

Redefining the Role of the Recruiter From Sourcing Expert to Talent Advisor





Overview

In today's rapidly evolving corporate landscape, talent acquisition (TA) is experiencing a paradigm shift. Propelled by AI and machine learning, traditional recruiter practices are being reshaped and the recruiter role is becoming increasingly complex and multidimensional.

As a result, companies are recognizing the importance of investing in their recruiters, not only because they are the ticket to finding great talent but also, as our Talent Acquisition research indicates, well-developed recruiters correlate with innovation and customer satisfaction.

This report explores the evolving role of recruiters, focusing on their strategic importance, the new skills required in a data-driven era, and how they can be equipped for future TA challenges.

In This Report

- The Dynamic Nature of Recruitment in a Post-Industrial Economy
- The Emerging Role of Recruiters in Systemic Talent Acquisition
- HR Strategies That Empower Next-Gen Recruiters
- The Way Forward
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The Dynamic Nature of Recruitment in a Post-Industrial Economy

Today's labor market is ever-changing, with scarcity of talent being one of the biggest issues companies face.¹ Employees are more inclined than ever to seek new challenges and career opportunities, leading to a more fluid and transient workforce.

This trend imposes new demands on recruiters, who must meet immediate hiring needs and understand shifts in required skills. This forecasting is crucial in a post-industrial labor market characterized by constant evolution, mergers, and convergence across various industries, giving rise to unique and highly specialized work segments (see Figure 1).

In the past, recruiters focused on building pipelines and closing candidates. The traditional recruiter was more of a salesperson who also uses HR tools to find, assess, and recruit. Much of this work was administrative (e.g., scheduling, background checking, interviewing).

Today, with AI platforms automating mundane tasks, recruiters are expected to play a more strategic role. Beyond filling vacancies, they are now responsible for building and maintaining a strong employer brand that resonates across platforms.² This involves navigating a complex landscape of job boards, hiring sources, and recruiting events, each with its unique audience and effectiveness. On top of that, recruiters must master the art of candidate selection, which requires a deep understanding of both the role and the company culture (see Figure 2 on the next page).

Recruiters spend a substantial amount of time supporting hiring managers. Managers may not fully comprehend the complexities of the recruitment process or the balance between external hiring, internal hiring, contract hiring, and outsourcing. High-impact recruiters should serve as talent advisors, educating and collaborating with hiring managers to find the best way to fill talent gaps.

Recruiters need to do more than just find candidates; they must also understand the market for these positions. Additionally, they should be able to identify people with

Figure 1: Journey to a Post-Industrial Economy (Intelligence Age)

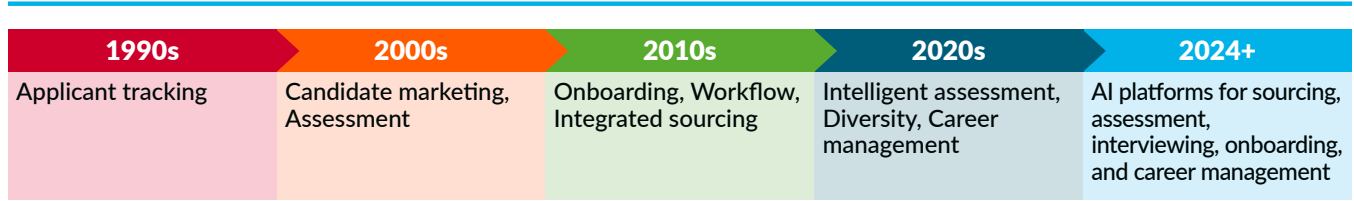
Agrarian Age 1850s	Industrial Age 1920s	Information Age 1970s	Intelligence Age 2020s
BUSINESS MODELS			
Farms, merchants, oil companies, shipping firms	Auto companies, aircraft builders, manufacturers	Telecommunications, computer companies, media companies	Tech companies, e-commerce, fintech, AI-based economy
Farms, merchants, craftsmen	Standard Oil, GM, Ford	IBM, Disney, AT&T	Google, Microsoft, Nvidia
TALENT MODELS			
People died in their 40s Companies lasted 100+ years	People died in their 50s Companies lasted 50+ years	People died in their 70s Companies lasted 20 to 30 years	People live into their 90s Companies last 10 to 15 years
<i>Talent is abundant Labor is replaceable</i>	<i>Talent to be trained CEO succession</i>	<i>War for skills Leadership pipeline</i>	<i>Epic shortages of skills and workers</i>
CFO		CIO	CHRO

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2023

1 Welcome to the Post-Industrial Age, Josh Bersin/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

2 The Definitive Guide to Recruiting: Human-Centered Talent Acquisition, Josh Bersin and Janet Mertens/The Josh Bersin Company, 2022.

Figure 2: The Evolving Talent Acquisition Landscape



Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2024

adjacent skills who could be a good fit. This requires skills that go beyond the scope of traditional recruitment and delve into other HR domains³ (see Figure 3).

The Rise of Technology in Recruitment

Hundreds of different technologies are available to address various stages of the recruitment process, such as assessment, sourcing, candidate marketing, interviewing, tracking, and

analytics. These recent advancements are steering recruitment toward an AI-enabled future where data-driven decision-making and automated processes are the norm.

This transition, however, is still in its early stages. Integrating these technologies into the recruitment process is not only about automation but also about enhancing the recruiter's ability to make informed decisions. AI and machine learning

Figure 3: Skills Convergence across Different HR Domains



Source: LinkedIn Thought Leadership Insights and The Josh Bersin Company, 2023

3 The Definitive Guide to Human Resources: Systemic HR™, Josh Bersin and Kathi Enderes, PhD/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

enable recruiters to analyze vast amounts of data, gain insights into candidate behavior, and predict future hiring trends. Companies such as Unilever, Hyatt, Accenture, McDonald's, FedEx, Providence, and Lockheed Martin are pioneers in this field.⁴ This technological empowerment is reshaping the recruitment landscape, making it more efficient, effective, and aligned with business strategies.

The financial implications of these technological advancements are significant. On average, companies typically invest thousands of dollars per hire, accounting for various expenses such as hiring fees, job advertisements, sourcing tools, technology assessments, and the salaries and training of recruitment personnel.⁵ This investment is higher for senior-level positions, often reaching tens of thousands of dollars per hire.

As these processes become more intelligent and automated, companies can save millions of dollars on the function. The evolving TA landscape, characterized by several challenges and the rising importance of technology, sets the stage for deeper exploration into the redefined role of recruiters.

The Emerging Role of Recruiters in Talent Acquisition

Despite the growing potential for automation in recruitment, the essence of the industry remains deeply rooted in human connections and relationships. However, there is a pressing shortage of skilled recruiters, highlighting the critical need for comprehensive training and upskilling in the field. Our research indicates that companies with human-centered TA capabilities are more adaptable, profitable, and innovative and have higher customer satisfaction and employee engagement.⁶

⁴ *HR Predictions for 2024: Imperatives for the Year Ahead*, Josh Bersin/The Josh Bersin Company, 2024.

⁵ *The Definitive Guide to Recruiting: Human-Centered Talent Acquisition*, Josh Bersin and Janet Mertens/The Josh Bersin Company, 2022.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Recruiters as Strategic Advisors

Recruiters today transcend the traditional role of sourcing and hiring candidates. They are now expected to understand the labor market, recognize subtle candidate needs, and reflect the company's true employment brand in the marketplace. Thus, recruiters are becoming talent advisors, working closely with hiring managers to identify skill gaps, refine job roles, understand team dynamics, and advise on talent strategy.

Recruiters are also expected to have open discussions about which type of opportunity best fits the scope of work and encourage hiring managers to look for talent across the talent ecosystem, not just in external talent pools.⁷

For example, at Starbucks, the critical talent issue is not just hiring and retention but also building a pipeline of managers and district managers.⁸ This development is catalyzed by the growing necessity for recruiters to align their activities not just with immediate hiring needs but also with the long-term strategic objectives of the organization (see Figure 4 on the next page).

The Strategic Advisor Mindset

Embracing the role of strategic advisor, recruiters are now expected to contribute significantly to the planning and execution of broader business strategies. Their insights and inputs are becoming crucial in shaping workforce planning, talent management, and organizational growth strategies. As strategic advisors, recruiters are no longer focused solely on filling vacancies but instead are instrumental in building and sustaining a resilient and agile workforce that can navigate the complexities of an ever-changing business environment.

Understanding Market Dynamics and Organizational Nuances

Today's recruiters must possess a comprehensive understanding of the business landscape to anticipate future talent needs. This entails a thorough knowledge of industry-specific trends, challenges, and opportunities. They need to be adept at interpreting how various roles and skill sets align with the organization's overarching goals. They are expected to

⁷ *Breaking the Boundaries of Recruitment: A Systemic Approach to Talent Lifecycle Management*, Josh Bersin and Jordan Schmitting/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

⁸ *HR Predictions for 2024: Imperatives for the Year Ahead*, Josh Bersin/The Josh Bersin Company, 2024.

Figure 4: Traditional Recruiters vs. Recruiters as Strategic Advisors

Criteria	Traditional Recruiters	Recruiters as Strategic Advisors
Role focus	Primarily focus on filling positions quickly	Focus on aligning recruitment with organizational strategy
Value proposition	Seen as a necessary function to bring in new hires	Viewed as strategic partners who contribute to business success through intelligent TA
Knowledge of business	Basic understanding of the company and its needs	Deep knowledge of the business, industry, and competitive landscape
Approach	Reactive—respond to immediate hiring needs	Proactive—anticipate future talent needs and trends
Skill set	Strong in administrative and process-oriented tasks	Skills in analytics, market intelligence, and strategic planning
Relationship with hiring managers	Limited interaction with hiring managers; mostly transactional	Close collaboration with hiring managers as partners in talent planning
Candidate sourcing	Primarily source candidates externally	Consider both external and internal talent pools, promoting internal mobility
Use of technology	Use technology primarily for administrative tasks such as tracking applicants and scheduling interviews	Leverage technology for talent intelligence, understanding skills availability in the market, and predicting future talent needs
Metrics for success	Focused on metrics such as time-to-fill and cost-per-hire	Emphasis on long-term metrics such as employee retention and performance impact
Talent pipeline	Develop pipeline based on current vacancies	Build a strategic talent pipeline for future needs
Workforce planning	Less involved in overall workforce planning	Integral part of workforce planning and forecasting

Source: *The Josh Bersin Company, 2024*

identify emerging roles and skills critical to the organization's success, thus allowing them to proactively strategize and prepare for future TA challenges. Below we highlight three organizations that are tipping the scales in the right direction:

- **Schneider Electric**, a digital automation and energy management company, requires its recruiters to have a deep understanding of the company's business landscape, including its culture, skills requirements, and strategic objectives. This enables the recruiters to

effectively identify potential internal candidates for open positions, assess their fit, and guide them through the internal mobility process.⁹

- **Kuehne+Nagel**, a global transport and logistics company, implemented a recruiter upskilling program designed to help recruiters anticipate future talent needs by understanding the evolving business landscape and the skills required for future roles.¹⁰

⁹ *The Definitive Guide to Recruiting: Human-Centered Talent Acquisition*, Josh Bersin and Janet Mertens/The Josh Bersin Company, 2022.

¹⁰ *Designing and Delivering Intelligent Talent Experiences: Key Practices to Recruit, Engage, and Grow your Workforce*, Josh Bersin and Janet Mertens/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

- **Boehringer Ingelheim**, a pharmaceutical and animal health company, leverages market insights to inform its recruiting decisions. The company's approach has evolved from consulting data on an ad hoc basis to upskilling recruiters to be consultative partners to the business. This approach aligns the TA process with the company's mission of delivering "value through innovation."¹¹

Anticipating Future Talent Needs

Recruiters need to collaborate closely with hiring managers to gain insights into organizational needs and the specific requirements of each role. This partnership is vital for crafting accurate candidate profiles and developing tailored sourcing strategies.

Companies such as Cisco, Oracle, Siemens Energy, L'Oréal, and Philips have adopted solutions that ensure their recruitment practices are strategic, highly optimized, scalable, and built around the employment brand.¹² SAB Miller, a South African multinational brewing and beverage company, has a recruiting team for each brand that creates its own local talent networks, operating in a decentralized way. This enables recruiters to be very close to the local business.

Systemic HR Catalysts

Integrating recruiter efforts and impact across learning and development (L&D); diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI); and pay and rewards ensures a holistic approach to talent management exemplified by leading companies such as HSBC, REA Group, Accenture, Deutsche Telekom, Target, Microsoft, IBM, and Johnson & Johnson.

These companies foster environments where recruiters get to collaborate closely with L&D to pinpoint and develop essential skills, enhancing internal mobility and fostering a culture of continuous learning.¹³

In DEI, recruiter efforts are crucial in promoting unbiased recruitment practices and fostering an inclusive environment, with some companies employing diversity scouts and leveraging AI for equitable hiring.¹⁴ Moreover, understanding

and communicating the rewards structure is vital for ensuring pay equity and attracting diverse talent, demonstrating commitment to a fair and competitive compensation strategy.¹⁵ This systemic approach not only aligns with organizational strategy but also significantly impacts employee retention, performance, and satisfaction.

The New Full-Stack Capabilities of Recruiters

The integration of data-driven decision-making and the application of AI-powered tools are transforming the competencies needed in modern recruitment practices, which include a comprehensive set of skills that spans various aspects of the recruitment process and beyond (see Figure 5 on the next page).

Recruiters with these kinds of capabilities have the ability to handle all stages of recruitment as well as understanding business needs and promoting employee development. On top of that, recruiters must now be proficient at interpreting and applying data insights to their recruitment strategies.

Data Analytics Mastery

Understanding how talent acquisition integrates with other parts of HR and the business is a key skill recruiters must master. At the same time, recruiters must develop expertise in data analytics, enabling them to make informed decisions and identify optimal sourcing channels per talent need. This allows them to effectively target passive candidates, leveraging predictive analytics to forecast hiring needs and trends. Such insights can inform TA strategies, helping recruiters to be more proactive and strategic.

ASML, a Netherlands-based company that provides manufacturing equipment, software, and services to the semiconductor industry, has been focusing on improving the reporting function in talent acquisition to reduce time-to-fill. They have defined global metrics and set up a dashboard in an analytics tool that pulls data from the applicant tracking system (ATS), which has significantly reduced the time recruiters spend pulling reports.

¹¹ *Talent Planning: How to Utilize Market Insights for Talent Acquisition Efficiency*, Josh Bersin/ The Josh Bersin Company, 2020.

¹² *The Definitive Guide to Recruiting: Human-Centered Talent Acquisition*, Josh Bersin and Janet Mertens/The Josh Bersin Company, 2022.

¹³ *Breaking the Boundaries of Recruitment: A Systemic Approach to Talent Lifecycle Management*, Josh Bersin and Jordan Schmitting/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

¹⁴ *The Definitive Guide to Human Resources: Systemic HR™*, Josh Bersin and Kathi Enderes, PhD/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

¹⁵ *The Definitive Guide to Human Resources: Systemic HR™*, Josh Bersin and Kathi Enderes, PhD/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

Figure 5: Top 10 Full-Stack Capabilities of Recruiters



Source: *The Josh Bersin Company, 2022*

Metrics include both accepted and rejected candidate satisfaction, percentage of requisitions managed and filled by a third-party agency, and percentage of submitted candidates accepted by hiring managers. Sanofi, a global biopharmaceutical company, has centralized data from the ATS and other recruiting systems into a business intelligence tool. This has enabled the company to look at numbers and easily compare insights across the organization, aligning the TA process with overall business objectives.¹⁶

Continuous Proficiency in Tech-Enabled Solutions

In an era where skills and workers are scarce and digital presence is increasingly important, recruiters must be adept at using digital and social media strategies for recruitment. The emergence of AI and machine learning in recruitment is transforming the industry, making it urgent for recruiters to ensure they are leveraging tools that allow them to be both efficient and effective. Nowadays, recruiters need to be skilled in using AI-powered tools for various aspects of the

¹⁶ *Guide to Talent Acquisition for the Future: Measuring Recruitment Impact with Reporting and Analytics*, Josh Bersin/The Josh Bersin Company, 2020.

recruitment process, including candidate sourcing, screening, and engagement. These tools not only enhance efficiency but also help in reducing biases, thus promoting a more equitable and diverse hiring process.

Companies such as Kuehne+Nagel, Southwest Airlines, and privately held American national security and technology company Peraton have leveraged AI-powered tools to streamline their recruitment processes, improve the recruiter experience, and enhance hiring outcomes.^{17,18}

Skills for the Post-Industrial Business World

Having deep knowledge of the business, letting go of the job-centric approach and aligning candidate’s capabilities with the organization’s goals, strategy, and vision is important for recruiters, but human-centered skills are equally important. Empathy, adaptability, and the ability to build authentic relationships with candidates, hiring managers, and teammates are essential for understanding candidate needs, adapting to changing business requirements, and building strong relationships.¹⁹

Indeed, a new model is needed that puts the work (and the person) at the center, identifies skills required to do the work, and systemically works across all HR domains to match work with skills (see Figure 6).

L’Oréal continuously develops its recruiters to ensure they are growing in the skills that allow them to actively manage their workloads. And when recruiting effectively stopped for a year, Scotiabank used that time to upskill the team. In many cases, recruiters tried their hand at new roles inside and outside HR, building new skills and capabilities such as executive communication, business acumen, and consulting—many of which they brought back to recruiting.²⁰

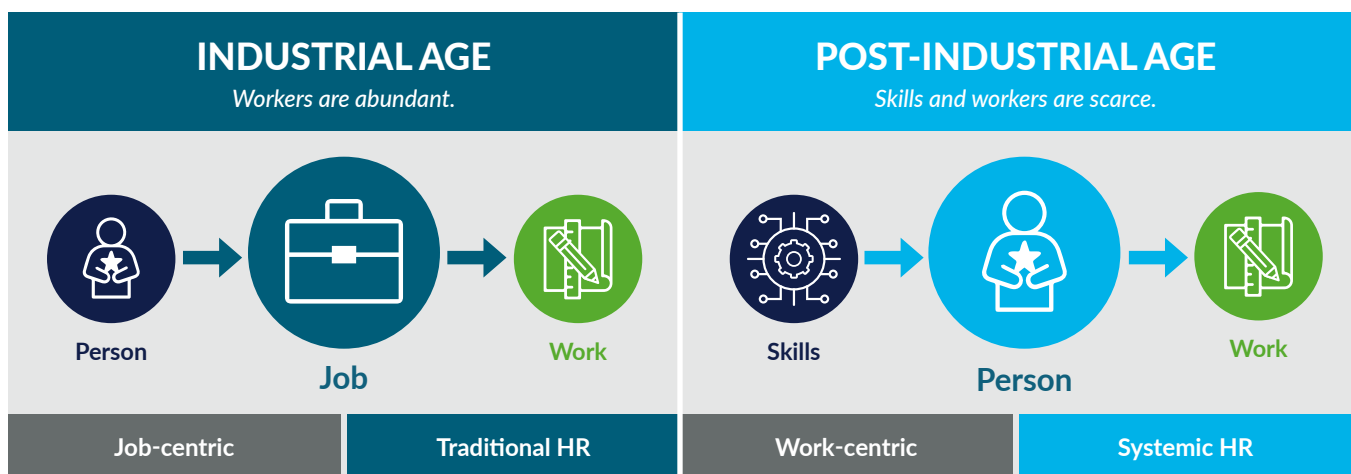
HR Strategies That Empower Next-Gen Recruiters

The recruiter role is being redefined by the need for real-time data-driven insights. This shift, driven by a need for more strategic, proactive, and tailored recruitment approaches, marks not only the imperative to develop new skills but also a departure from traditional reactive methods.

Access to On-Demand Candidate Insights

The modern recruitment landscape demands a skills-based approach, where recruiters are equipped with tools and data that give them access to real-time insights. Still, only 20% of

Figure 6: A New Model for People and Talent



Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2023

17 *The Definitive Guide to Recruiting: Human-Centered Talent Acquisition*, Josh Bersin and Janet Mertens/The Josh Bersin Company, 2022.

18 *Designing and Delivering Intelligent Talent Experiences: Key Practices to Recruit, Engage, and Grow your Workforce*, Josh Bersin and Janet Mertens/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

19 *Welcome to the Post-Industrial Age*, Josh Bersin/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

20 *The Definitive Guide to Recruiting: Human-Centered Talent Acquisition*, Josh Bersin and Janet Mertens/The Josh Bersin Company, 2022.

companies use skills insights for hiring (see Figure 7).²¹ This approach is crucial in enabling them to respond swiftly and effectively to the dynamic needs of the talent market and requires a transformation in recruitment strategies.

Recruiters must now operate with a mindset that values agility and foresight, leveraging data to inform every stage of the recruitment process. By doing so, they can adapt their strategies to the evolving needs of candidates and organizations and help progress toward becoming a skills-based organization.

Data to Understand the Talent Pool

Skills-based hiring has immense potential, as it allows companies to expand the hiring pool significantly, especially when adjacent skills are taken into consideration. It also increases diversity, tapping into unexplored candidate pools. However, our research uncovered that only 20% of companies use skills insights for hiring.²²

Next-gen recruiters need to use data analytics to understand the complexities of the talent pool. This involves a detailed analysis of demographics, career aspirations, skill sets, and behavioral patterns. The precision brought about by data-driven insights allows recruiters to not only find candidates who fit the required skill set but who also align with the company's culture and values. This level of precision is essential in building a workforce that is both skilled and cohesive.

Staying Ahead of Market Trends

Keeping abreast of real-time market insights is essential for recruiters. This includes monitoring industry trends, salary benchmarks, and competitive analyses, which are critical in shaping effective recruitment strategies that resonate with current market conditions. IBM, for example, which has 20-plus data scientists in its HR department, has built a real-time natural language processing (NLP) system that alerts the CHRO and her team when grievances or management issues arise in the network.²³

Figure 7: Progress toward a Skills-Based Organization

Only 20% of companies use skills insights for hiring	Only 10% of companies have a strategy to pay for skills
Only 12% of companies have programs to help people build skills for new careers	Only 9% of companies have a skills-based, easy-to-use talent marketplace
Only 12% of companies work on a business-aligned skills strategy	Only 6% of companies have a system for real-time skills insights

Source: The Josh Bersin Company, 2023

²¹ *The Definitive Guide to Building a Dynamic Organization*, Josh Bersin and Kathi Enderes, PhD/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

²² Ibid.

²³ *The Definitive Guide to Recruiting: Human-Centered Talent Acquisition*, Josh Bersin and Janet Mertens/The Josh Bersin Company, 2022.

Strong Partnership with Hiring Managers

These insights position recruiters as valuable advisors to hiring managers. Armed with up-to-date market knowledge, they can guide decision-making processes, ensuring that recruitment strategies are not only effective but also aligned with market realities (see Figure 8).

Companies such as Boehringer Ingelheim leverage TA analytics and talent planning to inform recruiting decisions and decide which skills to hire for and which skills to grow internally through L&D or internal mobility. This equips recruiters with the insights needed to evolve from talent request servicers to consultative partners to the business.

Engaging Passive Candidates

Engaging passive candidates—those who are not actively seeking new opportunities—requires a deep understanding of their motivations and aspirations coupled with the incessant support of technology. To engage passive candidates effectively, recruiters must delve into their psychology, understanding what drives their career decisions and how they view potential job changes. This insight is crucial in tailoring outreach and engagement strategies. Understanding people and the market at large is not enough for organizations to scale their recruitment efforts.




Recruiters must adopt a more nuanced approach to candidate experience management, recognizing the unique factors that might attract candidates to new opportunities, powered by the right technology to ensure this elusive talent pool is properly mapped.

Organizations such as Peraton, an American national security and tech company, and global financial services organization Sun Life Financial set out to build talent pipelines to move away from reactively responding to requisitions as they come in. Peraton has significantly expanded its talent pool by leveraging AI-powered tools that help the company tap into passive talent with the skills needed for the companies' strategic priorities.

Targeted Communication

The key to engaging passive talent lies in crafting compelling personalized messages. These messages must resonate with the individual's career aspirations, drawing them toward considering new opportunities. This involves crafting resonant messages that speak directly to their career goals and interests, often highlighting opportunities for growth, company culture, or unique job benefits. In engaging these candidates, it's vital to differentiate the role and the company from their current position. This might involve highlighting unique aspects of the company culture, career development opportunities, or other benefits that set the organization apart.

Figure 8: Sample Questions from Recruiters as Talent Advisors to Hiring Managers

	Work Design <ul style="list-style-type: none">Have your team's priorities or responsibilities changed recently?Have technology innovations impacted the nature of your team's work?
	Job Design <ul style="list-style-type: none">Would a temporary position or gig opportunity best fit the needs of your team?Is a high level of autonomy critical to the role, or are there frequent collaboration opportunities to facilitate learning in the flow of work?
	Organization Design <ul style="list-style-type: none">Is your current team structure conducive to the work that needs to be done?Do we need to backfill this expert? Or is there more value in hiring for additional entry to mid-level positions that we can fill with individuals who will grow into the expert role?

Source: *The Josh Bersin Company, 2023*

For example, Unilever designed a hero campaign called “You’re more than your job title” to boost brand awareness and highlight the notion of purpose that is core to the company’s brand.²⁴ And Southwest Airlines leverages an intelligent career site with an AI-powered conversational chatbot to collect information about every job-seeker’s skills, interests, years of experience, and geography. The intelligence builds with each interaction the candidate has with the platform. For candidates who don’t convert right away and apply for a job, or in cases of high-potential candidates who were previously in the pipeline, the company’s TA team can then use the information stored in the CRM to build personalized campaigns, target messaging, and gather additional information until they’re ready to act.²⁵

Nurturing Long-Term Relationships

Building long-term relationships with potential candidates is essential to creating a reservoir of talent. Authentically showcasing the employer brand, consistently communicating, personalizing the candidate journey, and listening and learning are essential elements that forge a strong candidate experience (see Figure 9). Recruiters should focus on nurturing these relationships, maintaining contact, and keeping candidates engaged with the company, even when there are no immediate vacancies.





Sun Life Financial runs a relationship-based model for campus hiring. Through this model, the company can forge deep, long-lasting relationships with candidates, educate them on the business, and help them discover where their skills, interests, and aspirations align before they even enter the interview process. The recruiting team cultivates relationships with students across multiple touchpoints before they ever step in for an interview. These touchpoints happen across the 300 to 400 campus events that Sun Life hosts each year.²⁶

Developing Talent Communities

Recruiters must also be adept at using various channels for outreach. This includes professional networks, social media platforms, and even personalized emails or messages, each tailored to suit the preferences of the target audience. Creating talent communities—where recruiters keep potential candidates informed about the company, its culture, and future opportunities—can be an effective strategy for fostering a sense of connection and belonging.

Pfizer is embracing digitization in its university recruitment strategies to capture the attention of a broader audience. Beyond maintaining an attractive employee value proposition (EVP), Pfizer is turning to high-tech, interactive social experiences to attract high-potential talent who may or may not have considered a career in the pharma industry. From

Figure 9: Four Essential Elements for a Strong Candidate Experience

1. Showcase Your Brand Authentically 	2. Communicate, Communicate, Communicate 	3. Personalize Every Step of the Journey 	4. Listen and Learn 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the employer’s brand message is consistent across all channels Be transparent—share the good, the bad, and the ugly Apply the principles of storytelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be prepared for 24/7 interactions across all channels Communicate with all candidates proactively Leverage technology to support on-demand communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Map out the full candidate journey Use data to personalize every interaction Leverage AI to tailor the experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuously measure candidate satisfaction Monitor employee sentiment on internal and external platforms Constantly course-correct based on captured data

Source: *The Josh Bersin Company, 2023*

24 *A Perfect Storm in Consumer Packaged Goods: The Consumer Delight Imperative*, Josh Bersin and Stella Ioannidou/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

25 *Designing and Delivering Intelligent Talent Experiences: Key Practices to Recruit, Engage, and Grow your Workforce*, Josh Bersin and Janet Mertens/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

26 *The Definitive Guide to Recruiting: Human-Centered Talent Acquisition*, Josh Bersin and Janet Mertens/The Josh Bersin Company, 2022.

leveraging WeChat, a popular messaging app, to hosting an AI-generated Mozart concert, Pfizer is creating engaging, informal touchpoints that capture the attention of thousands of college students.²⁷

Emphasizing Diverse and Elusive Talent

Recruiters play a pivotal role in ensuring workforce diversity.²⁸ They must embrace inclusive recruitment practices, recognizing and mitigating unconscious biases and ensuring a fair and equitable recruitment process powered by technology. Having the support of TA systems that help create equitable opportunities for all candidates is essential. AI and machine learning can also assist in reducing unconscious bias in the recruitment process. By analyzing data objectively, these technologies can help ensure a fair and equitable evaluation of all candidates.

Tackling Unconscious Bias

Recruiters should ensure that the recruitment process is accessible and fair, offering equal opportunities to candidates from diverse backgrounds. Companies such as Peraton are spearheading this, powered by platforms that can anonymize all candidates in the talent pool and hide information that could indicate candidates' sex, age, race, ethnicity, and education background.

Moreover, data analytics can be a powerful tool in driving diversity goals. Recruiters can use data to assess the effectiveness of their diversity initiatives, identify areas for improvement, and make informed decisions to attract a more diverse candidate pool. To achieve true diversity, recruiters must be trained to identify and tackle unconscious biases in the recruitment process. This includes using structured interview processes, diversifying sourcing channels, and implementing blind recruitment practices.

Goldman Sachs uses the “rule of two” to drive diversity into hiring. The goal is to have two diverse, qualified candidates interview for each open role wherever possible, and hiring managers are accountable for interviewing a diverse slate of candidates. Deutsche Telekom uses diversity scouts to drive bias out of hiring decisions.

²⁷ *The Changing Face of Pharma: Innovate or Stagnate*, Josh Bersin and Jordan Schmitting/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

²⁸ *Elevating Equity: The Real Story of Diversity and Inclusion*, Josh Bersin and Kathi Enderes, PhD/The Josh Bersin Company, 2021.

Qantas Airways has moved away from video interviews for volume hires because of inherent bias. Videos can introduce bias for race, gender, and age as well as factors such as background and attire. Instead, Qantas now uses a prescreening tool that walks candidates through several questions via text message and ranks all candidates—often up to 1,000 candidates for a single position—based on their fit for the job.²⁹

Customized Sourcing Approaches

Recruiters must think creatively and explore unconventional sourcing channels to access niche and specialized talent pools. This includes leveraging niche online forums, academic partnerships, and employee referral networks. It might also involve partnering with industry-specific forums, professional groups, or academic institutions to access these elusive candidates.

Customized sourcing approaches are key to accessing this talent. Recruiters should leverage targeted marketing, networking events, and direct outreach to engage with candidates in these niche areas, powered by scalable AI-powered platforms that allow them to build dynamic candidate pools that continuously scan the market.

The Way Forward

Recruiters have become instrumental in shaping the talent landscape of organizations. This expanded role encompasses not just the sourcing and acquisition of talent but also the provision of vital insights into strategic business alignment and workforce planning. Recruiters are now business leaders' go-to partners not only for sourcing requests but also for making data-driven, sustainable, forward-looking strategic decisions around talent.

Data and Automation as the Gold Standard

The integration of data-driven decision-making and AI-powered tools has significantly enhanced recruiters' ability to make informed, strategic TA decisions. And as the role of talent intelligence becomes increasingly critical, embracing data and automation can revolutionize sourcing strategies, job

²⁹ *Elevating Equity: The Real Story of Diversity and Inclusion*, Josh Bersin and Kathi Enderes, PhD/The Josh Bersin Company, 2021.

design, and skill gap identification. Recruiters must leverage AI, automation, and predictive analytics to drive efficiencies and optimize hiring experiences.

The evolving roles and skills of recruiters have a marked impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of the hiring process. Leveraging data analytics, AI tools, and strategic engagement techniques leads to a more streamlined recruitment process, effectively reducing time-to-hire.

This efficiency is not at the expense of quality; in fact, it often results in improved quality of hires. These advancements enhance the overall recruitment experience for candidates and hiring managers alike. They also play a crucial role in bolstering the organization's broader TA and retention strategies, ensuring a more agile and responsive approach to the dynamic talent market.

Opportunity Areas

Looking ahead, recruiters face a landscape filled with both challenges and opportunities. The rapid pace of technological advancement necessitates continuous adaptation and learning. To stay effective, recruiters must remain at the forefront of emerging trends and technologies in TA.

Forging a Talent Ecosystem

Our research on time-to-hire³⁰ highlights that traditional strategies are no longer sufficient in the current talent climate. Dynamic organizations don't just hire people; they strategically access talent by focusing on skills, capabilities, culture, and fit. Creating a strategy and executing on a range of workforce segments such as traditional employment, contractors, contingent workers, consultants, and crowd workers based on the business strategy and partnering with other companies to share talent and provide people with broader career mobility across companies are crucial approaches.³¹

Furthermore, the increasing emphasis on diversity and inclusion in the workforce presents both a challenge and an opportunity.³² Recruiters must adopt more equitable

and inclusive hiring practices, ensuring a diverse talent pool that reflects the varied perspectives and experiences in the broader society.

Internal Talent Optimization

It can cost up to six times more to hire from the outside than to build from within. Our findings also reveal that tapping into internal talent pools can be significantly more cost-effective than external hiring. The cost of recruiting a mid-career software engineer, for example, can be \$30,000 or more, including recruitment fees, advertising, and recruiting technology. By contrast, the cost to train and reskill an internal employee may be \$20,000 or less, saving as much as \$116,000 per person over three years.³³

Despite this, many organizations have yet to master the art of leveraging their internal workforce. This represents a significant opportunity for recruiters to develop strategies that enhance internal mobility and capitalize on the wealth of talent already within the organization.

Novartis, a global pharmaceutical giant, has transformed into a dynamic skills-based organization. It has implemented an internal talent marketplace that allows workforce planning based on required skills rather than just headcount. This approach has enabled the company to assemble teams with the necessary skills for specific projects and has set the stage for skills-based workforce planning.³⁴

Microsoft has undergone a cultural transformation to combat the fear of losing top talent to internal mobility. It has implemented strategies such as rewarding people managers for finding internal talent, offering job rotation programs, and providing employees with career advisers separate from their functional managers.

UPS encourages hiring managers and recruiters to look inside the company first and sets targets to fill a large share of their jobs with internal candidates. This approach has helped UPS effectively leverage its internal talent pool.³⁵

30 *Time-to-Hire Factbook: The Talent Climate Series*, The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

31 *The Definitive Guide to Building a Dynamic Organization*, Josh Bersin and Kathi Enderes, PhD/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

32 *Elevating Equity: The Real Story of Diversity and Inclusion*, Josh Bersin and Kathi Enderes, PhD/The Josh Bersin Company, 2021.

33 *Rethinking the Build vs. Buy Approach to Talent: How Savvy Employers are Building Tech Skills from Within*, Josh Bersin, 2019.

34 *Novartis Builds a Dynamic Organization Leveraging a Skills-Based Internal Talent Marketplace*, Josh Bersin and Kathi Enderes, PhD/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

35 *The Definitive Guide to Recruiting: Human-Centered Talent Acquisition*, Josh Bersin and Janet Mertens/The Josh Bersin Company, 2022.

Systemic Approach to Talent

As our research indicates, “pacesetter” organizations³⁶ are adopting a systemic approach³⁷ to talent. This involves integrating recruiting, retention, development, pay, goal setting, and management into cohesive strategies. Such an approach ensures more holistic and effective management of talent resources, addressing not only hiring but also long-term growth and sustainability.

This approach also involves using talent intelligence to expand geographic reach, increase diversity of talent, strengthen connections with emerging talent, and hire for upskilling potential. It’s about being proactive and strategic in recruitment efforts, rather than just reactive. Companies such as Sun Life Financial and JPMorganChase are examples of organizations that have adopted a systemic approach to TA. They have integrated TA strategies across all other areas of HR and are thinking outside the box of traditional recruiting.³⁸

Conclusion

The role of recruiters in the modern workforce has expanded beyond traditional boundaries. They now play a key role in shaping the strategic talent landscape, equipped with advanced tools and methodologies. However, the journey ahead is filled with challenges that require adaptability, data literacy, forging strategic partnerships throughout the business, and demonstrating a commitment to building diverse, inclusive, and sustainable talent pipelines.

Gone are the days when recruiters could rely on their gut feeling and planning skills to drive talent decisions. The future of TA is systemic, dynamic, and data-driven. Organizations that equip their teams with full-stack skills and great AI-powered technology solutions are already ahead of the game.

³⁶ *The Seven Winning Strategies of Pacesetter Organizations*, Josh Bersin, Kathi Enderes, PhD, and Stella Ioannidou/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

³⁷ *The Definitive Guide to Human Resources: Systemic HR™*, Josh Bersin and Kathi Enderes, PhD/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

³⁸ *Breaking the Boundaries of Recruitment: A Systemic Approach to Talent Lifecycle Management*, Josh Bersin and Jordan Schmitting/The Josh Bersin Company, 2023.

Global Pharmaceutical Company Reimagines Medicine through Inclusive Recruitment Practices

A global pharmaceutical company that impacts nearly 700 million patients worldwide is dedicated to reimagining medicine to enhance and prolong lives. The company focuses on high-value medications for major health challenges, leveraging technological leadership in R&D and innovative access strategies.

Addressing TA and Diversity Challenges

With a vast global presence, the company's talent acquisition (TA) strategies had to be robust and sophisticated enough to not only attract top-tier talent from across the world but also ensure the promotion and sustenance of a diverse and inclusive workforce. For this, a center of excellence within the diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI) space was created around diverse TA practices.

"We are a center of excellence within the diversity, equity, and inclusion space. We have a resource both on the global team and the U.S. team, responsible for the attraction, retention, and advancement of diverse associates across the U.S.," said the company's head of talent.

Integrating DEI into Talent Strategies

The integration of DEI into TA processes was not just a compliance requirement but a strategic necessity. The company aimed to create a workforce that mirrors the diversity of its patient base. Recognizing that diverse teams drive innovation and deliver more effective healthcare solutions, the company sought a comprehensive solution to embed DEI principles deeply within its talent management processes.

Emphasizing Equitable TA

In response to these challenges, the pharmaceutical giant adopted SeekOut, a trailblazing AI-assisted TA platform. This platform promised a holistic approach to TA, aligning with the company's need for an agile, efficient, DEI-centric recruitment strategy. "It is the first place I go for any corporate job that I'm helping to try and identify candidates for. It truly is searching for any open source on the internet to bring back relevant information," said the company's head of talent.

Enhancing Recruitment and DEI Strategies

By integrating AI into its inclusive recruitment practices, the company was able to completely reimagine the processes it uses for recruiting. The platform's data-driven capabilities enabled recruiters to effectively source a diverse range of candidates who had proven elusive in the past. This not only included candidates from varied ethnic and cultural backgrounds but also included professionals with diverse experiences and skill sets, crucial for the innovative work the company engages in. Additionally, the platform's AI capabilities allowed for a more efficient and targeted approach to candidate search, significantly aligning TA with the company's strategic objectives.

Results

Improvements in Recruitment Efficiency

The SeekOut implementation yielded marked improvements in recruitment efficiency. The AI-driven analytics of the platform allowed for a rapid identification and engagement process with suitable candidates, significantly reducing time-to-hire. This efficiency was vital for the company to maintain its competitive edge in the fast-paced pharmaceutical industry.

"By having those key metrics around the number of sessions, total searches, diversity-specific searches, we are able to monitor and measure diverse hires. It's like the value of the platform kind of sold itself," the company's head of talent.

Impact on Recruiters' Roles

The integration of AI in inclusive recruitment has had a notable impact on the roles of recruiters at the company. The platform equipped them with powerful tools and data, such as the size of the talent pool for specific job or skill requirements, transforming them into strategic partners in the TA process.

"[Recruiters are equipped] with more tangible information that can help them in their positioning when they're meeting with hiring managers for that recruitment strategy meeting," said the company's head of talent. "One of our goals as diverse

workforce acceleration is to build acumen comfortability, because our goal is to ensure that recruiters are confident as talent advisors.”

Positive Outcomes in DEI Initiatives

Introducing AI into inclusive sourcing bolstered the company’s DEI efforts and resulted in a workforce mix that was more representative of the global patient base it serves. This diversity has been key to fostering an inclusive work environment, encouraging innovation, and enhancing employee satisfaction.

“This is really going to change the game for us, as it relates to how our recruiters are going to be that much more effective, that much more efficient in what they do, and being able to tell that story as it relates to where candidates are in the process,” said the company’s head of talent.

Next Steps

As the pharmaceutical giant looks toward the future, it plans to continue leveraging AI to further enhance its TA and management strategies. Reflecting the company’s

commitment to a diverse, inclusive, and globally representative workforce, a key focus is the deeper integration of DEI into all talent acquisition and talent management aspects and software platforms (including human capital management [HCM] and the applicant tracking system [ATS]).

The company also aims to explore additional SeekOut capabilities, particularly in areas such as internal mobility and career development. This expansion aligns with its objective of not only attracting top talent but also nurturing and developing its existing workforce, fostering a culture of continuous learning and professional growth.

In addition, the company is dedicated to aligning its TA strategies with emerging workforce trends. This includes adapting to changes in the global talent market, leveraging technological advancements to meet evolving recruitment needs, and enhancing DEI efforts to stay at the forefront of the pharmaceutical industry’s ongoing need to innovate. ■

Peraton Leverages AI in Its Talent Strategy to Support Some of the Nation's Most Important Missions of Consequence

Peraton is a privately held American national security and technology company formed in 2017. It is known for its expertise in technology and defense, specializing in tackling complex challenges related to national security and advanced technological solutions.

Headquartered in Reston, Virginia, the company operates in several key areas, including cybersecurity, space, intelligence, citizen security, homeland security, health, and defense. With a significant global presence, Peraton employs a skilled 18,000-person workforce dedicated to innovation and excellence in these sectors.

The company is not only a significant contractor for government and military operations but also is one of America's greatest workplaces for diversity, an awarded best recruiter for 2022 and 2023, and one of the largest employers in Greater Washington.³⁹

Adapting to a Volatile Talent Market

In the fast-paced and competitive defense contracting sector, Peraton faced the challenge of navigating an increasingly volatile talent market. The defense industry demands a highly specialized workforce capable of adapting to rapidly changing technological and geopolitical landscapes.

Peraton's specific challenge was twofold: not only did they need to attract top external talent for specialized roles, but they also needed to effectively manage and develop their existing workforce of 18,000 employees. "At Peraton, talent acquisition is really the accelerant that fuels the Peraton engine," said Cari Bohley, VP of Talent Management at Peraton. A solution that spanned TA and talent management was needed to ensure the right talent was both effectively hired and efficiently grown.

Overcoming Growth Challenges

Peraton's rapid growth, especially following its significant acquisitions in 2021, further complicated its TA and management needs. This expansion brought to light the limitations of traditional talent strategies and underscored the need for a more agile and comprehensive approach to talent management that could handle the complexities of a growing, diverse organization.

Addressing Talent Development Needs

Engagement surveys at Peraton revealed that career development was a key area impacting employee retention and satisfaction. The company recognized the need to focus on internal talent mobility and career development to enhance employee engagement and reduce turnover, especially in a sector where experienced, skilled professionals are both hard to find and in high demand.

A Systemic Approach to Talent Growth

Peraton realized that it needed to empower recruiters with a comprehensive AI-powered platform that combines TA and talent management. SeekOut, a platform that helps organizations hire, grow, and retain great talent, provided Peraton with the tools and digital capabilities to not only streamline their recruitment processes but also enhance their internal talent mobility strategies.

"SeekOut is the first place I go for any corporate job that I'm helping to try and identify candidates for. It is searching and integrating talent profiles from any source on the internet to bring back the right information," said Bohley.

Transforming External Talent Acquisition

Peraton's TA team consists of two subteams working closely with one another: recruiting coordinators, profiles that handle the operational side of the recruitment process, and sourcers,

³⁹ ["Peraton Awards & Recognition,"](#) Peraton, 2024.

data analysts who are proficient in complex searches to identify the right candidates. “Sourcers are kind of like little wizards that go out and find people who otherwise wouldn’t be found,” said Alison Paris, SVP Talent Acquisition and Workforce Planning.

The AI-powered capabilities of the new platform searching the entire web for the right passive talent have enabled Peraton to adopt a more strategic approach to TA. It allowed for efficient sourcing of candidates, especially for niche roles vital to defense contracts. At the same time, the platform’s ability to offer deep insights into the talent pool facilitated a comprehensive and effective recruitment process—crucial for a company like Peraton operating in a high-stakes environment.

“One of the things that was really important for us from a tool standpoint was the AI and the ability of the platform to parse through a wide range of data. It gives a holistic view of an individual,” said Bohley. “By default, sourcers use any source of data that they can get their hands on. They don’t leave any stone unturned.”

Enhancing Internal Mobility and Talent Development

Investing in AI-powered capabilities also played a critical role in addressing Peraton’s internal talent development challenges. The platform’s robust data analytics enabled the company to identify and harness the potential within its existing workforce. This helped in creating clear career paths for employees, thereby improving retention and reducing the costs and time associated with external hiring.

“We’re doing a lot of work right now with restructuring our job architecture, making sure that we’re retaining the talent that’s behind the scenes,” said Bohley. “At first, we were using the platform in a very reactionary mode, but as we roll out Career Compass, we’ve got strategies in development for how we’re going to proactively make our talent decisions.”

Results

Significant Increase in Hiring Volumes

By harnessing real-time data and predictive analytics, Peraton was able to significantly increase hiring volumes, managing more than 4,800 external hires per year for specialized

government-related roles that are notoriously hard to fill. The platform’s efficiency in identifying suitable candidates meant the company could fill critical high-profile roles, enhancing its operational readiness and competitive advantage in the defense sector.

Higher Employee Satisfaction and Engagement

The new platform’s insights into employee skills and career aspirations enabled the company to better align its talent development efforts with individual and organizational goals. This alignment resulted in higher employee satisfaction and engagement, contributing to a more motivated and productive workforce.

Transforming the Role of Recruiters

The adoption of AI in recruitment has transformed the recruiting role at Peraton. Recruiters have moved beyond the traditional hiring role and are now strategic talent advisors. Recruiters at Peraton are now better equipped to work in harmony with line managers and talent counterparts, stay in sync on talent management strategies and metrics, align TA with business objectives, and contribute more significantly to the company’s overall success.

Next Steps

Peraton is committed to staying ahead of emerging workforce trends, such as the increasing importance of soft skills, the impact of remote work, and the digital transformation of the defense industry. The company plans to continue leveraging AI as a key component of its TA and management strategy and aims to further integrate the platform with its internal systems, streamlining talent management processes and enhancing overall operational efficiency.

Looking ahead, Peraton also intends to expand the functionalities of the platform, particularly in areas such as gig and contract work. This expansion aligns with the company’s strategy to tap into diverse talent pools and build a more adaptable, agile, skilled workforce capable of meeting the evolving demands of the defense sector. ■

About the Authors



Josh Bersin

Josh founded Bersin & Associates in 2001 to provide research and advisory services focused on corporate learning. He expanded the company's coverage to encompass HR, talent management, talent acquisition, and leadership and became a recognized expert in the talent market. Josh sold the company to Deloitte in 2012 and was a partner in Bersin by Deloitte up until 2018.

In 2019, Josh founded the Josh Bersin Academy, a professional development academy that has become the "home for HR." In 2020, he put together a team of analysts and advisors who are now working with him to support and guide HR organizations from around the world under the umbrella of The Josh Bersin Company. He is frequently featured in publications such as *Forbes*, *Harvard Business Review*, *HR Executive*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *CLO Magazine*. He is a popular blogger and has more than 800,000 followers on LinkedIn.



Stella Ioannidou

Stella is the senior director of research and Global Workforce Intelligence Project leader at The Josh Bersin Company. In this role, she conducts empirical research on a variety of topics related to the skills economy, talent intelligence, and HR technology. Stella has almost 20 years of experience across several industries, including banking. Prior to joining The Josh Bersin Company, Stella was the HR transformation leader for Deloitte, where she led large-scale HCM implementations and designed frameworks for talent acquisition and performance management for the public sector. Stella holds master's degrees in engineering, information systems management, business administration, and lifelong learning. Stella lives and works in Greece and is pursuing her PhD in talent intelligence. She is a certified project manager, change management practitioner, lean six sigma green belt, and ICAgile HR

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The Josh Bersin Company provides a wide range of research, tools, and advisory services to help HR leaders and professionals address the ever-evolving needs and challenges of today's workforce. We cover all topics in HR, HR technology, talent, and corporate learning with a special focus on the professional development of HR teams.

Our corporate membership program provides HR leaders and teams with the skills, strategies, benchmarks, and insights to build cutting-edge HR and people strategies through research, assessments, professional development, exclusive events, and community. Corporate membership also includes access to Galileo™, the world's first AI-powered expert assistant specifically developed for HR. Trained on 25 years of The Josh Bersin Company's research, insights, and expertise, and enriched by carefully curated material from our trusted content partners, Galileo unlocks information from over 50,000 verified assets to answer any HR-related question with timely and meaningful answers.

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