

Impact of AI-Driven Talent Acquisition on Recruitment Cost Efficiency and Quality of Hire

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Citation: Jain, A. & Yadav, N. (2026). *Impact of AI-Driven Talent Acquisition on Recruitment Cost Efficiency and Quality of Hire*. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Commerce, Management & Social Science*, 09(02(II)), 258–266. [https://doi.org/10.62823/IJARCMSS/9.2\(II\).9107](https://doi.org/10.62823/IJARCMSS/9.2(II).9107)

ABSTRACT

Artificial intelligence (AI) has found its way into talent acquisition, where it is used in automating sourcing, parsing resumes, matching candidates, using chatbots, analysing assessment scores, scheduling interviews and predictive decision making. While these technologies hold the potential of reducing recruitment expenses and enhancing quality of hire, there are various conditions necessary for their effectiveness: Data validity, process integration, Recruiter oversight, Ethical governance and Post hire measurement. This paper explores how AI is influencing two critical indicators for successful recruitment: recruitment cost efficiency and quality of hire. The paper then uses a conceptual literature synthesis to create an integrated framework that links AI capabilities to cost drivers, decision quality, candidate experience and long term employee outcomes. The analysis suggests that AI can help decrease administrative workload, time-to-fill, enhance pipeline conversion, and assist in skillsbased matching. But cost savings are likely to be exaggerated if implementation, integration, audit, vendor and compliance costs are not considered. Likewise, quality of hire does not occur automatically, it's a process that involves having job-relevant features validated, regular human review, bias tracking, and feedback through post-hire performance and retention data. The paper presents a measurement model, risk-control matrix, and recommendations for implementation for organizations aiming to leverage AI in recruitment while ensuring fairness, transparency, and strategic alignment.

Keywords: AI Recruitment, Algorithmic Hiring, Talent Acquisition, Cost per Hire, Quality of Hire, Human Resource Analytics, Recruitment Efficiency, Responsible AI.

Introduction

The role of talent acquisition has shifted from a mostly relational, administrative approach to a more data-driven, business process. Nowadays, organisations receive large numbers of digital applications, struggle to find the skills they need, and have limited budgets for recruitment and need to make quicker hiring decisions. AI-powered tools have thus grown in appeal to automate repetitive tasks, match candidates with job opportunities, customize outreach, rank applicants, schedule interviews, and provide insights to support the decision making process [5]. According to LinkedIn's recruiting research, quality of hire is a key focus for recruiters, and AI powered recruiting workflows are becoming more of a focus for boosting recruiters' matching accuracy and productivity. Meanwhile, studies regarding algorithmic hiring are alerting us to the risk of these algorithms perpetuating patterns of historical bias, lowering transparency, and providing false signals in situations where training data or target variables are poor [2]–[4].

This duality makes for a management and research challenge: AI can help reduce recruitment costs and make better hiring decisions, but it can also have side effects of cost and quality. There are

numerous metrics that organizations use to assess AI tools in the short term, including time-tofill and recruiter workload. These measures are helpful but not comprehensive. In a strategic sense, it's not cost efficient to hire a system that reduces screening time and increases the number of regretted hires, turnover, adverse impact or candidate distrust. On the other hand, if a system is designed could lead to a better performance after hiring, it could be worth investing more in the initial technology and governance upfront. Thus, the cost-quality effectiveness of AI-based talent acquisition needs to be measured comprehensively.

The research question this paper tackles is: What are the impact and effects of AI tools on recruitment cost effectiveness and quality of hire and what are the organizational factors that will shape the positive or negative impact? This paper has three contributions. First, it collates research and practice evidence of AI applications throughout the recruitment funnel. Secondly, it suggests a way to measure cost efficiency and quality of hire. Thirdly, it offers governance options on how to apply AI in recruitment as a decision support tool, but not as a replacement for professional judgment.

Background and Related Work

• AI-driven Talent Acquisition

AI-driven talent acquisition refers to the use of machine learning, natural language processing, recommender systems, conversational agents, generative AI, and analytics platforms to support recruitment activities. These tools are used across the hiring funnel: labor-market intelligence, job description optimization, programmatic advertising, candidate sourcing, resume parsing, applicant ranking, chatbot communication, assessment scoring, interview scheduling, and offer management. Table I summarizes typical applications and their expected impact mechanisms.

Academic literature emphasizes that HR phenomena are complex and difficult to predict because performance, motivation, fit, and retention depend on social and organizational contexts [1]. Tambe, Cappelli, and Yakubovich argue that

Table 1: AI Applications Across The Recruitment Funnel

Recruitment stage	AI-enabled activity	Cost-efficiency mechanism	Quality-of-hire mechanism
Workforce planning	Demand forecasting, skill-gap analytics, labor-market mapping	Reduces reactive hiring and agency dependence	Aligns hiring with future capability needs
Attraction	Job-ad wording analysis, programmatic job advertising, talent community targeting	Improves media spend efficiency and applicant conversion	Broadens relevant applicant pools and reduces poorly matched applicants
Sourcing	Candidate search, profile matching, talent rediscovery, outreach personalization	Reduces manual sourcing hours and improves response rates	Identifies passive candidates and skills-adjacent profiles
Screening	Resume parsing, knockout questions, ranking, structured video or text analytics	Lowers early-stage review time and shortlisting cost	Supports consistent evaluation against job-relevant criteria
Assessment	Skills tests, work-sample scoring, interview analytics, predictive models	Reduces repeated interviews and late-stage mismatches	Improves evidence quality when assessments are validated
Coordination	Chatbots, scheduling automation, candidate status updates	Reduces administrative labor and cycle time	Improves candidate experience and reduces dropout
Post-hire feedback	Performance, retention, ramp-up, and manager feedback analytics	Identifies costly bad-hire patterns	Calibrates models using real outcomes rather than proxy labels

AI in HR faces challenges including small datasets, complex outcomes, ethical constraints, and adverse employee reactions [1]. Raghavan *et al.* document that vendors often claim bias mitigation, but the design and validation of algorithmic assessments are difficult to evaluate externally [2]. Bogen and Rieke similarly note that hiring algorithms can disadvantage applicants across multiple stages, especially when tools automate rejection rather than positive selection [3]. These findings suggest that AI value cannot be assumed from automation alone; it depends on what is measured, how models are validated, and how decisions are governed.

- **Recruitment Cost Efficiency**

Recruitment cost efficiency is more than just cost cutting. The basic cost per hire (CPH) consists of the costs incurred to advertise, recruiter time and labor, agency fees, technology costs, evaluations, travel, background checks, and onboarding expenses. With the implementation of AI come new cost categories, though, including vendor subscription, data integration, cybersecurity review, legal assessment, audit fees, model monitoring, recruiter training, candidate support, and change management. An AI project can thus be seen to be beneficial based on a narrow cost-per-hire metric, even if the total cost of ownership is high.

A more useful construct is recruitment cost efficiency which is the amount of resources used in recruitment divided by the value of successful recruitment. Direct and indirect costs like vacancy cost and lost productivity of an unfilled position. By streamlining manual screening, speeding up candidate communication, enhancing conversion rates, and minimizing mismatches at the later stages, AI can boost efficiency. However, false positives can lead to an increase in interview time, false negatives can lead to qualified candidates being turned away, and unclear decision rules can incur legal and reputational expenses.

- **Quality of Hire**

Quality of hire is a multi-faceted concept that reflects the impact of a new hire once they enter and are a part of the workforce in the organization. Examples of those metrics include job performance, productivity ramp up, retention, satisfaction of hiring manager, cultural contribution, promotion potential, and peer/team feedback. According to LinkedIn's recruiting research, the quality of hire is measured by demand signals, retention signals, and mobility signals, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach [5]. Quality of hire is challenging in research terms because of its delayed nature, its dependence on the quality of onboarding and management, and the use of noisy proxy variables.

AI can enhance the quality of hire by boosting selection decision validity, consistency and job relevance. For instance, AI skills matching can help identify candidates who have skills that align with job requirements, regardless of their academic background, credential, or work experience. Skillsbased hiring research highlights that the skills signals are becoming increasingly important to employers, especially in emerging sectors, mirroring the findings of AI-powered talent matching [6]. But if AI models are based on unequal historical hiring practices, use of the wrong proxies like a resume's style, or over-optimizing for previous success candidates, their quality could be sub-optimal.

Conceptual Framework

Fig. 1 presents the conceptual framework developed in this paper. AI capabilities influence recruitment cost efficiency through automation, cycle-time reduction, and resource allocation. They influence quality of hire through improved evidence, better candidate-job matching, and post-hire learning loops. These relationships are moderated by data quality, model validity, recruiter capability, workflow integration, candidate experience, and governance maturity.

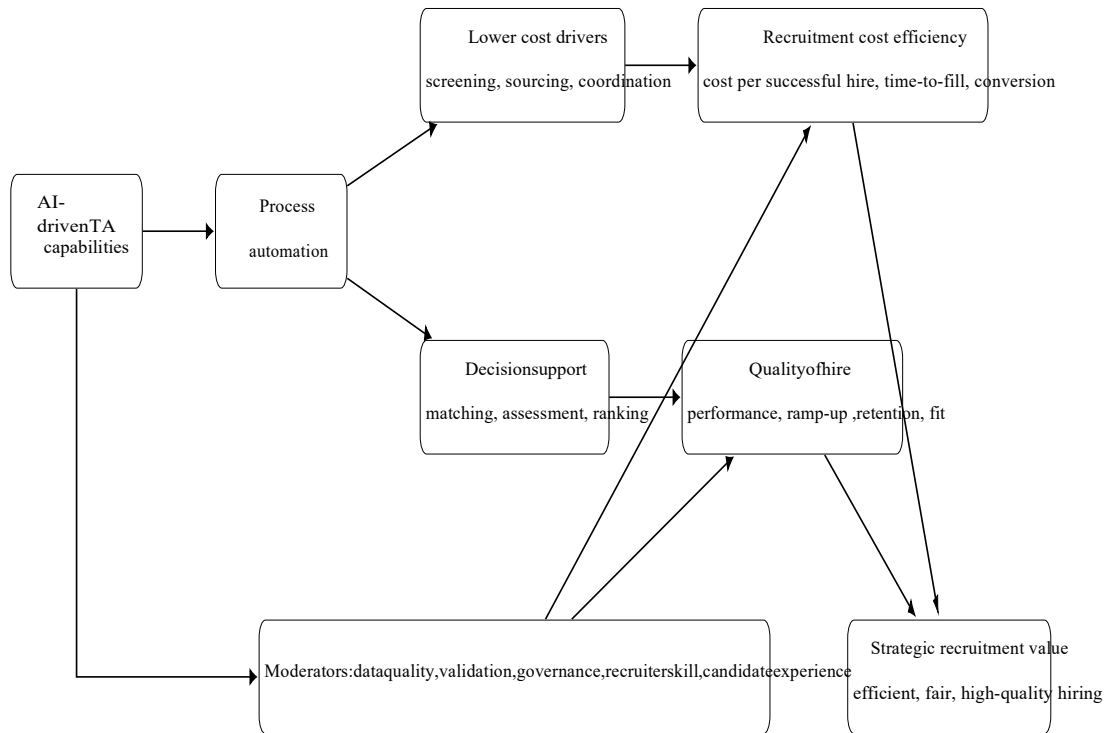


Fig. 1: Conceptual framework linking AI-driven talent acquisition to recruitment cost efficiency and quality of hire

Table 2: Metrics for Evaluating AI-Driven Recruitment

Metric area	Example metric	Purpose
Cost	Total cost per successful hire: $(C_d + C_t + C_g + C_v)/H_s$	Captures direct, technology, governance, and vacancy costs
Speed	Time-to-fill; time-to-shortlist; scheduling cycle time	Measures reduction of process bottlenecks
Conversion	Qualified applicants per source; shortlist-to-offer ratio	Shows whether AI improves funnel quality
Recruiter productivity	Requisitions per recruiter; hours per qualified candidate	Measures labor redeployment, not only labor reduction
Quality	Quality-of-hire index: weighted performance, ramp-up, retention, manager score	Links recruitment to business outcomes
Validity	Correlation of AI score with structured assessment and post-hire outcomes	Tests whether model signals are job relevant
Fairness	Selection-rate ratios, adverse-impact checks, subgroup error rates	Detects disparate impact and uneven model performance
Experience	Candidate satisfaction, response time, dropout rate	Captures trust and employer-brand effects

The framework emphasizes two propositions. First, AI's cost impact is mediated by workflow redesign. Simply adding an AI tool to an inefficient process may shift work from recruiters to candidates, hiring managers, or compliance teams without reducing total cost. Second, AI's quality impact is mediated by measurement validity. A model trained to predict who was previously hired may reproduce historical preferences; a model trained and validated against job performance, structured assessments, and retention outcomes has a stronger pathway to quality improvement.

Measurement Model

A practical evaluation of AI recruitment should combine operational, financial, quality, and fairness metrics. Table II provides a measurement model that organizations can adapt. The model

distinguishes input cost, process efficiency, selection quality, post-hire outcomes, and governance indicators.

Let *RCE* represent recruitment cost efficiency and *QoH* represent quality of hire. A simplified evaluation model can be expressed as:

$$RCE = \frac{H_s \times V_h}{C_d + C_t + C_g + C_v} \quad (1)$$

where H_s is the number of successful hires, V_h is estimated hire value, C_d is direct recruitment cost, C_t is technology and integration cost, C_g is governance and compliance cost, and C_v is vacancy cost. This formulation prevents organizations from treating technology cost and audit cost as external to recruitment performance.

Quality of hire can be represented as a weighted index:

$$QoH = w_1P + w_2R + w_3T + w_4M + w_5F \quad (2)$$

where P is job performance, R is retention or regretted turnover avoidance, T is time-to-productivity, M is hiring manager evaluation, F is role/team fit, and weights are determined by job family. The index should be calibrated by role, because the meaning of quality differs across sales, engineering, operations, healthcare, and leadership positions.

Impact on Recruitment Cost Efficiency

AI-driven recruitment affects cost efficiency through four primary mechanisms: labor substitution, cycle-time reduction, source optimization, and error reduction.

- **Labor substitution and redeployment**

Recruiters spend a lot of time on repetitive tasks doing tasks like reviewing resumes, following up on candidates, arranging interview dates and communicating with candidates regarding status. AI tools can help minimize these administrative tasks and enable recruiters to concentrate on consultative tasks like aligning with stakeholders, building candidate relationships, market intelligence, and negotiating offers. The cost benefit is greatest if automation eliminates redundant tasks among high-volume positions. For instance, in graduate, retail, call-center or seasonal hiring, the screening and scheduling aspect of the hiring process can be significantly reduced due to the use of a chatbot.

But, labor substitution is not synonymous with value creation. The total work may not decrease if the recruiters have to edit the results generated by AI for incorrect parsing or when candidates complain about rankings that are difficult to understand. Along with that, recruiters need to be trained to understand the output of AI and to take charge of the recommendations that are inappropriate. So it is not just about the number of recruiters being reduced, it's about hours saved per qualified candidate and about shifting recruiter time to other activities that enhance the conversion/acceptance rate.

- **Cycle-time Reduction and Vacancy Cost**

Time-to-fill is a significant cost factor as vacancies cause project delays, lost revenue, overtime, and existing employees. AI can help reduce the cycle time by screening candidates more efficiently, automate the interview scheduling process and keep candidates engaged. The efficiency benefit is especially important in hiring where the cost of vacancy is significant, such as difficult to fill jobs. Josh Bersin's talent acquisition analysis studies a drop in time-to-hire for hard-to-fill roles when AI sourcing and matching tools are added to the recruiting process [12]. Such estimates vary with context, but they emphasize measuring vacancy cost instead of just technology price.

- **Source Optimization**

AI can evaluate the source performance and prioritize budgeting efforts towards channels that generate strong applications and qualified candidates. Programmatic advertising can dynamically modify job posting spend, and talent-rediscovery tools can bring about pre-existing applicants containing partial data in the ATS. This can save on agency charges and ad waste. However, diversity and access need to be monitored to ensure source optimization. An algorithm that invests heavily in the channels that historically have yielded results could limit the talent pool for the future and eliminate diversity of talent.

- **Reduction of Bad-Hire Costs**

The hidden costs of poor hires are significant: repeat hiring, lost productivity, onboarding costs, manager time, team disruption and possible impact on customers. These costs can only be lowered by an AI that can better predict outcomes relevant to the job. Structured assessment, work samples, and validated signals come out of the informal resume proxies, and are more defensible. As mentioned by Aka *et al.* in another study, there are differences in the selection patterns, such as a preference for younger and less credentialed candidates, when using AI to assist in recruitment; however, in a junior-developer context, the use of AI may have a beneficial impact on final-stage pass rates as well. This makes it clear that efficiency gains need to be considered in combination with distributional and fairness analysis.

Impact on Quality of Hire

Quality of hire improves when selection decisions become more valid, consistent, and aligned with role requirements. AI can contribute in several ways, but it can also distort quality measurement.

- **Skills-based Matching**

AI systems can read resumes, profiles, and assessments to find skills, related experience, and transferable skills. When job titles and degrees don't indicate real abilities, this can be helpful. Skills-based matching can open up the pool of candidates by finding nontraditional candidates that would not be discovered by keyword searches. According to LinkedIn's Future of Recruiting research, skills assessment is becoming increasingly crucial for talent acquisition professionals when it comes to quality of hire [5]. This competency-based competency validation gives the most benefit when AI tools are linked to a competency model.

- **Consistency and structure**

The inconsistency of human recruitment decisions may be due to discrepancies in attention, interpretation, fatigue, and preferences among reviewers. AI can help boost consistency by carrying out the same screening process for all applicants. But uniformity doesn't necessarily mean equity and correctness. A biased model can consistently use the same biased logic. Raghavan *et al.* note that predictions of bias reduction by vendors rely on challenging decisions regarding targets of prediction, the training data, and the legal definition of bias [2]. So, AI should be used to assist in structured human decision making, not to remove accountability.

- **Predictive quality and feedback loops**

AI has been shown to enhance the quality of hire when the data from the hiring process is linked to the results after the job is filled. For instance, companies can determine if assessment scores correlate with ramp-up, performance review, sales numbers, code quality, safety incidents, retention or promotion. Feedback loops can help improve model calibration over time. Systems can maximise pass rates at interviews or give offers of acceptance but may not mean quality if there is no feedback. HR data is typically small and outcomes are complex, making predictions difficult, according to *et al.* [1]. That's why it's important that organisations test models on a job family basis and not make generalisations between jobs.

- **Candidate experience and employer brand**

Candidates experience is also a factor that indirectly impacts quality of hire. Rapid communication, clear status information and convenient scheduling can help to minimize dropouts of high-quality candidates. But, on the other hand, there is a risk of discouraging good candidates due to impersonal computer dialogues, lack of explanations for rejection, and lack of access to assessments. An experience rating isn't simply a satisfaction indicator, it's one of the quality indicators that affects who goes forward in the hiring process.

Cost-Quality Trade-Offs

The key management question is not if AI saves money or enhances quality, but how AI saves money and enhances quality. There are four possible scenarios for the adoption of AI, as shown in Fig. 2. The goal is strategic gain, defined as cost efficiency and increased quality of hire. The harmful sign of efficiency is false efficiency, when cost decreases but the quality suffers. A third option is premium quality, where the quality is increased but so is the cost, due to better assessments, audits, and human oversight. The worst scenario is failed adoption, which results in declining quality and increasing costs as a result of poor integration, lack of trust, and poor data.

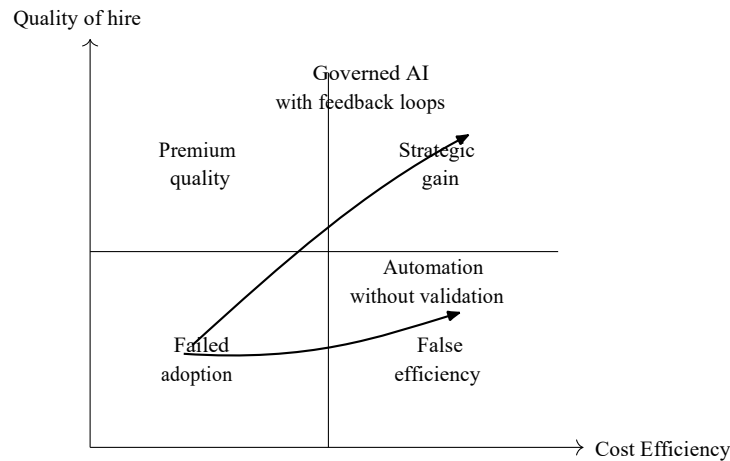


Fig. 2: Cost-quality matrix for AI-driven recruitment adoption.

At least 6 factors affect the cost-quality relationship. The first is that data quality is a prerequisite for AI to be able to distinguish meaningful skill signals from noise. Second, job analysis helps to establish the relevance of the model's measures to job requirements. Thirdly, it will be decided by workflow integration whether the tool can eliminate the bottlenecks or not, or whether it is parallel processing or not. Fourth, the ability of recruiters to interpret, challenge, and enhance AI-generated material will be what differentiates humans from the machines. Fourth, the talent of recruiters to interpret, challenge, and improve AI output will be what sets them apart from the machines. Fifth, the transparency of candidates is a factor that determines candidate trust in the process. Fifth, the transparency of candidates is a factor that determines whether or not the candidates trust the process. Sixth, governance maturity is the difference between identifying bias, drift, and compliance risks or not.

Governance and Risk Controls

The high-stakes nature of AI recruitment systems is evident in the fact that they can impact people's access to work. Risk management, transparency and auditability are becoming more important in regulatory and professional requirements. The NIST AI Risk Management Framework emphasizes the management of AI risks through governance, mapping, measurement, and management [9]. Within the EU, the AI Act defines numerous AI systems used in the context of work as highrisk systems that impose obligations on risk management, data governance, documentation, transparency, human oversight and monitoring [10]. A number of automated employment decision tools are subject to bias audits and candidate notices under Local Law 144 (LL 144) in New York City [11]. The developments are proof of the need for just and responsible implementation.

Table 3: Risk-Control Matrix for AI Talent Acquisition

Risk	Potential Impact	Control Mechanism
Historical bias	Replication of past exclusion or preference patterns	Bias testing, subgroup error analysis, representative data review
Proxy variables	Model uses school, gap, location, or writing style as hidden proxies	Feature review, explainability checks, job-relatedness validation
False negatives	Qualified candidates rejected early	Human review of borderline cases, appeal pathways, sampling audits
Opacity	Recruiters and candidates cannot understand decisions	Decision logs, reason codes, recruiter training, candidate notices
Model drift	Performance declines as jobs or labor markets change	Periodic validation, drift monitoring, retraining governance
Overautomation	Human accountability weakens	Human-in-the-loop decision rights and escalation rules
Legal exposure	Noncompliance with employment or AI regulation	Vendor due diligence, audit documentation, legal review

Table III converts these concerns into practical controls. Governance should begin before vendor selection. Organizations should ask vendors to provide validation evidence, data provenance, model documentation, adverse-impact testing, security controls, and explainability capabilities. Procurement should include HR, legal, compliance, IT, cybersecurity, and diversity stakeholders. Once deployed, the system should be monitored using both technical metrics and human outcomes.

Managerial Implications

The findings imply that AI-driven talent acquisition should be implemented as a sociotechnical transformation, not a standalone software purchase. Five practices are recommended.

First, organizations should define success as a balanced scorecard. A recruitment AI project should not be approved solely because it promises lower screening time. The business case should include cost per successful hire, vacancy cost, hiring-manager satisfaction, candidate experience, quality-of-hire index, adverse-impact indicators, and recruiter productivity.

Second, organizations should begin with job analysis and structured criteria. AI is most useful when the target role has clear competencies, measurable outcomes, and validated assessment evidence. Without this foundation, algorithms may optimize for convenience rather than job performance.

Third, organizations should preserve accountable human judgment. Human oversight should be meaningful, which means reviewers need enough information, authority, and time to challenge AI recommendations. Merely placing a recruiter after an automated shortlist may not be adequate if the recruiter has no practical ability to examine rejected applicants.

Fourth, organizations should connect recruitment data with post-hire outcomes. Quality of hire cannot be measured at the offer stage. Performance, ramp-up, retention, and manager feedback should be captured after hire and used to test whether AI scores predict real outcomes. Feedback loops should be role-specific to avoid inappropriate generalization.

Fifth, organizations should treat fairness and transparency as efficiency enablers. Bias audits, documentation, and candidate communication create costs, but they also reduce legal, reputational, and operational risk. In mature systems, governance cost is part of the cost of producing reliable hiring decisions.

Limitations and Future Research

This paper is not empirical, in that it does not report original primary survey or experimental data, but is a conceptual synthesis. It is for this reason that its conclusions are analytical and not causal. It is recommended that future studies examine the AI-supported and non-AI recruitment pipelines over a period of time to make comparisons across job families. The total cost of ownership should be evaluated, rather than the cost of the subscription or screening time. Delayed outcomes (performance, retention, promotion, and team contribution) need to be part of a quality of hire study. There is also a need for further study of the use of generative AI by candidates, AI-generated resumes, synthetic applications, and the interplay between applicant and employer AI systems.

Additionally, research into the governance capacities of small and medium enterprises, where the potential is less, will be valuable for future work. While most of the public discussion is focused on larger companies, it is possible for smaller companies to use vendor tools without the necessary resources to run a comprehensive audit. Last but not least, cross-cultural and legal comparisons are required since definitions of fairness, privacy and acceptable automation vary from one jurisdiction to another.

Conclusion

AI talent acquisition can enhance the efficiency of your recruitment spend by easing administrative burden, speeding up the recruitment cycle, streamlining sourcing spend and minimizing cost of bad hire. It can augment the quality of hire by enabling skills-based matching, assessment and structured evaluation, screening and learning after hire. But these advantages are subject to conditions and requirements.

AI can deliver apparent efficiencies by cutting visible process costs at the expense of hidden (or unattended) costs due to poor matches, dropouts, adverse impact, or compliance issues. The most powerful is when AI is integrated into a regulated recruitment process that has job specifications, assessments that have been tested, follow-up with humans, clear communication, and input from the

results of post-hire. The strategic challenge for organisations is not about whether AI should take the place of recruiters, but about how they can work together to create faster, fairer and better hiring decisions.

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