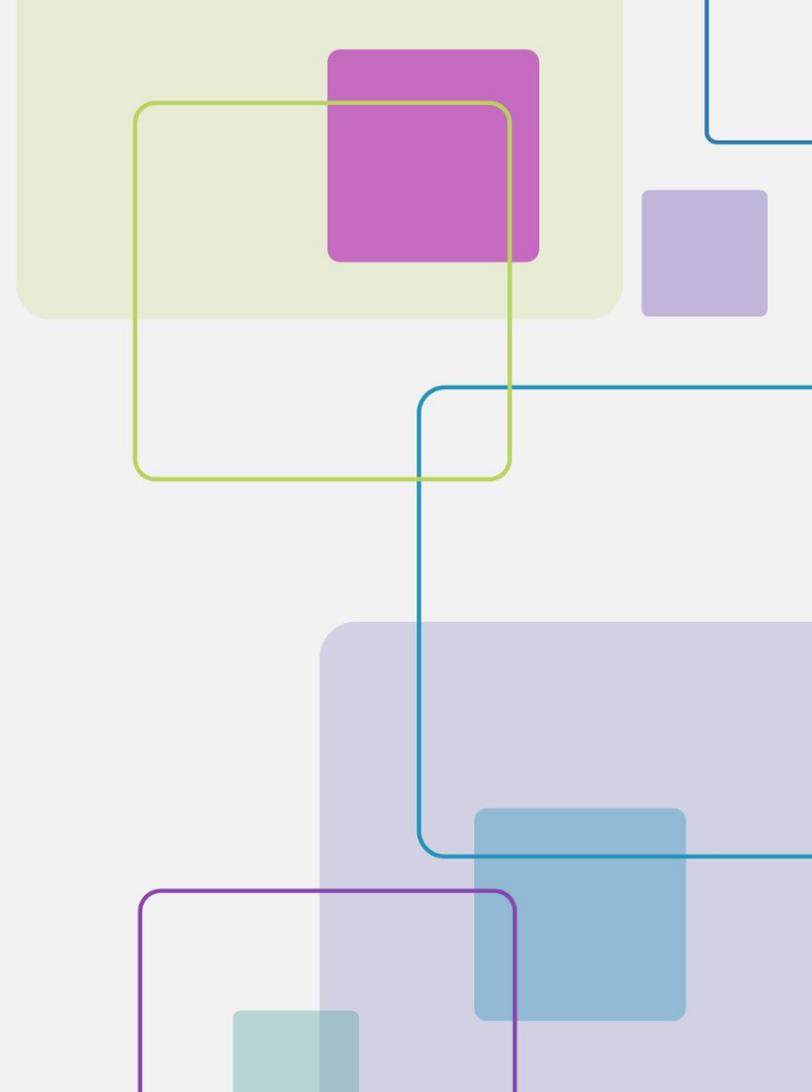




# GRID

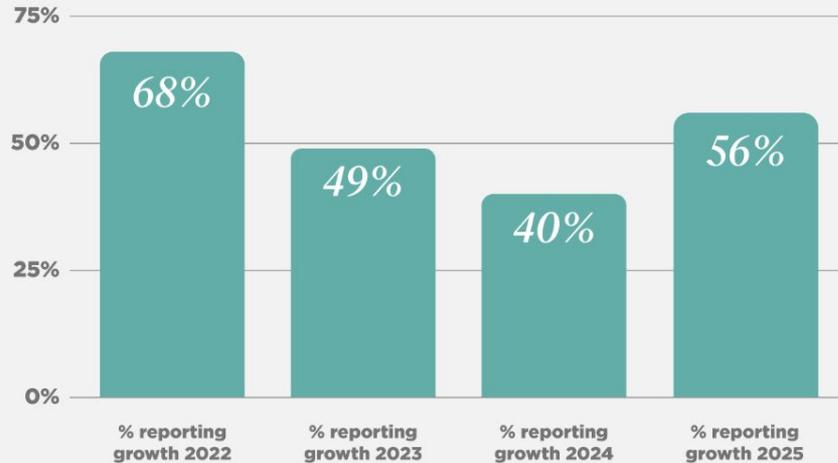
 **INDUSTRY TRENDS REPORT**

*2026 Slide Deck*



# 2025 was a turnaround year for recruiting

*Revenue growth 2022-2025*



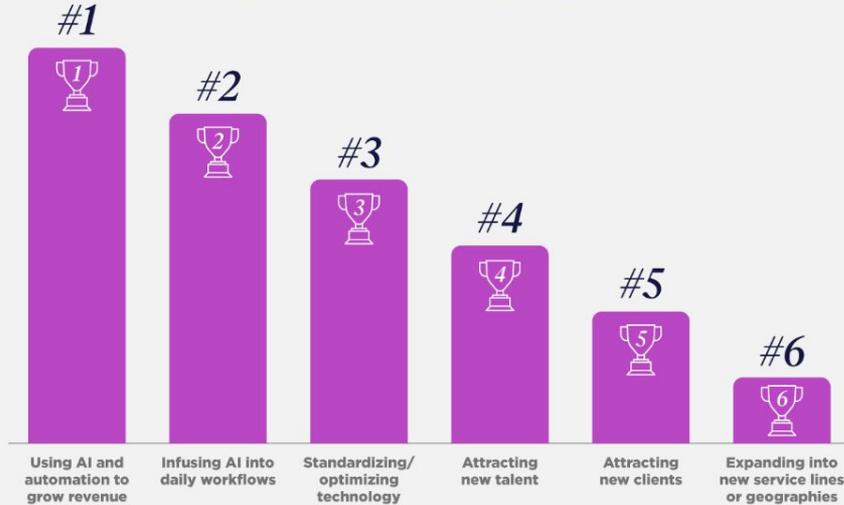
Bullhorn GRID 2026 Industry Trends Report

- **56%** of firms saw revenue growth - an increase from last year
- **13%** saw growth of more than 25%
- **14%** of firms saw revenue decline
- **Highest** percentage of revenue growth firms since 2022

Bullhorn 

# AI dominates the list of 2026 priorities

## 2026 Priorities ranked

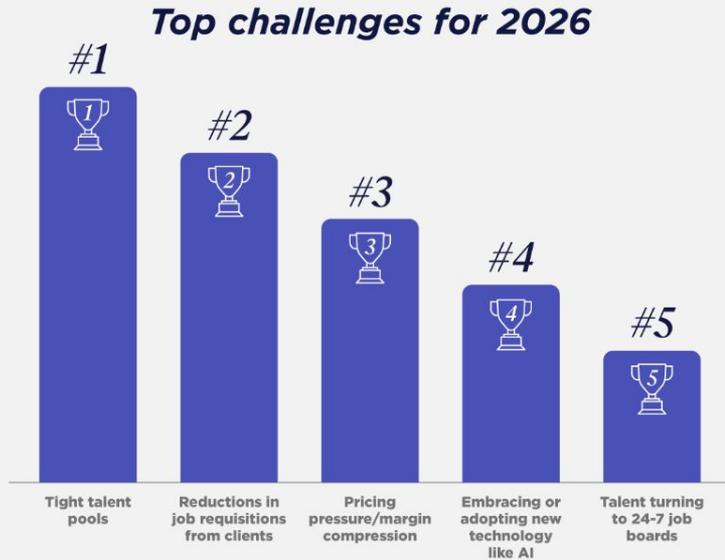


Bullhorn GRID 2026 Industry Trends Report

- Using AI and automation to grow revenue was the **top priority**
- And firms want to make sure AI is embedded across their platforms within the system of record
- Leaders shared the goal of optimizing technology is largely related to AI preparedness
- These priorities held true across regions, business lines, and verticals

Bullhorn 

# Talent shortage and lower job volumes are top challenges



- Ongoing combination of tight talent pool with fewer jobs
- This is the third year these have topped the list
- Turndown rates are improving
- **Lack of confidence** still elongating client hiring cycles
- **AI has changed the benchmark** for speed and service

# Four key takeaways

1



*AI drives  
revenue  
growth*

2



*AI leads to  
operational  
improvement*

3



*AI  
implementation  
strategy is  
crucial to  
adoption*

4



*Recruiters  
are never  
going back*

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INDUSTRY TRENDS REPORT



# AI and revenue performance

# Firms using AI are 3.5-4.5 x's more likely to grow revenue

*Revenue growth by AI use case*



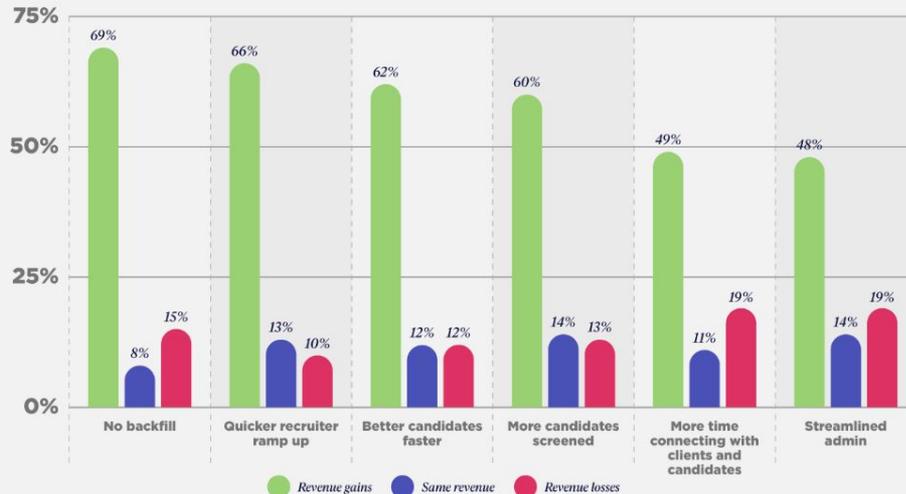
Bullhorn GR/D 2026 Industry Trends Report

- Top-performing firms **4 x's** more likely to be using AI
- Firms with revenue declines of 10+% were the **least likely to be using AI**
- AI screening correlates with **4 x's** likelihood of revenue growth
- AI revenue gap is **growing** each year

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# Highest growth firms are reaping multiple AI benefits

**Revenue performance  
by AI benefit**



Bullhorn GRID 2026 Industry Trends Report

- Firms that are seeing meaningful benefits from AI are as much as **6 x's** more likely to have increased revenue
- The highest growth firms (25+%) are **2.5 x's** more likely to be deploying AI in meaningful ways
- It isn't enough just to implement AI, it needs to be **strategic** and **high-impact**

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# Operational impact of AI

# Better candidates faster is the biggest benefit of AI

## What is the current impact of AI on your business?



Bullhorn GRID 2026 Industry Trends Report

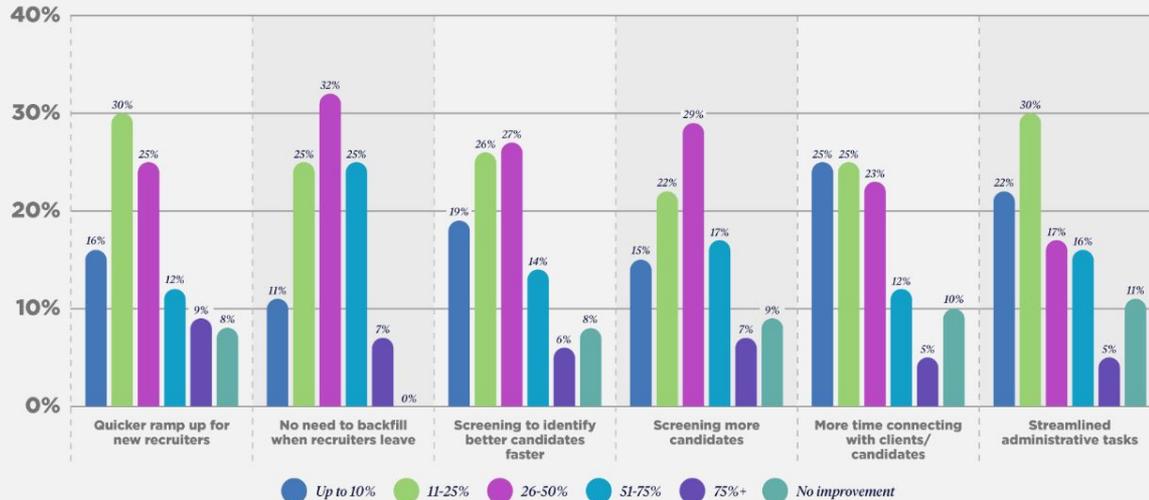
Respondent chose all that apply

- **56%** of top-performing firms have placement times under 10 days
- The benchmark for placement times has already shifted — **1/3** of firms that lost revenue had placement times of 10-19 days
- **47%** of firms have seen screening speed increase by more than **25%** because of AI

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# AI is improving KPIs across the board

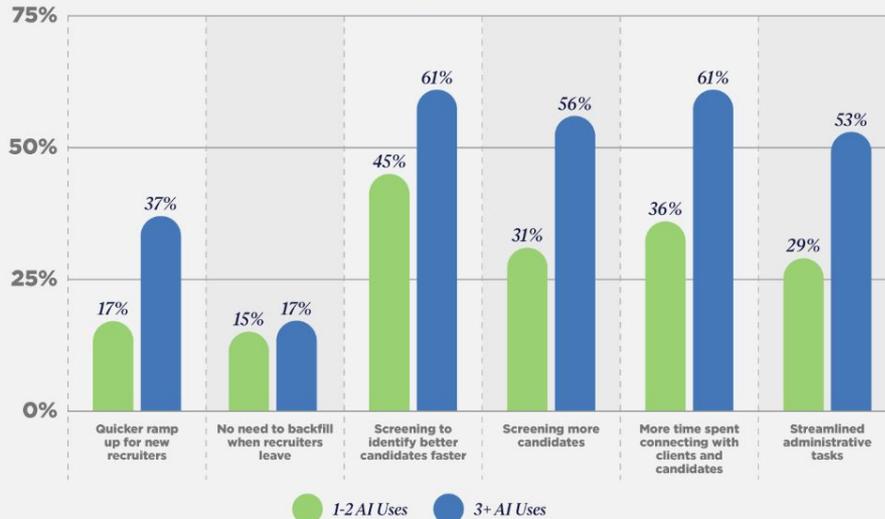
## AI-related KPI improvement



- **75%** of recruitment leaders say AI has accelerated recruiter ramp-up by more than **25%**
- **3/4** say AI screening has improved related KPIs by more than **25%**
- One leader shared that recruiters are getting an entire day back each week

# Platform AI can double the benefits

*Operational benefits by AI usage*



Bullhorn GRID 2026 Industry Trends Report

- Firms using AI in 3 or more parts of their recruitment lifecycle were
  - **twice as likely** to have quicker ramp-up for recruiters and
  - **80%** more likely to be screening more candidates
- **78%** of firms that grew revenue **25+%** are using AI embedded in their ATS
- AI throughout the workflow **doubles the chances** of fill rates over 75%

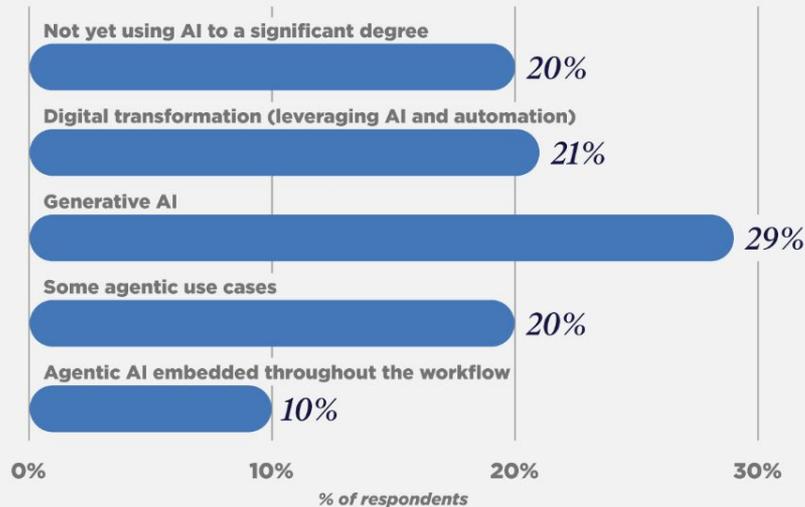
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# Successful AI implementation

# Still a long way to go with AI and automation

*To what degree is your agency using automation and AI?*



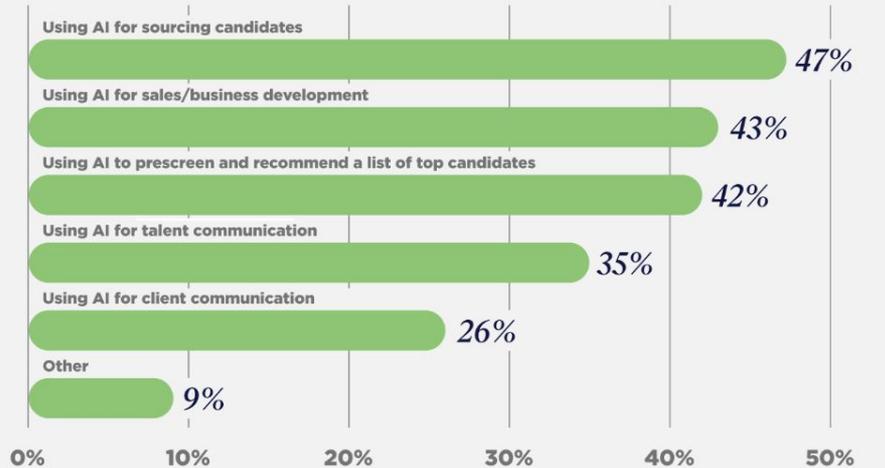
Bullhorn GRID 2026 Industry Trends Report

- **59%** of firms are currently using AI
- **Only 30%** are taking advantage of agentic AI
- **Only 54%** have even fully automated search
- **Less than 1/2** have automated payroll and billing
- **64%** are using AI solutions embedded in their ATS

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# Most firms are still not fully leveraging AI

*For which of the following are you using AI today?*



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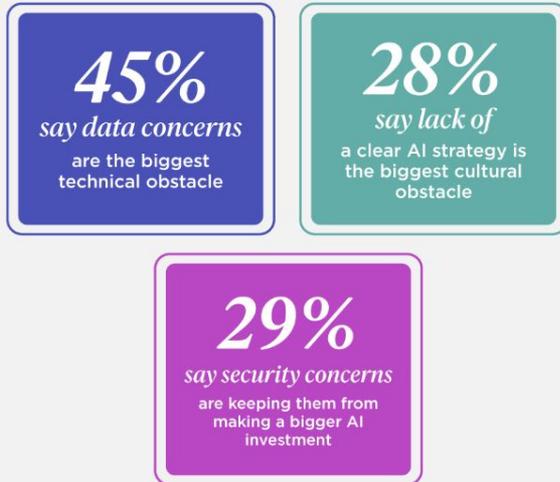
Respondents chose all that apply

- **59%** of firms are currently using AI
- **Only 30%** are taking advantage of agentic AI
- **Only 54%** have even fully automated search
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# AI implementation requires data quality and a clear strategy

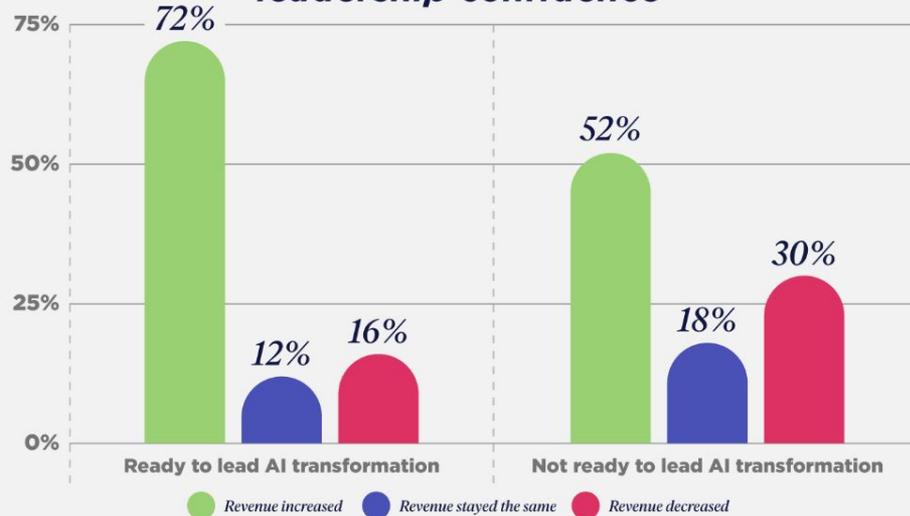
## ***Biggest obstacles to AI adoption:***



- Data quality (**34%**) and lack of a single source of data (**11%**) are technical obstacles to AI implementation
- Lack of a clear AI strategy (**28%**) is the top organizational obstacle, followed by lack of AI literacy (**19%**)
- Leaders shared that strategies like:
  - Formal AI training for employees
  - Designating AI ambassadors from across the organization
  - Celebrating wins and sharing best practices

# Leadership matters when it comes to AI adoption

**Financial performance by level of leadership confidence**



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- **81%** of leaders at the highest growth firms feel prepared to lead AI transformation — compared to 46% of those with the weakest revenue results
- Firms with leaders who are confident about leading AI change are almost **40%** more likely to have grown revenue
- Leaders shared that it is vital that leaders model AI usage and really “walk the walk”

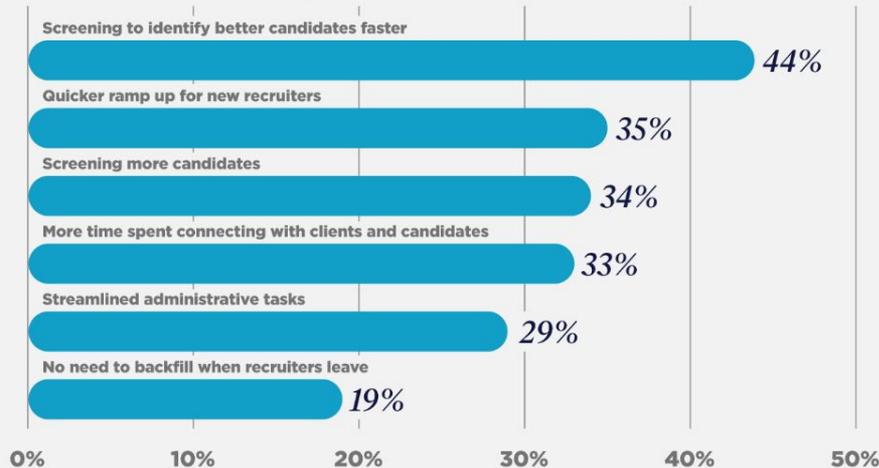
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# Recruiters are never going back

# Recruiters love AI for search and pre-screening

## What is the current impact of AI on your day-day work



Bullhorn GRID 2026 Industry Trends Report

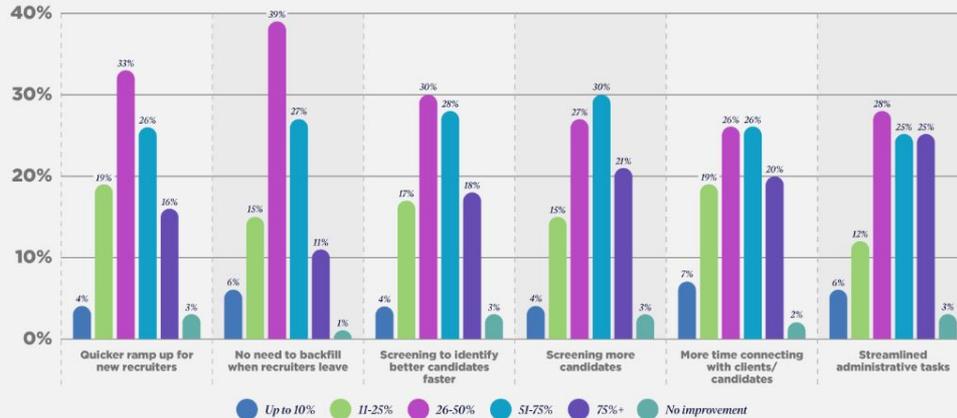
Respondents chose all that apply (recruiters only)

- **44%** of recruiters say AI is helping identify better candidates faster
- **1/3** appreciate that there is more time to spend with clients
- All leaders stressed that they are focused on finding the ideal **balance** between technology and human interaction

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# AI has rewritten the rules for search and screening

*Time savings by AI benefit*



Bullhorn GRID 2026 Industry Trends Report

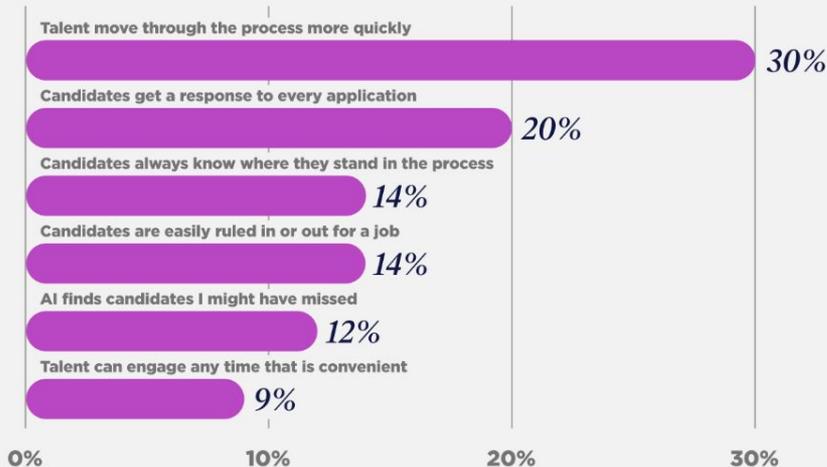
*“AI won’t take your job, it will help you get better at it, but what will take your job is another recruiter at a competitor that’s using AI and automation really well...”*

**Sam Porter,**  
IT Director, Morgan Hunt

- Recruiters report searching for candidates is the most time-consuming task
- 46%** say screening candidates faster with AI is cutting this time in half or better
- More time to connect with candidates clients is another key benefit for recruiters

# Recruiters appreciate that AI improves talent experience

## *Biggest impact of AI on talent experience*

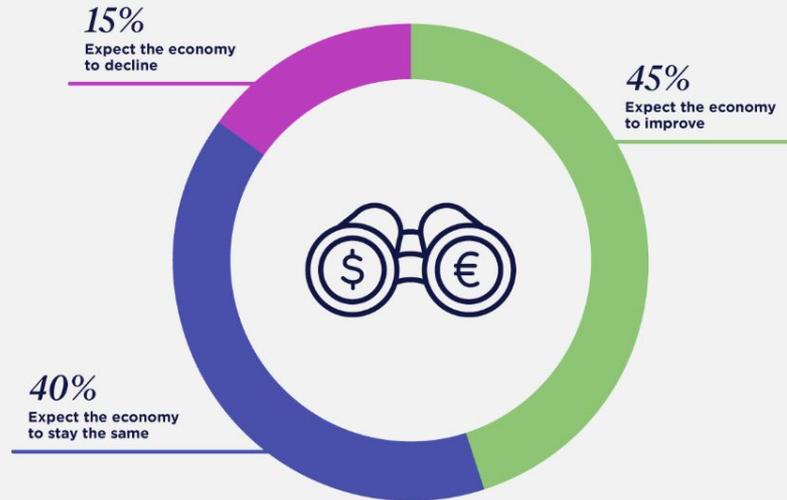


- **30%** of recruiters say moving candidates through the process faster is the top benefit of AI
- **20%** say it's that candidates get a response to every application
- Speed and responsiveness also top talent's wishlist for recruitment
- Leaders shared the key for recruiters is to personally experience AI wins and to have AI tools integrated into existing systems



# Economic and market outlook

# 2026 revenue outlook: Cautiously optimistic



- **45%** of firms expect the economy to improve in 2026
- But, **40%** expect it to stay the same – a larger percentage than in either of the last two years
- And leaders we spoke with shared that they **expect any improvement to be modest**, not dramatic

# Firms are creating their own tailwinds with efficiency and specialization

## Top strategies to improve financial performance



- Leaders shared that they are counting on **AI to up their level of productivity**
- Leaders say the biggest benefits of AI are **scaling without adding headcount** and **getting new recruiters productive faster**
- **More than 1/3** are continuing to find niche specialties where they can be definitive market leaders
- **Fewer** are focused on M&A or geographic expansion