



# Global Talent Acquisition Sentiment Study 2017

By Lighthouse Research

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# Foreword

Hiring. It's arguably one of the most valuable practices a business runs, so one would expect that the process would be clear-cut and well-defined. However, nearly half of companies say improving their recruiting function and processes are their top priority. They understand that the world of talent acquisition is changing and business as usual just will not cut it.

With that statistic in mind, Lighthouse Research developed the 2017 Global Talent Acquisition Sentiment Study, which asks the question:

## **“What are the Biggest Talent Acquisition Priorities for 2017?”**

And you gave us answers. With more than 400 responses from 18 different countries, the Global Talent Acquisition Sentiment Study shines a light on key areas that will likely drive decision-making in the coming year. The data shows that there are five top talent acquisition priorities among survey participants:

1. ONBOARDING
2. SOURCING
3. CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE
4. EMPLOYER BRANDING
5. RECRUITMENT MARKETING

This is an exciting new study for us at Lighthouse Research, because there are so many shifts in talent acquisition strategy, technology, and innovation today. We hope you enjoy the report and learn something valuable that can support your business through smarter, more engaging recruiting practices.

## Rules of the road

- Lighthouse offered 15 potential priorities in the survey based on concepts discussed most often in the marketplace (our clients, connections, and contacts reach more than 30,000 HR and talent acquisition professionals).
- Respondents were asked to choose the options that best reflected their company's priorities for 2017.
- The potential priorities were not explained or defined in an effort to avoid skewing results.

## SURVEY OPTIONS

- Developing/improving the internal talent acquisition function
- Aligning with the business
- Onboarding
- Sourcing
- Candidate experience
- Employer branding
- Recruitment marketing
- Hiring manager relations
- Improving the interview experience
- Assessments
- Mobile interface
- Video interviewing
- Employer review sites
- Artificial intelligence
- Other

## Who voted?

There were more than 400 responses to the 15 options in this year's survey, with votes coming from 18 countries across five continents. The US was well-represented with 71% of the responses. A few caveats:

- All who responded did so voluntarily and did not have to pre-qualify in any way to take part in the survey.
- Respondents to our research most often fall into the category of human resources and recruiting professionals.
- Because the survey was conducted online, it is assumed that many are tech-savvy and are positively oriented toward electronic communication and social media, which may be reflected in survey results.

## The envelope please...

The survey results are shown below, ranked in order of total votes cast.

Answer Choices	Responses
Developing/improving the internal talent acquisition function	46%
Aligning with the business	32%
Onboarding	29%
Sourcing	28%
Candidate experience	27%
Employer branding	20%
Recruitment marketing	19%
Improving interview experience	18%
Hiring manager relations	16%
Assessments	15%
Mobile interface	12%
Employer review sites	6%
Video interviewing	6%
Artificial intelligence	5%

Note that numbers one and two are more holistic, not related to a specific practice. One of the primary findings of the study with far-reaching impacts:

***More than half of companies say they are planning to enhance or improve their existing recruiting function, process, and approach in the coming year. In addition, a third of companies are planning to prioritize alignment between recruiting and business objectives, enabling strategic impact.***

For that reason, we will focus on the next 5 on the list, which lean toward more practical implementation.



## What are your priorities?

1. ONBOARDING (29%)
2. SOURCING (28%)
3. CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE (27%)
4. EMPLOYER BRANDING (20%)
5. RECRUITMENT MARKETING (19%)



# Priority #1 – Onboarding

*on-board-ing* | NOUN

the action or process of integrating a new employee into an organization or familiarizing a new customer or client with one's products or services

## Oxford Dictionaries

A sound and strategic onboarding process is the best way to start a new employee off on the right foot. 29% of those who took the survey agreed. The statistics are telling:

- One third of employees knew whether they would stay with their company long-term after their **first week**. (ERE Media)
- New employees who participated in a structured orientation program were 69% more likely to remain at a company up to three years. (Society for Human Resource Management)
- 73% of organizations revamp their onboarding with a goal of improving employee retention. (ERE Media)
- The cost of losing an employee in the first year is estimated to be at least **three times** the individual's salary. (The Wynhurst Group)

Effective onboarding is a key factor in job satisfaction and retention. Efforts to improve the onboarding process can result in big savings to the company.

***“You never get a second chance to make a first impression.”***

Author Unknown

## Priority #2 – Sourcing

*sourc-ing* | NOUN

a talent acquisition discipline which is focused on the identification, assessment and engagement of skilled worker candidates through proactive recruiting techniques.

### Wikipedia

The ability to identify candidates, both passive and active, is a critical need in any HR organization. Whether honing your use of search engines, networking, phone sourcing, or mobile recruiting by text, this is a skill that is evolving with current technology.

Certainly, the demand for talent begs for HR to be creative in their methods, and 28% of those surveyed are putting emphasis on improving sourcing techniques in the new year. In the last year we've done some hands-on sourcing as a way to better understand client needs, and we admit that it has been a challenge. The experiment had us working to find cybersecurity and software development talent for a variety of roles across the East coast and the Southeastern U.S., and it was amazing how many individuals were unresponsive, disinterested, or overly demanding—clear signs of a job seeker's market.

One hiring tool that is continuing to add value is referrals. New technologies in the marketplace allow employers to easily seek and find referral talent both inside and outside the organization. Other new initiatives include video job posts, recruiting with social tools, using gamification and assessments, and even leveraging competitive intelligence to acquire whole teams.

Finally, tools like artificial intelligence (AI) are being incorporated into more new tools and technologies in the market in order to reduce administrative efforts. We'll touch more on AI later in this report.

***"Great vision without great people is irrelevant."***

Jim Collins

## Priority #3 – Candidate Experience

*can·di·date ex·pe·ri·ence* | NOUN

the candidate's journey through the hiring process from initial attraction and application to onboarding

### **Society for Human Resource Management**

The candidate experience begins before most companies expect. It's not even reasonable today to think that the candidate experience starts when someone visits your career site for the first time. It begins with their impression of the company leading them to apply, their experience in the resume pool (to include how they are accepted or rejected), all the way through the hiring process. 27% of respondents realize this and feel that enhancing the candidate experience is key in the coming year.

Some of the metrics identified by Lighthouse Research for evaluating candidate experience include:

- Mobile readiness (ability to apply/interact with career site via mobile device)
- Pre-candidate experience (examination of employer review sites, social interactions, and other sources of information about your organization)
- Recruiter response time (how long does it take to acknowledge, communicate, and interact with candidates?)

Also of note: tools like assessments and video interviews, often considered to be barriers to a positive candidate experience, can actually drive value for candidates if they have a chance to demonstrate their competencies. (2017 Lighthouse Research Candidate Experience Study) However, less than one-third of candidates are allowed to take assessments in the hiring process (The Talent Board).

One intriguing case study of Virgin Media showed how the firm was able to use its candidate experience to turn rejected candidates into customers, attributing a multimillion dollar gain to the talent acquisition practice. (HR Open Source)

***“Candidates Just Want To Be Loved... Is That So Wrong?”***

Chloe Rada

## Priority #4 – Employer Branding

*em-ploy-er brand-ing* | NOUN

an organization's reputation as an employer, and its value proposition to its employees

### Wikipedia

One in five respondents want to improve employer branding in 2017, and there have never been so many tools at your disposal.

- Online job postings have become advertising tools complete with video, employee reviews, and other relevant information.
- Social media is the number one channel for communicating the employer brand, but only 21% of employers are using a mobile-optimized career website to communicate their brand. (Employer Brand International)
- GE's "Owen" commercials, where the firm used traditional TV advertising to rebrand itself as a technology firm in humorous ways, increased traffic to the company's career site by 8x.
- Advocacy by employees is a way to take advantage of the reach and authenticity of your workforce. Cisco has a WeAreCisco Snapchat handle that allows employees to take over the account, sharing their own insights into the company and its culture.

The bottom line: can your company state clearly who it is and what it stands for? Can your employees? It's never been easier to share that message, but it's also never been more crucial to make sure everyone understands that message and shares it the right way.

***"A word is a word, and a picture is worth a thousand... but a brand is worth a million."***

Tony Hsieh

## Priority #5 – Recruitment Marketing

*re-cruit-ment mar-ket-ing* | NOUN

building and maintaining an employer brand, extending reach and exposure of career opportunities, building and nurturing candidate relationships, and all management of messaging and advertising of talent acquisition efforts

B2C marketing has taken an interesting turn in recent years with more personalization and sophistication being woven into marketing practices than ever before. Recruitment marketing is a spinoff of those practices, allowing employers to leverage email campaigns, serve up personalized content, and capture interest from both passive and active candidates for further contact. In our research, 19% of respondents felt recruitment marketing should be a key initiative this year.

In the old days, recruitment marketing focused on cold calls and mass-message job ads. The future looks to be much more individualized. Candidates have many tools at their disposal to determine whether they “fit.” It is up to the company to ensure that the messages bearing the company name attract the talent they are seeking.

Companies that create a compelling, authentic employment brand, communicate their values and mission, and clearly articulate the nature of their workplace are beating the competition in their recruitment efforts. (Deloitte)

***“The best marketing doesn’t feel like marketing.”***

Tom Fishburne

## Breaking it down

Sourcing, onboarding and the candidate experience were all neck-and-neck in the final tally at 28%, 29%, and 27%, respectively. Efforts in these areas are key in accomplishing the critical goals of attracting, engaging, and retaining candidates throughout the hiring process and beyond. Employer branding and recruitment marketing, also tightly linked together, were not far behind at 20% and 19%, respectively.

Surprisingly enough, some of the concepts that are discussed most often in the marketplace placed at the bottom end of the priority list of more than a dozen options.

The three lowest priority areas were:

- Employer Review Sites (6%)
- Video Interviewing (6%)
- Artificial Intelligence (5%)

Our analysis of why these items finished lowest in the survey:

- Employer review sites (6%) are not new, and for some companies, they have started paying attention to these tools but are not seeing them as a critical part of their hiring strategy. It's important to remember two things: first, this is part of the candidate experience, so make sure they are driving value for the candidates; second, this is a great opportunity to leverage employee advocacy, getting your workers to voluntarily share about the culture in a fun, positive way.
- Video interviewing (6%) is a similar item. It's been around for a while, and many employers that want to use it have already adopted. However, we're also hearing that there is a perception that video interviews are not good for candidates. In our Candidate Experience study, we surveyed hundreds of candidates to get their feedback on video interviews, and they actually rated them positively as long as they were structured in a way to allow the candidate to show their true skills and abilities. Keep that concept in mind with these and any other hiring tools.
- AI (5%) is getting a lot of buzz in the recruiting technology space, so why do practitioners rate it lowest? Our belief is that there is a lack of use cases or understanding of how this works in practical ways, so it isn't a priority. In addition, for the vendors proclaiming AI, there are many that still aren't ready for prime time, which makes practitioners gun shy about jumping on board. We expect this to change position pretty significantly in the coming year as more firms start leveraging the value that these tools can provide.

## Other responses

The respondents to the survey also had an opportunity to write in areas they plan to focus in the coming year that might not have been reflected in the survey options. The following word cloud connects those dots, with size determining how often the item was mentioned in the responses:



Clearly, analytics was the frontrunner in this conversation, but other areas like manager training, referral networks, and staffing of internal recruiter roles were also key priorities in the coming year. [?](#)

## Trends

*While not included in the study itself, below we have included some of the macro-level trends that are impacting the workforce to help offer some color and context to the data, including aspects of personalization, workforce readiness, talent competition, and more.*

- The Gig Economy – The growth of the contingent workforce is leading companies to hire more strategically. Firms are now focusing more heavily on acquiring specific skills, not increasing headcount.
- Competition for Talent – Firms are struggling to find the right people. In multiple studies over the last few years, we have seen recruiting the right workforce continuously appear as the number one challenge for talent leaders. In addition, with low unemployment rates, this issue is compounded.
- Workforce readiness – Disruption is the new normal for businesses worldwide, and this increased demand for an agile workforce has outpaced the world of higher education, requiring companies to source from a shrinking pool of candidates that can drive value from day one.
- Universal personalization – Technology allows recruiters and sourcers to target candidates with a personalized approach, creating better conversations and more valuable interactions. Candidates crave a more personal approach, and new tools do the heavy lifting to make this practice feasible.
- Strategic alignment matters – 31% of leaders are prioritizing business alignment/impact. More than ever before, talent leaders are aligning practices with business objectives in an attempt to drive real, measurable value.

## In conclusion

*The 2017 Global Talent Acquisition Sentiment Study provided interesting food for thought from across the globe, giving us some interesting data on how companies plan to focus their talent acquisition efforts in the coming year. With the shifting job market, increased venture capital spending in the talent acquisition technology industry, and increasing pressure on recruiting leaders to deliver results, the coming year is going to bring an interesting mix of priorities that will continue to evolve over time. Interested in sharing this research with your colleagues, manager, or other professionals you know? Here's the link: <http://lhra.io/TA2017>*

***Thank you for checking out our research, and we'd love to hear your comments!***

**You can reach out to the author of this report on Twitter @beneubanks, on LinkedIn, or via email at [ben.eubanks@lhra.io](mailto:ben.eubanks@lhra.io).**

## Definitions

*While not included in the study, these definitions define how we at Lighthouse Research see these particular practices across the talent acquisition landscape.*

### **Developing/improving the internal talent acquisition function**

The process of recruiting talent from outside the organization and building a pipeline for the development of internal talent to fill future vacancies.

### **Aligning with the business**

Demonstrating the value of HR to the business by aligning with the company's business goals and strategic plan, and showing clear and measurable results.

### **Onboarding**

Often seen as simply new employee orientation, onboarding actually can span months or even years. It includes helping the employee embrace his or her new position, conveying the organizational brand and values, defining the culture, and stating expectations for performance.

### **Sourcing**

Proactively searching for talent to fill current openings and build a pipeline of candidates for anticipated openings.

### **Candidate experience**

The applicant's impression of the company, from the application process through hiring and onboarding.

### **Employer branding**

A company's reputation, defined by who the company says it is and what it stands for, but also by how the company is perceived in the marketplace.

### **Recruitment marketing**

Attracting candidates to employers through the process of posting jobs and employing branding initiatives.

### **Hiring manager relations**

The relationship between HR and the managers taking part in the recruiting and hiring process and the understanding of their respective roles in those processes.

### **Improving the interview experience**

Ensuring that all candidates have a positive interview experience, that all receive appropriate follow-up, and that the employer brand is enhanced in the process.

### **Assessments**

Appropriate designed and administered tools that help companies pick the right candidate. Assessment tools can include knowledge tests, job simulations, skill measurements, background checks, and drug screens, just to name a few.

### **Mobile interface**

Digital technologies for mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets that are used for talent attraction, engagement and retention.

### **Video interviewing**

Web-based interviews via video allowing hiring managers to replay, review, share and rate interviewees, reducing time and travel costs.

### **Employer review sites**

Online sites that collect information about what a company does, its size and revenues, the company culture, and how current and former employees feel about the organization.

### **Artificial intelligence**

When a machine undertakes problem-solving functions. In talent acquisition, AI functionality can assist with areas such as initial candidate assessment and tailoring the recruiting/onboarding process.



## About Us

Lighthouse Research & Advisory is a modern analyst firm dedicated to setting the standard for excellence in talent, learning, and HR. By providing compelling research and actionable insights for business leaders, our team's mission is to navigate the rapidly changing field of human capital management to support today's talent and learning functions. From establishing frameworks and defining competitive practices to illuminating the ROI of the employee experience, our goal is to chart a new course for talent.

Ben Eubanks is the Principal Analyst at Lighthouse, providing insights for today's talent leaders and vendor partners. Prior to joining Lighthouse, Ben worked as a research analyst for Brandon Hall Group, focusing on learning, talent acquisition, and talent management. During his tenure, he published more than 100 pieces of research and provided advisory services to executives from some of the largest and most respected organizations in the world.

He also has hands-on experience working as an HR executive, leading both strategic and tactical talent practices. Ben is the host of We're Only Human, a podcast focused on the intersection of people, technology, and the workplace. In addition, he runs upstartHR.com, a website serving HR leaders that has reached more than 750,000 readers since its inception.