

# How to Develop a Data-Driven Recruiting Strategy



When recruiting strategies fall short, it's rarely a question of effort.

Instead, challenges often arise when success—and the metrics tied to it—aren't clearly defined. What's working. What isn't. And what should be improved.

The strongest talent acquisition teams take a different approach. They decide what matters, measure it consistently, and let data (not guesswork) guide what happens next.



According to the [2025 Employ Recruiter Nation Report](#), **82%** of organizations use analytics to inform their talent acquisition strategy—and among teams planning to increase budget, more than a third (**38%**) plan to invest in reporting and analytics technology.

Still, data alone doesn't drive results. Action does.

That's where the real work begins: aligning stakeholders around shared goals, gathering meaningful feedback, and using recruiting metrics not just to report performance, but to uncover opportunities to improve it.

## Looking Backward vs. Moving Forward

One of the most common challenges in a data-driven recruiting strategy is the gap between forward-looking signals and retrospective measurement.


When reporting focuses primarily on historical metrics, teams have less visibility into what's ahead—making it harder to monitor pipeline health, upcoming roles, and in-flight performance.



## From Reporting to Decision-Making

High-performing TA teams don't treat data as a historical record, they use it as a real-time signal. They review metrics while roles are still open, surface early warning signs, and adjust quickly—before small slowdowns turn into major bottlenecks.

But data can only drive decisions when teams agree on what success looks like. When metrics are tied to clearly defined goals, actions become obvious: where to intervene, what to prioritize, and how to stay aligned with hiring managers and business leaders.



Leading TA teams don't rely on spreadsheets or static dashboards to power this shift—they invest in technology that makes decision-driven data usable in real time.

That includes platforms—like Lever—that support historical, req-level, and job-level reporting, so teams can see how similar roles have performed before, forecast timelines, and adjust strategy while reqs are still open.

## Working SMART-er: Defining Your Goals and Success Metrics

The SMART framework—Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound—is a proven way to set goals that actually drive progress.

Applied to talent acquisition, SMART goals help teams move from broad objectives to clear priorities and measurable outcomes. The result: goals your team can act on now, not revisit later.

### Factors shaping goal-setting and strategy through 2026 include:

- **70%** of organizations anticipate hiring more
- **67%** plan to increase their spend
- **67%** plan to invest more in AI-powered recruiting tools
- **91%** are focusing on skills-based hiring
- **47%** cite not enough qualified talent as a top challenge

\*Data pulled from Employ 2025 Recruiter Nation Report

Use this chart to define, refine, and ramp your SMART goals.

Goal	Metrics	Goal Date(s)	Results
<b>Goal #1:</b> Get time to hire under 4 weeks	time to hire	End of Year	—
<b>Goal #2:</b> Add two full-time employees in the x role	Two employees successfully complete a 90-day onboarding	End of Q3	—

## Where to Look for the Data

Your organization already holds a wealth of insight—you just need to know where to look.

Some of the most valuable signals come from:

- Employee engagement surveys to identify satisfaction trends and early turnover signals.
- Historical hiring and turnover data to predict future hiring needs.
- Industry labor data, such as [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) reports, to understand market conditions.
- Candidate engagement and conversion data throughout the hiring funnel.
- Industry benchmark reports to check your progress against other companies your size or in your industry.
- Your ATS and recruiting technology, including req-level and job-level historical data that shows how similar roles have performed by location, level, and source.
- New-hire check-ins at 30, 60, and 90 days to assess onboarding effectiveness.
- Hiring manager feedback loops to surface bottlenecks and friction points.









**Bonus:** AI-powered tools can help surface patterns across these data sets faster, making it easier to identify quick wins and long-term improvements with the greatest impact.

## Metrics Worth Measuring

The truth is, not all metrics carry the same weight. And when teams try to track everything, the insights that matter most get lost in the noise.

The right recruiting metrics help teams move from activity to impact. By measuring performance across the hiring lifecycle, talent acquisition teams can clearly see what's working, where friction exists, and where to focus next.

### Start with these foundational benchmarks:

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|  <b>Cost per Hire:</b> Total cost to recruit and onboard through the first 90 days |  <b>Candidate Conversion Rate:</b> Applicants compared to job views               |
|  <b>Time to Hire:</b> Time from application to accepted offer                      |  <b>Offer Acceptance Rate:</b> Percentage of offers accepted                      |
|  <b>Time to Fill:</b> Time from job posting to onboarding                          |  <b>Candidate Experience:</b> Feedback on fairness, communication, and interviews |
|  <b>Source of Hire:</b> Where candidates originate                                 |  <b>Quality of Hire:</b> Performance and role fit over time                       |

Once your priorities are clear, focus on three to five metrics you can measure consistently. These should be easy to capture—ideally automated—and directly tied to your goals.



Employ customers reduced time to fill from **67.7 days** to **63.5 days** year over year—driving faster, more efficient hiring.

**Use this table to outline the metrics you plan to track and the targets you aim to achieve. This will help you stay focused on the metrics that matter, without being bogged down by endless priorities.**

Goal	Metrics/KPI	Baseline	Target	Review Cadence
Focus sourcing on quality	Qualified Engagement Rate	32%	45%	Monthly

## Move Your Measurement Out of Excel

Today, teams are increasingly using AI where it matters most: to make sense of recruiting data. In fact, 27% of TA teams now use AI to help synthesize recruiting benchmarks, up from 18% in 2024.

AI-assisted analytics help teams:

- Automate reporting and reduce manual work.
- Surface trends in candidate quality and funnel drop-off faster.
- Highlight metrics most closely tied to outcomes and ROI.
- Connect ATS, CRM, and sourcing data for a unified view.
- Improve forecasting and capacity planning.
- Enable faster, in-workflow decisions.

Used responsibly, AI-powered dashboards help teams align faster, communicate more clearly, and make confident decisions based on data, not guesswork.



## From Benchmarks to Momentum

Benchmarks aren't the goal. Progress is.

Industry benchmarks—like those in [Employ's 2026 Hiring Benchmarks Report](#)—give teams critical context, showing where they stand, what to prioritize, and how to set realistic, business-aligned targets. Because improving your hiring process starts with a clear picture of where you are today.

But context alone doesn't drive results.

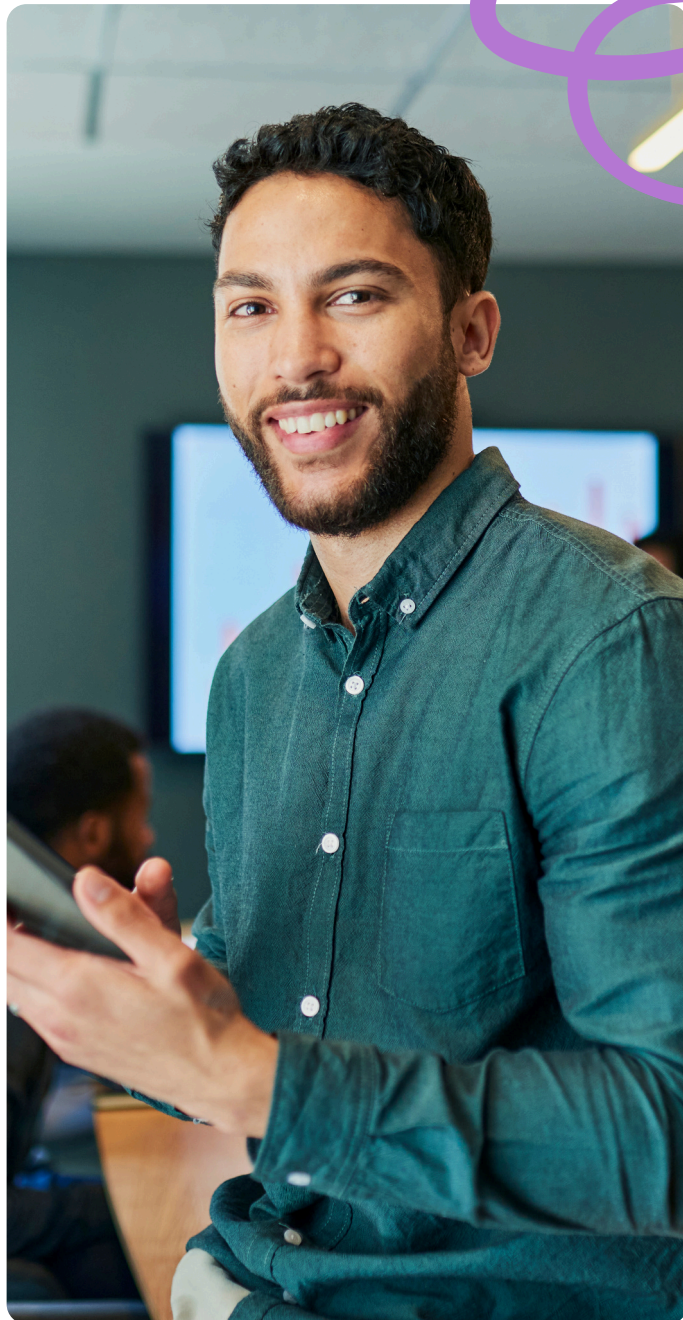
TA teams don't need more dashboards. They need a clear point of view.

Metrics only create impact when they're translated into an action plan—and into a story the business understands.

That means moving beyond reporting what happened to explaining it and creating an action plan for what comes next:

- What it means for the business.
- Why it matters right now.
- What you're doing next to improve outcomes.

When TA can connect hiring metrics to revenue growth, productivity, risk reduction, and cost efficiency, benchmarks become more than comparison points—they become momentum drivers.



The goal isn't just better data. It's better decisions, clearer narratives, and a seat at the table.