

Search and Staffing report

# The Future of Recruiting

How COVID-19 is transforming  
the industry

**LinkedIn** Talent Solutions



# Introduction

Search and staffing professionals have risen to the challenge in extremely challenging times. Your teams are leaner, demands on you are greater, and business needs are constantly shifting. But through it all, you've stepped up and steadied each other, and now you're poised to take on a bigger role as search and staffing organizations than ever before.

We've made six predictions about the future of recruiting — based on input from thousands of your peers, billions of data points from the LinkedIn platform, and interviews with talent leaders from around the world.

You'll be on the front line of diversity efforts, connecting with candidates and holding hiring managers to account. You'll make virtual recruiting feel as personal as an on-site handshake. You'll make the most of the remote workforce. Your empathy will elevate your company's and customers' brand. And you'll continue to add new skills, adapt as needed, and grow beyond the boundaries of your role.

Read on to see how you'll reshape the future of recruiting.



## Prediction 1

# Customers and companies will build and borrow more.

In volatile times, companies will move away from static jobs in siloed departments and toward project-based cross-functional work, where employees will shift to new projects as business needs change. Recruiters themselves experienced this in the immediate responses to COVID-19, with many moving to new projects when hiring shifted.

This will also change the way search and staffing firms assess and hire candidates — prioritizing applicants' potential and transferable skills over their pedigree and technical capacity to do specific tasks.

# 20%

increase in internal mobility  
since COVID-19<sup>1</sup>

1 out of 2  
search and staffing pros  
expect their recruiting  
budget to decrease.<sup>2</sup>

2 out of 3  
expect their L&D budget to  
increase or stay the same.<sup>2</sup>



“The future of talent acquisition lies in reskilling, rather than finding someone better in the market. If you need to hire today, you need to reskill yesterday.”



**Rajesh Ahuja**

Global Head of Talent Acquisition  
Infosys



## Prediction 2

# Recruiting will help keep businesses accountable for diversity.

Since companies around the world pledged support for the Black Lives Matter movement and greater diversity, candidates, employees, and consumers have been looking to see how those words will translate into action. Diversity is not a feel-good initiative but a business-critical imperative.

Remote work will vastly expand available talent pools, allowing for greater access to candidates from underrepresented groups and deflating the empty excuse that the talent isn't there to be found. Recruiters will not only deliver a diverse pipeline of candidates — they'll advocate for them and hold hiring managers accountable for moving those candidates through the funnel. They will restructure hiring processes to reduce bias, from building diverse interview panels to encouraging data-driven reporting against diversity goals.

# 75%

of search and staffing professionals say diversity will be very important to the future of recruiting.

# 43%

of search and staffing professionals say hiring managers are not held accountable for interviewing a diverse slate of candidates.



“Recruiters have to be able to answer questions on culture. They have to be able to answer questions about the company’s stance on diversity. They have to teach leaders and managers how to think more broadly about their own choices and coach them to gravitate not towards who they ‘like’ but who adds to the organization.”



**Lauren Gardner**

Corporate Vice President, Global Talent Acquisition  
Microsoft

### Prediction 3

# Virtual recruiting is here to stay.

Companies have dabbled with video interviews in the past, but the realities of COVID-19 have led them to create an end-to-end virtual recruiting process for the first time. They're seeing firsthand how it can save time and resources. So, similar to a hybrid workforce of on-site and remote employees, a hybrid hiring process that combines virtual and in-person elements will become the standard.

Your customers will face two challenges. First, businesses will need to refine their virtual processes and continue to look for ways to add human touches. Second, they'll have to decide when they'll use an in-person or virtual approach — how they'll optimize the candidate experience of in-person visits, while still leveraging the efficiencies of a virtual approach. Entry-level candidates may experience a completely virtual hiring process, while executive candidates will continue to receive a more tailored process, including on-site visits and face-to-face one-on-ones.

**85%** of search and staffing professionals agree that virtual recruiting will continue after COVID-19.

**71%** say virtual interviews will become the new standard.



“Now that we’ve proven we can run our recruiting shop virtually, what does the new normal look like? We won’t go back to an environment where everything is fully in-person again because we don’t have to. It’s likely going to be a hybrid of in-person and virtual.”



**Shavonne Gordon**

Vice President, Enterprise Diversity Recruiting  
Capital One



#### Prediction 4

# Recruiters will lead the transition to remote work.

Remote work tantalizes with its possibilities: diverse talent pools, increased productivity and retention, and savings on salaries and facilities. But it also complicates workforce planning with difficult considerations around compensation of remote workers, capacity planning, company culture, technology, and employee visibility.

Recruiters are uniquely positioned to provide advice on this transition, armed with data-driven insights about where talent is and feedback about what talent wants and needs. Knowing these concerns and moving quickly to address them can give your customers a competitive advantage. Recruiters can also help weigh the benefits of an anywhere-in-the-world approach versus a hub strategy of targeting a few sites to make career development and company culture stronger.

# 20%

Remote jobs result in over 20% more geographical diversity among applicants.<sup>3</sup>

# 68%

Advising the business on workplace planning is becoming increasingly important for 68% of search and staffing professionals.



“You think about cloud solutions — being able to tap into the cloud wherever you are. Why can’t we do that with talent? It doesn't matter where you sit or what country you’re in, as long as you have the skills. I think COVID-19 will be around for a while, unfortunately — but that’s an opportunity for recruiting to say that the door for talent is now open everywhere.”



**Sharon Tan**

Product Owner of Talent Mission  
Next Gen People Practices  
Telstra

Prediction 5

# Your firm's brand will hinge on empathy and actions.

As candidates and customers look for brands to take stronger stances on social issues, search and staffing leaders will increasingly focus on their customers’ brands — and see them in a radically new light. Instead of showcasing the company’s products, perks, and office amenities, they’ll publicize what the company is doing to support employees, customers, and communities in times of crisis.

From partnerships with nonprofits to employee assistance programs to small acts of kindness, the actions companies take — the way they show up with empathy — will shape their employer brand for years to come. To earn trust, employers will also hold themselves accountable for shortcomings and be transparent about their plans to address them.

A candidate’s impression of a company will be heavily influenced by their everyday interactions with recruiters. Recruiters will be more empathetic in their outreach, accommodating in their approach, and understanding of what candidates are going through.

60% of search and staffing professionals expect their employer branding budget to increase or stay the same.

## When companies speak on current events, candidates engage more.

Engagement uplift on LinkedIn, compared to average engagement for company posts

Engagement on company posts about COVID-19 in April<sup>4</sup>



Engagement on company posts about diversity in June<sup>4</sup>



“In the long run, COVID-19 will change how people see employers. They’ll remember if their organization didn’t look after them — as soon as COVID-19 hit, did they provide the right level of support from home working and flexible hours to training and health and well-being. They’ll also remember those organizations that really stood up and stood apart.”



**David Hindle**

Strategic Recruitment Lead  
Lloyds Banking Group

Prediction 6

# Recruiters will build new skills to align with the business.

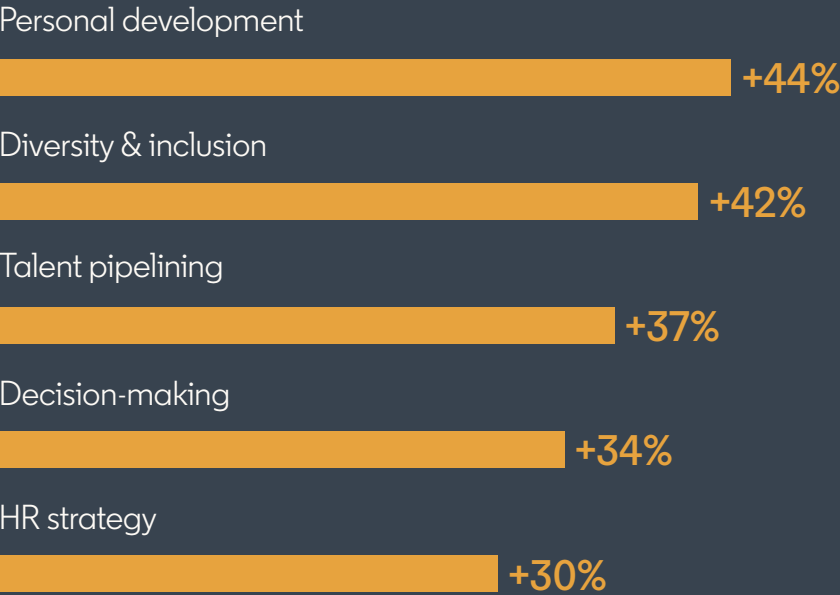
Recruiting teams have been stretched and refashioned recently, and that’s likely to continue. From dealing with hiring slowdowns (or unprecedented spikes) to aligning with ever-shifting business priorities, the one constant will be the need for adaptability.

While some recruiters will hire for different roles, locations, or companies as needs change, many will be asked to go beyond hiring. In fact, the fastest-growing skill for recruiters is personal development — the ability to add new skills.

Recruiters will increasingly serve as the bridge between a customer’s hiring needs and other customer HR initiatives. They’re rapidly adding skills like diversity and inclusion, decision-making, and HR strategy to their resumes. They’ll bring clarity to talent data, enable employer branding, and provide guidance on the virtual hiring process — all in a continuous process of improvement.

53% of talent professionals say **adaptability** will be the most important skill for recruiters over the next year.<sup>5</sup>

## Fastest-growing skills for recruiters in 2020<sup>6</sup>





“If you want to build cost-efficient talent acquisition teams, you need to make sure that people are more flexible, more adaptable, and that they can really change to the needs of the business. Lots of companies have got boxes that people sit in. I think those boxes may start to dissipate over time.”



**Candice De Clerck**

Global Director of Recruitment  
Prosus Group

# Methodology and endnotes

## Behavioral data

Insights for this report were derived from the billions of data points generated by more than 706 million members in over 200 countries on LinkedIn today. All data reflects aggregated LinkedIn member activity as of August 2020.

Recruiting professionals are defined as LinkedIn members with current job titles in recruiting, talent acquisition, and related fields. Demand is calculated as the average number of Recruiter InMail messages targeted to recruiting professionals each year since 2016, normalized for growth on the platform. Skills growth is calculated as the increase in percentage of recruiting professionals with relevant skills listed on their LinkedIn profiles or inferred based on other information on their profiles at the time of their employment as recruiting professionals.

Company posts about diversity included non-sponsored updates made to LinkedIn company pages and were identified through keywords like “diversity” and “inclusion” translated into multiple languages. Posts about COVID-19 were identified through keywords like “coronavirus” and “COVID-19,” similarly translated into multiple languages. Engagement with company posts was measured as a combination of likes, comments, clicks, and shares, and was measured against the average engagement of all company posts in the same time frame.

To identify remote job postings, LinkedIn used the built-in remote filters and a number of keywords (ex: “remote work,” “work from home,” and “home office”) in 10 different languages. To improve the precision of analysis, only full-time jobs that were premium listings were considered.

Rather than referring to a direct promotion, internal mobility has been defined as transitioning from a role to a dissimilar role within an organization. The time period considered was from April to August of 2020. Only transitions in which the title, company, location, function, and industry details of both the starting and destination roles were known were considered.

## Survey

We surveyed 1,518 professionals who self-identified as working in, or recently working in, a human resources or talent acquisition role or at a search and staffing agency. The survey was conducted in English, with respondents from over 28 countries. These survey respondents are LinkedIn members who were selected based on information in their LinkedIn profiles. They were contacted via email between June 30 and July 31, 2020.

## Endnotes

1. Based on global LinkedIn data. From April 2020–August 2020, internal hires made up 19.6% of all hires. Compared to 16.5% in the same time period in 2019, the share of internal-mobility hires increased by 18.8%.
2. 45% of global search and staffing professionals expected their overall recruiting budget to decrease; 66% of global talent professionals expected their learning and development budget to increase or stay the same.

# Methodology and endnotes

## Endnotes, continued

3. The average number of different city-locations applying to remote jobs is 21% higher than non-remote jobs globally.
4. Company posts in North America about these topics saw higher engagement compared to the average engagement of all company posts within the same month.
5. Given a choice of 13 soft skills, 53% of talent professionals said adaptability will be the most important skill for recruiters over the next year, followed by resilience, oral communication, and creativity.
6. Skills growth is based on the increase of the share of recruiting professionals with these skills on their LinkedIn profiles in 2020 globally.

# Acknowledgements

This report was informed by insightful interviews with several recruiting leaders from around the world. We owe our sincerest thanks to all of them, including:

[Rajesh Ahuja](#) of Infosys  
[Ahmad Al Ghamdi](#) of stc  
[Francesco Bianco](#) of Vodafone  
[Candice De Clerck](#) of Prosus Group  
[Mariama Eghan](#) of Dropbox  
[Anastacia Flores](#) of CBS Interactive  
[Lauren Gardner](#) of Microsoft  
[Jillian Geddes](#) of KEO International Consultants  
[Shavonne Gordon](#) of Capital One  
[David Hindle](#) of Lloyds Banking Group  
[Mani Motiee Tehrani](#) of CAMELOT Management Consultants  
[Ben Murphy-Ryan](#) of Arm  
[James O'Reilly](#) of Xero  
[Philipp Parker](#) of Munich Re  
[Akarin Phureesitr](#) of Central Pattana (CPN)  
[Sharon Tan](#) of Telstra  
[Thalia Thomas](#) of ANZ  
[John Vlastelica](#) of Recruiting Toolbox  
and our own LinkedIn Talent Acquisition Leadership team

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