

Building Stronger Talent Networks with Targeted Audience Planning

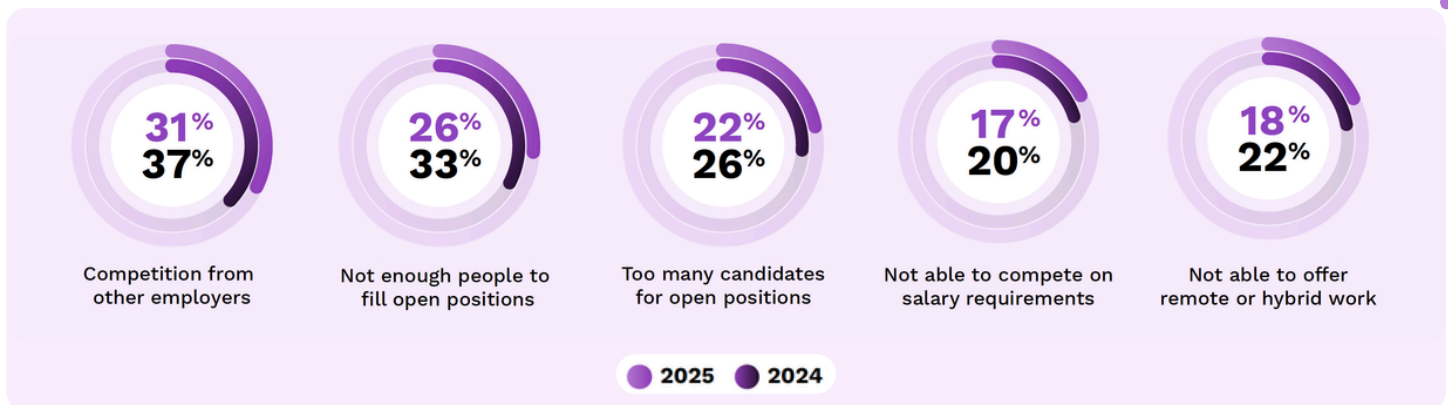


The latest [Employ Recruiter Nation Report](#) highlights a talent market defined by imbalance. While **26%** of organizations struggle with not having enough candidates, **22%** are overwhelmed by too many applicants.

This tension—scarcity on one end and overload on the other—underscores the real challenge facing today’s talent acquisition teams: not attracting more candidates, but finding the right ones.

And that’s exactly why targeted audience planning and well-defined candidate personas are more critical than ever.

Biggest Recruiting Challenges Facing Companies



Why Move to Targeted Candidate Audiences?

Talent acquisition is equal parts connection, precision, and speed. Teams need to build meaningful relationships with candidates, while efficiently moving qualified talent toward the right opportunities.

To do that, leading recruiting teams are shifting to a data-driven audience engagement—often supported by tools with embedded nurturing features. By organizing candidates into targeted audiences, recruiters can personalize outreach, maintain relationships over time, and support applicants across the entire journey—from first interaction through hire and beyond.

Below are some of the most common targeted audience types recruiting teams use today to stay aligned, intentional, and ready to hire.

- **Key Talent Audience:** Broad, high-value pools of candidates with the skills and experience aligned to a specific role type or function. These audiences are intentionally wide, spanning everything from seasonal and hourly workers to specialized professionals and executive talent. The goal is reach and readiness, keeping pipelines healthy so teams can respond quickly as hiring needs emerge.
- **Strategic Audience:** More targeted groups built around shared attributes such as background, experience, or community affiliation. These audiences are often used to support focused outreach initiatives, including efforts to broaden representation and improve equity across the hiring funnel. When grounded in data and intent, strategic audiences help teams engage talent thoughtfully—not generically.
- **Relationship Audience:** These are your candidates with a prior connection to your organization, including silver-medalist candidates, past applicants, and former employees. Recruiters should nurture any relationship audience through a consistent engagement cadence—sharing relevant roles, company updates, and feedback opportunities—to keep high-intent talent warm and ready to re-engage.

Audience vs. Segment

- **Audience:** Audiences are your primary candidate groups. They include candidates who can receive job openings, industry updates, surveys, and ongoing communications as part of a consistent engagement cadence. Audiences should closely align to the candidate personas you've built, reflecting how different candidates want to engage throughout the hiring journey.
- **Segment:** Segments are smaller, more specific subsets within your audiences. These niche groups are often defined by skills, experience level, certifications, professional affiliations, or education. Because they're highly targeted, segments are ideal for personalized outreach—like invitations to apply—and are especially valuable when sourcing for hard-to-fill roles.

Time Saving Tip

- **Advanced option:** Use a Candidate Relationship Management (CRM) solution with AI embedded directly into the ATS workflow to automate audience creation, segmentation, nurturing, and early-stage screening. Look for platforms that pair AI-powered screening companions with built-in nurture and engagement features, so candidates are continuously evaluated, organized, and re-engaged...without the manual lift.
- **Lower-cost option:** If your ATS doesn't offer a native CRM—or it's out of budget—there are lower-cost communication tools focused specifically on candidate outreach and engagement. These solutions allow you to build simple lists, send targeted campaigns, and maintain lightweight nurture cadences, helping you stay connected with talent without a full CRM investment.

Build Your Candidate Audiences

Once candidate audiences and segments are identified, it's time to start building, mapping, and targeting.

Bring the right stakeholders into the process—recruiters, hiring managers, and department leaders—to ensure each audience reflects real hiring needs, priorities, and success criteria. This collaboration helps create a shared understanding of who you're targeting and with what messaging.

Use the table below to map your targeted audience groups to their corresponding candidate personas, creating a clear, actionable foundation for more focused, effective recruitment marketing.

Targeted Audience Group	Recruiting Goal(s)	Candidate Persona(s)	Segment(s)
Remote workers in healthcare industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fill the 2 open remote billing positions• Expand male representation by 10% in remote roles	Persona A	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remote roles• Healthcare providers• Facility staff



Hit Send: Create Engaging Content that Drives Candidates

Once your candidate audiences and segments are in place, the focus shifts to activation—aka the outreach.

You'll want to focus on developing and delivering recruitment marketing content that's relevant, timely, and easy to engage with—which should be much easier now that you've defined your personas and your segments and know what to send to who.

Pro-tip: Leading recruiting teams meet candidates where they already are—prioritizing mobile-first touchpoints like text messaging and chatbots—while still leveraging proven channels such as career sites, job boards, and email.

Measure, Refine, Optimize

Every recruiting campaign tells a story—if you know where to look.

Track and analyze candidate engagement metrics the same way a marketing team measures campaign performance to see what's really driving interest, what's falling flat, and where you can optimize your targeting and outreach.

Below are some of the candidate engagement metrics recruiting teams use to guide more effective recruitment marketing.



Top-of-funnel engagement metrics

Answers the question: Are the right candidates discovering and clicking into your jobs?

- **Open rate:** Percentage of recipient who open a recruiting email.
- **Link click-through rate (CTR):** How often candidates click job links from emails, job boards, ads, or social posts.
- **Applicant conversion rate:** Percentage of visitors who start and complete an application.
- **Average applications per job:** The average number of applicants that apply to each open role.
- **Source of hire:** Where candidates are coming from (job boards, referrals, career site, social, etc.).

Mid-funnel engagement metrics

Answers the question: Are candidates engaging and progressing once they've entered the hiring process?

- **Candidate response rate:** Percentage of candidates who respond to outreach, emails, and interview requests.
- **Qualified engagement rate:** The percentage of candidates who advance from application to screening stage.
- **Screen-to-interview rate:** The percentage of screened candidates who advance to interview.

Re-engagement metrics

Answers the question: Are you successfully engaging (and re-engaging) existing talent for new roles?

- **Re-engagement rate:** Percentage of silver-medalist, past applicants, or CRM candidates who re-enter the funnel.

These insights should directly inform future campaigns, helping teams refine outreach, strengthen talent networks, and ultimately, improve quality of hire.