



HIRING ANALYSIS

Fixing the Leaky Talent Pipeline

Why qualified marketing candidates abandon your process before the offer stage — and the action plan to stop it happening.

In a competitive talent market, qualified marketing candidates are abandoning the recruitment process before they ever reach an offer. Leaky pipelines cost businesses time and money, reducing productivity and harming competitive advantage — but if the best talent is going elsewhere, it's something you can fix.

43 days

average time to hire a marketer in the UK

92%

of job seekers have abandoned a process over decision length

8%

increase in likelihood of losing a candidate per extra day taken

THE PROBLEM

What's going on

Time to hire varies sharply by seniority — up to 68 days for senior marketers, down to 32 for juniors. Very often, the root cause is internal decision-making: when sign-off requires multiple stakeholders, delay compounds. When candidates are expected to sit through more than two interviews, or prepare presentations, the risk of losing them mid-process rises significantly. Among candidates who've walked away, 40% cite negative interview experiences, and 37% say they'd have accepted the offer had it come sooner.

WITHDRAWALS

Why candidates are withdrawing

81%

of marketers say employers who communicate regularly leave a positive impression

78%

expect an application process to take under 30 minutes

55%

have withdrawn from a process citing its length as the primary reason

47%

Headhunted candidates are **47% more likely to accept a role** than those sourced through job boards.

Headhunted candidates are 47% more likely to accept a role than those sourced through job boards — a reminder that how a candidate enters your pipeline shapes how likely they are to stay in it.

THE MARKET

What hiring managers are looking for is changing

We're living in a post-boom era: marketing job postings are up 17% year-on-year, but still well down on three years ago, meaning the talent pool is larger than before. So why is it harder to find the right person? Because what "right" means has moved. 73% of marketing roles now require data analysis skills, up from 47% in 2022; 65% require proficiency with a specific marketing platform or tool; and 42% of roles posted in Q1 2025 required AI-related skills. No wonder 68% of marketing leaders report difficulty finding qualified candidates for specialist roles — and geographic barriers have broken down since COVID, meaning on-site roles increasingly compete for the same shrinking pool of local specialist talent that remote-friendly companies can now hire from anywhere.

What "right" now means

Share of marketing roles requiring each skill

Data analysis skills

73%

A specific marketing platform or tool

65%

AI-related skills (roles posted Q1 2025)

42%

Data analysis was required in 47% of roles in 2022.

Average days from application to offer, by seniority

Junior (application → offer)

32 days

Mid-level (application → offer)

47 days

Senior (application → offer)

68 days

Source: Example Recruitment research

EARLY-STAGE DROP-OFF

Where is the leak?

Complex application systems are a prime reason candidates leak at the earliest stage. An interested candidate expects to upload a CV and have it parsed — not to re-type their entire work history into a lengthy form. 68% of candidates abandon applications that take more than 20 minutes; 72% expect to finish one in under 10. 52% abandon processes with no clear compensation range stated, and 37% abandon after finding negative reviews on Glassdoor — with generic, copy-paste job descriptions giving them even less reason to persist.

What makes candidates walk away early

Share of candidates who abandon or withdraw, by trigger

Application takes more than 20 minutes

68%

Asked for more than three interviews or assessments

63%

No clear compensation range stated

52%

Negative reviews found on Glassdoor

37%

Source: Example Recruitment research

Timing matters just as much once someone has applied. If 72% expect a 10-minute application, engagement drops sharply for anyone who doesn't hear back within 24 hours. Most candidates expect the whole process to take no more than two weeks for junior roles and four weeks for senior ones — and 63% have withdrawn after being asked for more than three interviews or assessments.



Would you expect a customer enquiry to go unanswered for more than 24 hours? Imagine your ideal candidate submitting an application and hearing nothing back for days.

Assessment fatigue is a real, named reason for withdrawal: candidates asked to prepare presentations for a second or third interview — even as one of only two finalists — repeatedly cite fatigue as their reason for dropping out, especially when they're running the same process in parallel with other employers asking for the same thing.

COMMUNICATION

Communication breaks pipelines too

40% of candidates say they've withdrawn after a negative interview experience, and 58% say poor communication between internal stakeholders is a major reason for withdrawing. 47% have withdrawn after noticing that different interviewers describe the role differently, and 41% of senior marketers say they've walked away after being denied meaningful conversations with C-suite stakeholders.

“When I was a hiring manager myself, I knew I had to move quickly. We treated recruitment like marketing — and candidates like customers. That's exactly why I moved from marketing into recruitment.”

What you can do about it

365%

increase in completed applications for businesses that cut application completion time to under 5 minutes.

Businesses that reduced application completion time to under 5 minutes saw a 365% increase in completed applications, and those using skill-based assessments instead of credential reviews cut time-to-hire by 37%. If your ATS makes candidates re-type a CV they've just uploaded, expect to lose them; if you rely purely on LinkedIn's Easy Apply, expect to be flooded with irrelevant applications instead. Aligning interviewer calendars early — using a scheduling tool so slots stay open at every stage — adds certainty for candidates without sacrificing diligence.

Your action plan — tick off each fix as you make it:

- ☐ **Application process:** cut requirements to essentials, add 3–4 screening questions, and use CV-parsing tech to get completion time under 5 minutes — cuts abandonment by 47%
- ☐ **Assessment stage:** build 30-minute skill assessments, save presentations for the final two candidates only, and tell them clearly they have at least a 50% chance — cuts abandonment by 60%
- ☐ **Communication protocol:** a 24-hour SLA on all candidate enquiries, clear ownership of responses, and a shared calendar-booking system for every stage — cuts ghosting by 58%
- ☐ **Internal alignment:** agree who signs off job descriptions within 24 hours, involve the C-suite early for senior roles, and set internal response-time SLAs — cuts abandonment by 47%

43%

faster time to hire when working with specialist
recruiters

37%

better hire quality reported when working with
specialist recruiters

Companies working with specialist recruiters report filling roles 43% faster, with 37% better quality as a result. Recruiters aren't required for every hire — but they can speed up every process and open access to candidates who aren't actively applying anywhere at all.



Example Recruitment — marketing-led headhunters for SaaS and FinTech startups and scaleups in New York and London.

Read the live report and get in touch at theexample.co/reports/fixing-the-leaky-talent-pipeline