adjust their sourcing strategy to optimize success.

Delivering impartial results:

One advantage often looked at regarding hiring tech — especially for AI — is the idea that the recruiter's pipeline will be filled objectively from all available sources. But partiality can show its face in other ways.

Are job sites focused on giving their users exposure to large numbers of open jobs, or do they try to help recruiters target the best candidates? The fact that some big sites don't do much in the way of filtering candidates should give us a clue. As should the ubiquity of "one-click apply," which can result in hundreds of unqualified applicants for the recruiter to sift through.

Recruiters can look at the results pulled by their tech and see all kinds of biases. Jobs posted through a partnership or specific sourcing system run the risk of providing skewed results that showcase the candidates a platform happens to have available. If a platform or source isn't presenting the best, brightest, and bias-free candidates, is it really worth the investment?

Marrying job descriptions to people:

The biggest promise of recruiting technology is that AI could quickly and intelligently automate the matching of job requirements to available talent, so recruiters would only see qualified candidates in their feed.

Among all the promises, this is probably the one best kept. Instead of starting with a blank slate, recruiters can quickly fill their pipeline with reasonably qualified candidates. But let's look behind the curtain and see what's usually happening.

Traditional AI sourcing is limited to matching keywords in job descriptions to those in résumés, and the results often showcase a chasm between who the tech recommends and who the human recruiter would choose. What's missing is the intelligence to match jobs to more comprehensive profiles of candidates who could fill those roles successfully. What are the "must-have" skills, and where might the hirer be willing to offer training? Based on past employee behavior, which candidates might be most willing to change jobs? Which candidates have demonstrated steady growth in responsibilities and job titles, meaning they might be more successful long-term hires? Smarter AI matches a multifaceted profile of the ideal employee to candidates — not just keywords to other keywords.

> "
> *If you're using a 'matching' algorithm that is nothing more than a word-for-word match (technology that's been around for 30 years), you're not assessing tone, personality or soft skills. If you're using sentiment analysis, the resume is one of the worst docs for assessing tone and personality. People are hired for personality; often fired for their people skills. Beware. People dialogue matters.* "
>
> *Joanne Markow, Forbes Magazine*

A deeper analysis — and a human touch — is increasingly important because job seekers are becoming skilled at writing job descriptions that appeal specifically to [AI systems.](#) Being smart enough to game the AI system is impressive, but it doesn't necessarily mean the candidate will be successful in the job.

This is where the human element has to split the difference. While an AI matching algorithm can sift through thousands of résumés and look for the keywords that align with an opening, [the system is assessing hard skills rather than soft ones](#). When the latter is lacking instead of the former, that's when positions struggle to stay filled. A seasoned recruiter can easily spot these tactics, and an AI sourcing system that applies deeper intelligence to go beyond keyword matching can help flag them before they reach the recruiter.

Misaligned tech stacks:

Many recruiting solutions were marketed as the tool that can do it all. But look at any sophisticated HR department or staffing agency, and you're more likely to see multiple technologies cobbled together — often not speaking to each other.

Applicant tracking, sourcing, communication, and other tasks are critical to hiring, but their respective technologies often don't work together. And if they don't work together, their respective functions don't complement one another. That lack of coordination leaves

recruiters scrambling to get their tech on the same page to ensure optimal candidates are targeted, managed, and engaged from beginning to end.

A lot of recruiting organizations today are feeling technology fatigue. The last thing they want is another technology, with its own integration challenges, training demands, and impact on existing hiring processes.

Lacking DEI prioritization:

According to LinkedIn, diversity is a top hiring pursuit for 78% of companies. It's a priority for companies, and it should be a priority for any technology those companies use.
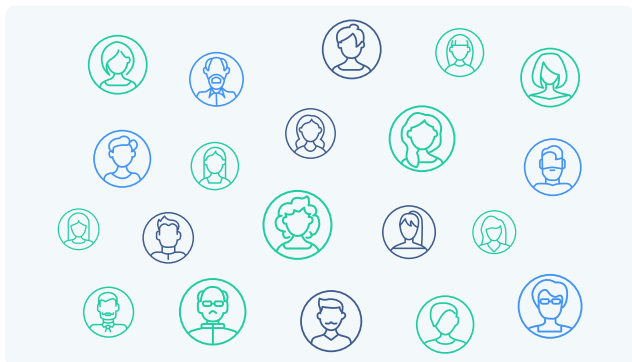
But with AI recruiting technology and AI in its infancy, many are still questioning that promise to minimize bias and actively promote DEI objectives. Why? To paraphrase a recent exploration of the subject by PBS, peoples' inherent biases are seeping into the technology. There is reported anti-black bias within AI recruiting, and more data is needed to turn the technology from a supplementary tool to one that's integral to each step of the sourcing, engagement, and hiring process.

Luckily, premium job sources are emerging that focus on presenting candidates who can help with DEI goals. But so far, these job sources aren't well integrated into general sourcing solutions; they're simply another source that has to be paid for, searched, and monitored separately. The sources can thrive if they're brought into the recruiting mainstream, and technology can help integrate them into recruiter workflows.

These are the issues recruiters continue to face with regard to hiring technology. And if hirers struggle to maximize the potential of recruiting platforms, candidates likely have similar experiences.

The disconnect: Job seekers and tech

While recruiting technology promised to make it easier for recruiters to fill open positions, the big job sites promised to make it simpler for people to find jobs.

It is easier these days. Job seekers can post to one or two of the big sites and be seen by a lot of companies. They can apply to most jobs with a simple click. And they can view a lot of open jobs that match their skills, experience, and location. But candidates — much like recruiters — are people first, which means hiring technology falls short for them on occasion. There is still plenty of work to be done.

Overwhelmed with opportunities:

Have you ever signed up to receive job alerts from a major job site? You'll certainly get them!

Your inbox will be flooded with jobs. But how many of them are actually good matches?

Just as simple AI keyword matching overwhelms recruiters with irrelevant candidates, this system can overwhelm job seekers. They might receive so many irrelevant job alerts that they begin to tune out and miss the real opportunities.
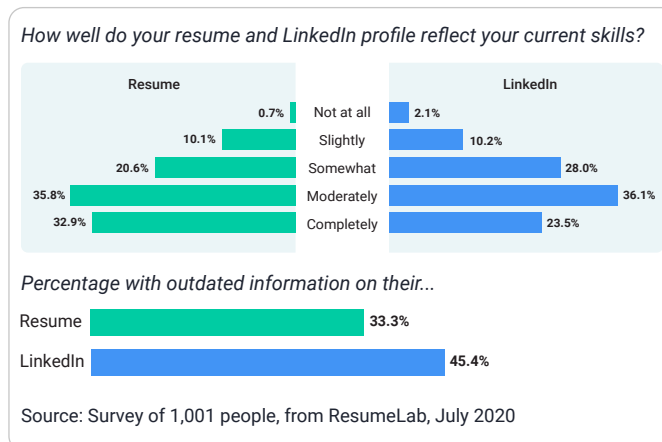
The challenge here is to apply smarter AI not only to the candidates recruiters see but also to the opportunities job seekers see. More comprehensive job profiles — coupled with more representative candidate profiles — could smooth recruiting for hirers as well as job seekers.

Maintaining multiple online presences:

There are more than 770 million people on LinkedIn! With that kind of saturation, it would be easy for most companies to accept those profiles as a universal résumé of sorts, but that's not the case. Many of those 770 million users also have profiles on Workable, Indeed, Monster, and other sites. Beyond those websites, people also have traditional résumés saved to their hard drives.

All of these profiles need to stay relevant and polished, but that's not always possible. After all, it's a ton of work to keep all of these profiles established and updated. Consistency, however, would allow every company to have access to the same information and use technology to

make consistent candidate choices driven by data.

How well do your resume and LinkedIn profile reflect your current skills?

	Resume		LinkedIn
Not at all	0.7%		2.1%
Slightly	10.1%		10.2%
Somewhat	20.6%		28.0%
Moderately	35.8%		36.1%
Completely	32.9%		23.5%

Percentage with outdated information on their...

Resume	33.3%
LinkedIn	45.4%

Source: Survey of 1,001 people, from ResumeLab, July 2020

Engaging with virtual hiring solutions:

If there's unrealized promise in AI recruiting technology, that could be because applicants are hesitant to buy in. A Yoh study revealed that 89% of Americans between the ages of 18 and 34 aren't comfortable with AI solutions in the candidate screening process, with 88% of applicants older than 35 saying the same.

Video interviews, personality assessments, and other new facets of the candidate experience — while convenient — can create some discomfort. Recruitment marketing expert Shelley Billinghurst says this about video interviews:

> " *Candidates can feel like they're on some sort of display – literally up on a screen in an office at a remote location being made to perform. Picturing someone putting your video reply in slow motion, reverse, fast forward – analyzing the number of times you blink. It's not exactly comforting.* "
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> *Why Video Interviewing is Simply a Bad Idea LinkedIn June 20, 2017*

Some candidates are leery of video interviews because of the lack of in-person connection and the potential for technological disruptions. And while personality tests like Meyers-Brigg and Enneagram can be helpful, they aren't all-the-way accurate. Apprehension in these tools can inject anxiety and suspicion into the job search, which isn't good for anyone.

The folly of stuffing résumés with keywords:

"Great communicator." "Organized." "X years of experience." "Self-starter." These are the kinds of buzzwords you'll see littered throughout résumés that candidates hope will draw attention from hirers.

But that doesn't make it any easier to stand out in a crowded talent pool. Too many irrelevant keywords and not enough distinctive ones might get you past the AI system, but you won't make any headway with actual humans trying to pinpoint great candidates.

Applying into a black hole:

Even with the availability of candidate engagement technology, more candidates are completely ignored by the hirer. An Indeed study found that 77% of candidates claim they've been "ghosted" after an interview, with 10% saying communication stopped even after a verbal job offer.

At a time when so many recruiting processes are automated — and quality candidates are so hard to find — there's no excuse for this.

Candidate engagement technology makes it relatively easy to reply to every applicant with at least a form letter, though it must be integrated into daily workflows. A ghosted candidate unsuited for one job might not consider the next offer — even if the role is a perfect fit.

The future: Find recruiting technology's next gear

There are people on both sides of the hiring process. As recruiting technology evolves and improves, part of that maturation involves resolving to put the heart of recruiting — the people — at the heart of hiring technology.

A TribePad study says it all: About 42% of survey respondents think technology dehumanizes hiring. The next generation of recruiting technology has the opportunity to be people-focused and tap into the entire universe of talent for recruiters.

Here's how to get there:

1. Put people at the top of your tech stack. Recruiting technology should focus on empowering recruiters rather than replacing them. Empower your team members to do what they do best: finding and developing ideal candidates both inside and outside of your company. Work to their strengths, allowing them to use the technology in the right way to bring the best candidates to the surface.

2. Build one doorway to the entire universe of talent. There's a wide universe of talent out

there, but everyone's stuck on their own planet. Be wary of becoming dependent on just the top job sources, or you'll be searching the same sources everyone else uses. This doorway needs to aggregate niche job sources as well as the dominant job boards, provide the tools to source candidates in support of a company's DEI initiatives — or with specialized credentials and skills — and lend a hand in sorting through profiles to deliver great candidates to recruiting professionals.

3. Meet candidates where they are. There is a need for impartial brokers who connect recruiters to candidates from the entire universe of talent, wherever they may be. Embrace technology that allows recruiters to enter requirements and specifications once to yield a qualified list of candidates.

4. Choose technology that's part of an open ecosystem. The use of open interfaces and application protocol interfaces (APIs) should enable recruiting organizations to easily integrate point solutions to specific needs into existing systems. Recruiters shouldn't have to rip and replace technology to get what they need.

5. Standardize job and talent information. Every résumé doesn't need to be as unique as a snowflake. Writing job descriptions does not need to be a crushing task for recruiters and hiring managers. Standardizing and simplifying how we capture and communicate skills, experience, and job requirements could help our automated systems work together and deliver better results.

Help recruiting be all it can be

There's a huge gap between the dreams of data scientists and the reality of a recruiter's day-to-day life. It's time to bridge that divide by building technology that helps recruiters and job seekers navigate common challenges.

With the countless promises made, kept, and broken by recruiting tech, we must always remember what we're really trying to do: automate repetitive tasks, automate repetitive tasks, lower the cost of finding better candidates, and free people to handle the very human job of engaging each other, building relationships, and becoming tomorrow's workforce.

About Leoforce

At Leoforce, our focus is singular: to deliver technology that unleashes the People Intelligence on the recruiting team. Our people-first AI recruiting solutions help companies tap into the complete, diverse "universe of talent" quickly and efficiently. Enterprises, staffing agencies, and growing businesses can use Arya People Intelligence to connect with a talented and global pool of applicants ready to help companies thrive.