



The Selection *Quarterly*

2024 - Q1 Edition



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Welcome to the first issue of The Selection Quarterly

Today, selection processes often lead to suboptimal results due to a lack of shared knowledge about what works and what doesn't. Therefore, we founded The Selection Lab in 2018 with a mission to answer what I personally consider one of the most important questions in the field of HR – what determines a successful hire?

The significance of this question cannot be overstated; fact-based hiring not only transforms lives but also revolutionizes organizations and, by extension, society. At The Selection Lab, we are dedicated to exploring this question with the utmost rigor.

To achieve this, we developed unique software that merges psychometric data with performance indicators at both the role and

company levels. This integration helps us eliminate personal biases that might otherwise influence hiring decisions, enabling us to provide precise, actionable insights. Our approach systematically identifies what distinguishes successful candidates across various roles and industries.

We are excited to share these insights with you and invite you to join us on this journey to enhance company and individual performance by discovering the keys to a great match. By publishing quarterly insights across various roles, we aim to advance knowledge in the HR field and empower those keen to refine their hiring strategies.

Enjoy the insights!

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Decoding *Success*:

Key Traits of Hired Candidates *Across Occupations*

The characteristics of the applicants who get selected for a job naturally differ across occupations. Where hired recruiter applicants may be more compassionate than the average, hired lawyers may be more responsible and hired statisticians more attentive to detail than their rivals in the job hunt. **But, what are the characteristics that all hired applicants across all industries and occupations share in common?**

Using unique data from our applicant assessment software, we compare the assessment outcomes of all hired applicants to the outcome of the average applicant. As the hiring decisions of firms are primarily based on the assessment results, any personal bias that might

otherwise influence the process is eliminated. This allows us to examine the relative importance of various competencies in determining a hiring decision – not only for lawyers or recruiters but for all occupations on average.



Our analysis yields *two major results:*

01

Hired applicants are more intelligent and have a higher learning ability than average, but they are also more insecure and lack the assets to cope with stress.

02

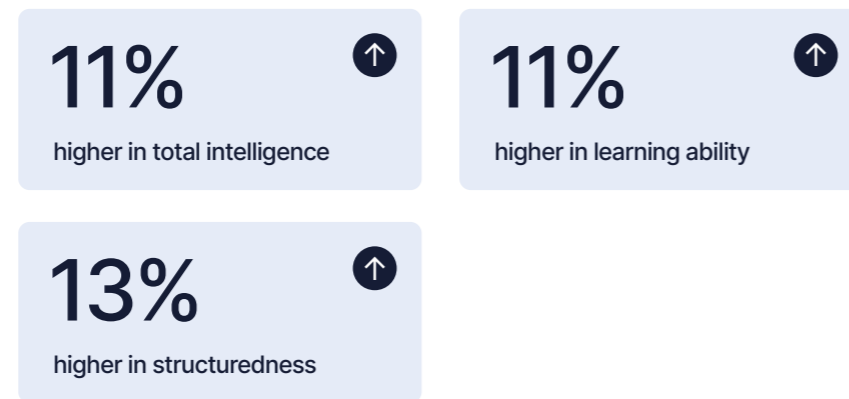
There are significant differences between what candidates value and what employers want when it comes to organizational culture and values.

From Intelligence to Insecurity: The Dual Nature of Hired Applicants

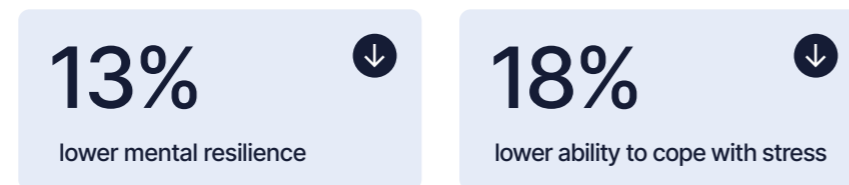
Our data sheds light into the differences between hired applicants and the average job seeker across various industries. On average, the hired applicant scores 11% higher than the average applicant. This difference is not insignificant. Notably, the hired applicants score on average 11% higher in both learning ability and a level of structuredness compared to the mean.

It comes as no surprise that employers value quick brains. More interestingly, the latter finding indicates that employers are more likely to hire conscientious applicants. Conscientiousness is one of the fundamental personality traits in the Big Five. Conscientious individuals are organized, responsible and reliable, and the personality trait is widely seen as a significant predictor of job success.

Hired applicants in our data score, on average: compared to the average applicant across industries.



Personality test results for hired applicants show, on average: compared to the average applicant across industries.



On the other hand, we also observe a more concerning trend regarding the mental resilience of hired applicants. Namely, when we look at hired applicants, their mental resilience and ability to cope with stress appear 13% and 18% lower than the mean. This indicates a preference for hiring what can be described as “insecure overachievers.” These are individuals who, despite their high achievements and capabilities, harbor doubts about their own worth and are driven by a fear of failure. While their drive may push insecure overachievers to excel, it also makes them more susceptible to stress. The likelihood of a hire decreasing in mental resilience raises important questions about the sustainability of workplace cultures that prioritize high achievement at the expense of employee wellbeing.

Organizational cultures that appeal to hired applicants in the data

(difference to average)



Bridging the Gap: The Cultural Divide Between Employers and Job Seekers

Beyond competencies, the assessment data highlights considerable variation in the values and cultural preferences between hired applicants and the baseline. What comes to organizational culture, we find that hired applicants thrive in a formal culture 14% more than the average, and value a culture with internal competition 20% above than the baseline. Additionally, hired candidates in the data show 18% less interest in flexible working hours compared to the average applicant, suggesting a misalignment between the workplace flexibility sought by many job seekers and the expectations of hiring employers. Hired applicants, we find, prefer more structured and hierarchical work environments, potentially conflicting with broader preferences for flexibility.

Not only are employers hiring candidates based on their fit to the culture, but the alignment of general values also matters. Most strikingly, the preference for tradition and conformity among hired applicants is significantly higher than the average applicant, at 37% and 34% respectively. Our observations unveil a structural trend in the hiring decisions of employers across industries: when the views held by the average applicant and the employer are misaligned, the employer will hire the applicants that fit in its culture.



Summary

While many characteristics of hired applicants are industry-specific, there is sufficient evidence that the formula for success has common denominators across occupations. In terms of skills and characteristics, we find that hired applicants across industries score significantly above average in intelligence, learning ability, and organizational skills. On the other hand, the relatively poor ability of hired candidates to cope with stress should raise some concern. Moreover, our results suggest that cultural alignment may play a key role in driving positive hiring decisions. In the presence of a wedge between the values of job-seekers and employers, hired candidates are found to lean towards the employers' view.

Trends in Recruiter Hiring

In a pool of dozens of applicants, what skills should a recruiter look for to secure the best match? Fresh data from our applicant assessment software can provide some answers.

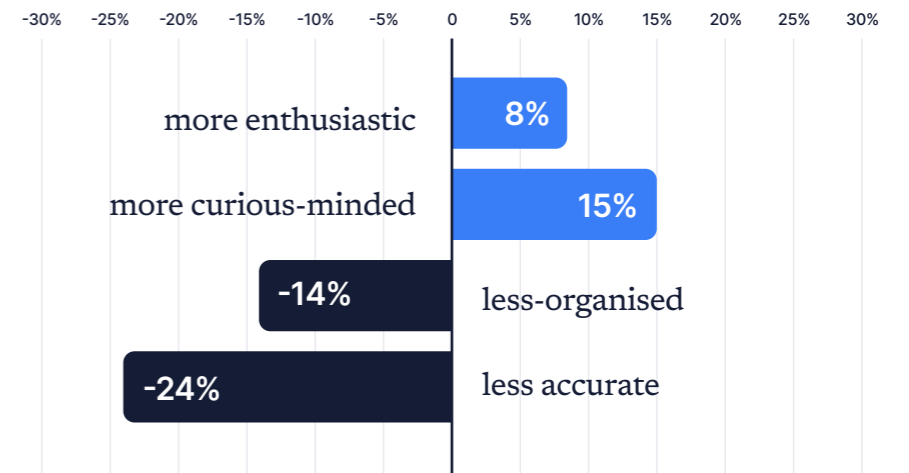
The recruitment process is a complex event with many forces at play. In this edition of The Selection Quarterly, we dive into the candidate matching process of recruitment agencies. Using data from our applicant assessment software, we track characteristics that separate the agency recruiters that get hired from those that are not selected for the job. We thereby gain insights in the characteristics that truly matter for an agency recruiter.

The applicants in our sample fill out an online assessment, after which their candidate profile is shared with the hiring recruitment agency. This objective assessment eliminates any recruiter bias that might otherwise influence the hiring decision. Therefore, a hiring choice depends on objectively measured applicant characteristics, and we may credibly compare the applicants that get the job to those who do not.

Recruiters Versus the Rest

Although the average hired applicant is more organised than the non-hired one, all recruiter applicants together are found to be 14% less organised and 24% less precise than applicants from all industries combined in the data. On the other hand, exhibiting above-average levels of enthusiasm and curiosity certainly fits the nature of the recruiter role.

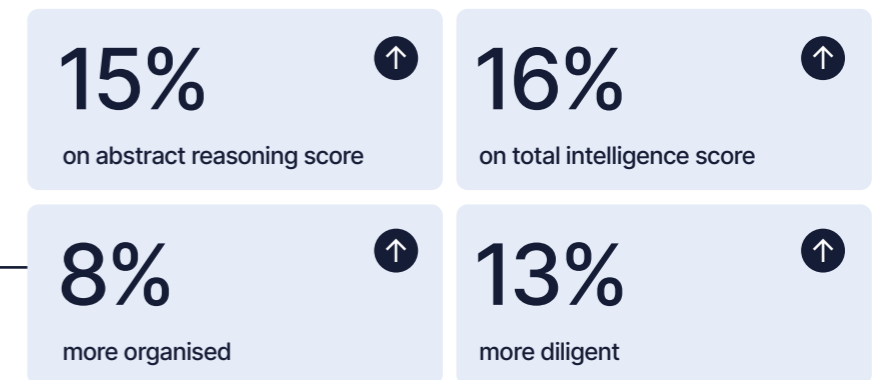
Compared to the average applicant (all industries), office recruiter applicants are:



Hired Applicants: The Survival of the Brightest

Intelligence, whether measured in abstract, numerical or verbal reasoning, is positively correlated with a hiring decision for our sample of recruiters. Looking at the data, the average hired recruiter scores 15 percent higher in abstract reasoning, 12 percent higher in verbal reasoning, and 16 percent higher in total intelligence compared to the average non-hired candidate. When recruiting companies can objectively measure their applicants' intelligence, it appears that they are more likely to hire the more intelligent ones. Numerical intelligence, however, weighs the least in a positive hiring decision.

Hired recruiters score, on average:
Compared to applicants that are not selected.



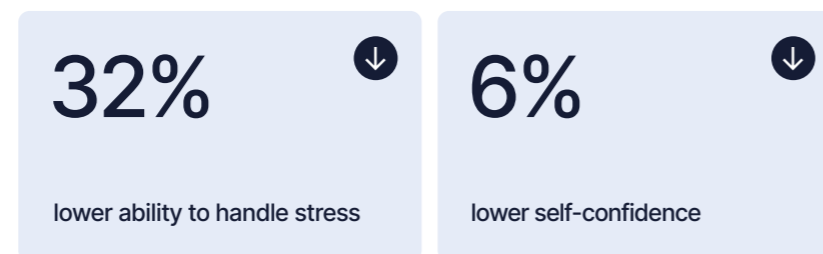
Beside intelligence, the data show that hired recruiters excel in a different set of skills than non-hired applicants.

Pride Meets Recruiter Prejudice

Despite the above comparisons, the hired do not score higher on all measured characteristics. Our data show that hired recruiters have, on average, less self-confidence and a lower ability to manage stress. This fits the description of an 'insecure overachiever'. As an individual who consistently seeks to exceed expectations in search for more confidence, the insecure overachiever is like a gold mine to recruiters. The data provides evidence of recruiters favouring characteristics of insecure overachievers in their recruitment practices.

Alternatively, it could be that some competencies of the rejected applicants work against those valued by recruiters. For example, an abundance of self-confidence could suppress precision, honesty, or accountability, all found to increase the likelihood of a positive hiring decision. One need not be Jane Austen to know that too much pride comes with prejudice!

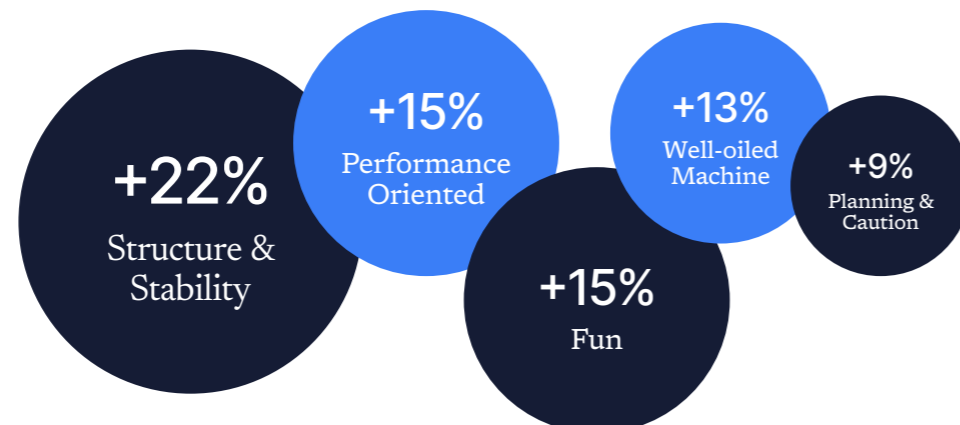
Personality test results for hired applicants show, on average:
Compared to non-hired recruiter applicants.



In Sync, In Success: The Importance of Culture and Values in the Recruitment Process

The data unveil remarkable differences between the hired and non-hired applicants when it comes to their preferences about company culture. Hired recruiters seem to prefer stable, structured, and result-oriented cultures. Above that, they also value fun as a part of their job 15% more than the average non-hired applicants. Consequently, the hired are 13% more compatible with a culture that functions like a "well-oiled machine". A company that operates smoothly and in which colleagues are well-coordinated with each others' activities, it seems just fit with the applicants that are in general more organised, diligent, and precise.

Organisational cultures that appeal to hired recruiters in the data:
Difference to non-hired.



Summary

Our results portray interesting insights about the difference between hired and non-hired office recruiters. First, higher intelligence, measured in any metric, increases the likelihood of a hire. Second, hired recruiters are on average more organised and hard-working than non-hired applicants. Compared to all applicants in our data, however, recruiter applicants are slightly less organised and much less precise. Finally, hired recruiters score lower in self confidence and the ability to manage stress, making them most compatible with organisational cultures that work like a well-oiled machine.

The Case for Hiring *Curious* Recruiters

“I have no special talent. I am only passionately curious”

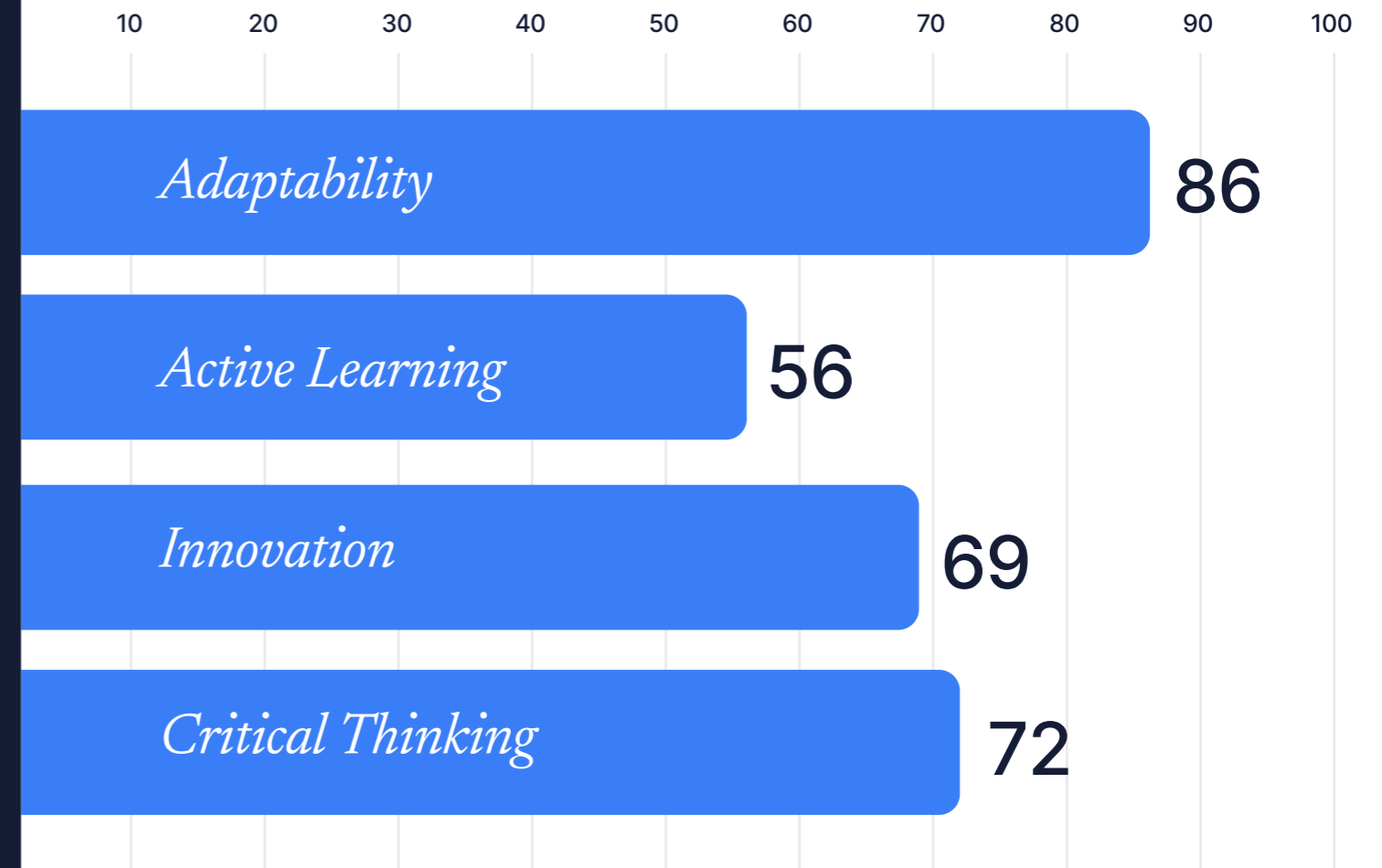
Albert Einstein

According to the current market outlook, passionate curiosity is on the rise, at least when it comes to recruitment. We dove into the trends in agency recruiter hiring. Here’s why it pays off to hire curious recruiters.

Our client data show that recruiter applicants are **15% more curious than the average applicant across industries.**

This curiosity has the power to enhance adaptability to new challenges. Moreover, recruiters who embrace curiosity are better equipped to understand diverse perspectives, and improve their overall effectiveness at work.

Essential skills associated with agency recruiters:



*average self-reported importance

Source: O*NET

Curious recruiters embrace the growth mindset

In a 2023 contribution to Forbes, the futurist Bernard Marr calls curiosity the essential future skill “that everyone must nurture”. Curiosity is the driving force that sparks critical thinkers, innovators, and active learners. These three skills are all among the top skills associated with agency recruiters, at least according to the U.S. portal for occupational information, O*NET.

According to Marr, curiosity is a key ingredient of what the psychologist Carol Dweck coined as the growth mindset. Individuals with a growth mindset see challenges as opportunities to learn and possible mistakes as a necessary part of the learning process. This has many implications to recruitment. From sourcing the right talent to navigating the newest technologies, recruiters often face complex problems. A growth mindset fosters a problem-solving attitude, encouraging recruiters to approach challenges with a focus on learning and innovation. Dweck’s philosophy sounds awfully lot like that of Einstein, does it not?

Curious recruiters are more open-minded

An important responsibility of recruiters is to ensure equal opportunity in the recruitment process. “Ensuring gender equality in the workplace” and “supporting the employability of people with disabilities” are listed as essential skills for recruitment consultants in the European Classification of Skills, Competencies, and Occupations (ESCO). According to a report by Workable, good recruiters keep an open mind. Standing for diversity makes a recruiter stand out.

When it comes to the pursuit of fair hiring, curiosity can help challenge active biases. Curious recruiters may push for a passionate candidate who is fit for the team but whose background would not support a hire. Curiosity about different perspectives and backgrounds contributes to building more robust and innovative teams.

Curious recruiters are highly adaptable

Research has demonstrated a clear link between knowledge-seeking curiosity, workplace learning and higher job performance¹. In today’s context, curious recruiters are more likely to explore new technologies and tools to enhance efficient sourcing and screening. Adapting to the opportunities of recent AI tools, for one, can prove major advances in the efficiency and job performance of any recruiter.

Adaptability is among the top ten essential recruiter skills as per O*NET, and can sometimes be measured even before a candidate is hired. Instead of asking a candidate about their past performance, the venture investor Natalie Fratto proposes, one should present them with “what if” scenarios.

Present the candidate with “What if” scenarios

What if you’re assigned to recruit for a niche industry you’re not familiar with?

What if a key client suddenly changes their hiring criteria?

What if a critical team member unexpectedly resigns in the middle of a project?

What if you’re managing a high-volume recruitment project with tight deadlines, and a personal emergency arises?

Such questions measure the candidate’s ability to think outside of the box, a skill that passionately curious, knowledge-hungry individuals are more likely to master.

¹ See e.g. Reio, T. G., Jr., & Wiswell, A. (2000). Field investigation of the relationship among adult curiosity, workplace learning, and job performance. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 11(1), 5–30. [https://doi.org/10.1002/1532-1096\(200021\)11:1<5::AID-HRDQ2>3.0.CO;2-A](https://doi.org/10.1002/1532-1096(200021)11:1<5::AID-HRDQ2>3.0.CO;2-A)

Curious recruiters are simply *better* recruiters

At the end of the day, it would be wrong to claim that Einstein had no special talents beyond curiosity. Similarly, curiosity is not the only important trait in the job market. Yet it is a critical one. From the insights discussed above, we learn that by sourcing curious candidates, recruitment agencies can support the growth mindset, enable adaptability, and support equal opportunity within their organisation.

Trends in *Consultant Hiring*

The consulting industry is renowned for its rigorous selection process. Not only are the intellectual capabilities of each candidate scanned with close scrutiny, but so is their fit within the dynamic and high-pressure working environment. Who, then, are the candidates that make the cut? Let's analyse data from our applicant assessment software to find out.

In this edition of The Selection Quarterly, we dive into the trenches of the consulting industry. By leveraging data on applicant characteristics, we highlight the differences between the consultant applicants that get hired by the recruiting organisation and those that do not. Our analysis owes up to the objective assessment process behind our sample, which effectively

eliminates any recruiter bias in hiring decisions. This allows us to focus solely on the competencies of the candidates in analysing positive hiring decisions. By identifying these key distinctions, we offer valuable insights for both recruiters in the consulting field and job seekers aiming to navigate its competitive landscape. So, without further ado, let's dive into the analysis!



Fast and Forward: The Unique Learning Curve of Consultants

In the pool of all applicants, consultants stand out with their high levels of curiosity and ability to learn. Specifically, results from personality tests show that consultant applicants are on average 8% more curious and 12% more capable of learning than the average applicant. These findings reflect the consulting industry's demand for individuals who are not just intelligent but are also eager to explore new problems. The capability of consultants to quickly assimilate complex information and devise innovative solutions encapsulates the core of the profession. More interestingly, these characteristics of consultants are unmatched next to the average applicant.

Compared to the average applicant (all industries), consultant applicants are:

8%



more curious

12%



more capable of learning

When it comes to cultural values, consultant applicants show a pronounced preference for international exposure and stimulation, rated 22% and 19% higher, respectively, than the average applicant's preferences. This indicates a clear inclination towards global engagement and a dynamic working environment, underscoring the global and fast-paced nature of the consulting world.

Consultant applicants find these values relatively important in organisational culture:

Compared to the average applicant.

+22%



international exposure

+19%



stimulation

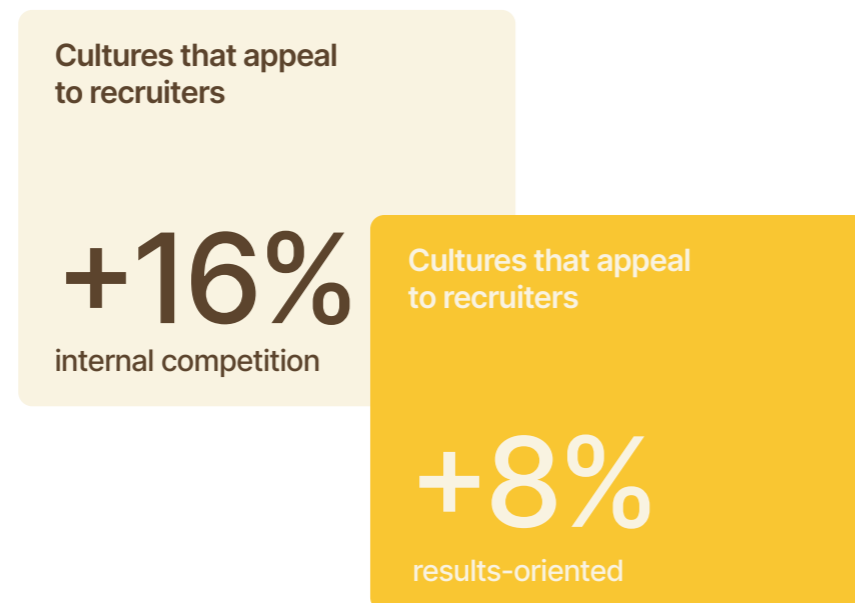
Hired Applicants: The Pressure Pot Factor

A comparison between the assessment results of hired and non-hired consultant candidates unearths interesting results. We find that a pivotal factor distinguishing hired consultants from those not hired is their superior accuracy and resilience to stress. On average, consultants who secure positions are found to be 14% more accurate in their tasks and 19% more resistant to stress than their non-hired counterparts.

Without a question, these competencies are critical in a field where precision in analysis and recommendations can make or break a client's strategy. Moreover, when the ability of employees to thrive under pressure is paramount to managing both the demands of clients and tight timelines, it only makes sense that employers select the candidates with a cool head.

Hired consultants are found to be, on average, 14% more accurate and 19% more resilient to stress compared to non-hired consultant applicants.

Organisational cultures that appeal to hired recruiters in the data:



Cultural Alignment is the Cherry On Top

Our data indicate that a positive hiring decision is also highly dependent on the alignment of the candidate's cultural preferences and the organisational culture in the recruiting organisation. Specifically, we find that hired consultants value internal competition and result-orientedness more than non-hired applicants, with an average difference of 13% and 8% respectively. These elements of organisational culture are typical for consultancies, indicating that while a match in cultural values can be a cherry on top in the recruitment process, their misalignment could ruin the whole cake.

Summary

For aspiring consultants and recruiting firms alike, our analysis of hired consultant applicants offers a better understanding of the dynamics behind a successful match. First, hired consultants in our data are characterised by their precision and ability to thrive under pressure, alongside their preference for competitive and result-oriented work environments. Additionally, when compared to the average applicant across industries, consultants are found to demonstrate a unique blend of curiosity and learning capability. In the high-stakes world of consulting, it appears that accuracy, resilience, and a drive for results are the consultants' keys to unlocking success.

Learning Ability is Central to Consultant Success

Why Aren't Recruiters Treating It As Such?

Over the past decade, learning agility has become an increasingly popular skill sought by recruiters. One would believe this to certainly hold for consultants, the forerunners in adapting to the continuously changing strategies, technologies, and business models of the digital era.

While our data shows that consultant applicants score on average 12% higher on learning ability compared to the baseline, there is also evidence that relatively high learning ability is not critical for a positive hiring decision. On the contrary, our data indicates that hired consultants score 10% lower on the ability to

learn, when compared to those who do not get hired.

What is learning ability, and why should it matter for the recruiters who hire consultants? We dug into the trends in consultant hiring, so that all you need to do is read ahead!

The Learning Curve: Moving From Ability To Agility

The role of a consultant is dynamic, with each project and client offering a new challenge. While excellent analytical, organizational, and social skills all have a standard place in a consultant's toolbox, the rapidly changing business environment of today makes learnability an extremely versatile and perhaps the most valuable skill of all.

The concepts of learning ability and agility stand but a letter apart from one another, yet there is a meaningful difference between them. Learning ability, or cognitive ability, can be seen as a measure of how well and how efficiently an individual can learn something new. It encompasses a range of cognitive processes, including memory, understanding, problem-solving, and application.

Learning agility, on the other hand, is a complex set of skills that enable individuals to learn and unlearn something new in one place and apply it in another, completely different context, as explained by Harver. Fast learners have excellent active listening and analytical skills or, as Indeed puts it, fast learners might not be the most skillful within a specific area, but they are fast to absorb new information and develop new skills quickly.

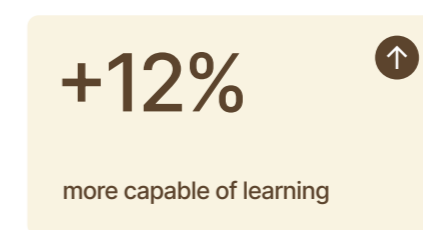
Cognitive ability has consistently been linked to success in almost all jobs. Here are four ways in which consultants can benefit from "the skill that trumps all other skills," as learning ability was recently called by Frederik Anseel of the UNSW Business School.

Fast learning enables rapid adaptation to new industries and emerging technologies

Most consultants work across various industries. A high learning ability enables quick understanding of industry-specific challenges, terminologies, and business models, allowing for both effective and tailored advice. Moreover, with technology evolving at an unprecedented pace, the ability to quickly learn and understand new technologies can empower consultants to offer cutting-edge solutions, keeping their clients ahead of the curve.

The tendency of consultants applicants towards a high learning ability is also confirmed by our data. Compared to the average of all industries, insights from our applicant assessment software indicate, consultant applicants were on average 12% more capable of learning new skills, compared to the baseline.

Compared to the average applicant (all industries), consultant applicants are:



Learning ability is highly correlated with learning agility

According to Harver, a high cognitive ability does not translate into learning agility on a one-to-one basis. However, an individual needs to cross a certain threshold in cognitive ability to become an efficient learner. Therefore, the consultants that learn faster are more likely to also master more dynamic skills such as looking beyond what they know to see the bigger picture, or developing innovative solutions on the basis of past experience.

Quick learners are also better communicators

A high learning ability is not limited to conceptual understanding, but it also encompasses learning to understand versatile social situations. Nuanced social skills, already predictive of learning ability in young children, are associated with active listening, cooperation, and even academic success. Effective communication is one of the essential soft skills for consultants. Understanding the nuances of language and communication styles across different cultures and industries is crucial for consultants to convey complex ideas effectively and build strong relationships with diverse clients.

Stress resilience can further boost cognitive ability

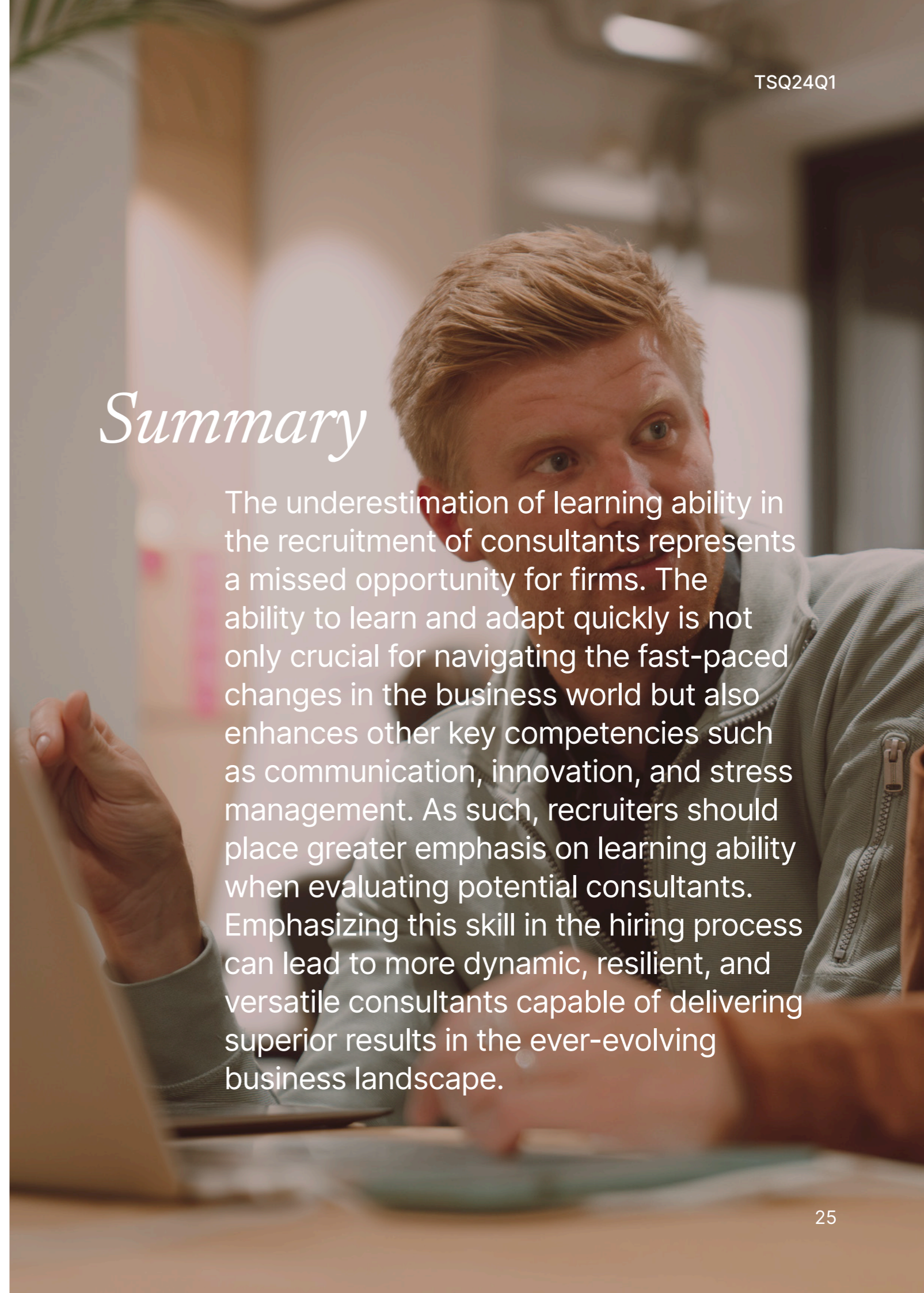
Diamonds may be made under pressure, but so are talented consultants. Navigating tight deadlines, complex problems, and high expectations is certainly not for everyone – especially not for those who cannot handle the stress. Research suggests that experiencing severe stress can have a drain on an individual's cognitive ability. Said differently, stress-resilient consultants might benefit marginally more from a high cognitive ability, as the conditions of their work will not affect their cognitive performance.

Our data indicates that out of a pool of consultant applicants, hired applicants were on average 19% more resilient to stress, compared to the non-hired applicants. While stress resilience is an important skill on its own, combining it with a high ability to learn can do wonders to employee performance.

Hired consultants are found to be, on average:

19%

more resilient to stress, compared to non-hired consultant applicants.



Summary

The underestimation of learning ability in the recruitment of consultants represents a missed opportunity for firms. The ability to learn and adapt quickly is not only crucial for navigating the fast-paced changes in the business world but also enhances other key competencies such as communication, innovation, and stress management. As such, recruiters should place greater emphasis on learning ability when evaluating potential consultants. Emphasizing this skill in the hiring process can lead to more dynamic, resilient, and versatile consultants capable of delivering superior results in the ever-evolving business landscape.

Trends in Lawyer Hiring

All rise! In this section of The Selection Quarterly, we unpack the latest trends that are reshaping who makes the cut in the competitive field of law. Using unique data from our applicant assessment software, we provide fresh insights about what to look for in lawyer candidates as a recruiter.

The applicants in our sample fill out an online assessment, after which their candidate profile is shared with the firm. This objective assessment eliminates any recruiter bias that might otherwise influence the hiring

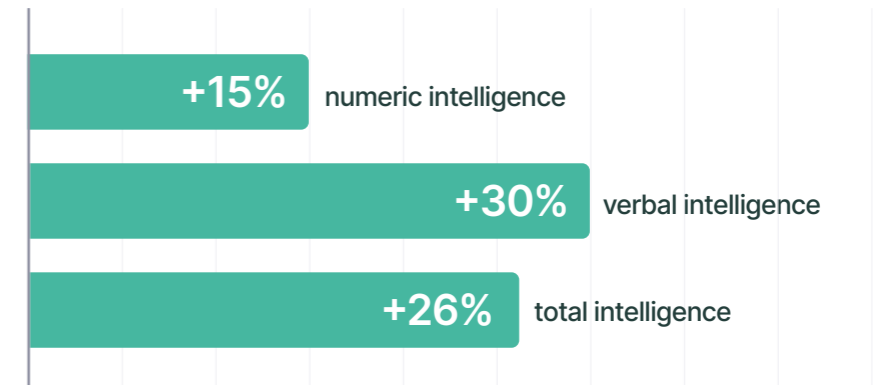
decision. Therefore, a hiring choice depends on objectively measured applicant characteristics, and we may credibly compare the applicants that get the job to those who do not.



Hired applicants: If you're intelligent, you're in

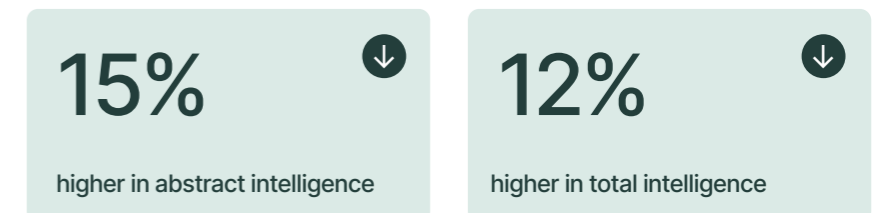
Our data enables us to compare the characteristics of hired lawyers to those that were not selected for the role. Total intelligence, and verbal intelligence in particular, is found to play an important role in being hired by a law firm. Namely, the average hired lawyer applicant scores significantly higher in both numerical and verbal intelligence. The level of abstract reasoning is on average equal across the hired and non-hired applicants, indicating little proof of selection based on abstract intelligence alone.

Hired lawyer applicants in our data score, on average:
Compared to non-hired lawyer applicants.



Abstract intelligence enters the picture when we compare lawyer applicants to all applicants in all industries. In particular, lawyer applicants, hired or not, are found to score on average 15% higher in abstract intelligence than everyone else. This could be caused by a selection bias: those who pursue a legal career might inherently possess higher levels of abstract intelligence. In that case, the selection on abstract intelligence has already occurred upon entering law school!

The average lawyer applicant in our data scores



compared to the average applicant across industries.

What makes lawyer applicants different from other candidates?

The legal profession demands a high degree of responsibility and problem-solving. Our findings resonate with this. When comparing lawyer applicants to all applicants across all industries, two distinct differences stand out.

First, we find lawyer applicants to be on average 24% more responsible compared to all applicants in all industries. Not only are lawyers entrusted with sensitive information and required to adhere to strict ethical standards, but the consequences of errors necessitates them to take a responsible approach.

Second, we find the average lawyer applicant to be 17% more curious. Lawyers may not always be associated with curiosity, but it can nevertheless be an important driver of success in the field. In order to provide value and stay relevant for their clients, lawyers should approach each case with a natural curiosity. Oh, lawyers. Passing the bar exam, only to set the bar extremely high for everyone else!

The average lawyer applicant in our data is:



compared to the average applicant across industries.

Real life is different from the movies

Looking at the data, hired lawyers appear highly adaptable, mentally resilient, and overall better at managing stress, compared to applicants not hired. This seems trivial. Due to the nature of the legal profession, law firms will look for candidates that can excel under high pressure.

Compared to non-hired applicants, hired lawyer applicants in our data are on average:



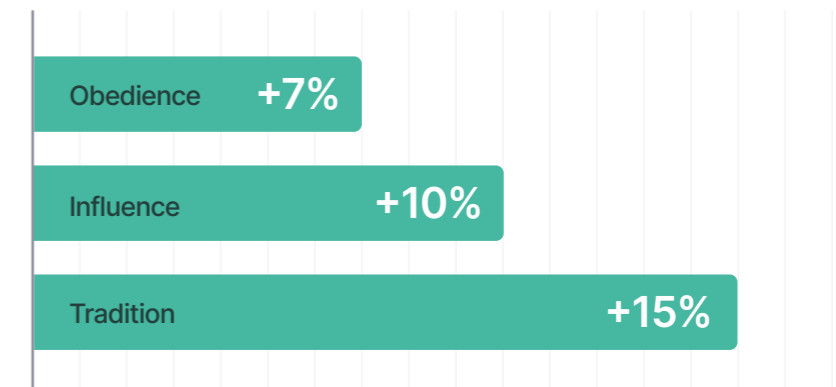
More interestingly, we find hired lawyers to be less assertive and proactive than non-hired lawyers. Additionally, lawyer applicants are in general less assertive than the average applicant across industries. The Hollywood image of bold and forceful lawyers seems to be quite far from the truth!

There are a couple explanations to the puzzling result. First, lawyers are often trained to be analytical, cautious, and precise in their language and actions, translating into a lower degree of assertiveness. Second, lawyers should have a service-oriented attitude. As a result, they may resolve disputes through negotiation and compromise rather than assertive confrontation.

Objection, your Honour!

Hired and non-hired applicants in our data differ vastly in terms of what drives them. Our data indicates that hired lawyers are relatively more satisfied in an environment where obedience, influence, and tradition are highly valued. Lawyers who thrive in environments valuing obedience and tradition may align better with the conventional legal culture, making them more appealing for traditional law firms or legal departments to hire.

The hired lawyer applicants in our data consider these motives relatively important:



Summary

What competencies should a recruiter look for in a pool of ambitious lawyer applicants? Intelligence plays a big role, for one. Moreover, hired lawyers are found to be more adaptable, mentally resilient, and less assertive than non-hired lawyers. These key characteristics of hired lawyers indicate a preference for analytical, stable, and service-oriented professionals in the legal field.

Traditional Legal Culture is Still Valued by Applicants

A culture of obedience, influence, and tradition continues to motivate successful lawyers, data from our applicant assessment software reveals. Specifically, we find that hired lawyers are relatively more driven by traditional values, compared to non-hired ones. At the same time, the legal field has – for a time now – been witnessing what Thomson Reuters called the “slow death of the traditional law firm”. With technology as an accelerator for flexible and hybrid work, many have shown frustration against the rigid structures of legal companies.

With our somewhat countering insights, can we infer that traditional legal culture is alive and well? We use data from our applicant assessment software to understand what lawyer applicants think.

Lawyer applicants value a formal culture on average

9%

more than the baseline applicant in our platform

The Uberization of Corporate Law

The contemporary demand for immediacy, flexibility, and accessibility in legal services has led to a shift towards a more agile way of working in many legal firms. As Forbes noted in 2017, the new legal culture is largely defined by demand-driven changes. However, much of this transformation has been made possible by companies leveraging technological innovation. In the extreme case, lawyers are available at the click of a button, much like summoning a ride on Uber. Lexoo, the London-based legal technology company, keeps a roster of legal luminaries around the globe, offering an effortless process to legal advice.

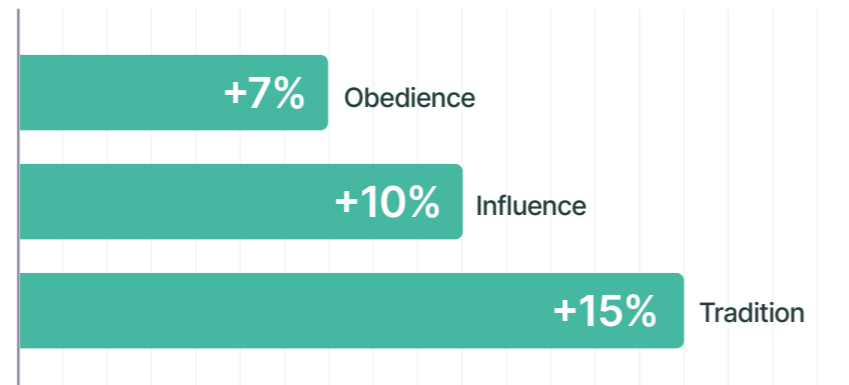
Selection on Observables

Our data shows that hired lawyers favor traditional values. But what about the applicants that do not get chosen? Interestingly, we find that the non-hired applicants place much less value on obedience and tradition, compared to the applicants who are hired. Moreover, when comparing the average lawyer applicant to the average applicant across industries, lawyer applicants are found to be 16% less conforming and value tradition 13% less than the baseline, albeit favoring a formal culture! It seems that, to some extent, traditional values may appear more popular than they are because law firms are selecting applicants whose preferences align with the cultural status quo.

Tradition Strikes Back

In a recent opinion piece, Huw Miles, a Managing Partner at Paris Smith LLP, lists seven elements that in his view can make a traditional law firm thrive. While recognizing the charm of the “virtual model”, he claims that it is important – especially for entrants to the profession – to understand what aspects in organizational culture can keep a traditional law firm “alive and well”. Interestingly, many of the aspects raised by Miles are matched in the cultural preferences of the lawyer applicants in our data.

Hired lawyer applicants in our data consider these motives relatively important:



First, profitable growth and development are essential drivers in a traditional law firm, Miles writes. Similarly, the lawyer applicants in our data place 17% more value on a culture that rewards performance at the highest level, compared to the average applicant across industries. Additionally, Miles emphasizes the role of career progression, and a path to a partnership where appropriate, as an important factor in legal culture. This resonates with our finding that result-oriented cultures with strong possibilities for professional growth are valued more highly by lawyer applicants, relative to the baseline applicant in our data.

While neither professional growth nor result-orientedness are exclusive to the traditional culture, these qualities are unquestionably present in traditional law firms. Combined with our finding that obedience, influence, and tradition are all important motivators for the average hired lawyer, there is evidence that the traditional culture will not be facing extinction anytime soon.

Lawyer applicants value a culture that rewards performance (+17%), is result-oriented (+3%), and accommodates professional growth (+5%)

compared to the average applicant across industries.

Finally, Miles advises anyone in doubt of the traditional model to look at the top 100 global law firms. Among the best of the best, according to Miles, tradition is flourishing – yet often adjusted to fit the needs of the client in each situation.

Summary

The consulting model adopted by the ‘Uberized’ law firms challenges the traditional legal culture that has – among other things – been called hierarchical, rigid, reactive, risk-averse, internally focused and lacking creativity and diversity. While it may be time to kiss some of these aspects goodbye in 2024, the traditional model may still be destined to thrive under the correct cultural adjustments. While there is reason to believe that law firms are selecting applicants based on their preferences towards a traditional culture, our data illustrates that the average lawyer applicant is still looking for a culture that can challenge them, all while rewarding excellence with a generous hand.