FREE GUIDE · 2026 EDITION

The 2026 AI Recruiting Playbook

Screen 10× more candidates without adding headcount.

A practical, vendor-neutral guide from Screeq — the AI recruiting platform built for in-house talent teams. Every statistic in this PDF links to a primary 2024–2026 source on the citations page.

Questions? coffee@screeq.com

What you'll get from this guide

01 · The volume problem in numbers

Roles posted in 2026 receive 3× the applications they did in 2021 — typical open roles now see **300+ applications**. AI adoption in HR jumped from 26% in 2024 to **43% in 2025**, with publicly-traded firms leading at 58%. The teams winning here aren't adding recruiters; they're moving repeatable screening work onto AI — exactly what Screeq was built for.

02 · Where AI helps and where it hurts

A simple way to think about your 5-stage funnel:

- **Sourcing** — AI extends your reach, but final outreach should stay human.
- **Resume screening** — Highest ROI for AI. Frees ~52% of recruiter day from admin.
- **Initial assessment** — Async interviews + AI scoring scale 10× without quality loss.
- **Final interviews** — Keep human. Use AI to draft questions, not to decide.
- **Offer & close** — AI assists scheduling; humans negotiate.

03 · The compliance floor (and why it matters everywhere)

The strictest rules today are in New York City (Local Law 144, bias audits), Colorado (SB 24-205, impact assessments), and the European Union (AI Act, high-risk classification). **Even if you don't hire in those regions today,** these frameworks are the template the rest of the world is copying. Building to them now means you won't have to retrofit when your regulator catches up.

> Action: ask any AI hiring vendor for (a) an annual bias-audit summary, (b) a model card describing what the model was trained on, and (c) an export of every decision the model made on your candidates. If they can't produce all three, walk.

04 · The scoring rubric template you can copy today

A **rubric** (see glossary) is just a one-page scoring sheet that every interviewer fills in the same way. It is the single highest-leverage change most teams can make.

Template — mid-level individual contributor:
• Domain knowledge — 30%
• Problem-solving signal — 30%
• Communication clarity — 20%
• Stakeholder navigation — 20%

Each criterion is scored 1–5 with a one-sentence anchor per score level (e.g. for Communication: *1 = unclear and meandering · 3 = clear with prompts · 5 = structured, concise, audience-aware*). Use the same five criteria for every candidate on the role; weight them differently for senior/leadership roles.

05 · 30 / 60 / 90-day rollout plan

- **Days 1–30:** pick one high-volume role, write the rubric, turn on AI CV scoring, baseline your funnel metrics.
- **Days 31–60:** add async interviews for screen-stage, train two reviewers on rubric calibration.
- **Days 61–90:** publish bias-audit summary, ship candidate-decision export for compliance, expand to a second role family.

The numbers that should shape your strategy

Current data points — every one drawn from a 2024–2026 primary or peer-reviewed report. **Click the link under each citation** on the Sources page to open the original report.

43%
Organisations using AI in HR in 2025, up from 26% in 2024. [1]

300+
Average applications per role in 2026 — 3× the 2021 baseline. [2]

52%
Of a recruiter's working day spent on admin that needs no recruiting skill. [3]

81%
Of recruiters report burnout — task misalignment, not raw hours, is the cause. [3]

1 Feb 2026
Colorado SB 24-205 impact-assessment deadline takes effect. [4]

Aug 2026
EU AI Act high-risk hiring rules begin phased enforcement. [5]

Where Screeq fits

Screeq ships AI CV scoring, async interview screening, structured rubric templates, a published bias-audit summary, and a one-click candidate-decision export — the exact compliance evidence regulators are starting to ask for. The frameworks in this guide work without us. With us, the screening half of the funnel collapses from days to minutes.

Plain-language glossary

Recruiting has its own shorthand. If a term in this guide felt unfamiliar, here's the short version. For a fuller list, see screeq.com/glossary.

ATS	Applicant Tracking System — the software used to manage open roles, candidates, and the hiring pipeline.
JD	Job Description — the written posting that describes a role, its responsibilities, and requirements.
TA team	Talent Acquisition team — the in-house recruiting function (sometimes just called 'recruiting').
HM	Hiring Manager — the person the new hire will report to. Owns the final yes/no on a candidate.
IC	Individual Contributor — someone who delivers work directly, without managing other people.
CTC	Cost To Company — the total annual cost of an employee (salary + benefits + employer taxes).
Rubric	A scoring sheet with named criteria (e.g. 'communication', 'problem-solving'), each rated on a fixed scale (e.g. 1–5). Replaces 'gut feel' with apples-to-apples comparisons.
Scorecard	The filled-in rubric for one candidate after one interview.
Async interview	An on-demand interview the candidate records when it suits them — no scheduling, no live call.
LLM	Large Language Model — the type of AI behind ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude. Used here for CV parsing and scoring.
SLM	Small Language Model — a smaller, cheaper, faster AI model. Often runs inside a vendor for narrow tasks.
PwC	PricewaterhouseCoopers — one of the 'Big Four' global consulting and audit firms.
SHRM	Society for Human Resource Management — the largest US-based HR professional body. Publishes the annual benchmarking report.
DOL	United States Department of Labor — the federal agency that publishes the bad-hire cost standard.
EEOC	Equal Employment Opportunity Commission — the US federal agency that enforces anti-discrimination law in hiring.
NYC AEDT	New York City Local Law 144 — requires an annual bias audit for any 'Automated Employment Decision Tool' used on NYC candidates.

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EU AI Act	EU regulation that classifies AI used for hiring as 'high-risk' and imposes transparency, logging, and human-oversight duties.
r (correlation)	Predictive-validity coefficient. 0 = no relationship, 1 = perfect prediction. r = 0.5 is considered very strong in HR research.

Sources & citations

Every statistic above maps to one of the entries below. Click the link to open the original report.

[1] 43% of organisations use AI in HR (up from 26% in 2024); publicly traded firms lead at 58%. *SHRM 2025 Talent Trends overview*
https://www.shrm.org/topics-tools/news/talent-acquisition

[2] Applications per hire have tripled since 2021; typical roles now receive 300+ applications. *Ashby 2026 Talent Trends Report*
https://www.ashbyhq.com/talent-trends

[3] 81% of recruiters report burnout; 52% of the working day is spent on non-recruiting admin (single 40+ agency dataset). *Automindz Solutions analysis, 2026*
https://automindz-solutions.com/blog/why-your-best-recruiters-burn-out

[4] Colorado SB 24-205 requires impact assessments for high-risk AI systems used in employment decisions; effective 1 Feb 2026. *Colorado General Assembly · SB 24-205*
https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb24-205

[5] EU AI Act classifies AI used in recruitment and employee selection as 'high-risk'; phased enforcement begins August 2026. *European Commission · AI Act overview*
https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/regulatory-framework-ai