

2024 Candidate Experience Report

Job seekers reveal what they want to see in a hiring process



2024

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What is the candidate experience? Is it really that important?

For many business owners, **finding and hiring the right people** for their team is their number one challenge. Turnover, short-staffing, and unqualified employees can cost businesses thousands in lost revenue opportunities.

Hiring has always been difficult, but in recent years, the fight for top talent has gotten tougher than ever before. In order to win the war for talent, employers have had to get creative. This has meant not only improving their workplace and their offerings, but also taking a look at every part of the hiring process and making improvements to win over their top-choice candidates.

We define **the candidate experience as the experience a candidate has with a potential employer throughout the hiring process, from job posting to job offer.** And in this annual report, we dive into the candidate experience and what it means for your ability to get the best employees to work for you.

Candidate Experience

the experience a candidate has with a potential employer throughout the hiring process, from job posting to job offer.

In our research, we attempt to answer questions employers would ask job seekers if given the chance, like:

- How much does the candidate experience matter?
- What are job seekers looking for during a company's hiring process?
- What are the top reasons candidates decline job offers?
- How often does a hiring process influence a candidate's decision to accept or reject an offer?
- How can employers improve their candidate experience to hire more successfully?
- And more!

Who took this survey?

To better understand the job seeker's perspective, we surveyed 500 U.S. participants within 11 key industries who've applied for jobs within the last 12 months and analyzed their answers about their experience during the hiring process.

Industries Surveyed:



Automotive



Cleaning Services



Education & Child Care



Fitness



Healthcare



Home & Commercial Services



Insurance & Financial Services



Hospitality, Entertainment & Recreation



Personal Care



Restaurant & Food Service



Retail



What's causing employees to look for new jobs anyway?

At CareerPlug, we believe that the best recruiting strategy is **retention**. Of course, that's easier said than done, as the job market has been inundated with turnover for a while now.

The "Great Resignation" began in early 2021, a year when about [47.8 million people quit their jobs](#), and continued into 2022, where around 50.5 million more people quit. During that time, employers scrambled to increase pay, improve benefits, and offer perks that helped retain their team and make new hires.

Economists say this [unprecedented exodus has ended](#), but this doesn't mean it's time to get complacent. We found that nearly **half of job seekers have considered quitting in the last year**, hinting at ongoing signs of unrest among employees.



49% of job seekers have considered leaving their job in the last 12 months

Job seekers are in search of higher pay.

So why are the job seekers we surveyed considering leaving their job? Turns out, most of them are in search of higher compensation.

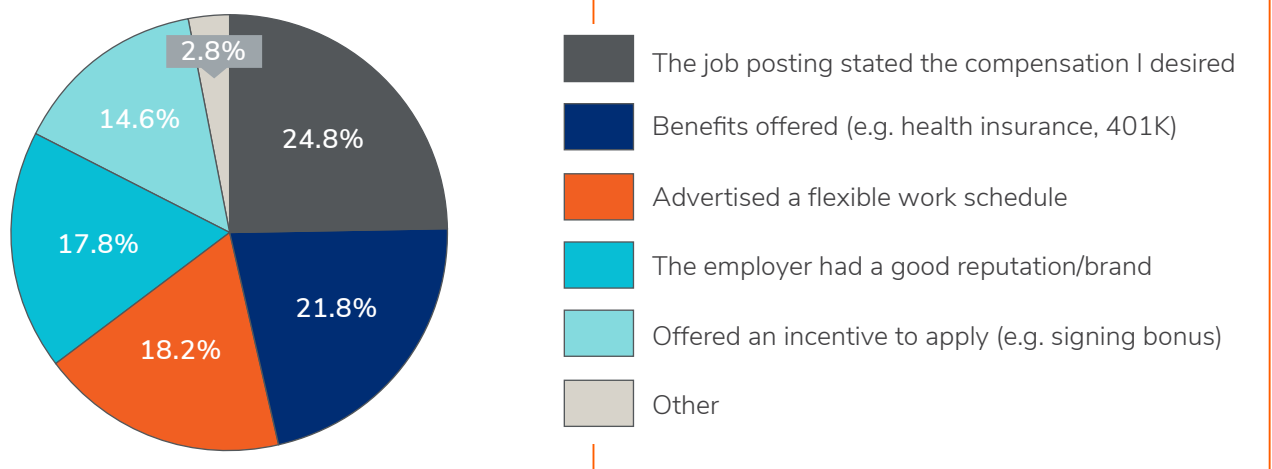
Dissatisfaction with current pay is the #1 reason employees have considered leaving their job and the #1 reason employees have left a job in the last year.



What attracts job seekers to apply to jobs?

Since the majority of job seekers have considered leaving or have left their job due to dissatisfaction with compensation, it's no surprise that "the job posting stated the compensation I desired" has the biggest influence on their decision to apply to a company.

Which of the following had the most influence on your decision to apply to those companies?



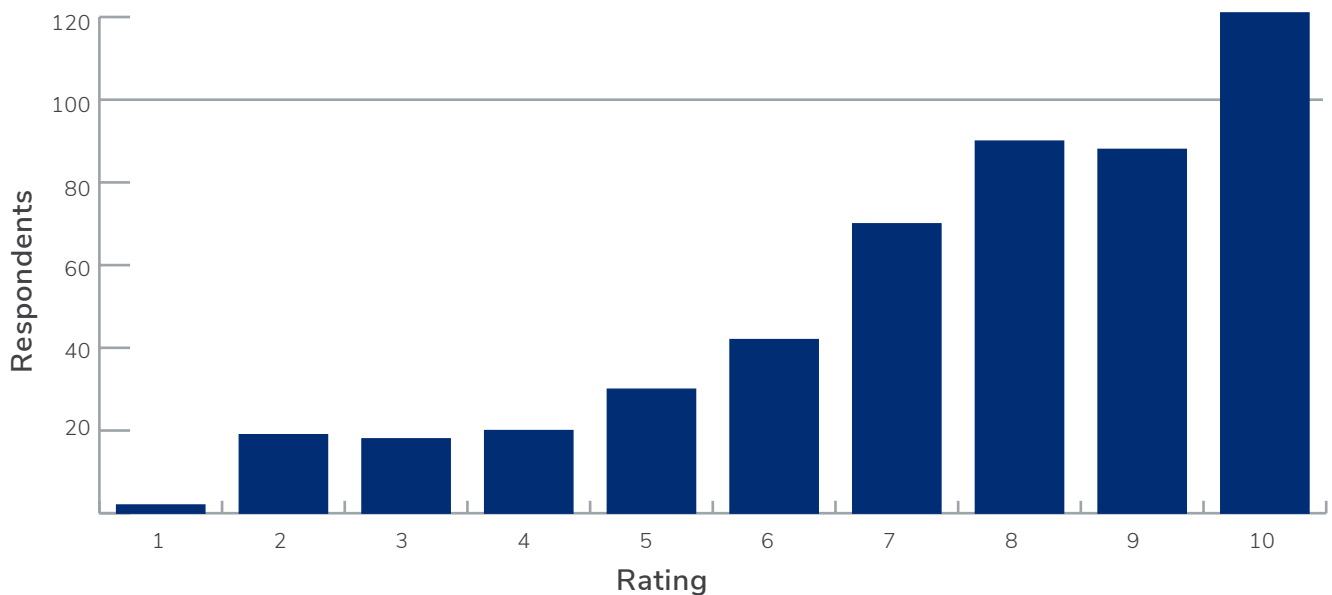
Job seekers are also persuaded by the benefits and perks a company offers and the employer's online reputation.



Do job seekers really care about the hiring process?

Aside from a job seeker's motivations to find new employment, what else are they thinking about when going through the steps of finding a job and vetting companies? Is the opportunity itself the only thing that matters – or does the hiring process actually impact a job seeker's final decision?

**On a scale of 1-10, how important is the hiring process experience to you?
(1 = Not Important; 10 = Very Important)**



Positive candidate experiences lead to more hires.

When asked about the company they currently work for (or most recently worked for), **83% of employees rated the candidate experience in the hiring process as positive.** And **76% of candidates** said that a positive experience influenced their decision to accept an offer.

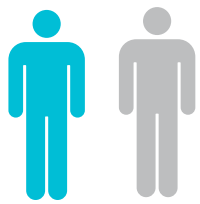


76% of candidates said a positive candidate experience influenced their decision to accept an offer.

A negative candidate experience could impact your ability to make the hire.

This year, we found that 52% of job seekers have declined an offer due to a poor candidate experience in the hiring process.

We found that:



53% of job seekers have had at least 1 negative experience in the hiring process in the past 12 months.

52% of job seekers said they've declined a job offer because of a poor experience with a potential employer during the hiring process.

This may seem surprising to you – unless you've kept up with our previous candidate experience reports! This statistic is consistent with the survey data that we have collected in years past, and looking back over the last few reports, we can say with confidence that if you're providing a poor experience to candidates in the recruitment process, **about half of your offers will be declined.**



Percentage of job seekers that have declined an offer because of a poor candidate experience:

52%

in 2024

49%

in 2023

58%

in 2022



Industry Insight:



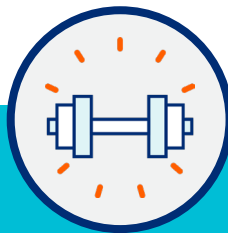
Restaurant

In Restaurant & Food Service, only **37%** of job seekers have had a negative experience in the hiring process in the last year.



Education

In Education, **42%** have declined a job offer because of a negative experience with a potential employer.



Fitness

71% in the Fitness Industry have declined an offer because of a negative experience with a potential employer.



Healthcare

In Healthcare, **64%** have considered leaving their current job in the last 12 months.

“Compensation and benefits not meeting expectations” and “the role and responsibilities were different than I expected” are the top reasons candidates decline job offers.

So what parts of the candidate experience have the most impact on a candidate’s final decision to accept an offer? Here’s what we found:

Reasons job seekers declined an offer:



The candidate experience and your employer brand

A poor candidate experience can also have serious consequences on your employer brand or business's reputation. This means that not only may it cause you to miss out on one great candidate, it could actually impact your ability to make other hires in the future.

It's standard for job seekers to spend significant time researching a company's reputation on employer review sites like [Glassdoor](#) and [JobSage](#). These reviews serve as social proof, signaling to candidates what they can expect from your hiring process and work environment. This means it's crucial to maintain a positive candidate experience for all applicants — whether you hire them or not.



35% of candidates said they've left a **negative** review online after having a negative experience.



60% of candidates said they've left a **positive** review online after having a positive experience.

This proves that a **positive experience makes a lasting impression on candidates**. These important insights from other job seekers will encourage more people to apply to your open roles.



"You don't have to spend much time on the internet to learn that most online reviews tend to skew negative, so it's great to see such a high percentage of candidates also sharing their positive experiences. It is so helpful and empowering to future candidates. We've spoken to many jobseekers in our line of work and most simply want to learn the truth, both the good and the bad."

Jacob Rios, Co-Founder and CEO of [JobSage](#)

Ghosting in the hiring process: Who's ghosting who?

It's time for a scary story.

You're a business owner and you desperately need to hire for your open role. Every day that goes by with an empty seat results in more lost profit for your business and takes a toll on your existing employees.

You've taken the time to review applications and to line up an interview with a strong candidate that you just have a great feeling about. On the day of the interview, you've prepared your questions, arrived to work early, popped in a breath mint, and — the candidate never shows!

Now let me tell you another tale...

You're a job seeker and your hunt for a new job has been exhausting. You've been spending all your free time updating your resume, browsing job boards and filling out lengthy applications. You found an opportunity you're really excited about, wrote a cover letter, and took extra care with your application. And... crickets. Days, then weeks go by and you finally draw the conclusion that you haven't been chosen for the role.

Scary, stuff right? And it's happening on both sides of the hiring process. We know that having a candidate ghost is a frustrating experience, but **our data suggests that employers may actually be ghosting more frequently than candidates:**

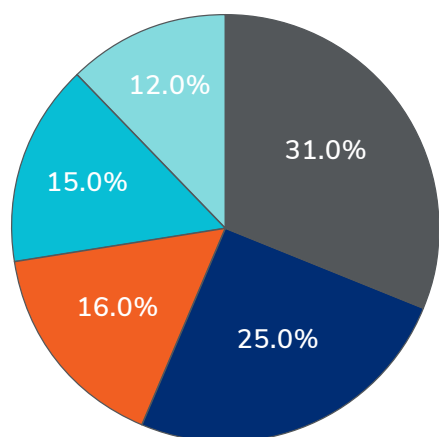
53% of candidates have been ghosted by a potential employer.



44% of candidates have ghosted an employer.

31% of job seekers said an employer responded to their application, but ghosted before scheduling an interview.

At what point in the hiring process were you ghosted by a potential employer?



- They responded to my application but ghosted before scheduling an interview
- I never heard anything back after sending an application
- I never heard anything back after my first interview
- I was ghosted after receiving a verbal offer
- I was ghosted after several rounds of interviews

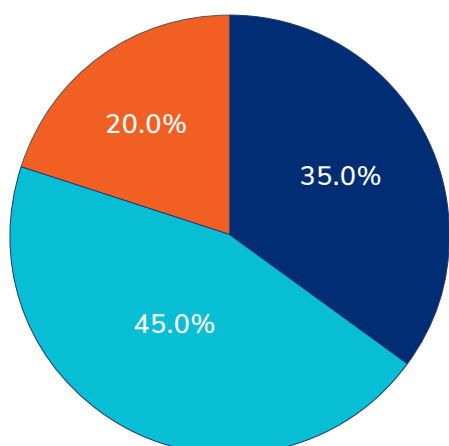
“There’s precedent for employers to ghost candidates in a hiring process, which has really been the standard for years, if you think about people applying and never hearing back or going to interviews and not hearing back. **I think it’s a two-way street.** Be the employer that follows up with every candidate, whether you’re hiring them or not.”

Natalie Morgan, CareerPlug’s Senior Director of People



45% of candidates who ghosted did so after interviewing.

At what point in the hiring process did you ghost a potential employer?



- Before interviewing
- After interviewing
- After receiving a job offer

Of the candidates that said they have ghosted a potential employer, nearly half said that they did so after interviewing. This can be frustrating for employers that have set aside the time and resources to interview someone for an open role.

This proves that it's important to **keep candidates informed every step of the way**. Follow up with candidates to thank them for interviewing and let them know when you plan to make a decision. Long gaps of communication in a hiring process could make a candidate think that you're not interested and push them towards other opportunities. Some job seekers we spoke to had further insight:

"The time in between coming in to do an interview vs. the time it takes for an email to come in saying if you made it or not **should be a little faster** than it usually is. I've been in cases where I found a better job by the time they sent in a letter saying I did or didn't get the job."

"I wish more employers were **responsive and quick**. Some employers take so long to get back to candidates you just assume you didn't get the job and may take a less desirable job in that time."



Why are candidates ghosting?

As a job seeker, what was your primary reason for ghosting?



When looking at the top two reasons that candidates ghost, we're reminded that candidates these days have more options than ever before and much higher expectations from employers.

Remember that candidates are engaging with multiple opportunities at once, so it's important to have a good offer and stand out in the hiring process. **Use your first opportunity to speak with candidates to get them excited about your company.**

CareerPlug President Jenny Leman recommends setting expectations and letting candidates know why you are the best place to work:

"I call it the EVP, the Employee Value Prop. Get that down to four to five sentences and be really clear about why you are the best employer for them in that moment. **Sell the opportunity, sell your company culture.**"

Jenny Leman,
CareerPlug's
President

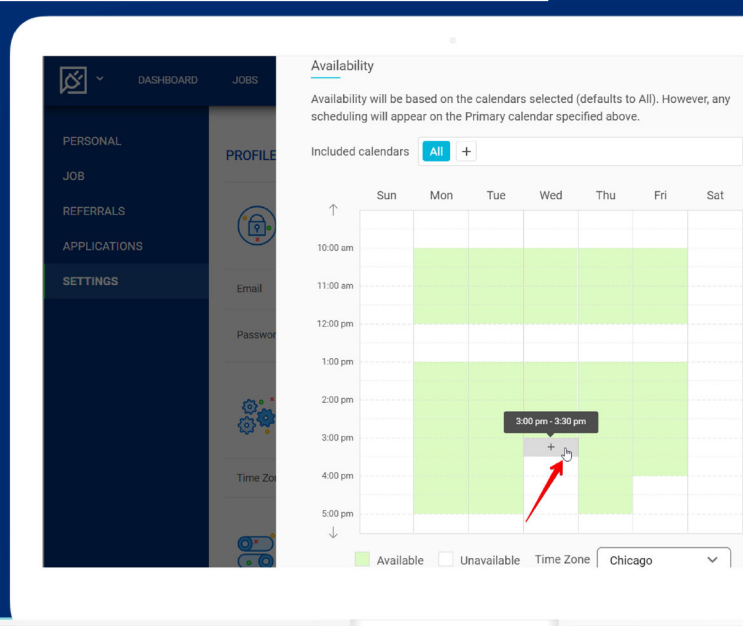


Reduce candidate ghosting with automated communication

Hiring automations like those available in CareerPlug's applicant tracking system can help reduce ghosting on both sides.

Automated communication can help you keep candidates engaged in your hiring process, and prevent them from dropping out to pursue other opportunities.

Autopilot, CareerPlug's [automated interview scheduling assistant](#), automatically sends your best candidates a link to schedule an interview on their own time, along with interview reminders throughout the process. CareerPlug also automatically sends courteous rejection emails to unqualified applicants, creating a great candidate experience for everyone.





How to improve the candidate experience

The data is clear: Making positive changes to your hiring process can help you get more candidates to say yes to your job offers. We asked job seekers to weigh in on what improvements they'd like to see.

What should employers focus on most to improve the hiring process?



More transparency in the hiring process about compensation and benefits is the #1 thing employers should focus on to improve the hiring process.

The top two recommendations from job seekers have been the same for 3 years in a row:

1. Create more transparency in the hiring process about compensation and benefits.
2. Provide clearer and more accurate information about the job and responsibilities.

It's clear – job seekers want employers that are up front about what they're offering, details around the hiring process, and honest information about the role.

Take the time to ensure that your job posting is thorough and accurately reflects the responsibilities of the role. Candidates look to your job posting as their guidepost when envisioning themselves working for your company. If they find out later that it's not accurate, they'll feel like you wasted their time. Leave time for candidates to ask their own questions about the role and your company. Lead with transparency and answer their questions honestly.

38% of job seekers expect to learn about compensation before applying/in the job post.



33% of job seekers expect to learn about benefits before applying/in the job post.

When job seekers expect to learn about the following during the hiring process:

	BEFORE APPLYING/ IN THE JOB POST	BEFORE THE INITIAL INTERVIEW	DURING THE INITIAL INTERVIEW	IN THE LATER INTERVIEW STAGES	AT THE OFFER STAGE
Compensation	38%	17%	24%	12%	8%
Benefits	33%	22%	25%	13%	8%
Company Culture	21%	24%	32%	12%	11%
Stages/Next Steps in the Hiring Process	19%	24%	32%	16%	9%

“Compensation and benefits are rarely, if ever, mentioned until the applicant has been put through a grueling and inconvenient interview process. Employers need to be upfront about what matters most to the applicant ... salary, benefits, and work conditions, including upward mobility.”



In some places, pay transparency isn't just a good look – it's the law!

Currently, 9 states have [pay transparency laws](#) in place. Some of these policies require employers to disclose salary and benefits information upon the applicant's request. But in four of these states – including most recently, New York – **employers are required to disclose salary in the job posting**. And major job boards like Indeed, have actually started removing job descriptions that don't comply!

Job seekers want to work for a company that offers growth opportunities.

Candidates say that growth opportunities offered by the employer play a big role in their decision to join a company. If you offer professional development plans, tuition reimbursement, and other development initiatives, make sure that you're up front about that in your job posting. Here are some of the other factors candidates are thinking about.

Most important factors that influence a candidate's decision to join a company:

FACTOR	PERCENTAGE OF JOB SEEKERS
Growth opportunities offered by the employer	29%
Responsiveness throughout the hiring process (e.g. how quickly you're contacted after applying/follow-up emails after interviews)	22%
Atmosphere of the workplace (e.g. fun, welcoming, etc.)	20%
Hiring process transparency (e.g. being told the number of steps, types of interviews, etc.)	17%
Interviewer Experience (e.g. personality, body language)	12%

Being a responsive employer is also important.



45% of job seekers would prefer to hear from an employer within 24 hours.

Responsiveness throughout the hiring process is the 2nd most important factor that influences someone's decision to join a company. We also found that 45% of job seekers expect an employer to get back to them within 2-3 days – but they'd rather hear from them sooner, within 24 hours.

At CareerPlug, we recommend following the **24-48-5 Rule**. Aim to contact applicants within 24 hours (which we know they prefer), schedule an interview within 48, and make the hire within 5 days. This can put you at a significant advantage when it comes to hiring the best talent before the competition.

The “24-48-5” Rule

Contact applicants within

24
hours

Schedule your interview within

48
hours

Hire within

5
days

Improve responsiveness throughout the process with [text recruiting](#), which allows you to communicate with candidates instantly using their preferred method of contact



What you can do now

Invest in your hiring process

Creating a [high-quality hiring process](#) will not only improve candidate experience but will also improve your ability to hire quality people for your team. Consider using an [applicant tracking system \(ATS\)](#) to help you attract the right applicants for your roles with compelling job postings and communicate quickly and easily with candidates throughout the hiring process via email or text. An ATS like [CareerPlug](#) can automate these crucial hiring process steps, allowing you to hire the right people faster.

Create a candidate experience checklist

Remember to do the following before your next round of hiring:

- Write [effective job descriptions](#) that include core responsibilities and requirements, as well as information about your company and culture.
- Include **compensation and benefits** information in the job description.
- Communicate the hiring process steps and timeline upfront**, either during initial phone screens, in the job postings, or on your careers page.
- Respond to **all** applicants **quickly** whether you want to hire them or not. (Use [automated text messaging](#) to make candidate communication easier.)
- To create a more convenient experience for candidates, **let them self-schedule their own interviews** with an [automated interview scheduling tool](#), like CareerPlug's Autopilot.
- Include context in interview invites about **who candidates will be interviewing with** and the **format of the interviews** — the goal is to let candidates know what to expect.
- Provide training and **hold interviewers accountable for conducting great interviews** — from questions to ask to proper etiquette (e.g. being on time, avoiding distractions, etc).
- Get feedback from current team members:
 - Ask current employees what their experience was like during the hiring process and **why they said yes to the offer**.
 - Ask current employees what they like about working for your company & gather ideas about how you can **incorporate that culture into your hiring process**.

About CareerPlug

CareerPlug is a software company on a mission to solve the #1 challenge of running a business: attracting and hiring the right people. More than 16,000 clients love working with us because we give them a proven playbook to make the right hires. And you don't need to be an HR pro to succeed, since our software is easy enough for anyone to use.



[Get a demo of CareerPlug today](#) and speak with an expert about how we can help you hire better.

www.careerplug.com