

The Journey to Digital World Class® Starts Here



The Hackett Digital World Class Matrix™
Talent Acquisition Software Provider Perspective
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January 2025

Executive summary | Talent acquisition

Research overview

- The Hackett Group’s research focused on 15 talent acquisition (TA) solution providers that span the SMB, mid, and enterprise markets.
- The Digital World Class Matrix™ includes vendors that provide critical capabilities to the talent acquisition function, including sourcing, candidate relationship management, recruitment marketing, interview solutions, analytics and onboarding.
- Adoption of emerging technologies (including AI) has significantly propelled performance improvements in HR organizations for recruiting outcomes and broader talent management alignment.

Talent acquisition capabilities

- Leading TA solutions are investing heavily in AI enablement across the hiring lifecycle, resulting in greater efficiency and accuracy within the HR organization.
- Product roadmaps for all vendors in the study are robust and will speed shifts in the market over the next 12 to 24 months.
- TA solutions continue to leverage the broader technology ecosystem to augment existing capabilities and provide HR organizations holistic capability enablement. Examples include integrations for digital adoption platforms, digital assistants and recruitment marketing.

Value realization

- Leading TA solutions enable marked improvement in critical recruiting metrics including time to fill (38% improvement on average) and time to hire (42% improvement on average).
- Most end users report significant improvement in cost per hire and quality of hire metrics after implementing platforms included in this study.
- Implementation experience, customer service and pace of innovation are generally viewed positively by customers.

Automation and intelligence

- Automation initiatives led to an average improvement of 38% for number of hires per FTE (recruiter) and a 58% improvement in automated staffing transactions.
- AI solutions that resonated most with current customers include job description generation, candidate matching, skills inference and analytics.
- Emerging AI solutions that will become more common over the next 12 to 24 months include AI-generated interview prompts, predictive analytics and bias detection (some vendors are offering these capabilities now in early stages).

Scope for this edition of The Hackett Digital World Class Matrix™

What is talent acquisition?

Talent acquisition encompasses the strategies and operations involved in finding and hiring skilled employees. HR teams use talent acquisition software to identify, assess and hire candidates to fill open positions while streamlining and automating the hiring process. Talent acquisition technologies include applicant tracking systems (ATS), sourcing tools, interview scheduling, onboarding tools and analytics, among others.



Top five priorities achieved from talent acquisition technology applications, according to buyers

Automation improvement (improvement of staffing transactions – e.g., candidate search, resume tracking, job posting)	63%
Time to fill (average number of days to fill a position)	61%
Time to hire (average number of days from job offer extended to offer acceptance)	61%
Applicants per opening (number of applicants per open requisition)	58%
Qualified applicant improvement (qualified applicants applying for open roles)	48%

Executive insights | Talent acquisition vendor perspectives



Key software provider market characteristics

Pricing models

- Common pricing models: One-time implementation fees, annual software license fee (SaaS), add-on fees for additional features/functionality, Per Employee Per Month (PEPM)

Geography and industry support

- Geographical presence importance varies significantly across customers based on business model. Currently, software providers are well represented in North America, EMEA and APAC.
- Industry knowledge for specialized hiring is particular advantageous for complex hiring needs (e.g., healthcare).

Hiring lifecycle coverage

- TA technology vendors provide support from sourcing through to hire, but also offer API integration with point solutions to provide a high level of customization for clients seeking capabilities that may not be native to the solution. These include digital assistants, candidate relationship management enhancements and digital adoption platforms. Reliable integration with broader HRIS* systems is essential for transferring new hire data.

Emerging technologies and advanced analytics

- Analytics capabilities are offered by all vendors included in the study, although at varying degrees of complexity. Predictive analytics to assist with turnover and talent pool management are gaining popularity for end users.
- AI applications are increasingly ubiquitous among TA vendors, with most common applications found in automation, candidate matching and job description generation. Agentic AI is slowly being introduced into the process to improve recruiter efficiency and experience.

(*HRIS: Human Resource Information System)



Software provider differentiation focus areas

User-friendly interface and functionality

- TA platforms need to be intuitive to encourage functionality adoption as the feature set continues to expand.
- Measures to reduce learning curves result in faster and greater value realization outcomes for end users.

Integration capabilities

- API integrations with point solutions and broader HCM applications are critical for holistic analytics capabilities and a simplified new hire onboarding process.

Functionality enhancements

- An even spread of enhancements across the hiring lifecycle is well received by end users. Over focus in one area leads to dissatisfaction with others, according to customers.
- Features that are resonating in the market as leading edge include:
 - Interview solutions that enhance scheduling, candidate assessment and interviewee acumen (e.g., generative AI interview prompts).
 - Predictive analytics to proactively source candidates when new or enhanced skills will be needed, maintain a strong succession-planning strategy, and prepare for potential turnover disruptions.
 - Internal mobility powered by marketplace functionality that engages the employee base to improve retention outcomes while upskilling the overall workforce.
 - Unbiased candidate matching powered by AI to speed sourcing of qualified applicants.
 - Agentic AI that can undertake multiple steps of the hiring lifecycle autonomously, such as new hire onboarding.



Service delivery model considerations

Challenges or barriers to talent acquisition process improvement

- AI adoption reticence remains in many HR divisions, mainly due to concerns about potential bias implications and accuracy.
- HR tech stack integrations can be complex and lead to data integrity/accuracy challenges.
- Pricing tiers offered by some vendors can be rigid and restrict à la carte purchase options.
- Talent intelligence initiatives can be hindered when not factoring in both internal and external candidates.
- Internal mobility functionality is highly dependent upon workforce adoption to provide a clear picture of existing skill-sets.
- Stakeholder buy-in requirements continue to expand, including personas beyond HR leadership such as CFOs, CPOs, and CIOs.
- Budget restrictions for expanding recruiting technology enablement can lead to incomplete solution sets.
- Limited recruiter awareness/adoption of all functions and features offered by TA platforms can lead to suboptimal usage.

Types of solutions deployed

- Applicant tracking system (ATS) best of breed solutions
- Recruiting modules offered as part of an end-to-end HCM platform
- Point solutions in areas such as candidate relationship management, digital assistants and talent intelligence



Solution features and improvement opportunities

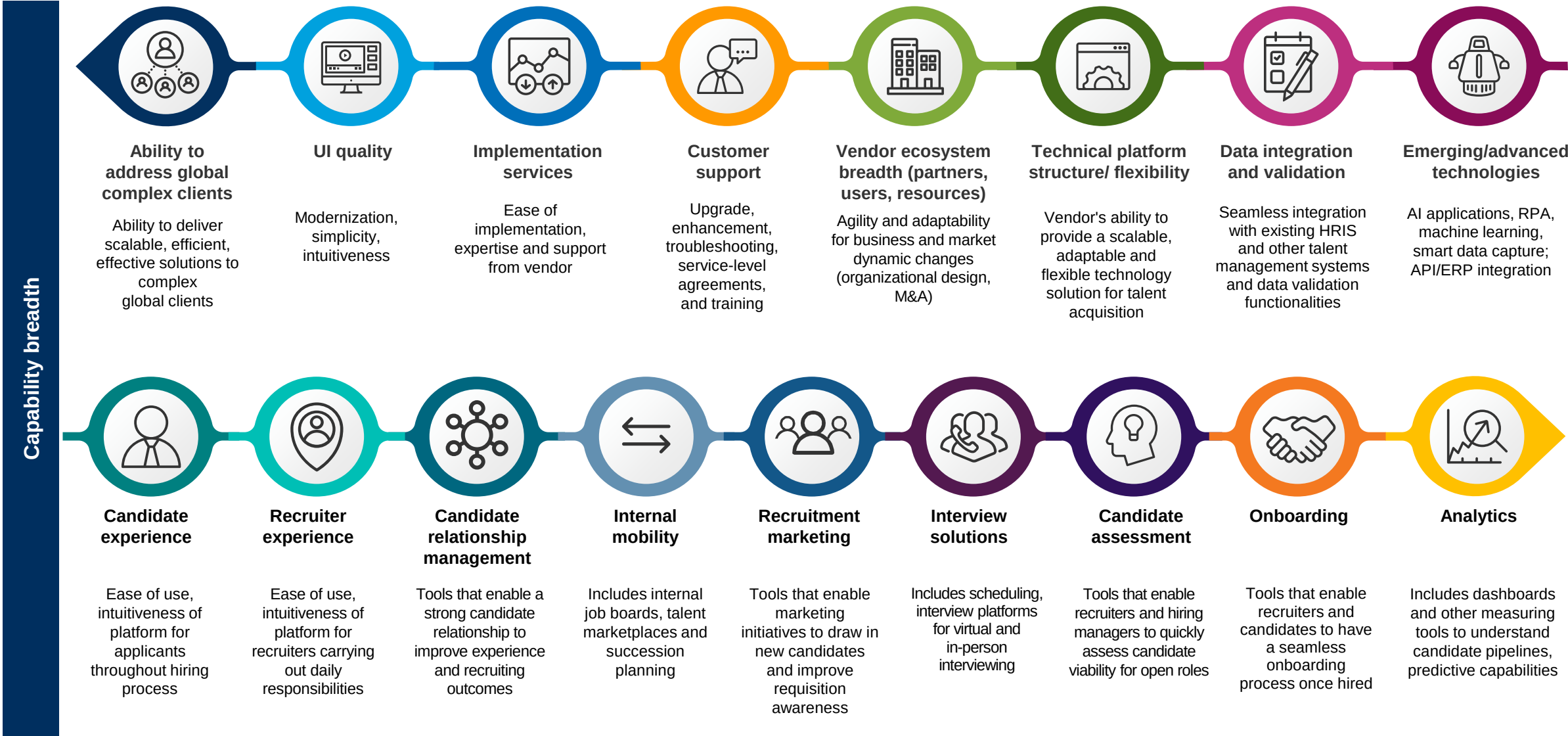
Solution features

- Talent acquisition solutions are innovating at a rapid pace to take advantage of emerging technologies such as AI in candidate relationship management, sourcing, interview solutions and recruitment marketing.
- Improved automation across the hiring lifecycle is reducing recruiter workload while speeding time to fill. This is particularly noticeable in interview scheduling and onboarding solutions.
- Increasing integration of recruiting functions with internal mobility solutions such as talent marketplaces is driving forward upskilling initiatives within organizations, improving performance and retention outcomes.
- Mobile enablement is considered table stakes for talent acquisition platforms and is heavily utilized, particularly in frontline worker scenarios.

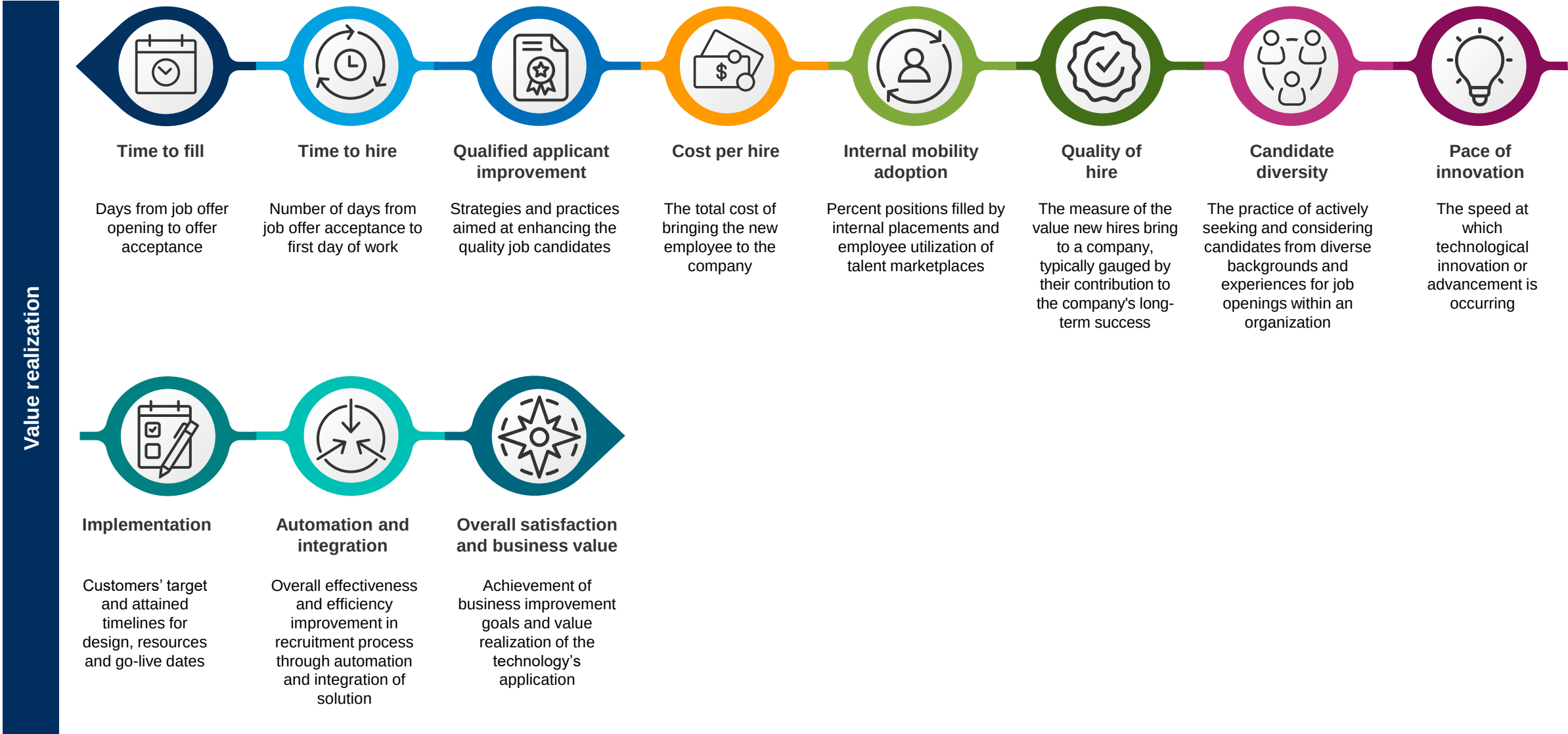
Improvement opportunities

- Customers are slow to adopt many AI-powered solutions and require proof of concept before full utilization.
- Interview solutions geared toward improving interviewer performance have room for expansion in many TA solutions.
- Predictive analytics are starting to become more ubiquitous in platforms but have room for improvement in breadth of applications.
- Customer service outcomes are mixed across vendors. A common issue is lack of in-depth knowledge of all features and functions offered in rapidly growing platforms.

Evaluation criteria used for the Talent Acquisition Digital World Class Matrix™



Evaluation criteria used for the Talent Acquisition Digital World Class Matrix™



Defining Digital World Class® performance

How to read the Hackett Digital World Class Matrix™ software provider ratings

HACKETT PRODUCT ASSESSMENT	
Ability to address globally complex clients	●
UI quality	◐
Implementation services	●
Customer support	◐
Vendor ecosystem breadth	◐
Technical platform structure/flexibility	◐
Data integration and validation	◐
Emerging technologies	◐
TALENT ACQUISITION	
Candidate experience	◐
Recruiter experience	◐
Candidate relationship management	◐
Internal mobility	●
Recruitment marketing	◐
Interview solutions	◐
Candidate assessment	◐
Onboarding	◐
Analytics	◐

●

 Leading

◐

 Advanced

◐

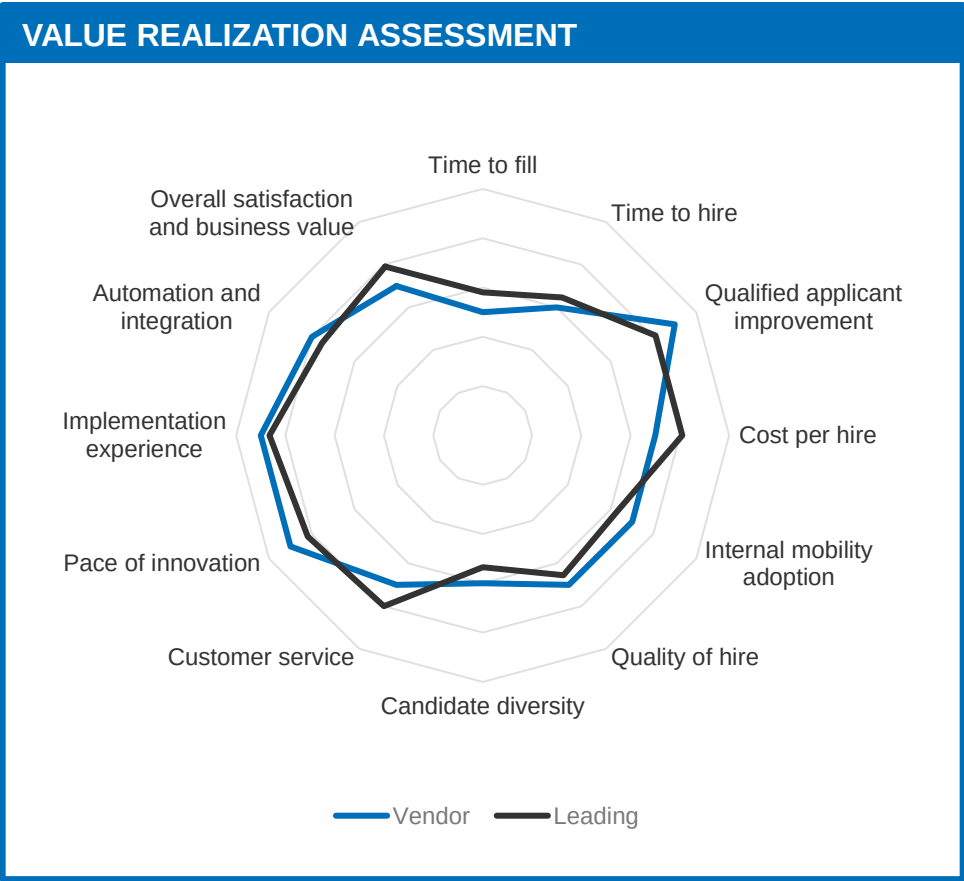
 Challenging

◐

 Emerging

 Not available or not evaluated

Capability ratings (Harvey balls) provide a scale of vendor **capacity** based upon available features and functionality.



- Value realization ratings (radial graph) provide a scale of vendor **delivery** based upon customer feedback.
- Vendor’s individual performance is measured by the blue line
 - Top quartile performance among the vendors included in the study is measured by the black line

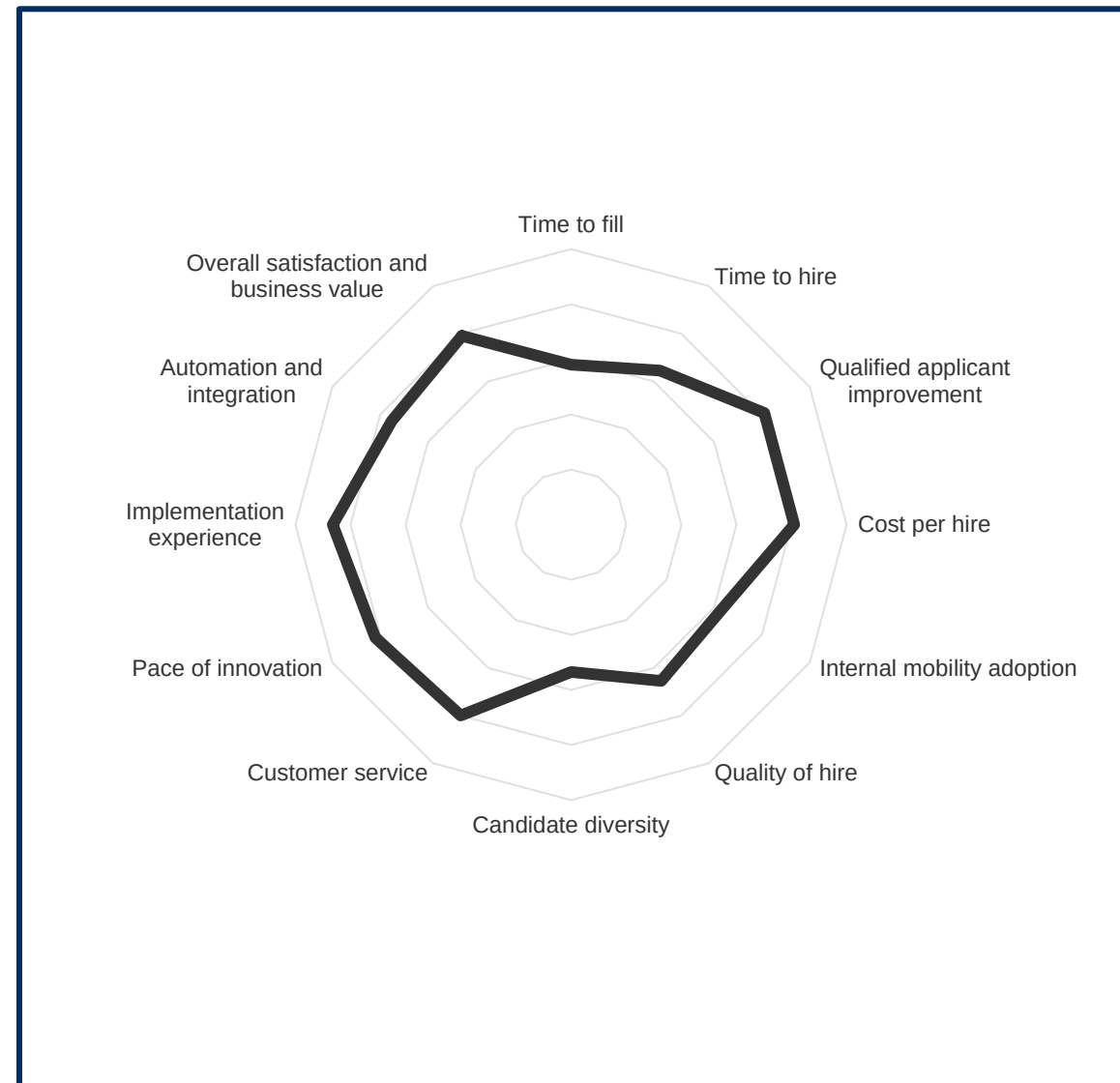
Our observations

Capability breadth measures the scope and depth of software features and functions

- Represented through Harvey ball ratings, capability ratings measure capacity of talent acquisition technology vendors to bring best-in-class solutions to critical functional areas such as candidate relationship management, interview solutions, recruitment marketing and sourcing applications.
- Capacity at times exceeds performance by end users due to several factors, including user awareness, adoption and ease of use.

Value realization measures the ability of the software to positively impact TA performance metrics

- Customers indicated that time to fill, time to hire and cost per hire are among the most critical metrics utilized by HR professionals to determine the success of TA technology solutions.
- CFOs and other finance personas respond most to cost per hire performance in TA technology assessment.
- CIOs and other IT personas respond most to implementation experience, integration and customer service performance.
- CEO and COO personas pay particular attention to overall business value when assessing technology impacts.



Source: The Hackett Group 2024 HCM Digital World Class Matrix Study

Differentiating factors to consider when selecting a talent acquisition solution

- Unified human capital management platform versus best-of-breed TA point solution.
- Breadth of capabilities and subsequent add-on needs for HR tech stack.
- Industry specialization in recruiting and platform flexibility to address them (e.g., healthcare, franchises).
- Hiring complexities for frontline and back-office requisitions.
- Alignment with regional or global requirements (implementation capabilities, support, scalability).
- Integration with existing solutions, platforms and technology (ERP, HCM, HR point solutions).
- Artificial intelligence use cases, usability, data sources and quality of search, content generation and analytics.
- Usability and intuitiveness of the solution to drive adoption, particularly in internal mobility.
- Predictive analytics capabilities for broader talent management initiatives.
- Candidate experience and retention enablement to improve company brand.
- Recruiter enablement to elevate HR function to strategic advisor.



Source: The Hackett Group 2025

Talent acquisition-focused software providers included in the Digital World Class Matrix™

The Hackett Group strongly believes that each client’s requirements are unique and advises clients to consider multiple factors when investigating or selecting a talent acquisition solution that is the best fit for their needs.

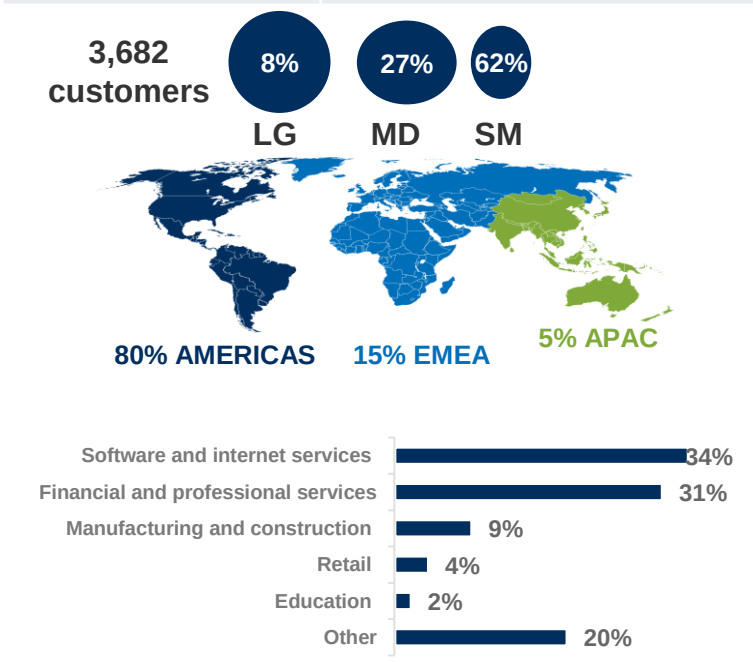
Hackett Advisory clients can request an interactive session with a Hackett advisor.

Lever Vendor Profile

COMPANY OVERVIEW

Lever is a scalable and powerful applicant tracking system combined with interactive candidate relationship management tools that enables talent teams of all sizes to find, nurture and hire the best talent easily and efficiently.

Founded:	2012
Headquarters:	Denver, CO, US
Ownership:	Private



REPRESENTATIVE CLIENTS



VISION/MISSION

Mission: “We bring together the best talent with the best companies, creating opportunities for people and business.”

Vision: “To be the category-leading talent acquisition provider.”

PRODUCT OVERVIEW

Lever recruiting software enables talent teams of all sizes to invest in a lasting talent strategy and grow company at scale. Build your employer brand, nurture candidates over time and make diverse, strategic hires with Lever’s powerful combination of ATS + CRM technology and automation.

- A powerful combination of ATS + CRM capabilities, all in one platform
- Configurable customization and automation of workflows
- Vast network of more than 400 integration partners
- Robust analytics and reporting, including DEI
- Nurture and engage candidates with a competitive employer brand

MAJOR PARTNERS



KEY SOFTWARE FEATURES

- Automation workflows:** Configurable and customizable automated workflows tailored to unique needs.
- Searchable talent database:** Create a robust database of silver medalists, engaged candidates and internal candidates to nurture and rediscover.
- Advanced sourcing and nurture:** Automated sourcing with dedicated pipeline from a variety of integrated sources, plus the ability to nurture and showcase employer brand.
- Reporting, analytics and visual insights:** Insights into TA performance in a variety of areas, through automated data capture and insightful dashboards.
- Diversity, equity and inclusion solutions:** Build a diverse employee network with a variety of sourcing tools, critical DEI data and dedicated dashboards.

HACKETT COMMENTARY

“Targeting customers that are seeking to rapidly scale their talent acquisition capacity while improving candidate sourcing, Lever offers a strong option for Employ customers in growth mode. The platform is a key enabler for Employ’s goal of traveling alongside customers in their talent acquisition maturity journey.”

HACKETT CAPABILITY PLACEMENT

- Part of the Employ brand (consisting of JazzHR, Lever and Jobvite), Lever provides talent acquisition capabilities for customers in growth mode requiring an agile approach able to scale as needed, with flexibility and extensive integration options.
- Lever’s UI is easy to navigate – pipeline management is intuitive and analytics are visually appealing and easy to filter. The search functionality and recommendation options provide a faster learning curve for recruiters.
- Career site configuration is enabled with WYSIWYG Web Builder and is intuitive and easy to manipulate. A series of OOB templates are available to get companies started.
- Workflow customizations are deep but easy to manage.
- The touchless approach for hiring managers is well received by clients, as it reduces recruiter workloads and improves hiring manager experience.
- Application processes for candidates are straightforward, and self-service interview scheduling simplifies the process (panel interview scheduling is on the roadmap for 2025).
- Lever does not provide a native onboarding capability, relying on integrations with HCM systems to facilitate this function.



HACKETT VALUE PLACEMENT

- Customers report notable improvement in qualified applicant outcomes after implementing Lever.
- Lever’s integration capabilities with other solutions in the HR tech ecosystem is reported to be easy and effective. This is particularly beneficial for customers utilizing other solutions for new hire onboarding.
- Customers are satisfied with implementation experience and customer service.
- Pace of innovation meets expectations for Lever’s target customer profile.
- Internal mobility adoption outcomes are above average.

HACKETT PRODUCT ASSESSMENT

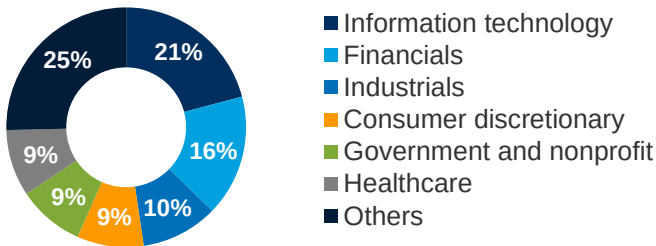
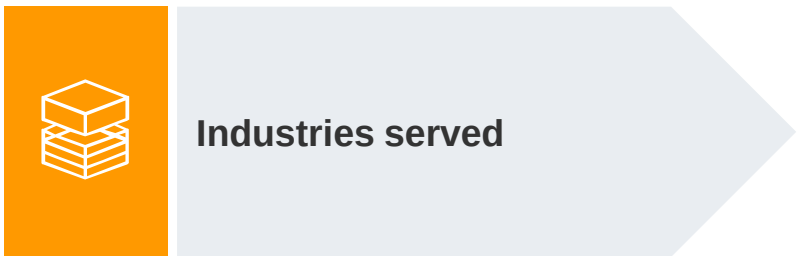
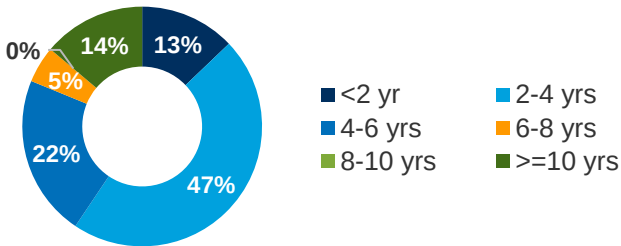
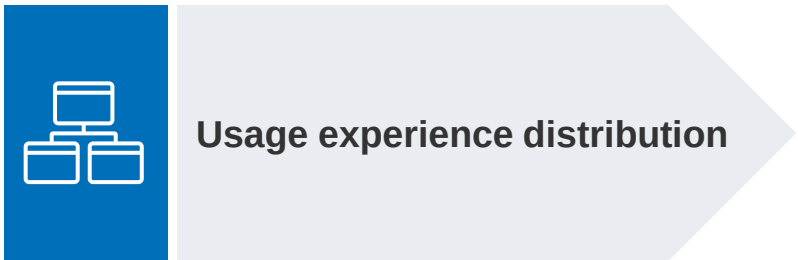
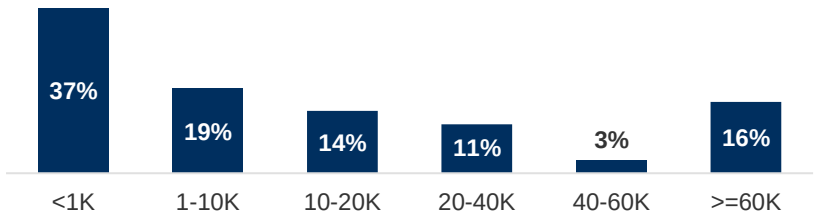
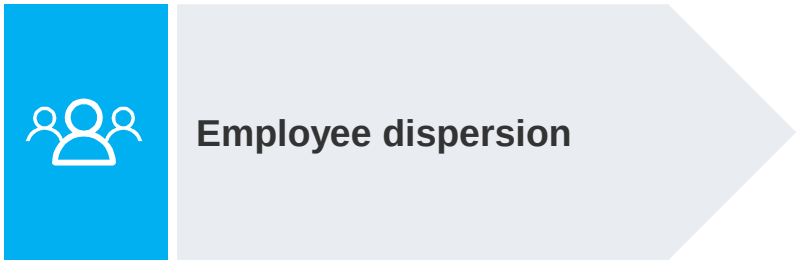
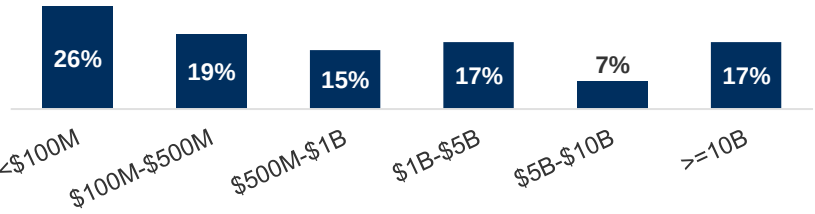
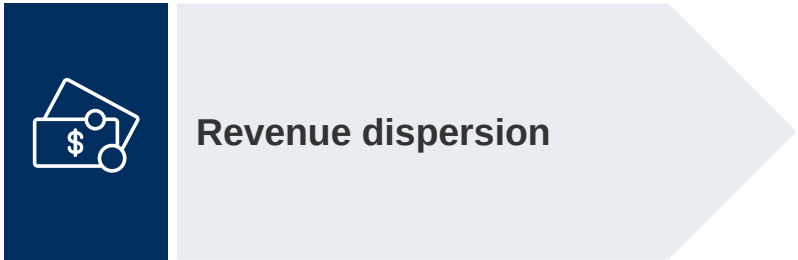
Ability to address globally complex clients	●
UI quality	●
Implementation services	●
Customer support	●
Vendor ecosystem breadth	●
Technical platform structure/flexibility	●
Data integration and validation	●
Emerging technologies	●

TALENT ACQUISITION

Candidate experience	●
Recruiter experience	●
Candidate relationship management	●
Internal mobility	●
Recruitment marketing	●
Interview solutions	●
Candidate assessment	●
Onboarding	- -
Analytics	●

The Hackett Digital World Class Matrix™ Talent Acquisition Study Findings

The Hackett Talent Acquisition Digital World Class Matrix™ customer profile overview



Data insights

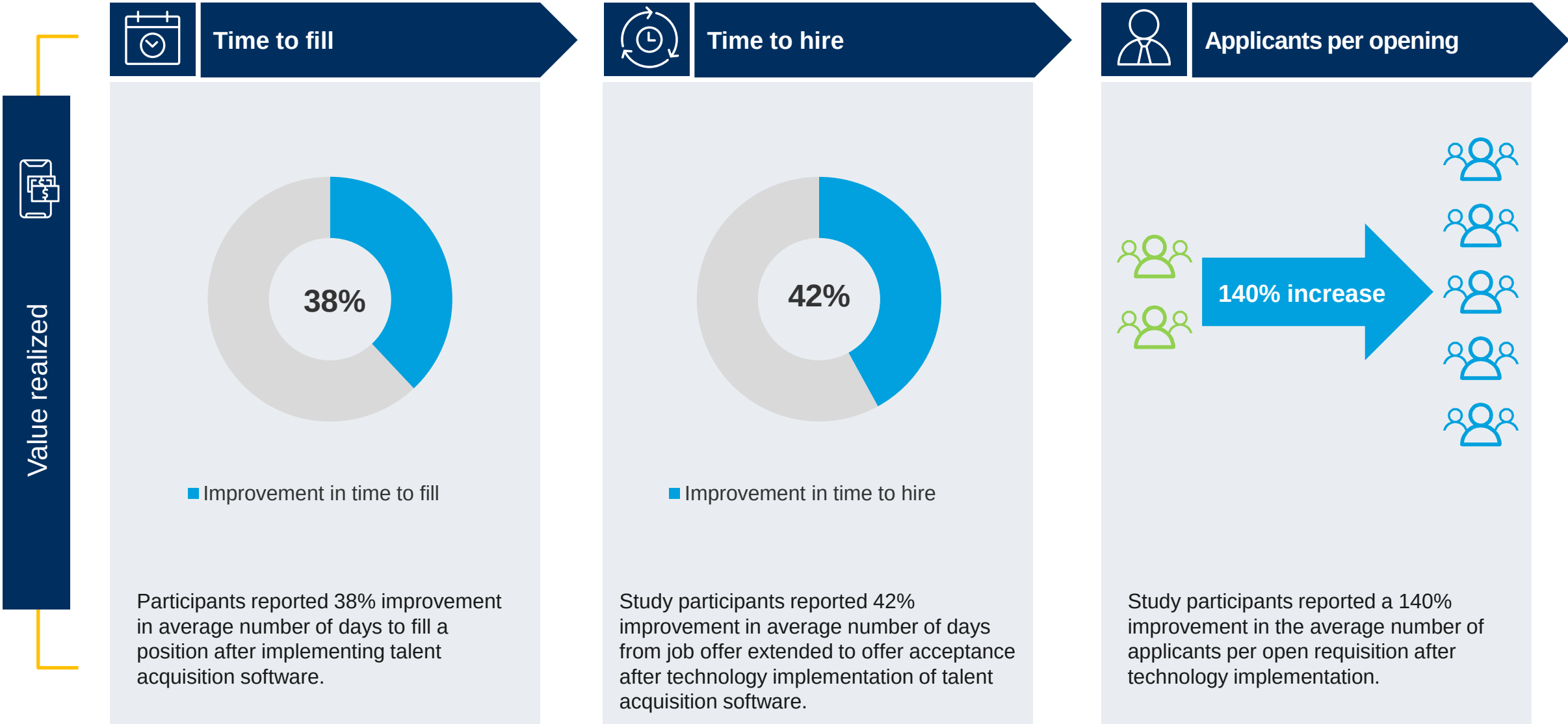
The Hackett Group Talent Acquisition Value Realization Customer Survey includes small, midsize and large organizations. The survey provides insights across different financial scales.

Customers represent diverse organization sizes, offering insights into how organizational structure affects application usage.

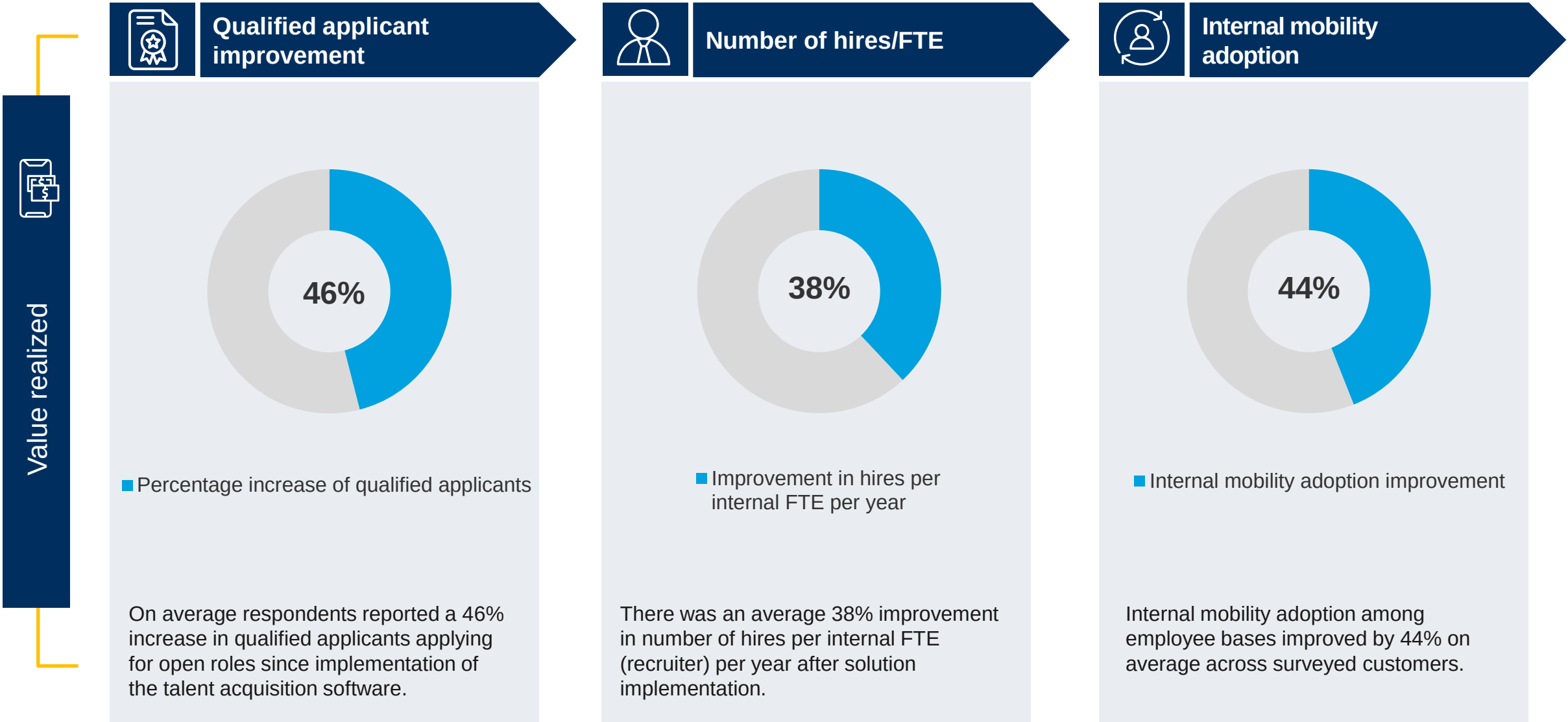
Participants span a wide range in terms of how long they have been using the application; this helps capture diverse user perspectives, from initial impressions to long-term user experience, and provides comprehensive feedback.

Participants come from various sectors, enhancing study credibility and relevance across different industries.

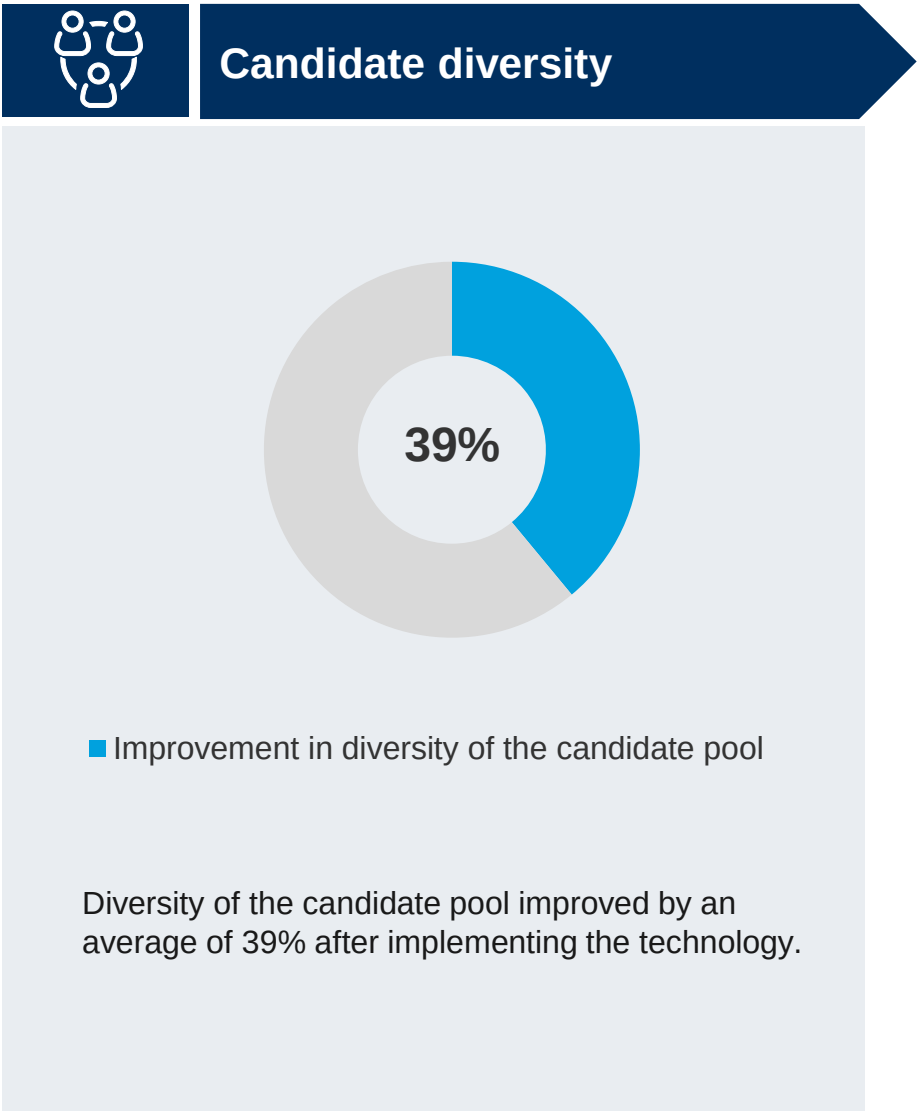
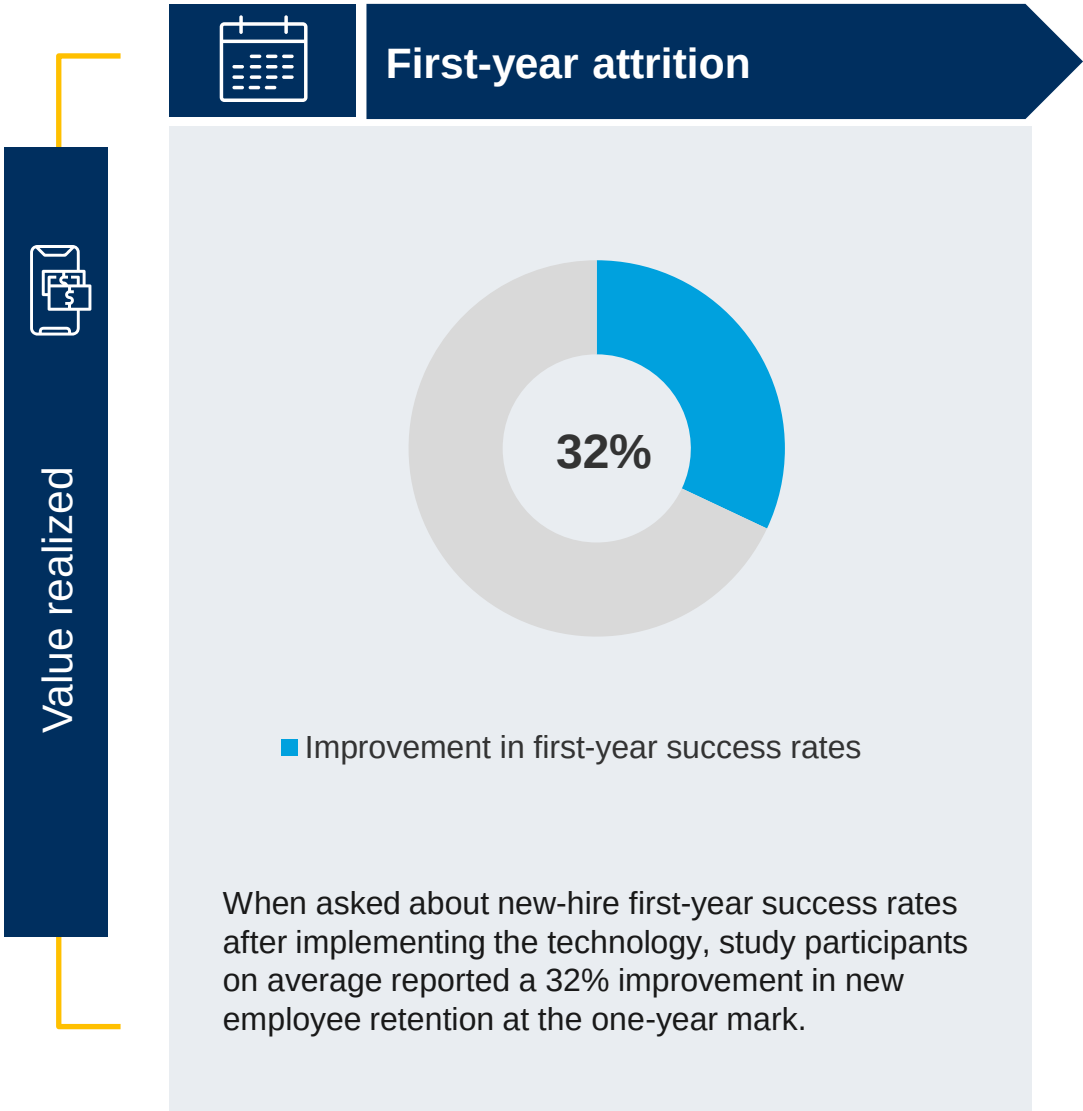
Value realized: Process improvements since implementation of technology



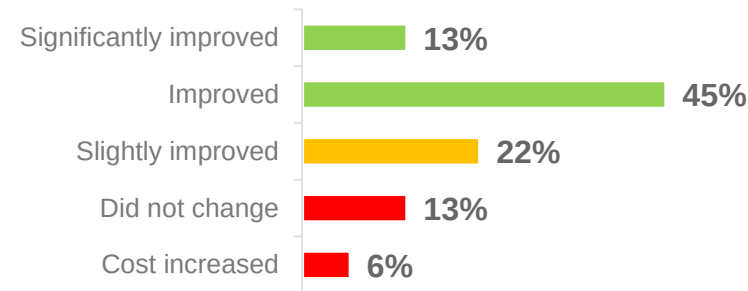
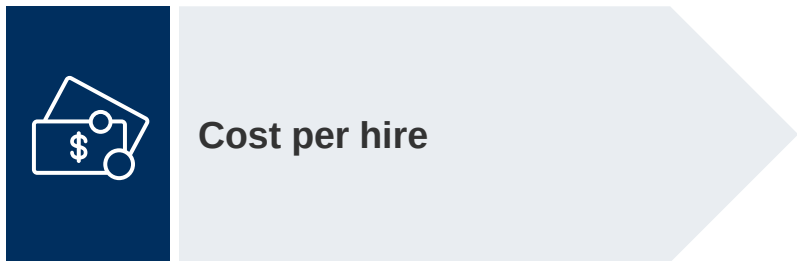
Value realized: Process improvements since implementation of technology (cont.)



Value realized: Process improvements since implementation of technology (cont.)

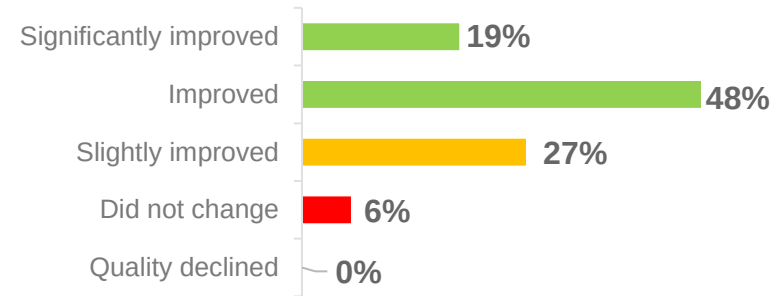
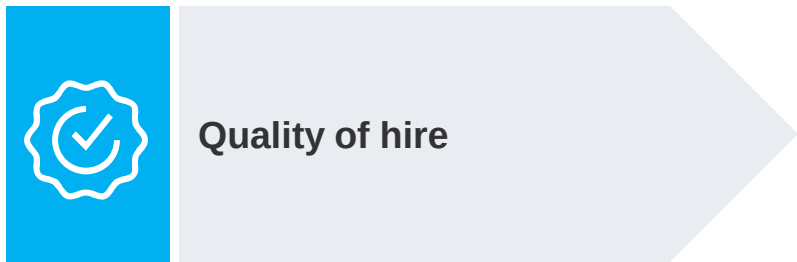


Value realized: Process improvements since implementation of technology (cont.)

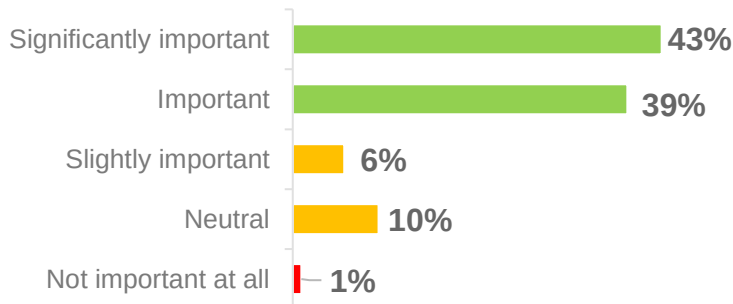
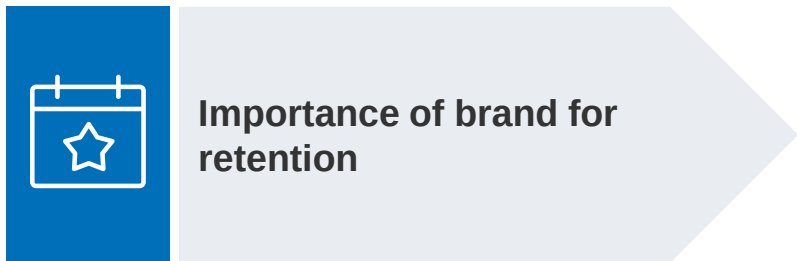


Data insights

80% of customers felt cost per hire was improved to some degree. Cost per hire was significantly improved by 13% of customers. 6% felt the cost per hire increased.

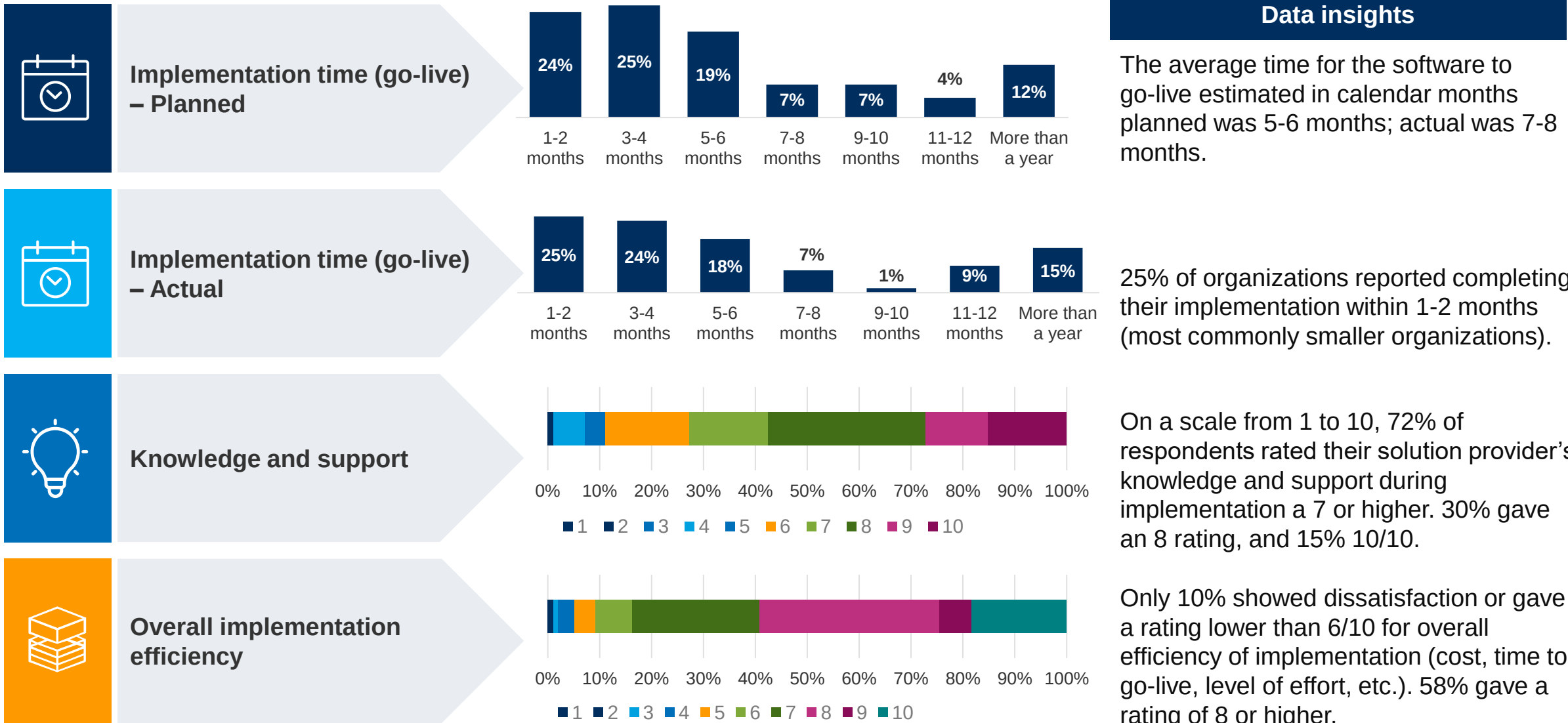


94% of customers reported an improvement in quality of hire, with 19% noting significant improvement. Quality declined for none.



Only 1% of survey participants responded that their company brand was not important at all for attracting and retaining employees; 43% felt it was significantly important.

Value realized: Implementation metrics



Data insights

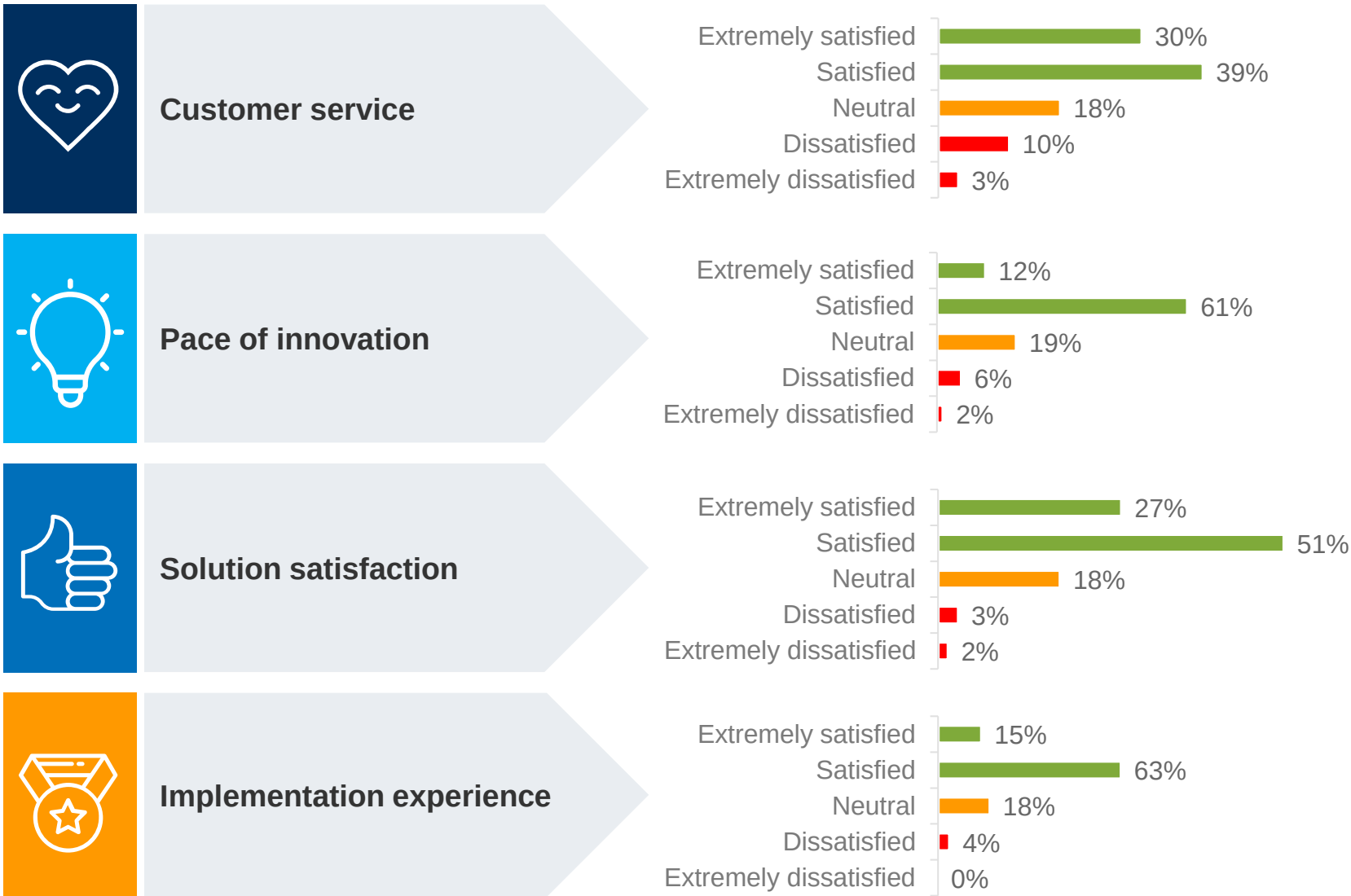
The average time for the software to go-live estimated in calendar months planned was 5-6 months; actual was 7-8 months.

25% of organizations reported completing their implementation within 1-2 months (most commonly smaller organizations).

On a scale from 1 to 10, 72% of respondents rated their solution provider's knowledge and support during implementation a 7 or higher. 30% gave an 8 rating, and 15% 10/10.

Only 10% showed dissatisfaction or gave a rating lower than 6/10 for overall efficiency of implementation (cost, time to go-live, level of effort, etc.). 58% gave a rating of 8 or higher.

Expected value: Customer satisfaction ratings on overall experience and objectives



Data insights

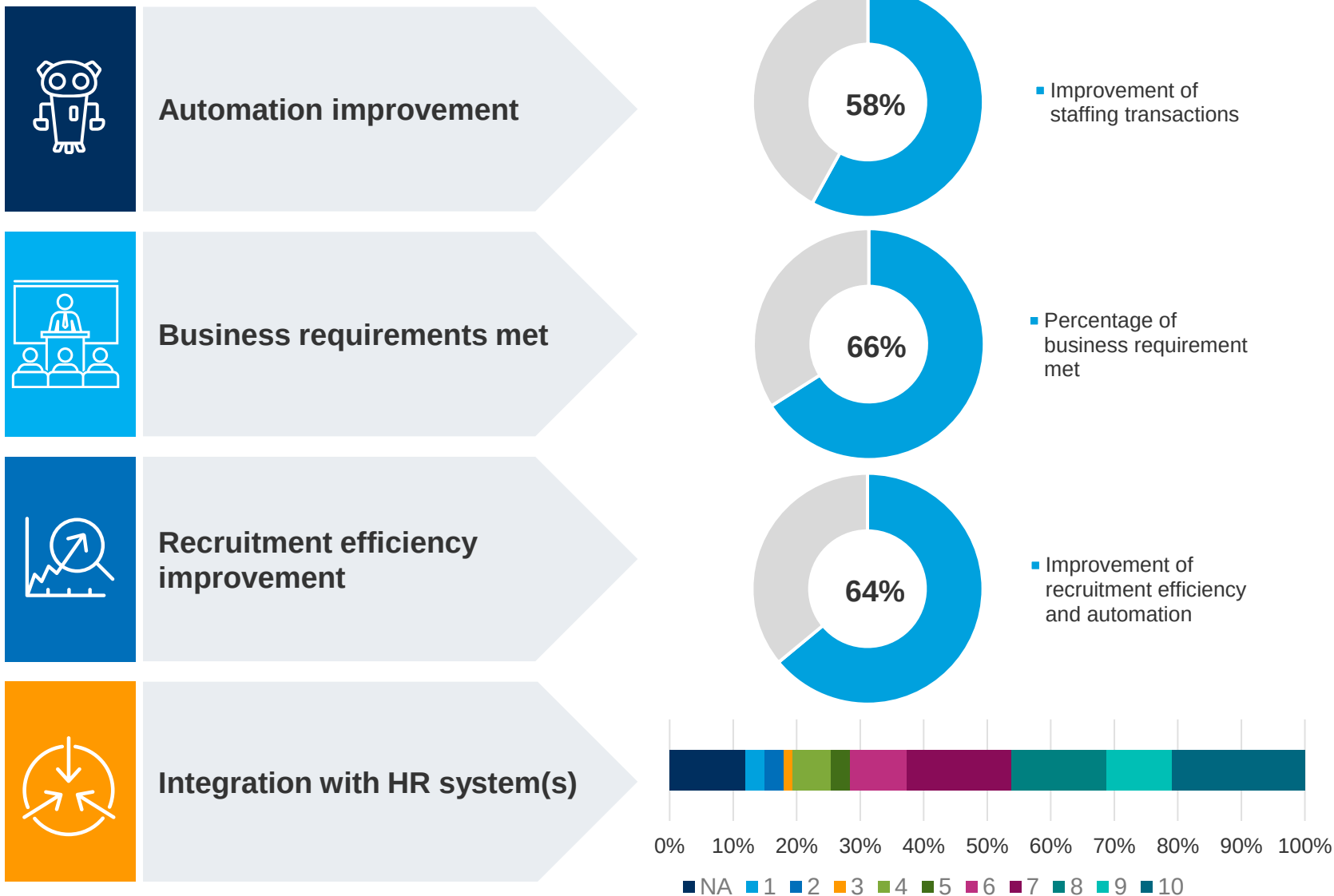
69% of respondents were either satisfied or extremely satisfied with their selected vendor's service and experience.

More than half of the survey respondents were satisfied with their solution provider's pace of innovation (core functionality updates and new features). Just 8% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction. AI innovations were most common among those respondents seeking greater functionality.

More than half of respondents were satisfied with the solution. Dissatisfaction levels were relatively low, with only 5% of respondents dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied.

78% of respondents were satisfied with their selected vendor's implementation service and experience. Only 4% of respondents were dissatisfied.

Value realized: Automation and integration metrics



Data insights

On an average there was 58% improvement of staffing transactions (e.g., candidate search, resume tracking, job-posting automation) since implementation of technology.

Participants reported on average that 66% of their company's business requirements were met by the software.

64% improvement was reported in recruitment efficiency and automation (estimated average % improvement versus the prior process).

Integration with current HR system(s) seemed very satisfactory. Around 62.7% of the respondents gave a rating of 7 or higher, and 21% gave a score of 10/10.

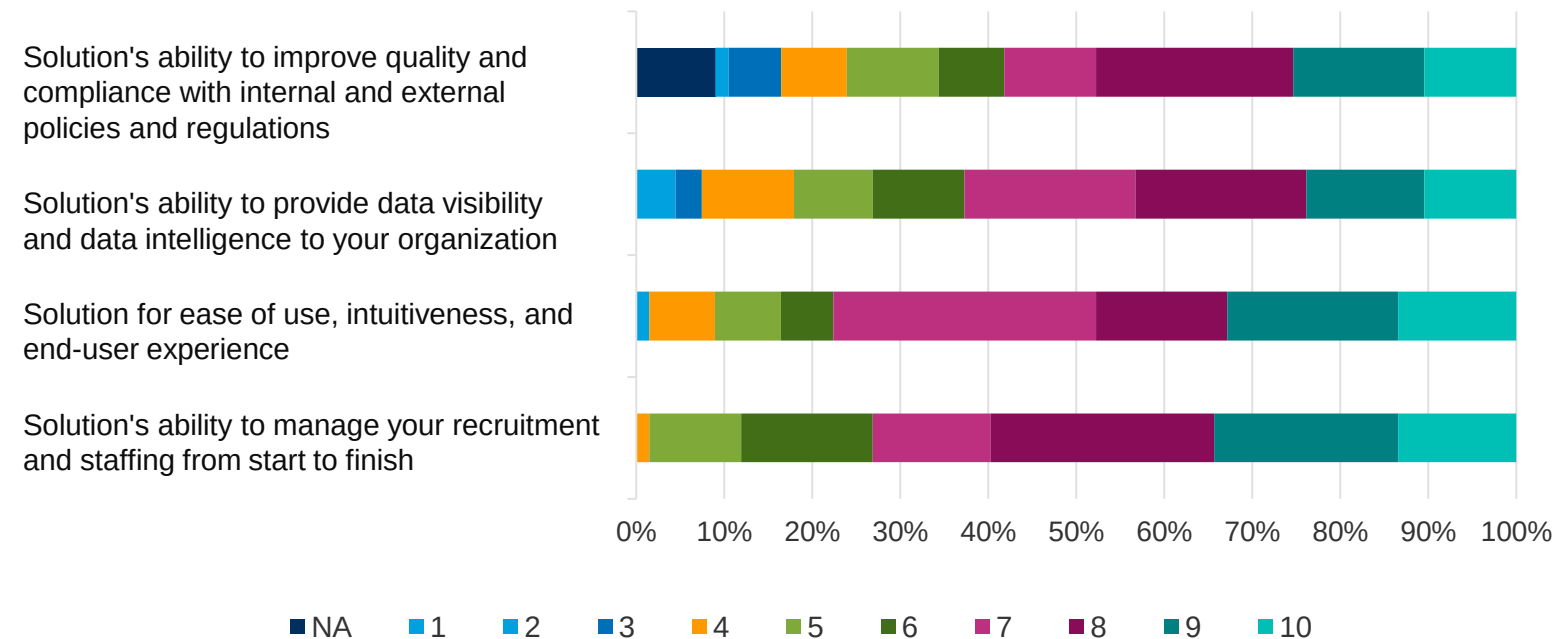
Expected value: End-user value and impact



Data insights

An average of 71% of recruiting and staffing activity is currently managed via the solution (i.e., the adoption rate across the company’s region[s] and businesses) as reported by the survey respondents.

Rating on a scale of 1-10



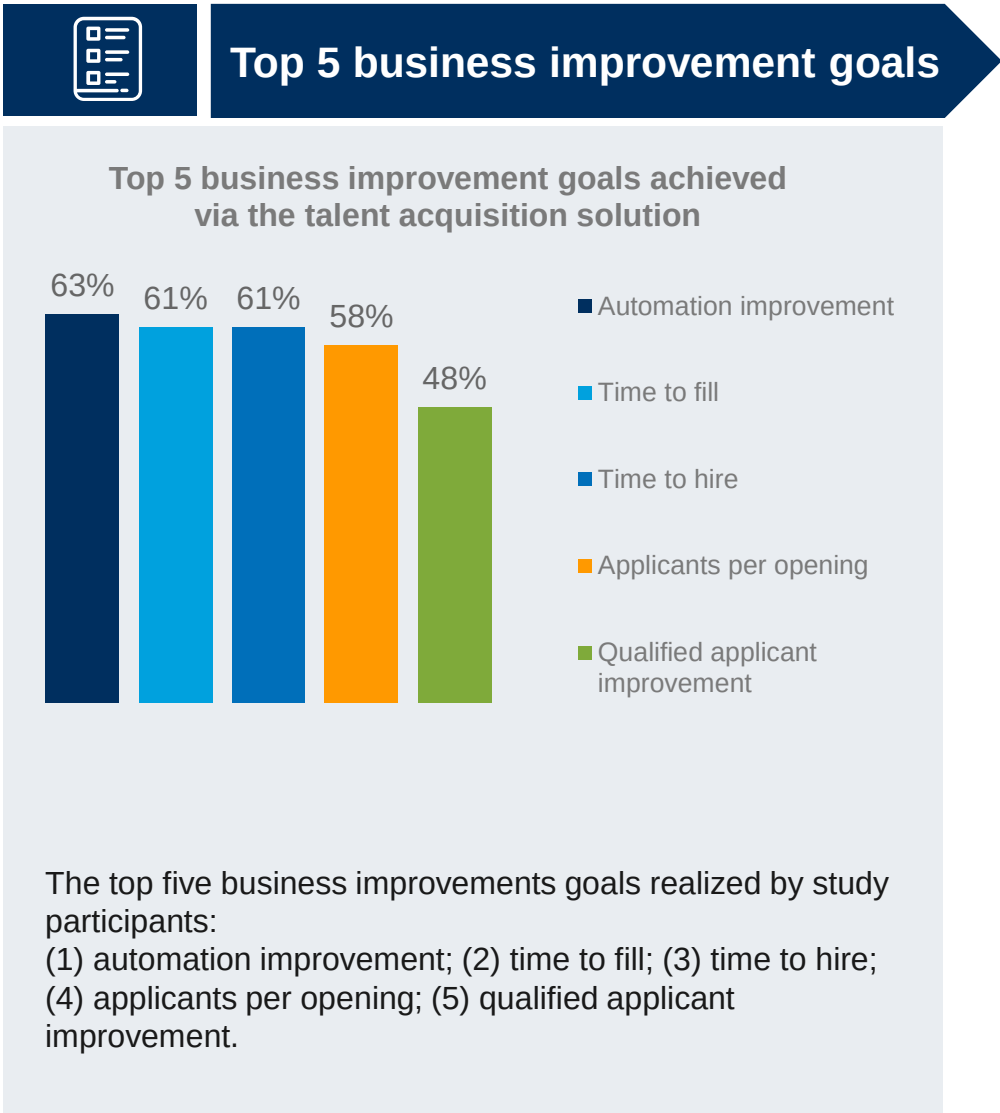
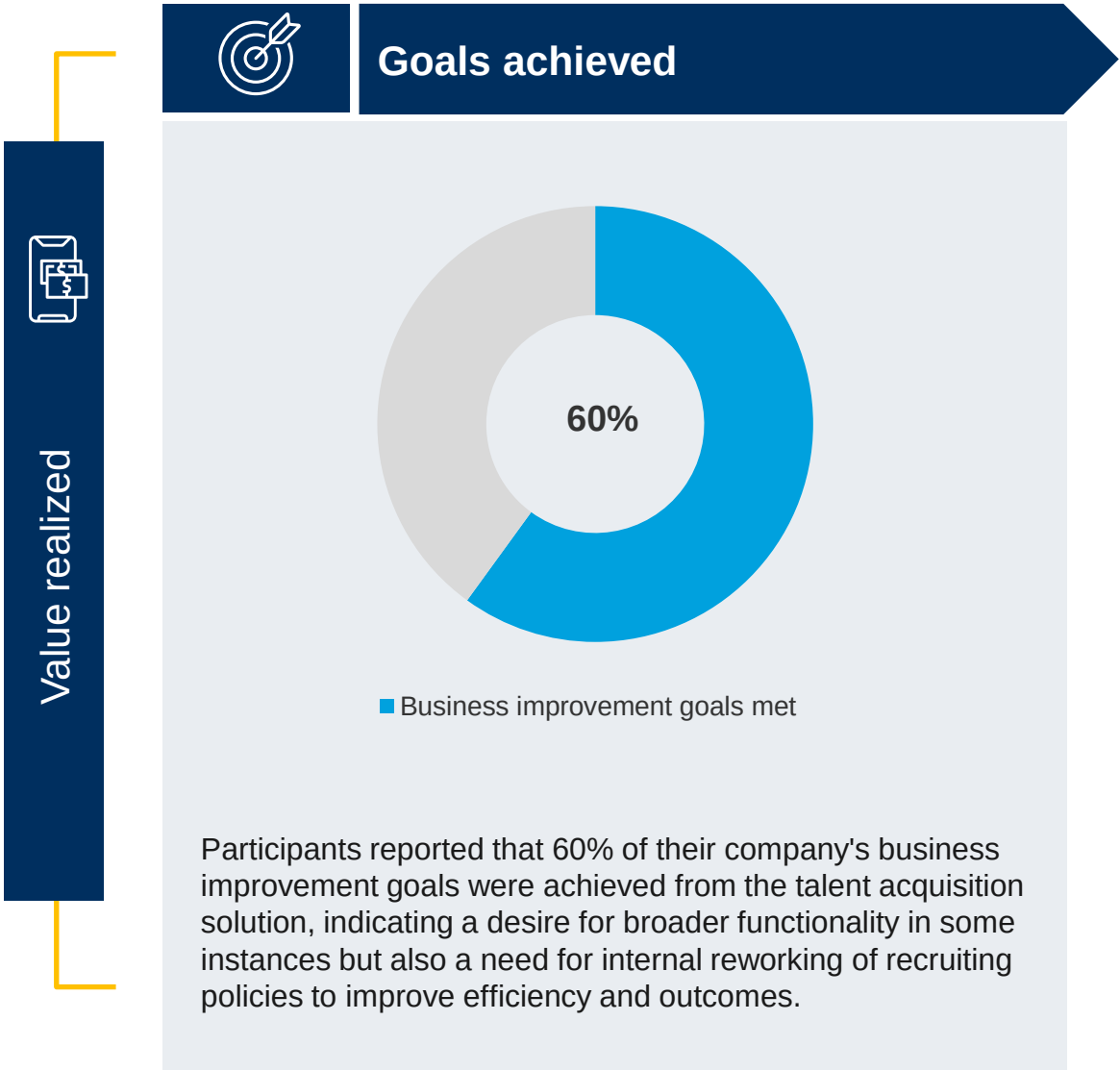
22% of participants gave a rating of 8/10 for the solution’s ability to improve quality and compliance with internal and external policies and regulations.

73% of participants gave a rating of between 6 and 10 for the solution's ability to provide data visibility and data intelligence to their organization.

30% rated the solution 7/10 for ease of use, intuitiveness and end-user experience.

25% of participants rated the solution an 8/10 for managing recruitment and staffing from start to finish. Only 1% gave a rating below 5.

Value realized: Business improvement goals



Appendix (FAQs and process definitions)

The Hackett Digital World Class Matrix™ frequently asked questions (FAQs)

How are software or service providers selected for participation?

- Providers are included if they meet the inclusion criteria for the study, which is determined by The Hackett Group analysts and subject matter experts during the initial scoping and design phase.

Are providers able to decide if they are included or excluded from the Hackett Digital World Class Matrix™?

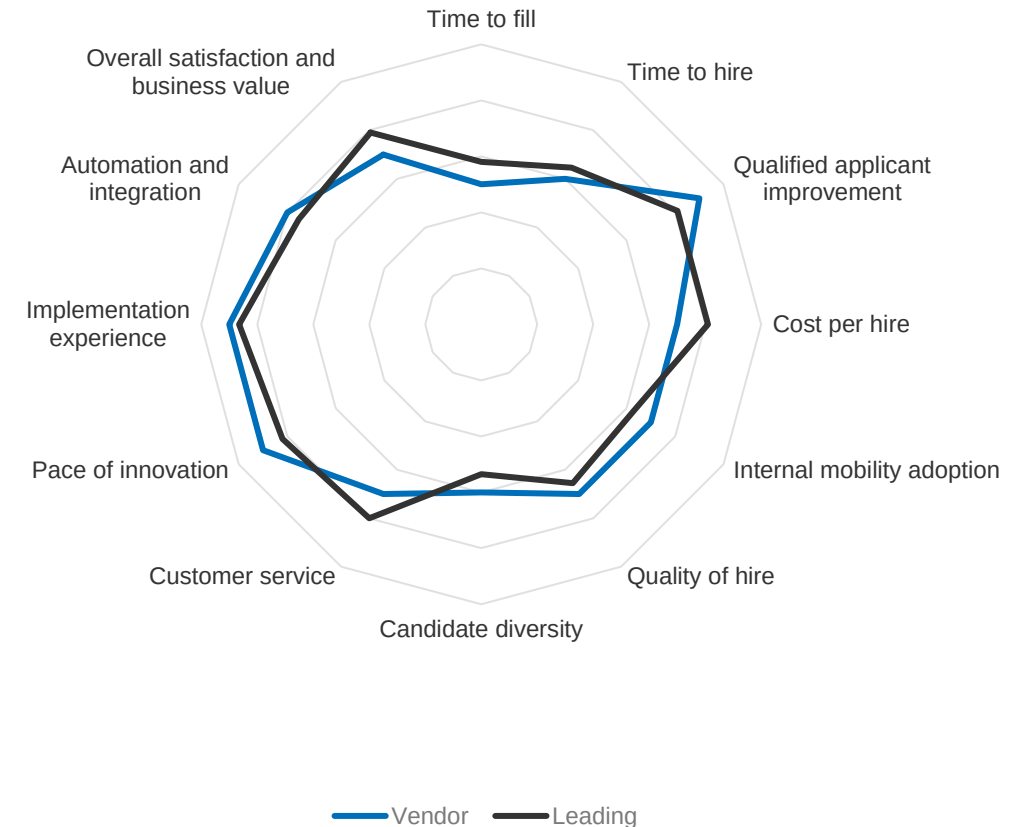
- No, providers cannot choose to be included or excluded from the Digital World Class Matrix Study. However, providers may opt not to directly participate in the process or provide information to The Hackett Group. The Hackett Group encourages participation but does not reward or penalize providers based on their level of participation.

Does The Hackett Group share individual responses from customer references, surveys, interviews or analysis?

- No, all responses from customer references, surveys, interviews, provider content and other sources of data collection are kept confidential and aggregated into the overall analysis.

How often are Hackett Digital World Class Matrix™ reports updated?

- Studies are typically refreshed between 12 to 24 months. However, a specific study's refresh is highly dependent upon the related marketplace's evolution velocity.



The Hackett Digital World Class Matrix™ FAQs (cont.)

Are there different levels of provider participation?

- Yes. Some providers have supplied all requested information, while some only provided partial information and The Hackett Group gathered the remaining information from our sources. For others, The Hackett Group gathered all the evaluation information from our sources.*

How are the software or service providers rated?

- For capability breadth, we use the following criteria:
 - Ability to address globally complex clients, UI quality, implementation services, customer support, vendor ecosystem breadth, technical platform structure/flexibility, data integration and validation, and emerging technologies
 - Candidate experience, recruiter experience, candidate relationship management, internal mobility, recruitment marketing, interview solutions, candidate assessment, onboarding, and analytics
- For value realization, we use the following criteria:

– Time to fill	– Candidate diversity
– Time to hire	– Customer Service
– Qualified applicant improvement	– Pace of Innovation
– Cost per hire	– Implementation
– Internal mobility adoption	– Automation and Integration
– Quality of hire	– Overall Satisfaction and Business Value

How does The Hackett Group build market intelligence reports?

- For each provider participating in a particular study, we gather the following information:**
 - Provider buyer survey
 - Provider strategy session
 - Customer surveys and/or interviews
- Our client survey collects data from providers' clients about:
 - Performance relevant to the offering category.
 - Experience through related questions on customer satisfaction, value, etc.
- Using this collected information and applied knowledge from internal and external subject matter experts, we compare aggregated client survey responses against our benchmarking data to measure performance relative to each other and to that of Digital World Class® organizations.

Why does Hackett not provide a comparative grid in this report?

- All organizations' needs are different and in recognition of that diversity, Hackett offers customized Matrix grids to buy-side members based upon identified priorities in consultation with Hackett advisors.

*Ratings for the following software providers exclude their direct input and are based on The Hackett Group's applied knowledge, public disclosures and The Hackett Group's interview and/or survey responses from software provider buyers: ADP, Dayforce, Greenhouse, Oracle, SAP SuccessFactors, SmartRecruiters, Workable, and Zoho.

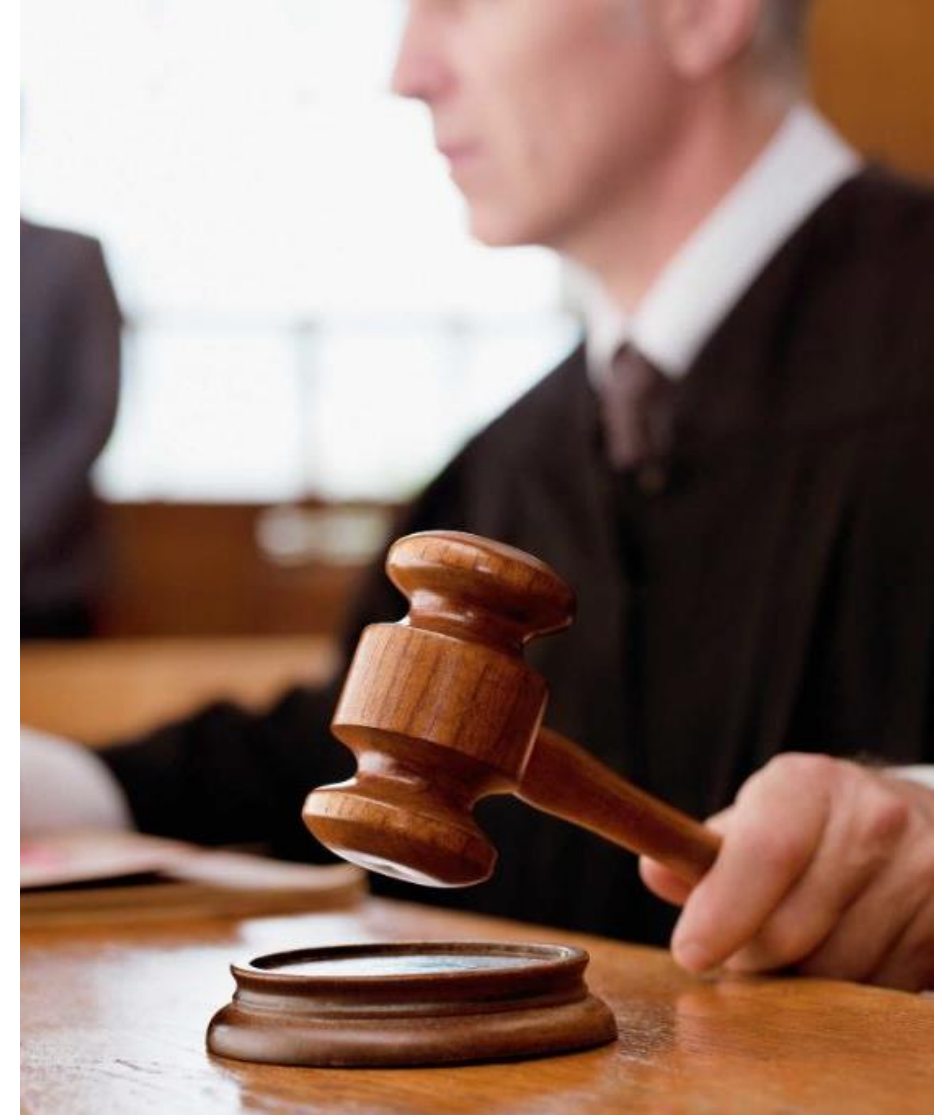
**Nonparticipating software providers have not provided any direct input. Hybrid software providers have provided direct input on RFI or capabilities only. Our analysis is based on The Hackett Group's applied knowledge, public disclosures and The Hackett Group's interview and/or survey responses from software provider buyers.

Important legal notice

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