



## **SURVEY REPORT**

# THE 2021 STATE OF RECRUITER & HIRING MANAGER COLLABORATION



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## **ABOUT THE SURVEY**

Talent Board and Phenom surveyed recruiters and talent acquisition professionals regarding their collaborative partnership with hiring managers to source and hire best-fit talent. A total of 285 anonymous survey responses were collected online between June 28 and July 2 2021 from recruiters, talent acquisition specialists, and talent acquisition leaders at companies of all sizes and across a wide range of industries worldwide.

# INTRODUCTION



Recruiters and hiring managers have one of the most important working relationships in any organization: they collaborate to source and hire best-fit talent. Their ability to work in partnership throughout the recruiting and hiring process — and to maintain superior levels of communication, responsiveness, and trust — can make or break a company's success in acquiring the right people.

Their work is even more challenging now due to major shifts in the talent acquisition landscape including employees quitting in record numbers, skyrocketing numbers of job requisitions, the dramatic expansion of virtual recruiting and onboarding, a proliferation of contractors and gig workers, the growing demand for work flexibility, and the complexity of engaging multigenerational workers.

Given these challenges — in addition to basic communication inefficiencies that make it difficult to fill roles quickly — we recognize that recruiters and hiring managers must work as efficiently as possible *together* to help their organizations grow. But how?

To better understand and optimize the existing relationship between recruiters and hiring managers, we needed to ask how they're faring in the midst of a changing talent paradigm. Where do roadblocks and areas of improvement exist? This survey was intended to answer these questions and reveal opportunities for strengthening this crucial partnership.

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

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## CRITICAL CHALLENGES

Recruiters' top three challenges when working with hiring managers to fill requisitions are\*:

- 46%** Deciphering “must-haves” versus “nice-to-haves”
- 41%** Slow response to email, call, or other form of outreach
- 39%** Ensuring a quality candidate experience



## COMMON ROADBLOCKS

The three most common roadblocks recruiters identified when working with hiring managers are\*:

- 56%** Unrealistic expectations
- 47%** Quality of candidates
- 39%** Poor communication



## COLLABORATION IMPROVEMENTS

The top three ways recruiters feel their relationship with hiring managers could be improved are\*:

- 50%** Faster communication
- 45%** Clearer expectations
- 39%** More frequent communication

## KEY TAKEAWAYS



Timely feedback from hiring managers is crucial throughout the recruiting cycle to keep top talent from being poached mid-process. Yet:

**45%**

of recruiters do not have software (excluding messaging apps and email) that provides them or their hiring managers with real-time feedback on candidates. Only 13% are currently considering it.

**59%**

of recruiters report that it typically takes 2 days or longer for hiring managers to provide them with feedback after a candidate interview.

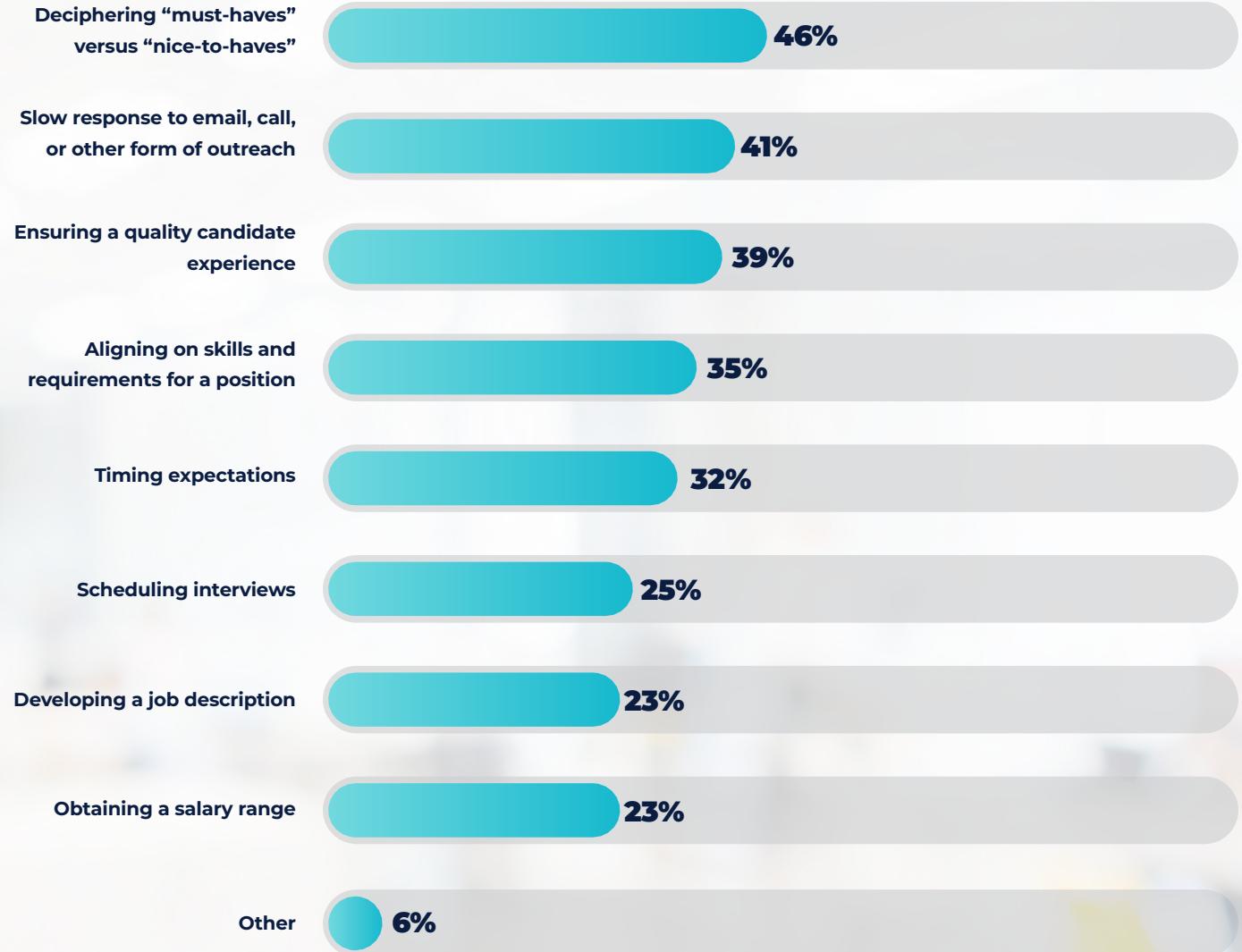


# OUR FINDINGS

# 1 | CRITICAL CHALLENGES

## What are the critical challenges you face when working with hiring managers?\*

The top challenge for nearly half of respondents (deciphering must-haves versus nice-to-haves) is an essential element in sourcing best-fit candidates, externally or internally. When recruiters don't clearly understand exactly which skills, qualifications, and other qualities hiring managers seek in a candidate, finding the right person can become a long, frustrating, and costly process. This is why early intake meetings between recruiters and hiring managers are so important, and why these meetings should include a frank discussion of required candidate qualities versus merely desirable ones.





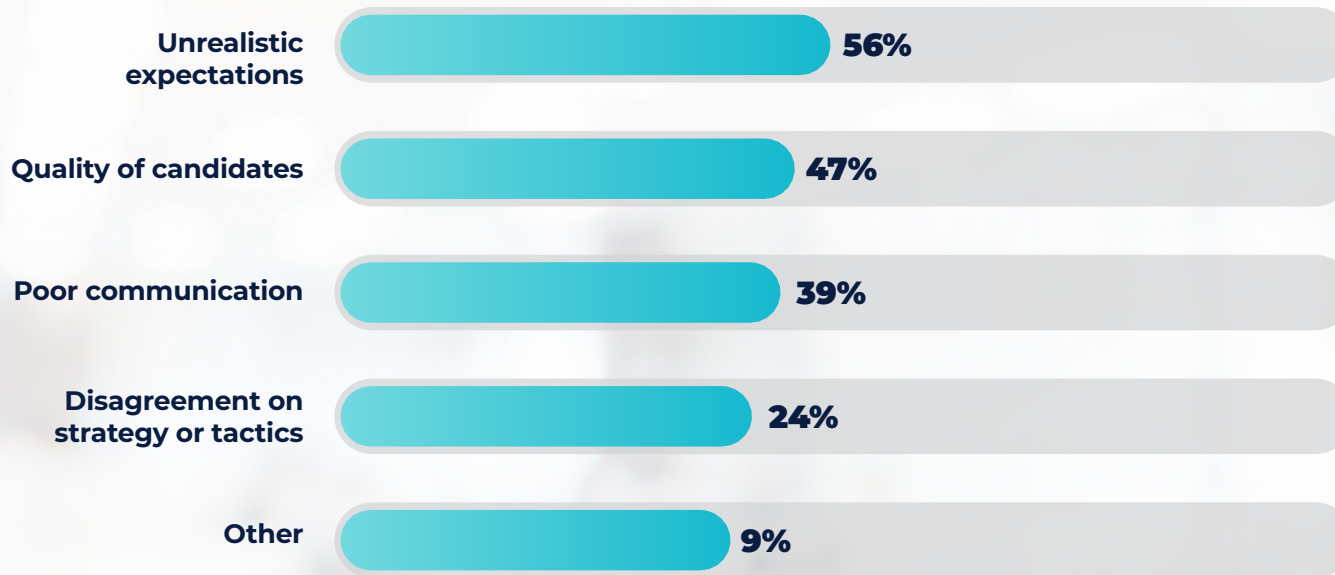
The second challenge on this list — slow communication between recruiters and hiring managers — can cost employers the best candidates for their jobs, particularly in competitive talent markets where other TA teams act quickly and decisively.

The third challenge — ensuring a quality candidate experience — is one of the **top recruiting activities among employers in 2021** for good reason. It has a major impact on a company's reputation, particularly now that candidates are quick to share their experiences (both good and bad) across social media, employer review sites, and their own personal and professional networks. Also, when companies prioritize a quality candidate experience, they're far more likely to successfully hire great talent in today's competitive labor market. With more jobs than active job seekers, **recruiters and hiring managers must do what they can** to create a quality candidate experience in their respective areas of responsibility (e.g., recruiters should make their outreach and follow up communications timely, clear, and respectful, while hiring managers should ensure the interview and assessment processes are as fair and bias-free as possible). If either group falters, it can sacrifice the entire candidate experience — no matter how positive it has been to that point.

At the end of the day, every item on the above list is crucial to finding the best people efficiently and cost-effectively. Failing to deliver on any of them can erode the candidate experience. And for consumer-based brands, **a poor candidate experience can directly damage the bottom line.**

## 2 | COMMON ROADBLOCKS

What are the most common roadblocks when working with hiring managers to fill reqs efficiently?\*



In spite of recruiters' general satisfaction regarding their collaboration with hiring managers, more than half cited unrealistic expectations while less than half cited candidate quality as their top two roadblocks. Interestingly, both issues are linked to the third roadblock: poor communication. Improving communication would mitigate the first two roadblocks, as well as disagreement on strategy or tactics — an issue for almost a quarter of respondents.

Resolving these issues isn't always simple. However, they must be addressed and resolved to whatever degree is possible. This makes it essential that recruiters and hiring managers hold intake meetings for every open role to clearly identify ideal candidates; discuss target personas; review ideal candidate profiles (ICPs) from LinkedIn or develop ones based on current employees; and schedule regular discussions and check-ins (weekly calls, daily email updates, etc.).

While these communication opportunities often go by the wayside in the heat of other daily pressures and priorities, keeping the lines of communication open is critical. Recruiters may even need to take the lead when it comes to championing frequent communication, such as setting up weekly check-ins to keep candidates moving along. In the long run, it will help build trust and prove their commitment to meeting hiring managers' needs.

### 3 | IDEAL CANDIDATE IDENTIFICATION

1

How often do you feel hiring managers give you a clear understanding of the ideal candidate?



2

How often do you discuss target personas with hiring managers to inform your sourcing strategies?



3

How often do hiring managers provide ideal candidate profiles (ICPs) from LinkedIn, existing employees, etc. to help you understand the types of candidates they're seeking?

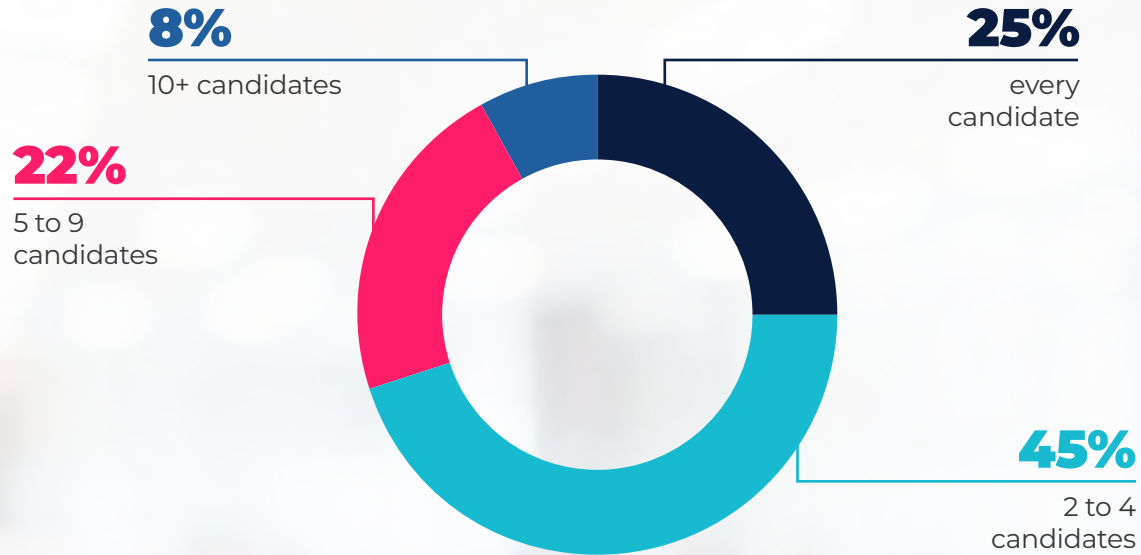


**It's crucial that recruiters and hiring managers seek alignment at the start of every talent search** on the specific skills, qualifications, and other qualities that constitute an ideal candidate. Without this alignment, sourcing best-fit talent is far more difficult and costly.

A simple action item for recruiters based on these findings: those who haven't yet "educated" hiring managers on the value and usefulness of target personas and ICPs should strongly consider doing so.

**We also asked recruiters:**

How many candidates are interviewed before you sync with hiring managers to realign on what constitutes an ideal candidate?

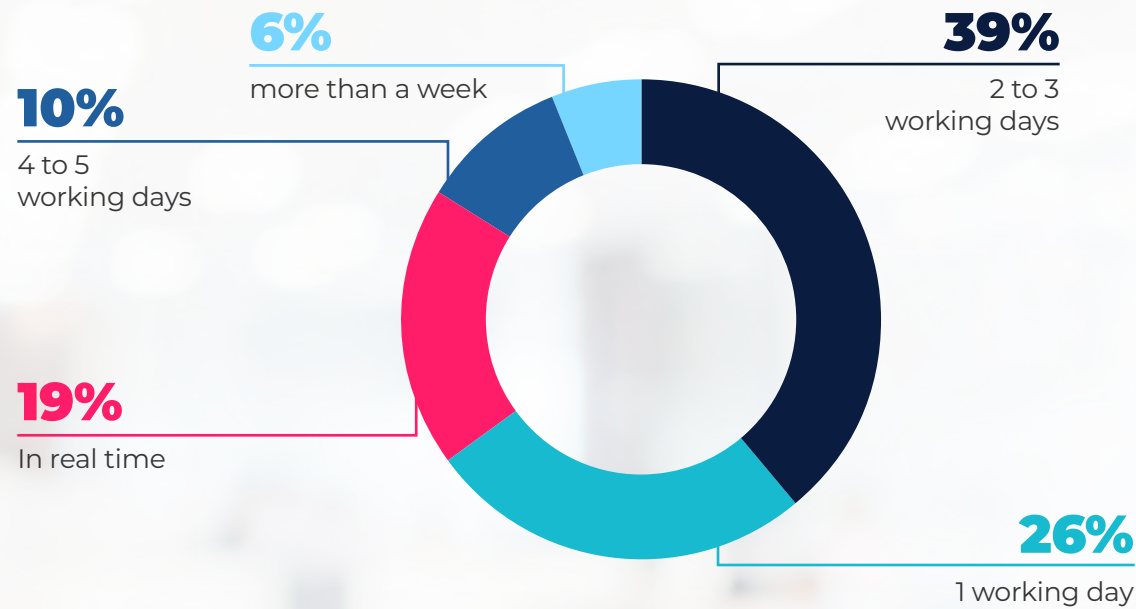


Recruiters and hiring managers sometimes need to realign after meeting with several applicants to better define what constitutes an ideal candidate. In some cases, this wasn't adequately understood from the start. In others, expectations might change or roles may be refined once a search begins.

While realigning with hiring managers requires a bit of additional time, it actually speeds up the process of finding and hiring the right talent. Therefore, the 30% of respondents who are realigning after 5 or more candidates would be wise to sync sooner with hiring managers, particularly for roles with high impact to the business and those that need to be filled quickly.

## 4 | REQUISITION RESPONSIVENESS

How long does it typically take for hiring managers to respond to your questions and job requirements when building a requisition?



Creating job requisitions often takes a bit of back and forth between recruiters and hiring managers. When both parties respond to the other in a timely manner during this process, it not only helps to keep them both engaged, but it also supports a feeling of mutual respect.

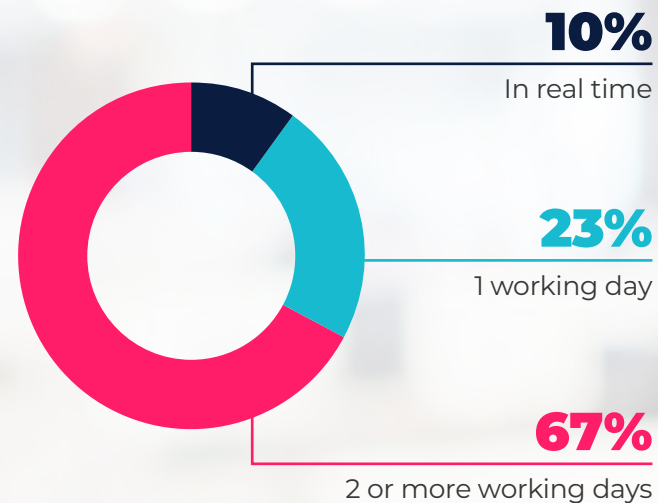
Certainly, taking 4 or 5 working days — or more — is a risky response time in today's highly competitive talent market. Even 2 to 3 days is less than ideal. Based on our findings, more than half of all recruiters should consider having an honest discussion with hiring managers about the need to respond quickly when collaborating on building a job requisition.

## 5 | CANDIDATE FEEDBACK

We asked recruiters about three critical opportunities for receiving feedback from hiring managers:

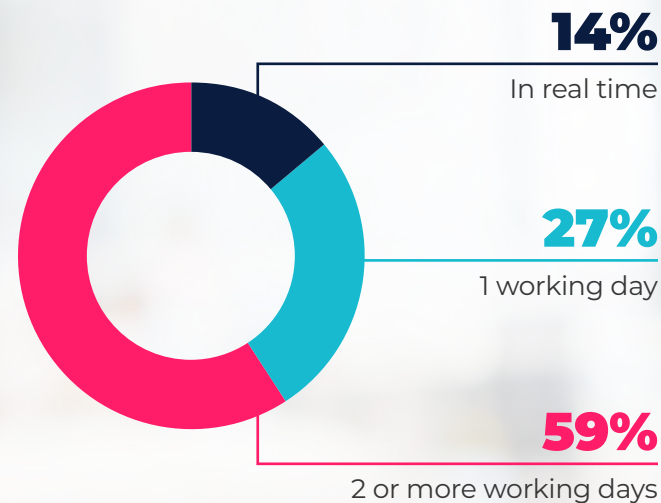
**1**

How long does it typically take for hiring managers to provide feedback *after sending candidate resumes for review*?



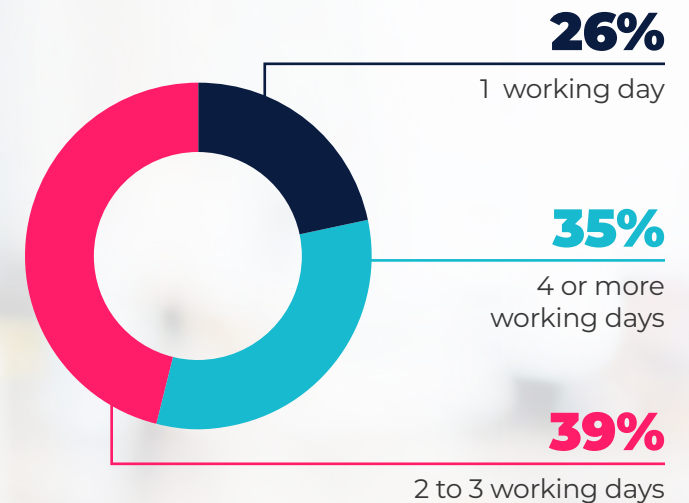
**2**

How long does it typically take for hiring managers to provide feedback *after an interview*?



**3**

When gathering feedback from multiple interview panelists, what is the average length of time it takes to receive feedback from all interviewers?



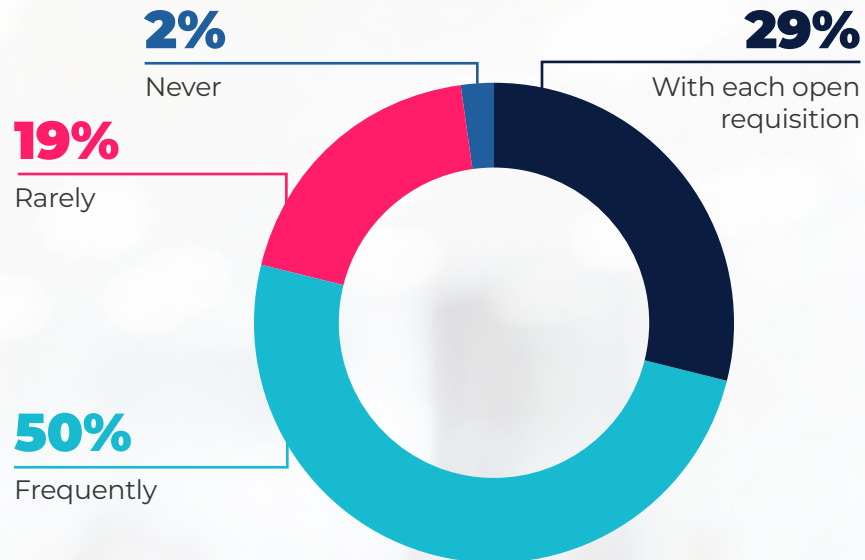
Timely feedback from hiring managers is crucial throughout the recruiting cycle to keep top talent from being poached mid-process. Yet 67% of respondents report that it could take 2 days or more to receive feedback from hiring managers after reviewing a resume; 59% report that it could take 2 days or more to receive post-interview feedback from hiring managers; and roughly three-quarters report that it could take 2 days or more to receive post-interview feedback from other interviewing panelists. Taking this much time just to get feedback puts an employment brand at a huge disadvantage. And our data highlights the fact that far too many organizations aren't benefiting from the potential increase in recruiting speed that panel interviews can provide.

One way to tighten up the feedback loop is to review hiring-manager follow-up strategies to ensure feedback is proactively collected consistently and within agreed-upon timeframes. We recommend using messaging apps and texting as opposed to communicating solely via email, which, as data below shows, is still the number one way hiring managers and recruiters communicate. Recruiting teams may want to also consider investing in hiring manager collaboration tools and technologies, like Phenom Hiring Manager referenced in the Technology Solutions section.



## 6 | PROCESS ALIGNMENT

How often do you discuss your sourcing and recruiting process for a particular role with hiring managers?



Nearly a quarter of respondents are not having regular discussions with hiring managers about the sourcing and recruiting process, a major disconnect for these TA teams. Additionally, when asked whether hiring managers truly grasp their sourcing/recruiting process, 25% of respondents report that they do not, while another 20% said they're unsure.

This was one of the few areas where there was significant differentiation in responses based on company size: as organizations get bigger, there seems to be a greater understanding of sourcing and recruiting by hiring managers, increasing up to 38% among companies with more than 500 employees.

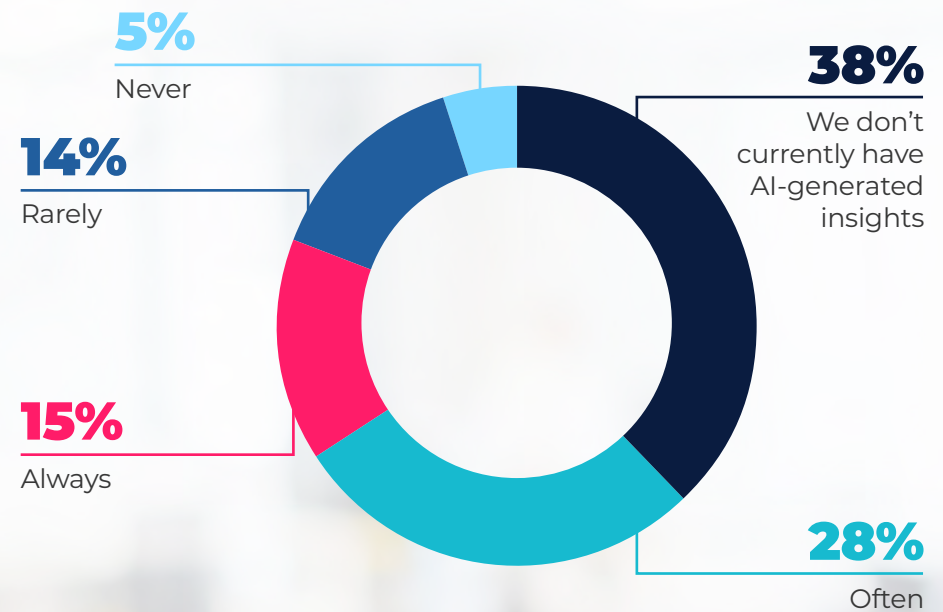
## 7 | TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS

Do your hiring managers have software to provide you or your recruiters with real-time feedback on candidates?

(excluding messaging apps and email)



How often do you share a candidate's AI-generated insights and fit score with hiring managers?



Software that enables real-time feedback can create a significant advantage for TA teams because it improves the efficiency with which candidates are evaluated.

Artificial intelligence and automation have emerged as essential technologies when recruiting and retaining talent. As Phenom's **2021 State of Candidate Experience report shows**, delivering an incredible candidate experience is the best way to gain a competitive edge in the new era of talent acquisition, "but talent acquisition teams and recruiters won't be able to handle it on their own — artificial intelligence, automation, and HR tech will play a pivotal role in how quickly they hire and develop talent."

With only 43% of recruiters sharing candidates' fit scores and intelligent insights, many TA teams are either not taking advantage of these time-saving tools — or they don't have access at all.

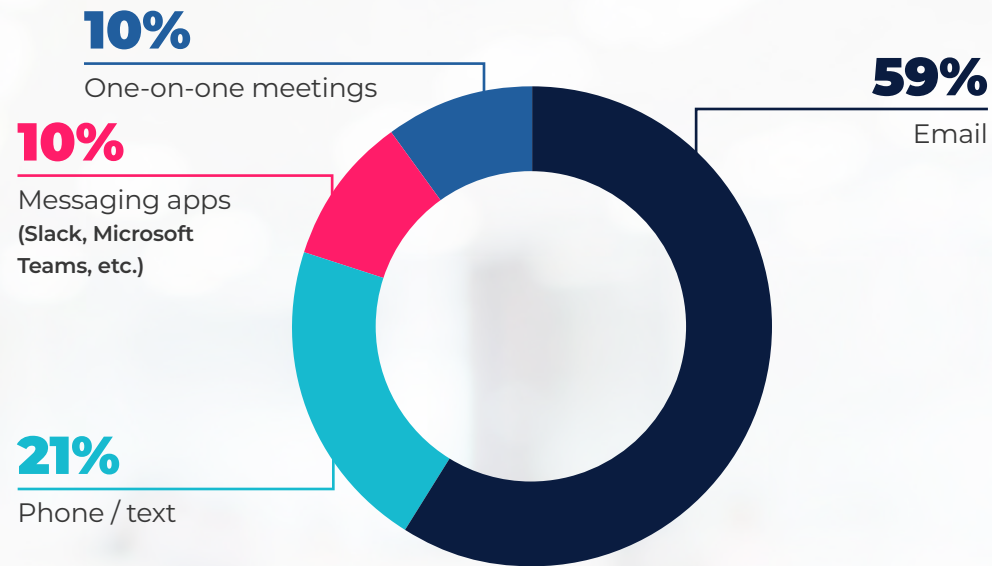
Chatbots and conversational AI, CRMs and candidate databases, virtual interviewing services, mobile applications, and text-based apps are just a few of the useful tech solutions TA teams should consider to boost their collaborative efficiency. Phenom Hiring Manager, for example, is an AI-powered set of tools that unites candidate discovery, interview scheduling, video assessments, and evaluation tools into an accessible, centralized, intuitive user experience. Not only does it bring greater visibility into the hiring process, it also enables hiring managers to discover top talent, better collaborate with recruiters, and streamline decision-making to move hiring forward.



**ARTIFICIAL  
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## 8 | COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

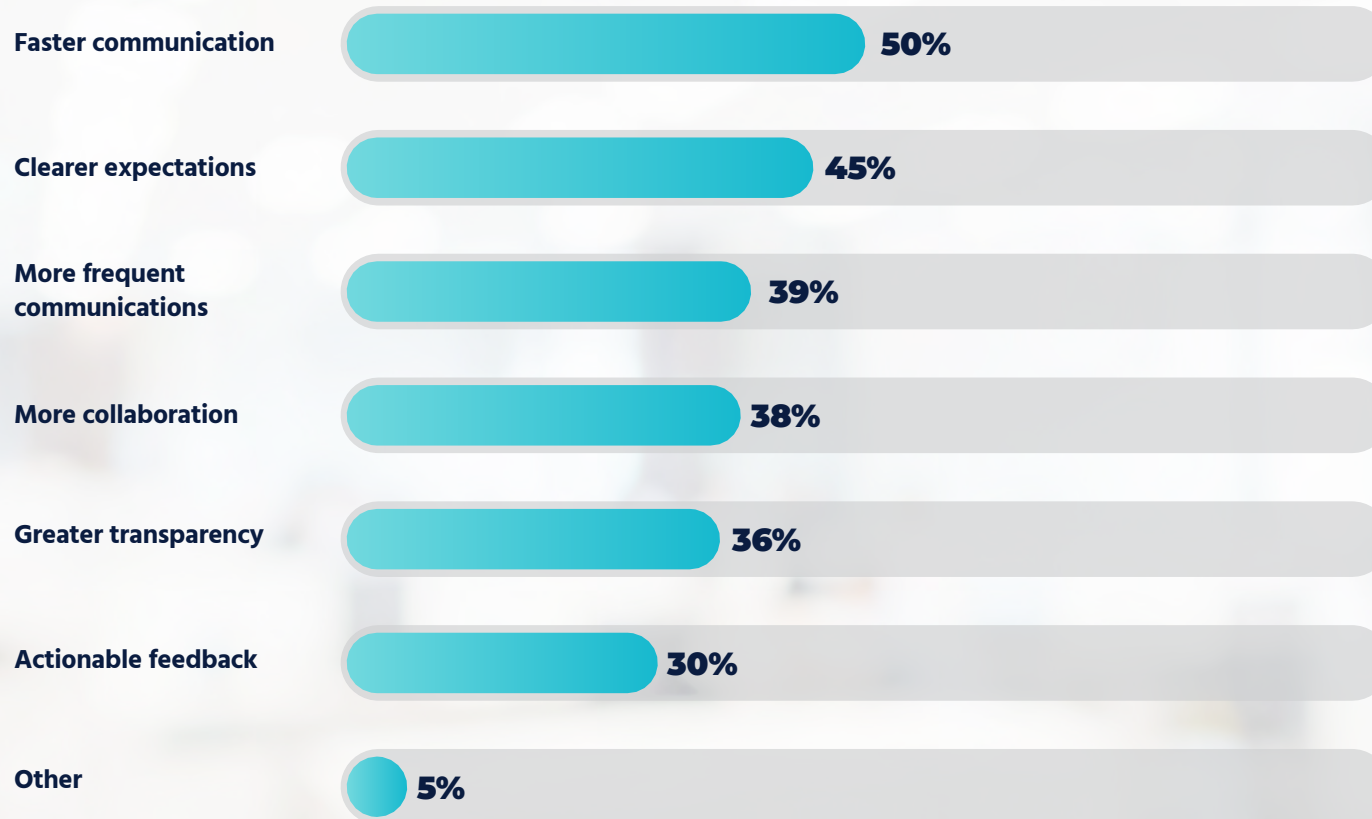
What communication method do you use the most to connect with hiring managers?



Even in the current fast-paced talent market, email remains the main communication channel through which recruiters connect with hiring managers — and by a fairly wide margin. Perhaps recruiters would get the faster communication they desire if they were to introduce and champion messaging apps and texting that facilitate and streamline conversations and feedback about job requisitions and candidates.

## 9 | COLLABORATION IMPROVEMENTS

What aspects of your relationship with hiring managers could be improved?



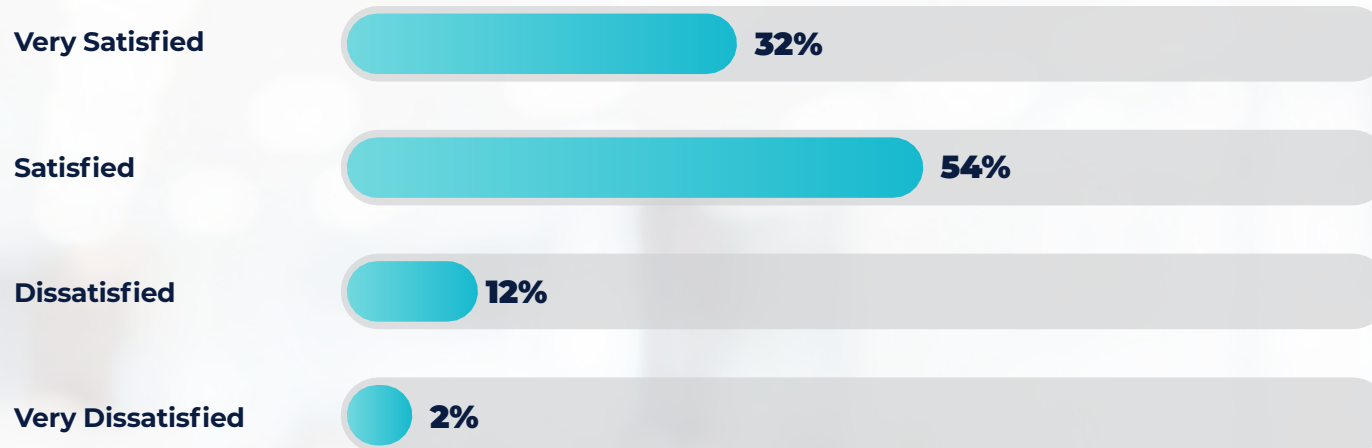
Because so much of the relationship between recruiters and hiring managers hinges on effective communication, it's no surprise that the top three responses involve different aspects of communication — speed, clarity, and frequency. The basic solution for improvement is the same as it is for resolving common roadblocks: a dogged commitment on the part of recruiters to hold frequent discussions and check-ins (and to reschedule them when necessary). It's also noteworthy that, despite their overall satisfaction with hiring manager collaboration, more than a third of respondents **want this collaboration to improve**.

While company size and culture often dictate how TA teams and hiring managers communicate, technology dedicated to minimizing roadblocks can offer significant strides in increasing collaborative relationships that empower more efficient and effective hiring.

# ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS

## COLLABORATION SATISFACTION

How would you rate the overall effectiveness of your collaboration with hiring managers?



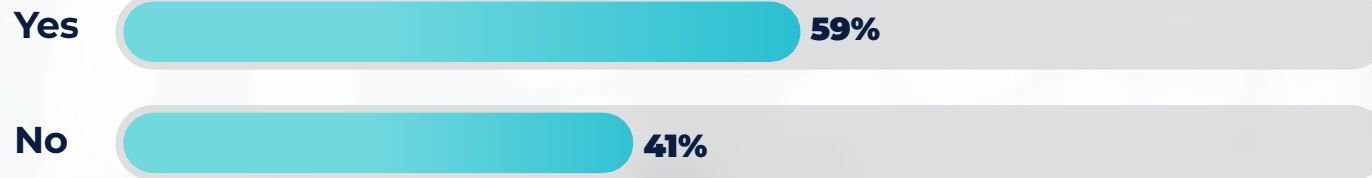
Interestingly, at the start of the survey, the majority of respondents indicated they were satisfied with the overall effectiveness of recruiter and hiring manager collaboration. Yet despite the initial high level of overall satisfaction, respondents also identified many important aspects of the relationship that are in need of improvement, including: faster and more frequent communication, clearer expectations when creating requisitions, and improving transparency.

# ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS

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## ACCOUNTABILITY

Are you held accountable for meeting specific service-level agreements (SLAs)?



While it's encouraging to see that a majority of respondents are given SLAs, a significant number of companies have yet to implement them. SLAs not only help to improve quality, speed of hire, and candidate diversity, but they also foster greater clarity and deeper discussions between recruiters and hiring managers, encouraging both parties to be specific about desired candidate qualities, timelines, and other mutual expectations.

As a [2020 SHRM article](#) points out, SLAs “have proven to be one of the most effective ways to improve recruiting results, increase recruiting consistency, and, at the same time, strengthen the relationship between recruiters and hiring managers.”

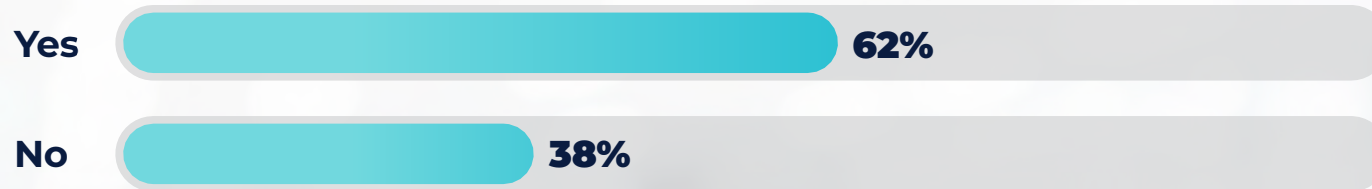


# ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS

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## INTERVIEW TRAINING

Does your organization conduct interview training for hiring managers/interviewers?



Interview training for hiring managers ensures a better evaluation experience — and not just for candidates. It can help interviewers feel more relaxed and capable of making the best possible hiring decisions. It also can help reduce unconscious bias, which is of growing importance in today's more enlightened business environment.

# CONCLUSION



Acquiring best-fit talent is arguably an employer's greatest challenge — especially in today's frenetic hiring environment. It's also a top concern of the C-suite and **a top priority of CEOs**. Sourcing and hiring best-fit talent on a consistent basis takes recruiters and hiring managers who are highly collaborative and who work efficiently together.

We expect recruiters and hiring managers will continue to optimize their working relationship even further to meet the demands of the highly competitive talent market. We also anticipate that business leaders will empower them with the collaborative tools for doing so. Phenom and Talent Board look forward to further exploring and reporting on this critical dynamic within the talent experience ecosystem.



## ABOUT PHENOM

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Phenom is a global HR technology company with a purpose to help a billion people find the right job. The Phenom Talent Experience Management (TXM) platform personalizes and automates the talent journey for candidates, recruiters, employees and managers. Powered by artificial intelligence (AI), the Phenom platform drives personalization, automation, and accuracy at every stage in the talent lifecycle. As a result, employers improve their talent acquisition and talent management efforts by helping candidates find the right job, employees learn and evolve, recruiters discover best-fit talent, and managers build their teams. Learn more about Phenom at [www.phenom.com](http://www.phenom.com)



## ABOUT TALENT BOARD

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Founded in 2011, Talent Board and the Candidate Experience Awards is the first non-profit research organization focused on the elevation and promotion of a quality candidate experience. Talent Board delivers annual recruiting and hiring industry benchmark research that highlights accountability, fairness and the business impact of candidate experience. Learn more about Talent Board at [www.thetalentboard.org](http://www.thetalentboard.org)