8 Tips from **350 Million** Job Posts

What the hiring data says about improving your next job ad

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In hiring, every word counts.

On any given day, there are more than three billion job ads online. It's a crush of information overload for any job candidate. On average they will spend *less than six seconds* with your content before deciding whether to skip it and move on.

That person might have been your next great hire. You don't want them to turn away because the language you chose didn't persuade them to apply.

Save time and resources now

- What benefits would your company see if you could shave two weeks off the time-to-fill for every single role?

- How much would your company's productivity increase if you sped up hiring overall by 20 percent? What could recruiters do with that time?

And see more benefits later

- What if you could make your listings as inclusive as possible while also targeting the best fit for every role?

- Optimizing for diversity and company values means lower turnover, greater job satisfaction, and higher-functioning teams, all of which boost productivity

Want to know how your job listings currently stack up against your competition?
Head over to Textio to look up how you rank on the Textio Index.

1 Be brief

The advice "less is more" is notoriously ambiguous. How much less? Fortunately for job listings, the hiring data has the answer. Currently, you'll do well if you keep your word count between 300–750 words. But if you're really aiming for perfection, then 600-700 words is the ultimate sweet spot.

Total word count

600-700 words perform best

50   1000

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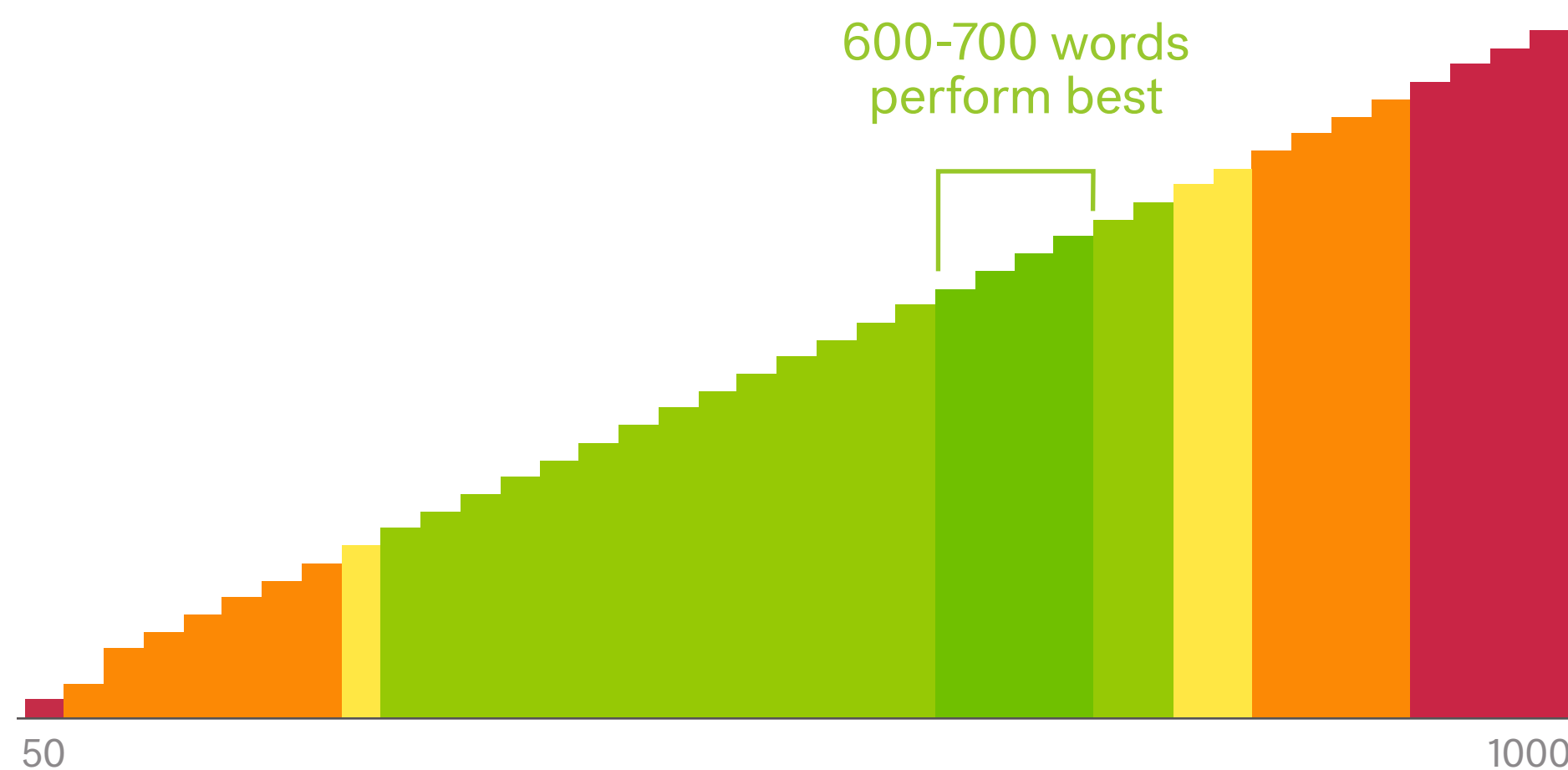
Frankenlistings!

Far too many companies take a mad scientist approach to their job posts. You use an old listing as a starting point. Your supervisor adds their two cents. The recruiting or brand or legal team adds some company-specific language.

The result: a Franken-listing with a couple more arms and legs than it really needs. Sound familiar?

This is not great for the reader, who will likely just move on to the next job listing. That person could have been your next great hire.
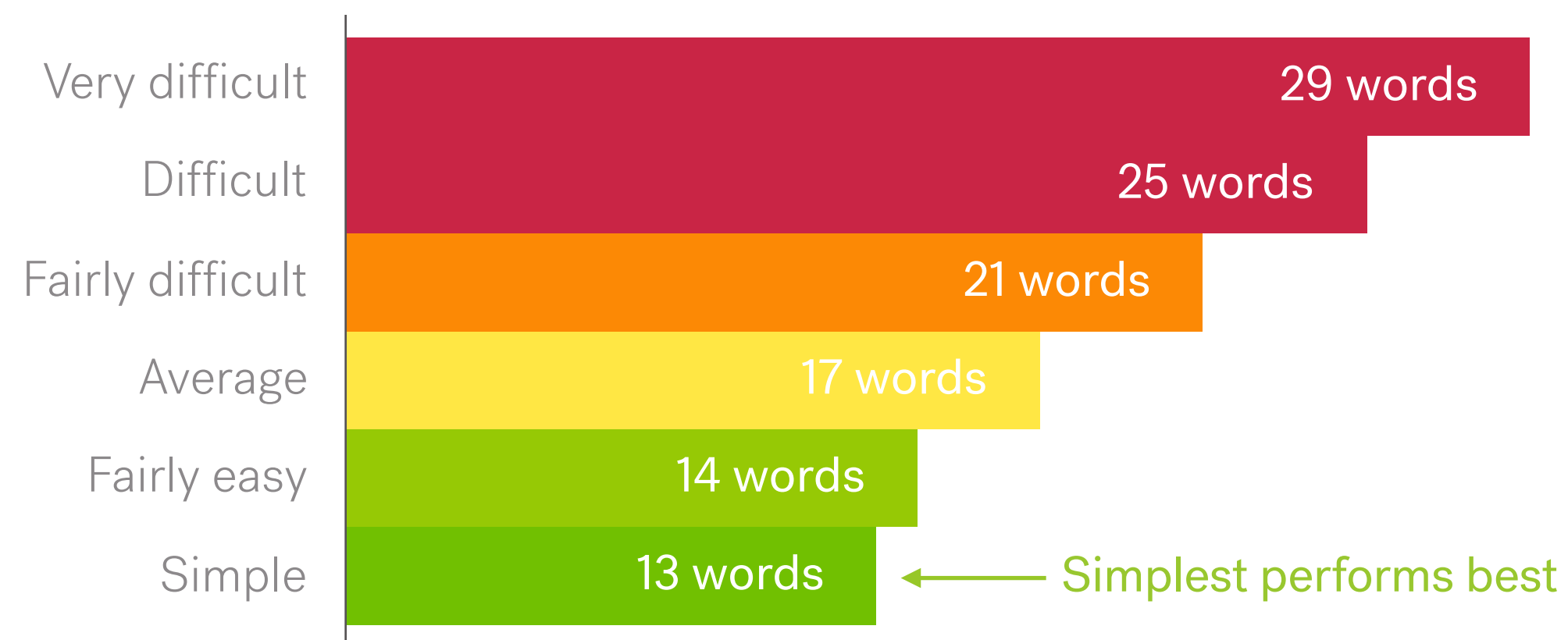
Trending: Fewer words

The optimal word count for job listings this year is less than last year — looks like job hunters are currently losing patience!

2 Stay concise

In addition to word count, data shows that the length of your sentences affects hiring performance, too. The best-performing posts today have 13 words per sentence on average. That's shorter than the average for written English, but at least you get twice as many words as the average billboard ad.

Average sentence length

Very difficult	29 words
Difficult	25 words
Fairly difficult	21 words
Average	17 words
Fairly easy	14 words
Simple	13 words ← Simplest performs best

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Word-ache

Have you ever read a sentence that just made your head hurt? Here's a good example of concision from Purdue University's writing lab that sums it up:

WORDY: "Balancing the budget by Friday is an impossibility without some kind of extra help."

CONCISE: "Balancing the budget by Friday is impossible without extra help."

Just removing a few extra words can make all the difference.

Trending: Shorter sentences

Language is constantly changing. Textio's data shows that job seekers react better to shorter sentences now than they did at the beginning of last year. Each extra word is just one more reason for people to stop reading and move on.

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3 Use structure

People scan your listing before they'll read it. So to attract the highest number of job seekers, make sure you have good subheadings, paragraph breaks, and especially bullet points. Textio's current hiring data shows that you'll see the best performance if about 1/3 of your posting is made up of bulleted content.

Percentage of bulleted content

About 1/3
performs best

0%   100%

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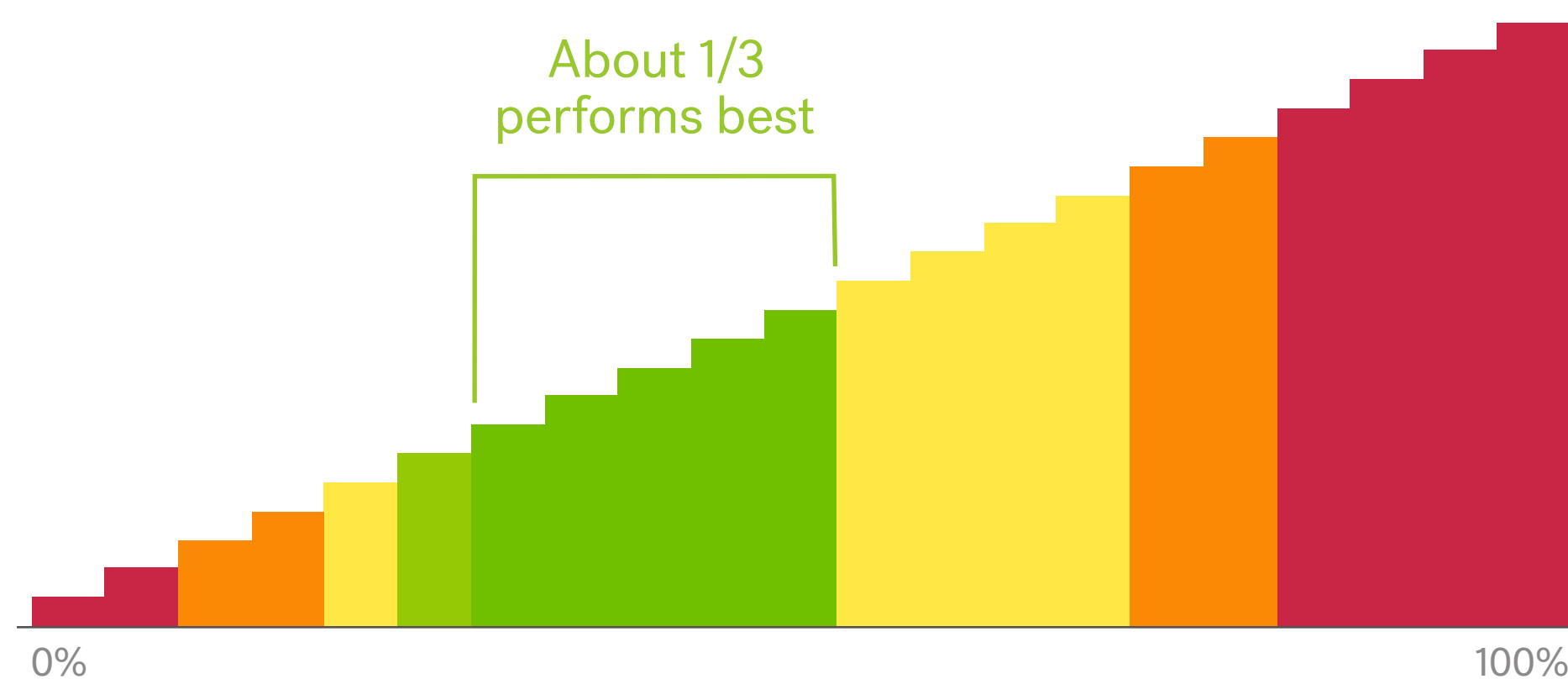
Bullets and gender

You might be surprised to learn that statistically, the amount of bulleted content in your job ad affects the proportion of women and men in your applicant pool.

- If you have too many bullet lists, fewer women will apply

- But if you have too few bullet lists, a lower number of men will apply

- For a gender-balanced pipeline, and the highest number of applicants, the current target is about 1/3 bullets

Trending: Even fewer bullets

Textio's data shows that in the last year, the job listings that use *fewer* bullet points have been performing better than last year. So that sweet spot of 1/3 bullets might just be getting smaller over time.

4 Be direct

The most successful job listings speak directly to the reader by using the pronouns "you" and "we." Job listings that use formal or indirect phrasing like "the ideal candidate" on average cause roles to fill more slowly and attract fewer qualified people. The best writing uses slightly more "you" than "we," but definitely includes both.

Ratio of "you" to "we" statements

Slightly more "you" performs best

0   2.3

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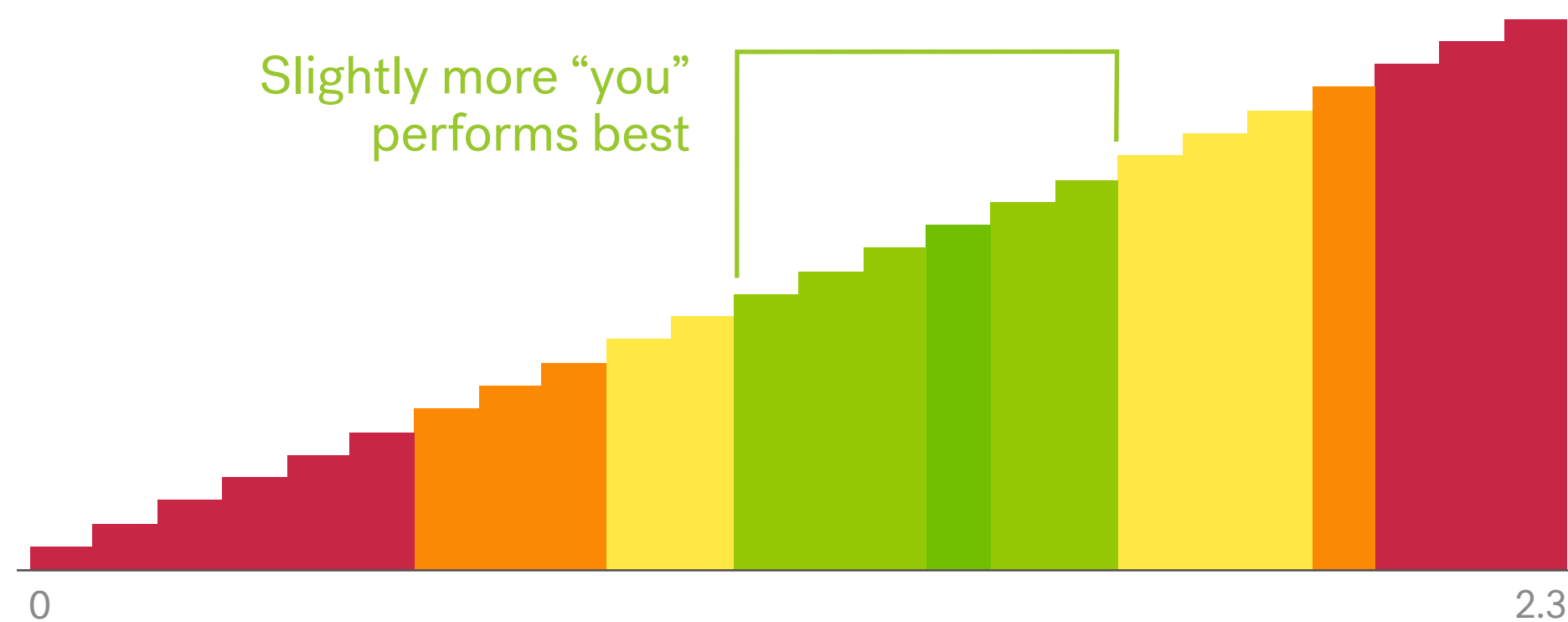
"How will I fit in?"

Reading a job post is the first and most important way to tell what a company will be like to work for. As a hiring manager or recruiter, your job is to make sure the mental picture you conjure up is a great one.

Imagine the questions that run through a job seeker's head before making the jump: Will I learn? Will I enjoy the culture? Am I going to be challenged and grow? Will I like my day-to-day responsibilities? Now answer those questions in your posting by speaking directly to the reader.

Here's some straight talk

Check out this sample sentence right out of one of our own Textio job posts:

▸ "**You** embrace technology in how **you** do **your** work — **we** are pretty nerdy!"

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5 Be inclusive

Textio's data shows a strong correlation between listing engagement and a company's stated commitment to fair hiring practices. The correlation is so strong, in fact, that job posts with an equal opportunity statement fill 10% faster on average.

More qualified people will apply:

¶ We are an Equal Opportunity employer committed to a diverse workforce. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, veteran status, or disability.

Fewer qualified people will apply:

¶ We are an EEO and Affirmative Action employer. Women, racial, and other minority candidates are invited to apply. Successful applicants will need to comply with a background check of criminal records.

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The data is perfectly clear

Textio collects job listings and their hiring outcomes from companies all around the world, not just in the U.S. where equal employment opportunity language stems from the Civil Rights Act. The data on this subject is clear: people across all demographics prefer to work for companies that write—*and act*—inclusively.

But you have to mean it

Just stating that your company is an "Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action Employer" doesn't cut it. In fact, Textio found that listings using this bare minimum for their equal opportunity statement saw *worse* hiring results than jobs that had no equal opportunity statement at all.

Here is a link to some great hand-picked examples, feel free to borrow!

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6 Be specific

The language you use to recruit an engineer is not the same as [recruiting for a sales or marketing role](#). Being job-specific seems obvious, but it might surprise you just how nuanced the differences can be. Compare these phrases for retail vs. IT roles: despite their similarity, the green phrases improve time to fill, but orange phrases slow down hiring.

JOBS IN RETAIL	JOBS IN I.T.
work collaboratively	work collaboratively
solid background	strong background
great opportunity	superb opportunity
deliver an outstanding customer experience	creating a superb customer experience

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Different strokes

Using Textio is the only reliable way to avoid "orange" phrases and find "green" ones that are associated with specific types of jobs; but here are some examples from [Textio's blog](#) that will give you an idea how to write your listings with job-specific hiring language:

‣ **Teachers are dreamers**
[Job ads for teachers](#) fill 21 days faster if they contain the word "dream."

‣ **Chefs prize people over passion**
[Talking about "crew"](#) is far better than "passion" for filling a cook position on short notice.

‣ **Bankers have a sunny disposition**
["Personality" wins](#) when it comes to hiring in the finance sector, but "entreprenurial" is a big loser.

7 Write local

Hiring language that works great in New York City might not compete strongly for the same type of job in London or Los Angeles. Even "synergy," that poster child of corporate jargon, works differently depending on location. So if you want to hire effectively, stay tuned to your local vernacular.

Cities where "synergy" works well, or poorly

Salt Lake City, UT	Miami, FL
London, UK	Sydney, Australia
Honolulu, HI	Washington, DC
San Francisco, CA	Philadelphia, PA
Phoenix, AZ	Dallas, TX
Chicago, IL	Cleveland, OH
Denver, CO	New York, NY

Location, location, location

Yes, it turns out that some cities actually *like* the word "synergy." Go figure. What else do we know about distinctions in effective hiring language across different locations? Textio's predictive engine has turned up some interesting statistical results:

▸ **Supercities**
There are just 5 cities where using the word "super" in a job post predicts faster hiring.

▸ **Intensity not required here**
In some cities, "intense" is associated with either very fast time-to-fill, or very slow.

▸ **Everything is(n't) awesome**
If you call a job "awesome," will it fill faster? Not everywhere.

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8 Stay current

Perhaps the toughest part of writing effective job posts is staying ahead of trending language. But it can mean getting the talent you want versus losing them to your competition. You can't afford to just reuse the same old job post template from last year and expect to get the same performance. Check out these language shifts in Seattle over just one year:

FASTEST MOVERS

1. gender identity
2. proud equal opportunity
3. self starter
4. customer service
5. strong communication

BIGGEST LOSERS

1. strong analytics
2. advanced knowledge
3. management skills
4. eoe
5. work collaboratively

Is "A.I." already dead?

Textio tracks job posts about artificial intelligence, and has spotted a trend in these listings that matches the rise and fall of "big data" terminology that happened a couple years ago. Jobs using these phrases fill just 1-2 days faster than average, which is a huge drop-off from the dramatic difference they made to job performance just 18 months ago:

- artificial intelligence
- machine learning
- machine intelligence

So what's next? Textio's predictive engine has already spotted a distinct upward trend in the phrases "deep learning" and "neural net." So if you are writing job posts for AI roles, you might want to start adapting your language.

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Now, go change people's lives.

You can actively change what people choose to do if you use the right words. Speechwriters know it. Therapists know it. But no one knows it more precisely than an ad copywriter. And that's what a job posting is: it's an advertisement. The only difference is the goal—instead of convincing Jennifer she really needs a new pair of Nikes, you're just asking her to make a career choice that could alter the course of her life. *No big deal.*

Bonus: Here are a few pro copywriter tips guaranteed to up your game…

Never write alone

Good ad copywriters never fly solo. It's a team effort. Who else is on your creative team for writing job ads? Ask someone whose writing you respect to be your sparring partner. You give feedback on their job posts, they give feedback on yours. Everybody wins. Over time, writing quality for both of you will improve, guaranteed.

Build a great library

There's nothing wrong with starting a new job post from an old template, unless it's a bad one. This one is super simple to do: make a folder where you store copies of all your best job posts. Title them consistently so you can more easily find the best one to start with for a particular new role. Now share that folder with your team!

Track performance

How many applications did you receive for the role? How many of those candidates were qualified enough to interview? How long did it take to fill the role? Even if you just track those pieces of data for every job that you publish, you'll start to get insights into how your writing affects your outcomes.

Discover Textio Hire.

If people don't respond to your emails or apply to your job ads, you can't hire them. Textio Hire unlocks the best language to engage them, and puts it right on the page, wherever you're writing. Textio Hire gives you the words you need to attract the people you want to hire, using language that reflects the very best of your values and culture.

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