



*The 2022 Hireology Applicant Study*

# The Great Reassessment



Today's job seekers are redefining work as we know it — here's a look at what they've come to expect and how hoteliers can win

# Introduction

Today's workers have reassessed their relationship with work. While this evolution was in motion well before the pandemic, the onset of COVID-19 in March of 2020 exacerbated it. People realized that they don't have to work rigid hours with little flexibility and sacrifice their personal lives to make a living. They realized that it is possible to work jobs they love while pursuing personal passions simultaneously. Today, the concept of work/life balance is dead — it's just life with work as a fully integrated part of who we are.

*“Today, the concept of work/life balance is dead — it's just life with work as a fully integrated part of who we are.”*

What's more, people have so many options today that they can afford to be picky about taking jobs that only meet these new expectations and needs. Because of many factors such as today's red hot economy, retiring Baby Boomers, and the proliferation of gig economy opportunities, there are roughly two open jobs for every one job seeker.

It turns out that people are taking advantage of their upper hand and truly exploring their options. Our survey of 415 2022 hospitality industry job applicants found that 45% of job seekers applied to more than 16 positions in their search. For context, this number was roughly 32% in 2021. In other words, for every qualified applicant you're now competing with 15 other companies; this, in turn, means it's harder to staff up your hotel to the capacity you'd like, serve your guests the best stay possible, and ultimately drive revenue.

The solution for hoteliers lies in deeply understanding workers' reassessed expectations when it comes to both the job itself and the job search, and then adjusting your offerings and processes to meet these needs. With thousands of roles left to fill in the industry, time is of the essence. So what exactly are these reassessments? That's what we set out to find out in our study of job seekers in the hospitality industry — one of the most impacted market segments from the pandemic and post-COVID hiring struggles. The following study outlines what we found.



# Pay is no longer job seekers' primary deciding factor

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Many hotels are attempting to win in today's labor shortage by simply outbidding competitors when it comes to pay. While this may be a way to attract some talent, wage wars won't work in the long run, nor will they help you attract the best talent. That's because job seeker needs are more nuanced than that. People aren't simply taking the highest paying offer and ignoring everything else. Rather, folks are looking at what you have to offer holistically. Pay is of course a factor for job seekers today, but it isn't the only factor — nor is it always the most important one.

## Flexibility

One of the biggest reassessments among workers today is the prioritization of flexibility. Flexibility is so valuable to people that many are willing to prioritize it over higher pay. While most of our survey respondents say pay alignment is their top priority when actively looking for a new job, 43% said that greater flexibility would keep them at their current employer over a higher paying offer. And 50% say they'd take a pay cut for the flexibility they want.

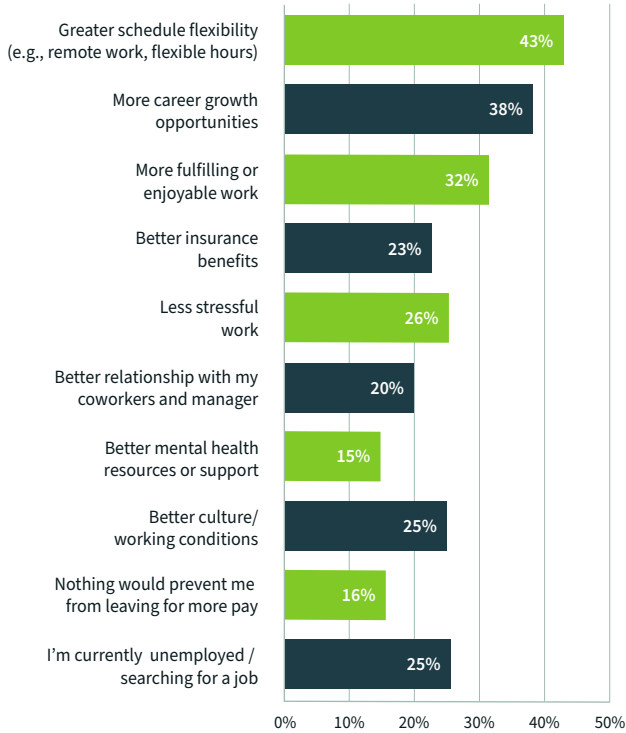
In other words, flexible work has monetary value now. So you absolutely can compete with companies like Amazon that continue to hike wages, as long as you can provide the flexibility people seek along with pay that's within an acceptable range.

Additionally, of the 60% of respondents who said they turned down an offer in the last six months, 35% cited the company's lack of flexible offerings. Imagine if you rethought your approach to flexible work and made it front and center in your employment branding. You could potentially make a significant impact on improving your offer acceptance rate.

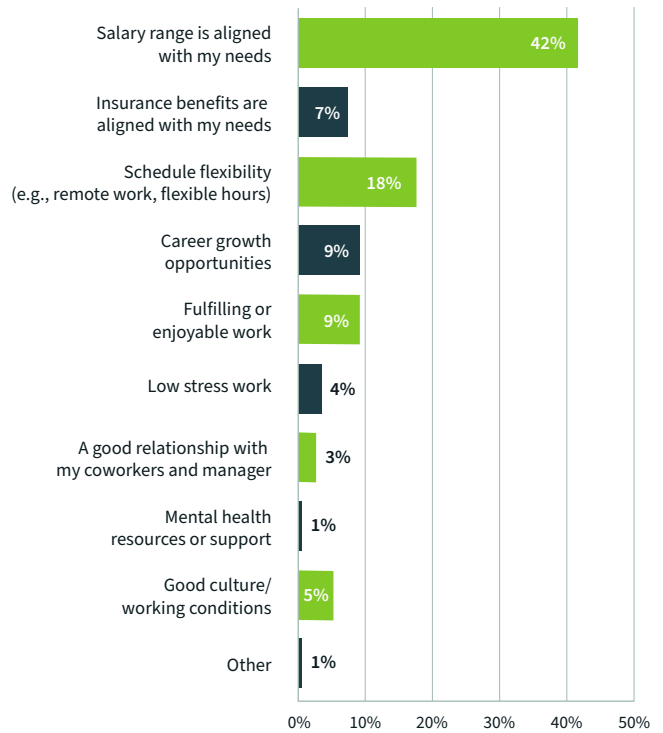
It's worth noting that flexibility encompasses so much more than just remote work. Hoteliers often assume that there is little they can do to offer flexibility, but this simply isn't true. Of course, remote work is preferred by many workers today — but not by all. People simply want to live their life and work jobs they enjoy without having to sacrifice one for the other. Flexibility can come in the form of more control over scheduling, more PTO for hourly or part-time workers, and mid-shift flexibility for things like appointments or childcare. Here's what one survey respondent had to say:

*“Flexibility in terms of work is when an individual can adapt to working various hours and/or days throughout the week as well as having the ability to be able to change or be fluid depending on the company’s needs.”*

**Which of the following benefits would prevent you from leaving your current job for a higher paying offer?**



**What is most important to you when searching for a new job?**

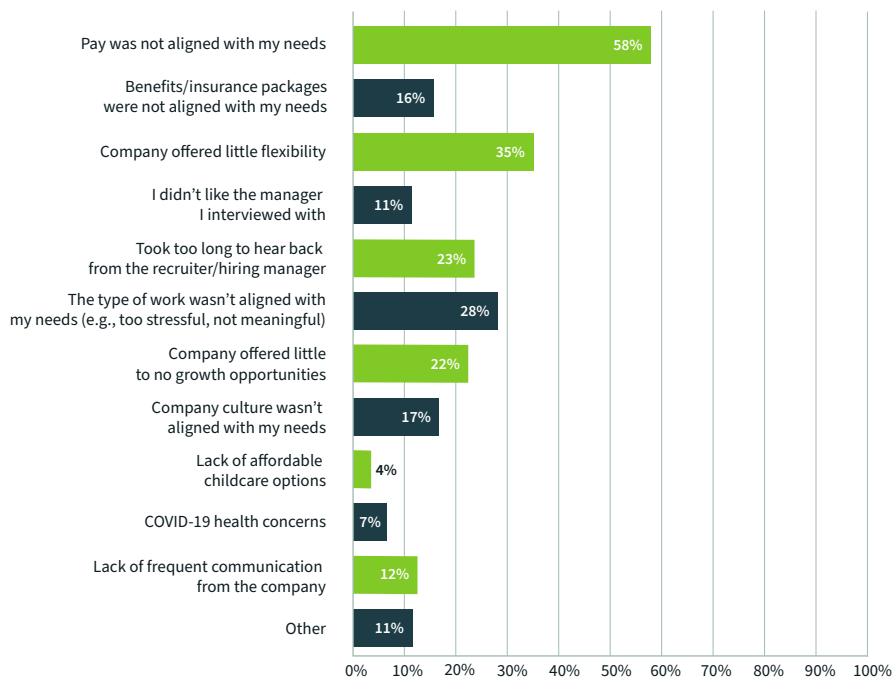


## Meaningful work

Meaningful work — which encompasses fulfillment, career growth, and company culture — is another reassessment that has taken center stage. It seems obvious, but people do not want to work jobs that make them feel unhappy, stressed, or limited. This is a reassessment that has been in the works in the hospitality industry for decades, but is one that the pandemic accelerated. People have been forced to reprioritize their lives and have come to realize that they can make a living without sacrificing their well-being.

Similar to flexibility, meaningful work is something many folks are willing to prioritize over pay. As noted above, pay is the top factor for job seekers when actively seeking a job but nearly 40% of respondents say more career growth opportunities would prevent them from leaving their current employer for higher pay and another 32% said the same about more fulfilling work. So again, if you can offer pay that is in an acceptable range, you do not have to outbid your competitors. You can compete with a broader employment package that consists of flexibility, fulfilling work, career paths, and culture.

**If you have turned down a job offer in the last 6 months, why?**



About a third of job seekers say they won't even apply to your open roles if you don't list your benefits in your job description — they have so many options, why would they apply if they don't know that your role meets their needs? When writing your job descriptions be sure to lead with your benefits, then follow with day-to-day responsibilities and qualifications.

## Hireology advice

**Rethink flexibility:** Remote or hybrid options are table stakes for work that does not need to be done in-person. But of course most hotel jobs cannot be done remotely (think: front desk clerks or housekeepers). In these situations flexibility can come in different forms — whether that’s more control over schedules, increased mid-shift flexibility, or additional PTO.

**Build clear growth paths:** You need to do more than just promise that you will offer growth opportunities — you need to show it. That means building clear career progression paths for every type of role in your hotel and defining what success looks like each step of the way. This gives employees clear insight into exactly what opportunities are available to them and what it takes to get there.

**Define core company values:** Great company culture is important for workers today, but it’s incredibly difficult to get right. The best way to promote real change within your hotel is to define the core values of the organization and then make sure leadership embodies these values. The way your leadership acts and treats others will always trickle down to managers and then the rest of the organization.

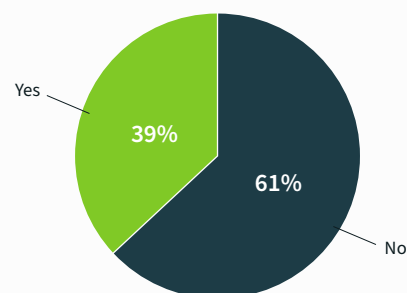
**Retail your jobs like products:** Once you’ve defined your offerings around flexibility, growth, and culture, market those differentiating factors like you would an upgraded room or spa services. Use the same techniques you’d use to sell your business — advertising, social media, content, and more. Make it clear across all channels you use to reach and engage with job seekers that you offer what they’re looking for and why your offerings are better than competing employers.

### The gig economy phenomenon

An added competition for hoteliers that government jobs data doesn’t take into account is gig economy work. Business models like Uber and Instacart are continuing to replicate across all kinds of industries, making it easier than ever for folks to pick up gig work to make a living and gain more control over when and how they work. In fact, nearly 40% of survey respondents say they have supplemented their full-time job with gig work.

The good news for hotels? There is a way to compete with gig work. When asked what prevents them from doing gig work full time, 54% of respondents said that gig work doesn’t offer stable income and 33% said that gig work doesn’t offer healthcare benefits. Stability and health insurance are benefits you can and should be offering and advertising as a part of your recruitment marketing efforts.

Have you ever supplemented your full-time job with gig or contract work? (e.g, driving Uber, freelance marketing)



# Mobile is mandatory

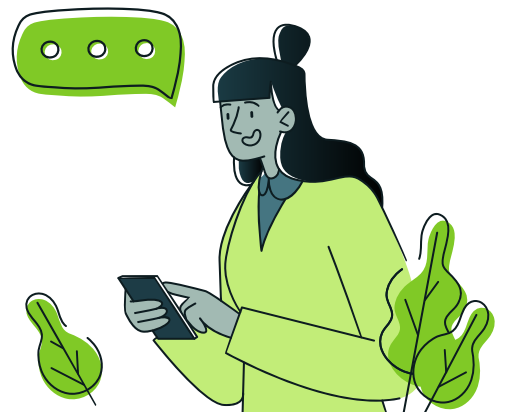
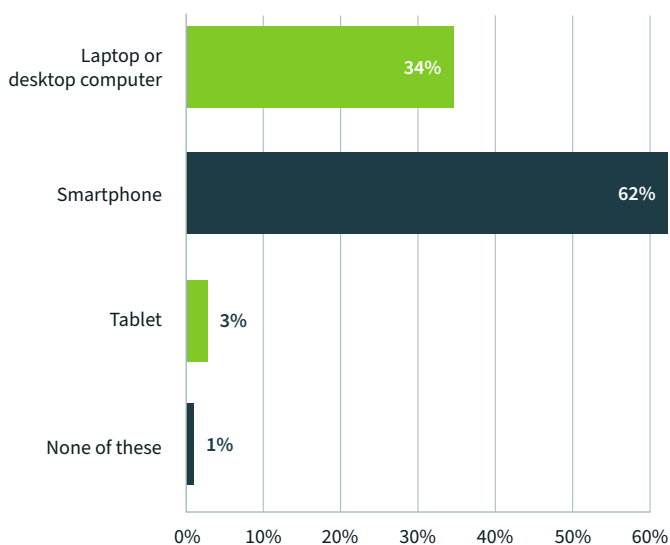
Another reassessment we're seeing among the workforce today is an increased reliance on smartphones to complete the entire job search and hiring process. In fact, we've officially crossed over a new tipping point with mobile — smartphones now drive the majority of all job searches today with 62% completing the entirety of the process on these devices.

*“Smartphones now drive the majority of all job searches today.”*

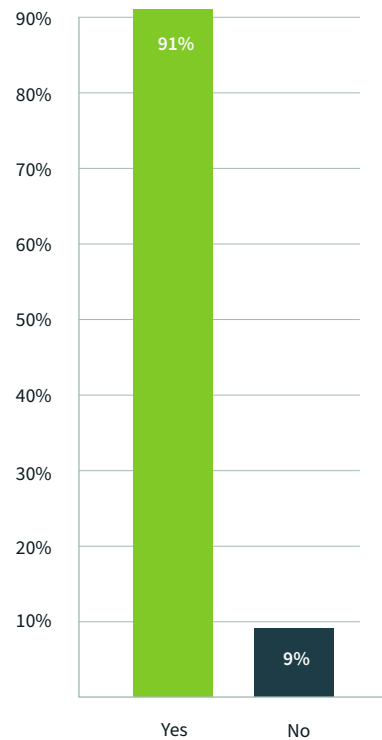
Job seekers have come to expect the ability to use their phones in the hiring process so much so that 41% say they've actually given up on an application because it was too tough to complete on their phones. So in other words, you could potentially increase your hotel's applicant flow by more than 40% just by making your applications easier to complete on a smartphone.

Mobile plays a role in recruiter-candidate communication too. The vast majority of respondents (90%) say they'd be willing to text with recruiters if it meant moving the hiring process along faster. And many studies prove that texting can and will speed up your process. Hireology customers that text with candidates experience an average time to hire that's two days faster than those relying on email alone. Additionally, studies show that folks read and respond to texts significantly faster than emails. One study actually found that the average text is read within 90 seconds of receiving it, compared to 90 minutes for the average email.

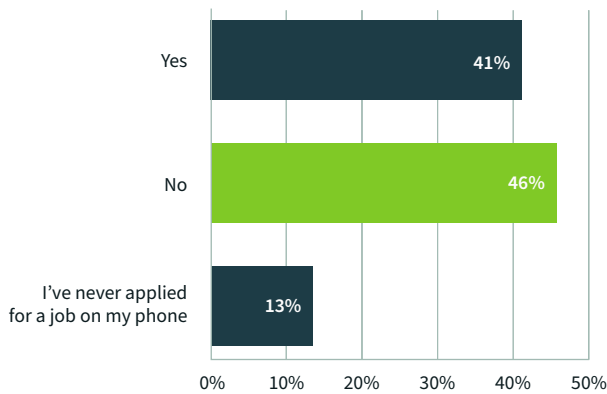
**Which type of device did you use the most during your most recent job search?**



**Would you be willing to text with recruiters for tasks like interview scheduling if it meant the hiring process would go faster?**



**Have you ever given up on a job application because it was too tough to complete on your phone?**



## Hireology advice

**Mobile friendly applications:** Optimizing your applications for mobile is all about finding ways to simplify. Small changes like eliminating drop down menus, cutting down copy to reduce scrolling time, or making any document attachments optional can go a long way. To ensure a true mobile-first experience, some organizations even design their online applications on a mobile device first and then scale up to larger screen sizes.

**Mobile optimized career sites:** A mobile-first mindset is also important when building your hotel's career site. Copy should be easy to read on a smartphone, videos should be easy to watch, and navigation should be simple. And of course it should be really easy to quickly navigate to your list of open roles and apply immediately — all from a mobile device.

**Candidate texting:** Texting is the future of recruiting. Not only are email inboxes getting more cluttered, but today's target audience is largely made up of digital natives who are less likely to answer their phones. On top of that, people are also more on-the-go than ever before. With texting, you will reach your candidates faster, receive responses sooner, and generally move the process along much more quickly than you would relying on email or phone calls to communicate with candidates.



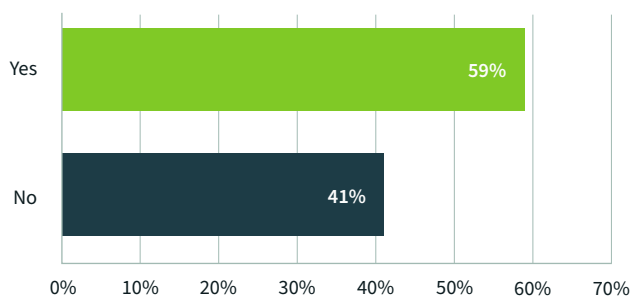
# Lengthy applications lead to lost applicants

People are also reassessing how much time they're willing to sacrifice to apply for jobs. Workers in many industries are on the go, away from home and busy with family lives that they do not have hours to give to job applications. At a time when they have so many options at their fingertips, they simply do not have to endure complicated, lengthy processes. In fact, 59% of our survey respondents say they have given up on a job application because it took too long to complete (as a reminder, 41% said they've given up because it was too difficult to complete on a mobile device).

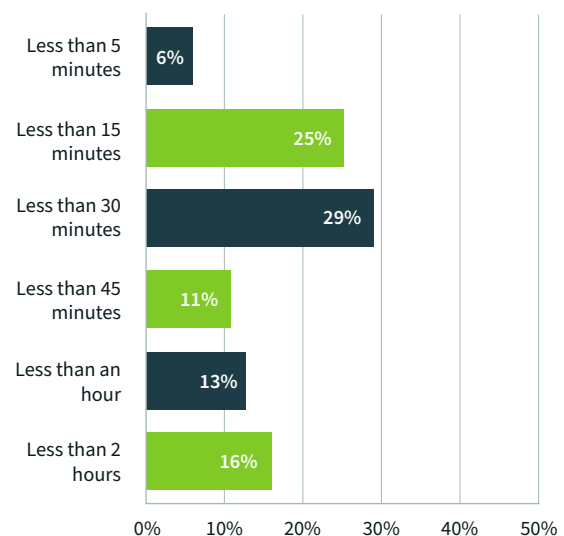
How long should your applications take? Nearly a third of respondents (29%) feel applications should take no more than 30 minutes and a quarter (25%) say they feel applications should take no more than 15 minutes.

In terms of the number of fields in the actual application, Hireology data found that application rates drop significantly if the application requires more than 6 fields. While 36% of those who view your job post will complete the application if it requires less than 6 fields, only 1 in 4 will do so if it requires 6–10 fields. This rate drops to just 14% that complete applications with 11–15 fields. With a little elimination, you could possibly double the amount of applicants you receive per post on average.

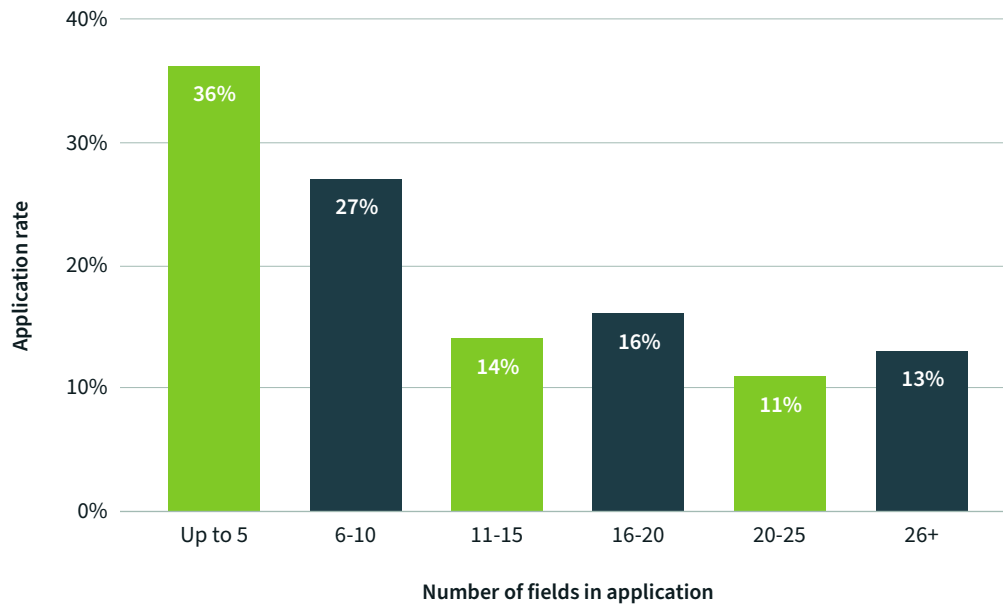
**Have you ever given up on a job application because it took too long to complete?**



**What is the maximum amount of time you would spend completing a job application before giving up?**



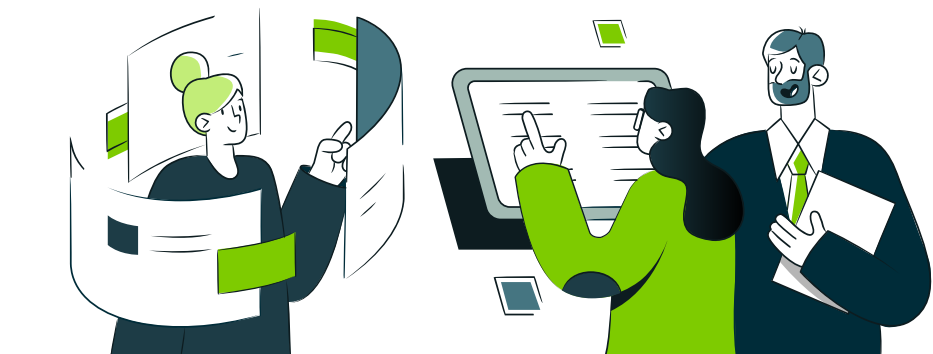
**Application completion rate per number of fields**



## Hireology advice

**Think of your applicants like sales leads:** You'd never ask a potential guest to fill out lengthy forms in order to stay at your hotel, so why would you do the same with your interested applicants? Require the bare minimum information — name, phone number, email address, and anything absolutely necessary for the role. From there, your recruiters can weed out the best and move those folks onto hiring managers for further consideration.

**Make resumes optional:** Workers in the hospitality industry (think: valets or bartenders) do not use or maintain resumes. So if you're using a generic job application that requires a resume — or worse requires applicants to submit a resume and repeat the information in a form — you're going to miss out on talent. As noted above, eliminate any and all roadblocks to applying and use your recruiters or screening questionnaires to further weed out those who might not be a fit.



# Job seekers get hired fast

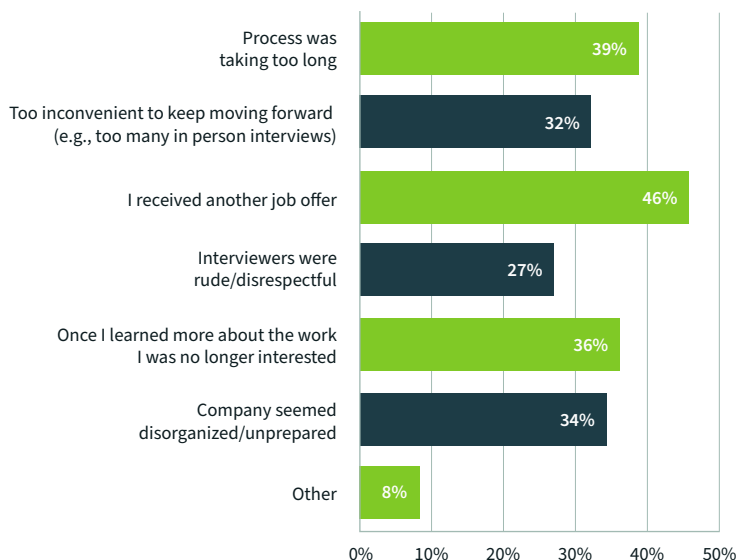
We're also seeing job seekers losing patience for employers that drag out the hiring process. Of the more than half of our respondents who turned down a job offer in the last six months, almost a quarter said they did so because the employer didn't respond fast enough. With some process optimization, you could potentially make 23% more hires.

What's more, slow processes are a major cause of candidate ghosting — defined as candidates not showing up for interviews or even ignoring offers with no explanation. In a recent Hireology study, 84% of employers say they've experienced this phenomenon in the past six months. When we asked candidates if and why they ghost, only 22% admitted to doing so. But of those who said they have, 39% said they did so because the employer didn't respond fast enough.

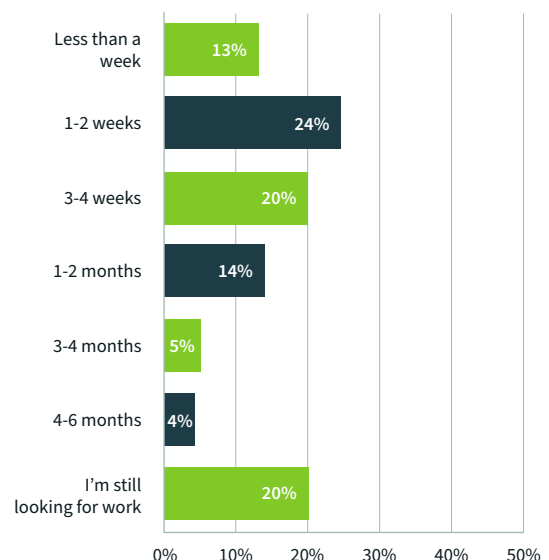
How fast does your hotel's hiring process need to be? Over a third of job seekers (37%) say their most recent job search took less than two weeks from initial research to offer acceptance. A fifth (20%) said it took less than a month. When asked specifically about the initial response to an application, about a quarter say they expect to hear back within 48 hours and 57% expect to hear back within a week.



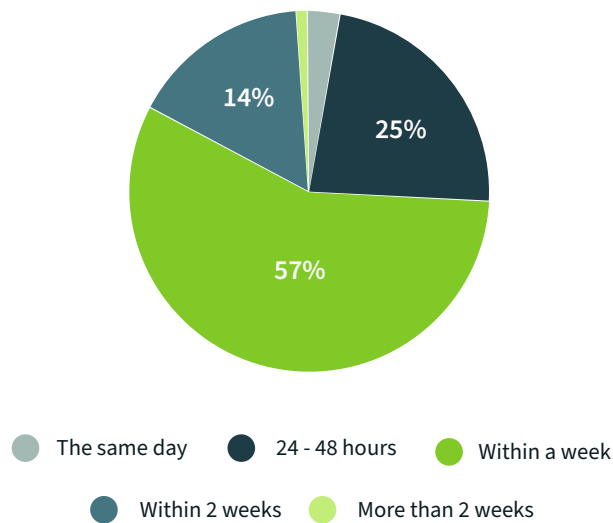
**Why have you ghosted companies in the past?**



**How long did your last job search (including researching companies, applying, interviewing and accepting an offer) take?**



### How soon do you expect to hear back from a company after applying?



### Hireology advice

**Rethink your processes:** Take some time to map out every step of your hotel's hiring process. How long does it take start-to-finish? Which steps take the longest? Are there any steps that can be streamlined? For example, maybe you realize that because your team requires interviews with three different managers for a guest-facing role, the process typically takes three weeks. But if you combined those interviews you might be able to shave it down to two weeks.

**Mobile recruiting and hiring:** If you're waiting until you get to your laptop or desk to respond to top applicants or advance great candidates, you're wasting precious time and it's costing your hotel. Typically, candidates will take the first offer they receive that meets their needs. Embrace tools that give you the option to engage with, advance, or even hire top candidates from a mobile device so you can get ahead of competitors and fill your roles faster.

**Centralized hiring tools:** Your disparate hiring tools might also be slowing you down. Jumping from platform to platform is time consuming in and of itself. Plus, you often waste time manually reentering applicant and candidate data into each platform. Using recruiting and hiring platforms with built-in tools for every step of the way — such as communication tools or candidate verification capabilities — can help you minimize the time it takes to get through important hiring steps and get great folks on board faster.

# Job seekers trust their friends

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The job search process mirrors the consumer buying process in many ways, but especially when it comes to the value of word-of-mouth referrals. In the consumer world, buyers typically trust their friends' opinions when it comes to the quality and value of products and brands over the brands themselves. Job seekers are no different. More than 50% of job seekers say they are more likely to accept a job offer if a trusted friend vouched for the company.

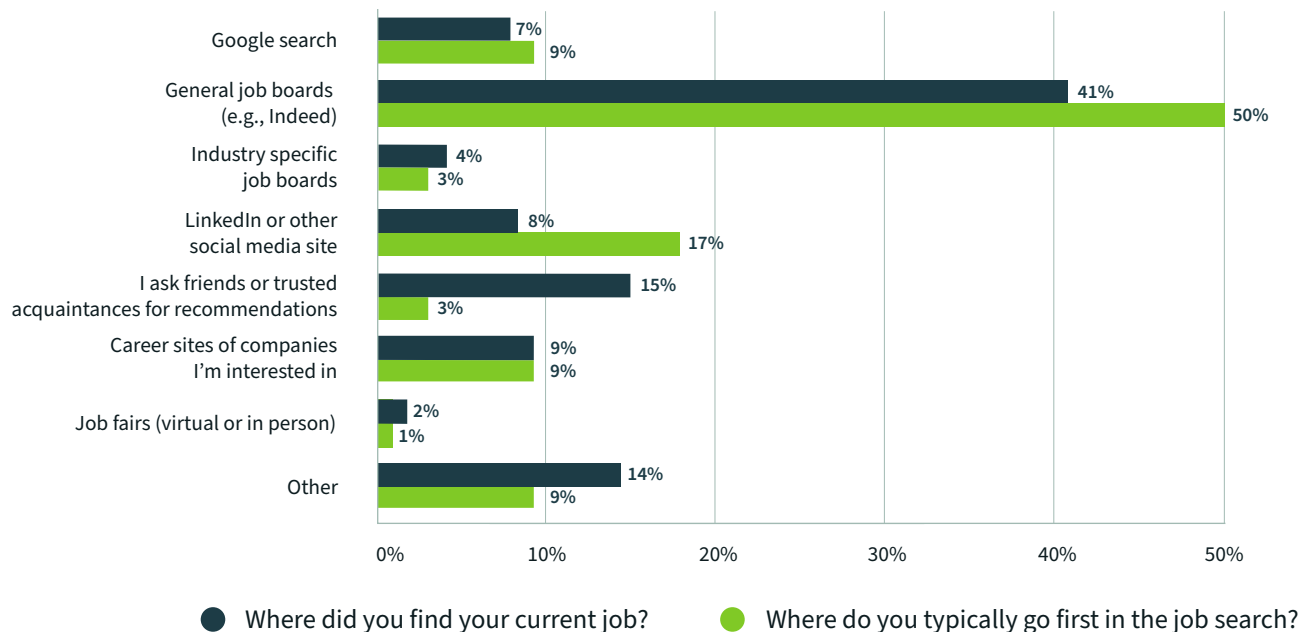
*“In the consumer world, buyers typically trust their friends’ opinions when it comes to the quality and value of products and brands over the brands themselves. Job seekers are no different.”*

Word-of-mouth referrals also drive a significantly higher ROI than any other candidate source. While 41% of people say they first go to job boards when looking for a new job, only 35% actually accept jobs they find on job boards. Compare that to the 15% of job seekers who say they go to friends first when looking for a job, while 20% say they actually found their most recent job through a friend. So if you can get that 15% up higher with a more robust referral program, the increase in actual hires through this channel could be significant.

Of course most hotels do have a referral program in place. But few have put in the time and effort required to get real results out of them. Too often, these are programs that live in the back of the employee handbook and are rarely mentioned or promoted outside of an employee's first few days on the job. Take some time to breathe new life into your referral program in order to maximize your potential for connecting with and hiring great folks in your existing employees' networks.



## Job search channels



### Hireology advice

**Internal marketing:** Apply marketing best practices to spread the word about your hotel's program internally. Reach folks where they are by using messaging that resonates with them. Since your employees are rarely working in one sport (other than front desk personnel), send them texts or place physical signage in high traffic areas. In your messaging make it clear exactly what roles you're looking for, how to participate, and what they get if their referral is hired. And repetition is key — folks typically need to hear messages multiple times before it sinks in.

**Easy participation:** The majority of your employees weren't hired to recruit for you — so the more hoops your employees have to jump through to submit a referral, the less likely they are to participate. Instead of requiring folks to complete lengthy forms or remember passwords for specific apps, make it as easy as sending a text or scanning a QR code. Removing any and all barriers will maximize participation.

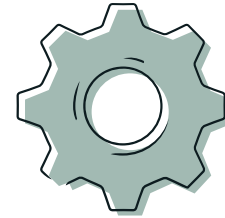
**Choose the right incentives and payout schedule:** As a rule of thumb, align the monetary value of the bonus payout with the difficulty of filling the role. Let's take an auto dealership for example. The payout for folks with specialized technician skills and knowledge should be higher than the payout for say entry-level valet as technician roles are typically much harder to fill and keep the facility running seamlessly. Similarly consider building a payout schedule that effectively incentivizes folks to participate as well. For example, maybe you pay half of the payout right way to give people some instant gratification but then you pay the rest when you're confident that a new hire is the right fit (for many this is six months).

# Top talent do not burn bridges

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The Great Resignation is a challenge for businesses across all industries today. As noted above folks have so many opportunities for work (including gig economy work) that they can afford to do some exploration. But for most, these resignations aren't necessarily a reflection of you as an employer. In fact, three quarters (75%) of respondents said they would be open to returning to a hotel they previously worked for — meaning more often than not, folks aren't burning bridges.

As a hotelier this means that anyone you lose should be treated as a possible candidate for future roles. Chances are, some of your former employees may end up looking to return to stable work or maybe they chose to experiment with a new industry that isn't working out for them. These folks worked for you in the past for a reason, so if you can prove that their experience would be even better the second time around you may just be able to get them to return.



## Hireology advice

**Keep former employees in your pipeline:** Build a database of former employees who have left on good terms. Keep notes about what skills they developed while working for your hotel and why they left. Reach out to them in six months to a year and potentially offer a new role or different responsibilities given their reasons for leaving and level of experience. And be sure to message any changes you've made to your benefits – such as your flexibility offerings or career growth opportunities.

**Smooth and thoughtful exit processes:** While it's never ideal to lose an employee (especially in today's tough hiring market), always follow a thoughtful offboarding process that includes an exit interview where you dig deep into why they're seeking opportunities elsewhere. Give them a warm send off. Kindness, support, and thoughtfulness will leave a positive final impression of your hotel in the minds of your former employees. And always make it clear that you would welcome them back should the right role open up down the line.



# Conclusion

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Today's labor supply and demand imbalance has given workers the power to demand change — change in how they get hired as well as what work looks like for them. And these demands can be felt in their actions. Folks are leaving their current jobs at unprecedented rates, they're holding out for new opportunities that truly meet their needs, and they have little patience for employers that make the hiring process difficult and slow.

As a result, hoteliers today are struggling. You're struggling to not only retain your talent but also build a pipeline of great applicants for your open roles. And this struggle is impacting your ability to provide a great guest experience — especially in the busy travel season due to requiring in-person work for traditionally lower pay and little flexibility.

But the good news is that today's job seekers are also being vocal about what you can do to win them over. They've made it clear that while pay is always an important factor when it comes to influencing where they work, it isn't the only factor. They want jobs that offer fulfilling work as well as the flexibility needed for them to live their lives the way they want to. Additionally, they don't want to nor do they have time to jump through hoops to apply to your open roles.

When it comes down to it, most of these demands aren't that outrageous. Simple changes to your job offerings and the way in which you interact with candidates can make a huge difference in your hotel's hiring results. The job search should be as simple as sending a text. And work itself should never come at the expense of a fulfilling life. If you can find a way to meet these needs, you can and will win as we continue to navigate today's unprecedented hiring challenges.





# Survey Breakdown

## Methodology

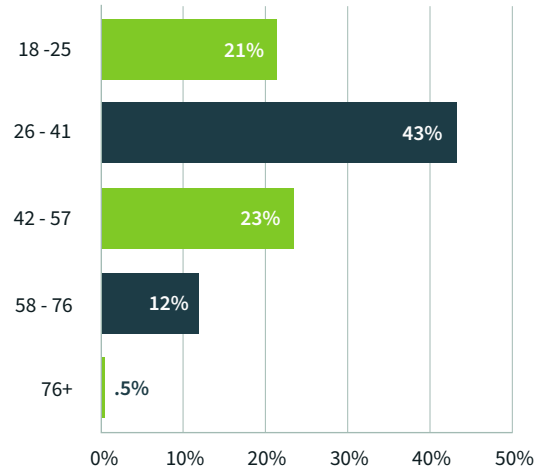
In April and May of 2022, Hireology surveyed 415 people who had applied to at least one hospitality job in the last six months. Age breakdown and industry focus of the job seekers surveyed is as follows:

## Demographics

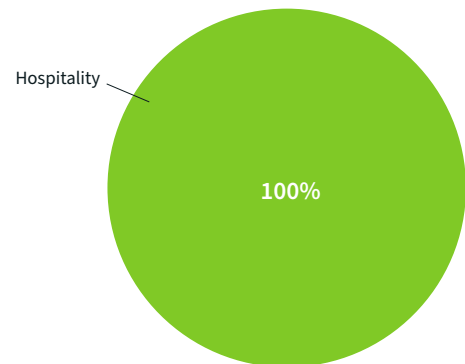
The age breakdown of the survey respondents reflected the overall age of the working population to ensure that the data is not skewed by generational perceptions.

The age breakdown of the respondents as well as the primary industry in which they were seeking work is shown in these charts (right).

What is your age?



In which industry do you currently work?  
If you're searching for a job please select the industry you're looking to work in



### About Hireology

Hireology is an all-in-one recruiting, hiring, and employee management platform that empowers decentralized businesses to build their best teams. The company equips HR and business leaders with the support and tools needed to manage the full employee lifecycle — from pre- to post-hire — in one seamless platform.

With focused expertise across several industries — including retail automotive, healthcare, professional and consumer services, and hospitality — more than 7,500 businesses rely on Hireology for their hiring, HR, and payroll needs, putting people at the center of their organizations. For more information, visit [www.hireology.com](http://www.hireology.com).