WWW.IJRPR.COM

International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews

Journal Homepage: www.ijrpr.com ISSN 2582-7421

From Talent Sourcing to Talent Acquisition: A Participant-Observation Case Study of the Recruitment and Selection Process in a Mid-Sized Indian IT Services Firm

Kasturi Amol Deshmukh*

School of Business, Indira University, Tathawade, Pune 411033, Maharashtra, India

A B S T R A C T

Recruitment and selection are often taught as separate human resource functions, yet in technology firms they operate as one continuous talent-acquisition pipeline. This paper presents a descriptive, single-organisation case study of that pipeline in a mid-sized, Pune-based IT services and product-engineering firm. The evidence comes from participant observation by the author, who worked in the firm's talent-acquisition function during a six-month internship (18 May to 17 November 2026). The study covers seven concurrently open positions, three technical and four non-technical, from job-description drafting through sourcing, telephonic screening, technical assessment, interview and walk-in coordination, offer closure and joining documentation. Because candidate-level data are confidential, the paper reports observed operating ranges rather than cohort totals: roughly 40–50 profiles sourced and 10–20 screening calls on active hiring days, about five virtual interviews per active position, one to two candidates progressing within about two days of virtual evaluation, and two to four joinings a month. Six findings emerge. Sourcing stayed concentrated on one primary portal despite diversification; early work-model screening reduced later drop-offs; manager feedback speed was the most controllable influence on progression; role-specific technical assignments gave a stronger competency signal than résumés; manual interview coordination sustained throughput at a high administrative cost; and hiring output was requirement-driven rather than target-driven. Interpreted through person–organisation fit, signaling, employer branding, war-for-talent and recruitment-analytics perspectives, the findings support eight low-cost, implementable improvements. The paper contributes an inside, role-comparative view of boutique-firm hiring in India.

Keywords: recruitment and selection; talent acquisition; IT services; participant observation; technical assessment; sourcing channels; India

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Recruitment and selection sit at the point where an organisation's growth plans become people on its payroll. In the classical formulation (Flippo, 1984), recruitment is an attraction-oriented activity that searches for prospective employees and encourages them to apply, while selection is an elimination-oriented activity that narrows the applicant pool to the candidate best suited to the role. Talent acquisition is a broader and more strategic term. It adds workforce planning, employer branding, structured multi-channel sourcing, candidate relationship management and the closing of candidates against competing offers. In technology hiring, where one recruiter often follows a candidate from first contact to offer, the line between recruitment and selection is thin in practice, and this paper treats the two as a single pipeline.

1.2 Problem and rationale

India's IT and IT-enabled services sector is among the country's largest contributors to services exports and white-collar employment (IBEF, 2026; NASSCOM, 2025). Within it, boutique and mid-sized engineering firms compete for the same scarce DevOps, cloud and data-engineering talent as far larger firms, but without the scale, brand recognition or enterprise tooling that large firms rely on. Existing studies of recruitment and selection tend to rely on surveys or secondary data and rarely describe the day-to-day mechanics of a live hiring function from inside it. Little is therefore known about how one hiring framework flexes across very different role types, or where, in a small and largely manual team, the process loses candidates.

1.3 Objectives

The study pursues four objectives:

O1. To describe the end-to-end recruitment and selection process of the case organisation, from sourcing to joining documentation.

O2. To examine the sourcing channels and tools used for technical and non-technical roles and their relative contribution to the candidate pipeline.

O3. To compare how the same process framework is adapted across technical and non-technical roles.

O4. To identify the challenges of hiring across several concurrent openings and the responses the team adopted.

1.4 Scope

The study covers the recruitment cycle for seven concurrently open positions: Corporate Finance Consultant, QA Automation Lead, Admin Executive, Recruiter, HR Executive, DevOps Engineer and Data Engineer. It runs from job-description drafting and posting to offer closure and joining documentation. It deliberately excludes formal onboarding and induction, which the case organisation assigns to a separate HR onboarding team.

1.5 Contributions and structure

The paper makes three contributions. It documents a complete hiring funnel across seven roles in one firm, which allows a like-for-like comparison of technical and non-technical routes. It reports operating-rate evidence from an operational seat rather than a questionnaire. And it translates six empirical findings into recommendations scoped to a small team's existing tools. Section 2 reviews the literature and theory, Section 3 sets out the sector and organisational context, Section 4 explains the method, Section 5 describes the process observed, Section 6 reports results, Section 7 discusses them, and Sections 8 and 9 give limitations and conclusions.

2. Literature review and theoretical framework

2.1 Empirical and practitioner literature

Abbas et al. (2021) review the methods firms actually use. On the recruitment side these include advertisements, agencies, employee referrals and electronic recruitment. On the selection side they include interviews, supervisor approval and reference checks. They also note that the COVID-19 pandemic pushed organisations of all sizes towards electronic platforms and that social media have become common in sourcing. Black et al. (2016) argue that organisations must keep auditing and updating their use of digital and social platforms to stay competitive in recruitment. Madhavi and Kaveri (2024) study IT firms in Hyderabad and report that technologies such as artificial intelligence, chat platforms and social media have accelerated candidate identification and screening. Ponamon et al. (2023) propose a conceptual model of recruitment and selection for the Industry 4.0 era, and Rozario et al. (2019) report an empirical study of the challenges that arise in recruitment and selection processes.

Table 1 - Reviewed literature and the gaps this study addresses

Source	Focus	Gap addressed here
Abbas et al. (2021)	Review of common recruitment and selection methods, including electronic and social-media sourcing	Little detail on how a firm moves from one dominant portal to a multi-channel mix
Black et al. (2016)	Staying current with social media in recruitment and selection	Limited guidance on diversifying away from a single dominant job portal in a small team
Madhavi & Kaveri (2024)	Technology-enabled hiring in IT firms (AI, chat platforms, social media)	Little on role-specific technical take-home assignments as a screening tool where no automated system is in place
Ponamon et al. (2023)	Conceptual recruitment and selection model for Industry 4.0	Framework not examined in a mid-sized, multi-role hiring setting
Rozario et al. (2019)	Empirical study of challenges in recruitment and selection	Few studies of how feedback turnaround affects offer drop-off in fast-moving, multi-role IT hiring

2.2 Theoretical lenses

Five perspectives guide the interpretation of the observations.

Person–organisation fit. Fit theory holds that selection outcomes are stronger when a candidate's values and working style match the organisation's culture, not only when skills match the job (Kristof, 1996). It predicts that organisations will build explicit fit checkpoints into selection.

Signaling theory. Under incomplete information, parties infer quality from imperfect signals (Spence, 1973). A résumé is a weak signal for specialised technical roles because credentials can overstate practical ability, so employers have reason to seek harder-to-fake signals such as work samples.

Employer branding. Candidates weigh an employer much as consumers weigh a product, balancing tangible attributes such as pay and work model against intangible ones such as culture and recognition (Ambler & Barrow, 1996). Firms with lower brand recognition must communicate these attributes actively.

War for talent. Where demand for a narrow band of skills persistently exceeds supply, employers compete on speed, experience and the total offer rather than on pay alone (Michaels et al., 2001).

Recruitment analytics. A metrics-based view treats recruitment as a measurable operational process, tracked through indicators such as source of hire, time to fill, interview-to-offer ratio and offer-to-join turnaround. It supports locating bottlenecks at a specific stage rather than blaming the process as a whole.

2.3 Research gaps

The literature offers limited guidance on five points that this study examines: the shift from a single dominant sourcing portal to a multi-channel mix; technical take-home assignments as a screening tool for niche roles; the effect of feedback turnaround on candidate drop-off; the hand-off between recruitment and onboarding; and the comparison of technical and non-technical hiring inside one firm. These gaps shaped the observation framework described in Section 4.

Read as a whole, the literature moves from the classical (the recruitment and selection split in Flippo, 1984), through the behavioural (fit, signaling, employer branding and the war for talent) to the operational (metrics-based recruitment). The structure of this paper mirrors that progression: Section 5 documents the operational process, Section 6 measures it, and Sections 7 and 8 interpret the challenges, limitations and recommendations against the behavioural and operational theory. A further point of convergence is that technology-enabled evaluation, whether AI-assisted screening (Madhavi & Kaveri, 2024) or an Industry 4.0 model (Ponamon et al., 2023), is the direction in which IT hiring is moving. That direction was only partly realised in the case organisation, which relied on a manual tracking sheet and not on an applicant tracking system.

3. Context: the sector and the case organisation

3.1 The Indian IT services sector

The sector ranges from large, diversified IT majors to specialised boutique firms that compete on depth in domains such as cloud, DevOps, data engineering and AI. Four features of this structure matter for hiring. First, talent supply for specialised engineering roles is tighter than for non-technical roles, which showed up in the continuous sourcing effort that the DevOps and data-engineering roles required. Second, buyer power is high: clients can choose among many comparable providers, so project wins and delivery timelines set how urgently a role must be filled. Third, rivalry extends into the talent market, because the same pool of DevOps, cloud and data engineers is approached by all players at once, which intensifies counter-offers and late-stage drop-offs. Fourth, long notice periods among employed candidates were the largest contributor to offer-to-join time in this study.

Two regulatory regimes bear directly on recruitment practice. The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 governs how candidate résumés, contact details, compensation data and identity documents may be collected and stored, and labour legislation sets the floor for offer terms, working hours and joining documentation.

Table 2 - Illustrative comparison of recruitment approaches (author's synthesis from observation, not a measured comparison)

Dimension	Large IT majors	Boutique and mid-sized firms
Hiring volume	Bulk, often campus-driven	Small-batch, role-specific; seven concurrent roles in this study
Sourcing	Dedicated applicant tracking systems and large sourcing teams	Manual, recruiter-driven sourcing across a few portals
Interview depth	Standardised multi-panel process, limited leadership involvement per candidate	High leadership involvement; every hire in this study met the chief executive
Employer branding	Established, widely recognised brand	Recruiter personally sells the role, culture and growth story
Tooling	Enterprise tracking and workflow automation	Spreadsheet tracking; higher administrative load per hire

3.1.1 Competitive forces through a talent lens

Threat of new entrants: moderate. Entry requires skilled technical talent, delivery infrastructure and client trust. Cloud tooling and remote delivery have lowered some barriers, which lets small specialised firms compete alongside larger ones. **Supplier power: low to moderate.** The key suppliers are cloud platforms and skilled engineers. Talent can be drawn from a national pool and multi-cloud strategies reduce dependence on any one vendor, but

the supply of qualified DevOps and data-engineering candidates was visibly tighter than for non-technical roles. **Buyer power: high.** Clients, especially small and mid-sized enterprises, can choose among many providers with comparable capabilities, so project wins and delivery timelines set the urgency, or burn rate, with which a role must be filled. **Threat of substitutes: moderate.** Low-code platforms and in-house teams pose some risk, although complex custom engineering and AI and data work still call for specialised partners. **Competitive rivalry: high.** Global majors, mid-tier firms and boutiques compete on domain expertise, delivery speed and technology depth, and the rivalry extends into the talent market.

3.1.2 PESTEL analysis

Table 3 - PESTEL analysis of the IT services sector

Factor	Relevance to IT services and to hiring
Political	Data-protection regulation such as India's Digital Personal Data Protection Act and global frameworks such as the GDPR shape how firms handle client and candidate data; export and IT policy incentives support the sector.
Economic	Global demand cycles, currency movements and client IT budgets affect project pipelines, and through them hiring velocity and headcount approvals.
Social	Remote and hybrid work culture and rising digital literacy increase demand for cloud, data and automation skills, even though the case organisation ran a fully office-based model, which proved a meaningful filter in screening.
Technological	Rapid advances in AI, cloud computing and DevOps practice require continuous upskilling and shape the technical assignments used to evaluate candidates.
Legal	Compliance with service agreements, intellectual-property law and cybersecurity regulation is essential for a firm serving international clients; document verification at joining is itself part of this compliance chain.
Environmental	Green IT and paperless HR processes, such as digital offer letters and e-verification of joining documents, are gradually being adopted across the sector.

3.1.3 Trends and challenges

IBEF (2026) puts India's IT and business-process management industry at about US$315.4 billion in FY26, with exports of about US$246.4 billion. Five trends bear on recruitment: rapid adoption of AI, cloud and automation among mid-market IT firms; growing attention to ethical data use and responsible AI; rising demand for data-engineering and DevOps talent as clients scale cloud infrastructure; a multi-portal sourcing mix instead of reliance on a single job board, a shift the case team itself had begun to apply; and structured, scenario-based technical assignments used alongside or instead of purely résumé-and-interview screening for engineering roles.

Four challenges stand out. Skill shortages in AI and machine learning, cloud and DevOps intensify competition for the same pool. Tighter data-privacy regulation raises the compliance overhead of handling candidate and client data. High attrition and counter-offers lead to lost offers and longer time to hire. Long notice periods among employed candidates were the single largest contributor to offer-to-join time in this study. Recruitment practice itself has moved from résumé-database sourcing towards professional-network sourcing, high-volume portals, referrals and more structured digital assessment, and employers increasingly track time to fill, stage ageing and source effectiveness. Industry commentary broadly expects continued, if moderated, growth in IT services demand, with AI-linked and data-engineering work outpacing traditional application maintenance. For a boutique firm, this suggests that specialised technical roles will remain the hardest to fill and the most contested.

3.1.4 Regulators and government initiatives

The sector has no single regulator. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology is the nodal ministry and administers the Information Technology Act, 2000. The Data Protection Board of India, under the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, supervises the processing of personal data; candidate résumés, contact details, compensation data and identity documents are personal data that require a lawful purpose, consent and secure retention. Commerce and special economic zone authorities administer the zone framework, which carries compliance, reporting and employee-documentation obligations; the case organisation's office sat inside a notified IT and ITES zone in Pune. Labour authorities administer the Shops and Establishments Act, the Code on Wages, provident-fund and insurance provisions and the Maternity Benefit Act, which together set the floor for offer terms, shift structure, working hours and onboarding documentation. The Ministry of Corporate Affairs and the Registrar of Companies govern corporate filings for private limited companies, Software Technology Parks of India supports software exports, and NASSCOM, an industry body and not a statutory regulator, acts as the sector's main standard-setting voice. For the recruitment function, the data-protection law and the labour codes are the two most

operationally relevant regimes: the first governs how candidate data may be held in tracking sheets, and the second governs what can lawfully be offered and documented at joining.

Successive central and state initiatives have also supported the sector and the supply of technical talent: Digital India; the Software Technology Parks scheme and special economic zone policy; Skill India, PMKVY and FutureSkills Prime, which aim to reskill the workforce in AI, cloud, cybersecurity, analytics and DevOps; Startup India and the National Policy on Software Products; the IndiaAI Mission, which funds AI research, compute capacity and applied-AI skilling; and the Maharashtra IT and ITES Policy, which supports the concentration of talent in Pune and other hubs.

3.1.5 Global issues affecting the sector

Because the sector earns most of its revenue from export markets, it is exposed to conditions outside India. Seven were visible in the hiring environment: global macroeconomic uncertainty and client IT-budget compression, which delay project starts and make requisitions stop-start; currency volatility, which affects the pay bands that can be approved for specialised roles; visa restrictions in the United States and parts of Europe, which push delivery further offshore; cross-border data-protection rules such as the GDPR; overseas employers hiring remotely, which gives Indian candidates access to international offers and intensifies counter-offer pressure; generative AI, which is automating routine coding, testing and support work and shifting demand towards higher-skill roles; and geopolitical instability and supply-chain disruption, which affect client confidence and the pace of new engagements.

3.2 The case organisation

The case organisation is a privately held, founder-led IT services and product-engineering firm headquartered in Pune, founded in 2010 and employing a few hundred people, with delivery presence in several countries. Its service lines include AI and data engineering, cloud and DevOps, custom software development and quality assurance. Work is fully office-based, six days a week, across two shifts, and this was disclosed to every candidate at the first screening call because location and shift comfort were qualifying criteria. The talent-acquisition team was small. It used a single shared seat on its primary resume-database portal, tracked candidates in a confidential spreadsheet instead of an applicant tracking system, and routed every hire through a final round with the chief executive. During the study period it was hiring for seven roles.

Table 4 - Roles open concurrently during the study period

Position	Category
Corporate Finance Consultant	Non-technical (finance)
QA Automation Lead	Technical
Admin Executive	Non-technical
Recruiter	Non-technical (HR)
HR Executive	Non-technical (HR)
DevOps Engineer	Technical
Data Engineer	Technical

3.2.1 Vision, values and employer value proposition

The firm states its vision as being a global partner and first choice for customers by leading in specific technology domains, and its mission as creating a niche through integrated, innovation-led technology services. Its founders repeatedly stress three values: integrity and strong core values, accountability paired with recognition of good work, and long-term, transparent client relationships. During screening, questions about ownership and comfort with a fast-paced, client-facing environment were used informally to gauge fit against these values, alongside the formal technical and compensation criteria. The firm positioned itself to candidates around hands-on technical exposure across AI, cloud and data projects for global clients; a flat, founder-accessible culture, reflected in routing every final hiring decision through the chief executive; and external recognition as a good employer. This value proposition was used, particularly with passive candidates, to counter the perceived rigidity of the fully office-based, six-day model. The trade-off was disclosed at the first call because early transparency reduced later drop-offs (Finding 2). The office sits in Pune's largest IT corridor, next to several direct competitors for talent, so the firm competes for the same local pool as larger, better-resourced neighbours.

3.2.2 Organisational structure

The chief executive and the chief technology officer, both co-founders, sit at the top, supported by functional heads for HR and talent acquisition and for delivery and client engagement. HR divides into talent acquisition, where this study was carried out, HR operations and generalist activities, and learning, development and employee engagement. Figure 1 places the seven roles hired for during the study against this reporting line.

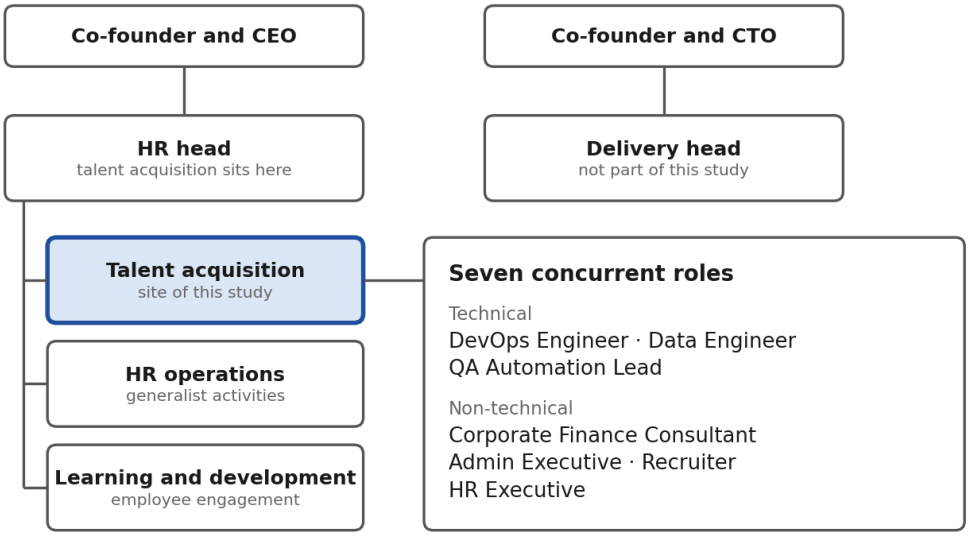


Fig. 1 - Indicative HR structure and the seven roles hired for.

3.2.3 SWOT analysis

Table 5 - SWOT analysis of the case organisation

Dimension	Details
Strengths	Diversified technology capability (AI, cloud, DevOps, quality assurance); delivery footprint in several countries; external recognition as a good employer; an active corporate social responsibility programme that supports employer branding.
Weaknesses	Limited public financial disclosure; sourcing still concentrated on one primary portal after two further channels were introduced; manual tracking in place of an applicant tracking system.
Opportunities	Growing global demand for AI and data-engineering skills; a data-platform partnership that opens premium engagements and related niche hiring; multi-portal sourcing and walk-in drives as ways to widen and speed up the funnel.
Threats	Intense competition for the same AI, cloud and DevOps pool from larger firms and other boutiques; salary competition that drives counter-offers; long notice periods that extend offer-to-join time.

3.2.4 Governance, alliances and social responsibility

As an unlisted private limited company, the firm is not bound by the disclosure rules that apply to listed peers, so its public governance information is limited. The arrangements that were publicly evidenced or directly observable were these. The company is closely held and led by its two co-founders. It files annual returns and audited financial statements with the Registrar of Companies. Every hire, across all seven roles, passed through a final interview with the chief executive before an offer was released, which concentrates final accountability for headcount at board level. Confidentiality and data-handling obligations flow from international client agreements into internal practice, and the confidentiality of the candidate tracking sheet, which constrains what this paper can report, is itself an instance of that control operating. An Internal Committee under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 is a mandatory requirement for an establishment of this size. Outcomes were communicated to both selected and rejected candidates, and work-model and shift conditions were disclosed at the first call instead of late in the funnel.

No merger or acquisition involving the firm was publicly reported during the study period. Its growth has been organic, through geographic expansion and technology partnerships. Two partnerships mattered directly for hiring: partner status with a data-platform vendor was the commercial reason behind the Data Engineer requisition, and partnerships across the three major cloud platforms shaped the certification criteria applied when screening DevOps and data-engineering candidates. At sector level, by contrast, consolidation was active, with mid-market players buying capability in data engineering, cloud migration and AI; acquired studios move into better-resourced pay structures, which intensifies competition for the same specialised candidates.

The firm's social-responsibility activity is organised around education and learning, health and wellness, environmental sustainability and inclusive growth, and publicly documented activities also contribute to its employer brand.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research design

The study is a descriptive, exploratory, single-organisation case study based on participant observation. This design was chosen because the mechanics of sourcing, screening, technical evaluation and offer closure are best seen from within an operational seat. A questionnaire or secondary-data study would not capture them at the same level of practical detail. The author was an active participant in the process, not an external observer.

4.2 Setting and participation

The observation period was a six-month talent-acquisition internship (18 May to 17 November 2026). On a recurring basis the author drafted and posted job descriptions, sourced candidates, screened résumés, conducted telephonic screening calls, maintained the candidate-tracking sheet, sent and followed up technical assignments, coordinated virtual interviews and walk-in drives, collected manager feedback, and supported post-offer documentation, all across the seven open positions.

4.3 Data sources

The primary evidence is first-hand participation, supported by working artefacts: the calling script, job-description templates, sample assignment questions and the structure of the tracking sheet. Secondary evidence comes from public corporate information, industry reports (IBEF, 2026; NASSCOM, 2025) and the literature in Section 2, which informed the sector and organisational context.

4.4 Data handling

The candidate-level tracking sheet is confidential. The paper therefore reports observed operating ranges, such as profiles sourced per active day, instead of cumulative candidate totals or conversion rates. These ranges are throughput indicators drawn from the tracking sheet and daily practice. They were not independently audited and are best read as evidence of process rhythm and capacity.

4.5 Analysis

Observations were organised stage by stage along the hiring funnel and compared across the seven roles. They were then grouped into recurring patterns, which became the six findings in Section 6. Each finding was checked against the research gaps in Section 2.3 and, where possible, against secondary sources. The five theoretical lenses in Section 2.2 were applied afterwards to interpret the patterns.

4.6 Ethics and reflexivity

The organisation is anonymised, and no candidate, employee or client is identifiable. Candidate-level and role-level counts are withheld. The author's dual role as intern and researcher may have shaped what was noticed and how it was interpreted, and the findings should be read with that in mind.

5. The recruitment and selection process observed

5.1 Overview

Every requisition followed a common sequence. The hiring manager confirmed the manpower requirement and a job description was drafted and posted. Candidates were sourced and screened by telephone. Technical roles then passed through a role-specific assignment. Shortlisted candidates were interviewed by the hiring manager and then by the chief executive, after which offers were issued, accepted and followed by joining documentation, and the verified file was handed to the onboarding team. Figure 2 traces one requisition from manpower request to joining. Candidates who are not selected are also told the outcome. For high-volume roles, walk-in drives compressed screening, document verification and a first interview into one day.

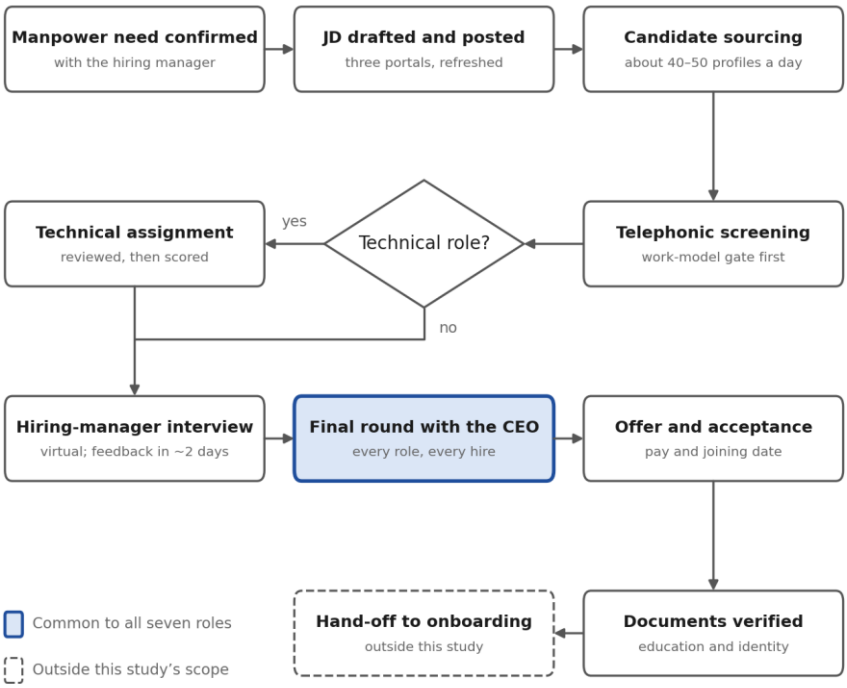


Fig. 2 - Requisition to joining: one decision and one common checkpoint.

Table 6 - Stages of the process and the observed operating rhythm

Stage	Principal activities	Observed rhythm
Job description and posting	Draft with hiring manager; use searchable title variants; post on three portals and refresh periodically	Up to seven live postings at once
Sourcing	Boolean keyword searches with experience and location filters; professional-network search for passive candidates; high-volume portal for direct applicants; referrals	About 40–50 profiles reviewed per active day
Telephonic screening	Standard script; work-model gating questions first; structured data capture	About 10–20 calls per day
Technical assignment	Role-specific take-home task for the three technical roles; review, then manager scoring	Technical roles only
Interview coordination	Scheduling, invitations, candidate briefing, rescheduling, manager feedback, final round	About five virtual interviews per active position
Walk-in drive	Invitations, registration, document checks, batch flow, same-day feedback	Periodic, for high-volume roles
Offer and joining documentation	Confirm pay and joining date, track acceptance, verify documents, hand off to onboarding	About two to four joinings per month

5.2 Sourcing and screening

Sourcing used three portals rather than one. The primary resume database was searched with role-specific mandatory and optional keywords and experience bands. For example, an HR Executive search combined a core title keyword with skills such as payroll, grievance and leave management, induction and exit formalities, filtered to a three-to-five-year experience band. A professional-network platform was used to reach passive candidates, particularly for DevOps and data roles, where relevant candidates were more active there than on job boards. A third portal supplied application volume. Referrals and a few niche leads supplemented all three.

Job descriptions were drafted or refined with each hiring manager and covered responsibilities, must-have and good-to-have skills, experience band and reporting line. Titles and keywords were aligned with how candidates search, for example by using both “QA Automation Lead” and “SDET / Test

Automation Lead", because portal search relevance drives the volume and quality of inbound applications. Postings carried consistent messaging across portals and were refreshed periodically for roles that stayed open for weeks.

Every shortlisted candidate was called using a standard script. The call first confirmed identity and availability, then asked two gating questions: comfort with the office location and the six-day, fully office-based model, and which of the two shift options would work. Only candidates who answered positively were taken through the structured data capture summarised in Table 7. Candidates were thanked, told they would be contacted if shortlisted, and sent the job description and company profile by email.

Table 7 - Data points captured during telephonic screening

Category	Details captured
Experience	Total years of experience; relevant experience
Current employment	Current company; designation; work location
Relocation	Current city of stay in Pune; hometown; willingness to relocate
Technical fit	Tools and technologies used; highest qualification and additional certifications
Compensation	Current pay (LPA); expected pay (LPA); whether the expectation is negotiable
Availability	Notice period; immediate-joiner status; whether the notice period is negotiable
Other	Whether already resigned (and last working day, if so); competing offers in hand; reason for job change

Beyond searching the database directly, two further activities on the primary portal widened reach for each open role: maintaining the live job posting and sending targeted mailers to matching profiles.

Table 8 - Job-posting and mailer activity on the primary portal (observed operating ranges)

Activity	Observed operating volume	Note
Live job postings	Up to seven concurrently, one per open role	Refreshed periodically to stay near the top of portal search results
Mailers to matching profiles	Roughly 20–30 profiles per active role per batch	Sent to search results not yet called, using a short templated message with role, location and pay band
Mailer response	A minority of profiles responded with interest	Consistently lower than the response to direct calls; used to supplement, not replace, calling
Direct-call connect rate	Noticeably higher than mailer response	Reflected in the 10–20 screening calls a day

Exact counts are not reproduced because the underlying portal-account activity is confidential. The ranges show that posting visibility and mailers were a continuing part of sourcing effort and that mailers were a lower-yield supplement to telephonic outreach.

5.3 Technical assignments

For the three technical roles, candidates who cleared screening received a role-specific take-home assignment before any interview. Sample themes for the DevOps role included how to establish the root cause when an application fails after deployment, how to deploy database changes to a specific environment, how to upload a file programmatically to cloud storage, and how to roll back a build. HR-adjacent roles received case-style questions, for instance on identifying training needs and measuring the return on training. Completed assignments were checked for accuracy and clarity before being passed to the hiring manager for scoring.

5.4 Interviews, the chief executive round and walk-in drives

Interview coordination was the most time-intensive task. It involved confirming availability across the candidate, the panel and the recruiter, sending invitations, briefing candidates and handling frequent last-minute rescheduling. After the hiring-manager interview, cleared candidates were taken to a final round with the chief executive before any offer, which gave leadership direct visibility into cultural fit and sign-off on every hire. Walk-in drives added a different load, requiring registration desks, original-document checks, batching of candidates through screening and interview stations, and consolidation of feedback from parallel panels on the same day.

5.5 Pipeline management and offer closure

With seven roles open at once, pipeline discipline mattered as much as any single stage. This meant timely communication at every stage, careful follow-up of unresponsive candidates, re-engagement of those who had gone cold, tracking of competing offers, and daily prioritisation of calls by how close each position was to its target closing date. For selected candidates, the team confirmed pay and joining date, tracked offer acceptance and verified educational, relieving, identity and statutory documents. Once documents were verified and the joining date was confirmed, the case moved to the onboarding team, which marks the boundary of this study.

5.6 A typical working day

A representative day in the peak hiring weeks began with reviewing overnight portal responses and search results across the seven roles, shortlisting fresh profiles against each role's keyword and filter criteria, and updating the tracking sheet before the first calls. Through the late morning and afternoon, screening calls ran in batches, interspersed with sending technical assignments to candidates who had cleared screening and following up assignments due that day. Early afternoon was usually reserved for that day's virtual interviews: confirming attendance an hour ahead, sending links, briefing candidates, and managing at least one last-minute reschedule. On walk-in days the whole morning shifted to on-site coordination. Later in the day, feedback was logged, outcomes were communicated, and any accepted offer had its acceptance and joining date recorded. The day closed with a short review of each role's pipeline health, which set the next day's priorities.

5.7 Adjacent HR support activities

Alongside the core funnel, the author gave limited support to three adjacent activities: client-welcome coordination for visiting client representatives, an internal continuous-improvement and engagement day, and seasonal festival-linked engagement events. These involved circulating invitations, timing events so that they did not disrupt interview schedules, arranging simple materials, and keeping a light record of participation. They were small relative to the recruitment workload, but they showed how a talent-acquisition team also supports the employee-experience and culture agenda.

6. Results

Because the tracking sheet is confidential, the quantitative evidence below consists of operating ranges observed during the study period. They describe process rhythm and capacity, not audited cohort totals or conversion rates.

6.1 Operating rhythm

Table 9 - Observed operating ranges across the funnel

Stage	Observed range	Reading
Profiles sourced	40–50 per active hiring day	Highest-volume activity
Telephonic screening	10–20 calls per day	Roughly one call for every two to three profiles reviewed
Virtual interviews	About five per active position	Interview load scales with the number of active roles
Progression or selection	One to two candidates within about two days of virtual evaluation	Fastest stage in the funnel
Final-round office call-ups	Four to five candidates, as the position requires	Depends on role urgency and pipeline
Joinings	About two to four per month	Requirement-driven and slowest to materialise

The funnel narrows steeply between screening calls and interviews, which indicates that a meaningful share of sourced and even screened candidates did not progress. The two-day decision window was the fastest stage. Joining was the slowest because it depended on candidates serving notice periods after accepting an offer. Monthly joining output varied within the two-to-four range and did not trend steadily upward, consistent with hiring being driven by approved demand and position urgency rather than a fixed monthly target.

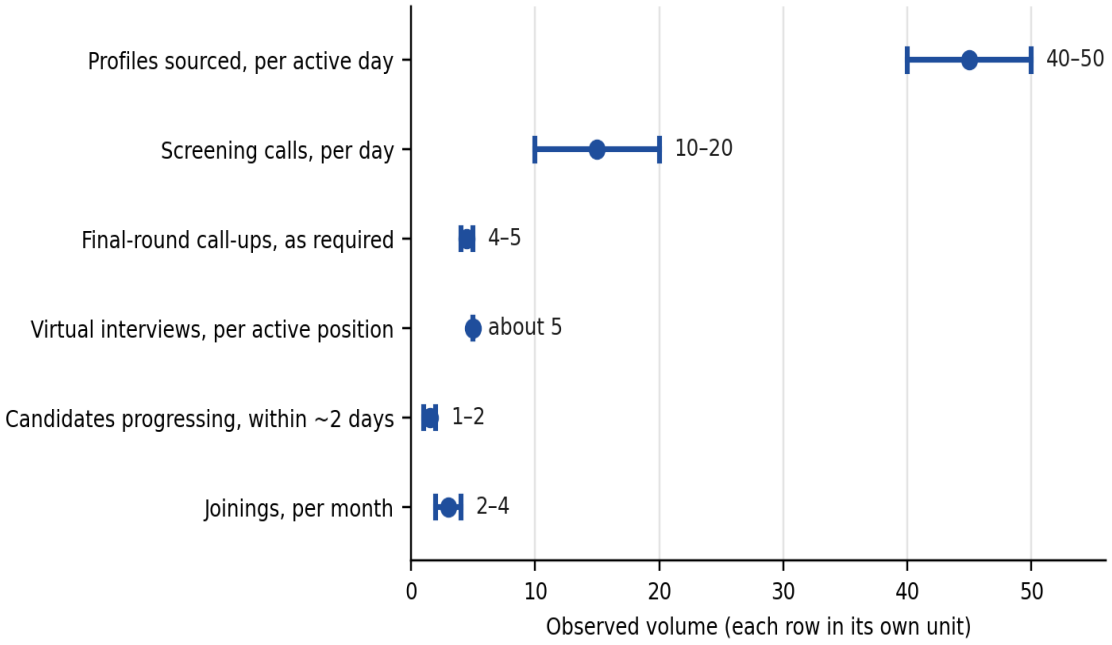


Fig. 3 - Observed operating ranges, low to high (point marks the midpoint).

6.2 Role-wise routes

Table 10 - Assessment route by role

Role	Category	Route
Corporate Finance Consultant	Non-technical	Screening → virtual interview → final round
QA Automation Lead	Technical	Screening → technical assessment → virtual interview → final round
Admin Executive	Non-technical	Screening → hiring-manager interview → final round
Recruiter	Non-technical	Screening → virtual interview → final round
HR Executive	Non-technical	Screening → assessment or case discussion → interview → final round
DevOps Engineer	Technical	Screening → technical assessment → virtual interview → final round
Data Engineer	Technical	Screening → technical assessment → virtual interview → final round

The route lengthens with technical depth. The three technical roles add an assessment stage that most non-technical roles skip, whereas the number of interview rounds and the chief executive round were the same for all seven roles. The contrast was visible in practice. The Data Engineer requisition required targeted sourcing around pipeline tools, cloud data platforms and SQL and Python, and used an assignment on practical cloud-storage and deployment scenarios to separate hands-on capability from résumé familiarity. The Admin Executive route was simpler: organisational skills, office-software proficiency, location suitability and shift comfort could be judged quickly in screening, with no assignment.

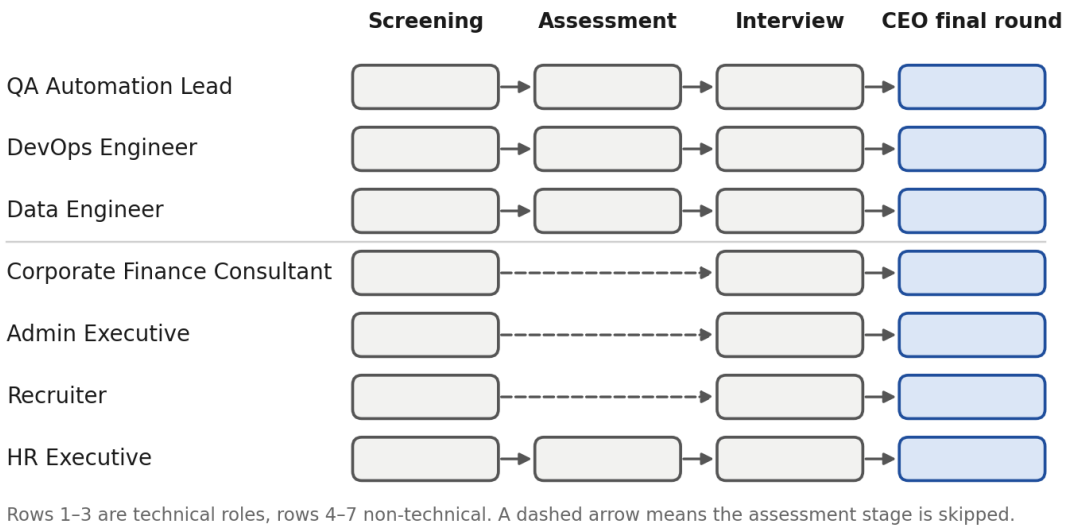


Fig. 4 - Assessment route by role, converging on the CEO round.

Figure 4 shows the routes as parallel tracks. The HR Executive route includes an assessment or case discussion, and all seven converge on the chief executive round, which made the chief executive's calendar the one scheduling constraint common to every pipeline.

6.3 Sourcing channels

Table 11 - Sourcing channels and observed use

Channel	Observed use
Primary resume-database portal	Main channel across all active roles
Professional-network recruiter platform	Passive and specialised technical profiles
Third job portal	Additional reach and direct-application volume
Referrals and niche sources	Supplementary, for selected requirements

6.4 Findings

Finding 1: Sourcing stayed concentrated on one primary portal despite diversification. The primary resume-database portal remained the main channel even after two further channels were introduced, and the team depended heavily on consistent portal-based sourcing. This can narrow access to passive and niche technical talent if other channels are not developed systematically. Channel percentages are not reported because the tracking data are confidential.

Finding 2: Early work-model screening reduced later drop-offs. Location, the six-day office model and shift comfort were moved to the first two questions of the calling script. Clearly mismatched candidates, often those from hybrid or standard-day-shift backgrounds, were identified within the first minute instead of after a full screening conversation or a scheduled interview. Early-stage drop-offs on work-model grounds fell, although the reduction was not formally quantified.

Finding 3: Review and feedback speed was the most controllable influence on progression. The process aimed to move candidates from virtual evaluation to progression within about two days. Hiring managers were managing delivery work alongside interview panels, so feedback sometimes slipped, and without a shared system the delay was often visible only after a candidate had gone cold. A polite same-day or next-morning reminder kept most feedback within the window, but this was a workaround and not a structural fix.

Finding 4: Role-specific technical assignments gave a stronger competency signal than résumés. Assignments acted as a formal gate for the three technical roles and showed practical capability beyond résumé keywords and screening answers. They were, however, evaluated without a common scoring standard, which limits comparability across candidates and evaluators.

Finding 5: Daily virtual interview coordination sustained throughput at a high administrative cost. Regular interview throughput was achievable through disciplined manual coordination. With several roles active at once, the load of calendar checks, confirmations and follow-ups was heavy, and the chief executive's calendar was the one scheduling constraint common to all seven pipelines.

Finding 6: Hiring output was requirement-driven. Joining output of two to four a month changed with approved manpower requirements and the urgency of positions near their closing dates. Performance should therefore be judged against approved demand and position priority, not against a fixed number.

6.5 Operational challenges and responses

Table 12 - Challenges, responses and results

Challenge	Response	Result
Scarce technical talent; static search strings aged quickly	Weekly review and broadening of search criteria; targeted professional-network searches for the two scarcest roles	Fresh candidates surfaced each week; pipelines stayed active
Manual tracking and interview coordination across seven roles	Batched interview slots; same-day tracking-sheet updates	Fewer calendar checks; pipeline status always current
Candidate discomfort with six-day, shift-based work	Work-model questions moved to the start of the call	Fewer wasted interviews and manager hours
Slow manager feedback	Same-day or next-morning reminders in the daily closing routine	Turnaround close to the two-day aim, but dependent on manual effort
Requirement-driven priorities across seven pipelines	End-of-day pipeline review to set next-day priorities	Urgent roles received more same-day attention
Aligning candidate, interviewer and recruiter calendars	Buffer windows and pre-agreed backup slots	Fewer same-day reschedules, though not eliminated
Volume pressure on evaluation quality	Script and assignment gate kept fixed for every candidate	Consistent screening on high- and low-volume days
Single shared seat on the primary portal	Informal time windows, urgent roles first; fallback to other channels	Urgent roles covered, but primary-channel throughput was lower
Candidate hesitation shaped by public employer-review platforms	Transparent answers on growth and appraisal cycles, paired with positive employer signals	Candidates who got direct answers were more likely to continue (not formally tracked)

6.6 Conclusions from the data

Read together, the findings describe a structured but high-touch recruitment system. The strongest quantitative evidence is the daily operating volume, 40–50 profiles sourced and 10–20 screening calls on active hiring days, together with about five virtual interviews per active position. Candidates then move through a short decision window of about two days and a final-round evaluation as required, which produces joining output of about two to four a month. The main opportunities are therefore not simply more hiring but better source diversification, disciplined early screening, faster feedback, standardised technical assessment and clearer visibility of role urgency and stage ageing.

The challenges in Table 12 also carry seven practical lessons. A single sourcing channel and a static keyword string age quickly for scarce technical skills, so strategy needs a fixed weekly review. Without a tracking system, coordination overhead scales directly with the number of open roles, and batching and same-day logging are cheap ways to contain it. Work-model and shift conditions should be disclosed before, not during or after, a detailed screening conversation. A manual reminder habit can stand in for a feedback-tracking system in the short term but does not scale. In a multi-role setup, a short explicit daily prioritisation step works better than a fixed routine. Building slack into schedules in advance works better than absorbing clashes afterwards, especially where one shared resource sits in every pipeline. And a fixed, non-negotiable script and assignment gate protects evaluation quality when volume is high.

7. Discussion

7.1 Interpreting the findings

Fit. The chief executive round across all seven roles functioned less as a technical checkpoint, which earlier stages had usually cleared, than as a values-fit checkpoint (Kristof, 1996). Screening questions on comfort with a fast-paced, client-facing, fully office-based environment worked as an early, informal fit filter, which is consistent with Finding 2.

Signaling. The assignments in Finding 4 created a harder-to-fake signal of competence than a résumé or an unstructured interview (Spence, 1973). The absence of a scoring rubric, however, weakened that signal because two evaluators could read the same output differently.

Employer branding. For a firm competing with much larger neighbours, recruiters had to sell the role, culture and growth story personally (Ambler & Barrow, 1996). Candidate questions raised on the basis of public review platforms show that employer perception formed outside the firm still has to be managed inside the recruitment conversation.

War for talent. In a market where specialised skills are scarce and counter-offers are common, a slow internal process can decide the outcome even when pay and role fit are comparable (Michaels et al., 2001). This explains why feedback speed (Finding 3) was the most controllable lever available.

Analytics. Recording the funnel as stage-wise operating ranges made it possible to place bottlenecks at specific stages. Manual tracking, however, limited how granular and comparable the data could be, and a lightweight tracking system would make source-of-hire and stage-ageing measures routine.

7.2 Technical and non-technical hiring

The funnel was common to all roles, but the technical-assessment stage was what differentiated evaluation depth. Interview counts and the chief executive round were identical across role types. Further investment in evaluation quality is therefore better aimed at the assessment and feedback stages than at adding interview rounds. Technical roles drew a more engaged, professional-network-active pool but needed deeper up-front skill matching, while non-technical roles moved faster through screening but needed more active pipeline management to keep candidates engaged in a more competitive local market.

7.3 Implications for practice

Each recommendation below follows from a finding and is scoped to be implementable within the team's existing structure and tools. The target values are illustrative starting points and should be calibrated locally.

Table 13 - Recommendations, implementation and expected outcomes

Recommendation (finding)	Implementation	Expected outcome
Set sourcing-channel-mix targets, for example a minimum non-primary-portal share for hard-to-fill technical roles (F1)	Set role-wise targets when a requisition opens; record the source against every profile; review source-wise shortlist and progression fortnightly	More balanced pipeline; lower cost per hire over time
Make work-model questions a mandatory opening check (F2)	Place location, six-day office model and shift questions first in every script and record the answers before further data capture	Less wasted recruiter and manager time
Agree a manager-feedback service level, for example 48 hours for assignment review and 72 hours for post-interview feedback (F3)	Record a feedback due date against each interview; send a reminder at the halfway point	Shorter hiring cycle; fewer drop-offs from delay
Standardise technical-assignment scoring rubrics (F4)	Convert existing questions into a weighted sheet with three or four criteria and a stated pass mark	Comparable evaluation across candidates and evaluators
Adopt a lightweight applicant tracking or scheduling tool (F5)	Start with a low-cost tool; migrate the existing sheet structure; pilot on two requisitions for a month	Less manual follow-up; visible interview and feedback status
Keep a role-wise burn tracker (F6)	Track approved openings, pipeline, stage ageing and expected final-round dates	Effort aligned with position urgency
Add a second portal seat or a documented rotation (Table 12)	Request an additional licence or formalise urgency-based access windows	More consistent primary-channel coverage

Recommendation (finding)	Implementation	Expected outcome
Provide employer-brand talking points and a standard post-offer documentation checklist (Table 12, Section 5.5)	Prepare factual points on growth and appraisal; send the checklist on offer day and track completion weekly	Fewer early-stage objections; a cleaner hand-off to onboarding

7.4 Practitioner learnings

Beyond process knowledge, the internship changed how the author understands recruitment as a discipline. Arriving with a classroom picture of a linear funnel, the author left with a stronger sense that much of the work is parallel prioritisation, deciding every day which of seven open pipelines most needs attention and why. Small, consistent habits compound into better funnel outcomes over weeks: a two-question filter at the start of every call, a same-day tracking-sheet update and a same-day feedback nudge to a manager.

The learning outcomes can be grouped as follows.

The full cycle. Understanding the complete cycle from job-description drafting and sourcing through screening, assessment, interview coordination, offer closure and joining documentation, across technical and non-technical roles.

Structured screening. Applying a structured telephonic script to capture experience, compensation, notice period and relocation data consistently at a sustained volume of 10–20 calls a day.

Assessment design. Seeing how technical assignments for DevOps and data-engineering roles are designed and used to test résumé claims.

Coordination. Running daily virtual interviews across concurrent roles, resolving calendar conflicts, and planning and running a walk-in drive from pre-drive confirmation to same-day feedback consolidation.

Communication and discipline. Improving communication with candidates, hiring managers and senior leadership, and keeping a consistent tracking sheet while prioritising follow-ups by urgency.

Feedback and hand-off. Understanding why timely manager feedback prevents drop-off in a competitive market, and how recruitment hands off cleanly to a separate onboarding function.

The training also built professional skills that coursework touches only briefly: staying composed when a candidate pushes back on pay or work model, following up firmly but politely with a busy hiring manager, and delivering a rejection in a way that keeps the door open. None of these appears in a funnel metric, yet each shaped whether a candidate stayed engaged.

8. Limitations and future research

The study has several limitations. The data are aggregated operating ranges from a confidential tracking sheet and were not independently audited, so no conversion rates or causal claims can be made, and several effects, such as the fall in work-model drop-offs, are observed but not quantified. The sample is a single organisation and seven roles, so the results may not generalise to senior, campus or graduate hiring, or to firms with a dedicated tracking system. Sourcing evidence centres on the primary portal because it dominated, so insight into other channels is thinner. The observation window may not capture seasonal variation, and dependence on manager feedback meant some pipelines were still active at the end of the period. Because the author was a participant, subjectivity cannot be ruled out. Finally, the study stops at documentation verification and cannot comment on onboarding.

Four lines of future work follow. Researchers could compare cost per hire and quality of hire by channel for technical roles, build and test a weighted rubric for technical assignments, track the later performance of candidates assessed by assignment versus interview alone, and extend the study into onboarding and early retention.

9. Conclusion

This case study followed one mid-sized IT services firm’s hiring pipeline from sourcing to acquisition across seven concurrent roles. The pipeline was structured and high-touch: high-frequency at the top of the funnel and requirement-gated at the bottom. Its main improvement opportunities do not lie in simply hiring more. They lie in diversified sourcing, disciplined early screening, faster feedback, standardised technical assessment and clearer visibility of role urgency and stage ageing. The findings extend the literature with an inside, role-comparative account of boutique-firm hiring and offer a practical, low-cost agenda that small talent-acquisition teams can adopt.

Acknowledgements

The author thanks the faculty guide, Dr. Sakshi Mann, for academic guidance and feedback, and the industry mentor and HR team of the case organisation for their support and for the learning opportunity.

Declarations

Competing interests. The author was a talent-acquisition intern at the case organisation during the study period.

Ethics and data. The organisation is anonymised. No candidate-level or personally identifiable data are reported, and the underlying tracking data are confidential and not available.

Appendix A. Sample telephonic screening script (abridged)

Opening. "Good [morning/afternoon], am I speaking with [Candidate Name]? This is [Recruiter Name] calling from [Company] regarding the [Role Name] position. Do you have 10–15 minutes to speak right now?"

Qualifying questions, asked before proceeding. "Before we go further, this role is based at our Pune office, and it is a fully work-from-office role, six days a week. Are you comfortable with that? We also have two shift options, 10:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. Would either of those work for you?"

Data-capture questions, asked only if both qualifying questions are answered positively. Total and relevant experience; current company and designation; tools and technologies used; current and expected pay, and whether it is negotiable; notice period, and whether it is negotiable; current city, hometown and willingness to relocate; whether already resigned and, if so, the last working day; competing offers in hand; and reason for considering a change.

Closing. "Thank you for your time, [Candidate Name]. I'll share the detailed job description and company profile by email. If your profile is shortlisted for the next step, our team will reach out within the next few working days."

Appendix B. Job-description template (structure used)

Role title, with common searchable variants noted for portal keyword tagging; department and reporting line; role summary (two to three lines); key responsibilities; must-have skills and qualifications; good-to-have skills; experience band; work location, work model (office-based) and shift options; compensation band, where disclosed.

Appendix C. Candidate-tracking sheet: column structure

Table A1 - Structure of the centralised tracking sheet maintained across all seven role pipelines

Column group	Fields tracked
Candidate details	Name, contact number, email, current location, source or channel
Role details	Role applied for, hiring manager, requisition priority
Screening data	Experience, current pay, expected pay, notice period, relocation willingness, shift and location confirmation
Assignment status	Sent, received, evaluated, cleared, not cleared (technical roles only)
Interview status	Assessment date, panel interview date and outcome, chief executive final-round date and outcome
Offer and joining	Offer date, accepted pay, joining date, document-verification status, final outcome

Appendix D. Abbreviations

Table A2 - Abbreviations used in this paper

Abbreviation	Full form
CEO	Chief executive officer
CTO	Chief technology officer
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
IBEF	India Brand Equity Foundation
JD	Job description
L&D	Learning and development
LPA	Lakhs per annum
NASSCOM	National Association of Software and Service Companies
PESTEL	Political, economic, social, technological, environmental, legal
QA	Quality assurance
SWOT	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats

References

Abbas, S. I., Shah, M. H., & Othman, Y. H. (2021). Critical review of recruitment and selection methods: Understanding the current practices. *Annals of Contemporary Developments in Management & HR, 3*(3).

Ambler, T., & Barrow, S. (1996). The employer brand. *Journal of Brand Management, 4*(3), 185–206.

Black, S. L., Washington, M. L., & Schmidt, G. B. (2016). How to stay current in social media to be competitive in recruitment and selection. In R. Landers & G. Schmidt (Eds.), *Social media in employee selection and recruitment* (pp. 197–212). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-29989-1_10

Flippo, E. B. (1984). *Personnel management* (6th ed.). McGraw-Hill.

Government of India. (2023). *The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023*.

IBEF. (2026). *IT & BPM industry in India*. https://www.ibef.org/industry/information-technology-india

Kristof, A. L. (1996). Person–organization fit: An integrative review of its conceptualizations, measurement, and implications. *Personnel Psychology, 49*(1), 1–49.

Madhavi, T., & Kaveri, A. (2024). The impact of artificial intelligence in recruitment and selection processes in IT companies. *Proceedings of the 2024 16th International Conference on Electronics, Computers and Artificial Intelligence (ECAI)*, 1–5. https://doi.org/10.1109/ECAI61503.2024.10607464

Michaels, E., Handfield-Jones, H., & Axelrod, B. (2001). *The war for talent*. Harvard Business School Press.

NASSCOM. (2025). *Technology sector in India: Strategic review 2025*. https://community.nasscom.in/communities/nasscom-insights/technology-sector-india-strategic-review-2025

Ponamon, J. F., Rumagit, S., Sumual, T. E. M., & Sumual, S. D. (2023). Recruitment and selection of human resources in Industry 4.0 era: New model conceptual. *International Journal of Information Technology and Education*, *2*(4), 67–77. https://doi.org/10.62711/ijite.v2i4.167

Rozario, S. D., Venkatraman, S., & Abbas, A. (2019). Challenges in recruitment and selection process: An empirical study. *Challenges*, *10*(2), 35. https://doi.org/10.3390/challe10020035

Spence, M. (1973). Job market signaling. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, *87*(3), 355–374.