

Hiring Highlights:

3 Challenges to Finding a Good Match

Guidewire

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A record number of insurance companies are planning to expand and hire new people in 2022, according to [a new study from Jacobson](#). But as hiring managers are writing more acceptance letters than ever, new hires ghost on the first day or drop out halfway through onboarding. Meanwhile the pressure on recruiting is at an all-time high.

Why is it so hard to find talent right now?

“It’s a layered issue,” said author of [Soft Skills I Learned the Hard Way](#) Teresa Freeman, an HR consulting executive and job coach at TFA Soft Skills. “There’s a big disconnect between what companies can offer and what quality candidates are demanding right now. In addition, many of the people who are struggling to get hired is because of their underdeveloped soft skills.”

Six Figures Isn’t Enough

As multinational companies double their salary caps, smaller companies, even if growing and doing well are struggling to match expectations. “Job seekers are looking for a big number,” Freeman said. That’s in part because more than half of Americans are still living paycheck-to-paycheck — and that includes a lot of people who make more than \$100,000.

If you can’t budge on the bottom line, offer flexibility. Popular perks to offer include flexible hours and work from home options, according to the labor study. Some companies are thinking even further outside the box to offer benefits that matter more than pay, including longer paternity leave and fertility benefits.

“People want better company culture, better pay and more flexibility, and are leaving for different opportunities when those needs aren’t met. It’s a candidate’s market, they have a lot of options right now, and it can be really hard to find good talent,” Freeman said.

Soft Skills Are Missing

Freeman is plugged into recruiting for multiple industries and sees what she calls a crisis when it comes to soft skills. “Employers are frustrated with the candidate pool as many people who come into interview are lacking soft skills,” said Freeman.

Candidates with qualifications still come up short on networking, interviewing, leadership and communication skills. To help, companies like State Farm are offering candidates a hand with helpful videos for job seekers on Interview Best Practices and Understanding Digital Interviewing.

Non-Degreed Applicants Get Lost

College degrees are historically a way to sort candidates, Freeman said, but there are also a lot of talented non-degreed people whose resumes are ignored because they don’t check the right boxes.

Insurance tech and analytics roles are in high demand — and considered the most difficult to fill. They can also be learned through a certification training rather than a four-year degree. “Dropping the degree requirement can open up your candidate pool and cut education time down by a lot,” Freeman said.

“It’s such a big deal that there are groups out there working to change the employer mindset and general perception of workers without a bachelor’s degree,” Freeman said. Organizations like Opportunity@Work, for example, are gathering, sharing and publishing data-driven reports to highlight the data that shows benefits of hiring nondegree applicants.

Currently, college degrees are used as a substitute for a lot of things, like whether or not someone has follow-through or experience working on a team. For insurance companies looking to expand their candidate pools, dropping degree requirements can help.

“Soft skills go a long way, so if a nondegree candidate has the ability to problem solve and show up on time, give them a chance,” Freeman said. “If I had to choose between two people with a similar skillset, one with a degree and a bad attitude and another without a degree who is easy to work with, I’d go with collaborative every time.”