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# The Graduate Recruiters Survey

Mounting Challenges for Hiring  
Australian & New Zealand Graduate Candidates

**Talegent**  
Technology meets Psychology

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*This white paper presents the findings of the Talegent Australia and New Zealand Graduate Recruiters survey. Talegent conducted independent research with 104 graduate recruiters in Australia and New Zealand about their experiences in the annual graduate recruitment process.*



## 1. Competition

## 2. Volumes

## 3. Identifying

## 4. Differentiating

## 5. Attracting

## 6. Engaging

## Overview

Graduate recruiters continue to face two opposing forces in the grad recruitment marketplace: they have to sift through higher and higher volumes of applicants, often thousands for a few roles, at the same time maintaining tight control over contracting resources and budget.

Their challenge is to efficiently screen candidates and quickly to find the highest quality talent before their competition, whilst making the candidate experience and their company's employment value proposition attractive to secure that top talent.

## Challenges Graduate Recruiters face include: (in rank order)

- Finding the Best Candidates before Competitors Do**  
 Despite the increasing volume of applicants, there is still heavy competition for the top quality talent. Complicating that, the global nature of the employment market means recruiters compete world-wide to find and attract the best.
- Managing High Applicant Volumes**  
 Graduate applications levels are at an all time high. Recruiters may have to screen hundreds of applicants for a single role. In most cases, resources to do so have stayed the same or decreased.
- Determining Potential in Grads**  
 When assessing grads, soft skills and potential (people skills, drive, motivations) are more important to recruiters than cognitive ability, work experience, or business acumen. However, many recruiters continue to rely on candidate attributes proven to have low correlation with success and need new tools to better identify potential.
- Differentiating the Experience to Attract & Engage Grads**  
 The rise of social media recruiting means candidates are more active, knowledgeable and expect to get information from potential employers more quickly. Recruiters have to learn to navigate the social media arena with agility and use the medium to their advantage.

## Findings

### Competition for Top Graduates:

Competition for the top graduates is high with the **majority of recruiters (50.8%) often or almost always competing** to hire the high potential candidates.

Competition is most intense for legal and professional services firms where recruiters **Almost Always (47.1%) or Often (23.5%) find competition for the top graduates challenging**.

Although competition is fierce, the majority of recruiters (59.3%) do not find applicants dropping out of the recruitment process a challenge.

### Managing Applicant Volumes:

Recruiters are inundated with applicants and **81.0%** of graduate recruiters find managing this volume **Sometimes (31.0%), Often (26.9%) or Almost Always (23.1%) challenging**.

This challenge is **substantially worse for recruiters who receive more than 100 applicants** where 71.0% of recruiters find it **Often (32.2%) or Almost Always (38.7%)** challenging to manage candidate volumes (Figure 1).

With **the majority of recruiters (59.6%) receiving more than 100 applicants** for graduate roles already and 57.3% of recruiters expecting candidate volumes to increase over the next 3-5 years this challenge is only going to increase.

### Identifying Top Grads:

Organisations are faced with identifying the high potential individuals in this torrent of applicants and **72.9% of recruiters find this challenging**.

Academic Performance and Assessments customised to the competencies specific to the graduate role were reported to provide the most valuable information for screening applicants. The majority of recruiters report that face-to-face interview provide the most valuable information to select the final applicants with **62.1% of recruiters reporting that this information is critical** to their decision.

### Determining High Potential:

Asking graduate recruiters which characteristics were important for graduate success at their organisation identified a combination of behaviours and abilities that help achieve objectives individually and collaboratively.

#### Recruiters' Ranking of Traits for Success

1. Drive and Motivation
2. People Skills
2. Written Communication
4. Teamwork
5. Problem Solving
6. Dependability
7. Critical Analysis of Information
8. Self Confidence
9. Optimism
10. Numerical Reasoning
11. Ability to influence others
12. Ability to motivate others

**Drive and Motivation** was the most valued characteristic grads could possess with **95.0%** of graduate recruiters rating this as critical or very important for graduate success at their organisation.

Tied for second were **People Skills** and **Written Communication** which were rated as critical or very important for graduate success by **91.66%** of graduate recruiters.

89% of graduate recruiters find **managing volume** challenging

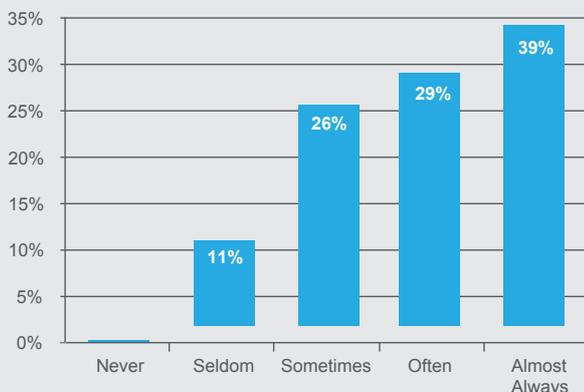


Figure 1 : Managing applicant volume

## Ineffective Selection Process:

Graduate recruiters reported that they continued to rely on applicant attributes that research has proven to be poor predictors of success.

## Work Experience

Although recruiters rate the information provided by an applicant's previous work experience as being very important (**49.2%**) or critical (**13.6%**), often graduates won't have relevant work experience to demonstrate competence. Previous job experience has been found to have a modest relationship with work performance with a mean  $r$  of 0.18 across 373 studies (Hunter & Hunter; 1984).

## Academic Performance

The majority of recruiters reported that they found the information from an applicant's academic performance very important (**47.5%**) or critical (**20.3%**) to their decision making. Although academic grades are often used by graduate recruiters to help screen applicants, Roth, BeVier, Switzer and Schippmann (1996) found that grades had a relatively low relationship to work performance ( $r = 0.16$ ). In addition to having a lower validity than other screening methods (Schmidt & Hunter; 1998) it has been found that the use of academic performance to screen applicants could be discriminatory against some cultural groups (Roth & Bobko; 2000).

## Conclusion: New Grad Hiring Challenges Requires a New Solution

Graduate recruiters reported that they continued to rely on applicant attributes that research has proven to be poor. As evidenced by our survey, recruiters are finding traditional methods inadequate for keeping up with the high and ever-growing volume of applicants and increasingly competitive hiring environment. Furthermore, many recruiters report that they rely on ineffective measure for predicting on-the-job success.

These new realities are heightening the need for and spurring adoption of automated systems based on proven psychometric measures. Assessment solutions offered by Talegent and others meet the need by providing:

- Predictive accuracy
- Volume capabilities
- Competitive branding/differentiation
- Consistent, quality candidate experience
- Leveraging of online technologies



## References

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