fountain

AI for Applicant Engagement:

How to Build Meaningful Conversations and Exceed Your Hiring Goals



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Introduction

There are endless ways to communicate in today's world, from in-person to digital communication to advanced artificial intelligence (AI) systems. Organizations around the globe use these communication methods as part of their hiring processes to source and retain the talent they need. While layoffs have hit the tech and financial sectors of late, there has been no such slowdown for industries driven by hourly workers, such as retail, hospitality, food service, manufacturing, and transportation.

Signs point to a growing gap between available hourly jobs and the number of workers who can fill them, with quit rates highest for hourly industries in the United States[1], and countries like the United Kingdom, Germany, and France all reporting hourly worker shortages as they entered 2023.[2,3,4] The number of job openings is only growing, with U.S. hourly industries like manufacturing and transportation showing nearly double the number of openings compared to hire rates *(Fig. 1)*.

Employers are quickly adapting to meet worker salary and benefits expectations in an effort to attract applicants. Wages for retail and accommodation jobs in the U.S. have steadily increased since the start of the pandemic, with the median posted pay at $14/hour in March 2020 and a little over $16/hour in February 2023. Bonuses are also on the rise in the healthcare and transportation industries, while education requirements have decreased overall to broaden applicant pools.[5,6]

But regardless of financial incentives, there has been waning focus on how employers choose to interact with applicants in this volatile climate and the impact advancements in conversational AI may have on hiring outcomes.

Fountain examined text interactions between employers and applicants over the span of a year to identify the topics of conversation, applicant sentiment, and how text content and emotion have an effect on hiring outcomes. Our research revealed the following four key pillars employers should keep in mind to ensure optimized communication in their hiring process and successful hiring outcomes:

1. Building mobile-first processes
2. Increasing applicant engagement by providing diverse communication options
3. Forwarding high-impact messages to recruiters when they're needed most
4. Leaning into the network effects of positive brand experiences by investing in holistic communication methods

If you're an employer struggling to find applicants to fill your open hourly roles, let's start with how to meet applicants where they are: on their phones.

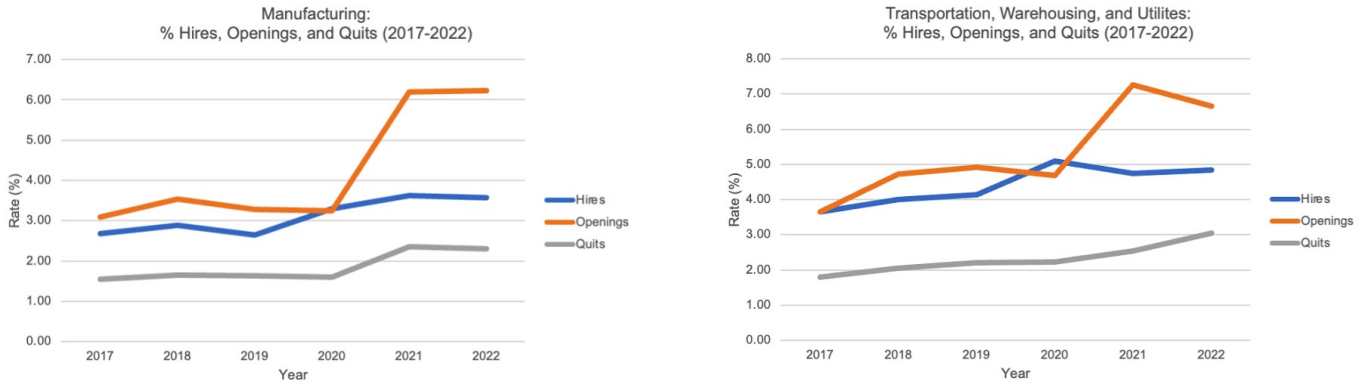


Fig. 1

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017–2022.

1. Data from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
2. UK ministers consider worker health checks to tackle labour shortages
3. More than half of German companies report labour shortages
4. France Desperately Needs Workers, but the Fixes Could Anger Left and Right
5. Data from Lightcast.io
6. Hiring in a Distributed World