

ROBERT WALTERS WHITEPAPER

**MANAGING YOUR EMPLOYER BRAND  
THROUGHOUT THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS**

**spotlight**  
SERIES

ROBERT WALTERS

# FOREWORD

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Earlier this year I forecasted that Australia should continue to see strong employment growth in 2011, and that as the war for talent intensifies, firms will need to clearly define their recruitment strategies and requirements as well as differentiate themselves as 'employers of choice' to be successful in recruiting and retaining the best talent.

Indeed, this issue has become increasingly pertinent, and is one that we have been discussing regularly with our clients over recent weeks. As the skills shortage worsens across a number of sectors, quality candidates are becoming harder to find and often have multiple employment options to choose from. Consequently, we've seen that employers who don't sell the opportunity and organisation or who implement lengthy recruitment processes have tended to miss out on their preferred candidates.

Therefore there's never been a better time to investigate what job-seekers value in a recruitment process and a potential employer. This whitepaper seeks to answer these questions and provide useful guidance to any individual involved in recruiting for their organisation; I hope it is of value to you.



**James Nicholson**  
Managing Director, Robert Walters, Australia

# METHODOLOGY

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This whitepaper is based on the findings of research undertaken by Robert Walters in May 2011. To conduct this research, Robert Walters surveyed almost 800 job-seekers as well as human resources representatives and hiring managers from over 130 organisations.

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# INTRODUCTION

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Recent predictions indicate that skills shortages are expected to worsen across a number of sectors throughout the remainder of 2011, bringing with them a candidate-driven market where top talent will become harder to source and often have multiple employment options to choose from.

In such market conditions, an employer can no longer just advertise a position, be inundated with suitable applicants and then have their preferred candidate accept an employment offer without any attempt to sell the opportunity and organisation. Job-seekers are more savvy and have increased power, so it becomes even more crucial for employers to ensure their recruitment processes and employment promise are clearly defined and streamlined.

This whitepaper has been created to assist employers in examining their recruitment process and managing their employer brand, and explores:

- Common behaviours of candidates throughout the recruitment process and what candidates consider to be the biggest turn-offs in a recruitment process
- What candidates consider are the key characteristics of a good employer and how they form their opinions of potential employers
- The impact the recruitment process has on a candidate's decision to accept or decline an employment offer
- Employers' cultivation and awareness of their employer brand proposition
- Key learnings and recommendations on how employers should manage their brand throughout the recruitment process.

# COMMON CANDIDATE BEHAVIOUR AND RECRUITMENT PROCESS DISLIKES

Robert Walters surveyed job-seekers on the following key factors of a typical job-search process to determine a candidate's ideal recruitment process.

## Job advertisements

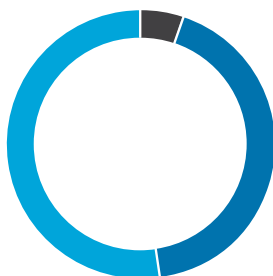
The survey asked job-seekers which factors had the most influence on their decision to apply for a role after looking at a job advertisement, and found that the description of the job had the biggest impact, followed by the salary/benefits mentioned, the description of the company and the quality of the grammar/language used (Table 1.0).

**Table 1.0 – Factors that most influence job-seekers when deciding to apply for a role**

Factor	Strong Influence	Very Strong Influence
Description of the job	45%	50%
Salary and/or benefits mentioned	48%	38%
Description of the company	50%	20%
Quality of grammar/language used	40%	21%

Job-seekers indicated that the presentation of the job advertisement and the publication/website the advertisement appears in/on only had 'some influence' on their decision to apply for a role (48% and 40% respectively).

**Chart 1.0 - Do you review the online career sections of the organisations you are applying to?**



- 43% Yes - for every job
- 52% Sometimes
- 5% Never

## Company research

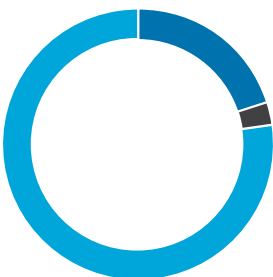
Only 5% of job-seekers surveyed indicated that they never looked at the online career sections of the organisations they apply to, with 43% of respondents looking at the online career section for every single job they apply for (Chart 1.0).

## Job interviews

Most respondents (71%) think they should only have to undertake two job interviews before receiving a job offer, and 16% believe they should only have to undertake one job interview. Only 13% of respondents feel that three or more job interviews are necessary.

When asked what their biggest turn-off is in a job interview, the majority of job-seekers (42%) ranked rude/unprofessional treatment from the interviewer highest, followed by not being given enough information about the role (24%) and not being given a chance to explain their experience properly (13%).

**Chart 2.0 - How long should a full recruitment process take?**



- 77% Less than 1 month
- 20% 1 - 2 months
- 3% 2 - 3 months
- 0% 3 - 4 months
- 0% More than 5 months

## Response times and length of process

The majority of job-seekers surveyed (46%) think they should only have to wait one-to-two days for a response after applying for a job; 32% are willing to wait three-to-four days. A staggering 91% of respondents have previously applied for a job but not received a response.

In addition, 77% of respondents believe that a full recruitment process (from applying for the job to receiving a written employment contract) should take less than one month. Only 3% of job-seekers surveyed think that a typical recruitment process should take more than two months (Chart 2.0).



**43%**

43% of job-seekers look at the online career section of an organisation before applying for a role

# HOW JOB-SEEKERS FORM OPINIONS OF POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS AND WHAT THEY LOOK FOR

When asked which factors most influenced them when forming an opinion of a potential employer, the job-seekers surveyed indicated that the person/s conducting the job interview/s and the attitudes of other employees in the organisation have the biggest impact (Table 2.0). Media stories about the organisation and the organisation's career website also had 'some influence' (53% and 48% respectively).

**Table 2.0 – Factors that most influence job-seekers when forming an opinion of a potential employer**

Factor	Strong Influence	Very Strong Influence
The person/s conducting the job interview/s	57%	20%
The attitudes of other employees in the organisation	49%	27%

The length of the recruitment process also had an impact on job-seekers when forming an opinion of a potential employer, with 79% of respondents saying they are turned-off the job/employer by a long recruitment process. In addition, 38% of respondents said they have gone to a potential employer's office for a job interview and had a bad experience in their interaction with existing staff, and of these, 73% were put off working for the organisation as a result.

Job-seekers considered a number of factors to be very important when looking for a new job, but the most important factors were the type of work, salary and benefits, opportunities for career progression and company culture (Table 3.0). Further highlighting the importance of company culture, 33% of job-seekers said they would consider resigning from their new job within the first six months if the culture was different to the one they were expecting, and 62% said they might consider resigning depending on other factors.

**Table 3.0 – Factors that are most important to job-seekers when looking for a new job**

Factor	Very Important	Extremely Important
Type of work	51%	36%
Salary and benefits	50%	32%
Opportunities for career progression	39%	34%
Company culture	45%	26%

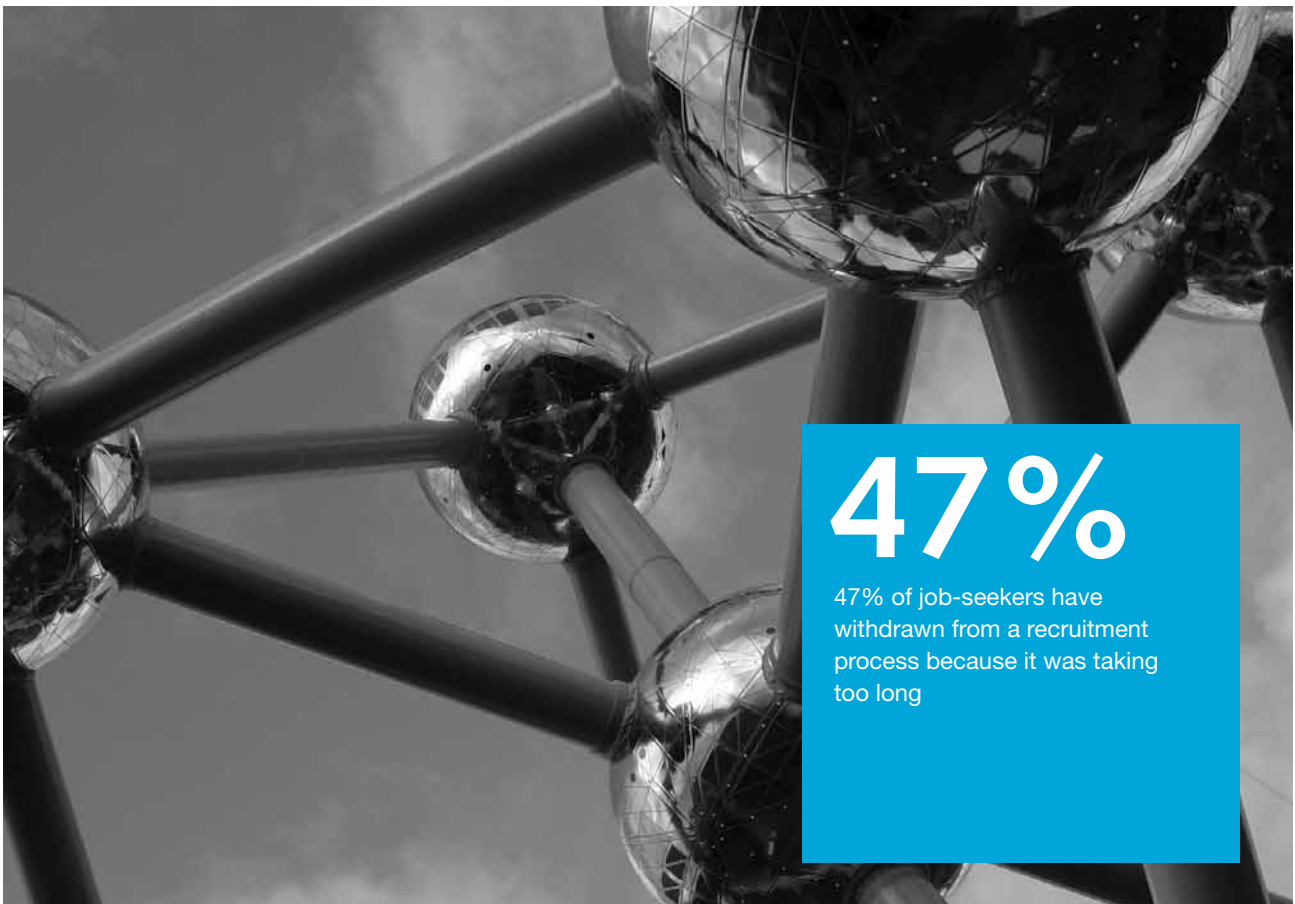
# IMPACT OF THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS ON CANDIDATES' DECISION MAKING

Robert Walters' survey asked job-seekers which factors had the most influence on their decision to accept or decline a job offer, and found that the culture/values of the organisation, the personality of the interviewer/s and the speed of response during the recruitment process has the biggest impact (Table 4.0). The length of the recruitment process and ease of the recruitment process also had a strong influence on job-seekers when deciding whether or not to accept a job offer (31% and 29% respectively).

**Table 4.0 – Factors that most influence job-seekers when deciding whether to accept or decline a job offer**

Factor	Strong Influence	Very Strong Influence
The culture/values of the organisation	52%	29%
The personality of the interviewer/s	48%	21%
The speed of response during the recruitment process	40%	15%

In addition, 45% of respondents indicated that they have withdrawn from a recruitment process before progressing to the offer stage because they didn't like the person/s conducting the job interview/s, and 47% of respondents have withdrawn from a recruitment process because it was taking too long.



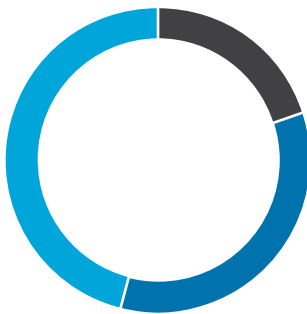
# EMPLOYERS' AWARENESS AND MANAGEMENT OF THEIR EMPLOYER BRAND PROPOSITION

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An employer brand proposition is defined by Brett Minchington as “the image of your organisation as a ‘great place to work’ in the mind of current employees and key stakeholders in the external market (active and passive candidates, clients, customers and other key stakeholders)”.<sup>1</sup>

While a promising 84% of employers surveyed indicated that they were familiar with the term ‘employer brand proposition’ (also known as ‘employer value proposition’), only 53% said their organisation has one, and just 28% of employers believe that all elements of their business reflect their employer brand proposition.

**Chart 3.0 – Do you think your existing employees understand your employment brand?**



■ 34% Yes  
■ 46% No  
■ 20% Unsure

The survey also found that employers most actively promote their employer brand proposition during the recruitment process (72%) and on their website (65%). Only 54% of employers actively promote their employer brand proposition internally to existing employees; unsurprisingly, a mere 34% of employers believe that their existing employees understand their employment promise (Chart 3.0).

<sup>1</sup> Minchington, B (2010) *Employer Brand Leadership – A Global Perspective*, Collective Learning Australia



**28%**

28% of employers believe that all elements of their business reflect their employer brand proposition

# KEY LEARNINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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The key findings of the survey of job-seekers indicate that there are several factors that impact on a candidate's journey through the job-search process and their opinion of a potential employer. These factors — including the speed of response and the personalities of interviewers — need to be managed throughout the recruitment process to increase an employer's chances of securing top talent in a candidate-driven market. Employers also need to ensure their employer brand proposition is communicated not just to candidates during the recruitment process but also internally, to ensure that their existing employees espouse the company's values and accurately represent the organisation's employment promise to potential new hires.

## **Key learning #1**

The job description, salary/benefits mentioned and language/grammar used in job advertisements have a significant impact on whether a candidate will apply for a job.

### **Recommendation**

Employers must invest adequate time and resources to producing clear job descriptions and well-written job advertisements if they are to attract suitable candidates to their roles. Job descriptions need to be clearly outlined and articulated, and the advertisement itself contain an indication of salary and other benefits, as well as be written in a professional style with no spelling or grammar errors. In addition, employers should seek to include references to culture (for example 'team-based environment' or 'inclusive/supportive culture'), as a positive organisational culture is a major attraction for job-seekers.

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## Employers must invest adequate time and resources to producing compelling job advertisements if they are to attract the best candidates to their organisation.

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Employers should also avoid using age-sensitive language (for example 'young, vibrant culture') when advertising a job, to ensure that they attract a wide range of candidates who might be suitable and avoid age discrimination, which can negatively impact a candidate's view of an organisation, no matter how unintentional the discrimination is.

## **Key learning #2**

The speed of response throughout the recruitment process has a significant impact on whether a job-seeker will accept or decline a job offer.

### **Recommendation**

In the current market, most good candidates are pursuing two or three opportunities at any time, so delays in responding can result in the loss of suitable applicants. A slow response rate can also lead candidates to view the organisation as disorganised or not placing enough importance on the role they are recruiting for, which creates negative sentiment around the employer brand and can lead candidates to decline a job offer. To avoid this, employers must identify who needs to be involved in reviewing CVs before advertising a job, and ensure that these staff members have time scheduled into their calendar to sort through CVs each day so that the organisation can respond to applications in a timely manner. In addition, employers should ensure they have budgetary sign-off for the new role before advertising, as this is a factor that commonly produces delays in recruitment processes.

It is also recommended that unsuccessful applicants are responded to and provided with the reasons why they will not be progressing; candidates who do not receive a response develop a great deal of ill-will towards that organisation and are likely to discuss their negative experience within their circle of friends and co-workers, which can negatively influence other job-seekers' opinions of the organisation.

### Key learning #3

The length of the recruitment process has a significant impact on how the job-seeker views the potential employer and whether they continue through the process.

#### **Recommendation**

Most recruitment processes tend to experience delays during the interview stage, which causes candidates to become increasingly frustrated, particularly if they have not been provided with expected timeframes. To avoid this, prior to advertising the job, employers should determine who needs to be involved in each interview stage and ensure these staff members are committed to timelines and have suitable availability to conduct interviews. This will enable employers to manage candidate expectations and explain the likely process from the outset.

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The number of staff involved in the interview process should also be kept to a minimum and employers should endeavour to conduct no more than two interviews.

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The number of staff involved in the interview process should also be kept to a minimum and employers should endeavour to conduct no more than two interviews for each role. In addition, employers should consider whether the process can be more streamlined, for example by having two staff members conducting a single interview or by conducting a panel interview. If time differences present a challenge, employers can also investigate whether a phone interview or Skype/video conference interview can be conducted.



#### Key learning #4

The personalities of the interviewers has a significant impact on how the job-seeker views the potential employer and whether they continue through the process and accept or decline an offer.

#### **Recommendation**

It is no longer realistic for employers to assume that any candidate they interview would gladly accept an employment offer without the interviewer having to work to sell the opportunity to them. As a result, employers should ensure that all staff members who will be involved in the interview process are trained on technique and approach, and are capable of delivering a consistent and positive message about the organisation. The personalities of the interviewers also need to accurately reflect the message being sold and be capable of attracting and recognising candidates with desired personality traits. For example, if an organisation wishes to recruit a candidate who is an extrovert with a strong personality, it would be best to avoid selecting an interviewer who is naturally more introverted, as this could confuse the message about the organisation's working environment and culture.

In addition, where possible, employers should avoid selecting staff to conduct an interview if they are aware that person may have a negative impact on the candidate. However, common sense should also be applied; if the manager the candidate would be reporting to is difficult it's best not to suppress this, as it is preferable to have a candidate withdraw in the interview stage than accept the offer and resign within the first six months.

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Employers should ensure that all staff members who will be involved in the interview process are trained on technique and approach, to deliver a consistent and positive message about the organisation.

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#### Key learning #5

The attitude of existing employees has a significant impact on how the job-seeker views the potential employer.

#### **Recommendation**

Employers need to ensure their existing employees understand the organisation's employer brand proposition, and that their behaviours reinforce these values. Key to this is listening to staff and improving employee engagement. Employers should conduct surveys, focus groups and interviews with individuals and groups to gain insight into how employees view the employer brand proposition and help identify initiatives that can be implemented to improve their understanding.

Conversely, if employee feedback indicates that their perception of the company is wildly different to the organisation's stated employer brand proposition, employers must ensure they investigate this and if necessary, adjust their employer brand proposition to one that is more accurately reflected by actual business practices and employee behaviour.

In addition, it is imperative that the staff members who interact with job-seekers throughout the recruitment process — from HR administrators through to the most senior hiring manager — have a very positive opinion of the organisation. Even if a staff member is a little cynical about the workplace and unintentionally makes negatives comments or references in an interview, this will be viewed by the job-seeker as extremely unprofessional and reflect badly on the organisation.



91%

91% of job-seekers have applied for a job but never received a response

# CONCLUSION

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Attracting and securing top talent in a candidate-short market can be a challenge, and is one that most employers will face as 2011 progresses. To improve their chances of securing their preferred candidates, employers need to adequately manage their employer brand throughout the recruitment process by ensuring the process itself and the employment promise are both clearly defined and streamlined. Partnering with an effective recruitment consultancy will also help you to successfully manage your recruitment processes and ensure positive outcomes for both employers and job-seekers.

## ABOUT THE ROBERT WALTERS SPOTLIGHT SERIES

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This whitepaper is the second in the Robert Walters Spotlight Series. The Spotlight Series features a range of thought-leading whitepapers designed to help employers address talent management issues that have a critical impact on business performance.



# CONTACT US

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To discuss this whitepaper or your recruitment needs in more detail, please contact your Robert Walters recruitment consultant or **James Nicholson, Robert Walters Managing Director – Australia**, on **+61 (0) 2 8289 3130** or **[james.nicholson@robertwalters.com.au](mailto:james.nicholson@robertwalters.com.au)**.

## Adelaide

Level 20  
25 Grenfell Street  
Adelaide SA 5000  
T +61 (0) 8 8216 3500  
F +61 (0) 8 8410 5155  
E [adelaide@robertwalters.com.au](mailto:adelaide@robertwalters.com.au)

## Brisbane

Level 27  
Waterfront Place  
1 Eagle Street  
Brisbane QLD 4000  
T +61 (0) 7 3032 2222  
F +61 (0) 7 3221 3877  
E [brisbane@robertwalters.com.au](mailto:brisbane@robertwalters.com.au)

## Melbourne

Level 29  
360 Collins Street  
Melbourne VIC 3000  
T +61 (0) 3 8628 2100  
F +61 (0) 3 9600 4200  
E [melbourne@robertwalters.com.au](mailto:melbourne@robertwalters.com.au)

## Perth

Level 10  
109 St Georges Terrace  
Perth WA 6001  
T +61 (0) 8 9266 0900  
F +61 (0) 8 9266 0999  
E [perth@robertwalters.com.au](mailto:perth@robertwalters.com.au)

## Sydney

Level 53  
Governor Phillip Tower  
1 Farrer Place  
Sydney NSW 2000  
T +61 (0) 2 8289 3100  
F +61 (0) 2 8289 3200  
E [sydney@robertwalters.com.au](mailto:sydney@robertwalters.com.au)

## North Sydney (Chatswood)

Level 15  
67 Albert Avenue  
Chatswood NSW 2067  
T +61 (0) 2 8423 1000  
F +61 (0) 2 8423 1099  
E [chatswood@robertwalters.com.au](mailto:chatswood@robertwalters.com.au)

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