



harver

White paper

Restaurant Volume Hiring in 2021

Introduction

Restaurant recruitment has always been challenging – from high rates of attrition, to a competitive labor market, decentralized hiring practices and the need for restaurant managers to act as recruiters. The often slow, inefficient recruitment processes and attrition and mis-hiring that resulted from them were seen as a simple fact of operating in the industry.

While innovation has leapt in other parts of the business, from inventory management, to self-service ordering kiosks and even dynamic order displays, this level of progress hasn't been seen across the industry's recruitment practices. Most restaurant groups have task forces focused on nurturing a more digital culture, predominantly focused on delivery and grab-and-go technology.

Even in organizations with a high focus on leveraging technology across the business, optimizing the recruitment process has often been a forgotten aspect of the overall digital transformation of the business. As a result, some functions of operations were more prepared than others to weather a global health crisis.

When the world went into lockdown, restaurants with a digital strategy for ordering, pick-up and delivery already in place were better positioned to react to the massive changes in the market and customer behavior. With services like UberEats and Postmates flourishing, delivery became a lifeline to weather the storm. Mobile ordering skyrocketed – enabling contactless transactions with customers that boosted sales.

Digitizing the order and pick-up process served as a survival tool. But, restaurants are now feeling the impact of overlooking their recruitment process, as competition for talent becomes much more fierce at the very moment the industry is re-opening. Unemployment rates skyrocketed at the onset of the pandemic, and many restaurant workers who were impacted have taken a step back from the industry.

With the aid of increased pandemic unemployment assistance, many are hesitant to return to work or have left the industry entirely in search of higher pay or job security. As hiring accelerates, with hundreds of thousands of jobs returning to the industry, restaurants find themselves in a tight race to secure the best talent for their business, and are facing the difficulties to retain workers in an industry with notoriously high attrition.

In this highly competitive market, during a time where digitization and efficiency are prioritized across most aspects of business, the old ways of recruiting have become ineffective. Restaurants will need to look for ways not only to future-proof ordering and delivery, but also the processes that provide them with the staff to keep operations running. Recruitment strategy will be the next key tool for survival in the era of restaurant recovery.

At Harver, the digital transformation of volume hiring processes has been our bread and butter for the past 6 years. Our solution is tailor made to turn manual, laborious volume hiring processes into efficient, candidate friendly digital experiences.

In the past 12 months alone, we've helped organizations around the world like McDonalds, HMS Host, and Burger King with their digital transformation and assisted them not only in meeting the demands of operating during the pandemic, but making sure they'd thrive in years to come.

The relationships we've cultivated with our customers have helped us to optimize our approach, and turn our product into a sophisticated, all-encompassing solution unlike anything else on the market.

In this white paper, we'll dive into the specifics of restaurant volume hiring, the technology we've built to help you overcome your recruitment challenges and the benefits of having a digitally transformed hiring process in place. After reading this paper, you'll be well prepared to take the next step towards an end-to-end digital hiring process that helps you make faster, better, and fundamentally fair hires, and that will stand the test of time.

The state of recruitment in the restaurant industry

The restaurant industry has had a tumultuous year – having lost more revenue and jobs than almost any other industry amidst the pandemic. At the end of 2020, the restaurant industry had total sales that were \$240 billion less than the pre-pandemic forecast, and over 22 million jobs were lost.

However, despite having been impacted more than most other sectors, the restaurant industry – particularly quick-service restaurants (QSRs) and fast casual – are poised for one of the strongest recoveries. QSRs are facing surging demand, especially those who offer drive-thrus, or who have leaned into offering delivery and curb-side pickup.

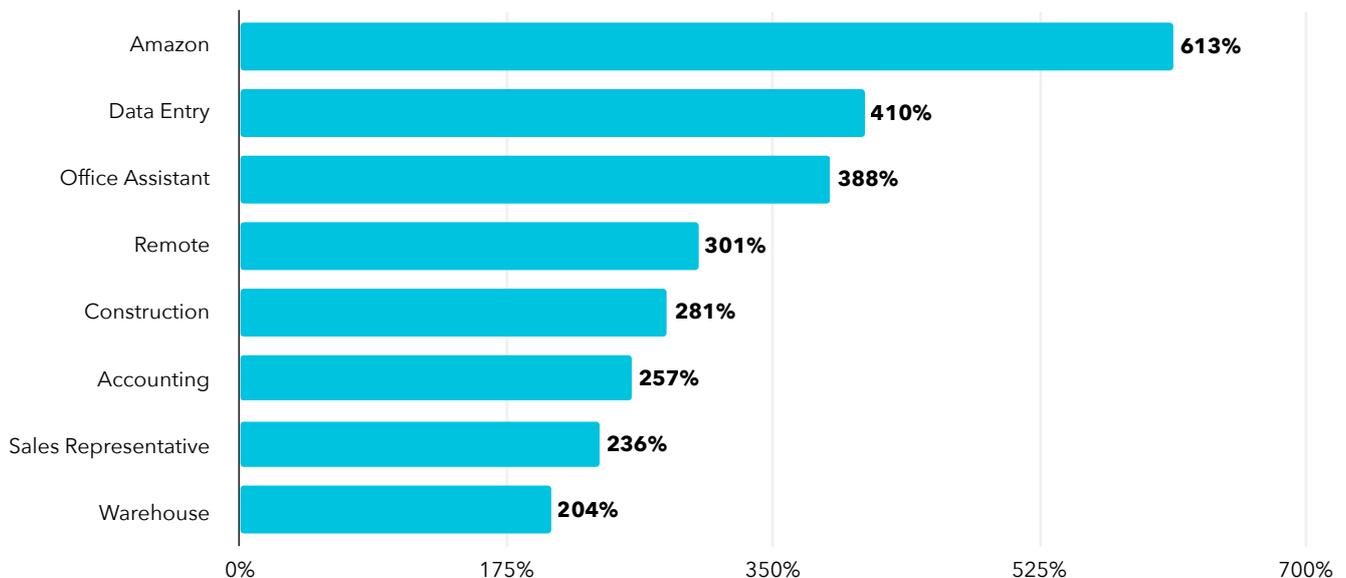
As restrictions ease, traffic to restaurants is expected to increase, the trend being positive for both sit-down and counter service restaurants. And although more formal dining stands to benefit the most, QSRs and fast casual restaurants will likely continue to pick up steam towards a full recovery.

That's good news for both restaurant owners and job seekers: more orders and sales means a higher workload, which translates into a higher demand for workers and thus more job openings. But, this industry-wide recovery is causing a stark spike in demand for labor all at once, leading to difficulty finding available talent.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the accommodation and food service sectors saw the largest increase in job openings in March 2021 compared to February 2021, adding no less than 185,000 jobs. Since March 2020, almost half a million (474,000) vacancies have been added.

% Change in share of job searches by restaurant servers Glassdoor

Job seekers who searched for "restaurant server" on Glassdoor in January and February 2020 are now searching for jobs in other industries.



Source: [Glassdoor](#)

Even with those additions, as of April 2021 the industry boasts 2.8 million less jobs than the year prior, and the unemployment rate is hanging around 10.8%. Despite this, the labor market has tightened, as many workers have left for other industries to gain job security, better pay, or to reduce their face-to-face contact with others.

A Glassdoor study conducted in May 2020 found that candidates who had previously searched for jobs as a restaurant server were flocking to jobs in delivery, data entry, and as office assistants – marking a stark preference for job security and remote options. Job seekers who have left the industry might be reluctant to return.

When considering talent that remains, a large number of owners see the supplemented unemployment benefits as a culprit, because they may disincentive workers from coming back into the industry.

This has accentuated the already existing restaurant hiring crisis. Prior to the onset of the pandemic, the 2020 State of the Industry report published by the National Restaurant Association showed that three in 10 restaurant operators had job openings that were difficult to fill. The labor shortage, coupled with the expected drop in the pool of younger workers (16-24 year olds) has turned recruitment into a top priority for food service operators.

With the war for talent tougher than ever and the pressure of offering a good dining experience to their customers increasing, organizations are zooming in on their recruitment processes and getting creative with their sourcing and hiring strategies. In addition to strengthening their employment propositions, offering incentives for interviews and organizing hiring parties to attract talent, industry leaders are investing in recruitment technology that enables them to launch initiatives such as 1-minute applications and virtual interviews.

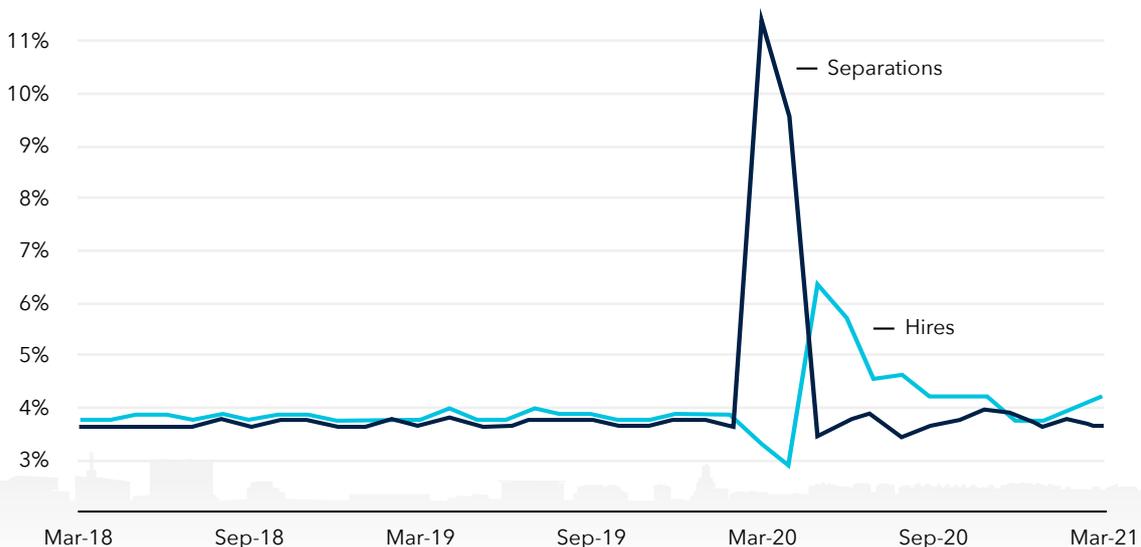
The end goal for restaurant recruiters is to win the battle for talent by making the hiring process more efficient and frictionless for candidates.

While this may seem like an impossible mission for the many QSRs and fast casual restaurants that are still relying on outdated, manual hiring practices, it's an achievable goal for restaurant operators who are open to adopt technology to digitize their recruitment processes and create more agile hiring practices.

We'll dive into the specifics of the digital transformation of recruitment in the restaurant industry in the next sections of this white paper. But first, let's take a closer look at the challenges faced by QSRs and sit down restaurants when it comes to hiring at scale, to understand what exactly should their transformation efforts be directed towards.

Hires and total separations rates, seasonally adjusted

March 2018 - March 2021



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

The challenges of restaurant volume hiring

In the US alone, as of May 2020, [the restaurant industry hires more than 11 million employees](#), with more than 4 million working in quick-service restaurants (QSRs). As you can imagine, this presents a series of challenges that are not experienced in regular recruitment.

On the one hand, fast-food chains face the constant demand for human resources and the ever-present potential for turnover to rear its ugly head. As such, HR and recruitment teams need to make sure that they have enough employees on deck to avoid service disruptions and continue offering top-quality customer service.

On the other hand, quick-service restaurants (QSRs) who operate multiple locations need to maintain consistency and uniformity both in their services and in their recruitment practices. Franchises and chain restaurants that rely on a low-wage workforce need to come up with sourcing and recruiting strategies that enable them to shorten their time-to-hire while recruiting high-quality candidates.

Given the entry-level nature of these jobs, finding candidates shouldn't be a problem; but finding good candidates - as in, applicants who don't quit after a few months and who have the skills needed for representing the brand - is a tough challenge, especially for multi-location QSRs.

As we've learned from our clients, some locations are particularly hard to recruit for, and HR leads need to act fast in order to not lose candidates to competitors. Timing, speed, and a well-coordinated recruitment process are therefore essential for finding good hires for quick-service restaurants.

Let's take a closer look at these QSR recruitment challenges to understand the specifics better.

1. Unwanted employee turnover

Employee turnover is a costly and persistent problem across the entire food service industry. Before the pandemic, the restaurant sector had one of the [highest attrition rates](#) in the United States, some companies losing upwards of [100% of their workforce annually](#). Contrary to expectations, the massive numbers of displaced workers did not lead to a decrease in turnover rates.

Quite the opposite: [data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) shows an increase in the employee separation rates in the accommodation and food services sector, which reached 130.7% compared to 78.9% in 2019. Although a portion of the rise can be attributed to furloughs and layoffs at the onset of the pandemic, we can see that attrition is remaining high as the industry recovers. The attrition rate for March 2021 is [projected to return to pre-pandemic levels, around 79.4%](#).

Attrition is high across the entirety of the industry, but it's much higher in fast-food and quick-service - often hovering between 130-150% [according to CNBC](#). This number is a mix of voluntary and involuntary attrition - both candidates who leave on their own, and those who are let go - pointing to massive issues with the volume recruitment practices of many organizations. Not only does this add up to high costs for employers, it also puts pressure on employees and managers who may be left short staffed.

Yet, reducing employee turnover can be a complex task in the restaurant industry and might take more than [strengthening the employment proposition](#), increasing scheduling flexibility or bumping up benefits. And that's because its root causes are complex as well: on the one hand, restaurant employers need to fast-track their recruitment efforts, so they end up sacrificing quality for quantity, and hiring poor-fitting candidates. On the other hand, candidates don't fully understand what the role entails and end up leaving when they experience the realities of the job.

2. Tighter labor market

Next to employee attrition, food service providers are also struggling with finding talent. And this isn't a new problem: even before the pandemic, restaurant owners were feeling the difficulties of a labor shortage.

Now, with unemployment higher than it was at the start of 2020, QSRs and fast casual restaurants are facing a tighter labor market: because the barriers to entry - and therefore exit - are low, it is more frictionless for candidates to move between companies, especially if one is offering a better schedule or an extra dollar of pay each hour.

In addition, the industry did lose some of its workforce during the pandemic: in December 2020, there were 2.5 million fewer people employed in food service and drink places than February. This left more than 40% of restaurants severely understaffed, both limited-service restaurants and full-service brands being affected.

Many workers left the industry and aren't jumping to return because of safety concerns, job insecurity, or a desire for better pay and benefits that they can find in a different line of work. For talent that remains in the industry, the abundance of jobs and similarity between companies makes it difficult for employers to stand out and secure talent without improving their recruitment process and employment proposition.

With high needs for staff and low barriers for candidates to move between jobs, applicants have the luxury of being able to quickly find work or switch employers. This means that organizations with inefficient recruitment processes will miss out on talent, because candidates are looking to secure a paycheck with the lowest amount of friction possible.

3. Staffing multiple locations

Compared to hiring for a single office or a remote organization, hiring at scale across locations creates a new set of challenges for talent leaders. First, when operating across cities, states or countries, you need to be able to tailor your recruitment process to the reality of each individual labor market.

The recruitment landscape in New York City looks very different from one in Arkansas, for example. Moreover, the availability of talent for one location can be vastly different from another location just a mile away. Often, one restaurant in a busier area might be flooded with applications, while another that's a bit more out of the way struggles to hire enough staff. QSRs need to be able to accommodate the circumstances of multiple locations in one city, while tailoring to various markets.

On the one hand, this implies coping with the rules, regulations, and re-opening plans of various markets. On the other hand, it means that organizations need to be able to accommodate various unemployment rates and varied levels of competition for available talent, all while working with restaurant managers who have locations to run in addition to meeting demands for staff.



Navigating the restaurant hiring crisis

See how leading restaurant players around the globe are tackling the challenges of volume hiring in the post-pandemic world.

[Watch the webinar](#)

4. Restaurant managers have to act as recruiters

Another challenge associated with volume hiring in the restaurant industry is that location managers often have to perform recruitment tasks next to their main responsibilities. But they're not recruiters, and oftentimes they're left to figure out what types of candidates would fit the open positions the best, and what questions to ask during interviews to make sure they hire the best candidates.

While it's undeniable that hiring managers should be involved in the recruitment process, and that certain duties can only be tackled by them, digging into candidates' abilities and identifying the applicants who are most likely to be top performers should not be their responsibility; not when hiring at scale for low-complexity jobs and dealing with entry-level candidates who all look the same on paper.

QSRs and fast casual restaurants are faced with places with a constant high level of demand for oversight and customer service. Restaurant managers have a lot on their plate: from scheduling staff, to training, inventory control, and resolving real-time customer issues.

When faced with recruiting to keep the location well-staffed, especially if dealing with constant attrition, it will quickly become a burden for them to make time to screen resumes, schedule interviews with candidates, and complete onboarding. Moreover, if a manager has to ignore a customer issue to interview a candidate, that's a poor customer experience, so it creates a lose-lose situation. And if a manager leaves a candidate hanging – waiting for a callback or during an interview, that is a poor candidate experience that can cost you talent.

Not to mention, having each store manager run their own recruitment process leaves a lot of room for error, especially in the case of franchises. This creates hundreds or thousands of isolated, localized hiring processes that are difficult to analyze and control from headquarters, leaving you with no data to spot bottlenecks, resolve issues, or manage change.

On top of this, we have the problem of hiring bias: when managers rely on subjective, gut feeling decision making, there's room for mis-hiring. Even if someone is a great general manager, they may not be great at recruiting. If a location manager is bad at recruiting, it results in more mis-hires and higher attrition rates in the long run, only forcing them to recruit even more.

If we zoom out, we see that especially when attrition happens in the first 90 days, the root of the problem is often a result of issues in the hiring process. Even if a role poses a recruitment challenge from having a difficult schedule, low pay, or repetitive work, decreasing new hire attrition is a matter of finding the candidate with the right skills and attitude. And restaurant managers aren't always properly equipped for that.

5. Candidates expect a good experience

As shown above, relying on restaurant managers to find the time to source, screen, schedule, and interview candidates when they have a moment means you risk having a frustrating and slow candidate experience. This is, in itself, a recruitment problem, but the even bigger issue behind it is that in the food service industry, your applicants are often your customers too, and they expect to be treated as such. Thus, a lost applicant can mean a lost customer as well.

But what makes a good candidate experience? If we look at the entry-level talent pool, these applicants are often looking for two things: a paycheck, and job security. They don't want to go through lengthy application processes and waste time crafting resumes and cover letters.

Plus, it's a mistake to assume that candidates are only applying to your organization, or that they'll be willing to wait around. If your recruitment process is frustrating and slow, leaving candidates in the callback phase, you risk losing the best talent to your competitors. Thus, if you want to secure the top candidates, you need to move fast and offer job security before competition does.

To achieve this, some companies are revving up in-person hiring events or 1-minute applications to slash the callback phase – and while these do help cut the time to hire, they create new difficulties for restaurant managers. For instance, a hiring day requires your team and candidates to take hours out of their day to commute to a location and go through a tiring hiring pageant. On the other hand, a 1-minute application saves time for candidates but leaves hiring managers with little actionable information to drive hiring decisions.

And there's one more challenge associated with such initiatives: often, organizations make the mistake of having a one-sided recruitment process. They ask candidates for a lot of time investment and information, but don't offer the same in return: the job descriptions are brief, and candidates don't get the chance to ask questions about the responsibilities and challenges of the day-to-day work.

So you not only miss the opportunity to address the misaligned expectations that contribute so much to early attrition; you also fail in sharing your employment proposition, thus in selling the job and persuading the applicants to choose you.

Meanwhile, big players in the QSR industry are getting creative and making big changes to their candidate experience to fight in the war for talent – and those who will come out on top will balance a great candidate experience with data to make hiring decisions accurate and efficient for talent teams and store managers.

We'll explore the recruitment solutions implemented by the leading names in the restaurant volume hiring space in the next section.

We want to treat our applicants the way we treat our customers. We have to be able to offer them job security within a few days.

- Martijn Ulehake, Employer Branding Specialist at Albert Heijn

How to win the restaurant recruitment game

Gaining a sustainable competitive advantage when recruiting in the restaurant industry requires a fundamental shift in how you select and hire new employees. The old approach, which accepted attrition as a necessary evil, is no longer acceptable. The new approach should be tailored to the day-to-day reality of your restaurant managers and candidates, and be focused on combining selling and selecting.

What do we mean by selling and selecting? In big lines, moving away from the one-sided recruitment process described above and adopting a two-way matching strategy, where candidates receive just as much information about your organization as you do about them.

Along with this, the new reality of recruiting for food service providers requires a fast and accurate process. Technology is used in restaurants to collect orders, track inventory, and manage schedules – it should be used to facilitate recruitment, too. When hiring at scale, saving time and costs in a sustainable manner is easiest achieved by improving the efficiency of your recruitment process.

How do you do this, in practice? Let's dive into the specifics of what you need to tackle the evergreen and new recruitment challenges in the restaurant industry, from battling attrition to competing for talent.

1. You need data-driven candidate selection

In the previous section, we've mentioned that employee turnover rates are higher in the restaurant industry than in other sectors. This happens due to multiple reasons: on the one hand, recruiters rely on incomplete resumes, candidates' past experience - or lack thereof - and gut feeling when making hiring decisions. None of these predicts an applicant's potential or long-term on-the-job performance.

On the other hand, job application processes aren't informative enough, and don't showcase the company culture and work environment well enough to help candidates make an informed decision. As a result, candidates end up accepting jobs that don't fit their profiles and skills. This approach leads to poor quality hires, contributing to the continuous separations.

To counter this issue, restaurant recruiters need to approach candidate selection with a different mindset, and to allow technology to drive their hiring decisions. This means moving away from traditional recruitment practices and embracing data-driven hiring processes where candidates progress to the next stages only if they possess the specific skills shared by top performers in those roles.

In practice, this is achieved through talent matching technology, which is quickly becoming the standard for high-volume recruitment. Organizations who are hiring thousands or tens of thousands of employees need to be able to screen, select, and hire the right talent automatically to speed up their hiring process. Especially for entry-level roles, where experience isn't required and resumes aren't always relevant, asking managers to screen CVs wastes time for them and the candidate.

So, restaurants and QSRs need technology to predict who will be successful on the basis of their personality, skills, and competencies, rather than their past job titles.

This technology can help recruiters find who will perform highly and who is most likely to stay, empowering location managers with data to make fast and accurate hiring decisions.

But this solves only half of the problem; even when recruiters can accurately predict which candidates would fit the open roles based on their assessed skills, early employee attrition can still happen when candidates' expectations aren't met. This is why recruiters need to look specifically for two-way matching technology, as opposed to one-directional assessments.

Typically, in high volume recruitment, information flows only one way as the candidate is screened, which means that applicants aren't getting a realistic look into the role they'll be doing. This leads to no-shows and high rates of early attrition due to misaligned expectations. A two-way matching framework solves this problem by presenting candidates with enough information to let them decide if the role is a good fit, and at the same time enabling recruiters to collect data about candidates and make better-informed decisions.

What do we mean by two-way matching framework?

On the one hand data-driven hiring decisions; on the other, a realistic job preview that enables candidates to self-select out of the recruitment process if their expectations from the role aren't met.

Yet, in order for this data-driven approach to work well, the process needs to be fast; and this leads us to the next element needed for winning at restaurant recruitment: efficiency.

2. The process should be fast and efficient

In a tight labor market, you can't afford to keep candidates waiting; when most applicants lose interest in a job if they don't hear back from an employer within 10 days, you need to make sure that your recruiting team can operate fast enough to capture the best talent on the market.

Having high quality matching technology in place allows you to safely automate your screening, assessing, and selection steps of the recruitment funnel, speeding up the process and reducing the time to hire significantly. Moreover, if your technology can accurately identify a good match, that means that hiring managers don't need to pause their day to screen resumes or call candidates. Candidates can apply at any time, and automatically progress to an interview to move through the process at their own pace. In short – you can put them in the driver's seat.

A fast process saves your team time, money and energy, but it also allows you to capture top talent.

When the market for talent is fierce, the companies who can offer the fastest job security will have a competitive advantage over those with slow, lengthy recruitment processes. Plus, when seats are filled faster, you're more likely to avoid the issues your employees and store managers face when short staffed.

Harver brings me peace of mind and it increases my store's overall efficiency.

- J.W. Sevenhuijsen, Store Manager HEMA

3. You should route candidates between locations

To solve the third challenge of restaurant recruitment - namely, staffing multiple locations - you need to be able to allow candidates to apply to multiple locations at once. Oftentimes, if you're hiring for multiple locations within an area, you may see more applicants at one restaurant than another. This leaves one hiring manager crushed with resumes, while another is short staffed.

To avoid this, you can pair location routing with your application. At the onset of the application, allow candidates to apply to all available locations and route them to the restaurant with the highest demand and lowest supply of candidates. This can also help you with offering job security faster, because you'll be able to show candidates their hiring chances based on the number of applicants, and entice them to apply to a location with a higher need for staff.

4. Hiring managers should oversee processes

As said, restaurant managers are not recruiters, but they're expected to make time for sourcing candidates, screening resumes, interpreting assessment scores and scheduling interviews, because someone still needs to find and hire people for your locations. And oftentimes they need to prioritize these administrative tasks over their core activities, which leads to frustration and slow or poor hiring decisions.

We've touched upon the need for faster, more efficient recruitment processes, and we've shown that automation can help achieve this. However, the idea of automating manual processes brings to light one of the fears that restaurant managers have when it comes to digitizing their work: losing the human component. Allowing a machine to make hiring decisions doesn't sound that tempting to location managers who want to be involved in the process, remain in control and have the final say when a candidate is selected.

So how do you tackle the challenge of reducing their workload, without alienating your location managers?

By equipping them with tools and technology designed to do just that: take over the repetitive, manual tasks that don't require real-time human judgement, such as screening resumes, assessing candidate skills or scheduling interviews. This empowers them to focus on customers and on driving revenue for your locations, while ensuring that the best applicants are selected and invited to on-site interviews.

Thus, instead of constantly being involved in the hiring process and going back and forth trying to source and chase applicants who already lost interest or just don't pick up the phone, restaurant managers can hand over all these steps to software and focus on their core activities.

Taking this approach enables you not only to work more efficiently, but also to centralize your recruitment function, even when operating in different labor markets. Moreover, it creates the premises for standardizing procedures and decision making criteria, delivering a uniform candidate experience, and collecting data consistently to track your KPIs. All these while maintaining flexibility both when it comes to making changes quickly and to tailoring processes to various labor markets.

5. You need an engaging candidate experience

As mentioned before, restaurant job candidates - especially those applying to QSR roles - are often your customers too, and if you strive to offer them an outstanding customer experience, you should aim for the same when it comes to recruitment.

This might mean rethinking your selection process and going beyond feeding applicants automated skill tests, the end goal here being to create an amazing candidate experience. Yet, this shouldn't happen to the detriment of showcasing your unique company culture or values. So how do you provide an immersive and fun candidate experience that does justice to your company and at the same time enables you to find and hire talent in an effective manner?

By creating a fully digital, platform-independent application process that's different from the standard resume-based recruitment. A short and engaging experience infused with elements ranging from creative situational judgement tests and introductory company videos to personality questionnaires or cultural-fit tests.

This offers applicants a sneak peek behind the scenes, making it feel like a real work day, and showcases the company culture while assessing their skills and competencies.

Until now, we've looked at the challenges that restaurant recruiters are facing when hiring at scale, and some potential angles for tackling these challenges. But how do all these tactics come together into a coherent recruitment strategy that provides speed, flexibility, and accuracy, while meeting candidates' expectations?

Let's find the answer in the next section.

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How Hema transformed their application process

HEMA drastically reduced time to hire across its 800 stores in 10 countries by automating their existing manual hiring processes, while enabling store managers to predict an applicant's on-the-job success.

 10 min average application time	 98% applicant satisfaction score
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[Watch the testimonial](#)

The ideal restaurant volume hiring process

To see the full possibilities for your restaurant recruitment process and define your vision for the future, we'll need to take a step back from the current constraints and simply look at what the ideal process should look like. Starting from the big picture and imagining the future state of the recruitment process while disregarding the current constraints is the first step in turning the ideal volume hiring process into reality.

Once the vision is clear, articulating long-term goals such as eliminating manual tasks, enabling self-service options in the candidate journey, or finding ways to route applicants between locations to balance labor shortages, starts to appeal more like a step-by-step path than an overwhelming set of new procedures.

But what does this process look like in practice?

For candidates: information and job security

For entry-level candidates that are looking to secure a paycheck, the most important things your organization can offer are job security and the information to decide if the role is right for them. Even for applicants who are more interested in the rest of your employment proposition, whether it be opportunities for advancement, a flexible schedule, or above average pay, it all starts with offering an informative, engaging experience to cultivate a positive relationship from the first interaction.

An engaging application reduces dropout in early stages of the recruitment funnel and increases your likelihood of attracting the best talent. Candidates who come for entry-level positions don't always have a resume to share, and are more likely to scan a QR code for a digital application process than visit your company website and fill in a long form or write a cover letter. Making it easy to apply from any device keeps the process short, while allowing you to assess skills and job-fit to make better hiring decisions.

However, a convenient way to apply is only half the battle. Once candidates have expressed interest in working for you, they want to be kept informed about the status of their application, even if they aren't selected.

Automatically sending notifications, informing them of their progress, or allowing them to self-schedule their interviews at the end of the application helps keep them engaged and speeds up the recruitment process. Especially when talent is scarce, an engaging and fast application process gives you a leg up over every other competitor in the area.

It's also important to remember who your target candidate is. Most of the candidates applying for high-volume, entry-level roles at restaurants are used to instant messaging, same day delivery, and self-servicing online. When it comes to looking for a job, they expect the same: a fast and efficient process with rapid responses.

For restaurant managers: great staff, and time to focus on their key day-to-day tasks

Having high quality, capable staff is important to any manager – but it’s only one of many items on a laundry list of responsibilities that restaurant managers need to keep things running smoothly.

Restaurants, especially QSRs, are fast-paced environments, and manual recruitment processes require location managers to step away from the action in order to keep up with hiring. Implementing technology that moves candidates through the recruitment funnel without any intervention from the talent team allows restaurant managers to focus on their day-to-day responsibilities, without missing out on talent.

In an ideal scenario, location managers get involved only during the most crucial steps of the process: interviewing and hiring decisions, while the menial tasks like scheduling and screening are done automatically. This also helps to solve sourcing issues across locations, as candidates can be automatically routed to locations with the highest demand for labor.

In the end, the goal is to build a process that is efficient, objective, and results in the best possible hires joining their team. Store managers want to win time back, remove manual recruitment tasks from their to-do list, and always have access to high quality new hires who are briefed on what the job entails: to help avoid mis-aligned expectations, no-shows, and early attrition.

For talent teams: agility, insight and control

By implementing a standard, unified process across locations, you gain the ability to collect centralized data in a single source of truth, and manage change in a more structured way.

In a manual process where each location recruits slightly differently, implementing new ways of working and managing change across teams requires coordinating and synchronizing hundreds or thousands of different processes.

With one globally implemented recruitment process, you have the ability to better communicate your employment proposition to all candidates, and gain a centralized control panel to measure the health of your hiring efforts.

However, even for large organizations where a high degree of control and standardization is critical, restaurant talent teams also need to have the flexibility to meet the demands of each labor market they operate in. So in an ideal scenario, a centralized hiring process would still allow recruiters to adapt parts of it to the needs of individual locations, or by state, region or country.

Next to these characteristics, the ideal volume hiring process provides restaurant recruiters with actionable insights for continuously improving their efficiency and ensuring that their hiring practices are fair and bias-free.

You’ll gain control and insight, and be better able to guarantee your process is fair and bias-free. By offering a standardized candidate experience, you ensure each applicant is treated fairly and assessed on objective criteria that predict success, rather than the gut feeling of hiring managers.

How do they get there?

These goals are lofty, but nothing less could fully address the challenges of volume hiring within the restaurant industry.

The key component to reaching the desired end-state is to invest in digital transformation, enabled by volume hiring software that addresses the most pressing challenges of restaurant recruitment. However, simply throwing more tools in the mix to address one off challenges won’t guarantee a better recruitment process, unless they’re a part of a larger initiative.

Digital transformation for restaurant volume hiring

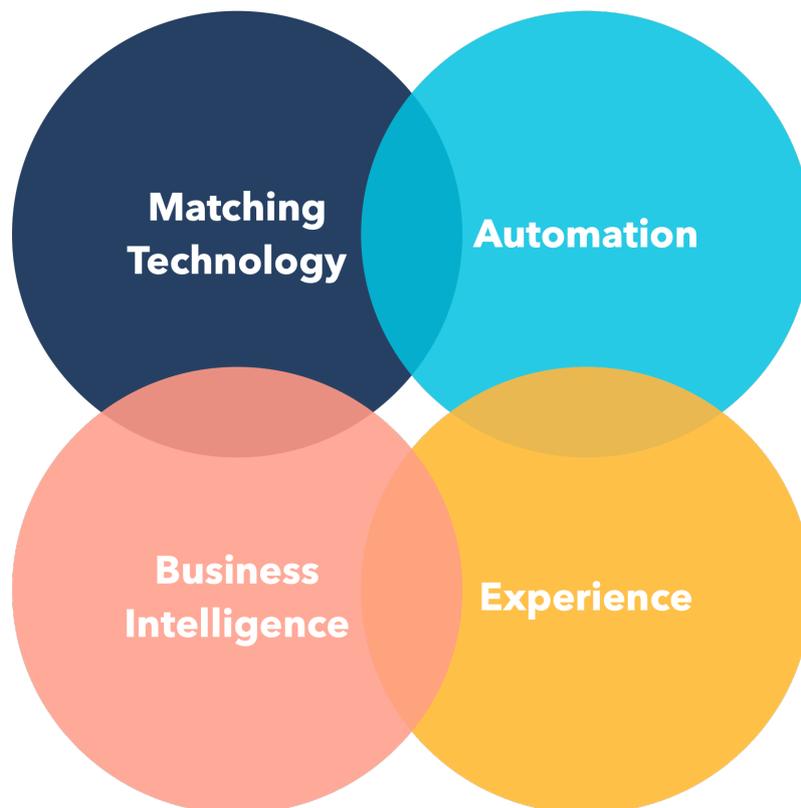
Digital transformation has long been a favorite buzzword among technology providers and leaders who want to insulate their organization from the challenges of the future.

In the wake of the pandemic, we've seen processes across every department of every organization in every industry flip on their heads, proving there is no better time to prepare for the future than right away. Recruitment is no exception – now is the time to accelerate the digitization of your recruitment strategy by adopting an end-to-end digital solution built for hiring at scale.

But, where do you start?

We believe that isolated improvements don't really tackle the challenges arising today, and could even end up creating more work for recruiters and talent teams if they suddenly need to manage new processes or a bigger tech stack. Instead of buying a swath of technology and creating new procedures for every piece of the recruitment journey, the process needs to be transformed sustainably, by investing in high-impact, long-term solutions.

Working closely to enable volume hiring at restaurants and QSRs around the globe, we've identified four main components of a robust digital transformation in restaurant recruitment: Matching Technology, Automation, Candidate Experience, and Business Intelligence.



Two-way Matching Technology

No matter the organization or role, there are always skills and competencies that predict success on the job. To hire at scale, you should be systematically screening candidates for the characteristics that predict success in your specific organization. Matching technology is built exactly for this purpose: to help you evaluate candidates at scale, across multiple competencies that are relevant for your open roles and predictive of success on the job.

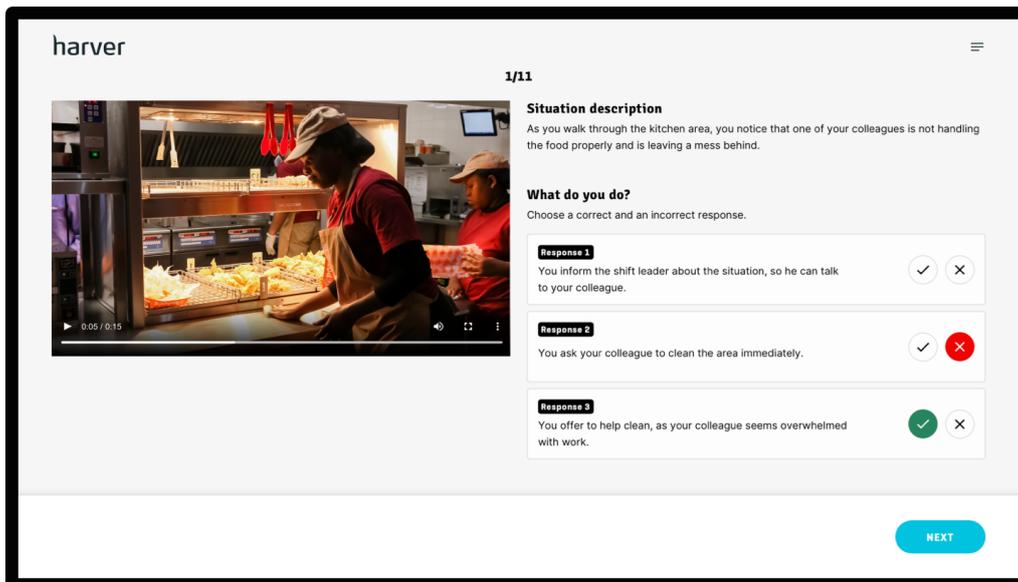
Matching technology does the hard work for you by assessing candidates, scoring their skills and competencies, and moving applicants forward in the recruitment process if they meet specific selection criteria. This helps recruiters make objective, data-driven decisions about candidates, while ensuring a high quality of hire.

The details of matching technology implementation might vary from one organization to another, in the sense that each position or job family might require custom, role-specific assessments that measure not only a set of hard and soft skills, but also a candidate's organizational fit. But in general, talent matching technology relies on pre-employment assessments used to identify candidates with the skills and disposition to be a top performer in a specific role.

Before we dive into the process itself, it's crucial to understand the difference between the **one-way matching framework** commonly used by assessment companies, and the **two-way matching technology** developed by Harver to support talent acquisition teams in the volume hiring space.

In comparison to more specialized roles, entry-level candidates for high volume, low complexity jobs are rarely afforded an opportunity to fully evaluate the role they applied for. In high-touch application processes, candidates have multiple interviews to evaluate the opportunity and ask their most pressing questions. At scale, when hiring quickly is a priority, organizations need to find a way to deliver the same level of transparency to applicants.

Yet, what usually happens in most hiring processes is that information flows predominantly in one direction: from the candidate to the talent team. Applicants submit their resumes, answer questions in interviews, and are assessed against the criteria laid out in the job description. In the end, the talent team will have abundant information about the candidate, but the candidate rarely receives the same level of transparency.



This is especially true when conducting volume hiring, where thousands or tens of thousands of candidates are simultaneously moving through the process. In this type of method for selecting candidates, there isn't necessarily a flow of information in the other direction: from the hiring organization to the candidate.

Applicants are, therefore, expected to evaluate the opportunity through their own research, testimonials from recruiters or hiring managers, and by asking questions when given the opportunity. This can lead to non-uniform candidate experiences and misaligned expectations.

That's where two-way matching comes in. Rather than having a one-way talent matching process that only collects information about applicants for recruiters and hiring managers, the most successful hiring processes also have a way to deliver information about the role to candidates, in an efficient and engaging way.

Regardless of the position, when candidates come on board without the right expectations of the role or organization, it can be jarring when the day-to-day isn't what they expected or they encounter an uncomfortable critical situation, like an angry customer. It often leads to early attrition, which remains the biggest challenge for recruiters in the volume hiring space. So what the two-way matching framework does is to tackle the problem of early attrition by providing an in-depth realistic job preview to the candidate, while assessing their skills and job-fit.

Here's what this means in practice: when candidates apply through a career page, or scan a QR code in a restaurant, they are immediately directed to the Harver platform.

There, they go through an application flow that provides them with a realistic job preview while assessing their skills and characteristics, and comparing the score to a custom benchmark based on the profile of existing top performers. They are automatically scored on a combination of pre-employment assessments, including Situational Judgement Tests (SJTs), personality questionnaires, or learning agility and multitasking assessments.

Harver is integrated and synchronized with your ATS, so when a candidate clicks "Apply" and starts filling in their details, the information is sent to the ATS, and your recruiters and hiring managers are able to see the results of these assessments and an overall matching score in real time within the ATS.

Unlike a typical assessment, where reports are generated and a new task is created to analyze and interpret the results, applicants are automatically compared to a custom benchmark, and ranked on a match from 0-100, or simply as "great fit," "good fit," "poor fit" and so on.

This makes interpreting the results extremely easy, and enables you to automatically reject or move candidates further in the process, without recruiter intervention. In addition, candidates can be scored across locations. For example, if one location often has 10x more applicants than another because of a busier area, the benchmark can be tailored to be more selective.

Alternatively, candidates can be prompted within the Harver system to apply to multiple applications at once, and given a tip that their hiring chances might be higher at a location with less applicants. This is a powerful tool for multi-location recruitment, as it allows you to build and make the most of the existing talent pool in a neighborhood or city.

Now let's take a quick look at the assessments part as well. Within the restaurant industry, the most predictive assessments include situational judgement tests and personality questionnaires. These are used to assess candidates for a series of skills and characteristics that are considered good predictors of top performance.



[See how McDonald's transformed their hiring process by adopting two-way matching](#)

In most restaurants, for example, staff will need high customer orientation, stress tolerance, and multi-tasking abilities in addition to a willingness to work on their feet in a fast-paced, face-to-face environment. It isn't enough to only focus on the job-specific characteristics, because whether or not a candidate has great customer service skills won't predict whether or not they'll attrit because of mis-aligned expectations.

Employee attrition in QSRs is so often caused by a misunderstanding of the job's nature, especially for employees with little to no work experience applying for entry-level roles. That's why in addition to assessing job-fit, you also need to allow candidates to determine if the job is a match for them, for example, by showing that they'll be in a busy kitchen on their feet during a realistic job preview.

Realistic job previews allow you to give applicants the experience of trying out the job, so they understand the work environment and what the job entails. By doing this, applicants are given a unique option: to self-select out of the process if they find it may not be a good fit for them. While this may sound counterintuitive, especially when labor is more scarce, it is far less costly and time-consuming to lose an applicant than to lose a new hire.

By implementing two-way matching technology for assessing candidates, you're able to gain data to drive objective hiring decisions. Matching technology makes your process faster, and reduces the risk of mis-hires or instances of bias because candidates are being selected on the basis of their skills.

As said, all these steps can be automated, to make the process faster. We've briefly touched upon the automation component, so let's take a closer look at it in the next section.

Automation

Recruitment automation speeds up your workflow and frees location managers from manual tasks by quickly moving top candidates through your hiring process, while rejecting those that are a poor fit. A faster workflow means fewer lost candidates and lower hiring costs, so you increase the likelihood of employing top-quality talent while keeping operation costs low.

To implement an automated process, it's important to acknowledge that it requires a shift in strategy and will change the role of a restaurant manager in the process. The level and depth of automation varies depending on your organization's needs – encompassing as much as the entire process from "apply" to "hire" or combinations of steps in between. In an ideal reality, after candidates apply, screening and selection are automatic and the candidate details are sent to the ATS.

If candidates are auto-matched accurately, it means you can also automate the interview scheduling step, if you have an interview in your recruitment process. Candidate results in the Harver platform, for example, are instantaneously calculated, meaning that as soon as a candidate has completed the application, they have the option to self-schedule an interview if they meet the criteria. This eliminates the entire callback period, where candidates are left waiting after hitting apply or handing in a resume.

Automation can also be used to route applicants between locations. If you're hiring for multiple locations and see higher demand than supply in one restaurant, and the reverse in another restaurant, you can show candidates all the available locations during the application process, and prompt them to apply to multiple restaurants, to increase their chances of getting the job.

Our platform calculates where they're most likely to get hired, based on the availability of open roles and applicants. Restaurant managers are then able to see in real time who fits the role based on their assessment results, and when they'll be coming in to interview if self-scheduling is enabled. This enables our clients to hire candidates within 24 hours, instead of several days.

Thus, automation has removed the process inefficiencies related to the manual tasks that location managers and recruiters need to complete to move the old process along. And as we mentioned, this fast process is great for candidates as well, because it brings them job security more quickly. Which leads us to the last component of our digital transformation framework: the candidate experience.

Candidate Experience

In an optimized process with two-way matching technology and automation, candidates can get job security within 24 hours, so the time to commitment on both the employer and the employee's side is significantly reduced.

Yet, applicants benefit from more than speed. They're also receiving a more informative application experience when they're assessed on the basis of their skills, rather than past experience on their resume. In the entry-level realm, where many applicants might not have past experience, assessing on the basis of skills also helps to reduce any unconscious bias that could factor into hiring decisions.

In addition to being selected more fairly, this type of engaging candidate journey, where realistic job previews and company videos are integrated with more classical questionnaires, gives applicants more information than they'd typically receive from a manual recruitment process. Because the process is digital, the application experience is able to educate candidates about the role, no matter the volume of talent who are applying.

In a manual reality, the information a candidate gets about the role would vary depending on how much time a manager spends filling them in or answering their questions, which we know can be a conflict when they have other tasks to attend to in the restaurant. During the digital process, candidates are immediately engaged, and get an accurate preview of the role on their own time – whenever they decide they're interested enough to hit "Apply".

During the application process, candidates are exposed to the reality of routine tasks, as well as critical incidents - like an angry customer or a machine malfunction, to get a full picture of the role. Even though 90% of a job is routine, those critical incidents will differentiate high and low performers, and may determine who is willing to stay on the job. In addition to showing those critical situations, most of our restaurant clients also start with a company video to ensure each applicant knows about the work environment, company culture, and their employer value proposition.

Particularly in the crowded QSR space, where every day companies are looking for new ways to attract talent with investments in their employee experience, being able to effectively communicate the opportunity you offer, at scale, is half the battle.

At the end of these digital application experiences, candidates are asked to provide a rating and feedback, so there's always insight available into the candidate experience. In addition, data is readily available to show if any stages are seeing higher drop-offs, in case tailoring is needed at a store or market level.



[Read how Albert Heijn reduced their time to hire to 24 hours](#)

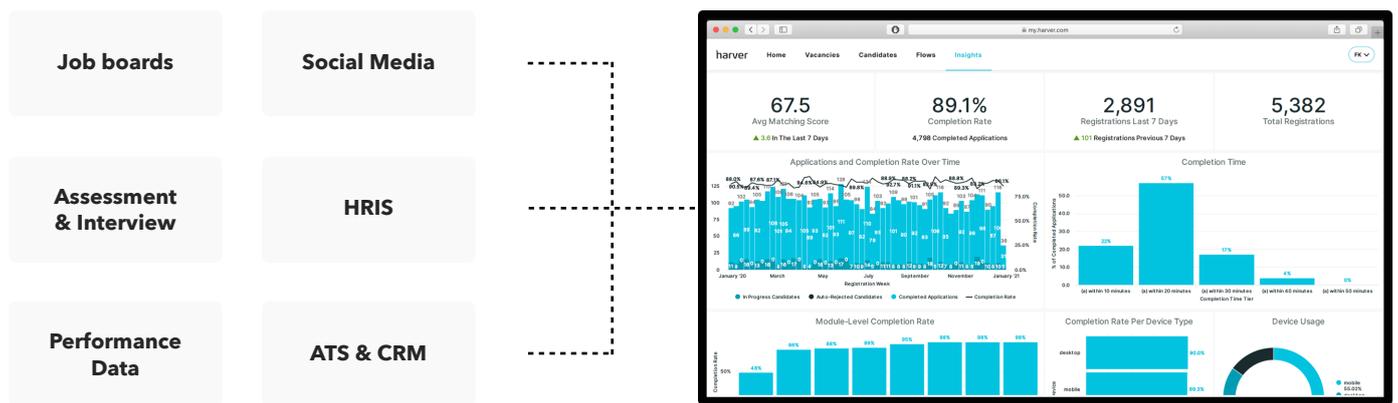
Business Intelligence

The fourth pillar of our digital transformation framework is business intelligence. To make the most of your data, you need to be able to extract actionable insights in an easy manner. Our platform offers real-time data through a series of out-of-the-box dashboards, but you can create your own reports as well if you want to track specific KPIs.

For example, one dashboard shows you candidate experience scores, such as how satisfied they were with the application; another report gives you insights into the matching scores of your candidates, enabling you to easily see who’s a good fit for the open roles. Then we have the sourcing insights; when you work in high volume, you need to know what source gives you the best candidates, where your top performers are coming from.

Finally, the D&I dashboard makes it easy to track DEI metrics and identify bias present across locations and recruitment funnel stages, helping your company follow through with your diversity and inclusion program.

Our BI solution is therefore suitable not only for interpreting candidate scores but also for optimizing your sourcing strategy to decrease your cost per hire and improve the quality of hire in the long run.



In conclusion

Digital transformation has been on the to-do list for most major QSRs and restaurants for some time, and the pandemic and tight labor market have only increased the importance of a high-quality volume recruitment process. Sustainable long-term growth requires being able to hire and retain the best talent, without needing to increase HR headcount every time you need to do so.

As the realities of the restaurant industry workforce continue to shift, and the competition for talent becomes more fierce, organizations will need to be prepared to communicate their employer value proposition, accurately identify the best talent, and provide fast and fair hiring experiences digitally.

The new reality of recruiting goes beyond a hiring party or a 1 minute application, and requires a fundamental shift from manual screening and selection to end-to-end engagement. The winners of restaurant recruitment will be the organizations that combine selling and selecting, to ensure a mutual fit between the candidate and the organization every time.

Restaurants will need to pay keen attention to their technology, and whether they're making sustainable investments in winning back time and costs, or if they're just adding to the list of tools for recruiters and hiring managers to keep up with. In the end, the goal is clear: create a standard and engaging process that allows restaurant managers to get back to their day-to-day while always having great talent coming in the door.

As we face an uncertain future and the labor market continues to quickly evolve, this is only possible by adopting a digital-first strategy that is flexible and based on a constant collection of data. These insights – and the ability to act on them, is what will help restaurants and QSRs navigate any changes that come their way.

At Harver, we work with companies that have high-volume, low complexity jobs across a number of industries and geographies. What we see is that when it comes to volume hiring, leaders in every industry are paving the way by leveraging technology to improve their recruitment outcomes.

We believe it's time for restaurant employers to join the movement!

Ready to digitise your recruitment process?
**See how Harver can help you improve
efficiency and reduce employee attrition**

[Request a demo](#)

or visit **our website**
for more information

harver