

Talent Pulse | Q3 2023 Edition

Getting Ghosted:

Is Candidate Behavior
Haunting You?

Why Ghosting? The Employer Side

After months (if not years) of [talent shortages](#), we've seen a long-awaited uptick in applicants across many industries — seemingly ready to get to work. Great news, right? Of course. However, (you knew it was coming) employers ALSO report continued candidate ghosting and fallout throughout the hiring process. So, it would seem candidate application numbers are being inflated with window shoppers, and for one reason or another, many are walking away without buying. What gives?

It would be simple to cue the now-familiar banter about the lack of work ethic and accountability plaguing the job market today.

Simple – but not productive – and who has time to spin their wheels in this hiring climate? Instead of focusing on the “what” of this phenomenon, this piece seeks to **explore the “why.”** Many employers tend to look through a very critical lens when it comes to being on the short end of disappointing candidate behavior. Putting those frustrations to the side, a more important question begs to be asked: Why aren't candidates buying what your organization is selling?



What is Ghosting?

The term originated in the dating world and describes the act of suddenly and abruptly severing communication with someone without explanation. In an era of impersonal, digital communication, it's gotten much easier to do.

In a [Korn Ferry survey](#), roughly a third of participating U.S. retailers said that at least 25% of the candidates they hire into distribution center roles don't show up to the first day of work.

The Employer Side

What gives?

“We continue to implement strategies with the goal of circumventing ghosting, but when someone wants to bail there isn't much we can do”, said Gared Chrismer, Manpower recruiter for South Central PA. “It is a helplessly frustrating feeling. For example, if someone has an interview scheduled at a client, we are sending daily reminders for the interview up until an hour prior and the candidate may still ghost us without ever responding.”

Reporter Chip Cutter of the Wall Street Journal [echoed this sentiment](#). “I spoke with a cleaning company in Texas that said about 80 percent of their new hires just aren't showing up after they complete a couple of days of training. Some companies are even putting in their job listings, “No ghosting, you need to be reliable.”

Some have attributed the phenomenon to the lingering effect of the pandemic, when the talent shortage gave candidates in many industries the upper hand. Yet as Covid-19 has a continually lessened impact on our lives, one can only speculate that this new mindset may be here to stay.

The Fallout on Productivity

When hiring managers post jobs, interview workers, and make offers, they assume they're well on the way to full employment (or something close to it). But when instead, they're suddenly caught understaffed, it wreaks havoc on productivity.

Some companies are even putting in their job listings, “No ghosting.”

The Candidate Side

Reduced productivity and the inability to deliver on strategic initiatives can lead to higher costs, reduced product quality, loss of competitive advantage as well as a damaged reputation in the marketplace. And these effects have a tendency to spread. Manufacturing, in particular, has the highest multiplier effect of any economic sector: [for every \\$1 spent in manufacturing, another \\$2.74 is added to the economy.](#)

The Candidate Side

Sorry, not sorry.

[More than 75% of job seekers](#) have been ghosted after an interview, never hearing from a company again.

Google “ghosting in the hiring process” and you’ll find many stories like [this one](#) from an anonymous job seeker: “Maybe this [being ghosted] will help employers clean up their act. Honestly, in all my years working and interviewing for jobs, I’ve only had a handful of companies get back to me after an interview. I’ve had so many just go AWOL after an interview that I thought it was normal employer behavior.”

What Is Driving This Trend?

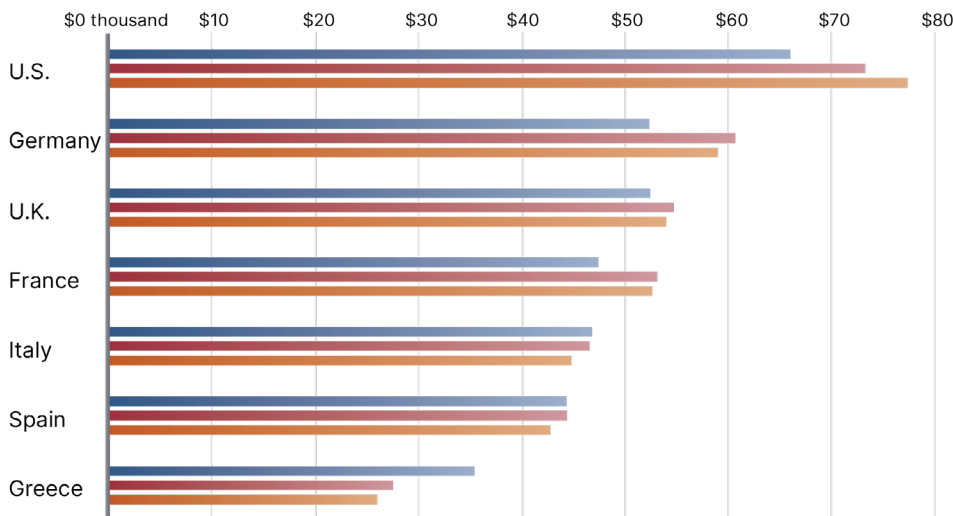
To explore a solution, it’s necessary to dig into the causes. One of them, and it’s a significant one, is mentioned above. Many candidates are simply treating employers the way they’ve been treated for years. But, turning down a job that they were interested enough to apply for is still a puzzler.

The Economy Plays a Part

Big picture: though it may not feel like it, Americans are better off than they were in 2008, especially when compared to other Western nations.

Average Annual Wages

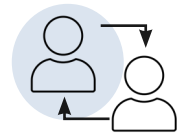
■ 2008 ■ 2019 ■ 2022



Note: Adjusted for inflation and purchasing power.

Source: Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development

A strong job market, lingering pandemic effects (including many hybrid or remote options) and recent news that inflation has cooled may have made some job seekers more particular.



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What's Driving This Trend?

Low Unemployment

With historically low unemployment continuing, many job seekers are already employed and are casually scoping the market to see what's out there and whether they can get "a better deal." And often, they do.

In some industries, workers have their pick of jobs. For example, durable goods manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, education and health services all are experiencing a labor shortage — these industries have more unfilled job openings than unemployed, experienced workers. Even if every unemployed person with experience in the durable goods manufacturing industry were employed, the [industry would fill only around 65% of the vacant jobs](#).

Easy-Apply Too Easy?

Job-search algorithms send open positions right to workers. This inspires "semi-passive" candidates to act, when they may not have otherwise. And the 'easy apply' option on many sites means candidates can send off resumes for multiple jobs more effortlessly than ever. Just like in social media relationships, there is no hardiness, no commitment. Today we measure success on impressions, views, and clicks; and that's great for building interest in your product, but we must exercise caution and be realistic about how many candidates we receive through this approach are "all in."

By focusing on getting an immediate (and shallow) commitment with click-to-apply, you are using the same consumer logic as buying a lipstick on impulse ... but the lipstick is a \$10 commitment, and you can toss it if you don't like it. In fact, asking a job seeker to react by clicking requires less commitment than making a purchase. Understand that this approach, while a great part of an overall recruitment strategy, may not have a high conversion rate and may not always be the best option.

How to Increase the Odds

We've heard the refrain over the last couple of years—candidates are in the driver's seat. But maybe we need to do more to get them to pull into our parking lot. Let's put it this way, if you're a large, multinational corporation, you invest millions of dollars researching the target market for your product. Even the smallest businesses invest a significant number of resources into understanding future customers. They need to know who their customers are to get the right message in front of them. So why wouldn't you put a fraction of that effort into researching and attracting your ideal candidate?

What's Your EVP?

Crafting a strong Employer Value Proposition is job one of attracting and retaining better candidates. An Employer Value Proposition, or EVP, is the sum total of what your company has to offer the candidate.

Many companies have a carefully crafted brand. Isn't that the same as an EVP?



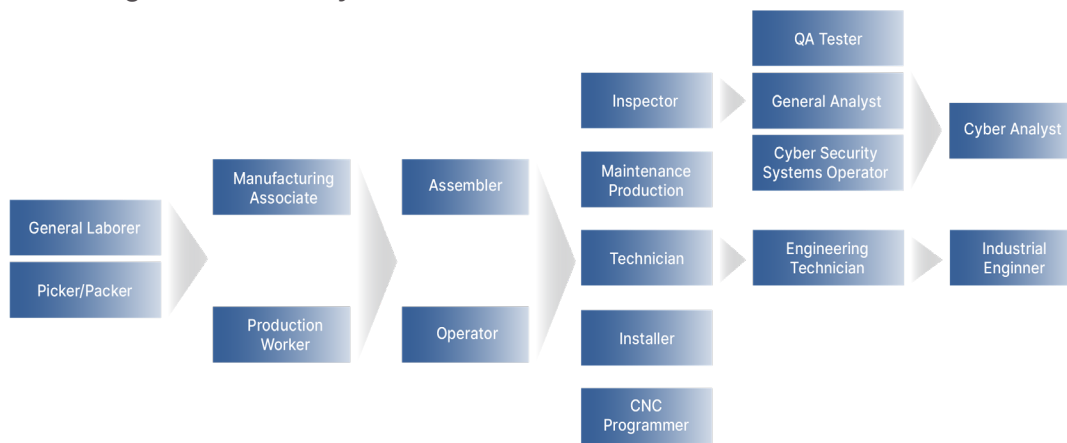
According to ManpowerGroup's latest [What Workers Want](#) research, employees across all sectors, at all levels, are demanding more choice and autonomy over when they work; choosing start and end times to their working days, and being offered choice over shift patterns to fit around individual needs.

What's Your EVP?

They may have similarities, but they're not the same. While your brand is designed to appeal to your potential customer (or investor), the EVP is directed to the potential employee. It's a compelling answer to the question, "Why should I work for your company instead of somewhere else?" It should include a realistic picture of the job, including the culture, so that the candidate can make an informed decision. [A whopping 69% of candidates report](#) they have actually discontinued a hiring process after discovering negative information about the company.

It's important to realize that an EVP is not a tagline to attach to job postings or other communication. It's the underlying message that permeates all employer communications, programs, processes and data, as well as the actions, behaviors, commitment and engagement of everyone that interacts with applicants. Crafting an EVP means focusing less on what you want from a candidate and more on what you can offer them.

Illustrating Career Pathways



Career pathways are a great addition to your EVP, enabling candidates to envision a future within your organization. This graphic depicts possible career pathways for an entry-level worker in manufacturing.

Recruitment Marketing

Recruitment marketing works hand-in-hand with your EVP. Recruitment marketers are professionals that promote your company as the product and your desired candidate as the target market. They provide assistance with creating an EVP and executing it across every channel, attracting better-aligned, difficult-to-reach candidates.

Time to Value

Many companies are discovering the value of offering an extra incentive for completing their first day: a gift card, free lunch, daily paycheck. Even though most ghosting happens before Day One, communicating this benefit to a candidate during the interview is likely to increase the chances they will show up as scheduled.



When employers ghost a candidate during the interview process, a negative mental toll is certainly paid. True, some applicants may not be totally committed to your open role; but there are certainly those who are. For these candidates, excitement grows once they've invested their time in an interview, and you can bet they have already started to plan their lives around the possibility of being selected. Can you imagine then, the continued wait for feedback as days stretch into weeks? So, if we are playing "who got it worse", these abandoned candidates probably take the cake — especially when this happens time after time. Should we be surprised with how poorly our own medicine tastes?

The Bottom Line

Focus on DEIB

An effective Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) program can and should be part of your EVP. Not only is DEIB important to job seekers, but opening the doors a little wider will bring in skilled candidates you may have unintentionally been overlooking. [Recent research has shown](#) that underrepresented groups are 20% more likely to experience employer ghosting—these candidates may respond positively to a strong DEIB commitment.

Fill the Funnel

If you think of a barrage of applicants as filling a funnel, you get the idea. If you've been too restrictive at the top of the funnel, you may be missing out on some very viable candidates. The difference is that a strong EVP that stands out from your competitors will magnetically attract more **COMMITTED** individuals into that funnel - so not only will your funnel be more full, it will be full of individuals who truly want to work for you.

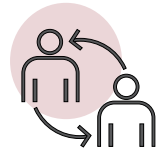
But don't make the mistake of opening the floodgates to everyone; as stated above, be cautious about how and when you use an "easy apply" feature.

The Bottom Line

As our culture is becoming more and more impersonal, recruiters and hiring managers need to remember the golden rule: treat candidates like you want to be treated. Communication is key to ending the ghosting epidemic. Providing feedback to candidates who are not selected models the kind of behavior we all want to see from both sides. When you provide good feedback, you are strengthening your reputation in the marketplace. Just like customers, candidates with a bad experience will share it on social media. Providing good feedback can bolster your reputation as it reinforces your EVP.

Also, it's time to ditch the old ways of recruiting: putting a sign up and expecting candidates to flock to your door. With a strong EVP and a recruitment marketing approach, you're inviting select "window shoppers" to purposefully enter your place of business, already predisposed to "buy." As recruiters and marketers, Manpower has the experience and the expertise to help you craft an EVP that stands out from the crowd. Learn more about our services.

For information on all the ways we can help, connect with [your Manpower workforce expert today.](#)



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