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A blue-tinted photograph of a hand with white nail polish interacting with a smartphone. The background is blurred with bokeh light effects.

THE RISE OF
**TEXT
RECRUITING**
AND THE BUSINESS IMPACT

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INTRODUCTION:

With more jobs to fill and fewer recruiters to fill them, companies need to reevaluate how to effectively attract and hire talent. According to Aptitude Research, 68% of companies are rethinking their approach to candidate communication this year. Traditional forms of communication including email can negatively impact the employer brand, provide a poor candidate experience, and prevent recruiters from reaching their hiring goals. As companies look to improve communication, Text Recruiting is a strategic priority. Forty percent (40%) of companies have increased their use of text in talent acquisition this year.

Text Recruiting humanizes and personalizes the candidate experience while lifting the administrative burden placed on recruiting teams. Unlike other areas of talent acquisition, Text Recruiting provides an immediate ROI – impacting every aspect of the candidate journey. It offers a significant, measurable impact in a short period of time.

Although text is widely adopted in other areas of business, talent acquisition has been slow to respond. Email is still the preferred method of communication, and 58% of candidates receive no response at all when they are screened out of the process. Text Recruiting can provide improvements to conversion rates, efficiency, and engagement. According to this study, companies using text see the following results:

4x

Four times more likely to see candidates respond in the first two minutes

2x

Two times more likely to fill positions in the first two weeks

48%

Forty-eight percent (48%) improvement in the candidate experience



According to Aptitude Research,
40%
of companies have increased their use of text in talent acquisition this year.

As the demand for text increases, companies must consider a platform that can help track and manage all communication in a consistent and meaningful way. This report, based on data collected in 2022 from both the candidate and employer perspective, will explore the impact of Text Recruiting and answer the following questions:

- ✔ What are the top challenges with communication today?
- ✔ Why is email not an effective form of communication?
- ✔ What are the benefits of text?
- ✔ What is the difference between informal text and text recruiting platforms?
- ✔ How are companies using text to support both talent acquisition and employee experience?
- ✔ What is the business impact of Text Recruiting?



Quantitative Research:

328 responses for TA and HR VP Level,
Recruiters/Sourcers/IT Professionals.

Company Sizes:

- 18% SMB (250-999)
- 22% (1000-4999)
- 28% (5K-999K)
- 32% Enterprise (10,000+)

Qualitative Research:

Interviews with TA and
HR leaders in 2022



Top Findings

1 Email Is Not Enough:

Most companies rely on email as their primary form of communication in talent acquisition. Yet, mobile usage has increased over the past year and 43% of candidates do not always open their emails. Email limits how a company can engage with talent, slowing down time to fill, and providing a negative experience for both recruiters and candidates. Text improves response times and overall efficiency.

2 Text Is Important Across Areas of TA:

Many companies look at text to support the apply process or recruitment marketing efforts. Text can also play a role in everything from employer branding to onboarding. When asked what areas companies would use text, 1:1 communication and scheduling were top priorities. Text can help lift the administrative burden placed on recruiters in these areas and provide consistent communication when used throughout the process.

3 Text Recruiting Platforms Deliver ROI:

Companies using text see significant improvements and an immediate ROI in efficiency, experience, and effectiveness. Aptitude Research found that companies using text over email were two times more likely to fill positions in two weeks, and more likely to improve time to fill, candidate experience, and quality of hire. Companies increasing their use of text in talent acquisition see improvements in open rates, clickthrough rates, and response times.

4 Text Improves the Recruiter Experience:

The recruiter experience is greatly impacted by using text. Recruiters save time in communicating with candidates, improving efficiency and better identifying quality of hire. Text allows recruiters to spend time on more strategic areas of talent acquisition while providing personalization to each candidate.

5 Candidates Have a Mobile-Only Mindset:

Candidate behavior has changed since the pandemic. More people are working remotely, and candidates rely on their mobile device to research jobs, connect with brands, and apply for a job. According to this study, 62% of candidates are using their mobile device more this year than last. Candidates want to be able to use one device to communicate with a potential employer, and text meets the needs of the mobile-only mindset by providing faster response and personalized engagement in real-time.

6 Two-Way Communication at Scale Is a Reality Through Text:

In a tight labor market where most recruiting teams are under-resourced, many candidates are not receiving consistent communication from recruiters. Companies must consider solutions that will provide more personalization and two-way communication at scale. Text recruiting platforms give every candidate an opportunity to engage in a bidirectional conversation, from applying for a job to scheduling an interview to onboarding. Sixty-six percent (66%) of candidates surveyed would respond back to a recruiter over text.

7 Not All Text Is the Same:

This study found that 86% of recruiters are using text in some way to support talent acquisition. Most of these recruiters are using informal, random text messages from their personal devices. This type of texting jeopardizes a company's compliance, integration, and measurement strategy. It also puts companies at risk for introducing bias into the talent acquisition process. Text recruiting platforms help companies track and manage all text communications to stay compliant, integrate with existing systems, and measure the ROI of those engagements.

The **NEW Conversation** in HCM



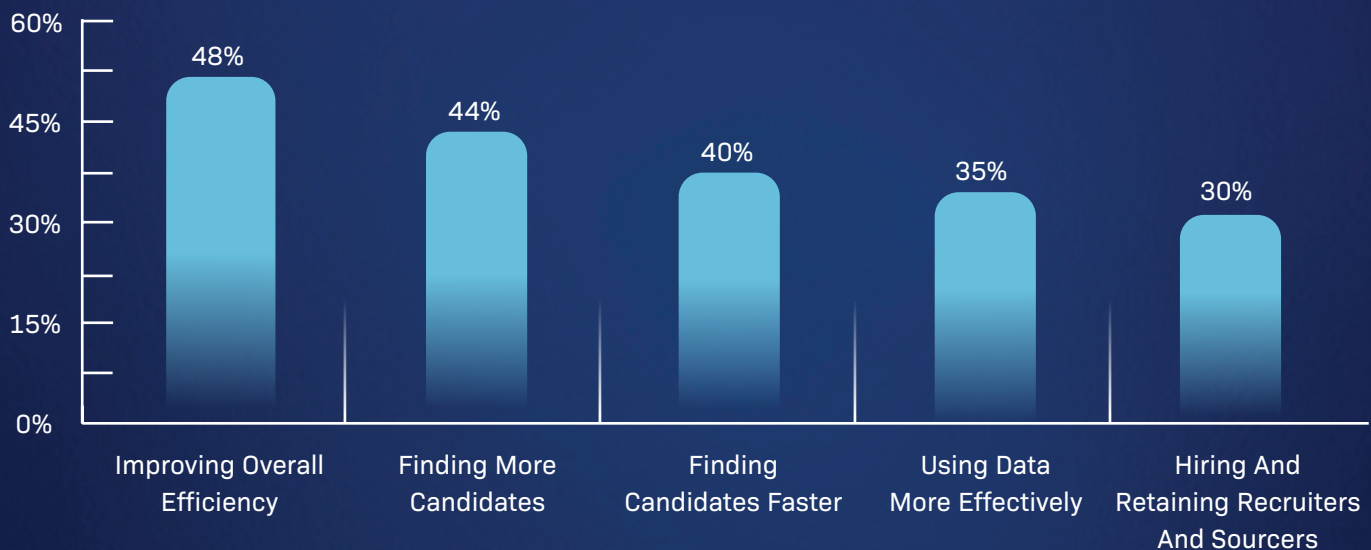
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New Website



A COMMUNICATION CRISIS

When asked to select the top three priorities for 2022, companies identified improving efficiency, finding candidates faster, and finding more candidates. Speed is the currency for success in talent acquisition. Companies that move quickly are better able to attract, recruit, and hire talent. And strong candidate communication gives companies a competitive advantage, allowing them to make connections and build more meaningful relationships in an efficient way.

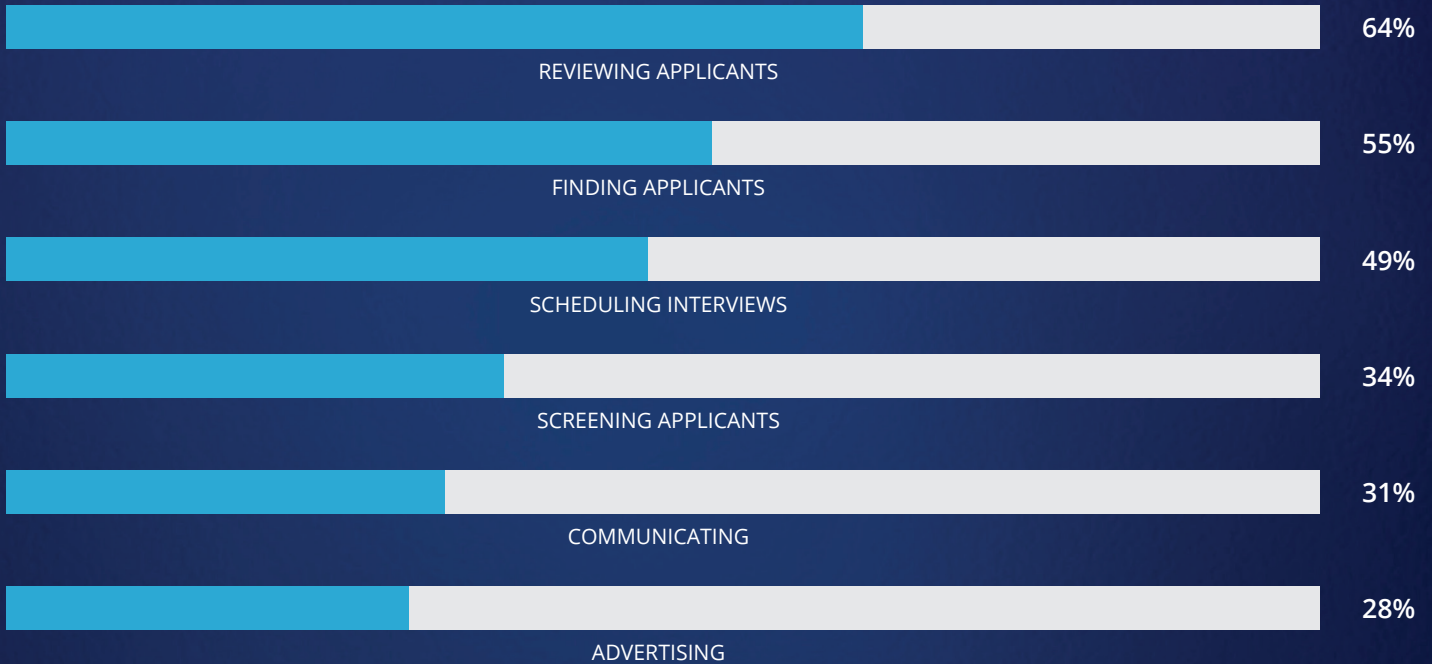
Figure 1: Top Talent Acquisition Priorities



Candidate communication has become the most critical job of today's modern TA professional and too often, the most overlooked. Communication is what differentiates brands and experiences while creating greater loyalty with candidates. Unfortunately, in today's labor market, recruiting teams are overwhelmed with new responsibilities that prevent consistent communication with candidates. When asked about day-to-day activities in Aptitude Research's **Talent Acquisition Technology and the Modern Recruiter** study, recruiters are spending most of their time reviewing applicants, finding candidates in the ATS, and scheduling interviews. These time-consuming tactical activities take away from more strategic priorities (see Figure 2).



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Figure 2: Daily Recruiter Activities

Communication often takes a back seat to these administrative activities and responsibilities. The result is that candidates are ignored:

56%

Four times more likely to see Fifty-six percent (56%) of applicants that are screened out never receive a response

74%

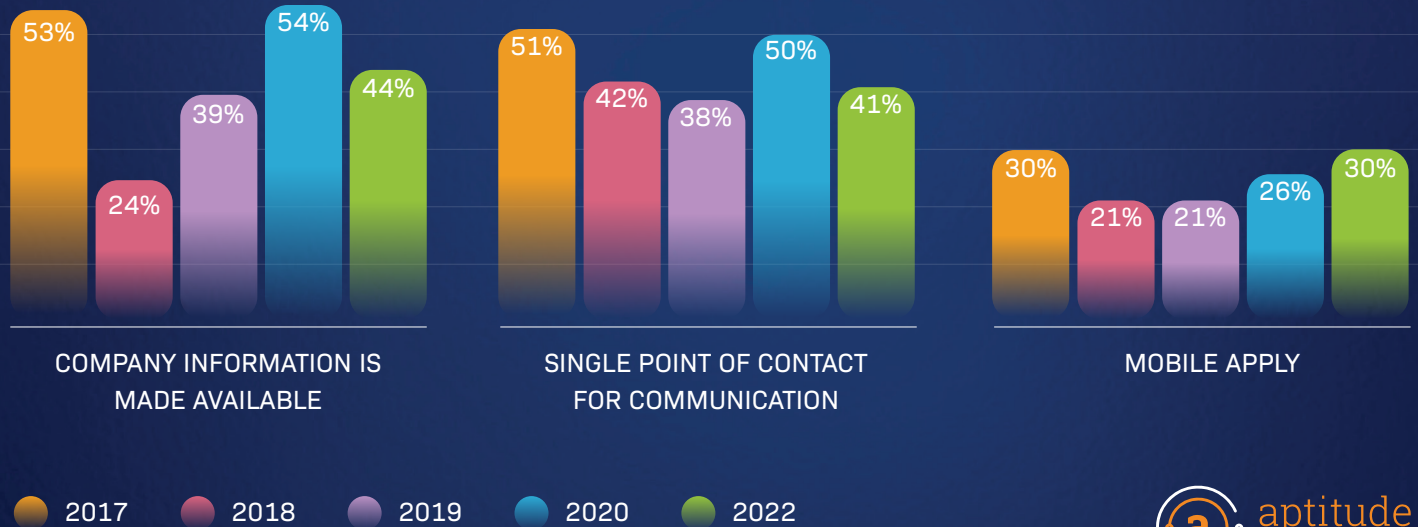
Seventy-four percent (74%) of companies are not effectively engaging candidates in a remote environment

62%

Sixty-two percent (62%) of hourly workers never receive a response

As companies look to the future of talent acquisition, they must reevaluate communication techniques. Candidate expectations have changed, and companies must adjust content and delivery accordingly. Before COVID, companies had made small improvements by providing a point of contact and status on the application. Yet, many of these companies have experienced a setback over the past year. Only 44% of companies make company information available now compared to 54% in 2020, and only 41% provide a single point of contact compared to 50% in 2020. With one in three recruiters looking for new opportunities and 30% feeling more burned out this year than last year, candidate communication has suffered.

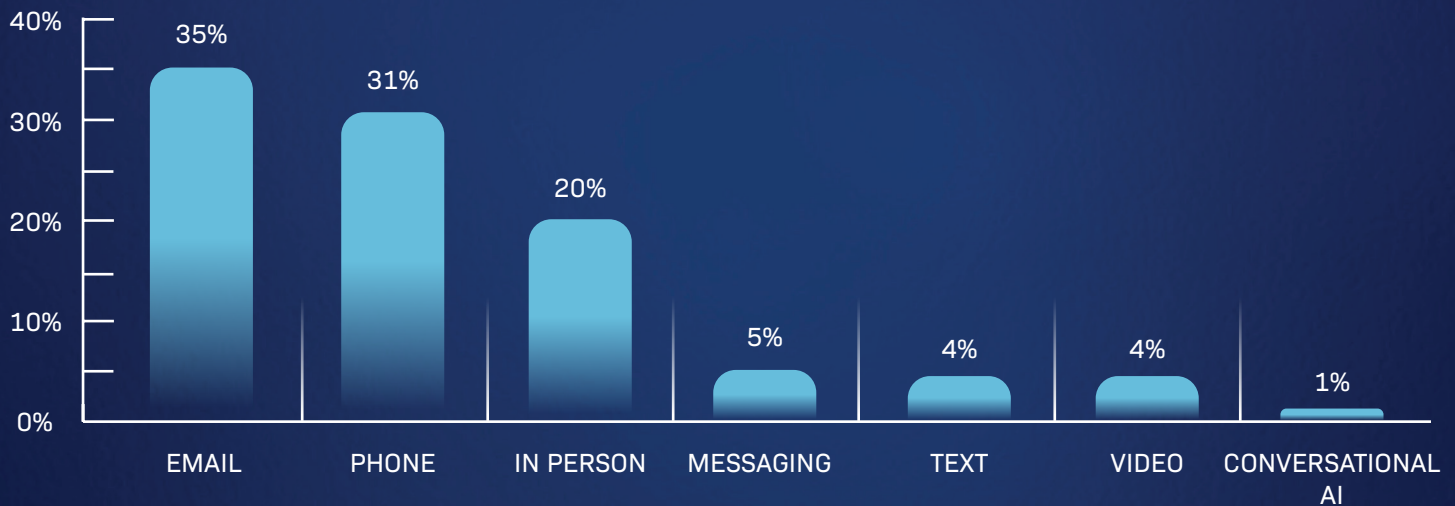
Figure 3: Candidate Communication Year-Over-Year



THE CHALLENGE WITH EMAIL



Email is the primary form of communication for most companies in talent acquisition (see Figure 4). Recruiters send candidates email reminders to apply, schedule interviews, take an assessment, and sign an offer letter. Many ATS systems are designed to support only email. Unfortunately, email is not always the most effective way to reach candidates and for many high-volume industries, candidates do not have access to email. Although 96% of companies recognize that stronger communication drives results, most candidate communication is ineffective and inconsistent. In fact, only 43% of candidates read their email messages from recruiters.

Figure 4: Primary Form of Communication

The pandemic has changed candidate behavior and expectations around communication. Today's companies have better options for communicating, including:



Text/SMS



Intelligent Chat



WhatsApp



WeChat



**Microsoft
Teams**



Slack

These forms of communication are more effective ways to engage with talent, saving recruiters' time and enabling a better candidate experience. According to this study, 62% of candidates are using their mobile device more this year than last. Text is how candidates communicate in their personal lives. Travel, shopping, events, and delivery are all enabled through text. When comparing the usage of email to text, 2.2 trillion texts were sent each day in 2020 compared to 306 billion emails, according to Statista.

Email has long been a source of frustration for candidates and recruiters. ATS systems provide email templates and libraries to help save time, but these templates lack personalization and engagement. Recruiters may spend up to an hour drafting an email to send to a candidate, while a text can be drafted in a few seconds. Figure 5 highlights some of the differences between email and text.



EMAIL

Figure 5:

VS

TEXT



Requires candidates to have an application or web interface to send or receive an email

Requires no application or web interface to send or receive a text

Requires username and password

No authentication

One-way communication when executed from inside the ATS

Two-way communication

Delayed response time

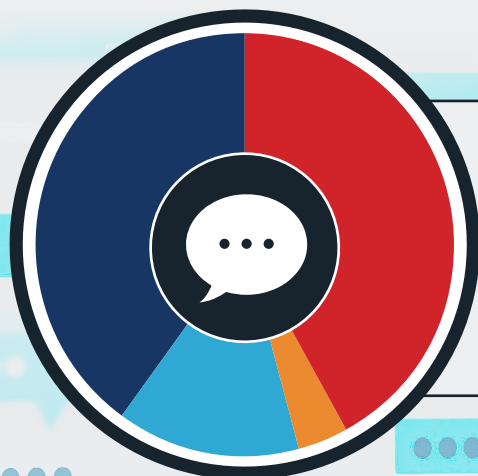
Immediate response

Long-form communication that requires templates or dedicated time

Short-form communication that saves recruiters' time

For talent acquisition professionals to compete for talent, they must meet candidates where they "live." This study found that 40% of companies using text in talent acquisition plan to increase their investment this year.

Figure 6: Increased Use of Text



42% Decreased

40% Increase

14% We don't use text

4% Remain the same

What is driving this increased investment?

The Role of TA and HR has Changed:

With shifts in demographics, a more dispersed workforce, and remote work, the workforce has become more complex and so has the role of the modern TA and HR professional. Today's leaders must juggle multiple hats to be successful. No longer focused solely on administrative tasks, the modern HR function requires a new set of skills and competencies. They must become more proactive and less reactionary in the way they communicate and engage with candidates and employees. Instead of simply pointing candidates and employees in the right direction, they must empower them with all the information, tools, and resources to be successful.

The Need for Greater Transparency:

Transparency is a reality for today's workforce. Companies are expected to be transparent about their employer brand, perks and incentives, financial performance, and engagement levels. Companies are expected to be transparent about the employee experience, career development, and company culture. While this level of transparency is positive, it requires more frequent, personalized communication.

Existing Technology Is Not Enough:

Traditional TA and HR systems were designed to be tactical and not focused on the experience of candidates or employees. These systems are not fully integrated and do not consider the preferences and needs of today's candidates or employees. Only 39% of companies are satisfied with their provider and would recommend them. There is a new set of technology needed that focuses on what the experience is and how it can drive stronger engagement, productivity, and performance.

Communication is the primary differentiator of a positive candidate experience and can also serve as the thread to employee experience. Companies need better tools to communicate with candidates early in the process when they are researching the organization, provide a progress indicator during the apply process, and convey next steps post-application. The following pages of this report will explore how text is impacting talent acquisition efforts and employee experience.



WHAT IS TEXT RECRUITING?

Although the use of text in talent acquisition has increased, most recruiters are using an informal or ad hoc approach to texting. They are casually texting with some candidates from their personal or even company devices. Eighty-six percent (86%) of companies state that recruiters have used text to support talent acquisition activities and 57% of recruiters have texted with a candidate in the past week. Yet, most of these engagements are random messages that are not powered by a secure, purpose-built text recruiting platform. This type of outreach can negatively impact the candidate experience and put a company at risk.

This informal approach to texting presents several challenges, including:



Compliance:

Recruiters and hiring managers that use personal devices – or even dedicated company devices – make it difficult to ensure that company guidelines are followed. Text messaging activity is increasingly likely to be included in compliance audits. Working with a provider dedicated to talent acquisition communication can help ensure compliance.



Bias:

Many aspects of talent acquisition include bias, and communication is one. Companies must ensure that candidate communication is consistent and professional. Every candidate should have the same opportunity for engagement, and recruiters and hiring managers must be thoughtful of their messaging. A platform designed to support talent acquisition can ensure that every candidate has the same opportunity for communication and that recruiters and managers follow company guidelines in their language and messaging.



Measurement:

Tracking and measuring communication is critical to success. Currently, only 34% of companies are measuring the effectiveness of their candidate communication. Companies that leverage a platform can track all engagement and see the ROI of their communication efforts.

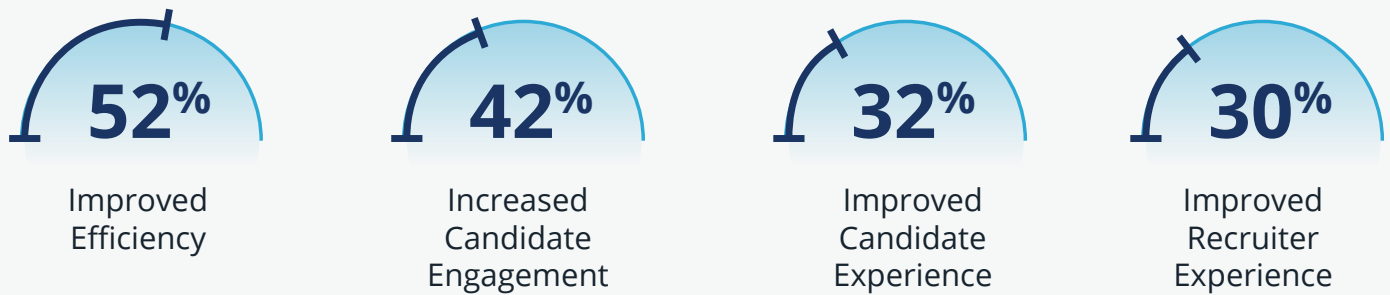


Integration:

A lack of strategy around texting means that candidate communication and engagement is not integrated in a CRM, ATS, or HRIS system.

Text recruiting platforms empower TA to be more efficient in communication and integrate with existing technology. AI-enabled platforms help lift the administrative burden, provide recommendations, and improve immediate engagement. Companies using these solutions identified the following as the top benefits: efficiency, candidate engagement, candidate experience, and recruiter experience (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Benefits of Text Recruiting Platforms

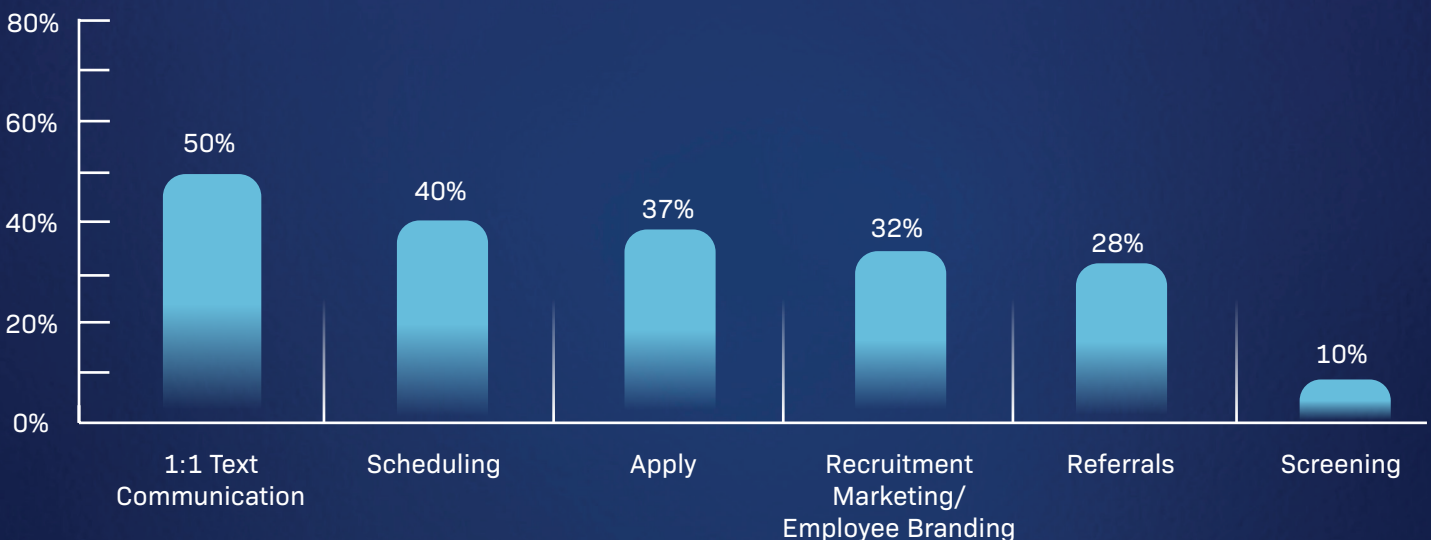


What is driving this increased investment?

Text can be used to support many use cases in talent acquisition. Yet, most companies view text as an extension of recruitment marketing. Companies can engage with talent, send messages, and provide opportunities to opt-in to talent communities through text. But the reality is that text can support the entire talent acquisition lifecycle from recruitment marketing to onboarding and beyond.

When asked where companies would want to be using text, the majority of companies cited 1:1 communication, scheduling, and apply (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Use Cases for Text in Recruitment



1:1 Text Communication



These capabilities add texting to an existing system including sourcing, ATS, LinkedIn, or HRIS systems. It allows companies to text any candidate from a webpage and keeps track of the history of the text exchange. These capabilities can be used to support candidates from as early as the apply process through to offer management and onboarding.

Scheduling



Interview scheduling is a point of frustration for many recruiters today. Over 50% of companies have dedicated schedulers to support these activities and one in three companies still do not have a standardized approach to scheduling. Text can lift the administrative burden placed on recruiters and support scheduling through immediate communication.

Apply



One of the biggest trends in TA technology over the past few years is the idea of “easy apply” or candidate-friendly apply. For some companies, the apply process can take up to an hour to complete and companies often lose candidates at this stage. A text recruiting apply process allows candidates to apply for a job using a keyword or short code which can speed up the entire process.

Recruitment Marketing



Text can enable a stronger recruitment marketing strategy. Like corporate marketing, text can allow recruiters to send campaigns, provide job opportunities, and share company information through text.

Referrals



Companies can engage with employees via text to provide referrals.

Screening



Using text, they can qualify applicants faster using response templates and automated screening questions. Advanced recruitment texting platforms can be programmed to send follow up questions, job application links, or other content based on candidate responses.

Text can impact talent acquisition for high-volume as well as professional hiring. With faster response times and greater engagement, companies can better engage with candidates and reduce time to fill.

How Is Text Being Used to Support the Employee Experience?

Talent acquisition is often the starting point for companies using text to support HR initiatives. Companies that are looking to extend the candidate experience into the employee experience should consider text as one option.

Communication is not an isolated activity. It is not something that starts and stops during the onboarding phase. Strategic communication needs to be consistent, frequent, and something that spans the entire employee lifecycle, which means 365 days a year. When asked to rank at which stages employee communication is the most critical, organizations cited performance management, career development, learning management, benefits, and rewards and recognition (see Figure 9).

Text can play a role in each of these areas:

Performance Management: Companies can use text to provide feedback and communication to employees rather than wait until an annual performance review.

Internal Mobility: Companies can use text to alert employees about career opportunities, share learning and development opportunities, and provide feedback.

Learning and Development: Text can help support learning and development by sharing opportunities with employees and alerting managers to new courses.

Benefits: Text can support open enrollment by providing a more effective vehicle to alert employees and send reminders about open enrollment dates.

Total Rewards: Text can be used for rewards and recognition. Sending a “thank you” to an employee via text provides a more effective and frequent approach to recognition instead of waiting for an annual email at the time of an employee’s anniversary.

Figure 9: Employee Experience Priorities Ranked



What Is the Business Impact?

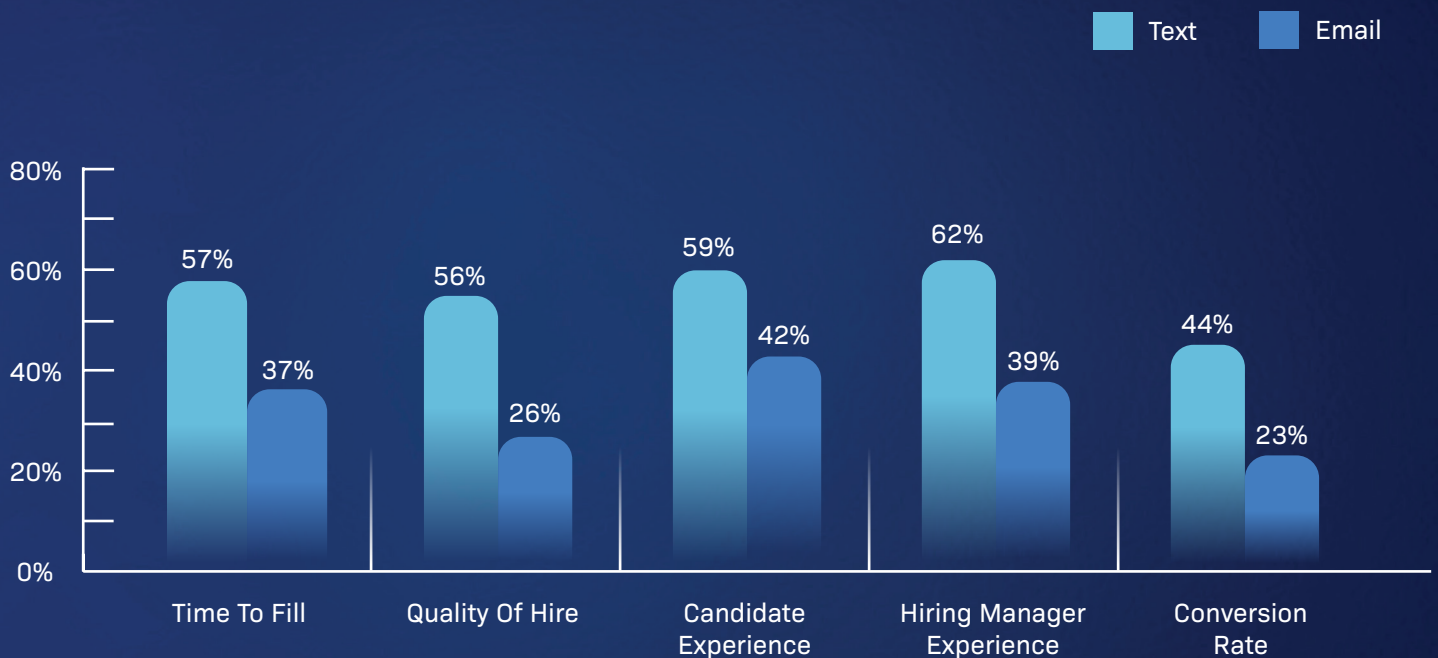
The use of text has an immediate impact on talent acquisition by improving efficiency, experience, and effectiveness. According to Aptitude Research, the two most significant benefits include response times and time to fill:

Response time: Companies using text were four times more likely to see candidates respond in the first two minutes compared to companies using email.

Time to fill: Companies using text were two times more likely to fill positions in the first two weeks than companies using email.

Text impacts efficiency but it also impacts quality and experience. It helps companies connect with the right talent in a more effective way. Additionally, Aptitude Research found improvements to talent acquisition metrics and communication metrics. Companies that use text over email improved time to fill, quality of hire, candidate experience, hiring manager experience, and conversion rates (see Figure 10). Text connects employers and candidates in an immediate way, improving both efficiency and experience.

Figure 10: Talent Acquisition Improvements



Companies that have increased their use of text are also seeing improvements in open rates, clickthrough rates, and response rates (see Figure 11). Marketing and other areas of the business track these metrics to show customer engagement. Companies looking to measure the ROI of their communication strategies should consider a similar approach.

Figure 11: *The Impact on Communication Metrics*



Companies using Text Recruiting do not need to wait months or years to see results. Text provides an immediate impact on talent acquisition and integrates with the existing recruiter workflow to provide a better experience.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Candidate communication requires a better experience and improved efficiency. Companies that rely on emails or traditional forms of communication are failing to attract quality talent and losing candidates in the process. Text Recruiting provides an immediate ROI for companies looking to improve how they attract, recruit, and hire talent. It improves response times, engagement metrics, and the overall experience of both candidates and recruiters. Companies looking to leverage text in their talent acquisition strategies should consider:

- Using a platform that can help to track engagement and effectiveness of communication while providing more consistency and standards for recruiters and hiring managers.
- Measuring the impact of text on their overall talent acquisition efforts from recruitment marketing to onboarding
- Extending communication to the employee experience and considering performance management, internal mobility, and benefits administration

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Aptitude Research Partners is a research-based analyst and advisory firm focused on HCM technology. We conduct quantitative and qualitative research on all aspects of Human Capital Management to better understand the skills, capabilities, technology, and underlying strategies required to deliver business results in today's complex work environment.

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Emissary is a text recruiting platform built to make text based candidate engagement and recruiting automation easy. Our texting software empowers enterprise recruiting and HR teams with efficient text recruiting tools that work in harmony with any ATS, HRIS or recruiting site. Emissary's platform supports 1-to-1 texting, texting campaigns, chatbots, triggered messaging and much more. In addition, deep integrations with leading ATS vendors like Workday SAP SuccessFactors, Lever and more enable seamless data synchronization across platforms for enhanced productivity and compliance. Getting started with Emissary is easy with most customers up, running and integrated in a week or less.

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