

INSIDE THE CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

2023 REPORT

The Hard Truth About Candidate
Expectations vs Candidate Experience
Realities



FOREWORD

In 2010, we conducted research into the candidate experience and found that just 5% of candidates rate their experience as excellent. So, where are we 12 years on?

PeopleScout's latest research shows that the number of candidates rating their experience as excellent has gone up, but at less than two in 10 candidates, it's not exactly a resounding improvement.

In the past, candidates spent an average of three to four hours preparing and submitting one job application. Today's candidates are fed up with investing their time and effort into the candidate journey, only to receive no follow-up, no feedback, or worse, no acknowledgment. They're showing us this frustration through a rise in ghosting and candidate drop-off. Candidates know their value in this competitive hiring market, and they're holding employers accountable.

Technology, social media and consumer experiences driven by Amazon and other pioneering retailers have changed what candidates expect. They want seamless, fast, digital experiences that they can access on their mobile devices. If they can't find the information they want, in the way they want to consume it, they just won't apply. They need to know that applying to your organization is worth their time and effort *before* they'll take that step.

There's a lot of talk about the candidate experience, and most of the talent leaders I speak to seem to understand the importance of improving how they engage with job seekers. Yet, this research report shows there's more for organizations to do to meet the expectations of today's candidates.

My hope is that this serves as a rallying cry for the recruitment space, motivating talent acquisition teams to be bold in their candidate experience efforts and accelerate the path to improvement.



FROM NOW TO NEXT,

SIMON WRIGHT

global head of talent advisory consulting

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INTRODUCTION

Our modern world is one of instant gratification and convenience. We ask Alexa to turn on our favorite playlist, receive suggestions for movies based on our viewing history, and skip the queue at our favourite coffee place using an app to order before we arrive.

As consumers, our expectations are soaring. We demand that brands deliver seamless, intuitive and personalized experiences to keep us engaged. In the fight for talent, the same rules apply.

The current competition in the labor market and the increased demand for both diverse talent and digital skills means that coveted candidates have more options than ever before. They can afford to be picky, holding out for the employer that engages and inspires them during the recruitment process.

The candidate experience has never been more important. Yet, this latest research from PeopleScout shows that less than two in 10 candidates would rate their recent recruitment experience as excellent.

For our research, we audited the candidate journey of over 215 organizations around the world through our propriety Candidate Experience Diagnostic. We've compared this with data gathered via a survey of over 2,400 job seekers globally.

The results show a clear disparity between candidate expectations and the reality they encounter while searching for jobs, gathering information to support their decision, and applying. We believe the employers that close this gap will have a clear advantage in winning top talent.

THE ECONOMICS OF EXPERIENCE

52%

of organizations that prioritize candidate experience saw [increases in revenue](#) of 10% or more.

\$5.4 MILLION

Virgin Media found poor candidate experience was [costing](#) them \$5.4 million USD a year in cancelled subscriptions.

78%

of candidates say the overall candidate experience they get is an indicator of [how a company values its people](#).

70%

Organizations that invest in a strong candidate experience improve their [quality-of-hire](#) by 70%.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this research is to provide an objective overview of the current state of global candidate experience at some of the world's largest companies. We conducted the research for this report in two stages.

First, we performed our propriety Candidate Experience Diagnostic on the candidate journey of over 215 organizations across the globe. Looking through the lens of the candidate, we applied for jobs at each organization and scored the experience, focusing on the pre-interview stages of Awareness, Consideration, Activation, Application and Engagement. Each organization was given a score (the higher the better) called the Candidate Experience Quotient, **CandidateXQ**, a calculation taking into account 40 key experience indicators, including 15 critical factors that make or break the candidate experience, which we have identified from working with hundreds of clients. When these elements are missing, they have a seriously detrimental effect on a company's ability to attract talent.

40
key experience
indicators

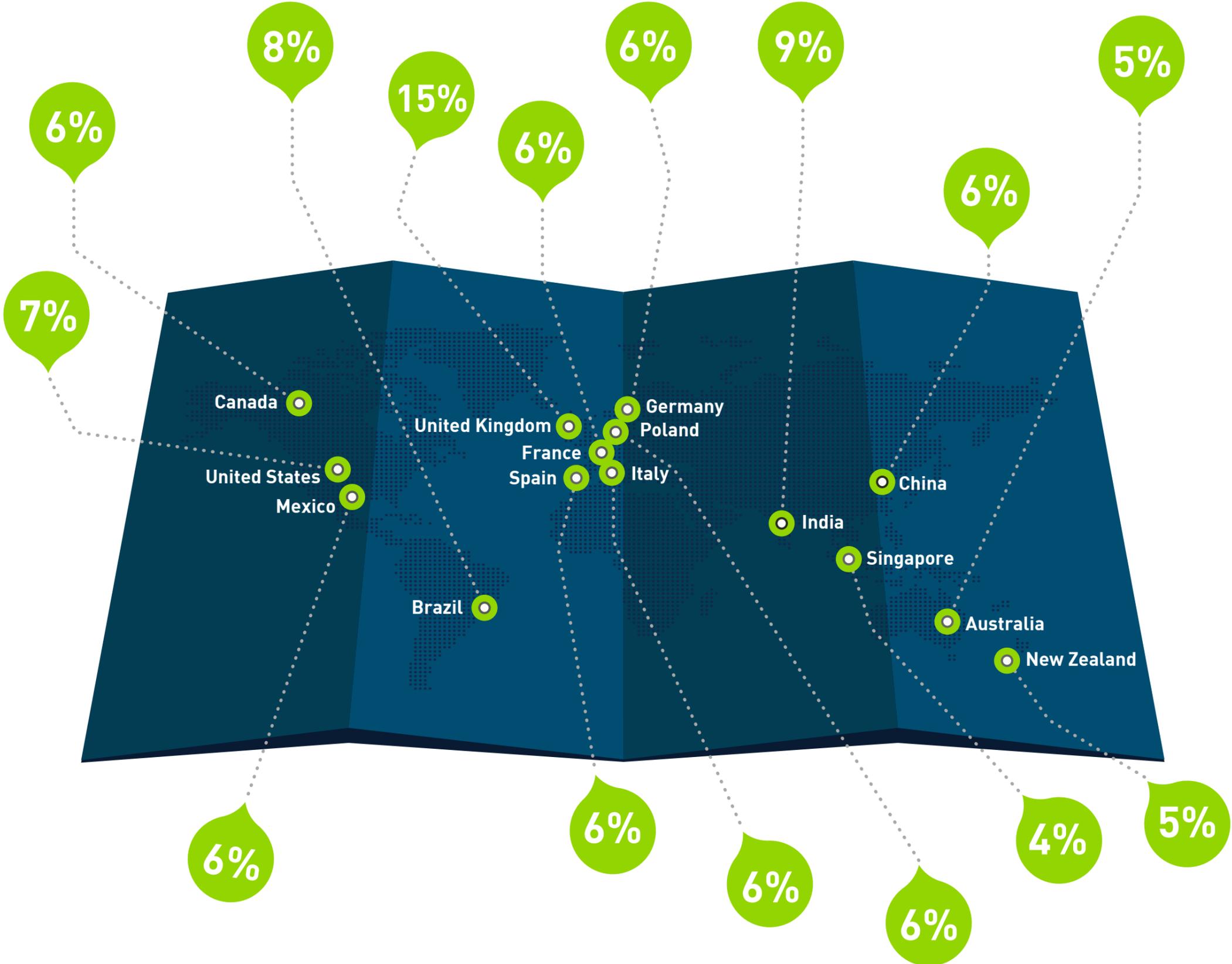


15
critical
factors

The second stage of our research was conducted via a global survey of over 2,400 individuals who have applied for a job in the last 12 months and/or would consider applying for a job in the next 12 months.

GLOBAL SURVEY

These candidates are distributed across Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Mexico, New Zealand, Poland, Singapore, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States.



KEY FINDINGS



Less than 2 in 10 candidates would rate their recent recruitment experience as excellent. Candidates in EMEA are half as likely to rate their experience as excellent than those in other regions.



2/3 of candidates use social media to research companies during their job search. Yet, a third of employers are not posting career related content to their social channels at least once a week.

Word of mouth is still an important source for job seekers with 57% saying they've asked friends and colleagues about an employer.



35%

of organizations don't feature real employees on their career site.



Less than half of employers show information about the organization's mission, purpose or values on the career site. Yet, they're the top three considerations for applicants when deciding to apply.



Only 13% of employers offer candidates the opportunity to speak to a recruiter or current employee before applying.



Only half of organizations provide an opportunity for candidates to register their interest or to sign up for job alerts.

30%

Only 30% of employers clearly stated that adjustments were available for candidates with disabilities prior to starting an application.



Less than half of employers are taking advantage of a one-click application tool, and only 1 in 10 provided information to candidates explaining what they should expect during the application process.

Less than 2 in 10 employers provided candidates with details on the next steps in the recruitment process after applying.



Nearly half (48%) of candidates did not receive feedback on their last application. Of those who did receive feedback, 38% stated the comments they received were not useful.

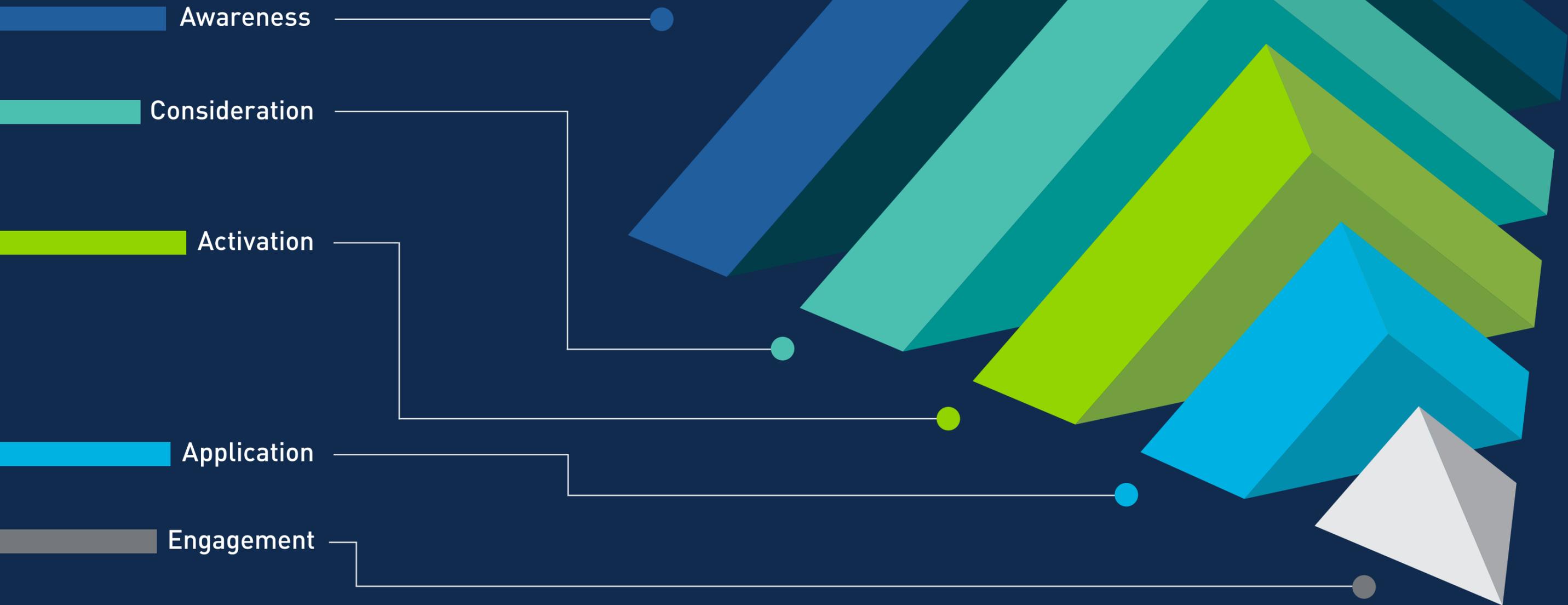


44% of organizations did not provide an opportunity for candidates to give feedback on their experience.

Men are more likely than women to be aware of opportunities to give and receive feedback during the recruitment process.



THE CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE: EXPECTATIONS VS REALITY



AWARENESS

Is recruitment content relevant and easily available?

AWARENESS

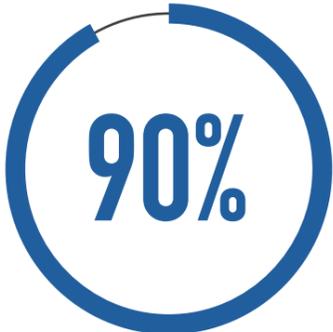
CONSIDERATION

ACTIVATION

APPLICATION

ENGAGEMENT

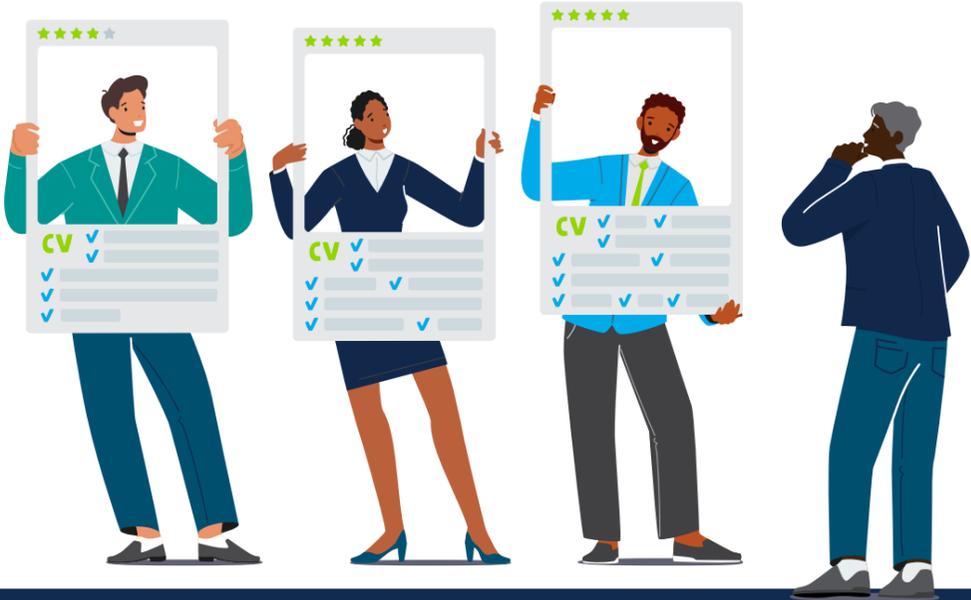
Average CandidateXQ score for the Awareness stage:



Job openings have grown by a third since 2019, yet job seekers per opening have [fallen by half](#). In this tight labor market, organizations must find bold new ways to stand out and catch the attention of candidates.

CANDIDATE EXPECTATIONS

Search engines, like Google, and social media are the top job search tools used by candidates across the world.



HOW CANDIDATES FIND JOB OPENINGS



Search engines (i.e., Google)



Social media (i.e., LinkedIn)



Job boards (i.e., Indeed)



Company websites



Personal or professional network



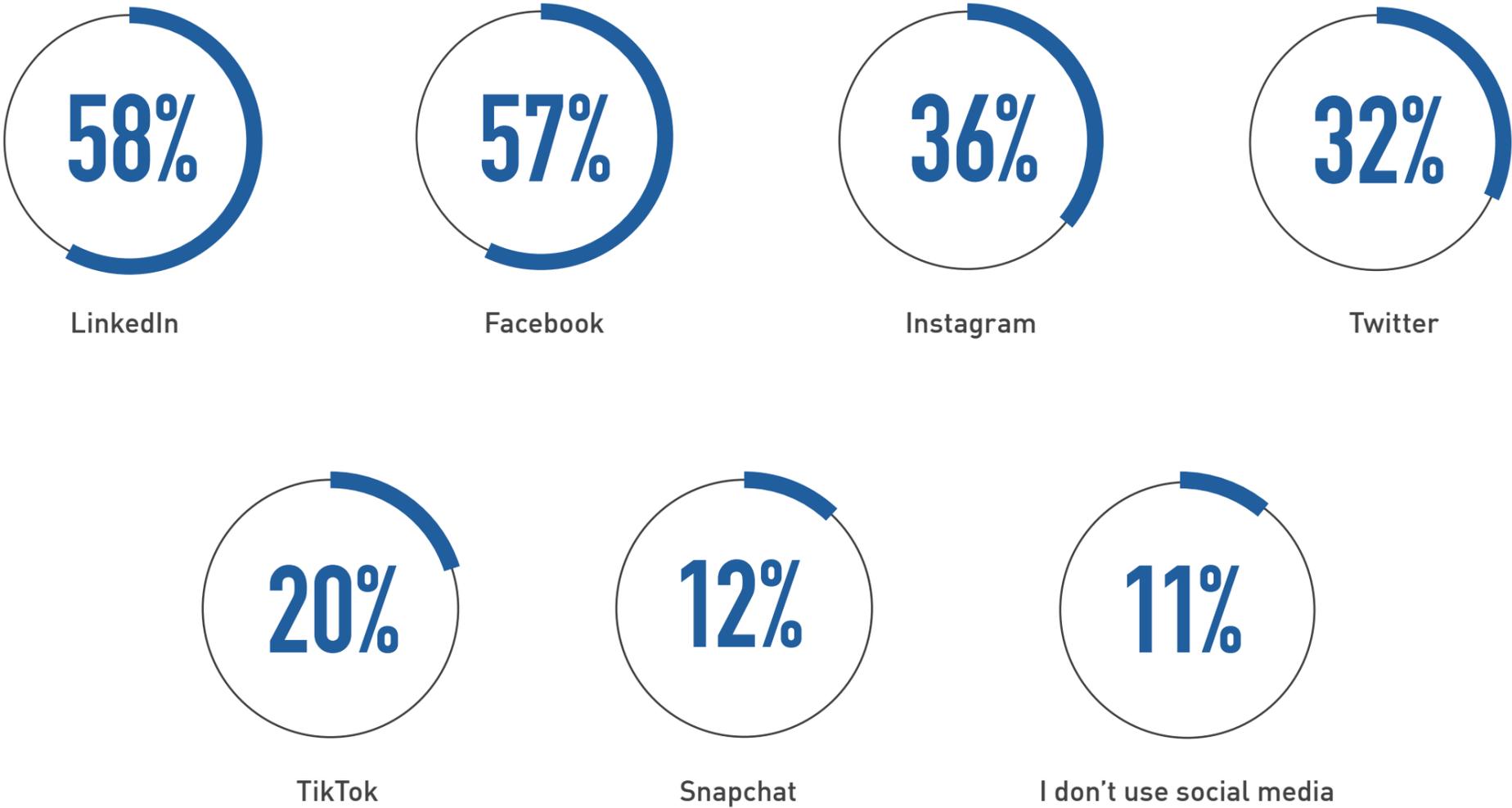
Review sites (i.e., Glassdoor)

In North and South America, search engines are the top-rated search tool overall, but women prefer social media. Facebook and LinkedIn are the favored social networks globally for finding a job.

That said, 42% of the candidates we surveyed said they don't use LinkedIn at all and 45% said they don't use Facebook. Of candidates not using LinkedIn or Facebook in their job search, a third said did they still use social media in their search—favoring Instagram.

- AWARENESS
- CONSIDERATION
- ACTIVATION
- APPLICATION
- ENGAGEMENT

TOP SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS FOR JOB SEARCH



REALITY

The Awareness stage was the highest scoring area for the organizations we evaluated.

Employers rank well for search terms related to their brand name, but don't fare as well when it comes to searches related to job titles or locations. However, nearly a quarter of organizations (22%) don't appear in the Google for Jobs listings when searching by location and job title, such as "IT jobs in Cincinnati."

However, career-related content (above and beyond job listings) on social media shows room for improvement. This was one of the lowest scoring factors in the Awareness stage across all industries.

CLOSING THE GAP

Making Yourself Findable

Mastering online search is not just about showing up when a candidate searches for "careers at Company Name." Would your organization show up in the top results for "jobs in Paris" or "remote accounting jobs"? Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is not just for marketers. Talent acquisition teams need to get savvy in recruitment marketing to make their job openings easier to find through online search.

Improving Career Site Search Functionality

Search doesn't just stop at Google. Is your career site easy to access from your corporate website? Are your job openings searchable? Employers should take a page from the e-commerce book and streamline career site experiences by offering relevant job searches. This means candidates can navigate quickly and easily to the types of roles that interest them and even get recommendations for similar positions.

AWARENESS

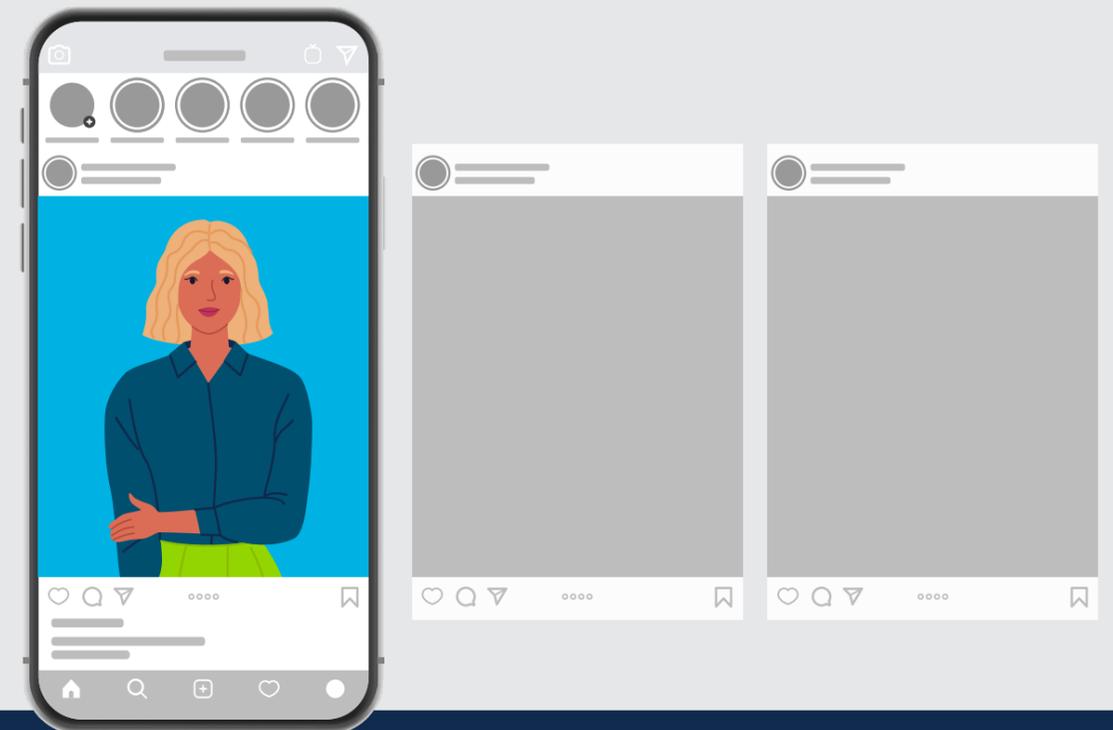
CONSIDERATION

ACTIVATION

APPLICATION

ENGAGEMENT

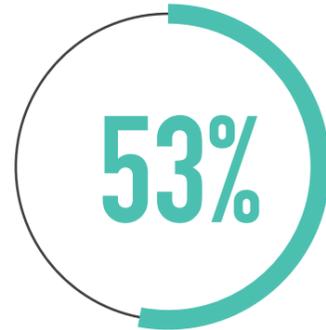
Of the companies we assessed, **one in three** had not posted career-related content to their social media channels for at least a week.



CONSIDERATION

Why should I work here? What does it really feel like to work at your organization?

Average CandidateXQ score for the Consideration stage:



Candidates have never been more well-informed, with some becoming downright forensic in their investigation of job opportunities. They are evaluating your organization from every angle in hopes of answering the question, “Why should I work here?”

When considering whether to apply for a role, candidates will weigh the authenticity of your employer brand claims. Their goal is to gain a sense of what it’s really like to work at your organization. Your goal is to make sure their perceptions are accurate.

CANDIDATE EXPECTATIONS

What information are candidates looking for?

Not surprisingly, flexibility and work/life balance are top of mind for women around the world as they juggle work and family. Career development is the second most important element for women in the U.S.—unique for the region.

Historically, rewards and benefits have been ranked highly by candidates. However, our research confirms a post-pandemic shift in candidate expectations to more importance placed on flexibility and purpose.

- AWARENESS
- CONSIDERATION
- ACTIVATION
- APPLICATION
- ENGAGEMENT

The #1 obstacle for candidates in the application process is not knowing what it’s like to work at an organization.



TOP THINGS CANDIDATES LOOK FOR WHEN EVALUATING A COMPANY

- 1 Flexible working and work/life balance
- 2 Mission/purpose
- 3 Rewards and benefits
- 4 Career development and internal mobility
- 5 Company values

Men in particular (with the exception of those in EMEA) are more likely to rate organizational philosophy as Extremely Important compared to other considerations:

THE TOP CONSIDERATION FOR MEN BY REGION

APAC

Company values

LATAM

Mission/purpose

EMEA

Rewards and benefits

North America

Mission/purpose

AWARENESS

CONSIDERATION

ACTIVATION

APPLICATION

ENGAGEMENT



50%

of candidates say an organization's mission/purpose or values are a key influence on their decision to apply

There are generational differences of note as well. Flexible schedules and company purpose are important across age groups, with Millennials, Gen X and Baby Boomers showing similar considerations. However, the up-and-coming generation, Gen Z, is more focused on diversity and company culture than rewards and benefits like other demographics.

TOP CONSIDERATIONS BY GENERATION

AWARENESS
 CONSIDERATION
 ACTIVATION
 APPLICATION
 ENGAGEMENT

	1	2	3
Gen Z 1995 - 2010	Mission/purpose	Flexible working and work/life balance	D&I; Company culture (tied)
Millennials 1980 - 1994	Flexible working and work/life balance	Mission/purpose	Rewards and benefits
Gen X 1960 - 1979	Flexible working and work/life balance	Rewards and benefits	Mission/purpose
Baby Boomers 1940 - 1959	Flexible working and work/life balance	Rewards and benefits	Mission/purpose

Gen Z currently makes up **30%** of the total global population, and it's predicted they'll make up **27%** of the workforce by 2025.

One in five Millennials in EMEA, APAC and North America say an organization's mission and purpose is their top consideration when choosing a job, compared to one in 10 who favor rewards and benefits.



Where are candidates looking for information?

Social media is the preferred resource for learning more about employers with two-thirds (65%) of candidates leveraging it in their research. Company websites came in at a close second with 64% of candidates using them.

When asked how hearing from actual employees would influence their job search, 86% of all respondents said they value stories from employees. Baby Boomers in particular appreciate this with 92% indicating it would influence their decision to join an organization. Plus, one in three women also say it's important.

This may be what's driving candidates to turn to third-party resources. The favorite way to obtain information from real employees is to speak to friends and colleagues with second place going to review sites like Glassdoor.

Women in the U.S. prefer to research employers via their company website.

WHAT KIND OF THIRD-PARTY RESOURCES DID YOU USE IN YOUR MOST RECENT JOB SEARCH? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)



Reaching out to friends/
colleagues



Review sites



Reaching out to current
employees

REALITY

After a good showing in the Awareness stage, the scores in the Consideration stage dropped off considerably to an average of just 53%.

Considering that company values and mission/purpose are top considerations for job seekers when deciding whether to apply to a role, it's concerning how few organizations have this information on their career pages. We found information about company values on career pages just 59% of the time and details on the mission or purpose of the organization less than half (48%) of the time.

Plus, with information on flexible working and work/life balance being so universally valued by candidates across regions and generations, it's worrying that we found mention of this on career pages just over half of the time.

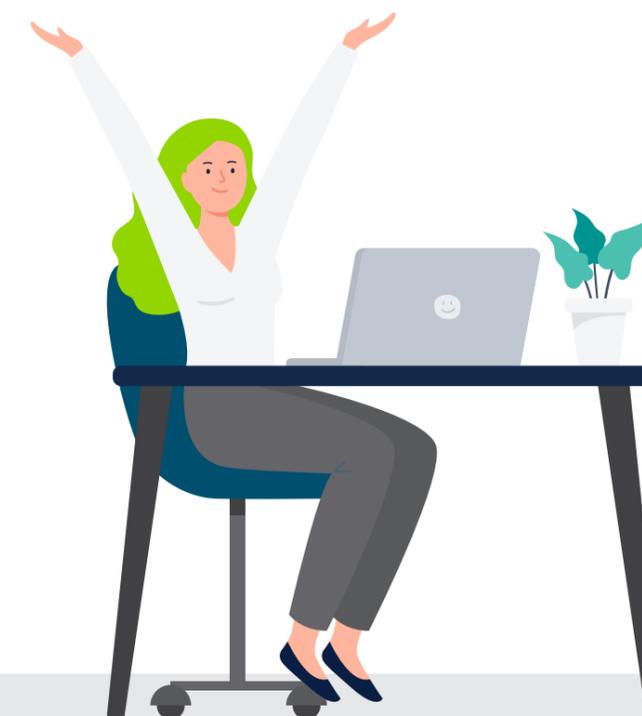
In addition, during our diagnostic, we evaluated career sites to see if a diverse group of real employees was represented. We found that 35% of organizations don't feature real employees on their career site. In addition, 60% of career sites don't contain any video content in which employees share their personal journeys and stories. Plus, just 13% of organizations offer candidates the opportunity to have peer-to-peer conversations with recruiters or current employees prior to applying.

CLOSING THE GAP

Creating an Emotional Connection

More than ever, candidates are searching for work they find meaningful and an employer that shares their values—especially the Millennial and Gen Z workforce. Considering how important this is to candidates and how infrequently we ran into this information in our diagnostic, there's clearly a missed opportunity for organizations to connect with their talent audience.

Your organization's purpose, communicated via your career site, and a well-articulated employer value proposition, can provoke an emotive response from candidates, give them a glimpse into your company culture and differentiate you from competitors.



Managing Your Brand Reputation

If candidates can't get what they need from your career website, it may be what's driving them to seek out information from their personal network and review sites. However, review sites often act as an outlet for upset former employees.

Leveraging your own channels—your career site and social media profiles—to showcase your values and culture provides you with more control over your employer value proposition and the narrative your candidates hear.

In fact, we're working with clients now to incorporate their review site scores and feedback into their company career pages. This is a part of an active strategy to manage both their online reputation and candidate expectations. We've seen that organizations who invest in this create stronger engagement with candidates through superior employer branding.

Embracing Authenticity

We all know that seeing is believing. So, when it comes to communicating your employee experience, including your diversity and inclusion policies, are you showing your candidates why they should work for you, or simply telling them?

Candidates find the voice of an average employee more credible than what companies say about themselves, so ensuring their stories and experiences are visible throughout the candidate experience is a tested way to engage candidates on an emotional level, building authenticity and brand trust.

Mobilizing your employee advocates to illustrate your unique offering and company culture with imagery and video content lends legitimacy to the claims of your employee value proposition. Plus, giving candidates access to your advocates through Q&A webinars, recruitment events and live online chat is an excellent way for candidates to make an emotional connection to your employer brand.

AWARENESS

CONSIDERATION

ACTIVATION

APPLICATION

ENGAGEMENT



ACTIVATION

What will the recruitment process look like?

Average CandidateXQ score
for the Activation stage:



At this stage, the candidate is interested in your role and your organization, but they still want to confirm that entering your recruitment process will be worth their time and effort. They want to know exactly what they're signing themselves up for by applying.

Candidate Expectations

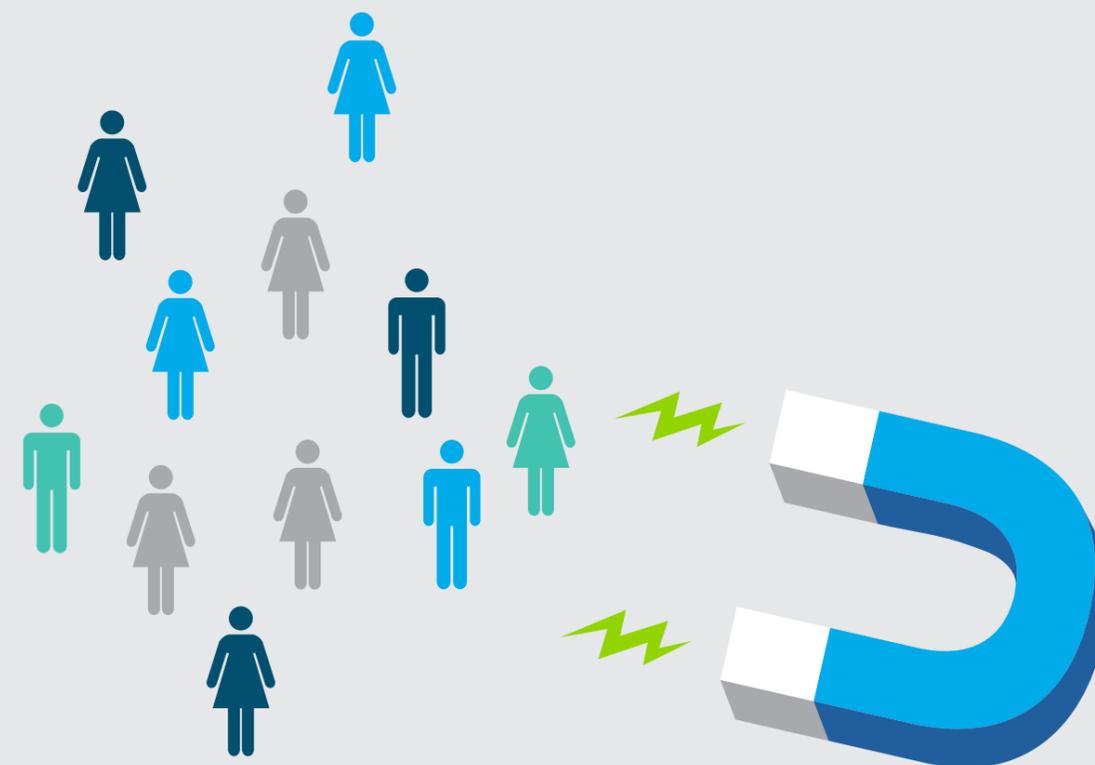
Our research revealed that the top three reasons candidates don't apply to a job are:

- 1 Lack of information about the role
- 2 Lack of information about the salary
- 3 Lack of information about the skills and experience required

These were fairly consistent across all regions and genders.

Baby Boomers indicate lack of information on salary as their top reason for not applying and were 10% more likely to choose this than Gen Z respondents. Boomers were also half as likely as both Gen Z-ers and Millennials to be bothered by not receiving information on the recruitment process or by lack of content on the career site.

AWARENESS
CONSIDERATION
ACTIVATION
APPLICATION
ENGAGEMENT



REALITY

Whilst our diagnostic revealed that job postings do a good job of communicating the role requirements and how the candidate will be assessed, we see that most organizations post job descriptions rather than job advertisements. In other words, companies list their requirements, but don't tell the candidates what they'll get in return. It's all about what organizations want and not what they offer, which won't fly in today's candidate-led market.

Digging in further with our diagnostic, we found that additional information about the recruitment process was lacking. Only a third of organizations (34%) had career sites that featured frequently asked questions (FAQs) or advice to support candidates throughout the process (31%). Less than a third (28%) gave an overview of the key stages of the recruiting process. This information can help to set realistic expectations for candidates, reduce their anxiety throughout the recruitment process and decrease drop-off.

Another point of concern was that only half of organizations (53%) provide an opportunity for candidates to register their interest or to sign up for job alerts. Even fewer (39%) prompted candidates to join a talent community. By not offering these ways to stay in touch with your organization, you could be unknowingly turning away a number of talented candidates.

CLOSING THE GAP

The average score in the Activation stage was second to last across the candidate journey. Not a good sign for a crucial point in the candidate's journey.

Improving Job Ads

One underutilized tool we see in our Talent Advisory work is realistic job previews. These video job ads give candidates a feel for the job by showing them a snapshot of the day-to-day tasks and environment. It's an effective screening tool and can reduce attrition by setting the right expectations.

AWARENESS

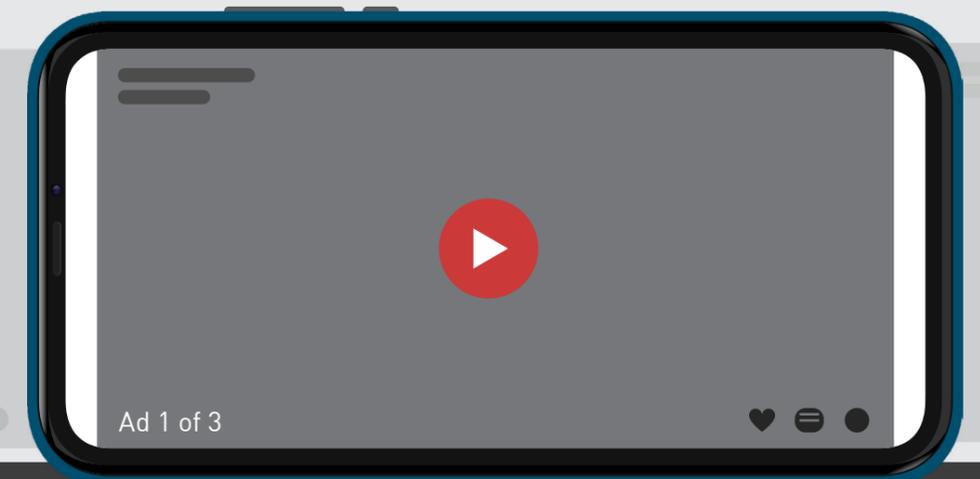
CONSIDERATION

ACTIVATION

APPLICATION

ENGAGEMENT

Video job ads receive **70%** more applications than written ones.



HERE ARE SOME MORE BEST PRACTICES FOR BETTER JOB ADS:

AWARENESS

CONSIDERATION

ACTIVATION

APPLICATION

ENGAGEMENT

Keep them brief.

The more requirements you have, the more likely you are to discourage applications. Plus, your pipeline will become less diverse as candidates from underrepresented groups are less likely to apply if they don't meet all the requirements.

Use plain language.

There are free online tools that can help identify biased language as well as opportunities to improve readability. It's especially important for job titles. Make sure you're using verbiage that your candidate would use rather than your internal terminology. A candidate looking for a hotel job is more likely to search for "housekeeper" than "environmental services engineer."

Include the salary.

Seeing as many candidates are interested in the salary before applying, it's a best practice to include this when possible. Plus, salary transparency is increasingly becoming a legal requirement in some countries and states.



Sharing Next Steps

When you've activated the candidate's interest in applying for a role, setting expectations and giving advice on the recruitment process is an often-overlooked way of improving the number and quality of applications you receive. If candidates aren't sure what they're getting involved in at the outset, they will likely pass over your position altogether.

Laying out the steps of the candidate journey has the added bonus of making your recruitment process more accessible to harder to reach talent groups, supporting your brand's commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Growing a Talent Pipeline

As consumers, we're used to signing up for offers and news from our favorite brands. Cultivating subscription lists and sharing tailored content via marketing automation tools is a simple, yet effective way companies build engagement with prospective customers who may not buy now but might buy later. There's a big opportunity for organizations to use the similar tools in their recruitment efforts.

Maintaining engagement with talent pools lets you show passive candidates what they are missing by keeping them warm until the right job becomes available. These communications should go beyond the standard job updates to market your employer brand in the same way you would your consumer brand.

Talent pools offer a rich pipeline of qualified candidates that should be a first port of call when filling new roles. Organizations that can execute this effectively will win the competition for top talent.

AWARENESS

CONSIDERATION

ACTIVATION

APPLICATION

ENGAGEMENT

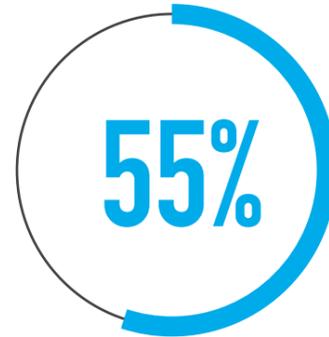


APPLICATION

How fast and easy is it to apply?

- AWARENESS
- CONSIDERATION
- ACTIVATION
- APPLICATION**
- ENGAGEMENT

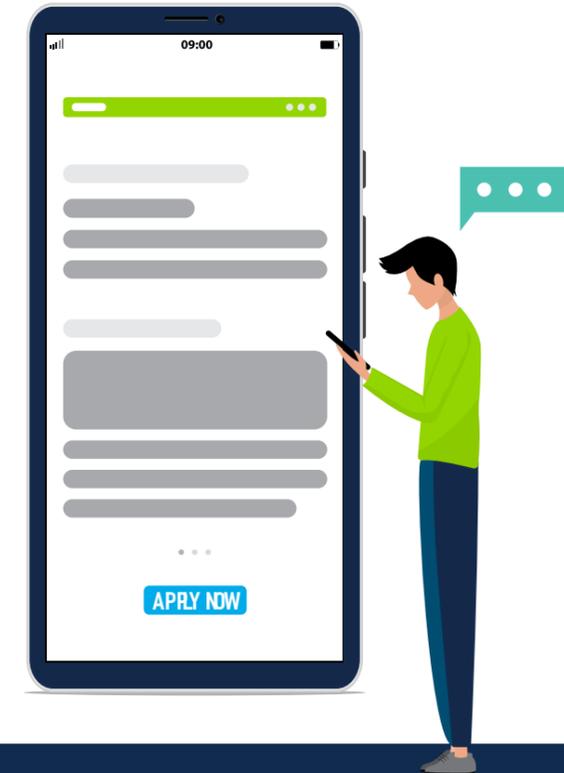
Average CandidateXQ score for the Application stage:



At this stage, your candidate has decided to apply. Yet, candidates that get this far can still drop out before starting an application or even mid-way through if they don't find the process quick and easy. Candidates put a lot of time and work into completing an application, and they want to know upfront how much time they should plan to invest and the kind of effort it will take.

CANDIDATE EXPECTATIONS

The vast majority of candidates have used a mobile device to apply for a job.



CANDIDATES WHO HAVE APPLIED TO A JOB VIA A MOBILE DEVICE



APAC



EMEA



LATAM



NORTH AMERICA

On average, most candidates in all regions say their last application took them between 10 and 30 minutes to complete. Compared to other regions, a considerably higher percentage of candidates in the U.S. indicated their last application took them 5 to 10 minutes.

REALITY

The average CandidateXQ score ticked up in this stage. Companies have figured out the importance of mobile devices in the recruitment process, with most industries scoring well for mobile-enabled career sites and applications in our diagnostic.

Organizations have also embraced shorter applications. We encountered a one-click application 43% of the time and found that we were able to complete applications in less than 15 minutes for 78% of organizations.

Despite the apparent speed, application experiences weren't rated as overwhelmingly positive by candidates.

We found information about the application process was lacking for the majority of employers. Before getting into the application, only 10% of organizations outlined how long the application would take and what information the candidate would need to provide (i.e., Social Security Number, National Insurance Number, references, etc.).

- AWARENESS
- CONSIDERATION
- ACTIVATION
- APPLICATION**
- ENGAGEMENT

CANDIDATES WHO SAID THEIR LAST APPLICATION EXPERIENCE WAS VERY POSITIVE:



APAC



EMEA



LATAM



NORTH AMERICA

Perhaps contributing to the negative experiences, nearly 40% of organizations asked candidates to duplicate information that was already contained in their résumé or CV. Only half of employers showed a progress indicator during the application process, and just 42% offered applicants the chance to save their submission and come back later.

We were also worried by the lack of accessibility we found. Before starting the application process, only 30% of organizations gave candidates the opportunity to request reasonable adjustments, which is important for candidates with disabilities.

CLOSING THE GAP

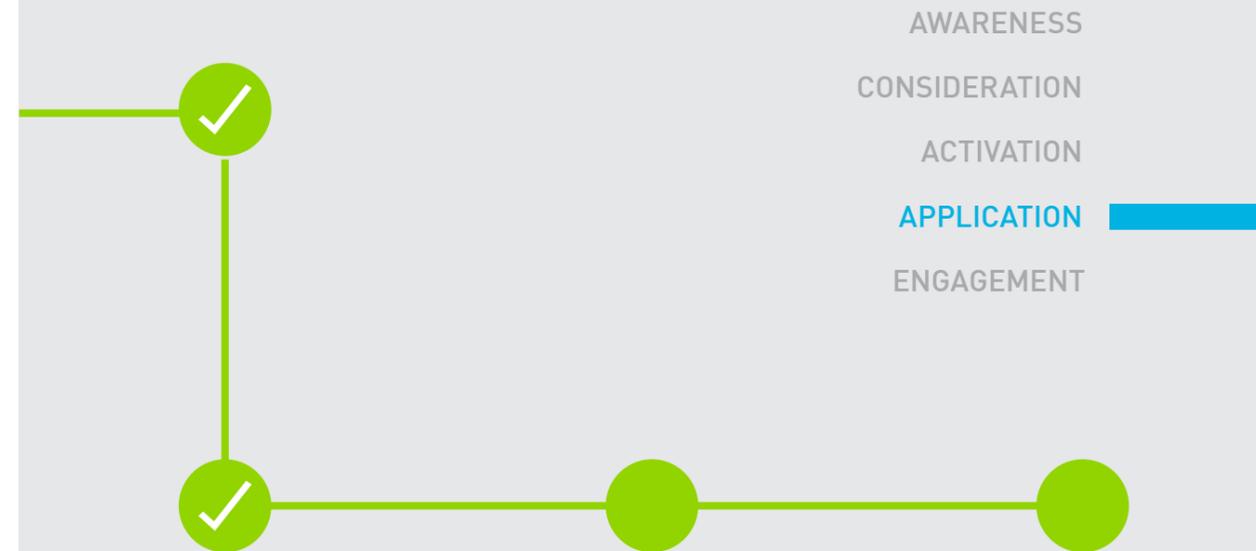
Streamlining Recruitment

Increasingly, brands are realizing they can create a more consumer-like experience for job applicants. Many organizations are embracing social media tools (like the one-click apply option on LinkedIn) to increase the simplicity and convenience of applications even further.

Keeping things quick and streamlined should be the general rule. While some organizations still sing the praises of a multi-stage recruitment process for filtering out candidates that don't meet requirements, the truth is that the longer the process, the more danger there is that your perfect candidate will get snapped up by another employer.

Introducing More Equity and Inclusion

It's also imperative to make it easy and straightforward for candidates to request a reasonable adjustment for any part of the recruitment process. Adjustments could be presenting an online application form that's compatible with a screen reader or changing the location of a job interview to make it more accessible. Gestures like this will go a long way to creating an equitable and inclusive recruitment process.



APPLICATION EXPERIENCE ANALYSIS

40%
Required duplicate content

54%
Showed an application progress indicator

42%
Gave an option to save the application and come back later

12%
Offered hints and tips during the application process

ENGAGEMENT

What happens after I submit my application?

- AWARENESS
- CONSIDERATION
- ACTIVATION
- APPLICATION
- ENGAGEMENT

Average CandidateXQ score for the Engagement stage:



Regardless of how long the candidate took to submit their application—10 minutes or two hours—they’ve just given you all of their personal and professional information. Following up with candidates once they’ve applied is a crucial moment in their journey with your brand—one that can impact whether they show up for an interview, what they say about your brand online and even whether you retain them as a customer.

CANDIDATE EXPECTATIONS

After applying, candidates want two things: engagement and information.

83% of candidates [share their poor experiences](#) with friends and family, with 54% taking to social media to voice their discontent.

CANDIDATES RATE THE FOLLOWING AS EXTREMELY OR VERY LIKELY TO CAUSE THEM TO DROP OUT OF THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS AFTER APPLYING:



No acknowledgement of my application



Lack of information on next steps



Employer was not responsive to my questions



Employer took too long to respond to my application



Lack of feedback from employer

These factors clearly carry equal importance for candidates, and organizations that fail to meet these expectations will struggle to keep talent in the funnel during the latter half of their recruitment process.

REALITY

This was the lowest scoring stage in our diagnostic. While candidates receive an automated acknowledgement email 89% of the time, beyond that, they're mostly left hanging.

A communication laying out the next steps was received just 16% of the time. Plus, many organizations offered very little feedback to candidates. In fact, nearly half (48%) of candidates did not receive feedback on their last application. Of those who did receive feedback, 38% stated that the comments they received were not useful.

Asking for feedback didn't go much better, with just 56% of candidates saying they were asked to provide feedback on their recruitment experience.

Our candidate survey also revealed that men are more likely than women to be aware of opportunities to give and receive feedback during the recruitment process.

CLOSING THE GAP

Acknowledging an Application

Unfortunately, ghosting has become quite common in the recruitment world. Brands court potential employees with a slick career site, convince them to invest time and emotion in crafting and submitting an application and then...nothing.

Unsurprisingly, this can have damaging consequences for how the brand is perceived, not just by the scorned candidate but by their network of colleagues and friends.

11% of candidates never get a confirmation of their application.



And now, candidates are turning the tables on employers. According to [Indeed](#), 83% of employers have been ghosted by candidates during the recruitment process—sometimes even after they have accepted an offer.

At the very least, you should be sending an automated email acknowledging you've received the application. Ideally, you'll also follow up no later than 48 hours after submission with a personalized message or call to move the candidate forward or to reject them. If you find that your auto-rejection rate is high, take a look at your job ad. Why wasn't it clear to candidates what would get them turned down for the role?

Giving Feedback

Your rejection should contain feedback. That means providing specific comments on what you liked or didn't like about the candidate's résumé or CV (or interview if the rejection comes at a later stage), not a generic "not what we're looking for at this time" message.

Our research into candidate feedback conducted in 2019 revealed that nine in 10 candidates won't recommend an employer if they are not given personalized feedback. Whereas, seven in 10 would actively endorse a company if given detailed comments.

Inevitably not all candidates can be successful, but ensuring your communications are timely and empathetic can go a long way to creating a positive brand experience out of an unpleasant situation. And remember, candidates are also potential customers, too.

Asking for Feedback

If you truly want to improve your candidate experience, asking your candidates what they think and making improvements based on their input is a great place to start.

This is a big miss at many organizations. If you're not leveraging candidate surveying tools, you are passing up valuable insights that can help you improve your employer brand, reduce attrition and improve your time-to-hire.

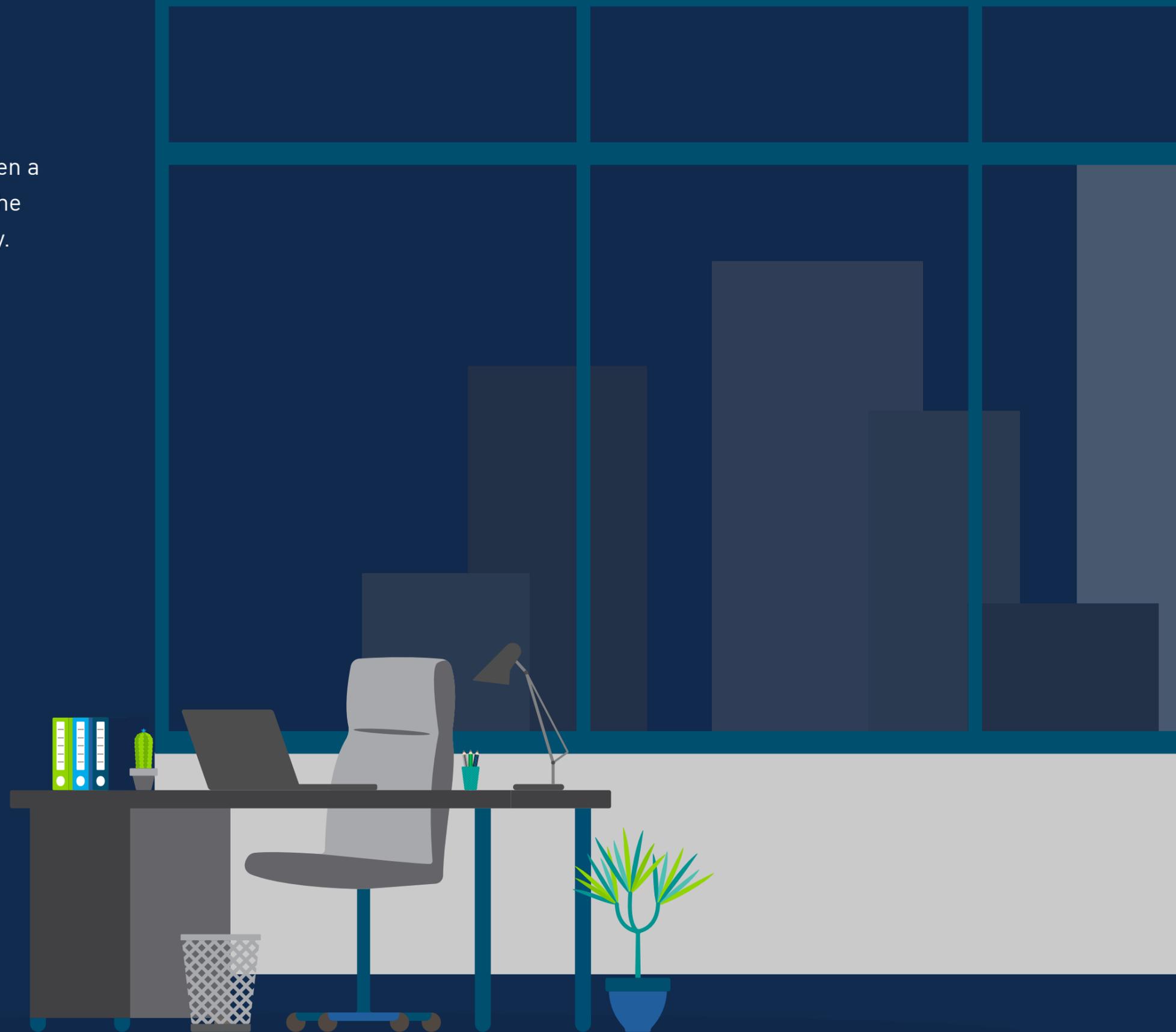


INDUSTRY LANDSCAPE

Each organization was assessed for 40 different factors and given a score for each stage as well as an overall CandidateXQ score. The following sections provide an overview of the results by industry.

- 1 Financial Services
- 2 Retail & Consumer Goods
- 3 Healthcare & Life Sciences
- 4 Technology
- 5 Manufacturing & Industrial
- 6 Business & Management Consulting
- 7 Government & Public Sector
- 8 Hospitality

Average CandidateXQ
score across all
sectors



1. FINANCIAL SERVICES

Average overall CandidateXQ score for Financial Services organizations:

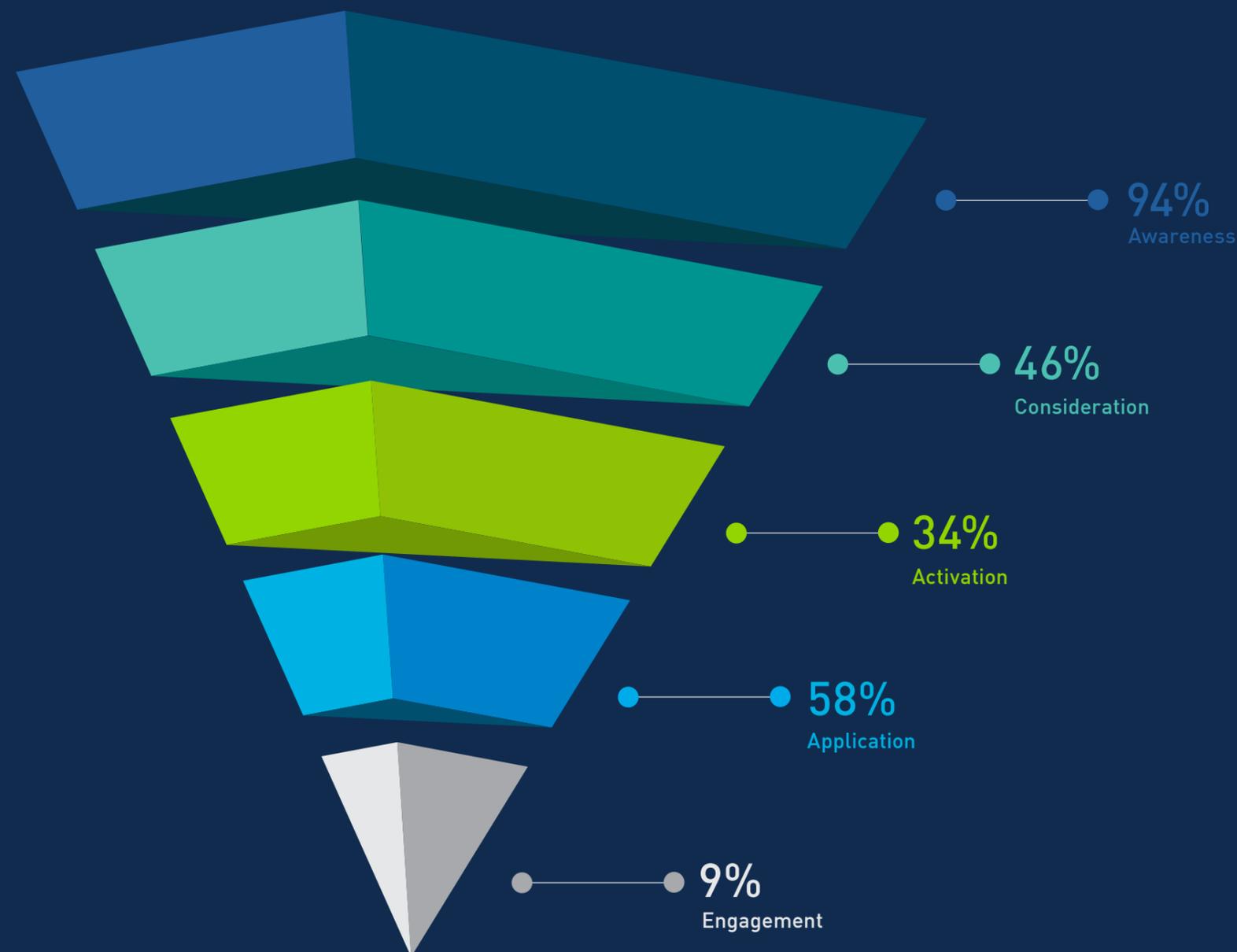


Financial Services was the highest scoring industry overall. Organizations in this sector fared best on average across the Awareness, Consideration and Activation stages. However, this industry scored lowest in the Engagement stage out of all the industries we measured.

None of the companies we looked at asked candidates for feedback—a missed opportunity. Encouragingly, this sector seems serious about diversity. We frequently found information about diversity and inclusion on the career sites of financial services organizations.

Common Misses

- Lack of information about mission/purpose on the career site
- Not asking candidates for feedback



2. RETAIL & CONSUMER GOODS

Average overall CandidateXQ score for Retail & Consumer Goods organizations:



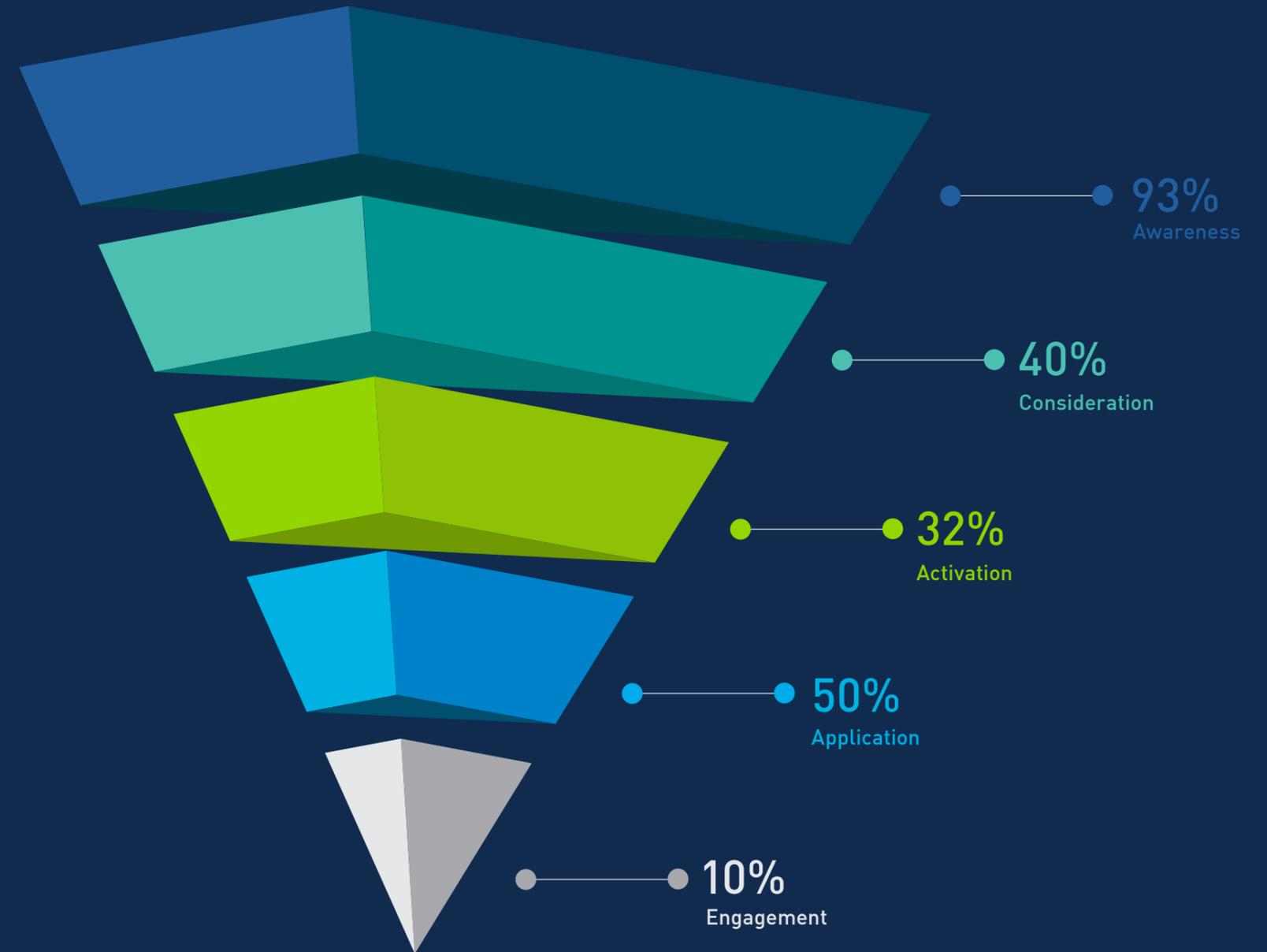
While not achieving the highest average scores in any of the stages, the Retail and Consumer Goods sector still achieved the second highest overall CandidateXQ score compared to the other industries.

Organizations in this sector were more likely to have career pages that showcased rewards and benefits and clearly articulated why the candidate should join.

Retailers did not score well for providing feedback, perhaps due to the high-volume nature of their talent acquisition model.

Common Misses

- Lack of information about the application process
- Lack of feedback given to candidates upon rejection



3. HEALTHCARE & LIFE SCIENCES

Average CandidateXQ score for Healthcare & Life Sciences organizations:



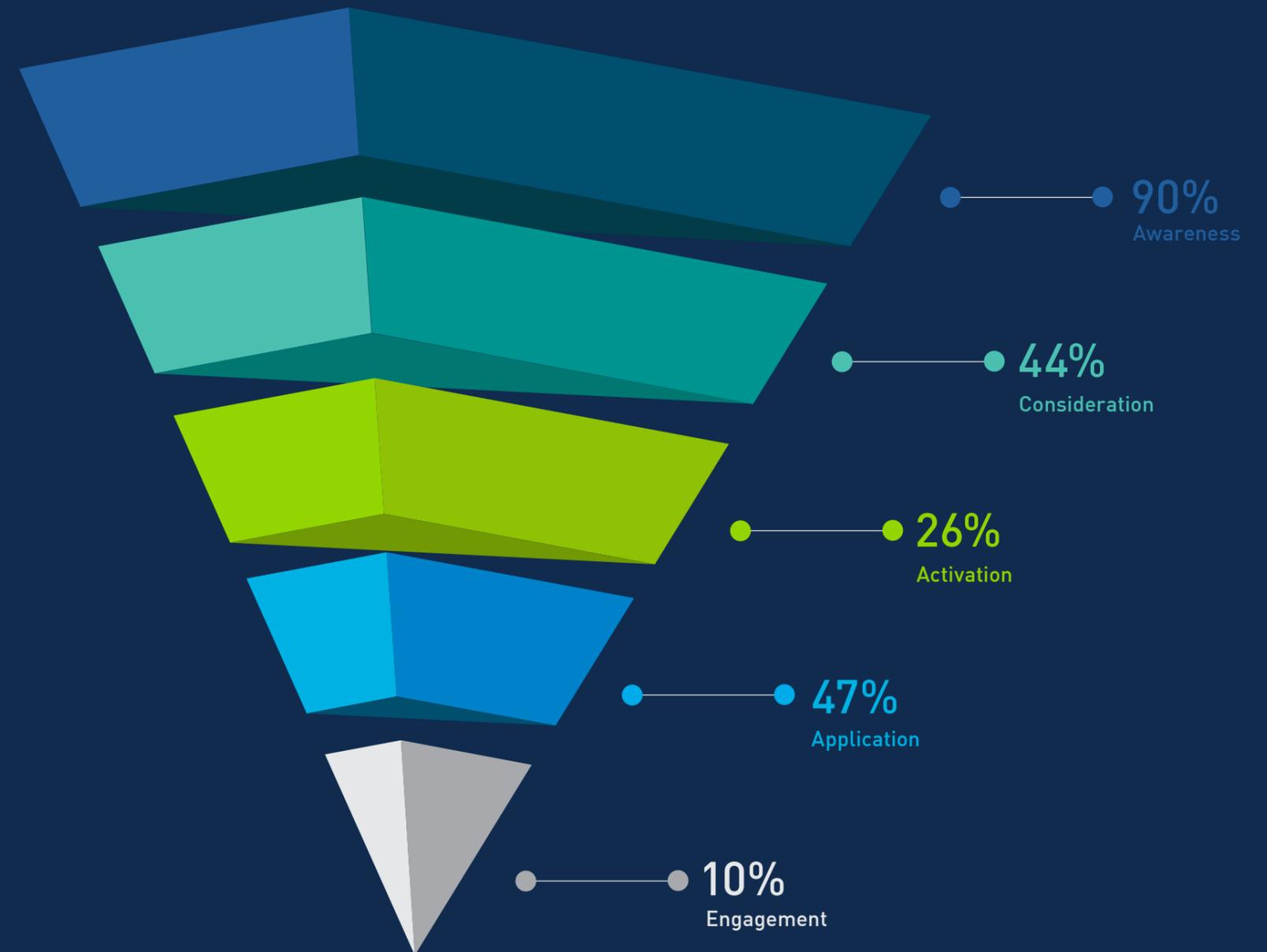
Coming in third, the Healthcare and Life Sciences sector scored highest in the Awareness stage and second highest in the Consideration stage.

All of the organizations we assessed had mobile-enabled career sites and applications. These career sites also provided good information about why candidates should join the organization.

However, employers in the Healthcare and Life Sciences industry are missing an opportunity when it comes to improving their candidate experience. Only 4% of these organizations asked candidates for feedback.

Common Misses

- No recruitment content on social media for at least a week
- Lack of information about the application process
- Not asking candidates for feedback



4. TECHNOLOGY

Average overall CandidateXQ score for Technology organizations:

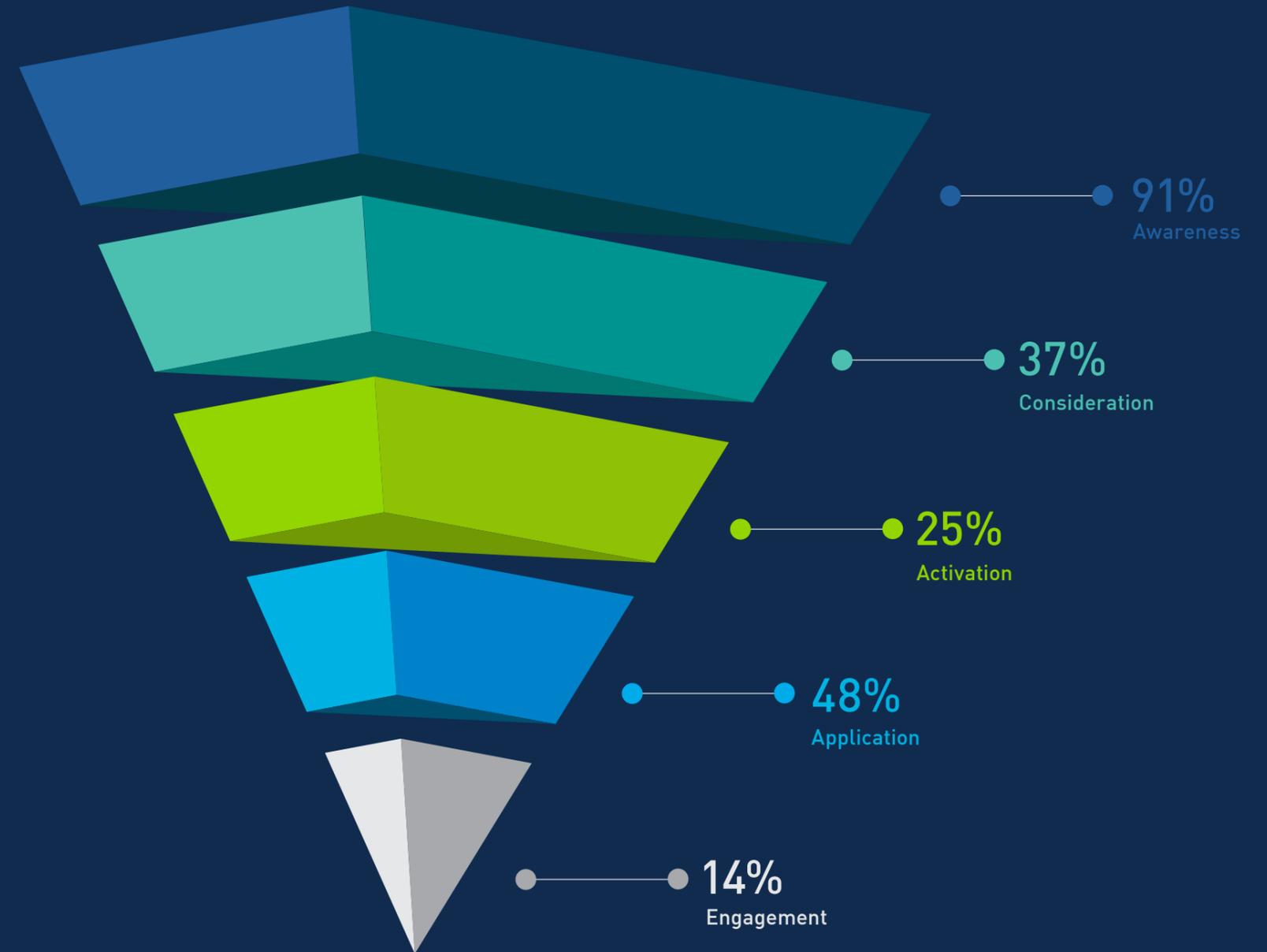


The Technology sector scored the highest in the Engagement stage, performing particularly well with application acknowledgement. However, none of the organizations we audited gave any kind of feedback.

Technology organizations also scored well in including diversity and inclusion information on their career site—an encouraging sign of change in the industry.

Common Misses

- Lack of information about mission/purpose on the career site
- Lack of information about the application process
- Lack of feedback given to candidates upon rejection



5. MANUFACTURING & INDUSTRIAL

Average overall CandidateXQ score for Manufacturing & Industrial organizations:



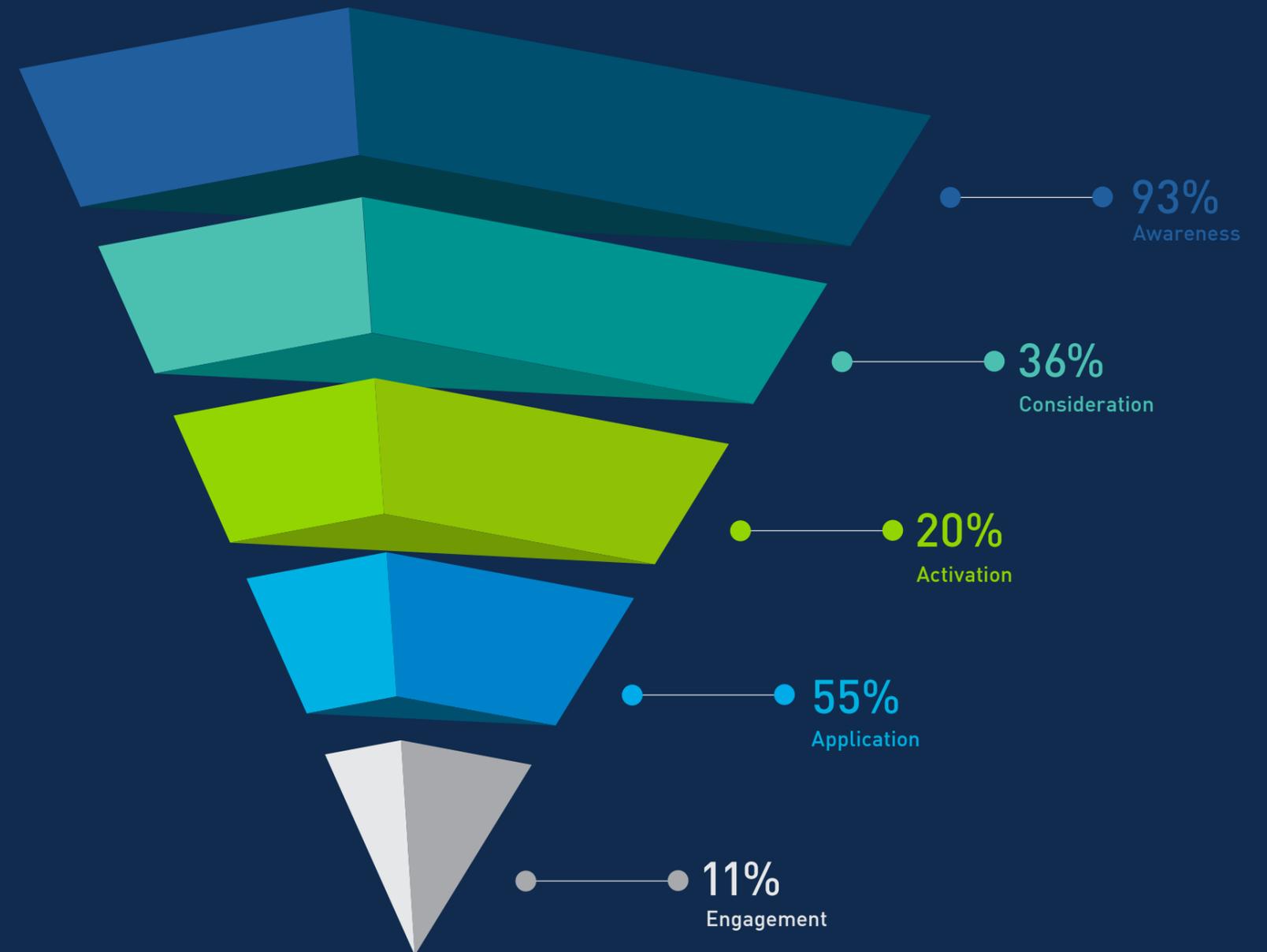
Manufacturers scored highest in the Consideration stage and second highest in Awareness.

Job postings scored well for providing an overview of the role. This is another sector that scored well for showing diversity and inclusion on their career sites.

The lowest scores for the Manufacturing and Industrial sector were related to feedback. Very few organizations we assessed were giving or asking for feedback.

Common Misses

- Lack of information about the application process
- Lack of feedback given to candidates upon rejection
- Not asking candidates for feedback



6. BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT CONSULTING

Average overall CandidateXQ score for Business & Management Consulting organizations:

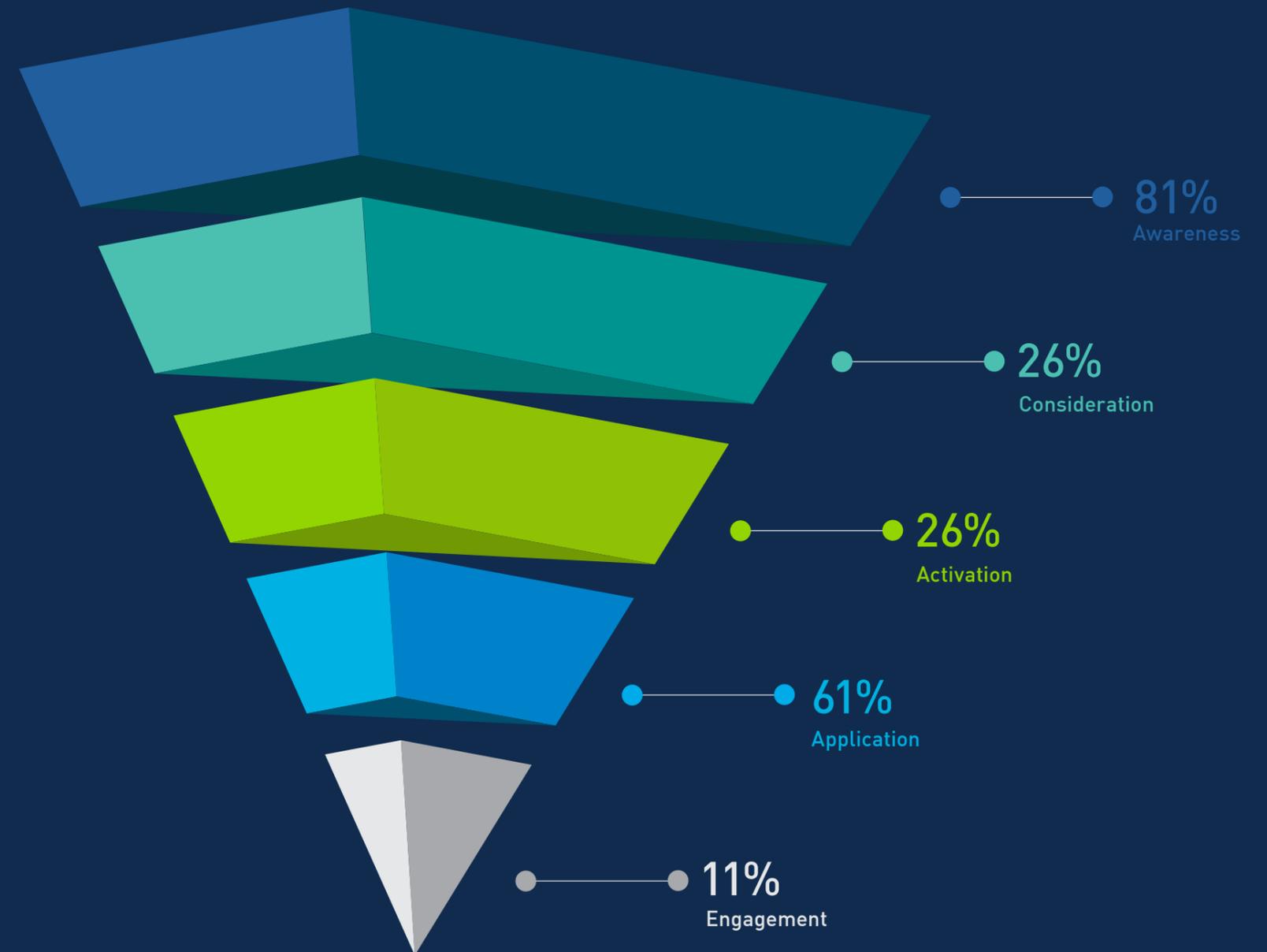


The Business and Management Consulting industry scored highest in the Application stage, with all of the organizations we assessed clocking in at under 15 minutes to complete.

However, once applications were submitted, we found problems. None of the companies we looked at followed up quickly (within 48 hours), gave information on next steps or provided feedback to candidates.

Common Misses

- Lack of information about the application process and recruitment process next steps
- Not giving feedback upon rejection or asking candidates for feedback
- Rejection takes longer than 48 hours



7. GOVERNMENT & PUBLIC SECTOR

Average overall CandidateXQ score for Government & Public Sector organizations:



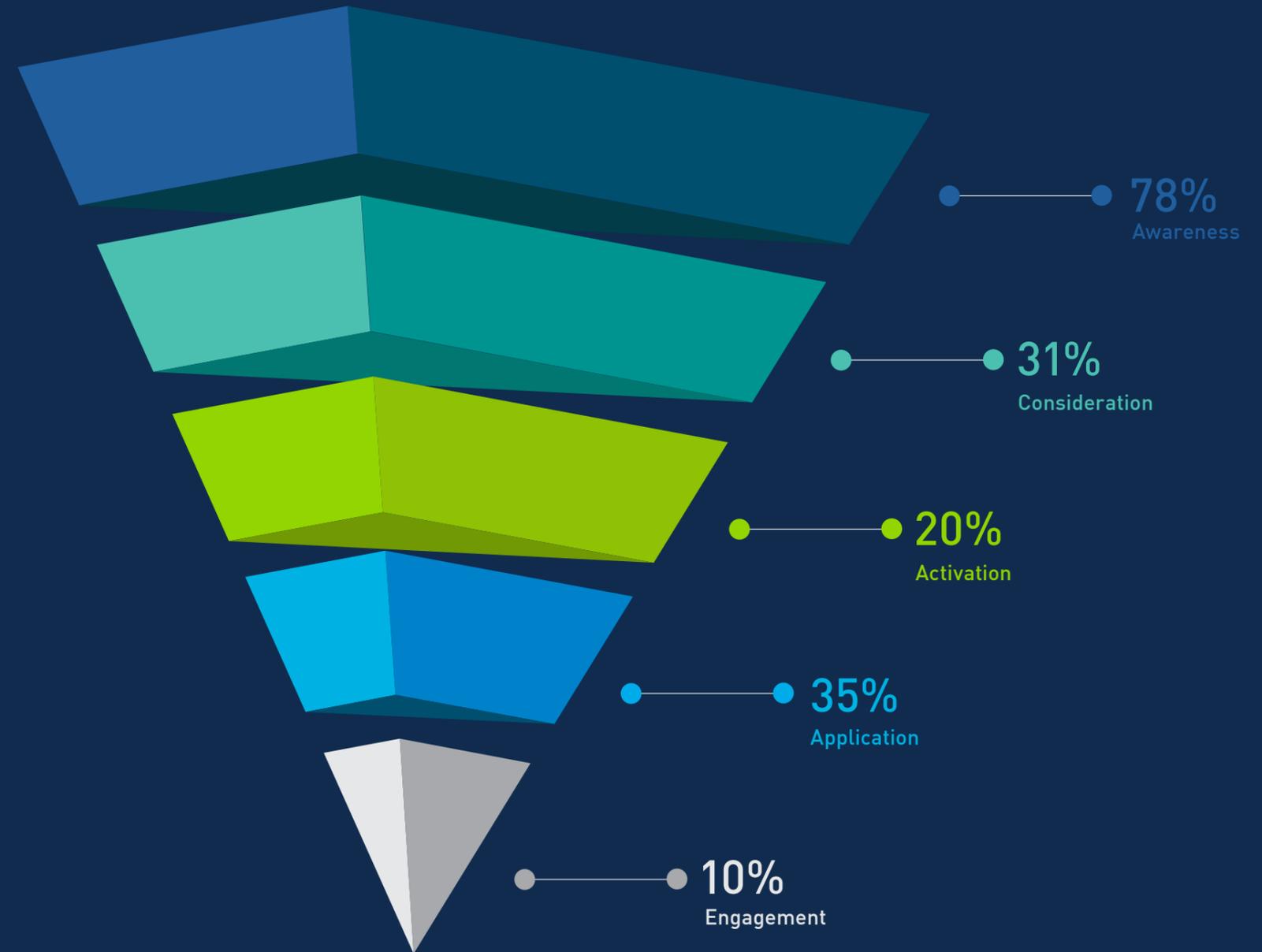
Government and Public Sector organizations have room to improve across the candidate journey. Many (but not all) have mobile-enabled application processes, and most (again, not all) are leveraging automated communications to acknowledge applications.

Government and Public Sector organizations can improve in the use of social media, both to showcase recruitment content as well as to aid in speeding up applications (i.e., only one in five uses a one-click apply option).

In addition, very few organizations in this sector seem to be leveraging talent pooling. Not many offered candidates the ability to join a talent community or register their interest.

Common Misses

- Low usage rate of one-click application features on social media
- Lack of information about the application process
- Lack of opportunity for candidates to join talent pool



8. HOSPITALITY

Average overall CandidateXQ score for Hospitality organizations:



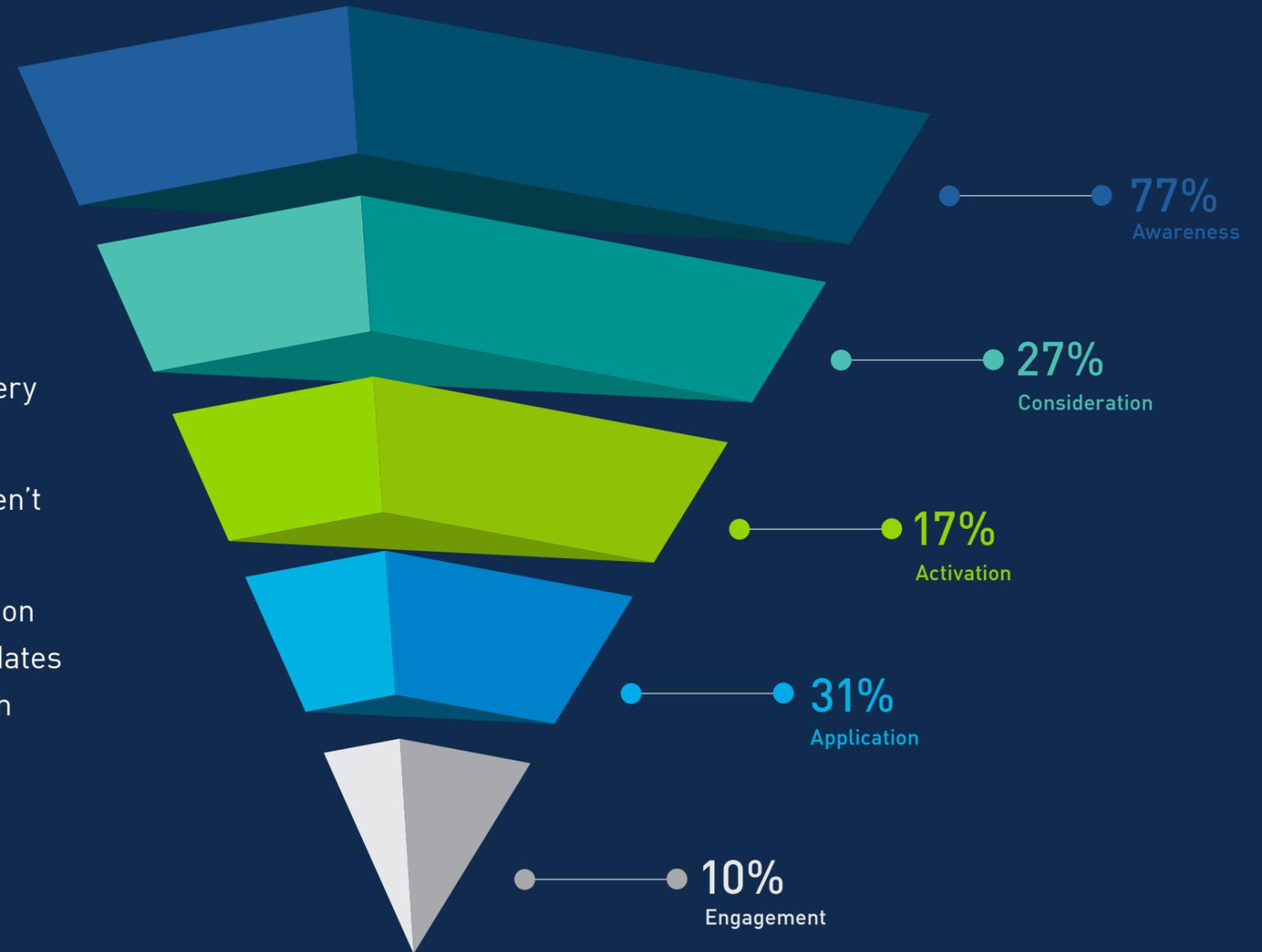
The Hospitality sector came in last overall with the lowest average scores in every stage except Engagement (in which it was second to last).

This sector has been struggling to recover post-pandemic, but organizations aren't doing themselves any favors when it comes the candidate experience.

While Hospitality organizations did well at showcasing their diversity and inclusion efforts on their career sites, we were surprised to see that only half gave candidates the opportunity to register their interest. For an industry that typically has a high turnover rate, talent pooling is a must-have to fill roles quickly.

Common Misses

- No recruitment content on social media for at least a week
- Lack of information about the application process and recruitment process next steps
- Not giving feedback upon rejection or asking candidates for feedback



YOUR CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE ACTION PLAN

So, now that you know what candidates want and where organizations are falling short, how do you start making improvements?

Here are five actionable ways to boost your CandidateXQ score.

1. Start surveying your candidates.

If you're serious about improving your candidate experience, the best way to source ideas is through your talent audience. Introducing a survey to your process—either following an application, an interview, a rejection, or all three—is a must for any organization that wants to secure top talent. These insights are invaluable for identifying areas of improvement and can help you prioritize your candidate experience optimization projects.

Learn more:

- [Feedback Loop: The Key to a Strong Employer Brand \(That You're Probably Missing\)](#)

2. Audit your career site.

Modern candidates have turned the tables, and now they're demanding to know what you've got to offer them. Ensure your career site contains information about your mission, values, rewards and benefits and diversity and inclusion program. Look for places to incorporate real employees into your recruitment content as well as add more video.

Learn more:

- [Launching and Managing a Dynamic Employer Value Proposition and Employer Brand](#)

3. Evaluate your social media strategy.

Given that social media is the second most popular job-search tool among the global candidates we surveyed, it's important to have a social media strategy as part of your candidate attraction efforts. Are you posting recruitment content at least once a week? Are you on the right social networks? If you're not leveraging one-click application tools offered by networks like LinkedIn, it's worth adding it into the mix to improve application rates. Also, not everyone uses LinkedIn, so make sure your combination of channels is meeting your talent audience where they are.

Learn more:

- [Effectively Leverage Social Media to Improve Your Employer Brand](#)

4. Find ways to streamline your process.

Much of what candidates expect is driven by the online consumer experience, so take a page from the e-commerce playbook. Are there places you can introduce automation to boost speed and increase candidate engagement? You should definitely have an automated acknowledgement email after receiving an application, but do you have additional automated communications—either as emails or SMS—that allow you to share next steps in the recruitment process, FAQ content or additional recruitment marketing content? Take a look at your talent tech stack and see if there are places you can introduce new functionality.

Learn more:

- [Recruitment Technology: How to Build the Ultimate Tech Stack](#)

5. Consider investing in RPO.

Tight labor markets have motivated many organizations to turn to [recruitment process outsourcing \(RPO\)](#) for the first time. A leading RPO partner has honed expertise in creating great candidate experiences across clients and sectors. These best practices along with access to technology can augment your team to provide a personalized experience and consistent feedback throughout the recruitment process.

Learn more:

- [Are You Ready for RPO? 3 Questions to Ask](#)

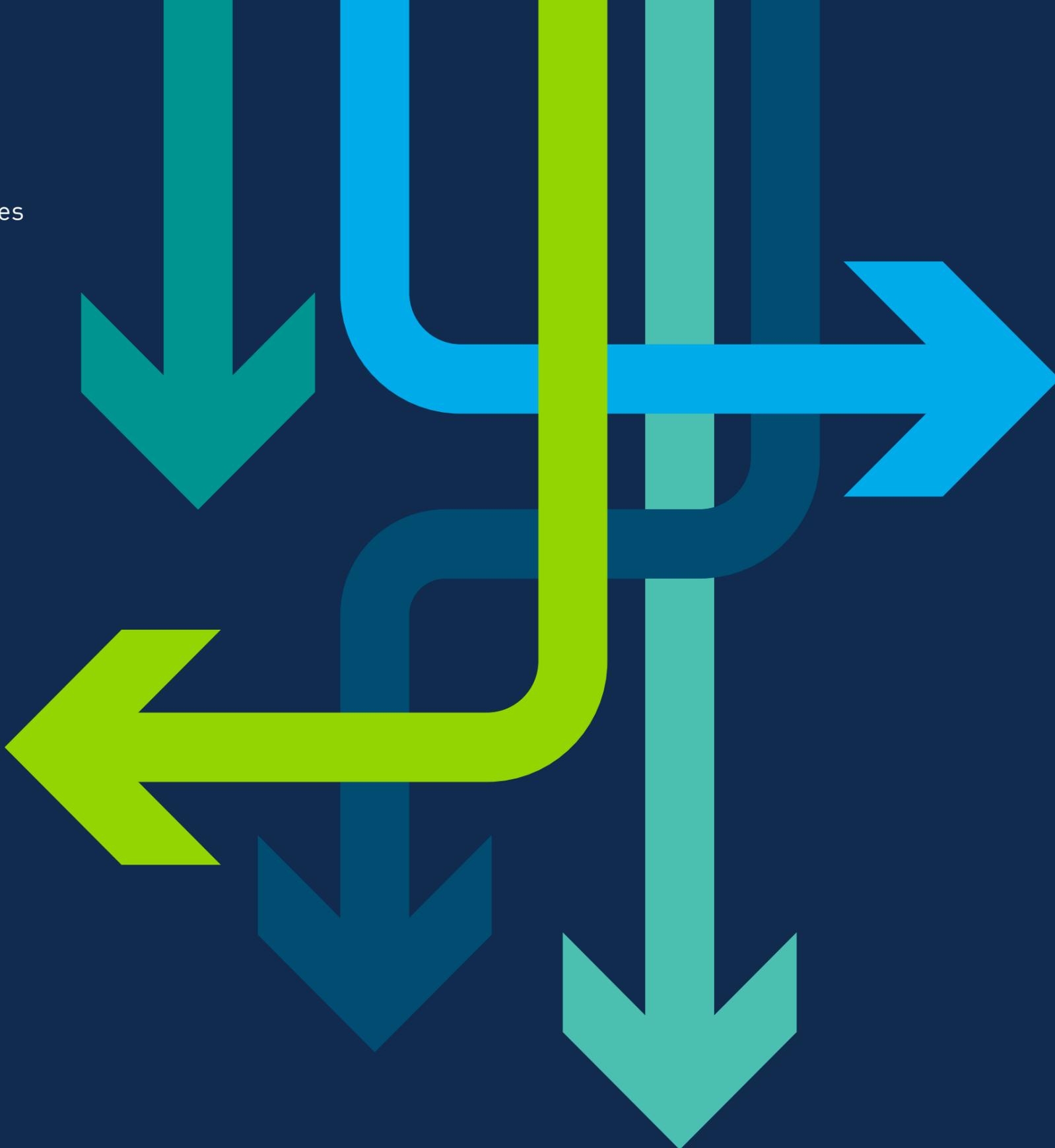
CONCLUSION

Candidates have never had higher expectations. The gap between what candidates want and what they get still remains wide, but it can be made smaller.

While there is no such thing as a perfect recruitment process, evolving your candidate experience will improve your organization's ability to attract and hire great talent.

Curious to know how your organization's CandidateXQ would stack up? Sign up for your free Candidate Experience Diagnostic today.

[GET YOUR SCORE](#)





PeopleScout, a TrueBlue company, is one of the world's largest RPO providers managing talent solutions that span the global economy, with end-to-end MSP and talent advisory capabilities supporting total workforce needs. PeopleScout boasts 97% client retention managing the most complex programs in the industry. The company's thousands of forward-looking talent professionals provide clients with the edge in the people business by consistently delivering now while anticipating what's next.

Affinix™, PeopleScout's proprietary talent acquisition platform, empowers faster engagement with the best talent through an AI-driven, consumer-like candidate experience and optimizes the talent process through data and actionable insights. Leveraging the power of data gleaned from engaging millions of candidates and contingent associates every year, PeopleScout has served clients across more than 70 countries with headquarters in Chicago, London and Sydney and global delivery centers in Toronto, Montreal, Bristol, Krakow, Gurgaon and Bangalore.

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