



THE ROI OF BETTER HIRING DECISIONS

Why Manager Enablement Drives Enterprise Performance

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ABOUT



A world leading provider of market intelligence on the Future of Work and HR Technology. **UNLEASH** is a customer-first, global digital media and events business, delivering the latest news, analysis and market trends for HR, technology, learning and recruitment leaders.

UNLEASH has championed HR excellence and disruption since 2011, serving as the strategic transformation engine for Human Resources. We are built to inspire, connect, and empower HR leaders worldwide to navigate the fast-changing world of work.

Our community is a diverse group of leaders, including HR Buyers from over 120 countries, who reimagine work and help optimize, enable and unleash new ideas and thinking that improve the lives of millions of people each year.

unleash.ai



We're on a Mission to Redefine What Great Hiring Looks Like.

Born From the Frustration of Doing It Wrong—and the Vision to Get It Right

HireBrain was founded in 2022 by David Nason—a career sales leader turned talent acquisition executive who experienced firsthand how broken the hiring process had become. After global leadership roles at Oracle, Cisco, and Infor, he saw that hiring had become reactive, inconsistent, and disconnected from business strategy.

He didn't set out to build a new category. He set out to solve a human problem.

Today, HireBrain is a hiring enablement platform trusted by enterprise teams around the world to bring consistency, clarity, and business alignment to every hiring decision.

hirebrain.com

INTRODUCTION

Every talent decision is a strategic bet on your company's future, and the stakes are higher than most businesses realize.

Organizations pour millions into sourcing services, job advertising, and technology every year, though often miss the single most critical variable: the hiring manager. The capability of the people making final hiring decisions is assumed or overlooked, rather than actively developed, and it's one of the most costly systemic failures in the world of talent acquisition.

A poor hire can cost up to 3x the role's salary¹ as delayed productivity cripples project delivery, revenue and business growth. Recent studies also show the hiring success rate in Europe sits at a lowly 46%, with only 56% offer acceptance rates and nearly 1 in 5 new hires leaving during probation².

A different approach is necessary to reduce costs and risk, while ensuring recruitment teams and "the business" hire talent with the best chance of success the first time. This is where new technologies and AI capabilities have the promise of making a difference, providing ways to boost hiring manager capability and strategic alignment with the C-suite. Teams need to be able to streamline labor-intensive tasks and repetitive admin, so they can deliver more value with less friction.

In this report, we draw on a comprehensive industry study to quantify the immense opportunity that stems from better hiring manager enablement. We trust it will provide a blueprint for any HR and talent acquisition leader looking to transform their function into one of the biggest ROI levers in enterprise performance.

1. Source: [Hiring Mistakes are Costing the UK Millions Each Year](#), REC

2. Source: [HR Monitor 2025](#), McKinsey

Our research

HireBrain has partnered with UNLEASH to conduct in-depth research into the capability and accountability of hiring managers in delivering value for their business. Our study centered around a survey of 250 US and UK HR and recruitment leaders across a wide range of industries. The majority of respondents occupy senior roles within their company's hiring departments, most of which have a significant influence over budgetary decisions regarding program initiatives and technology investment. See appendix for a full breakdown. We'd like to thank everyone who took the time to be a part of our research, and we trust you will find these insights valuable for your own hiring manager enablement.

See [Appendix](#) for demographic charts

Key takeaways

- ✦ **81%** of hiring managers collaborate with business leaders on workforce planning; yet only **34%** connect hiring to business outcomes, performance and revenue.
- ✦ **57%** of TA functions are primarily evaluated on the quality of hires they deliver.
- ✦ Only **25%** of hiring managers articulate how a role will deliver measurable business value on a regular basis.
- ✦ **44%** of hiring managers lack full visibility over the cost implications of a poor hire.
- ✦ **87%** of TA functions now use AI in some way as part of their recruitment processes; yet only **47%** feel very confident their tools are fully integrated and coherent.

Chapter 1

ALIGNING HIRING WITH BUSINESS STRATEGY

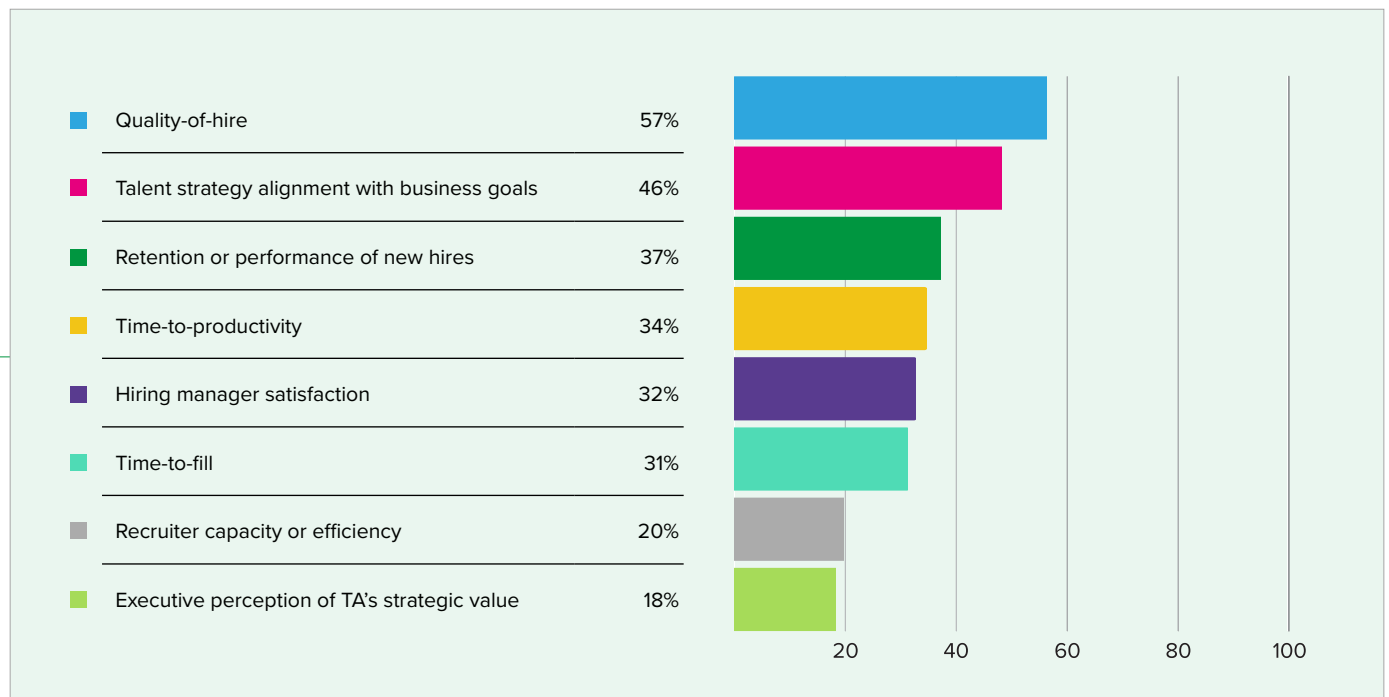
Talent acquisition plays a pivotal role in shaping your success as an organization, yet too often hiring decisions are made reactively rather than strategically.

The lack of connection between recruitment and overarching business goals is often a costly drag on performance. A great hire on paper may be a poor fit in practice, which is usually more down to a lack of strategic sync than lack of skill. And when responsibilities, outcomes and business objectives are misaligned, it sets a weak foundation for performance and internal mobility.

By contrast, strong strategic alignment turns the perception of recruitment from a side service into a competitive advantage. It ensures every new hire is a direct investment into the company's future and judged on a clear set of success metrics, not just perceived skill. It also ensures your core vision becomes more embedded into your workforce as it grows.

For senior leaders, connecting this tactical approach to hiring with true business impact should be considered a basic imperative. After all, it's the only way a company can actually execute its plan for growth.

Which of the following best reflects how your TA function is evaluated by senior business leaders at your organization?



Our research shows that 57% of TA functions are primarily evaluated by the quality of hires they deliver. Senior business leaders clearly care about ensuring the long-term value a new employee brings, and finding people who will excel, stay loyal and move the company forward.

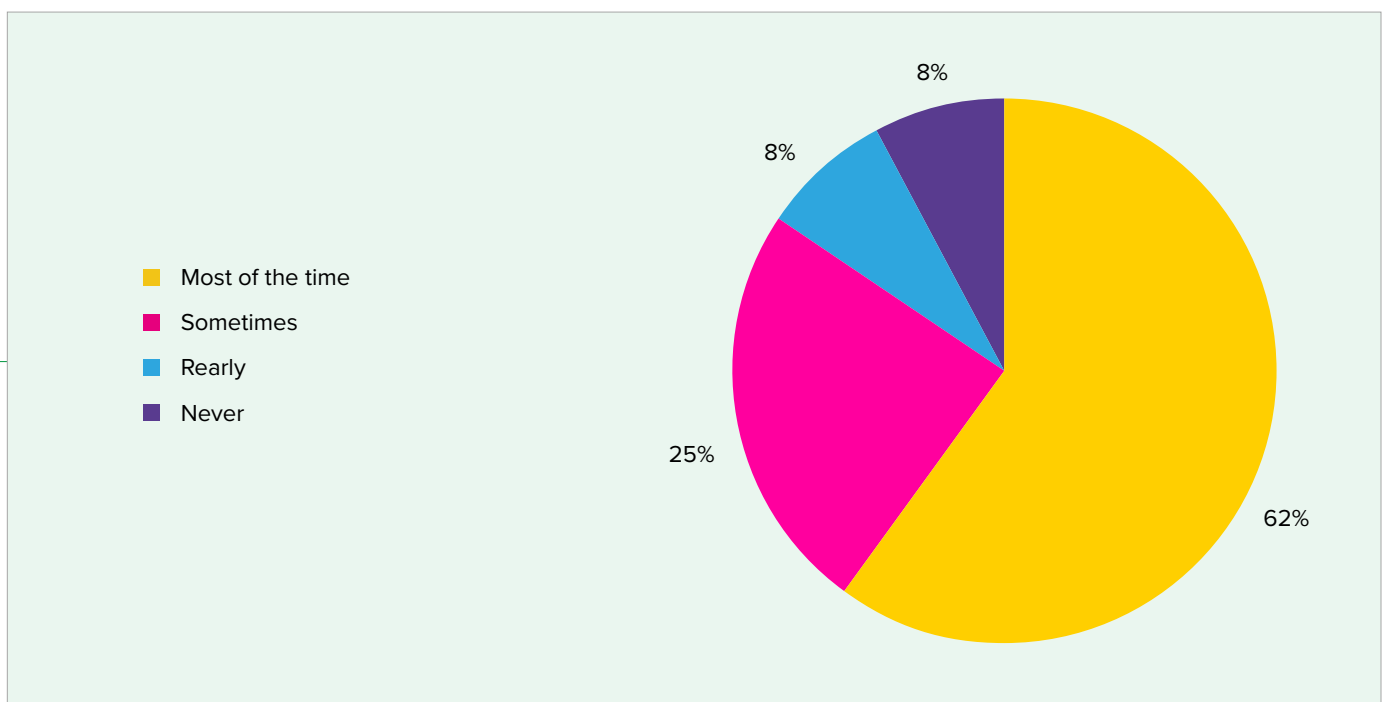
Under half (46%) of hiring teams are judged on their ability to align talent strategy with business goals, and only 18% are evaluated in terms of strategic value they provide to the executive team – a clear disconnect between recruiters and senior leaders.

Without this link, it's difficult to see how hiring managers can fully understand future skill needs, build pipelines for critical roles or ensure that talent aligns with core objectives.

Traditional operational metrics are still used to evaluate hiring performance in roughly one-third of businesses, particularly retention (37%), time-to-productivity (34%) and time-to-fill (31%). While these data points can be useful in terms of spotting trends and pain points, they are lagging indicators that only offer strategic insight after the fact.

It's interesting to see that 'quality of hire' now ranks much higher than 'time-to-fill', suggesting that most organizations are aiming to take a longer-term view when recruiting the best person for every role, not simply the fastest available person.

When defining a new role, how often do hiring managers articulate how the role will deliver measurable business value?



The strategic disconnect becomes even more apparent when you consider that only 25% of hiring managers articulate how a role will deliver measurable business value on a regular basis.

This is ultimately where most issues regarding TA alignment arise. Even when senior leaders intend to evaluate recruitment functions on strategic outcomes like quality of hire and strength of talent strategy, hiring managers themselves are often not equipped to make the link between new hire impact and business KPIs. In most cases, this is more likely a failure of organizational process or lack of tools and training, rather than the fault of individuals.

Without a clear articulation of the business value a specific role is expected to bring, TA teams are forced to predict value solely on past credentials, qualifications and years of experience, rather than their potential to support clear organizational goals. In practice, that means they may fill a role with someone with a seemingly fantastic resume but that lacks the integral competencies to drive real results for their company.

This also factors into candidate and employee experience. Top performers are often motivated by the impact they can produce within an organization, so if

that alignment is not clearly communicated as part of a job description then employers will likely lose out on an important driver of talent attraction and retention.

Missing opportunities to demonstrate value

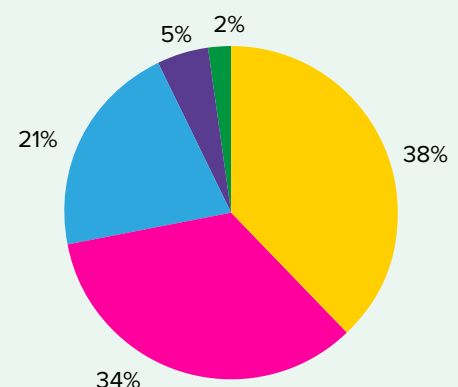
The vast majority of hiring managers (81%) say they collaborate with business leaders on workforce planning; yet only 34% connect hiring to business outcomes like performance and revenue.

The number of teams that do focus on sharing insights into the quality of hires (38%) is still significantly less than the current expectation of senior business leaders to report on quality (57%). This gap leaves TA teams vulnerable to being perceived as out of touch with core business priorities or even underperforming on expectations.

Again, we see a drop in focus on traditional metrics (21%), which further reinforces the intent to reposition TA as less of a service and more of a strategic lever. That's easier said than done of course, and clearly more work is needed to support the shift from reporting on activity to analyzing the tangible business value resulting from every new hire.

How do TA teams communicate value to the C-suite?

- We supplement metrics with experience or quality insights
- We connect hiring to business outcomes (performance, revenue)
- We focus on traditional metrics (time-to-fill, cost)
- We struggle to measure and communicate impact
- We don't interact with the C-suite directly



Chapter 2

UNPACKING THE COST OF POOR HIRES

Every company or employer of a certain size has been affected by a bad hire – but how many track the real cost implications of getting it wrong?

A single poor recruitment decision can drain your cash flow, upset your workplace culture and set you back months, or even years, of growth.

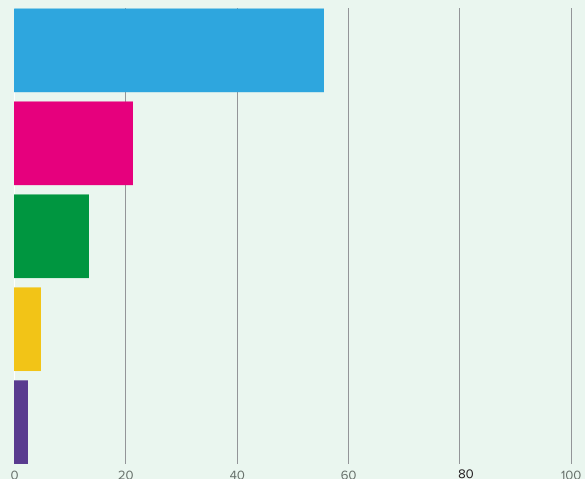
The direct costs of job advertising, recruitment agencies, pre-employment assessments, salary and other expenses soon mount up. But while it's clear to see how these costs hit your bottom line, the indirect consequences of bad hiring last much longer and

ultimately prove more damaging to organizational performance.

Lost managerial time, stretched internal resources, slower project delivery, decreased team morale and risk of disengagement may not immediately show up on a balance sheet, yet all of this leaves a serious dent in long-term productivity.

How well does your organization currently track the cost of a poor hire (replacement, lost productivity and business disruption)?

■ We track and report on it consistently	56%
■ We track it occasionally or for specific roles	21%
■ We don't track it but are aware of the impact	16%
■ We don't track it and it's not widely discussed	6%
■ Not sure	3%



Currently only 56% of TA functions track and report on the cost of poor hires on a consistent basis. The remaining 44% lack full visibility over cost implications and are therefore not in a position to share an accurate, developed picture of hiring ROI with senior leaders and decision-makers.

Many hiring managers are still siloed away from the core financial and performance drivers of their business. These blind spots can severely limit hiring teams and undermine TA's strategic credibility, as well as their ability to quantify their true impact on company performance.

Who is accountable for poor recruitment?

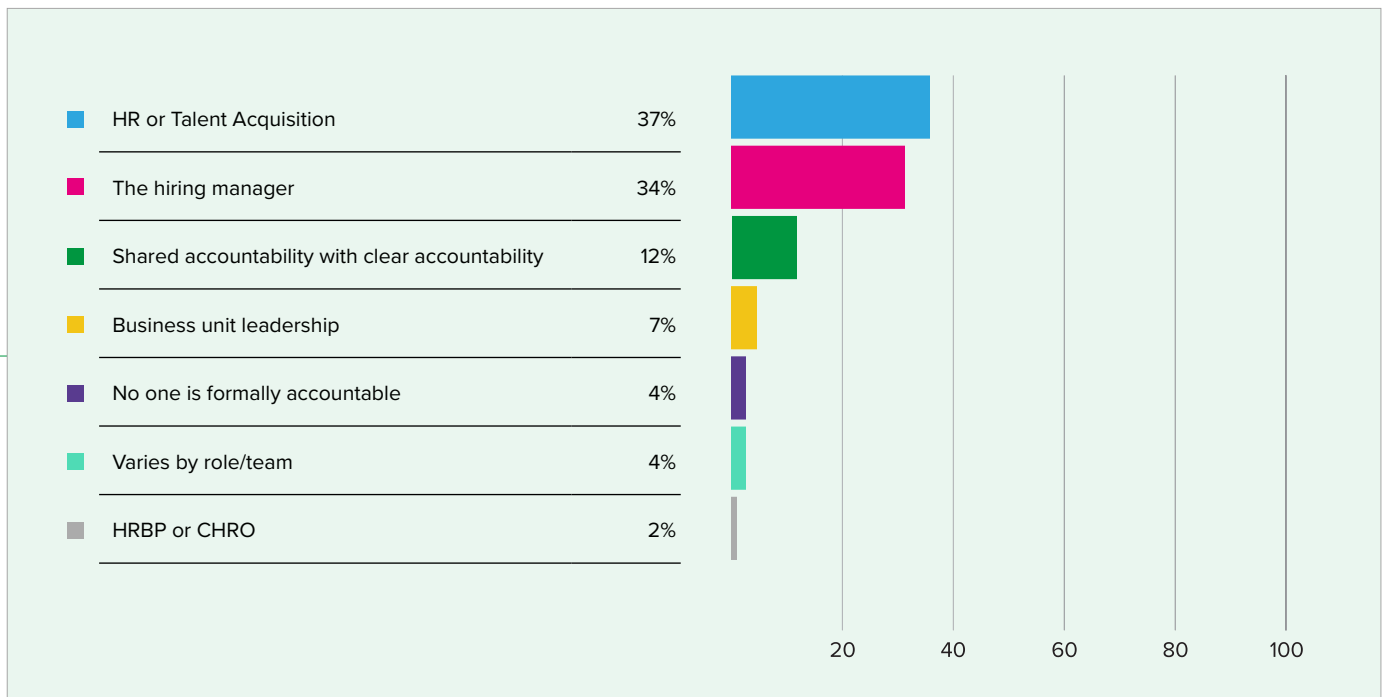
Our data shows a distribution in accountability for poor hires, predominantly between HR or TA teams (37%) and hiring managers (34%). The key difference here is whether or not accountability is shared or assigned at an individual level.

High-performing businesses increasingly view clear ownership as a driver of recruitment success because it drives productivity, commitment and greater transparency over talent decisions. When every hiring manager is given a remit with defined expectations and measurable outcomes, it's easier to track each stage of the decision-making process to see where things are working well – and where they aren't.

By contrast, it's easy for inefficiencies to seep into recruitment culture when there is no clear owner to answer for poor hiring decisions, or to drive necessary changes.

Lack of accountability can also directly undermine an organization's ability to track and report on hiring costs which, as we've seen, is an issue in 44% of companies. Even when costs are tracked, ensuring that departments have sight of the numbers isn't enough; individuals need to be empowered and expected to enact change as a result.

Who is ultimately accountable for the business outcomes of a hire (e.g., performance, retention, contribution to goals)?



Chapter 3

THE ENABLEMENT GAP – WHERE DOES TRAINING AND SUPPORT FALL SHORT?

Empowering hiring managers to recruit through the lens of core organizational goals requires a fundamental shift in approach for many companies. The first step is to get a clear view of the constraints and bottlenecks which are hindering your hiring managers. This is crucial to determine exactly where structured support is most needed in order to deliver business objectives.

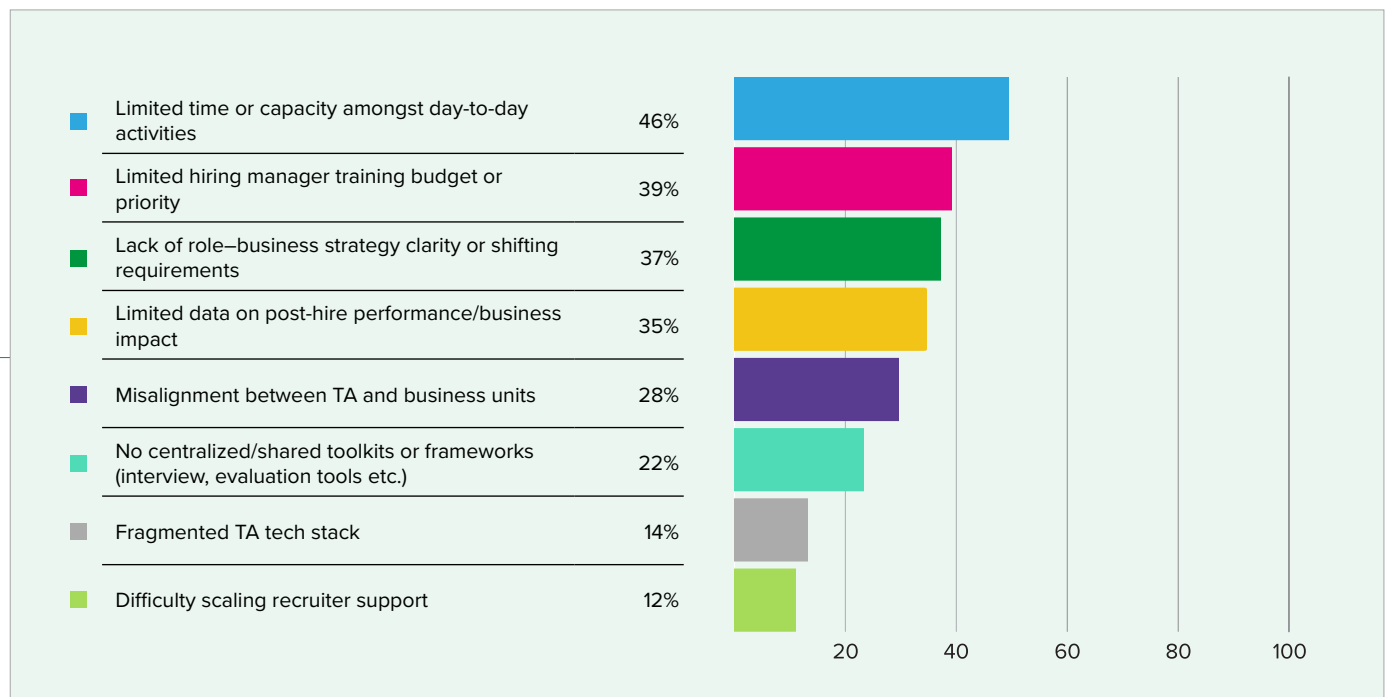
Our data shows that limited time and capacity is the biggest factor limiting TA functions (46%), particularly those that still rely on manual admin processes rather than smart automation. Hiring managers often don't have the time to connect all the dots between their work and the wider business impact, which is a big reason why many senior corporate leaders fail to see TA as a core strategic lever.

Changing this perception starts by equipping those in charge of recruitment with the right resources and technology, specifically tools designed to ease the burden of repetitive tasks and free up more time for strategic thinking.

Training budgets for hiring managers are seen to be lacking in 39% of organizations, indicating the ability of those making important recruitment decisions may often be taken for granted. This skills gap can directly lead to poor recruitment decisions, while increasing the risk of costly mis-hires and higher early-stage turnover.

Poor training isn't the only issue. Lack of role-business clarity (37%), limited data on business impact (35%) and internal misalignment (28%) all surfaced strongly in the research – each of which highlights an underlying failure to connect hiring with strategic goals.

What most limits your ability to enable hiring managers effectively today?



Driving hiring manager capability

Although most organizations now see its value, the promise of managerial enablement is often undermined by the very frameworks and tools designed to support it.

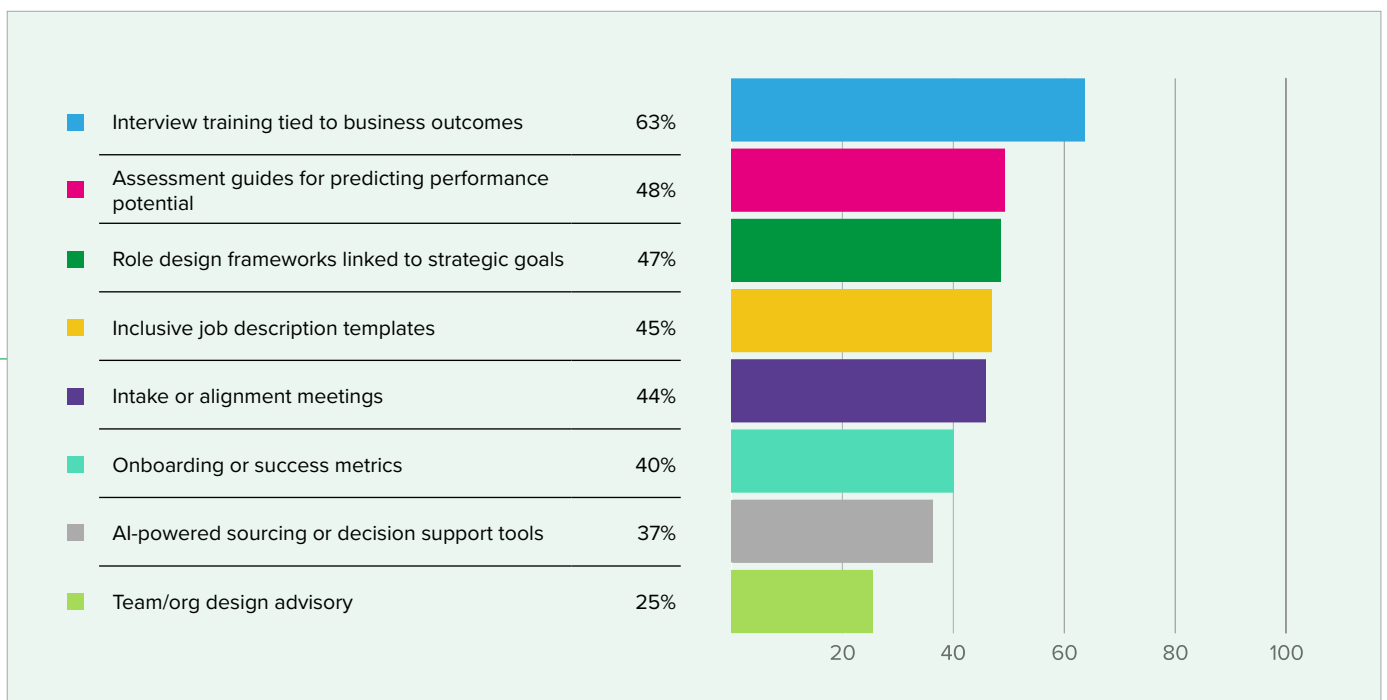
When these foundational elements fall short, they do nothing to empower TA functions and only serve to perpetuate the cycle of inefficiency and mis-hiring. A common example is off-the-shelf training programs that are largely disconnected from an organization's internal processes and infrastructure. This creates a mismatch between what is taught and what actually needs to be reinforced and supported on the job.

Our research shows that interview training tied to business outcomes (63%) is by far the most common approach to ensuring strategic clarity when assessing potential hires. While a relatively positive sign, this is not the same as comprehensive hiring training and organizations need to be careful of over-reliance on a single tactic to solve a multifaceted challenge.

Beyond this, we see a significant drop-off across all other structured supports. Less than half of organizations implement assessment guides for predicting performance potential, role design frameworks, alignment meetings, and onboarding success metrics (40–48%). Again, this reinforces our earlier findings, which show a stark capability gap between intention and execution.

It also relates back to the issue of training being disconnected from process and infrastructure. One of the main reasons why hiring manager training has such a low efficacy rating is because off-the-shelf programs – such as bias mitigation training – don't reflect the skills, principles and processes involved in their day-to-day role.

Which structured supports do hiring managers currently receive to ensure high-impact, business-aligned hiring decisions?



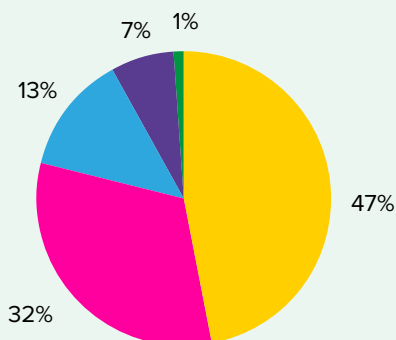
AI, AUGMENTATION AND THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE

AI is transforming hiring by replacing guesswork with data-driven clarity: from defining roles and designing assets to evaluating candidate potential based on clear context.

87% of TA functions now use AI in some way as part of their recruitment processes; yet only 47% feel very confident their tools are fully integrated and coherent. This gap represents a significant opportunity for most hiring managers to expand, optimize, and deliver stronger outputs.

Part of the challenge is that fear and misunderstanding around AI deployment remain prevalent. Clear communication is vital to close the confidence gap, allay any fears and ensure all stakeholders understand that AI is designed to augment and enhance human capability, not replace it entirely.

How confident are you that AI tools in your hiring process are aligned across users and systems?



- Very confident – tools are integrated and coherent
- Somewhat confident – early signs of misalignment
- Not using AI in hiring today
- Concerned – disconnected tools are creating conflict
- Not sure

Where can AI make the biggest impact for your business?

The majority of organizations believe equipping hiring managers with the right mix of tools and support is key to driving two primary outcomes: higher productivity (58%) and better retention rates (31%).

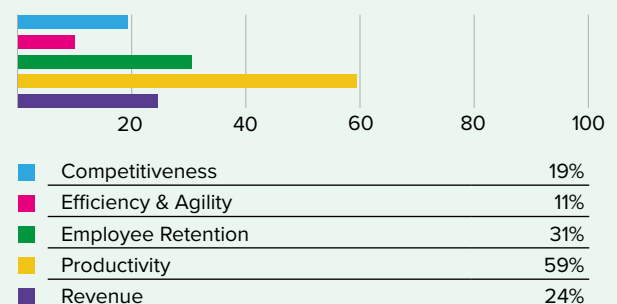
AI now plays a central part in maximizing these gains and levelling up the capability of TA teams. By leveraging context-aware tools to automate high-value, labor-intensive tasks, hiring managers can dedicate more time to strategic decision-making and building a more human-centric experience for all.

For example, AI can be used to deliver:

- Contextualized intake notes and analysis
- AI-assisted role planning and design
- Performance roadmaps
- Role-specific interview guides and scorecards
- Goal-based onboarding and ongoing success metrics
- Scheduling interviews

All of this goes a long way to reducing attrition, improving time-to-productivity and optimizing talent strategies in line with core business objectives.

If your hiring managers were consistently equipped to make better, faster hiring decisions, where would the biggest business gains occur?



Ready to turn hiring manager capability into a strategic advantage?

The data is clear: organizations that enable managers with structure, context, and decision support see faster hiring, stronger alignment and better outcomes, but most haven't yet built this into their process.

HireBrain helps teams close that gap. The platform equips recruiters and hiring managers with tools that turn good intentions into consistent, high-quality decisions without adding friction or complexity.

If you're exploring how Hiring Enablement could support your talent strategy, let's connect.

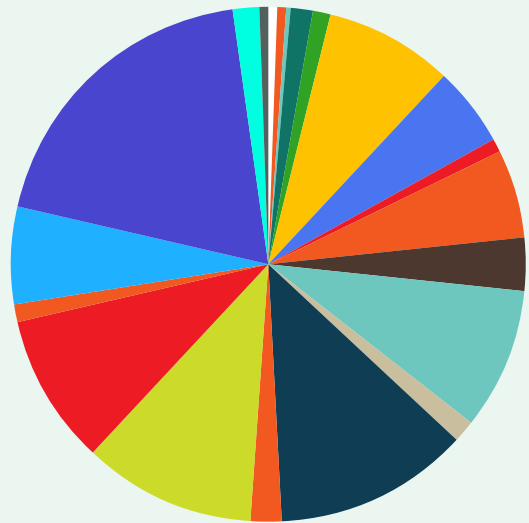
Learn more about HireBrain at
www.hirebrain.com



APPENDIX

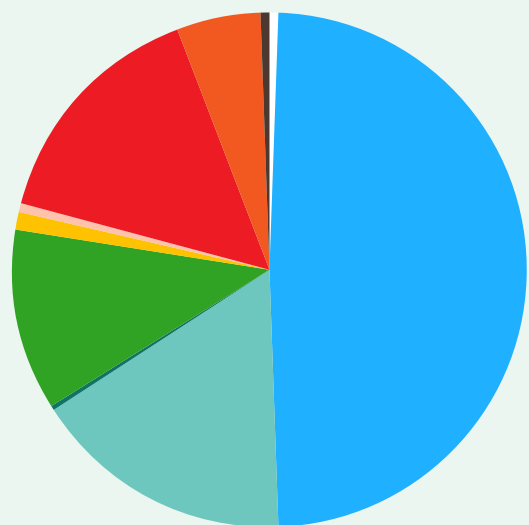
Your industry

Advertising and Marketing	0.81%
Agriculture	0.41%
Airlines and Aerospace (including Defense)	0.41%
Automotive	1.22%
Business Support and Logistics	1.22%
Construction, Machinery and Homes	8.13%
Education	4.88%
Entertainment and Leisure	0.81%
Finance and Financial Services	5.69%
Government	3.25%
Healthcare and Pharmaceuticals	8.94%
Insurance	1.22%
Manufacturing	12.20%
Nonprofit	2.03%
Other	10.98%
Professional Services	9.35%
Real Estate	1.22%
Retail and Consumer Durables	6.10%
Telecoms, Technology, Internet and Electronics	19.11%
Transportation and Delivery	1.63%
Utilities, Energy and Extraction	0.41%



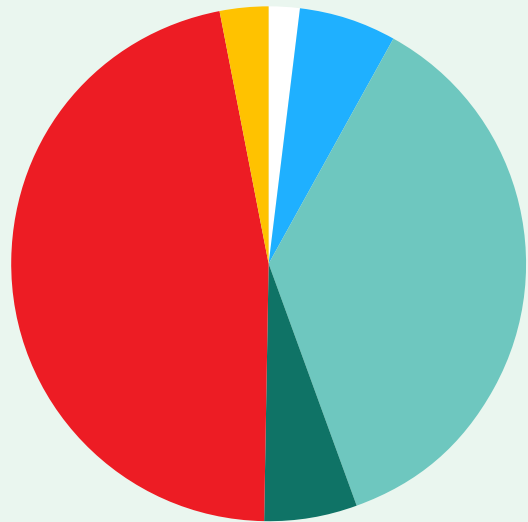
Which of the following best describes the main focus of your role?

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion	0.81%
HR Generalist	48.78%
HR Tech/HRIS	16.26%
L&D	0.41%
Other HR Business Unit/Regional Head	11.38%
Payroll	1.22%
People Analytics	0.41%
Recruiting	15.04%
Talent Management	5.28%
Total Rewards/Compensation & Benefits	0.41%



Which of the following best describes the level of your role?

Assistant/Coordinator/Specialist	2.03%
CxO	6.10%
Director/Head of Department	36.59%
Founder/Owner	5.69%
Senior Manager/Manager	46.75%
SVP/VP	2.93%



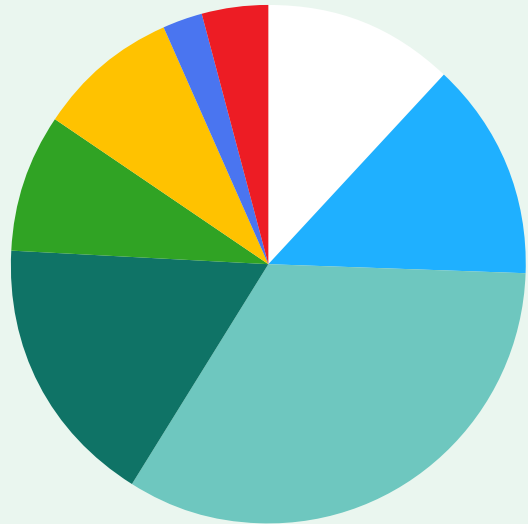
Which of the following best describes your role in HR technology decision-making?

Budget Holder	48.78%
Budget Influence	42.68%
No Budget Control	8.54%



What is the size of your organization?

One-99	12.20%
100-249	13.41%
250-999	33.33%
1000-4999	17.07%
5000-9999	8.54%
10000-49999	8.94%
50000-99999	2.44%
100000+	4.07%



Where is your organization currently headquartered?

USA	47.56%
UK	40.65%
Netherlands	1.22%
France	1.22%
Germany	0.81%
Austria	0.41%
Belgium	0.81%
Canada	0.41%
China	0.41%
Cyprus	0.41%
Denmark	0.41%
India	0.41%
Italy	0.41%
Finland	0.41%
Ireland	0.41%
Luxembourg	0.41%
Mauritius	0.41%
Nigeria	0.81%
South Africa	0.41%
Switzerland	0.41%
American Samoa	0.41%
Turkey	0.41%
United Arab Emirates	0.41%
United States Minor Outlying Island	0.41%

