



More time scheduling than assessing

35% of recruiter time goes to interview coordination, 25% to screening. Only a quarter of the hours is assessment.

Summary

A 2026 survey of more than a hundred organisations by Aptitude Research shows that 35% of recruiter time goes to interview coordination, 25% to screening, and 24% to candidate communication. Of the 219 employers Phenom audited, 94% do not offer automated interview scheduling at the point of application. 6% do. 1% deploy a voice screening agent. 57% of surveyed organisations already use some form of automation agent, but adoption clusters at the front of the process, not at the coordination steps that consume the largest share of hours.

Where the hours go

In 2026, Aptitude Research surveyed more than a hundred organisations on their hiring process. The time allocation that emerges is lopsided in a way most recruiters recognise but rarely see quantified.

35% of recruiter time goes to interview coordination



Aptitude Research, Hiring Automation Survey 2026, n=100+ organisations.

35% of time goes to interview coordination: aligning calendars, sending reminders, rescheduling, and confirming. 25% goes to screening: assessing whether a candidate is suitable. 24% goes to candidate communication: status messages, rejections, and updates. A quarter of available hours goes to the work that directly contributes to the hiring decision.

What automation changes

Of the 219 employers Phenom audited on their application process, 94% do not offer automated interview scheduling at the point of application. The candidate applies, the application lands in an applicant tracking system, and a recruiter schedules the interview manually. That manual step is the 35%.

Among employers that have automated, the outcomes match the effort. 42% of organisations reporting effective automation say quality of hire improved. 44% report fewer interview steps. 42% report faster time to hire.

57% of surveyed organisations already use some form of automation agent in the hiring process. But those agents cluster at the front: sourcing, initial screening, and chatbot interaction. The coordination steps that consume the largest share of time, calendar alignment, no-shows, and rescheduling, remain mostly manual.

Why coordination does not fix itself

The problem is not that employers are unaware of the tools. 62% say automation is more urgent than a year ago. 44% point to screening and one-way interviews as the step most in need of AI. 31% name scheduling agents as the next impactful investment.

But adoption lags behind intent. 19% report advanced, end-to-end automation. 54% operate at a foundational or developing level. The gap between ambition and the state of the technology is wide enough to build a service in.

What cuts against this

Two caveats.

First, 72% of surveyed organisations rate their inline candidate experience as effective or very effective, even though the same group scores low on automation. That could mean satisfaction measures what the employer experiences rather than what the candidate experiences. It could also mean that manual coordination is effective but expensive.

Second, the survey measures self-reported time allocation, not tracked time. The 35% is what organisations estimate, not what a time study shows. The direction is more informative than the precise split.

What this means in practice

- The 35% is the strongest argument for an agency defending its fee. The conversation is not "we find better candidates" but "we take the coordination off your team so your people spend that time on assessment."
- 94% of employers do not schedule an interview at the moment of application. Every intake where a client says their process takes too long, you can answer with that percentage.
- 57% already use automation agents, but almost none for the scheduling step. The market invests at the front of the funnel (sourcing, screening) and leaves the back (coordination, communication) manual. That is the step an agency can do faster.
- Among employers that have automated effectively, 42% report better quality and 42% report shorter time to hire. Those are the two outcomes an agency sells.

Method and sources

The time allocation comes from the Aptitude Research survey of more than a hundred organisations, published as part of the State of Hiring Automation 2026 report. The adoption figures come from the Phenom audit of 219 employers, based on publicly accessible career sites, collected between December 2025 and February 2026.

The survey measures self-reported time allocation and adoption levels. The audit measures the presence of specific automation capabilities in the publicly visible application flow.

The figures on agent adoption (57%), urgency (62%), and satisfaction (72%) are survey results on a sample of more than a hundred organisations. The sample size is small for population estimates, and the results are indicative.

Phenom is the vendor of the platform that scores on the measured categories, and Aptitude Research conducted the survey in partnership with Phenom. Both interests apply to every use of the figures. The report is published at stateofha.phenom.com.

Sources

- Phenom, State of Hiring Automation: 2026 Benchmark Report
- Aptitude Research, Hiring Automation Survey 2026