

# Understanding the Impact of Job Descriptions, Titles, and Apply Process on Sourcing Costs



Recruiters have two masters. Like salespeople, they must sell a product. That product is the opportunity for a fresh face to join an organization, and the process of converting talent into contracted employees is the lynchpin of any recruitment function.

Employees, of course, have the power to boost a brand or damage it. That makes HR a marketing function as much as it is a sales one. Every day, recruiters are responsible for finding the right candidates for their organization. They do this by placing recruitment advertisements, measuring the return on investment (ROI) of those advertisements, and making strategic decisions in order to boost their campaign's success. In marketing speak, they are responsible for turning over leads and converting those leads into sales.

Such duality of function is unusual. Outside the human resources space, sales people rarely do marketing work, and marketing people rarely sell the leads they turn over. It's a real testament to the business savvy and talents of recruiters that they are able to combine both functions. But managing these two processes also presents distinct challenges for recruiters who may not be versed in marketing analysis.

In our view, recruiters can take great inspiration from the digital marketing playbook. Direct response marketers, whose objective is not brand-building but generating a physical lead or a sale, expend a tremendous amount of time, energy and expense making sure the business process is as efficient as possible, so they get the highest level of conversion. A good example is the Amazon "one-click" buy button. It seems obvious that consumers who can buy things with one click will buy more, but that wonderfully efficient process came about through massive market analysis and a thorough understanding of consumer psychology.

Recruiters don't have a one-click buy button. What they do have is a job advertisement, comprised of a title and a job description, and an online recruitment platform that allows candidates to physically submit their application once they click through from the ad. This is the recruiter's sales funnel, and good decisions along the pipeline can amplify the brand message, positively influence candidate behavior, and boost the efficacy of the business process.

Appcast analyzed over 400 companies advertising their jobs on the web and the 3.7 million applies that resulted from those searches. We found that the length of the job description, job title and application process, as well as the mobile-enablement of the apply portal, had a material impact on the candidate's decision to apply. Marketing analytics, applied to your apply processes, can really help to capture your audience's attention, boost conversion (apply) rates and drive recruitment ROI — as this whitepaper shows.

I do hope you find it useful.



**Chris Forman,**  
Founder and CEO  
of Appcast

## Executive Summary

- Recruiters can directly improve the return on investment (ROI) of their recruitment spend by testing the conversion rate of their job advertisements and apply processes.
- A principal measure of the return achieved from a job advertisement is the click-to-apply (CTA) ratio, which measures the number of candidates viewing a job advertisement who go on to complete a job application.
- Data suggests a "Goldilocks" formula for the length of a job description, with massive CTA spikes for descriptions containing 300 - 800 words.
- Data similarly suggests an ROI hot spot for job titles containing 1 - 3 words.
- Recruiters can boost conversion rates by up to 365% by reducing the length of the apply process to five minutes or less.

## Introduction

Once upon a time, recruiters could post a job advertisement, then sit back and watch the applications come flooding in. Those days are gone. Today's online job advertisement market is robust, and postings must compete for visibility in a sea of similar ads.

For recruiters, whose job it is to attract the right candidates in sufficient volume, driving those candidates to the company's recruitment portal via streamlined processes to ultimately submitting an application, online recruitment presents a particular challenge. The ad-to-hire pipeline is long. Along the way, recruiters must make strategic decisions such as:

- where to place job advertisements
- the advertisement pricing model
- the length and content of the advertisement copy
- the structure of the application process

Those decisions have the ability to positively or negatively impact a candidate's decision to apply. What we are actually asking is that recruiters think, act and analyze like an online marketer to boost the conversion rates of a recruitment campaign.

A principal measure of the return achieved from recruitment advertising is the click-to-apply ratio.

***In many ways, recruiters must think, act and analyze like an online marketer to boost the conversion rates of a recruitment campaign.***

CTA measures the number of candidates viewing a job advertisement who go on to complete a job application. This paper looks at the CTA of job advertisements and apply portals across every major applicant tracking system in every major industry and asks the question: which job titles, descriptions and apply processes deliver the greatest ROI?

## Impact of Job Descriptions on CTA

Appcast tracked 400 companies advertising their jobs on the web and the 3.7 million applies that resulted from those searches.<sup>1</sup> The data shows that when it comes to job descriptions, less is more.

- **Too-long:** Job descriptions of 1,100 words achieved a CTA of just 3.9%.
- **Too-short:** Job descriptions with only 100 words achieved a CTA of just 3.4%.
- **Just right:** Job descriptions containing 300 - 800 words achieved click-through rates up to five times higher than comparable job descriptions that are either longer or shorter.

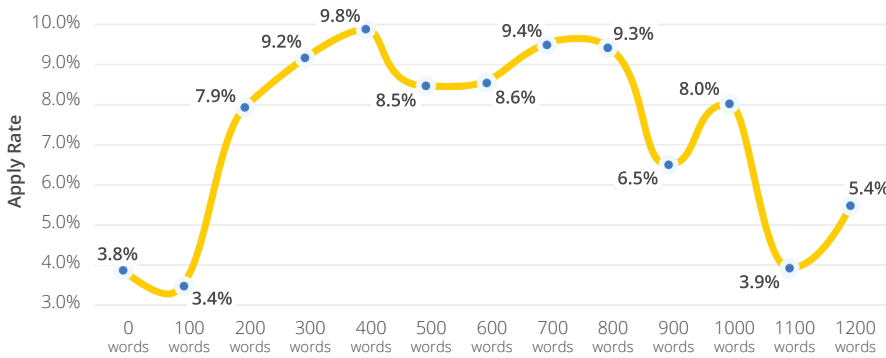
In other words, the length of the job description has a material impact on click-to apply ratios. For many applicants, too-long job descriptions may suggest a stifling working environment, and demand too much effort from candidates who already are investing a great deal of time in their job search. The mid-length description, capped at 800 words, is detailed without being too long, as Figure 1 shows.

*The data shows that when it comes to job descriptions, less is more.*

*Job descriptions containing 300 - 800 words achieved click-to-apply ratios five times higher than very short or very long job descriptions.*

<sup>1</sup> Appcast 2018 Recruitment Media Benchmark Report

Figure 1: Average click-to-apply ratios across all industries based on character length of job description



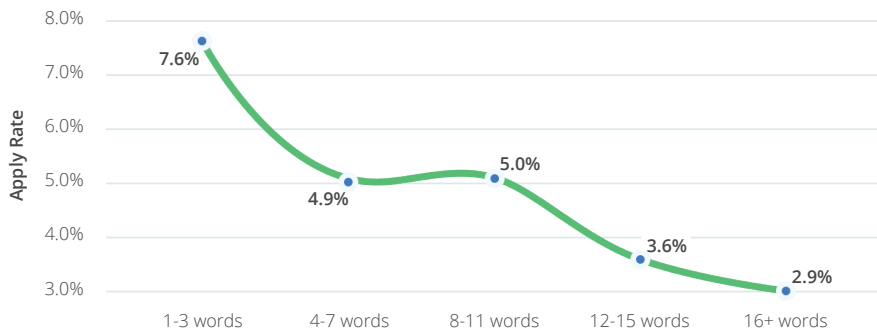
## Impact of Job Titles on CTA

The job title is a job seeker's first exposure to the recruiting organization. We expected to see a clear CTA spike for titles of a certain length, similar to the job description bell curve. In fact, the data relating to job titles is slightly murkier; however, it supports "Goldilocks" logic when it comes to optimizing the ROI of job titles.

- Our data shows a clear sweet spot for titles containing 1 - 3 words. Titles of this length outperform other title lengths by, on average, up to 40%. In other words, they're *just* right.
- As the word count on job titles goes up, apply rates are heavily impacted, with a steady decline in apply rate as Figure 2 shows.

***Titles containing 1 – 3 words outperform other title lengths by, on average, up to 40%***

Figure 2: Average click-to-apply ratios across all industries based on character length of job title.



So, while opportunities exist to optimize the length of job titles, clear and descriptive title content may have greater influence on a candidate's decision to apply.

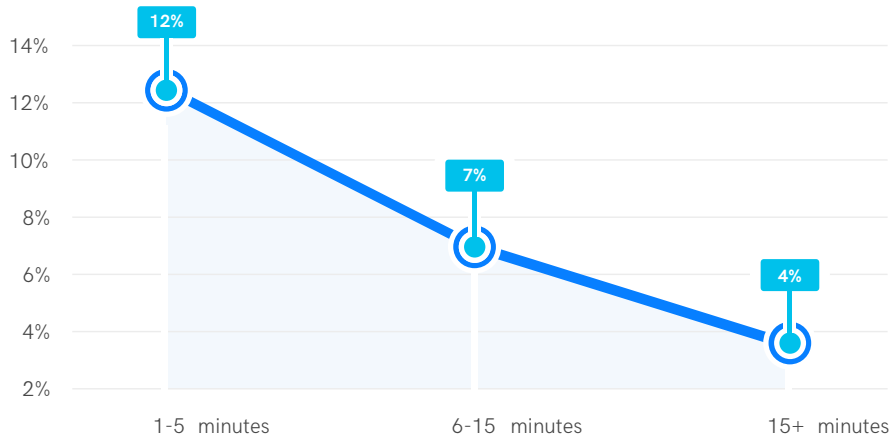
## Impact of Weak Apply Processes on CTA

A job seeker who clicks on a recruitment advertisement arrives at the organization's apply portal. At this juncture, ill-conceived apply processes can seriously deter candidates, many of whom will abandon an application before they submit it.

Our data shows that lengthy, complex and time consuming applications act as a barrier to applicants. Applications that take more than 15 minutes to complete experience a 365% degradation in completion rates, as Figure 3 shows.

*Applicants are 365% less likely to complete an application that takes 15 minutes or more to fill out.*

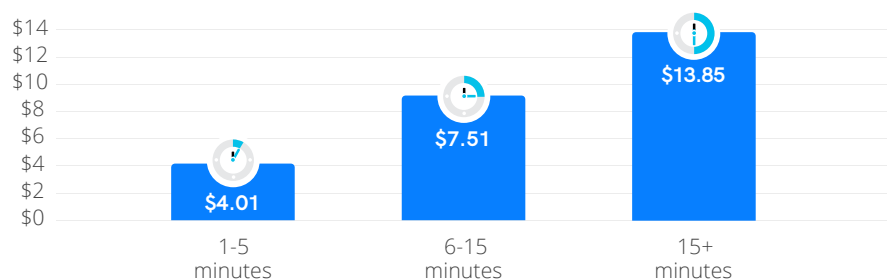
**Figure 3: Average job application completion rates across all industries based on the length of time it takes to complete an application (in minutes).**



On a cost-per-click pricing model, recruiters pay per click regardless of what the candidate does next. When completion rates are low, applicant sourcing costs are commensurately high. Our data suggests that recruiters can slash their cost-per-applicant by 250% simply by reducing the time it takes to complete an application from 15 minutes to 5 minutes, as Figure 4 shows.

*Recruiters can slash their cost-per-applicant by 250% simply by reducing the time it takes to complete an application from 15 minutes to 5 minutes.*

**Figure 4: Average cost-per-applicant across all industries based on the length of time it takes to complete an application (in minutes). Assumes a cost-per-click of \$0.50**

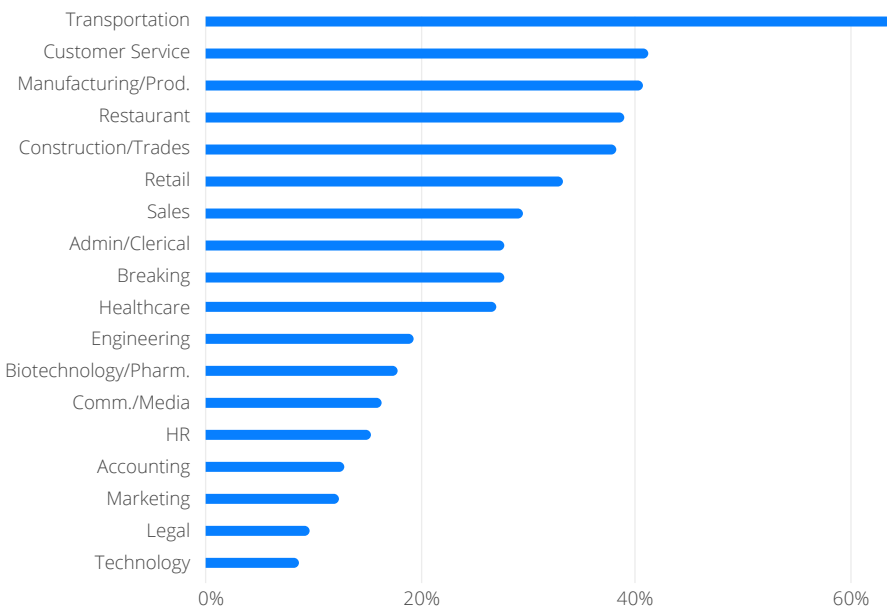


## Impact of Mobile Recruiting on CTA

Today, over 40% of the traffic arriving at a recruiter's online application portal comes from mobile devices. Yet, just 5.1% of mobile traffic completes a job application, compared to 9.5% for desktop candidates. But not all mobile apply processes are created equal, and the percentage of applies vary by industry. Figure 5 below illustrates percentage of applies on mobile devices by industry, with Transportation being the highest at 64%, and Technology at a mobile apply rate of 9%.

*Today, over 40% of the traffic arriving at a recruiter's online application portal comes from mobile devices. Yet, just 5.1% of mobile traffic completes a job application.*

Figure 5: % of Applies on Mobile Devices, by Sector



The reason is simple: it is far harder to apply from a mobile device than it is from a desktop. This may be due to:

- Platform issues, such as the inability to store a resume on a mobile device
- The length of the apply process, which becomes exaggerated when performed on a mobile device.
- Other issues, such as the apply portal not rendering correctly on a small screen.



The mobile disconnect is costly when advertising is bought on a cost-per-click pricing model. Across industries overall, desktop advertising CPC is higher at \$0.77, compared to mobile CPC at \$0.55. But, the returns from desktop CPC bids are much greater, with a 9.5% click-to-apply rate, and a \$8.14 cost-per-application. For mobile, click-to-apply rate grew by 18% to 5.1% in 2017, still yielding a higher cost-per-application at \$10.84. This highlights the importance of ensuring your mobile apply process is simple and easy to complete, which will result in both a higher apply rate and a lower cost per applicant.

*For mobile, click-to-apply rate grew by 18% to 5.1% in 2017, still yielding a higher cost-per-application at \$10.84.*

## Conclusion

Marketers spend a huge amount of time and resources analyzing their conversion path. Recruiters should do the same to make sure that applicants have both an interest in the job (creating a lead) and actually toss their hat into the ring (making a sale.) In this respect, data suggests that:

- Job descriptions and titles should be "Goldilocks" length to boost click-through rates by up to 500%.
- Removing every "nice-to-have" job application question that is not required to evaluate a candidate can boost conversion rates by up to 365%.
- Measuring mobile degradation rates is the first step towards boosting conversion. Higher conversion may be achieved through platform changes, negotiating better advertising rates based on the conversion data or switching to a pay-per-applicant pricing model that charges only when a candidate submits an application.

## Recruiting with Appcast

On January 1, 2014, Appcast launched Exchange, the industry's first pay-per-applicant job ad exchange. Exchange allows talent acquisition leaders to focus their recruitment advertising budgets more efficiently by charging only when a job application is completed on an employer's ATS or career site.

Appcast Exchange offers advanced programmatic online ad buying in the form of a 'rules-based buying' engine that delivers great applicants to the recruitment portal and ensures budget is allocated strategically on hard-to-fill or critical vacancies that need applications.

Already used by leading employers, agencies and recruitment firms, Appcast Exchange is focused on maximizing the efficiency of recruiting ad spend in a streamlined, user-friendly way. Hiring managers set the rules on how they wish to sponsor jobs and how much they are willing to pay, with no long-term contract. To learn more about Appcast and sign up for a demo, visit: [appcast.io](http://appcast.io)