

The Future of Hospitality Hiring 2024

Outsmart your competitors and win in the new age of hospitality talent

Based on an exclusive survey of HR professionals at hotels and resorts nationwide



The new age of hospitality talent is here — are you ready?

In the hospitality care sector, bottom-line growth depends entirely on your ability to recruit and retain top talent for critical guest-facing roles. But in a highly competitive hiring landscape where talent is scarce and candidate expectations are ever-changing, this is easier said than done. To outsmart your competition and capture your fair share of today's talent pool, it's important to start with an understanding of where most hotels and resorts stand today as it relates to hiring, retention, and more.

In our third-annual benchmark report, we'll uncover the insights gleaned from our December 2023 survey of HR teams across leading hotels and resorts. This report sheds light on common hospitality hiring challenges, emerging trends, the state of AI in hospitality recruitment, and more — offering a comprehensive roadmap for what it takes to win in the new age of hospitality employment.

Key findings

- 91% of hotels reported that hiring is still somewhat or extremely challenging
- O Hotels cite lack of quality talent as the top factor impacting today's hiring challenges
- **26% of hotels say housekeepers are the hardest role to fill**
- **O** Great workplace culture is the most common employee benefit offered among hotels
- **61% of hotels say their hiring process takes less than 2 weeks**
- 53% of respondents say they're already using AI in some capacity for recruiting at their hotel





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How challenging is hiring for hotels and resorts today?

From hiring to retention and everywhere in between, learn what hotels reported are their greatest people-related challenges for 2024.







Hotels still find the hiring climate untenable

For 91% of hotels today, hiring remains a challenge — with 30% noting that that challenge is extreme and 60% reporting that it is more challenging now than it was a year ago. Hiring has become so difficult that about three-fourths have admitted to hiring someone who wasn't a fit simply to get the position filled.

One reason why hiring remains so difficult in the hospitality industry is because of the ongoing effects of the pandemic. Workers in this sector lost their jobs at the onset of the pandemic and in the years since have gained the upper hand in the job market — giving them opportunities to change careers to meet their needs for flexibility, career growth, and more. Many workers have left the industry entirely for what they feel are greener pastures elsewhere.

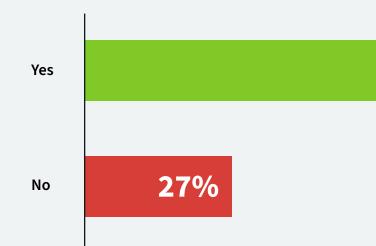


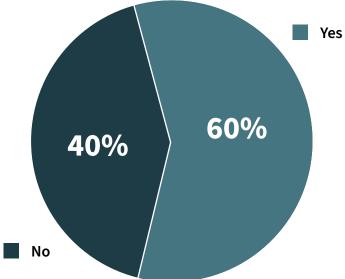
In your opinion, how challenging is In your opinion, is hiring more of a hiring for your facility right now? challenge this year than it was last year? Not challenging Yes 9% Extremely 30% challenging 60%

61%

Somewhat challenging

Have you ever hired someone who isn't qualified because you needed to fill a role?



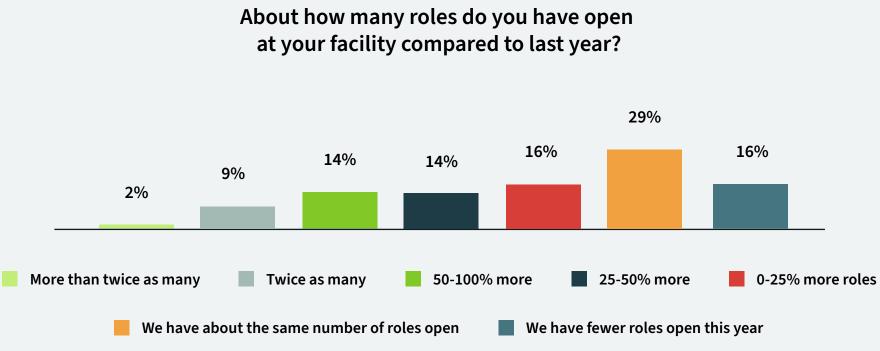




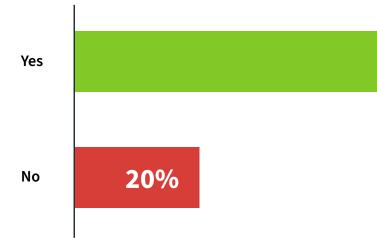
More than half of all respondents (55%) said that they have more open roles now than they did a year ago, with 29% noting that the number of open roles remains the same. Eight in 10 respondents indicated that increased difficulty attracting and engaging with younger talent contributes to hiring challenges today.

One reason why younger workers are less interested in hospitality jobs is because they have greater expectations for flexibility and well-being than their older counterparts. And the hospitality industry is widely known for its long hours and inflexible environments. Attracting and retaining younger workers in the sector requires hospitality HR leaders to prioritize improving employee benefits and marketing those benefits in effective employer branding messaging.





Do you find you have a harder time recruiting and retaining Gen Z employees (26 and under) than other generations?







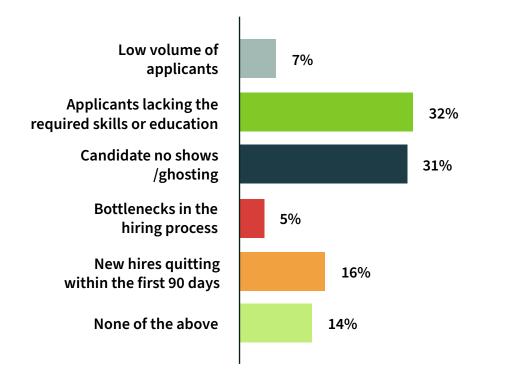
Hotels struggle with applicant quality and candidate no-shows

When asked to give specifics on exactly where the biggest challenges lie with hiring today, poor candidate quality and ghosting (when a candidate stops responding, effectively removing themselves from the running) top the list.

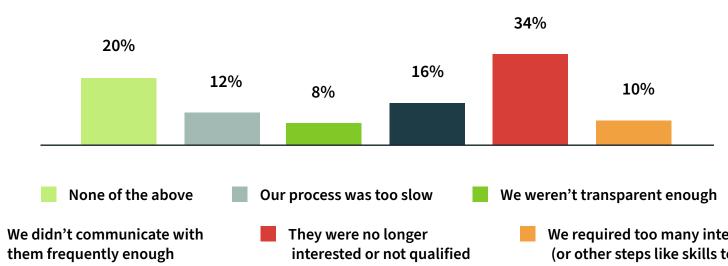
Nearly all respondents (95%) say they have experienced ghosting, up from 86% in last year's report. And most attribute high instances of ghosting to candidates simply no longer having an interest in the role.

However, when we surveyed hospitality industry applicants earlier this year, most said they ghost due to lack of communication and transparency from the employer and slow-moving hiring processes — indicating a larger hiring process and speed issue at play. Hotels need to think beyond simply getting applicants in the door and find ways to provide a faster and more convenient experience for top candidates.

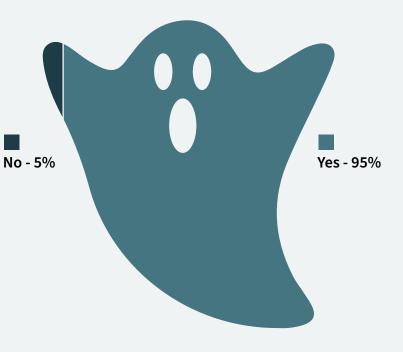
What is your number one challenge as it relates to filling open roles?



What do you think is the number one reason why candidates ghost/no show?



Have you experienced interview ghosting/no shows in the past year?



We required too many interviews (or other steps like skills tests)

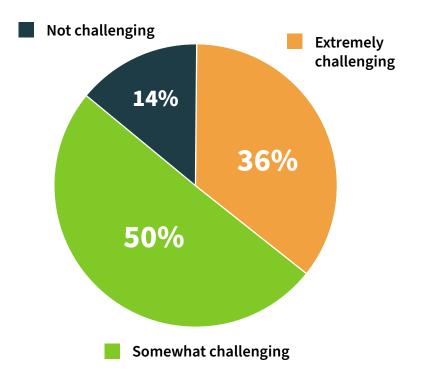
Retention is a core business challenge

Retention is also a challenge for 86% of hotels, with 36% reporting that this challenge is extreme and 62% indicating that the challenge has gotten worse over the last year. Most respondents reported that less than 80% of the hires they made in the past year are still employed with their hotel.

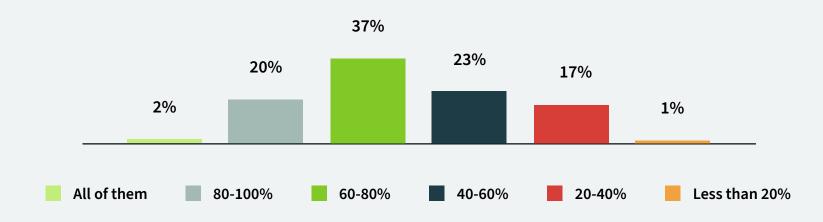
Not only does high turnover add even more pressure to overworked hiring teams, but it brings added costs. Experts predict that the cost of replacing just one employee is one half to two times that person's salary. In the hospitality sector, these costs are likely even higher given that booking rooms and depends entirely on having enough housekeeping staff on board.

While there is never a single answer for what hotels and resorts can do to reduce turnover, it helps to start with an understanding of why people leave. According to our applicant research, most say they would leave their current employer for **better pay, career growth opportunities,** and **health insurance** elsewhere.

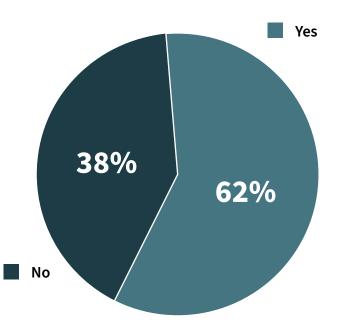
How challenging is employee retention for your facility right now?



What percentage of the hires you made in 2023 are still employed with your organization?



Is retention more of a challenge this year than it was last year?



Advice for hotels and resorts

Build the foundation with a great employer brand

The number one way you can stand out during a time of high competition and low talent supply is with a great employer brand. Before you make any other changes to your recruitment strategy, it's critical that you spend some time revisiting your employer branding messaging and materials. This might mean drafting new positioning about what makes your organization stand out (maybe you offer exceptional work/life balance?) or completely redesigning the look and feel of your career site and other branding materials.

Audit your hiring process and tools

The data shows that ghosting (or no-shows) remains a common problem among all hotels and resorts. You can combat this phenomenon and gain a leg up by providing a better experience for candidates than your competitors do. Start by thinking through the hiring process from the candidates' point of view and identify any areas that might be difficult to navigate or trigger them to move on. Consider how your tooling is playing a role in this. If you find that ghosting often happens while scheduling interviews, for example, consider tools that automate this step.

Create an employee-friendly onboarding program

Study after study shows that one of the biggest drivers of retention is great onboarding. When is the last time you've revisited your onboarding program? Your program should offer digital options for new hire paperwork (don't make new employees fill out forms on the first day!) as well as other document collection (e.g., certifications and insurance). It should also include a documented week one plan for your new hires that lays the groundwork for long-term success and fulfillment — including relationship building as well as extensive training.

Gather regular employee feedback

If you're not already regularly gathering feedback from employees it's time to start. Understanding the pulse of your existing team and identifying opportunities to keep them happy and loyal to your hotel is critical to curbing turnover and reducing the pressure on hiring teams. Conduct regular surveys, meet with employees 1:1, and always interview departing employees to better understand their reasons for leaving. And of course any time you gather feedback it's critical that you make real and concerted efforts to act on it.



An overview of high-demand hotel and resort roles

It's clear that hiring remains a challenge for hotels and resorts, but what positions are the most difficult to fill and retain?







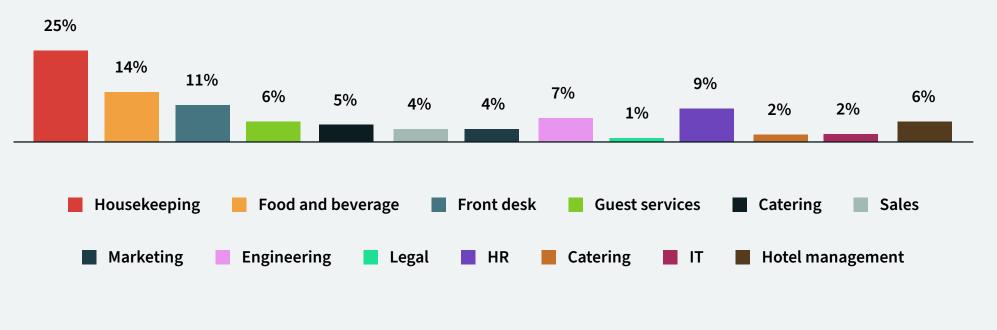
Demand for housekeepers outranks all other roles

A quarter (26%) of respondents said housekeepers are the most difficult to fill roles at their hotel currently followed by food and beverage, with 30% predicting that housekeepers will be in demand more than any other role in the year ahead. Hotels report that food and beverage workers are the hardest to retain, followed closely by housekeepers.

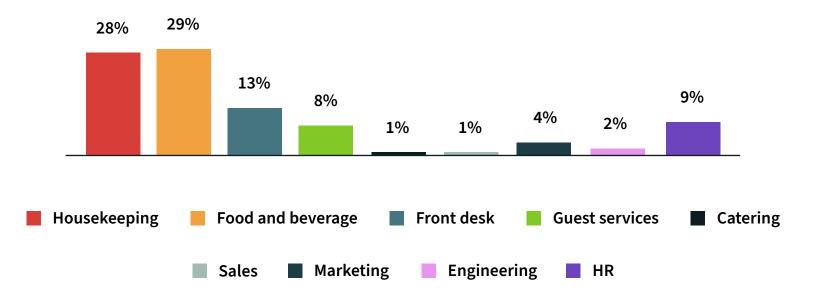
Housekeepers and food and beverage workers are in high demand now for a few reasons. For one, travel has recently surpassed pre-pandemic levels. But in order to meet demand, hotels need to have enough people on staff to clean rooms and service guests in the bar and restaurant.

Additionally, many of the workers who had previously taken these types of roles had opportunities to move onto other industries during the pandemic. On top of that, younger workers tend to have a negative perception of the sector and pursue work in fields they believe will provide them with the flexibility and mental health support they desire.

Which type of role is the most difficult to fill at your hotel?



For which types of role do you experience the highest turnover?



Advice for hotels and resorts

Foster relationships with local schools

Once you've revamped your employer brand, you can start taking your messages directly to the next generation of workers at high schools, community colleges, and four-year universities. Digital channels for recruitment are always important, but almost nothing beats face-to-face conversations when it comes to swaying opinions. Offer to speak to groups of students enrolled in relevant programs, create on-site job shadow programs and other learning opportunities, or donate scholarships.

Texting, texting, texting

Of course once you do have great candidates interested in your open roles, you need to do everything you can to keep them engaged and combat the no-show problem discussed earlier. Texting is one of the best ways you can ensure that top candidates remain interested in your hotel or resort. Texting can be used to not only move the hiring process along (e.g., scheduling interviews, kicking off onboarding processes) but it can also be a great tool for simply ensuring top candidates know what they're getting when they work for you. Use text to remind great candidates of your benefits, competitive pay, growth opportunities, and more.

Prioritize referrals

In the hospitality space, workers are highly connected with folks who are just like them — why not leverage this? Of course most hotels have an employee referral program in place but the key is finding ways to get more out of it. Make it a requirement for new hires to list people they know from previous roles or training programs and nurture these contacts over time. Or consistently reach out to your housekeeping and food and beverage staff via text reminding them of open roles as well as the bonuses you're offering. At times of highest demand, consider raising the bonus payout amount.



How leading hotels and resorts are designing jobs

Job design is a critical aspect of recruiting top talent in a tight market. Read on to see what benefits your competitors are offering and where you have an opportunity to stand out.







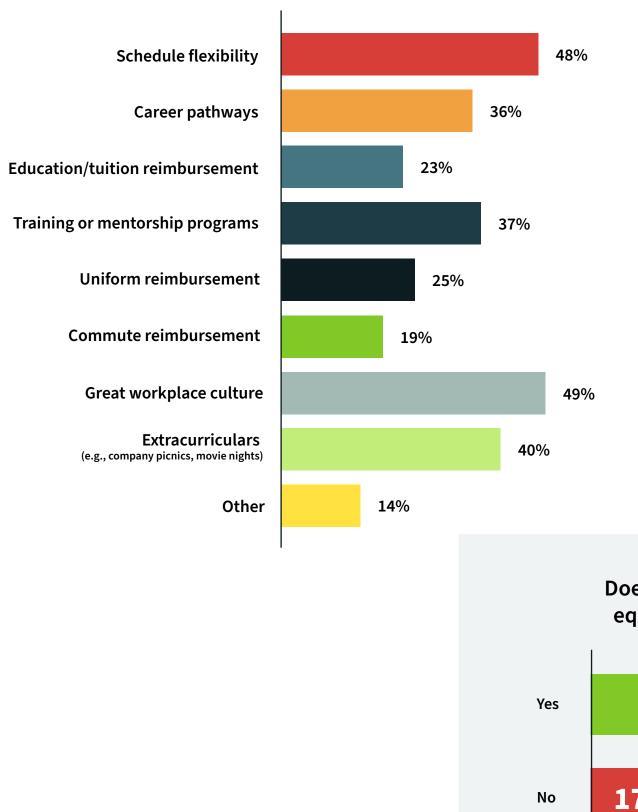
Common hotel and resort employee benefits

Most hotels are offering a range of benefits, with workplace culture and schedule flexibility topping the list. Extracurriculars like company picnics come in third — offered by 40% of respondents. When asked about DEI — a key factor in driving better hiring outcomes and overall business results — 83% said they do have a formal DEI program in place.

As hiring challenges continue to persist in the hospitality sector, one of the easiest things hotels can do to recruit more than their fair share of talent is get on par with competitors when it comes to benefits outside of pay. Workers in this sector — especially housekeepers, bartenders, and wait staff — have the upper hand. Winning them over often comes down to what you offer compared to the competitor down the street.



Which employee benefits do you offer outside of pay and health insurance? (select all that apply)



Does your hotel have a diversity, equity, and inclusion program?







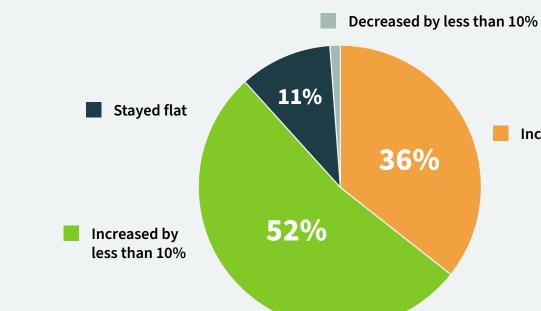
Wages continue to increase

As to be expected given current inflation and high competition, 88% of hotels raised wages this year, while compensation remained flat for 11% of respondents. According to ZipRecruiter, the average hourly wage for housekeepers is \$16.31, while bartenders are earning \$15.91/hour.

As hiring challenges continue to persist, hiking wages and sparking a wage war with your competitors won't solve the talent problem. According to Hirelogy's recent applicant survey, only 9% of today's hospitality job seekers will always take the higher paying job when presented with two offers. The top benefits job seekers choose over higher pay include:

- Schedule flexibility
- Career growth
- Fulfilling work
- Easy commute

In general, over the past year wages/salaries for our new hires has:





Increased by more than 10%



Advice for hotels and resorts

Audit your benefits

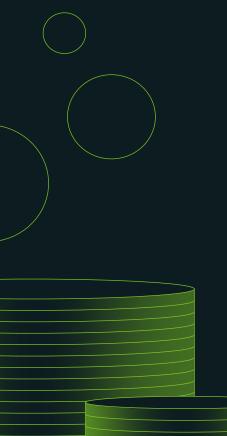
Job seekers today are looking for more than just a paycheck. They want to feel like they can grow professionally with the flexibility to live their lives. And based on the survey, we know that many hotels are taking the steps necessary to offer these benefits. Take some time to audit what you offer and identify opportunities for benefits you can afford to add to ensure that you're remaining competitive. The good news is that you likely already offer many of the perks job seekers are looking for, like flexibility and career growth. You now need to find a way to make that clear in your employment branding messaging.

Update your career site

With updated job descriptions in hand, take the same approach with your career site. Think of it like the homepage of your hotel's customer-facing website. What do you offer that job seekers want? What makes you different from competing facilities or employers in different industries? Use your career site to shout these selling points from the rooftops.

Rewrite your job descriptions

Once you have a grasp of what you can offer job seekers and how you want to message those offerings, it's important to clearly state it in your job descriptions. Gone are the days of simply stating what the job entails along with requirements. Your job descriptions should resemble an ad for a product or service — sell what job seekers get out of working from you. Lead with key perks like career growth, flexibility, and more. Then dive into requirements and day-to-day duties of the role. To generate effective job seekers even faster, leverage an ATS with AI-based job description automation.





Talent sourcing: What's working for hotels and resorts?

At a time when the number of open jobs outweighs the number of active job seekers, it can feel like attracting a high volume of quality applicants is impossible. Learn where leading hotels are sourcing their hires today and identify channels you can add to your strategy in 2024.







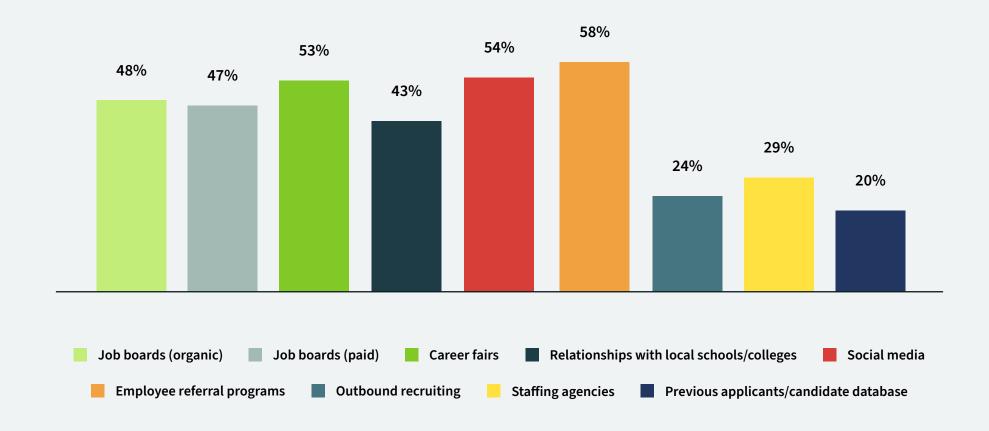
Which sourcing channels do hotels use?

Most hotels and resorts are relying on a multi-channel strategy to source talent, with employee referral programs, social media, and career fairs topping the list.

When we asked job seekers to list the channels they use to look for work in our most recent applicant research, Indeed, LinkedIn, Google search, and networking topped the list. What this tells us is that hotels are doing a nice job meeting job seekers where they are. If your team is still relying on just one or two channels to source talent, it's time to consider a diversification strategy.



Select all the channels you use to source talent





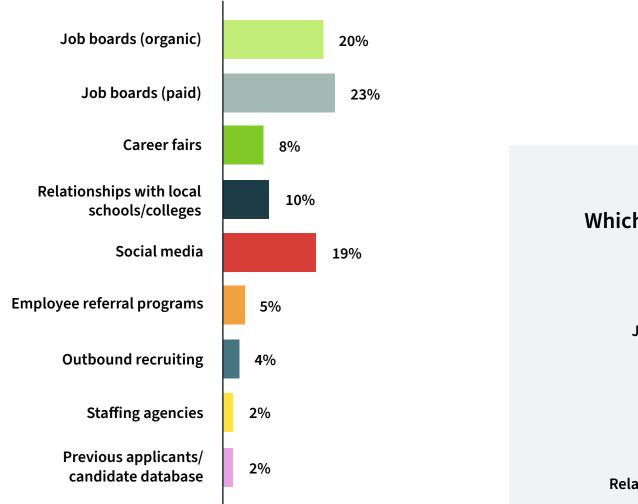
Which sourcing channels drive the most applicants and hires?

While hotels rely on a range of channels to source talent, there are a few that stand out in terms of applicant volume and quality. Respondents said paid and organic listings on job boards and social media bring in the most candidates, but when it comes to quality employee referral programs jump up to the top spot.

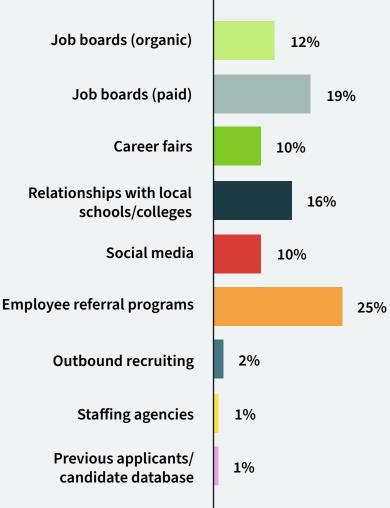
Referred candidates tend to be higher quality because they're effectively already vetted by your top performing employees. These are folks who are likely very similar to your existing staff and already have a greater interest in your organization than candidates sourced from other channels. Studies have also shown that referral hires are much more likely to stick around long-term and tend to perform better.

However, when it comes to sourcing, what works best for most hotels might not be what works best for you. The key is to understand where you're driving the most applicants in terms of both quality and quantity and shift your resources accordingly to get the most ROI from these channels.

Which channel is the top performing source in terms of applicant volume?



Which channel is the top performing source in terms of applicant quality?



The state of hotel and resort employee referral programs

Despite referral programs proving to be a great source for quality talent, most hotels are still relying on outdated processes and strategies for running these programs. Most respondents are still relying on word-of-mouth and spreadsheets to promote and manage their programs. And only 30% say they are happy with the level of participation in their programs.

This tells us that there is an opportunity for hotels to get even more out of these programs. By investing in improving referral program promotion and overall management processes it's possible to significantly increase referral candidates. Effective referral programs ultimately create a pipeline of better quality talent who you're more likely to retain — all while reducing your recruitment spend.



Which of the following statements are true about your employee referral program?



We generally rely on word-of-mouth to promote

We find that employee referral programs gener-



Job board spend among hotels

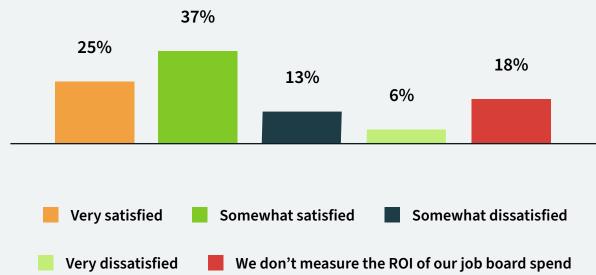
Paid job board ads tend to drive a high volume of talent, but how much is this costing hotels? Most are spending between \$2000-5000 per month, while another 20% spend in the \$500-\$2000 range per month. For the most part, hotels are satisfied with the return on this monthly spend, while 18% admitted to not tracking the results of paid job board ads.

Job boards are an essential part of any hospitality organization's talent strategy. In fact, our applicant research found that Indeed is the top channel used by hospitality job seekers today. Those that are unhappy with their spend on these sites are likely equating more spend with more applicants. The reality is that success on these highly competitive sites requires a strategic approach and a quality over quantity mindset

What is your monthly spend on job boards, across all locations?



Are you satisfied with the ROI of your job board spend?



Advice for hotels and resorts

Track sourcing-related hiring metrics and adjust accordingly

If you're like most hospitality businesses, you're probably using a wide range of channels to source applicants. But do you actually know which channels provide the best ROI? Start tracking metrics like applicants/source and hires/source to paint a clearer picture of which sources drive the most impact. From there you can develop a plan for adjustments you can make to optimize your time and resources.

Leverage your existing talent database

Do you ever wish you could bring a former employee back? Or hire a candidate you interviewed for a role last year? Well, you can (and should!). Leveraging relationships you've built over time can actually be a really lucrative strategy for filling open roles. Start by getting your database in order by centralizing all former employees, former applicants and candidates, and former referrals. Then start nurturing these groups through regular campaign messages. Of course getting this right is a massive undertaking, so consider recruitment platforms that facilitate advanced database management and communication automation.

Modernize your employee referral program

We know that employee referral programs are the top source of quality talent for hotels today, but most are relying on outdated tools and strategies for managing these programs — limiting the channel's potential. It's time to ditch the spreadsheets and inconsistent promotion tactics and get intentional about your program. Boost participation (and thus, quality candidates) by sending regular text campaigns to your team reminding them of open roles and bonus payout amounts. And invest in tools that allow you to execute all of this without ever leaving your applicant tracking system.

Sponsor your jobs on Indeed

Because so many hospitality businesses — beyond just hotels — are using Indeed, the site can become incredibly competitive. If you're not finding the results you're looking for with organic listings only, consider sponsoring your most important open roles. On average Indeed Sponsored Jobs result in 55% more applicants than non-sponsored jobs¹ and are 4.5x more likely to result in a hire than non-sponsored jobs.²



¹ Indeed data (US,CA)

² Indeed data (worldwide), Q4 2020

Hiring process speed and bottlenecks

Speed is a critical factor in a tight job market, especially given that 67% of job seekers in the hospitality industry say they accepted the first offer they received in their most recent job search. Are most hotels able to keep up with candidate expectations? Let's take a look.







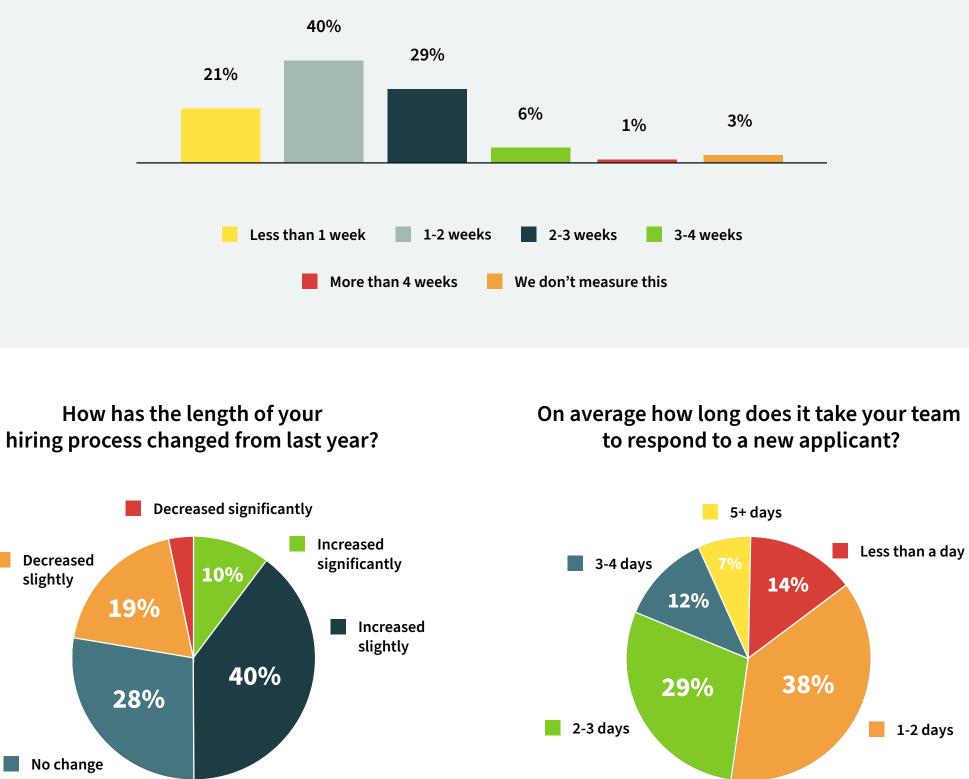
Average hiring process speed

Most respondents say they're able to hire qualified applicants in less than two weeks, and half say that this timeframe has remained the same or decreased since last year. When it comes to initial response time, just over half say they typically respond within 48 hours with 14% indicating that they respond the same day an application is received.

Given that most hotels and resorts struggle with ghosting and no-shows, it's no surprise that they are prioritizing hiring speed. Leading organizations are able to do this by defining hiring processes and mandates, investing in tools that make moving faster easier (think: automation and mobile), and adopting a more holistic mindset that considers the candidate experience beyond their initial application.



On average, how long is your hiring process? (the time it takes from the moment someone applies to the job to become a fully-onboarded employee?)

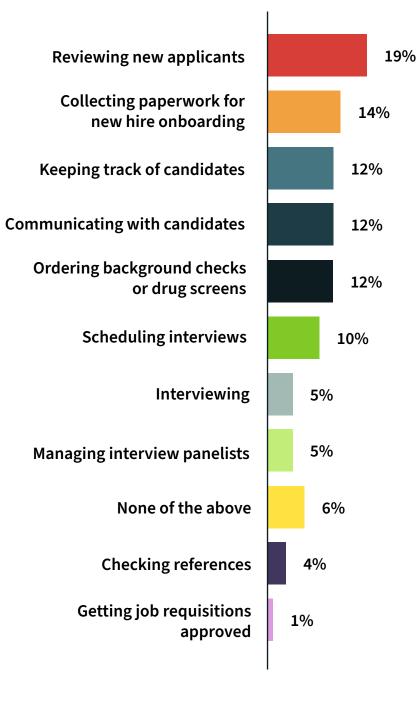


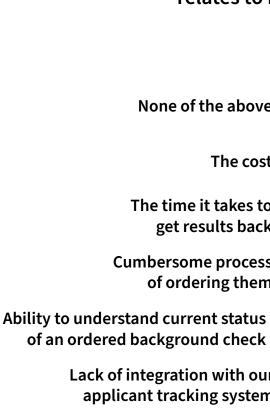
Hiring process bottlenecks

When asked what prevents them from moving even faster when vetting and interviewing a top candidate, the process of reviewing new applicants and collecting required paperwork tops the list. As it relates to background checks and drug screens specifically, the time it takes to get results back combined with the cumbersome process of ordering them are the most common bottlenecks for hotels.

Again, much of these bottlenecks are due to lack of defined processes and outdated tools. There's only so much hiring teams can do within the confines of what's provided to them. Top hospitality businesses are creating guide rails for their teams to work smarter, not harder by giving them the technology and direction they need to succeed.

What is the MOST cumbersome step in your hiring process?



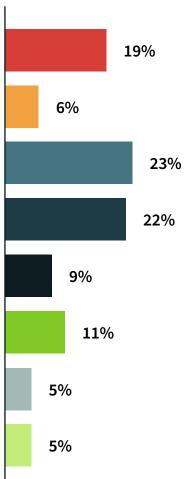


We do not conduct background checks

What is your biggest challenge as it relates to background checks?

None of the above The cost The time it takes to get results back **Cumbersome process** of ordering them Lack of integration with our applicant tracking system

Other



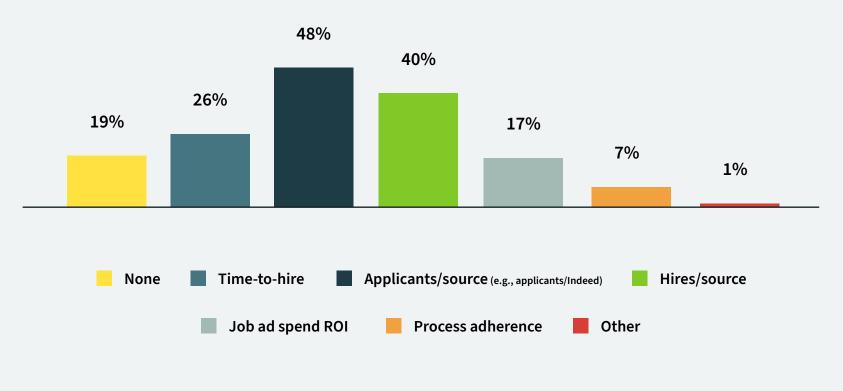
Hotel and resort hiring metrics

Identifying opportunities to recruit better quality talent and fill roles faster typically starts with an understanding of what's working and what isn't. About 20% admit to not tracking any sourcing metrics.

Of those that do, most are tracking applicants per and hires per source. Few hotels are tracking process related metrics or job board ROI key metrics that can help HR teams understand what's driving ghosting and how to optimize spend.



Which hiring metrics (if any) do you track regularly?







Advice for hotels and resorts

Track process-related hiring metrics and adjust accordingly

To remain competitive in today's hiring market, you need to move fast on great candidates. But much like with sourcing, it's difficult to improve time-to-hire without knowing what's slowing you down. If you aren't already, start tracking hiring speed and process adherence across locations to identify roadblocks (Is interview scheduling slowing you down? Or document collection?) and make the necessary adjustments to your processes and tech stack based on what you find.

Adopt a modern applicant tracking system

Modernizing and centralizing all of your hiring steps can also make a big difference when it comes to reducing time-to-hire. For example, the time it takes to manually switch from your email account back to your hiring platform to communicate with candidates and then your internal team can add days to your process. Look for platforms that offer everything you need — from distributing jobs to making an offer — in one central location.

Embrace automation

No matter how many HR employees you have on staff, human beings can only process so much information at a time. These human limitations will prevent you from moving faster in your hiring process at a certain point. That's where automations can come into play. We know HR teams are often bogged down by the time it takes to review applicants, schedule interviews, and manage background check processes. Why not let automation streamline these tasks for you? Many tools out there, including Hireology, offer everything you need to drastically reduce the time spent on these tasks — allowing you to hire faster and focus on more important work.



Leveraging Al in hospitality recruitment

Artificial intelligence (AI) dominated conversations across all sectors in the past year — hospitality included. To gauge how hotels feel as it relates to hiring and HR, we asked several questions around comfortability and expected usage of AI.





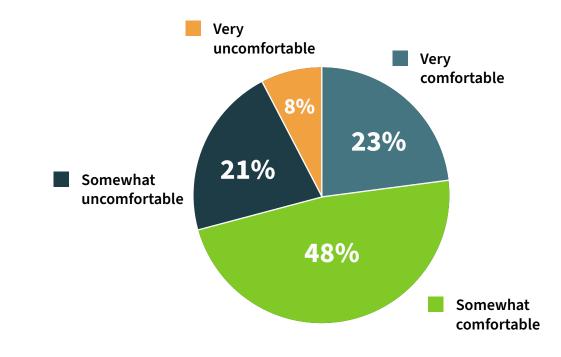


Hoteliers are comfortable with the idea of Al

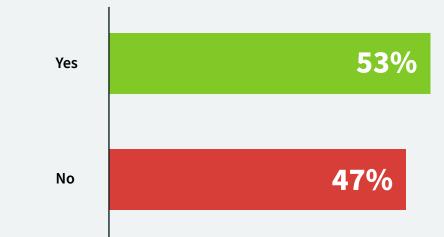
AI has become a buzzword in all industries, not just hospitality. So it's no surprise that about 70% are somewhat or very comfortable with the concept of AI in recruitment. Additionally, 43% said they feel they understand the potential AI could have in their day-to-day jobs in hospitality recruiting and HR.

However, more than half (53%) say they have concerns around AI biases. Recruiting and HR is a highly personal yet complex field where the right answers and decisions are almost never clear cut. It is natural for HR teams to have some concerns and reservations about adding AI to the mix.

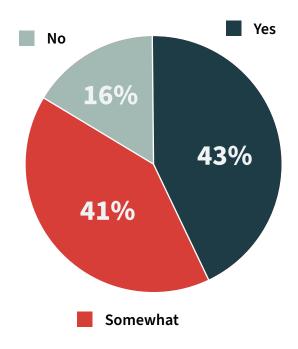
How comfortable are you with the idea of using AI in recruitment in any capacity?



Do you have concerns about biases as it relates to AI in recruitment?



Do you feel you understand the possibilities and impacts of AI as it relates to recruitment?



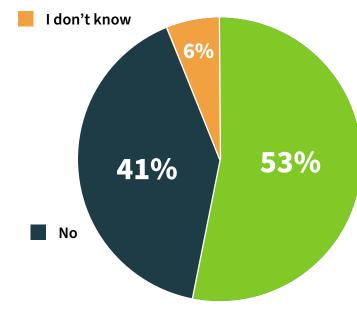


Current and potential usage of AI for hospitality hiring

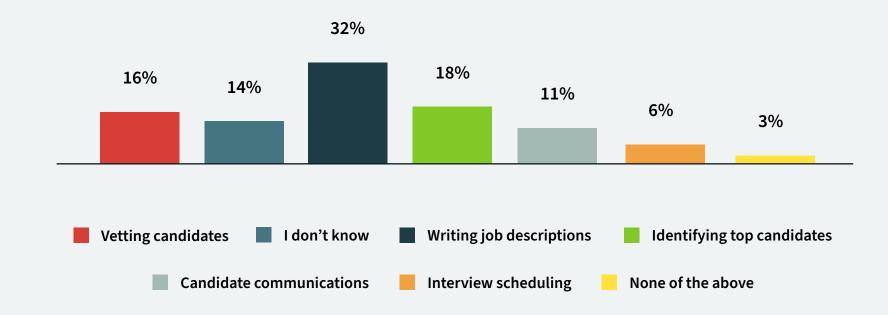
Currently more than half of the survey respondents said they are using AI in some capacity in their current roles — much higher than any other industry surveyed. When asked where they feel AI could be most useful in the hiring process, about 17% say they don't know or didn't see the potential in any of the options offered. However, about a third of respondents listed writing job descriptions, which is a capability already offered by leading applicant tracking systems on the market — including Hireology.



Do you use AI in any capacity in the hiring process right now?



In your opinion, where would AI be most useful in the hiring process (if at all)





Advice for hotels and resorts

Experiment with public AI resources

The data shows that facilities are cautious about AI, which makes sense given the relatively negative buzz around the concept. Those that are curious about AI can experiment without making massive investment by leveraging free resources like ChatGPT. You could use these types of tools to draft candidate emails that you can revise and reuse throughout your hiring process. Or you could experiment with prompting it to write job descriptions. Whatever you choose to try, the key is getting yourself familiar and comfortable with the technology.

Invest in forward-thinking HR technology

If you're interested in getting more in-depth with AI, many applicant tracking systems and recruitment software providers are beginning to integrate AI into their platforms. Look for solutions that offer tools like automated communication, AI-based interview scheduling, and more. Software providers that are already offering AI in these ways will be the leaders as AI becomes more commonplace down the line.

Get your data in order

AI has the potential to revolutionize hiring for the better. But for AI to be effective, it needs to be trained on complete and accurate data. That means every applicant and candidate in your talent database must have a complete profile. And every rejection, interview, or hire is logged in the system with as much information as possible. With a clean database, you'll be able to leverage time-saving tools like candidate recommendation engines, job description writers, and more down the line.

Use AI for efficiency, not decision making

Concerns around biases and discrimination are also critical to consider. Al-driven hiring processes depend on the quality of the data used to train the algorithms. Biases present in historical data could be made worse by AI, leading to unintentional discriminatory outcomes. To ensure fairness and transparency, a level of human involvement is and always will be essential. While you can conduct data audits, and work to improve your algorithm, it will never be advised to leave final decisions around hiring up to AI models entirely.



Moving forward

As you step into the new age of talent acquisition and retention in the hospitality industry, we hope this report serves as a guiding compass. Hiring is and will remain a challenge, but by understanding the competitive landscape, you can form strategies to reach job seekers sooner, move faster on top applicants, and provide a better experience for candidates.

In the hospitality sector, your people are your biggest driver of business success. Afterall, you can't improve occupancy, and thus drive revenue, without great talent in place to clean rooms and service guests. You simply need to find the right combination of technology, strategy, and process to help you capture and retain the very best.



Learn how Hireology can help

Ä Hireology

Hireology is the leading provider of recruitment automation for multi-location businesses. The platform equips HR and business leaders with the support and tools they need to attract better quality talent, fill open roles faster, and make data-driven hiring decisions. Hireology was rated number eight on G2's 2023 list of 50 Best HR Products.

More than 10,000 businesses — including hotels, resorts, and property management groups — rely on Hireology to hire the skilled workers they need to build better teams and create a competitive advantage.

Schedule your free demo today

Methodology

In December 2023, Hireology surveyed about 100 HR employees at hotels and resorts nationwide. The breakdown of the employee count at the respondents' properties is as follows:



20%

27%