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Using Prescreening to Refine Your Applicant Pool

Strategies and Tactics for Asking Better Prescreening Questions

KNOW the
CONSEQUENCES

If you have a good candidate sourcing strategy in place, you know that you'll likely receive a bounty of applicants. You may even have the fortunate problem of receiving too many applicants. In either case, it's often impossible to properly cull through all of the resumes, cover letters, and applications in due time (even with the help of automated solutions like an ATS).

So you may take shortcuts—giving each applicant a cursory glance.
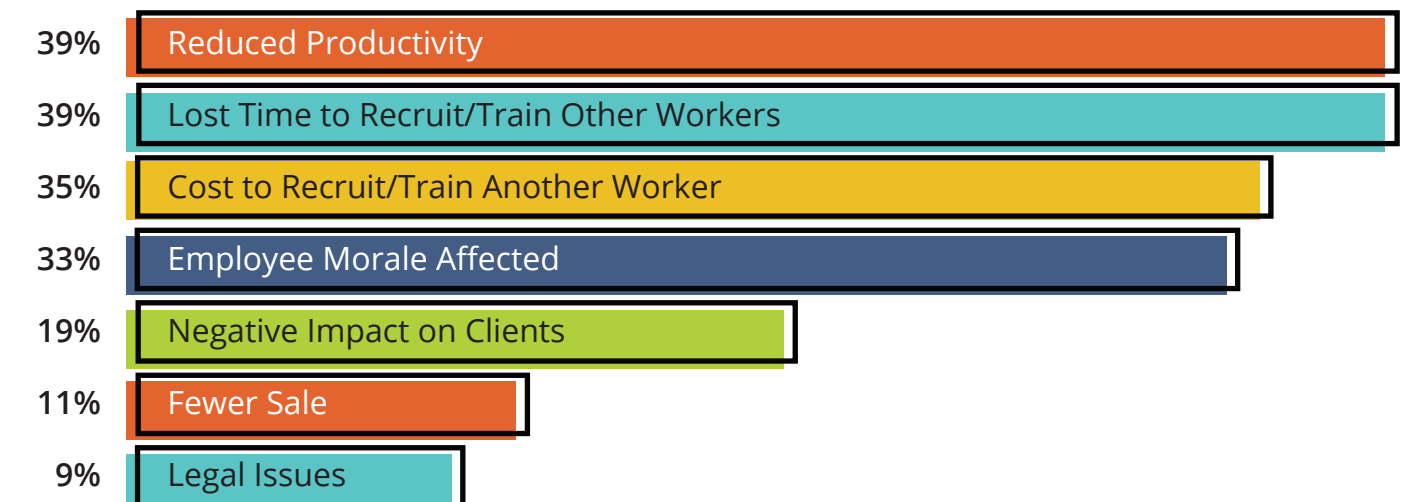
"It's widely documented that recruiters spend less than

SIX SECONDS

looking at each applicant resume![1]"

The result is that too many qualified candidates slip through the cracks, and you and your team will also end up expending valuable time interviewing and vetting candidates who aren't fits—from culture, to experience, to skill sets.

It's not just time that's sacrificed when you have too many applicants and too few hours to address their applications.

40% ...of the time, bad hires are the result of recruiters and hiring managers rushing to fill a position.

41% ...of companies indicate a bad hire cost them at least $25,000.

25% ...of companies reveal a bad hire cost them $50,000.

Impact of a Bad Hire According to Employers[2]

%	
39%	Reduced Productivity
39%	Lost Time to Recruit/Train Other Workers
35%	Cost to Recruit/Train Another Worker
33%	Employee Morale Affected
19%	Negative Impact on Clients
11%	Fewer Sale
9%	Legal Issues

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SAVE TIME & Weed Out Poor Candidates with PRESCREENING

Sourcing, vetting, and hiring candidates are time-consuming and often tedious processes. One study found it takes nearly 40 hours (one full work week!) to fill one position. Here's the breakdown in time:[3]

AVERAGE TIME IT TAKES TO FILL AN OPEN JOB

Posting to Job Boards: **1.5** /hours per job board
(normally jobs are posted to several)

Reviewing and Prescreening Applicants: **27.5** /hours per job posting

Prepping for Interviews: **1.5** /hours

Wrapping Up and Hiring: **7.5** /hours
(final reviews, testing, reference checks, etc.)

Total: **38** /hours

The good news is that with the right prescreening questions, you can slash the amount of staff time required to fill each position by 30 to 50 percent.[4]

# of Monthly Job Postings	Staff Time Expenditure w/o Prescreening	Staff Time Savings w/ Prescreening[2]	Productivity Gains[6]
3 or Less	Up to 120 Hours	As Much as 60 Hours	$3,600
3 to 6	Up to 240 Hours	As Much as 120 Hours	$7,200
6 to 9	Up to 360 Hours	As Much as 180 Hours	$10,800
9 to 12	Up to 480 Hours	As Much as 240 Hours	$14,400

## Prescreening Also Helps Weed Out Unqualified Applicants

50 percent of applicants are unqualified for the job postings to which they respond. Why is this the case? One reason is that the average jobseeker spends 10 minutes looking at a job posting, but only 10 percent of that time is spent assessing whether they are a fit based on the qualifications, roles, and responsibilities listed. Instead, most of the time a jobseeker spends looking at a job posting is on the title, compensation, and location.

Prescreening can quickly and easily help you filter out these poor fit candidates.

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To Prescreen or NOT to PRESCREEN

Prescreening is something that can easily be built into online application processes. It can also save valuable staff time, whittle a pile of applications down to a manageable list, and filter-in only the candidates who are most qualified and best fit for the job opening.

But prescreening isn't for every job posting. Use the checklist on the right to determine if prescreening is right for you.
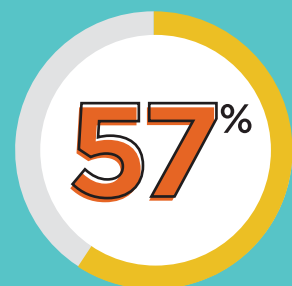
57% ...of companies indicate they use some form of online prescreening tools...
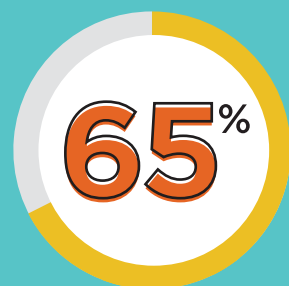
but only... **65%** ...of those feel these add value to the candidate-sourcing process.[8]

Prescreening Questions Checklist

☐ How many applicants do you expect to receive? If you anticipate more than 30 to 40, then prescreening questions can help you pare the list down.

☐ Is there a particular qualification or requirement that is a deal breaker (e.g., certification, experience with a software program, etc.)? If so, then prescreening "knock-out" questions will allow you to eliminate applicants who lack that particular qualification or requirement.

☐ If travel is required (e.g., sales position), prescreening applicants based on their ability to travel will eliminate those who cannot do so.

☐ If you're recruiting workers who need to work on specific shifts (e.g., weekends, specific hours such as day shift, morning shift, or evening shift), then questions about worker availability will help pinpoint applicants who are unable to meet the work schedule.

☐ For positions where additional testing and assessments are involved (e.g., personality tests, work-related assessments such as writing, programming, etc.), prescreening can "weed out" lukewarm applications who either don't complete the application or indicate their unwillingness or inability to complete these additional tests and assessments.

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WRITE **WINNING** Prescreening Questions

There are several things that you can do to write and leverage effective prescreening questions.

To start, you need to strategize your approach. That means identifying the criteria key to the candidate's success and making sure those pieces are reflected in prescreening questions, tying a scoring process to questions that aren't deal-breakers, and creating a library where you can store your questions so you can reuse them at a later date.

Then it's all about execution. Use our great eight (the tips on the right) to make sure that you're creating the kind of prescreening questions that can help your hiring process – not hurt it.

RESEARCH FINDS THAT APPLICANTS ARE TYPICALLY WILLING TO SPEND BETWEEN 5 AND 30 MINUTES OF TIME COMPLETING PRESCREENING QUESTIONS IF THEY'RE RELEVANT TO THE POSITION.

Creating Mighty Prescreening Questions

1. *Remove unrevealing questions.* Don't ask questions where a vast majority of candidates will answer them the same way.

2. *Stay away from "nice-to-have" qualifications*. Limit prescreening questions to the specific experiences and requirements that are vital to the job.

3. *Keep the questions job related.* There needs to be a direct link between prescreening questions and job requirements, particularly if your intent is to eliminate applicants from the candidate pool. For example, if you elect to include a question about a particular certification or credential, then that needs to be a requisite for the job.

4. *Be specific.* The more open ended a question, the more likely an applicant will "stretch the truth" to remain in consideration. For example, if you want or need someone who has built spreadsheets that use pivot tables, don't ask if they have Excel experience. Rather, ask them how many years of experience they have building pivot tables in Excel.

5. *One size doesn't fit all*. The number and time required to complete prescreening questions varies from one job posting to another. For example, a software engineering position requiring security clearance should have more prescreening questions than a job posting for a truck driver.

6. *Keep them legal*. Prescreening questions need to comply with EEOC regulations, other federal regulations, as well as state and city ordinances.

7. *Avoid questions that are off limits or those that could be construed as discriminatory* (see "Prohibited Employment Policies/Practices"). These can damage your employer brand and expose you to legal penalties and/or lawsuits.

8. *Make sure you're consistent in applying prescreening questions*. Every applicant for a given position needs to be asked the same prescreening questions. Failing to do so reduces the effectiveness of your prescreening process and causes potential legal problems.

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MightyRecruiter Makes PRESCREENING**EASY**

MightyRecruiter is the whip-smart, lightning-quick, affordable hiring solution designed to help businesses—big and small—hire right, hire fast, and hire at a price that makes sense. Among its many capabilities is the ability to include prescreening questions in the job application form. Some of its other mighty features include:

- ☐ Publication of job descriptions to your career site and social channels in a single click

- ☐ Streamlined job posting to multiple job boards with a single click

- ☐ Premier placement of job opportunities on the #1 resume builder site in America

- ☐ Access to a massive database of 10+ million resumes

- ☐ Intuitive, comprehensive dashboards and reporting tools

- ☐ Automated employee referral technology that turns your workers into recruiters in seconds

- ☐ Anytime, anywhere access for anyone in your organization using any device without any log-in requirement

MightyRecruiter's job promotion experts are also at your disposal. They'll help you optimize your job board spend and identify best sites for your postings (and can even post on your behalf). It's the human touch that makes a difference.

<div style="background:orange">

Start Your Free Trial Today

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[1] "Keeping an Eye on Recruiter Behavior: New Case Study Clarifies Recruiter Decision-Making," TheLadders, 2012.

[2] "Nearly Seven in Ten Businesses Affected by a Bad Hire in the Past Year," CareerBuilder Survey, December 12, 2012.

[3] "First in HR: Know Your Numbers in Hiring," Recruiterbox, accessed June 10, 2016.

[4] Faith Bliga, "Prescreening Job Applicants," ApplicantStack Blog, May 31, 2011.

[5] Assumes a 50 percent reduction in staff time.

[6] Assumes a $60-per-hour salary and benefits.

[7] Dr. John Sullivan, "Why You Can't Get a Job … Recruiting Explained by the Numbers," ERE Media, May 20, 2013.

[8] Charles A. Hander, "Getting the Most from Online Pre-Screening Questions: Tips for Strategy and Process," CareerBuilder, accessed June 10, 2016.

[9] Shoa Appelman, "5 Pre-Employment Test Trends You Need to Know About," ERE Media, January 29, 2015.

[10] Hander, "Getting the Most from Online Pre-Screening Questions."

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