



State of Candidate Experience

2023 Benchmarks Report
European Edition

How the top 100 European companies from the Global
500 rank in attracting, engaging, and converting talent



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Foreword

Every company is on a journey of transformation. The last few years taught us that we will not survive if we remain narrow-focused on simply winning talent. AI and technology is reinventing all businesses across all industries, and it's happening before our eyes. The most critical task human resources (HR) must address is how their companies will empower individuals to transfer their potential into the skills and competencies needed for current and future markets.

To adapt, employers must embrace cutting-edge practices and technology for not only hiring employees, but developing and retaining them as well.

Intelligence, automation, and experience are essential to overcoming the biggest talent acquisition and retention challenges today, and for years to come.

By automating tedious, time-consuming tasks, companies can accelerate productivity and efficiency with incredible accuracy – freeing up recruiters and TA teams to become wildly productive and focus on more strategic work like building deeper relationships with candidates. With intelligence, HR teams gain access to a level of insights that surface best-fit talent faster to expedite decision-making and processes.

All of this comes together to enrich the experience for everyone across the board, especially job seekers. Quickly matching the right candidate with the right job based on their experience, skills, and geographic location allows them to make a deeper connection with an organization, and ultimately apply faster.

Moreover, as we embrace AI technologies, it is crucial to prioritize data security, privacy, and ethical considerations. Safeguarding candidate and employee data and ensuring compliance with data protection regulations are paramount in maintaining the trust and respecting individual privacy throughout the talent acquisition process.

AI is no longer something we can afford to be fearful of – it's here, and we will need to adapt quickly to continue filling roles with phenomenal talent and retain them for the long haul.

This report not only sheds light on the current state of the candidate experience, it also reinforces how some organizations are using AI-first technologies to adapt and grow. It is my hope that the report will ignite conversations within your own teams to identify ways to reimagine work so all talent can thrive.



John Harrington
Director, Product Marketing
Phenom

Introduction

In the past year, the European hiring landscape has undergone rapid changes, necessitating a continuous shift in recruitment strategies and acquisition of new skills by recruiting teams.

Although these changes pose challenges, there is also positive news. The traditional notion that talent acquisition (TA) only serves to fill open positions has become obsolete. Instead, TA teams are now perceived as reliable advisors whose expertise assists senior executives in accomplishing their most significant business goals.

The use of recruitment technology has become increasingly vital in building high-quality talent pools and delivering a positive candidate experience — particularly on one's career site.

As the first interaction with a company and its culture, career sites must convey a strong employer brand, provide easy access to jobs, deliver a quick application process, and curate personalised information — like skills, experience, and location — that helps candidates make informed decisions about whether your company is right for them.

Now more than ever, delivering incredible candidate (and employee) experiences is the only way to gain a competitive edge in the market. But talent teams and recruiters need support. Artificial intelligence, automation, and HR tech will not only play a pivotal role in how quickly companies *hire* top talent, but how well they then *develop* and *retain* their employees.

Phenom audited the top 100 European companies from the Global 500 list in key areas of the talent journey: attraction, engagement, and conversion, as well as their use of AI. By viewing the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement across these companies, TA teams can gain valuable insights and best practices to improve their candidate experience, grow talent pools, and more efficiently hire best-fit talent.

About the Audit

The purpose of this audit is to provide an objective evaluation of the current state of the candidate experience across the top 100 European companies from the Fortune Global 500 list. The analysis was conducted based on the representation and performance of each organisation's career site, application process, and communication with candidates across three phases of talent acquisition: **attraction**, **engagement**, and **conversion**. It also assesses how well companies used AI and automation technology throughout the process (i.e. use of a chatbot, personalisation, automated communications, intelligent search functions, candidate scoring, and more).

While this research highlights both company successes and areas of improvement, it's meant to inspire all companies with opportunities to further enhance the candidate experience for a more efficient, effective hiring process.

Audit Methodology

To conduct the audit, we appraised the digital candidate experiences of the European 100 companies from September 2022 to February 2023 using several criteria across the following three categories:



Attraction

How well does the career site drive traffic to relevant job openings? Subcomponents of this category include landing pages, ease of navigation, social profile integration, page load time, job distribution, and SEO.



Engagement

Is the candidate spending an optimal amount of time on the career site? Subcomponents of this category include job descriptions, video and blog content, employer value proposition, surveys, and employee reviews.



Conversion

What does the job application process entail? Subcomponents of this category include ease of apply process, user support, error prevention, application options (manual, social, cloud), and post-application communication.

Artificial Intelligence

Are companies using AI? And if so, how effectively? This additional audit is based on data from the Attraction, Engagement, and Conversion categories, including social login and apply, job search functionality, personalisation, chatbot performance, and dynamic content.

European 100 Executive Summary

Over the past two years, European companies have encountered notable obstacles in attracting and retaining top talent due to the region's demanding economic circumstances and evolving job market. With rising inflation and the destabilising war in Ukraine, fears of hiring freezes and job losses have led to difficulties in finding and retaining skilled workers. The existing talent pools of traditional workers in an aging market are not sufficient to replenish those who have retired. And post-pandemic trends across North America like "the great resignation" and "talent reshuffle" are similarly affecting Europe.

Retaining top talent has become a primary goal for European companies. Still, they must pay attention to the importance of improving the candidate experience proactively, rather than just focusing on attrition. Companies need to catch up in critical areas such as technology and innovation to remain competitive in the long term — and improving the candidate experience can help do just that.

Overall, this audit shows that most European 100 companies are still behind the HR technology curve. Despite improvements made since last year's report (such as presenting relevant job recommendations and using a recruiting chatbot), there are still significant opportunities for companies to enhance job seekers' experiences through intelligence and automation. Of particular significance: **94% of the Euro 100 scored poorly in AI.** However, companies can use the information from this report to focus on opportunities for advancement and development.

Here's where the Euro 100 succeeded:

89%

of career sites could be viewed on all devices without issues (desktop, tablet, mobile device)

85%

of companies removed expired jobs from third party sites

74%

of career sites had a single sign-on option for easy returning access

58%

of sites enabled the "submit" button once all mandatory fields were filled to avoid duplicate submissions and provide a better user experience

A Year-Over-Year Analysis of Candidate Experiences

The 2023 audit of European 100 career sites revealed improvement over the last year to deliver hyper-personalized experiences and job matching that strengthen candidate attraction, engagement and conversion, including a:

↑525%

increase in presenting job recommendations based on browsing history

↑67%

increase in using a recruitment chatbot

↑64%

increase in showing job recommendations based on geographic location

↑60%

increase in displaying recently viewed jobs

Here's where the Euro 100 struggled:

90%

of companies did not send an application satisfaction survey to get candidate feedback

83%

did not display recently viewed jobs

82%

did not share job recommendations based on geographic location

75%

did not present job recommendations based on browsing history

37%

of career site search functionality could provide relevant suggestions based on candidates' keywords

10%

of career sites had a chatbot

KEY FINDINGS

Attraction

Creating a user-friendly career site is imperative to attracting candidates. Having an easily navigable site where job seekers can start an intuitive job search without having to scroll through pages of content can make all the difference. If it's difficult for a candidate to find what they're looking for, they're more likely to leave the site altogether, resulting in loss of potential talent for employers.

KEY FINDINGS

Attraction

5% of career sites had an intuitive job search and apply process, requiring less than three clicks to apply

↓**44%** since 2022



26% of career sites had an option for social login



38% of career sites were optimised to start the job search “above the fold”

“Above the fold” content is content that a site visitor sees before they begin scrolling. If your career site isn’t optimised to start the job search above the fold, you may be losing candidates who don’t have time to comb through your site for open positions.



9% of career sites had type-ahead search



49% of career sites aligned with the minimal accessibility guidelines

Quick Apply

Candidates want applications that are quick and simple. If your career site is easy to navigate and has an intuitive job search process, you’re more likely to attract, engage, and ultimately convert candidates. If candidates are met with a lengthy application process or applications that require them to input the same information more than once, they will be quick to abandon your site.

KEY FINDINGS

Attraction

34% of career sites' search functionality was able to understand the context of the keyword and separate it with proper grouping (e.g. keyword, location, category)



64% of career sites only showed search results for what was typed and did not provide similar suggestions

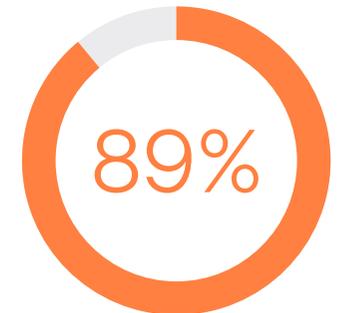


18% of career sites had auto location detection to suggest nearby jobs



26% of companies used six or more job aggregators, such as Indeed or Monster

↓**51%** since 2022



89% of career sites could be viewed on all devices without issues (desktop, tablet, mobile device) and loaded all images within three seconds

Personalisation is Paramount

Leveraging AI to curate personalised job recommendations or location-specific perks both expedites the job search process and connects candidates with the right roles faster. Personalisation also helps candidates feel seen and valued, leading to a more positive impression of your company.

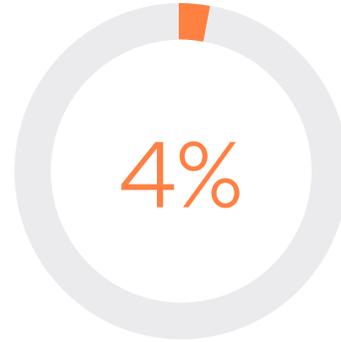
KEY FINDINGS

Attraction



85% of companies removed expired jobs from their career site and job aggregators

↓**6%** since 2022



4% of companies used UTM tracking consistently on third-party job posting sites



3% of career sites had strong page and domain authority

Page authority is the value a search engine assigns a web page. Domain authority is how well an entire web domain ranks.



21% of companies actively used three social media platforms to attract talent

Social Strategy

More frequently, candidates are visiting social media sites first to find jobs. Using social media to advertise open roles and opportunities is therefore imperative, as it's a great way to boost the promotion of roles, especially those that may be hard to fill. Having a dynamic social media presence also allows candidates to connect with your brand and learn about your company culture before even visiting your career site.

KEY FINDINGS

Engagement

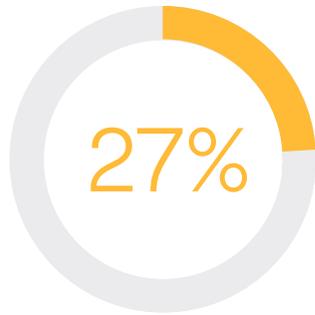
What career site elements are crucial to engage candidates in a way that ultimately encourages an apply? Relevant job recommendations based on candidate searches, job carts that save favorite jobs, and a chatbot that acts as a personalised career site concierge top the list. Unfortunately, the Euro 100 are lacking in ways that actively engage candidates on their career sites.

KEY FINDINGS

Engagement



10% of career sites had a chatbot – of those, **7%** could provide job recommendations and **6%** could answer FAQs



27% of career sites presented job recommendations based on a candidate's profile



25% of career sites presented job recommendations based on browsing history



17% of career sites displayed recently viewed jobs



19% of career sites had a job cart or favorites function to save jobs and didn't require the use of a username or password

**Since 2022 report*

Rely on AI

AI technology can provide relevant jobs, location-specific perks, and upcoming events for candidates – as well as display dynamic content as candidates move through your career site. This expedites the job search process and connects candidates with the right roles faster.

KEY FINDINGS

Engagement



35% of career sites included a posting date for all jobs



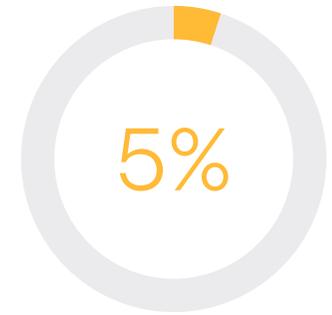
15% of career sites had a consistent branded application process so the user knows they are still on the same site



10% of companies sent applicants a satisfaction survey



28% of companies had curated social media content embedded within the career site



5% of career sites featured curated Glassdoor employee reviews

Content is King

Showcasing your company culture to future employees through social media and branded content is essential to attracting, engaging, and ultimately converting candidates. Authentic videos, employee testimonials, and candid blog posts are great ways to convey what it's really like to work at your organisation. Giving employees access to tools that allow them to create and share their own content is an easy way to promote your brand.

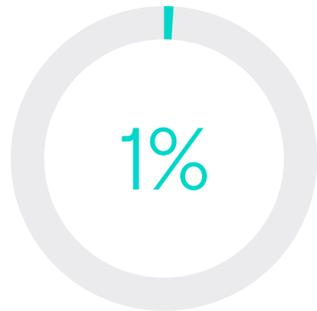
KEY FINDINGS

Conversion

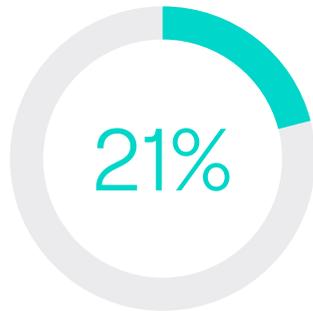
Conversion must-haves include a quick and easy application process and ample candidate communication, especially regarding application and hiring status. Configuring your career site so candidates don't have to input information more than once reduces frustration and decreases the likelihood that they abandon the application process altogether. Similarly, hyper-relevant communication — even if automated — leaves candidates feeling heard and valued. When it comes to conversion, the Euro 100 still have substantial improvements to make.

KEY FINDINGS

Conversion



1% of career sites “greyed out” disabled fields in an intuitive way to assist applicants during the application process



21% of career sites let applicants apply directly through LinkedIn and could parse applicant data correctly



90% of companies communicated with candidates to confirm receipt of the application – **but 0%** communicated application status beyond that



75% of career sites had a single sign-on option for easy returning access



58% of career sites enabled the “submit” button once all mandatory fields were filled to avoid duplicate submissions and provide a better user experience

Communication is Key

Candidates expect to hear from companies throughout the *entire* process, and aren’t afraid to pursue other opportunities if all they receive is a confirmation email that their application was submitted. TA teams must keep job seekers up-to-date on their application status by sending an automated email when their resume is reviewed, communication if the hiring process is delayed, and a thoughtful email if they are rejected. Candidates who receive updates about their application status – *even if they don’t get the job* – will leave feeling better about the company, and in turn, can be re-engaged in the future.

Audit Score Distinctions

Every company reviewed in the audit received a score for Attraction, Engagement, and Conversion, as well as an overall score for its entire candidate experience. *They also received a separate score for their use of AI.* After accumulating their scores, companies were then ranked as follows:

● Exceptional (75+)

Organisations with scores of 75 or more place exceptional emphasis on providing a great candidate experience. These employers exemplify what it means to attract, engage, and convert active and passive job seekers alike.

● Acceptable (60-74)

Organisations with scores between 60-74 implement many of the best recruitment practices. However, employers who fall within this range have opportunities to enhance their career site to improve the candidate experience.

● Unsatisfactory (50-59)

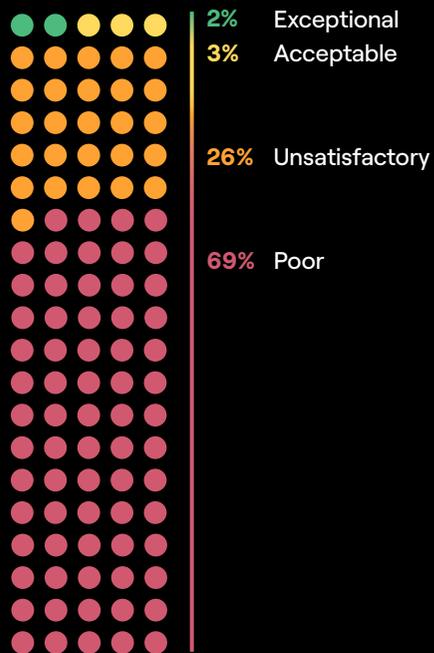
Organisations with scores between 50-59 lack significant career site features and functionalities. Employers should take a holistic look at their career site from the perspective of job seekers.

● Poor (0-49)

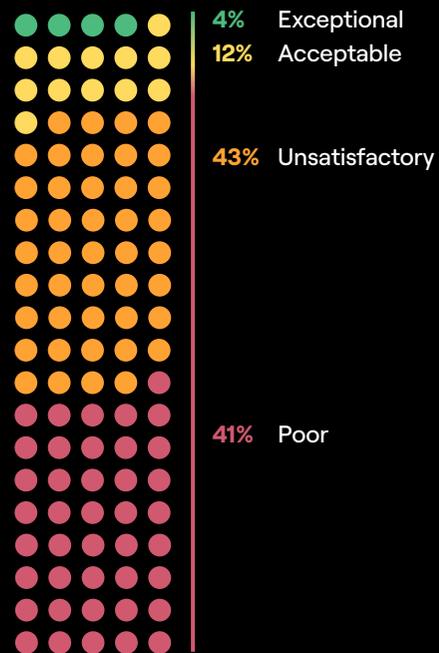
Organisations with scores between 0-49 must take radical action to improve their digital candidate experience. These employers lack strong career sites, thus almost certainly providing a negative experience.

Euro 100 Rankings

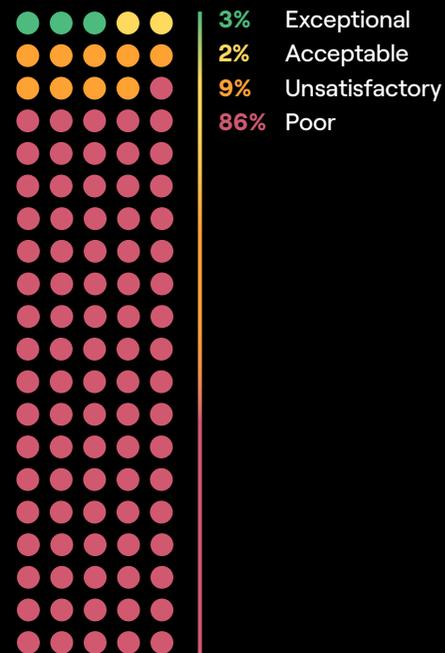
Attracting Candidates



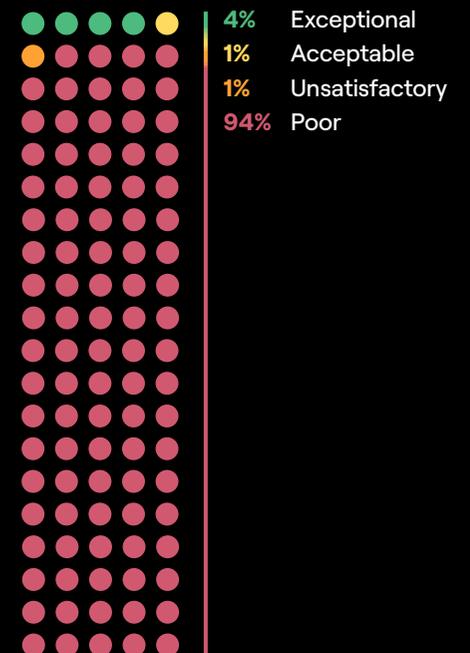
Engaging Candidates



Converting Candidates

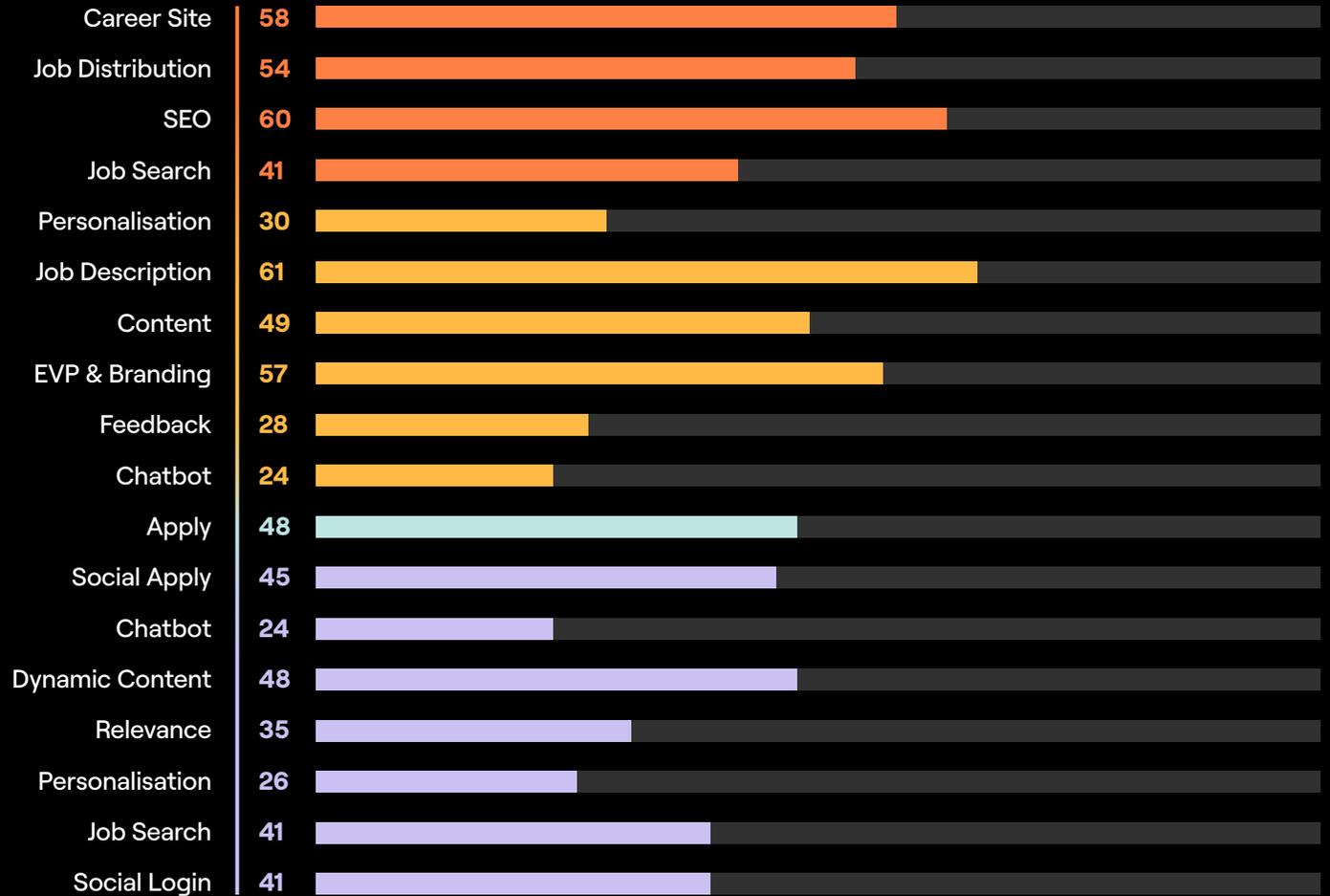


Artificial Intelligence



Overall Rankings

The graph illustrates the average scores of each audit conducted within the following categories: **Attraction**, **Engagement**, **Conversion**, and **Artificial Intelligence**



Overall Rankings

Company	Overall	Attraction	Engagement	Conversion	AI*
Roche Group	77	87	75	66	84
Kuehne + Nagel International	76	88	74	66	96
AXA	71	79	76	56	96
Chubb	70	70	75	64	71
Deutsche Post DHL Group	67	84	66	48	87
AstraZeneca	60	61	55	64	44
Royal Dutch Shell	58	58	54	64	32
TotalEnergies	58	68	57	48	44
Aviva	57	56	55	60	58
Unilever	56	57	48	64	46
BNP Paribas	55	48	58	58	34
Sanofi	55	58	50	56	38
HSBC Holdings	54	56	48	58	35
Electricité de France	53	61	38	62	38
Accenture	53	55	45	60	33

*AI not included in overall score

Overall Rankings

Company	Overall	Attraction	Engagement	Conversion	AI*
ThyssenKrupp	53	61	50	48	30
Barclays	53	57	55	48	31
BP	52	62	48	44	44
Equinor	52	56	41	60	32
Airbus	52	58	39	60	36
Deutsche Bahn	52	61	30	68	37
Anheuser-Busch InBev	52	46	45	66	32
Fresenius	52	52	51	52	26
Volvo	52	59	46	52	34
Carrefour	51	65	40	48	44
Engie	51	54	41	60	41
Repsol	51	51	37	68	36
Deutsche Bank	51	61	33	60	36
Bosch Group	50	59	45	46	36

*AI not included in overall score

Overall Rankings

Company	Overall	Attraction	Engagement	Conversion	AI*
Rio Tinto Group	50	57	37	56	41
Société Générale	50	55	45	50	38
Lloyds Banking Group	50	52	38	60	28
GlaxoSmithKline	50	54	42	56	38
Banco Santander	49	50	39	60	28
Siemens	49	56	42	50	34
Zurich Insurance Group	49	61	43	42	35
Novartis	49	59	39	50	45
Saint-Gobain	49	57	47	42	44
Ingka Group	49	54	38	58	31
Banco Bilbao Vizcaya Argentaria	49	63	40	44	41
L'Oréal	49	60	44	44	37
Vinci	48	57	39	48	37
CMA CGM	48	60	38	46	36

*AI not included in overall score

Overall Rankings

Company	Overall	Attraction	Engagement	Conversion	AI*
Mercedes-Benz Group / Daimle	48	53	41	48	33
La Poste	48	51	53	40	39
British American Tobacco	48	55	44	44	32
Enel	47	56	32	54	29
Continental	47	50	40	52	31
SNCF Group	47	46	41	56	34
Energie Baden-Württemberg	47	47	38	58	30
BASF	46	57	39	42	40
ENI	46	47	38	52	29
Maersk Group	46	53	28	60	28
Renault	46	47	36	56	23
Anglo American	46	42	38	60	30
UBS Group	45	51	34	52	34
Stellantis	45	54	28	54	22
Royal Ahold Delhaize	45	51	42	40	33

*AI not included in overall score

Overall Rankings

Company	Overall	Attraction	Engagement	Conversion	AI*
Legal & General Group	45	51	39	44	28
Orange	45	60	39	36	31
Swiss Re	45	49	37	50	26
ZF Friedrichshafen	45	58	34	42	30
J. Sainsbury	45	59	32	44	30
Munich Re Group	44	48	45	38	46
Aegon	44	44	33	56	26
Groupe BPCE	44	50	41	40	31
Deutsche Telekom	43	44	42	42	29
Crédit Agricole	43	50	39	40	31
Nestlé	43	55	32	42	36
Tesco	43	40	39	52	23
Vodafone Group	43	50	36	42	29
Volkswagen	42	58	31	36	33
E.ON	42	51	33	42	23

*AI not included in overall score

Overall Rankings

Company	Overall	Attraction	Engagement	Conversion	AI*
Bayer	42	50	34	42	25
Poste Italiane	42	43	35	48	28
Fortum	41	52	25	48	32
Louis Dreyfus	41	40	39	44	23
Allianz	40	54	25	42	24
BMW Group	40	48	31	42	31
Telefónica	40	41	37	42	20
Iberdrola	40	47	32	42	26
ArcelorMittal	39	36	45	36	48
LyondellBasell Industries	39	42	32	42	20
Rosneft Oil	38	41	27	48	24
Christian Dior	38	41	27	48	20
Intesa Sanpaolo	38	38	35	42	20
OMV Group	38	41	35	40	20
ACS	37	43	30	40	20

*AI not included in overall score

Overall Rankings

Company	Overall	Attraction	Engagement	Conversion	AI*
PKN ORLEN Group	38	41	27	48	20
Glencore	36	35	32	40	23
Assicurazioni Generali	36	39	37	32	31
Bouygues	34	32	30	40	20
Phoenix Pharma	32	34	26	36	20
Edeka Zentrale	31	38	27	28	23
Talanx	30	42	28	20	23
DZ Bank	29	40	25	20	20
Finatis	28	32	30	20	20
Gazprom	25	34	19	20	20
Lukoil	25	34	21	20	22
ELO Group (Auchan Retail)	24	32	20	20	20
EXOR Group	23	30	19	20	20

*AI not included in overall score

Opportunities and Recommendations

Included below are recommendations companies can implement — ranked simple to complex — to provide a better candidate experience.

Opportunities and Recommendations

Simple

These recommendations require less time and cost to implement

- Post vacancies on at least four job posting sites and two social media platforms (LinkedIn and Twitter)
- Ensure your career site is accessible from multiple types of devices (desktop, mobile, tablet) without sacrificing functionality
- Make your career site “discoverable” by using SEO-friendly URLs and including compelling content to improve domain and page authority
- Optimise career site content “above the fold” (don’t force candidates to scroll to search for jobs or join your talent community)
- Remove expired job postings from third party sites to ensure candidates aren’t wasting time applying to a job that is no longer open

Opportunities and Recommendations

Intermediary

These recommendations require somewhat more time and cost to implement, influenced by variables within each organisation

- Optimise the mobile experience across all pages
- Use job titles that comply with best practices so they resonate with job seekers (i.e. business card titles, keyword searchable, no special characters, no extraneous details)
- Provide adequate job descriptions (at least three role descriptions and three responsibilities) for job seekers to understand the role within *your* organisation
- Offer a “job cart” or “favorites” capability so job seekers can save searches and results
- Leverage compelling, unique, and branded content throughout the career site about your company culture, purpose and mission, diversity, and interview tips via site landing pages, videos, blogs, and employee testimonials
- Enable applicants to submit resumes and/or import their information via LinkedIn or other social accounts
- Communicate with applicants throughout the entire hiring process beyond a perfunctory email acknowledging receipt of an application

Opportunities and Recommendations

Complex

These recommendations likely require the most time and cost to implement, but have also been shown to yield the strongest results for a positive candidate experience

- Leverage AI to remember career site visitors and provide job suggestions based on location, browsing history, user profile, skills and experience, and other candidate-specific information
- A/B test pages to enable the highest possible conversion rate for leads and applications
- Offer semantic and type-ahead search functionality that understands the context of keywords to provide the most relevant results and additional suggestions faster
- Use a conversational AI chatbot to greet career site visitors, capture leads, proactively address common questions, and automate screening and scheduling
- Employ AI technology that can source and pre-qualify previous applicants, active leads, and internal employees to fast-track hiring
- Use advanced analytics that allow hiring teams to measure progress, report on visitor interactions, predict outcomes, and make necessary improvements along the way
- Embrace cutting-edge technology that will improve efficiencies and experience, such as generative AI, interview intelligence, and a candidate hub

Conclusion

As the European job market evolves, companies must adapt to the changing expectations of candidates and existing employees as well as the difficulties in attracting new talent. With the recent attrition and reshuffle trend, organisations are prioritising retaining top talent by demonstrating a commitment to their employees' professional development and well-being. However, companies can't ignore finding new ways to attract younger talent to their organisations or tapping into new talent pools. This calls for innovative and creative solutions to address the changing needs and expectations of the workforce, particularly in areas like technology and innovation.

Because of this, organisations need to provide an unmatched candidate — and employee — experience to gain a competitive advantage that empowers them to hire faster, develop better, and retain longer.

And that approach must be rooted in **intelligence and experience**.

Are you meeting candidate expectations?

Find out how *your* candidate
experience stacks up.

Request a complimentary career site audit

About Intelligent Talent Experience

Powered by artificial intelligence, the Phenom Intelligent Talent Experience platform connects data, people, and interactions to deliver phenomenal moments with maximum efficiency throughout the talent journey.

With Phenom, candidates find and choose you faster, employees develop their skills and evolve, recruiters become wildly productive, managers build stronger-performing teams, HR aligns employee development with company goals, and HRIS creates a holistic tech infrastructure through seamless integrations.

Candidate Experience

Connect the right talent to the right job

- Career Site
- Chatbot
- CMS
- University Recruiting

Recruiter Experience

Discover and engage top talent with AI

- CRM
- Campaigns
- SMS and 1:1 Messaging
- Video Assessments
- AI Scheduling

HR Experience

Align employee development with company goals

- Workforce Intelligence
- Skills and Competency Intelligence
- Workforce Supply and Demand
- Career Framework

Employee Experience

Upskill, evolve, and retain your workforce

- Talent Marketplace
- Career Pathing
- Gigs
- Mentoring
- Employee Resource Groups
- Referrals

Manager Experience

Build better teams faster

- Hiring Manager
- Talent Analytics
- Interview Management

HRIS Experience

Create a holistic tech infrastructure

- Integrations
- Service Hub
- Flow Studio
- Forms

About Phenom

Phenom has a purpose of helping a billion people find the right job. Through AI-powered talent experiences, employers are using Phenom to hire employees faster, develop them to their full potential, and retain them longer. The Phenom Intelligent Talent Experience platform seamlessly connects candidates, employees, recruiters, hiring managers, HR, and HRIS — empowering over 500 diverse and global enterprises with innovative products including Phenom Career Site, Chatbot, CMS, CRM, AI Scheduling, Video Assessments, Campaigns, University Recruiting, Talent Marketplace, Career Pathing, Gigs, Mentoring, and Referrals.

Learn more: phenom.com