



FUTURE OF HIRING

The Death of the CV.

What's Coming Next?

91% of employers are now actively looking for something most candidates don't even know exists — digital career credentials — while LinkedIn's reach collapses and the century-old CV limps on regardless.

Introduction

The traditional CV is on its knees. After more than a century as the cornerstone of recruitment, this self-reported, unverified document is finally being challenged by a perfect storm of technological innovation, employer frustration and changing workforce expectations.

This isn't a simple upgrade from paper to digital. It's a fundamental rethink of how we handle professional identity, skills verification, and the relationship between talent and opportunity — with implications that go well beyond HR, into social equity, privacy and the nature of work itself.

Several forces are driving the change. The skills gap crisis means 65% of jobs will change significantly every 5 to 7 years, which makes hiring purely on degrees and job titles increasingly inadequate. Widespread credential fraud has created a trust deficit too — 84% of HR leaders say they've encountered misrepresented skills on CVs. And digital natives entering the workforce simply expect seamless, technology-enabled experiences that a paper (or PDF) document can't provide.

The question isn't whether change is coming — it's already here. The real question is what replaces the CV, and whether that transition creates more opportunity than it closes off.

THE PROBLEM

The CV Is Broken (And Everyone Knows It)

The numbers paint a picture of dysfunction that would be unacceptable in any other business process.

98%

failure rate — only 2% of applicants get an interview.

98% Never interviewed

2%

250

average applications received per corporate job opening

75%

of CVs never even reach a human, filtered out by ATS keyword matching

Applicant Tracking Systems are supposedly screening for the best candidates, but in practice they're just hunting for keywords. Miss the right buzzwords and a perfectly good CV goes straight to the digital bin.

The 25% that do survive automated screening aren't much better served by what comes next: the average hiring manager spends just seven seconds looking at a CV before deciding its fate. Seven seconds to judge years of education, experience and potential.

"A 98% failure rate. The CV isn't just inefficient — it's actively unfair."

Then there's the bias problem. NPR research from 2024 found that people with white-sounding names get 50% more callbacks than those with Black-sounding names. That's led to "CV whitening", where minority candidates literally change their names on applications — and when they do, their callback rates double.

Fraud compounds all of it. The 2025 State of Credentialing Report found 84% of HR leaders have encountered misrepresented skills or experience on CVs — a vicious cycle

where growing fraud makes employers more sceptical of everyone, adding fresh barriers for honest candidates.

AI SLUDGE

The AI Deluge: When Everyone Has a Perfect CV

It's getting worse before it gets better. 61% of job applications are now flagged as AI-written, often stuffed with the same overused phrases and optimised keywords. Tools like AiApply.co and JobCopilot let candidates generate hundreds of applications automatically, flooding recruiters with what industry commentators are calling "AI sludge".



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When anyone can produce a seemingly perfect CV in minutes, and automated systems can apply to hundreds of jobs at once, the signal-to-noise ratio collapses. Recruiters are left wading through generic, AI-optimised applications that tell them nothing real about what a candidate can actually do — the one tool meant to differentiate candidates has become commoditised into uselessness.

THE ALTERNATIVE

Career Passports: The Verifiable Future?

Enter the career passport — a concept that aims to fix many of the CV's fundamental flaws. Think of it as a professional identity that's verified and tamper-proof: instead of candidates telling employers what they can do, trusted organisations vouch for their skills digitally.

Career passports are collections of digitally signed credentials issued by educational institutions, employers, professional bodies and training organisations, each carrying metadata about the issuer, the assessment criteria and the verification process. No more "I'm proficient in Excel" claims that could mean anything from a basic spreadsheet to a pivot-table wizard.

CAREER PASSPORTS · IN PRACTICE

What Would a Digital Career Passport Actually Look Like?

Picture an app dashboard showing a verified professional identity: basic information cryptographically signed by government authorities at the top, and below it a timeline of verified experiences, each with a digital badge an employer can click to see the full verification detail.

A degree isn't just listed — it's a verifiable credential containing the exact modules studied, the grades achieved, and the learning outcomes reached. A Google Analytics certification isn't a line on a CV but a rich credential showing the specific competencies demonstrated and the date the assessment was passed. Work experience gets the same treatment: instead of "Marketing Manager at TechCorp (2020–2023)", a career passport shows verified credentials for each project, each skill developed, and a former manager's digitally signed performance review.

The underlying infrastructure uses blockchain-style verification, with each credential cryptographically signed by the issuing organisation so employers can verify authenticity instantly, without contacting the issuer. Zero-knowledge proofs mean a candidate can prove they hold a qualification without revealing unnecessary personal detail.

"A career passport travels with you across platforms, countries and career changes. It's platform-independent, globally recognised, and impossible to fake."

Crucially, the individual owns and controls the data. Unlike a LinkedIn profile, which can disappear or be altered, a career passport travels with the person — and this isn't science fiction, it's already happening, with mixed results around the world.

The UK's Food & Drink Careers Passport is a genuine success story: workers in the sector carry verified records of their training and skills from job to job, which has created a more mobile workforce and virtually eliminated fake qualifications among participating companies. Its focus on a single industry with established training standards appears to be the key — it sidestepped much of the complexity that has tripped up broader attempts.

California's experience is more cautionary. After spending over £20 million and slipping past two planned launch dates — originally spring 2024, then autumn 2024 — the state's system finally went live in April 2025. Its Department of Technology had flagged the project for "immediate corrective action" during development, citing technical complexity, privacy concerns and stakeholder resistance. It's now operational, integrating academic achievement with verified work experience, military service and training programmes — proof that scaling this kind of technology is harder than it looks, but that persistence can pay off.

Momentum is building globally. The European Union is rolling out Digital Identity Wallets that will let citizens store everything from driving licences to university degrees, and Bhutan has already launched a national digital ID system for all its citizens.

Employers want digital credentials. Few see them.

Share of employers

Actively look for digital credentials when reviewing candidates

91%

More likely to interview someone with a digital credential proving a key skill

86%

Regularly see digital credentials in applications

46%

The gap between 91% and 46% is the demand-supply gap.

BLIND HIRING

The Anonymisation Debate: To Hide or Not to Hide?

If we're moving toward verified digital credentials, should we also hide who candidates are during initial screening? It's called "blind hiring", and the research behind it is compelling.

"If we're moving to verified digital credentials, should we also hide who people are during the initial screening?"

35%

more likely to hire women when using blind recruitment (PwC, 2020)

16%

more likely to hire minority candidates under the same blind process

The famous orchestra study is the classic illustration: when musicians auditioned behind screens, orchestras hired significantly more women. Remove the bias triggers, the logic

goes, and you get fairer outcomes.

But it isn't that simple. Harvard Business Review published a piece titled "When Blind Hiring Advances DEI and When It Doesn't", making the point that removing context can sometimes hurt the very people it's meant to help — if you can't see that someone overcame real barriers to reach their qualifications, you might undervalue what they've achieved.

The technical answer may be more nuanced. The W3C is developing "selective disclosure" — proving you hold a qualification without revealing everything about yourself, similar to proving you're over 18 without showing your exact birthdate. Zero-knowledge proofs and similar cryptographic techniques could let candidates verify skills while keeping their privacy, enabling anonymised initial screening with identifying information reintroduced later for a more holistic evaluation.

CANDIDATES, EMPLOYERS, RECRUITERS

What This Means for Everyone

If you're looking for work: 65% of jobseekers say they'd use digital credentials once they learn about them, and on the 2025 data the demand is already there on the employer side — 91% are actively looking for digital credentials. The problem isn't demand anymore, it's supply: only 46% of employers regularly see them in applications. Candidates who have digital credentials are in a strong position; those who don't are missing out on a real advantage — verified proof of skills that removes repeated demonstrations, reduces bias in initial screening, supports global mobility, and tracks skill development in real time.

No repeated demonstrations

Less bias in initial screening

Global mobility

Real-time skill tracking

“If you have digital credentials, you're in a strong position. If you don't, you're missing out on a significant advantage.”

That said, the digital divide is real: 80% of people who say they're uninterested in digital credentials don't have a university degree, and two-thirds earn less than £40,000 a year. Done carelessly, this shift risks creating a new form of inequality where access to technology becomes the barrier to opportunity.

If you're hiring people: whether you realise it or not, you're already part of this shift if you're among the 91% of employers actively looking for digital credentials. The 84% of HR leaders who've encountered misrepresented CV skills have a strong incentive to want verified data instead — digital credentials cut out lengthy background checks and give richer, verified information about what people can actually do, and skills-based hiring built on them has been shown to improve retention and performance. The next frontier is simply technical: integrating credentials with the HR systems you already run.

If you're in recruitment: this could be transformative for the industry — instant verification, better matching, less fraud. But it also means learning new systems, understanding a fragmented landscape of credentialing platforms, and potentially retraining how you evaluate candidates altogether.

PLATFORMS

LinkedIn's Decline and What's Coming Next

LinkedIn is having its own crisis. Users are calling it "enshittification": algorithm changes in 2025 cut organic reach for content creators by up to 75%, as the platform shifted from supporting creators toward prioritising advertising revenue.

75%

LinkedIn's 2025 algorithm changes cut organic reach for content creators **by up to 75%.**

That decline may be an opening. Rather than a single platform replacing LinkedIn, we may see an "unbundling" — specialised platforms for different industries, skills-based matching systems, and AI-powered recruitment tools working across multiple data sources at once. As LinkedIn becomes a less reliable home for professional identity, that may itself accelerate the move to digital credentials, which offer platform independence, cryptographic verification, granular skill representation and real-time updates — advantages a platform-dependent profile simply can't match.

“Verified credentials offer platform independence, cryptographic verification, granular skill representation, and real-time updates — advantages that platform-dependent profiles simply can't match.”

AI IN HIRING

The AI Wild Card

Employers using AI in hiring

Share of employers, 2023 vs 2025



Source: Example Recruitment research

AI can process digital credentials at scale, match skills to requirements, and in theory strip human bias out of the equation. But AI brings its own serious bias problems: research

shows AI hiring tools favour white-associated names 85% of the time, versus just 9% for Black-associated names. Done badly, we could end up automating discrimination at a scale no individual recruiter ever could.

AI hiring tools carry their own bias

How often AI hiring tools favour each group of names

White-associated names

85%

Black-associated names

9%

Source: Example Recruitment research

The "black box" problem makes it worse — when an AI system makes a hiring decision, it's often impossible to know why. How do you appeal a decision you can't understand, or audit a system for fairness you can't see inside?

Solutions are emerging, though: explainable AI technologies that expose decision-making, regular bias testing and auditing becoming standard practice, human-in-the-loop systems that pair AI efficiency with human oversight, and regulation — the EU AI Act and various state legislation — starting to address the gaps. Combine AI with digital credentials properly and you get real possibilities: automated verification of credential authenticity, sophisticated skills matching, competency assessment from credential metadata, and predictive analytics based on career patterns.

The Final Word, Finally

"The death of the CV won't happen overnight. We're not moving to a single replacement but rather an ecosystem of verified credentials, specialised platforms, and AI-powered matching systems."

People have been saying the CV is dead for fifty years. And we still have the CV — still perfecting mission statements, still editing achievements, still arguing over one page versus two. The truth is these are highly tuned documents that get remarkably little real visibility compared to how often they're sent out. Good candidates are routinely overlooked simply because of volume, and we've moved quickly into an AI age where it's trivially easy to craft a CV that matches a job description perfectly, and even easier to spam job boards with it via Easy Apply.

LinkedIn was sort of meant to solve that — and for headhunters, it genuinely does. We don't spam CVs, and we don't even invite applications; we go out and find people based on their LinkedIn profiles or recommendations from others, and help them build an application where they're one of a handful of people, not one of hundreds. But we don't operate in volume. When companies invite open applications, the CV becomes the problem again: it creates huge variance in how people present themselves, so selection ends up being made on the CV rather than the person — and at volume, you simply can't select on the basis of the person.

We've speculated on what replaces it. In some cases, the career passport has already proved quite good. Implementation will be harder elsewhere, and it may end up decentralised and unbundled — specific industries, like Food & Drink, running their own career passport with specialist, digitally signed certifications. There's no reason marketing couldn't have the same — though it's worth imagining just how many certifying bodies that would take.

Until certifications and experience are centralised somewhere, we may be stuck with the CV — but its demise is being hastened by AI and by abuse of the system. The way forward isn't clear, and it will take organisations with real vision and real perseverance to centralise that information and protect it properly. What is certain is that the CV is diminishing in effectiveness, and the job market has been damaged by the enshittification of LinkedIn and other job boards alongside it.

Our own approach has always been to avoid the deluge of applications and seek people out directly, and any business looking to hire people with a high degree of specificity

should do the same. It relies on large networks and the ability to search multiple databases, but it cuts the uncertainty of sifting through unsuitable applications — and the risk of a genuinely perfect candidate getting lost behind an imperfect application.

About Example Recruitment

Our approach has always been fundamentally different from the broken system described in this report.

“We don't invite applications. We identify future hires.”

Founded on 20 years of B2B marketing experience, we've never believed in the volume-based, ATS-driven approach that's failing employers and candidates alike. There's a good reason you won't find us advertising on job boards — clients come to us to find the 1 in 1,000, not to sift through hundreds of applications.

- We've never relied on CVs as the primary source of truth
- We don't use AI to replace human judgement
- We don't use ATS systems to filter out candidates
- We don't contribute to "AI sludge" with mass applications

Instead, we maintain the human-centred, relationship-based approach that the future of recruitment will ultimately require, focusing on verified capabilities, demonstrated experience and cultural fit rather than keyword matching or automated screening.

The net result: hiring that's faster, more enjoyable and more predictable. While the industry grapples with the problems set out in this report, we're already delivering the solution — quality over quantity, verification over claims, and human insight over algorithmic screening.



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/the-death-of-the-cv