

A top-down photograph of a person with blonde hair, wearing a blue denim shirt, sitting at a white desk. They are using a silver laptop. The desk is cluttered with various items: a blue USB drive with a blue cable, a wooden desk organizer with orange and yellow sticky notes and a pen, a smartphone, a tablet, a red pen, and a black pen. The person's hands are on the laptop keyboard and trackpad. The background is a dark wood floor.

The Science of Talent Attraction:  
What Makes  
Candidates Click

**Recruiting has one of the biggest impacts on people and businesses today.**

This means talent leaders have a huge responsibility in changing people's lives and being a top source of business impact and innovation.

Whether you're leading a talent acquisition team or deep in the recruiting trenches, the talent you attract today will have a significant impact on your company's growth. But the methods you use to attract skilled candidates may vary depending on your hiring needs and the competitiveness of your industry.



“Human resources isn't a thing we do. It's the thing that **runs our business.**”

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**Steve Wynn**  
Wynn Hotels



“The secret of my success is that we have gone to exceptional lengths to hire the **best people in the world.**”

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**Steve Jobs**  
Apple

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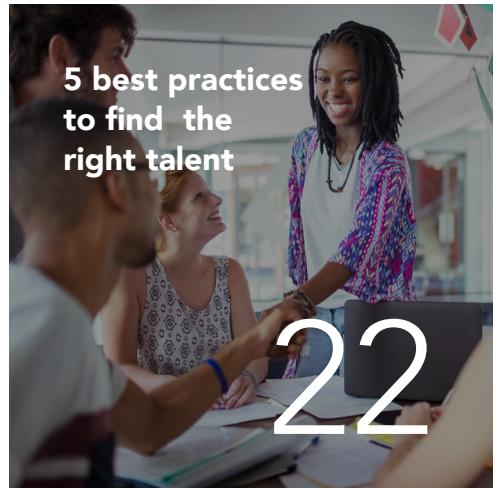
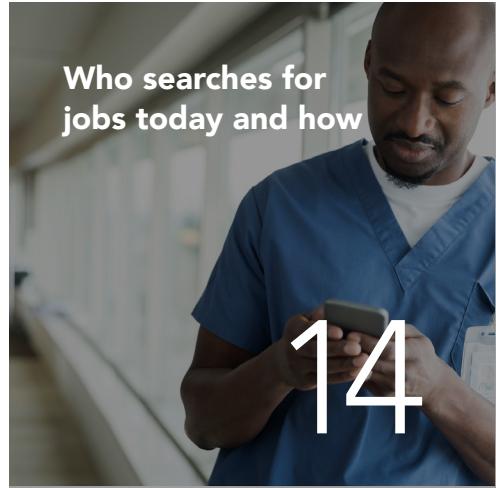
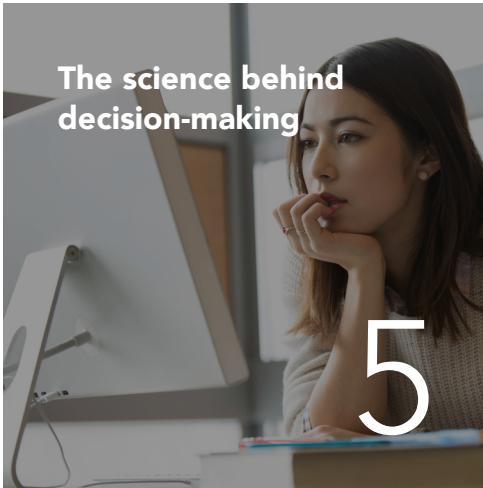
# How will you attract skilled candidates in an evolving labor market?

To help employers understand job seeker behavior and how to reach top talent, we conducted two large-scale talent studies in the US. We surveyed more than 8,000 adults to understand how people search for jobs today and what influences their decisions. We also surveyed 1,000 talent professionals to get their perspectives and explore how job search trends impact their recruitment organizations. Based on the findings

from these third-party studies, we were inspired to look at our own data and uncovered some compelling insights about how often people search for jobs today.

In this ebook, we share the research that sheds light on the science behind job search and how candidates make career decisions today, revealing a new perspective on the modern candidate.

## Table of contents



# The science behind decision-making

When we think about change and how we decide to make an important change, we often go through a series of steps toward making that decision. The first step is often contemplating a change followed by preparing for a change and then taking

action to carry out the desired change. When it involves a career change, the decision-making process may be more involved and stressful. That's because there are seven major decisions people have to make to change jobs:

## The Career Decision-Making Process



The first step is considering a change and making the decision to be open to other opportunities. The next series of decisions involves considering your company as a potential employer and evaluating a specific position within your company. After applying for a job, the candidate has to commit to the interview and hiring process, accept an offer and then appear at the new job on the first day of employment.

While there are many steps, the first one—considering a change—is the hardest by far.

**Here are four key findings we uncovered about career decision making:**

# Career decisions are among the most stressful life decisions.

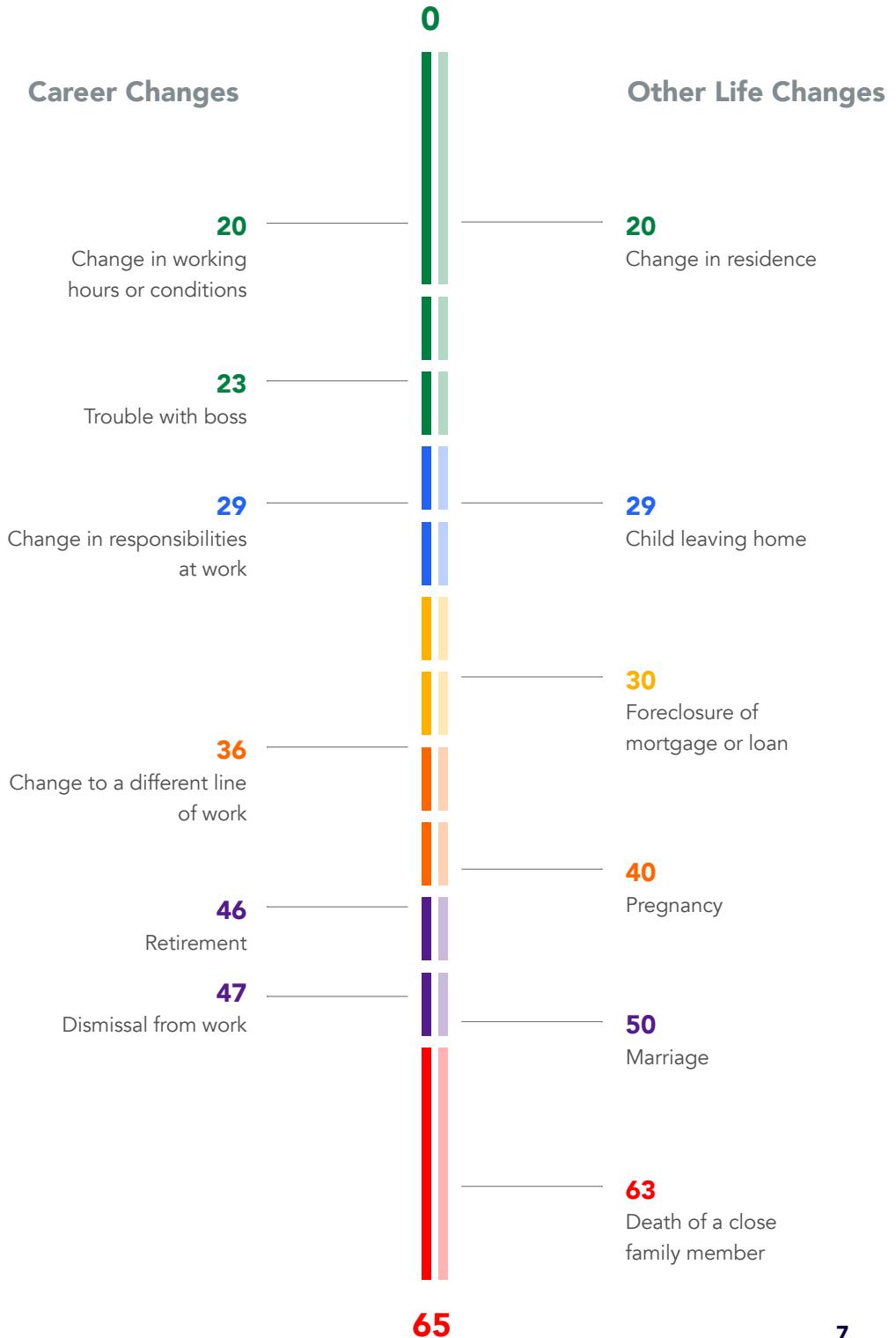


**After family and health, career events have the biggest impact on stress and happiness. As talent professionals, we are all helping people through career changes and bringing people into new opportunities.**

As we can see from the Holmes and Rahe stress scale on page 7, the majority of life events are ranked 0 (low stress) to 65 (high stress) on the scale.

Career-related events span across the entire spectrum of stress, from a change in working hours or conditions to having trouble with a boss. Change in responsibilities at work can cause the same level of stress as leaving a child at home, and changing to a different line of work, retirement and dismissal from work are ranked as some of the most traumatic potential life events.

## The Holmes and Rahe Stress Scale



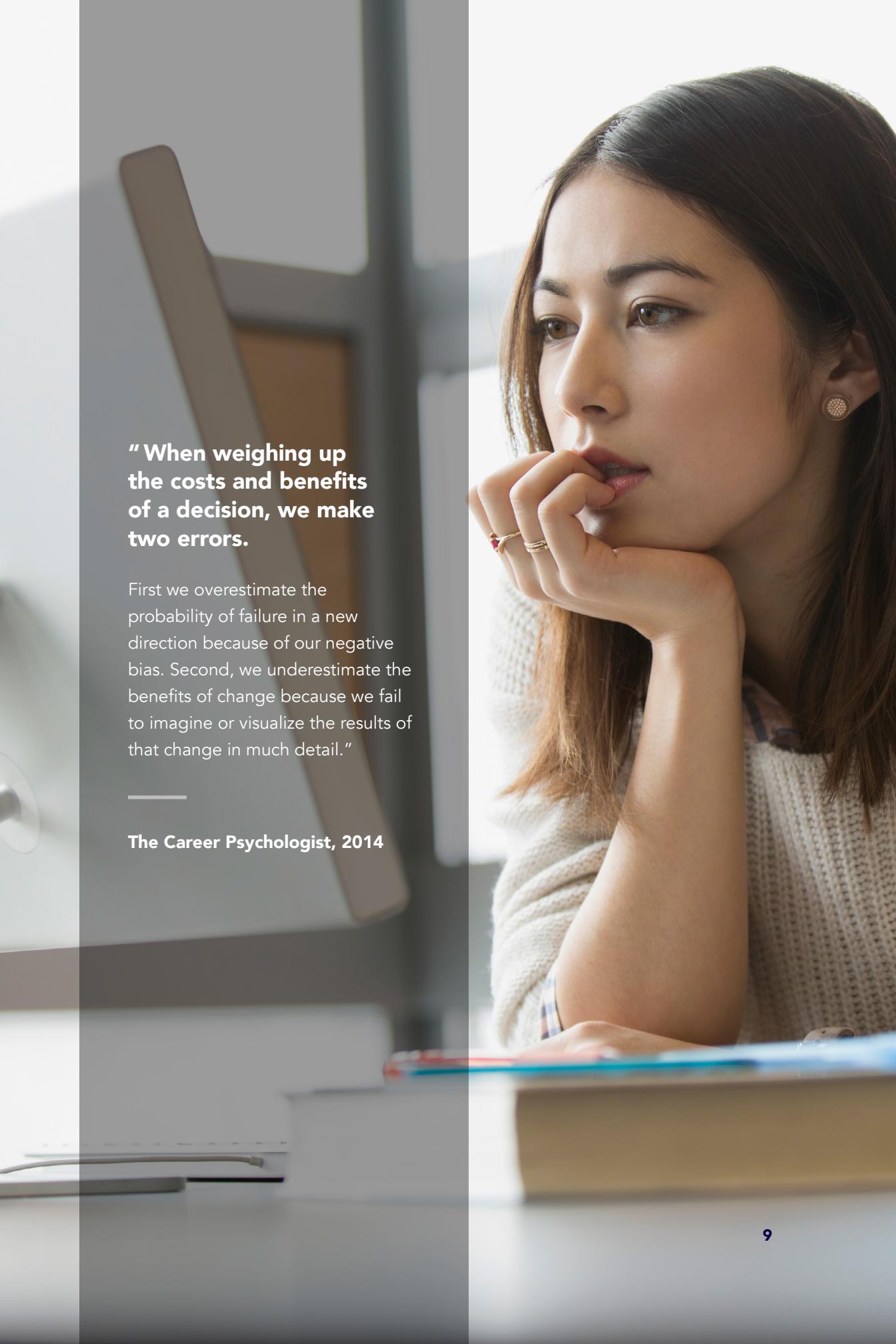
# Most people are wired to be resistant to career change.



**Career change requires people to project into the the future and imagine the potential benefits and risks.**

But research shows that most people will overestimate risks associated with a change, meaning convincing people to make a career change is even harder. They'll focus on the probability of failure when thinking about a change, when choosing a job or when making a big decision, and they won't consider the potential benefits of that change in the same way.

Candidates who are presented with a great opportunity may focus only on the risks of a career change and not necessarily the great potential outcomes.



**“ When weighing up  
the costs and benefits  
of a decision, we make  
two errors.**

First we overestimate the probability of failure in a new direction because of our negative bias. Second, we underestimate the benefits of change because we fail to imagine or visualize the results of that change in much detail.”

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**The Career Psychologist, 2014**

# Career changes are major life events.

# 3

## The forces against career change are incredibly strong:

-  Career changes are high stress.
-  We underestimate the potential benefits.
-  Making a career change is hard work.
-  We overestimate the chance of failure.

So what leads employed people to make the decision to change jobs? We found that people look for jobs when they are inspired by new opportunities or disillusioned with their current work.

## Factors that inspire people to make a career change<sup>1</sup>



Source: 1. Harris Poll on behalf of Indeed (n=1,997)

**Active candidates, those who are actively looking or open to a new job, have already considered these factors and done most of the psychological work to prepare themselves for change.**

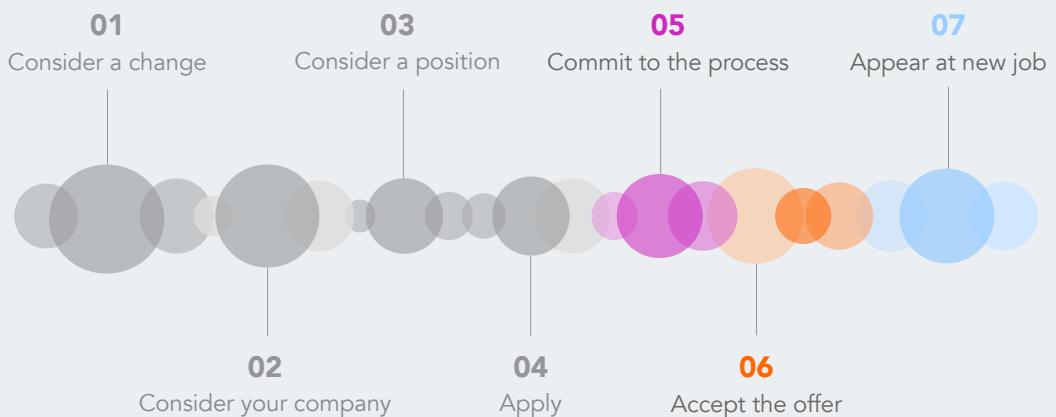
While many believe the vast majority of employed people are passive candidates, our study found that most people are quite active in their job search—a positive sign that the majority of those in the labor force have already considered a career change.

# These candidates have decided to make a change, they've chosen your company and they've considered a particular job and applied.

Talent professionals have to guide them through the last stages of their decision: committing to your hiring process, accepting an offer and then showing up at the new job.

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## The Career Decision-Making Process



# People feel better about decisions that they fully control.

**When it comes to major purchases, people are more confident in the research they do themselves prior to making the purchase, as opposed to a purchase that results from a sales call, for example.**

We see the same trend with job seekers. 79% of candidates agree it is important to look at other opportunities before accepting a job offer.<sup>2</sup> 54% of candidates also believe they would be more successful in a role if they found the job themselves and applied themselves, as opposed to a job presented by a recruiter.<sup>3</sup>

The science behind decision making and how people consider career changes has a huge impact on the success of your recruitment efforts. To help you understand the vast opportunity to attract skilled candidates, we also examined the behaviors and influencers of the modern job seeker.

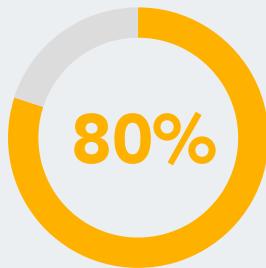
Source: 2-3. Decipher/FocusVision on behalf of Indeed (n=4,000)

# Who searches for jobs today and how

While the responsibility of talent leaders is immense, there are commonly held perceptions of today's candidates that have a huge impact on the success of our recruitment efforts.

Many recruiters still believe the vast majority of professionals are passive candidates.

## The Myth



of candidates are **passive**



of candidates are **active**

**Truly passive candidate:** Someone who is employed and not actively job seeking, but open to the right opportunity.

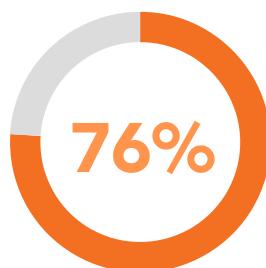
If this is true, it suggests that to attract the vast majority of candidates, you need to proactively source them through phone calls, email and social networks. The belief is that passive candidates typically don't

visit job boards or career sites, but they are willing to hear from recruiters about that life-changing role. This is why many talent acquisition organizations invest heavily in outbound recruiting, or sourcing.

**Our research completely debunked this belief.  
Here's what we found:**



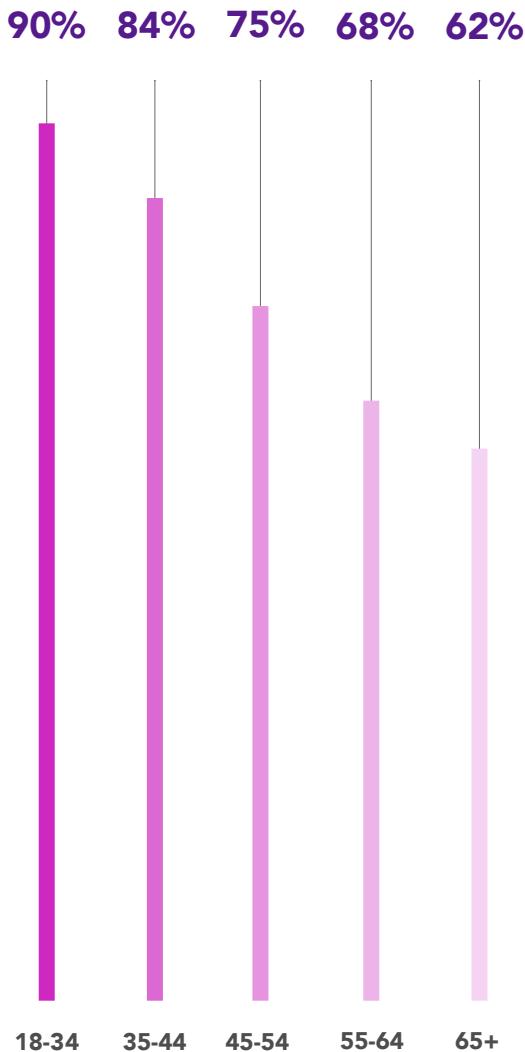
of people in the labor force look at job opportunities at least a few times a year<sup>4</sup>



of people in the labor force look at job opportunities monthly<sup>5</sup>

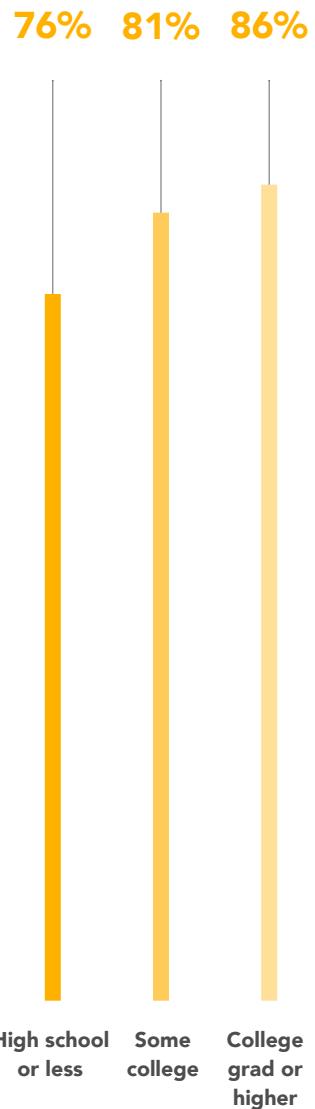
## People who actively look at job opportunities are also younger and more educated.

Percentage of candidates who actively look at job opportunities by age group<sup>6</sup>



Source: 6. Harris Poll on behalf of Indeed (18-34, n=779; 35-44, n=426; 45-54, n=427; 55-64, n=486; 65+, n=175)

Percentage of candidates who actively look at job opportunities by education level<sup>7</sup>



Source: 7. Harris Poll on behalf of Indeed (High school or less, n=592; Some college, n=720; College graduate or higher, n=981)

The research also revealed that the modern workforce actively seeks opportunity.

**95%**

of adults hired within the past year took an action to find a job within the six months prior to being hired<sup>8</sup>

**5%**

of people hired didn't actively look for a job in the preceding six months

### Actions taken 6 months prior to current job among the 95% hired in the past year<sup>9</sup>



Source: 8-9. Decipher/FocusVision on behalf of Indeed (n=684)

## Employer spotlight

Jonathan Turner, corporate director of human resources at B/E Aerospace, used to believe passive candidates led to better hires because he assumed they were satisfied their existing roles. But after taking a closer look at hiring data and tracking the performance of active and passive hires, Turner found the opposite to be true.

After surveying hiring managers, the company determined active candidates are better-quality hires than passive candidates during their first year on the job. Active candidates who found and applied to the company's jobs, rather than applying to jobs presented by a recruiter, were significantly cheaper and faster to recruit and hire.

**“Active candidates are already looking and mentally prepared to switch companies, locations, or careers,” Turner told the Wall Street Journal.**

Passive candidates, by contrast, are “more difficult to find, engage with, and motivate to make major life changes, which leads to longer times to fill.”

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### **Jonathan Turner**

Corporate Director of Human Resources, B/E Aerospace

As people get hired, there are two sets of activities that drive the connection between an employer and an employee: looking at opportunities online or interacting and networking with friends, family or professional contacts.

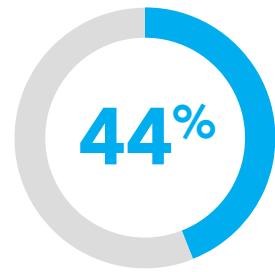
While these activities help talented people get hired, the job search doesn't stop there. In fact, the job search never really ends. Also, candidates expect jobs to come to them via mobile, and a large percentage subscribe to job alerts that bring new listings directly to them.

**Once people take a job, their behaviors barely change.**

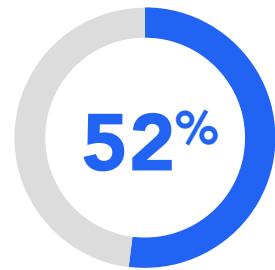
**65%** of new hires look at new jobs again within 91 days of being hired.<sup>11</sup>

**50%** of high-income hires, earning \$100-\$110K, look at new jobs within 28 days of being hired.<sup>12</sup> These findings lead us to believe no one is "passive" about their career today.

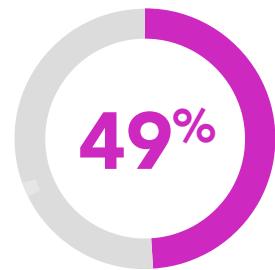
Source: 10. Harris Poll on behalf of Indeed (n=2,293, 18-34, n=779, College degree or more education, N=981; Household Income of \$100,000+, N=388)  
11-12. Indeed data (worldwide)



of workers subscribe to **job alerts**<sup>10</sup>



of those workers are between the ages **18-34**



are college graduates of higher



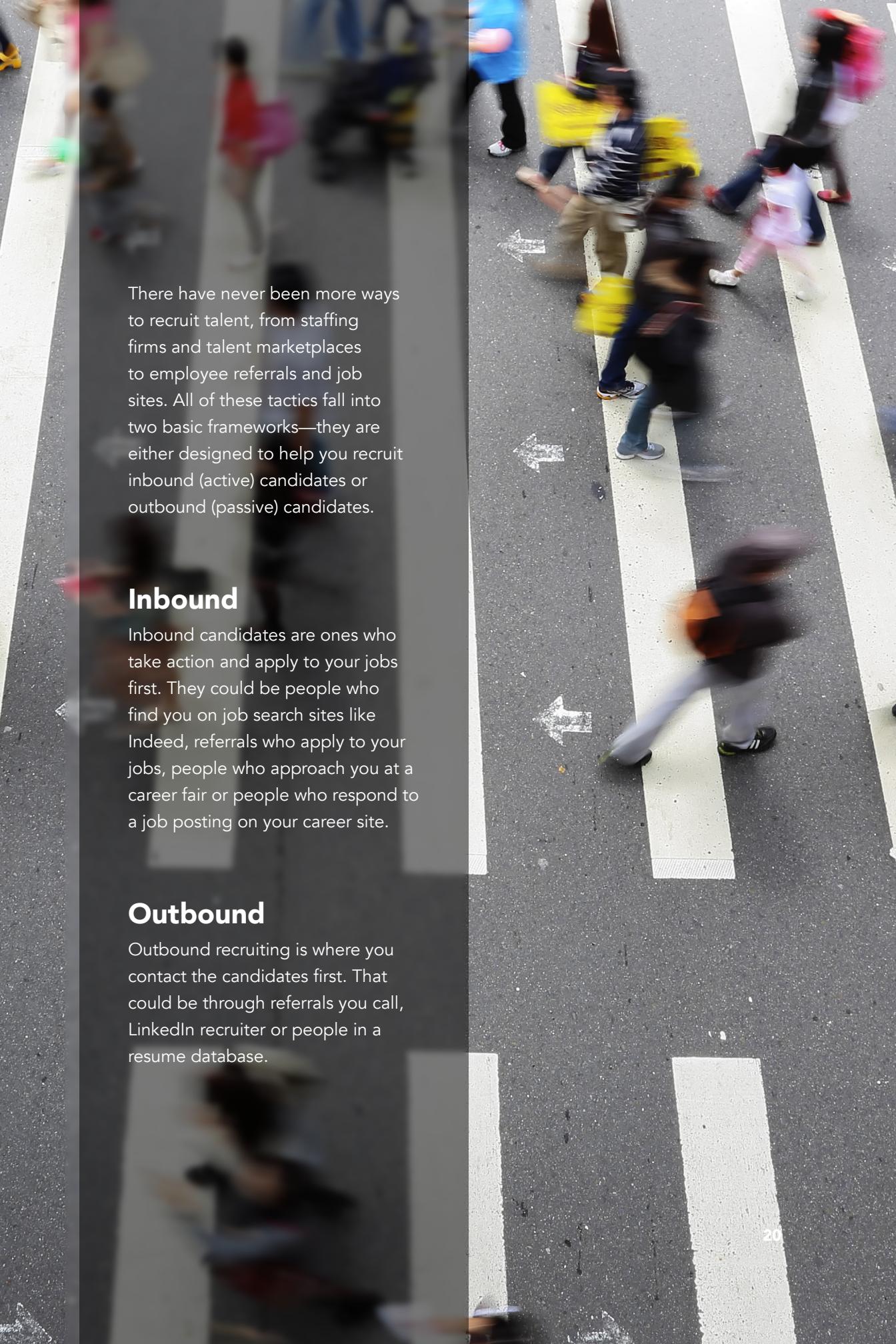
have household earnings of \$100K+

## How recruiting tactics determine candidate quality

With many employed people actively looking for jobs, the opportunity for companies to capture the attention of skilled candidates and attract them to new jobs is immense. And the recruiting tactics you use will ultimately determine the quality of the candidates you receive.

For example, our study found that 60% of candidates are more confident in the jobs they find themselves rather than jobs presented by a recruiter<sup>13</sup>, indicating that candidates prefer to be in control of their job search so they can find the best fit.





There have never been more ways to recruit talent, from staffing firms and talent marketplaces to employee referrals and job sites. All of these tactics fall into two basic frameworks—they are either designed to help you recruit inbound (active) candidates or outbound (passive) candidates.

## **Inbound**

Inbound candidates are ones who take action and apply to your jobs first. They could be people who find you on job search sites like Indeed, referrals who apply to your jobs, people who approach you at a career fair or people who respond to a job posting on your career site.

## **Outbound**

Outbound recruiting is where you contact the candidates first. That could be through referrals you call, LinkedIn recruiter or people in a resume database.

# Most talent professionals first try to fill positions with inbound candidates because it's easier and in many cases it's free, faster and less expensive.

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## Companies that fully measure cost-per-hire find outbound recruiting is more expensive for several reasons:

-  Labor-intensive
-  Low candidate response rates to inquiries
-  Long lead times
-  Low offer acceptance rates
-  Uncertain cultural fit
-  Time-consuming to overcome psychological barriers to change

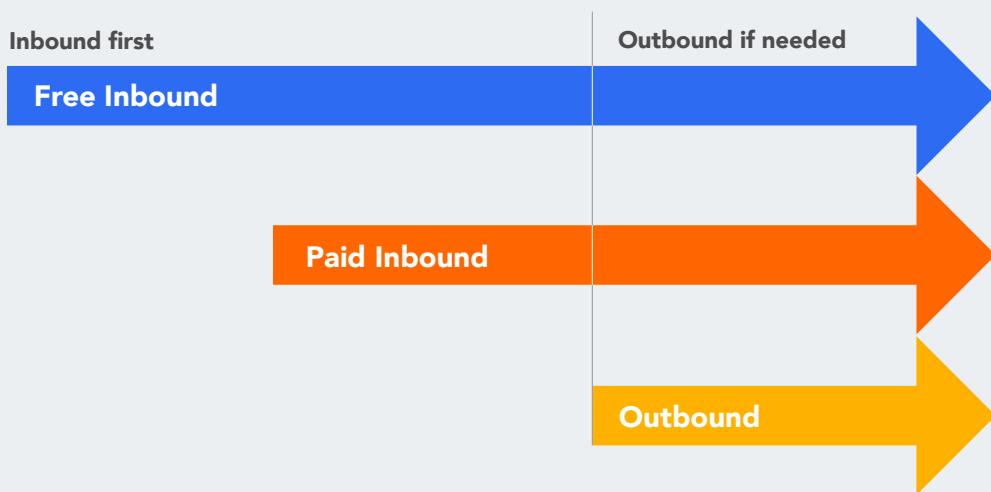
Recruiting outbound candidates is very labor intensive. The result is often low candidate response rates, long lead times and lower offer-acceptance rates. Inbound (active) candidates, on the other hand, have already decided to pursue a change, as we shared in the first section of this ebook. They already use various tactics and mechanisms to find new jobs.

But inbound recruiting has its challenges as well. Some roles receive too many applicants for recruiters to screen. Also, some roles are hard to fill quickly because more employers are competing for a smaller pool of highly skilled candidates.

Given these challenges, how can you shape your recruiting organization to best take advantage of the changing nature of job search? Based on the findings from our study, **here are five best practices you can apply to find the right talent and improve the way you recruit today.**

# 5 best practices to find the right talent

## #1: Sequence your recruiting tactics to maximize quality, cost and performance.



If you open a position and receive a sufficient flow of active candidates from organic traffic, fill as many positions as you can with that free traffic. If you're getting the right applicants and just need more candidates, then invest in paid traffic. With Indeed Sponsored Jobs, for example, you can set a budget based on your conversion rates and the number of candidates you need to fill a significant portion of your positions at the lowest possible cost per hire.

Inevitably, there will also be a set of hard-to-fill roles that may make up 10–20% of your positions. If there's an insufficient pipeline of candidates after 14 days of free and paid inbound recruiting, that's the time to consider outbound recruiting.

For most people, we recommend focusing outbound efforts on the jobs that are likely to be chronically unfilled, or open for at least three months, which is about 30% of US job vacancies today.

## #2: Shape your candidate pipeline.

In the era of job search engines, you control your talent. Below are three key levers to shape your talent pipeline:

### Job titles:

Avoid using internal titles that don't accurately describe the job. People may misunderstand abbreviations or acronyms, and they're less likely to search for them.

### Job description:

When writing your job descriptions, use a style that communicates your company's character and values to draw the right candidates in. Also use relevant keywords to make it easy for quality candidates to find your jobs.

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**This job posting from Spotify is a great example of a job description that draws talent in and performs well in search.**

We're looking for **thoughtful, well-rounded front-end engineers** to join our **team**. If you're the right one for us, **you love the Web, take great pride** in your work, think of **coding** as **more than just a job**, and have a few great **projects** to show off. You can **take a concept and transform it** into an awesome **Web-based experience** with your own **technical** and **UI/UX expertise**.

The words in **blue** give the reader a sense of the culture. The words in **purple** are the types of words that perform well in search. The perfect combination of both will get your jobs in front of the right people and entice them to apply.

## Career site

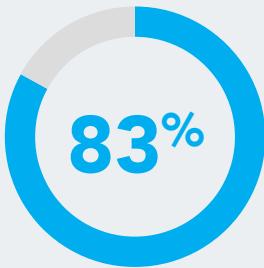
More than half of Indeed's job search traffic today is mobile.<sup>14</sup> Ensuring your career site is mobile friendly is key to ensuring the majority of job seekers can view and apply to jobs from any device. Also, be judicious in your use of online screener questions.

The more questions you have, the fewer applicants you're going to receive.

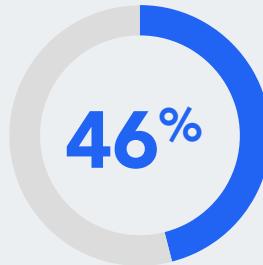
**It may be tempting to have a lengthy application with a lot of screener questions to weed out unqualified applicants.**

We found that including 30 screener questions reduces applications by 50%, and over 45 questions reduces applicants by almost 90%.<sup>15</sup>

### #3: Build a brand that brings talent to you.



83% of people say that reviews impact where they apply.<sup>16</sup>



46% of people say company reputation has a large impact on the decision to accept a job.<sup>17</sup>

+5%

+5% more applications are seen when employer reviews are available on Indeed.<sup>18</sup>

Source: 16-17. Redshift Research on behalf of Indeed  
18. Indeed data (US)

### #4: Optimize the inbound and outbound candidate experience for top talent.

Your inbound recruiting process needs to be so great that it would encourage a great candidate to go through it. One organization that's done a great job on this is Airbnb, the vacation rental site. The company recognized its candidate experience needed an overhaul, and it started by conducting a storyboarding exercise to map out the end-to-end candidate experience.

#### Storyboarding Exercise

- 1 What do we want them to know?
- 2 What do we want them to feel?
- 3 What does **rejection** feel like at this stage?
- 4 What makes this stage **uniquely** Airbnb?

#### What they implemented

- 1 Website FAQ for candidates
- 2 New Applicant Tracking Software
- 3 Candidate feedback surveys
- 4 Interviewer training

## #5: Build a platform for inbound recruiting.

If outbound recruiting is akin to sales, then inbound recruiting is much more like marketing. Over time, we predict that recruiting technology will continue to evolve to look more like marketing technology in many ways. For example, your typical recruitment marketing technology platform may include:



Career website and landing page



Lead capture functionality



Candidate CRM that manages all data around contacts



Candidate scoring and screening



Candidate marketing automation tools that automate communication to prospects



Talent analytics to measure performance and determine future investments

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This is the type of functionality that can help recruiters better match applicants to opportunities and nurture them through the hiring process with a comprehensive candidate experience.

# How employers apply the science of talent attraction

## Defining hiring success metrics

“When I talk about sourcing channels, we used to be focused on efficiency. Now we’re using data to focus on effectiveness, which includes prioritizing, assessing quality and value and using analytics to continuously improve our recruiting process.”

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**Tim Streeter,**

COO, Talent Acquisition  
Accenture

## Evaluating candidate quality based on source data

“When asked about the success of their hires, hiring managers said that 100% of their hires from Indeed were “definitely the right choice for B/E” as compared to 94% from LinkedIn and 91% from referrals or the company’s own website.”

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**Jonathan Turner,**

Corporate Director of Human Resources,  
B/E Aerospace

## Using hiring data to make decisions

“Knowing the data is one thing, acting upon it is another. A big development is marrying the data together with a set of activities that will capitalize on what the data is telling you. To be able to provide a hiring manager with that exact hiring pool that they’re looking for is one of the biggest benefits we’ve found from Indeed.”

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**Frank Hynes,**

VP of Talent Acquisition,  
Charles Schwab

## Research methodology

Indeed conducted two comprehensive talent studies in the United States.

### **Harris Poll**

This survey was conducted online within the United States from March 25-30, 2015, among 4,041 adults ages 18 and older, among whom 2,293 employed or unemployed job seekers (1,997 employed adults and 296 unemployed job seekers), by Harris Poll on behalf of Indeed via its Quick Query omnibus product. A second wave was conducted from April 27-30, 2015 among 4,025 U.S. adults ages 18 and older, among which 1,761 are employed but not self employed and 461 are employed but not self employed and hired within the past year. Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

### **Decipher/FocusVision**

This survey was fielded online within the United States from March 16-22, 2016, among 4,000 adults ages 18 and older, among whom 2,439 employed and unemployed job seekers (1,439 employed adults and 1,000 unemployed adults) and 1,561 employed adults not currently looking for new opportunities, using the Decipher survey platform owned by FocusVision on behalf of Indeed. We identified "top performers" as the sample of respondents who are regularly recognized for work contributions.



# Your next hire is here.

## Questions

Contact us at [indeed.com/hire/contact](https://indeed.com/hire/contact)

## About Indeed

Indeed is the #1 job site in the world<sup>19</sup> and allows job seekers to search millions of jobs on the web or mobile in over 60 countries and 28 languages. Over 200 million unique visitors each month search for jobs<sup>20</sup>, post resumes and research companies on Indeed, and Indeed is the #1 source of external hires for thousands of companies.<sup>21</sup>

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Source: 19. comScore, Total Visits, March 2017

20. Google Analytics, Unique Visitors, September 2016

21. SilkRoad, Sources of Hire 2017