



The candidate conviction gap

How to tell whether your careers website is just generating applications, or whether it is generating hiring momentum.



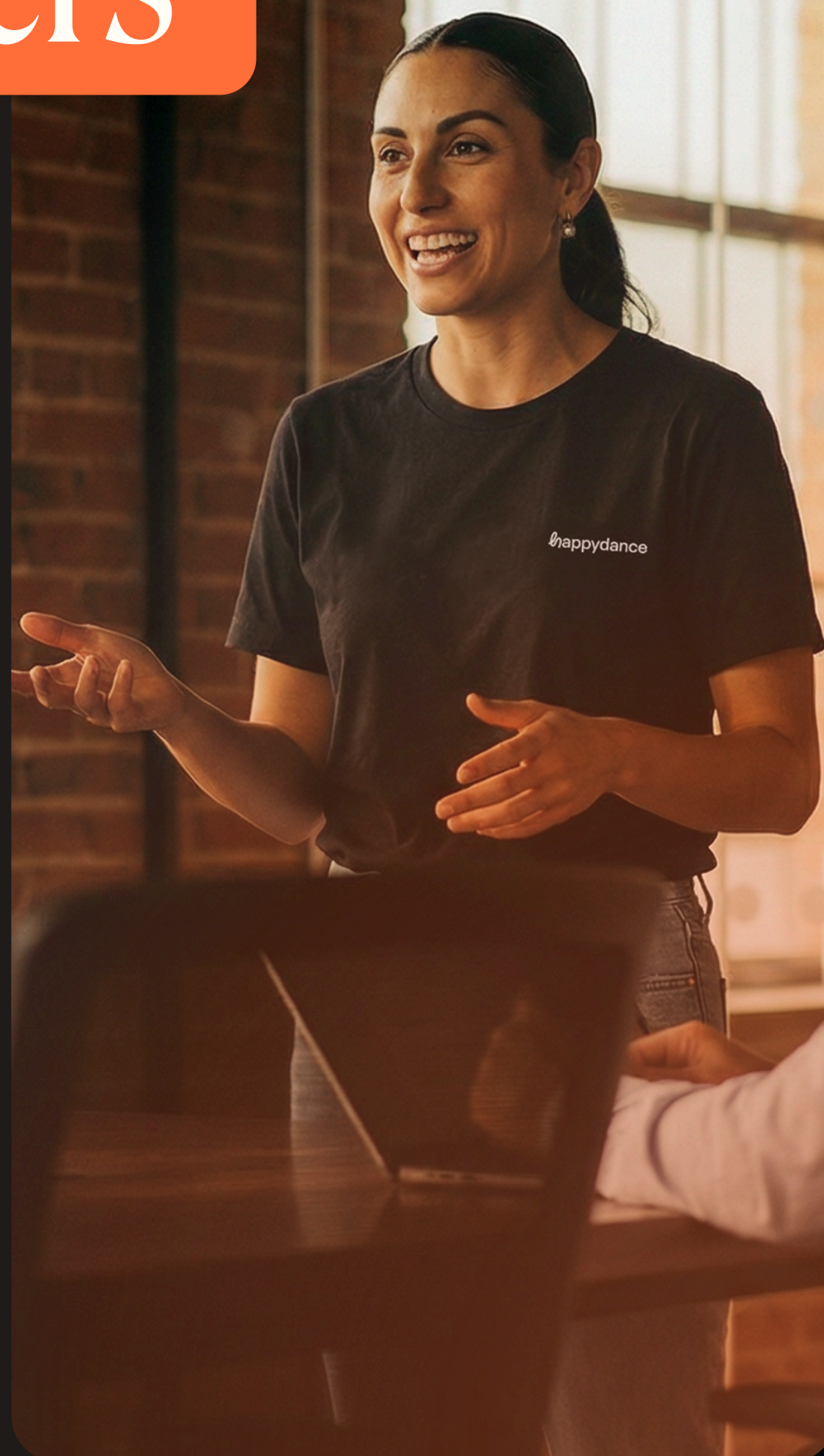
A diagnostic for talent leaders

This worksheet pulls four weeks of thinking into a single tool your team can run in about an hour. It is built for enterprise talent leaders, employer brand managers, and anyone responsible for whether the careers website is doing more than sitting there looking professional.

Use it honestly. It is designed to surface gaps, not confirm what you already believe.

What is inside

- 01 The idea in one paragraph
- 02 The conviction curve
- 03 Volume or momentum, a four-signal check
- 04 The five pre-apply breakpoints
- 05 The conviction checklist
- 06 What to do next



The idea in one paragraph

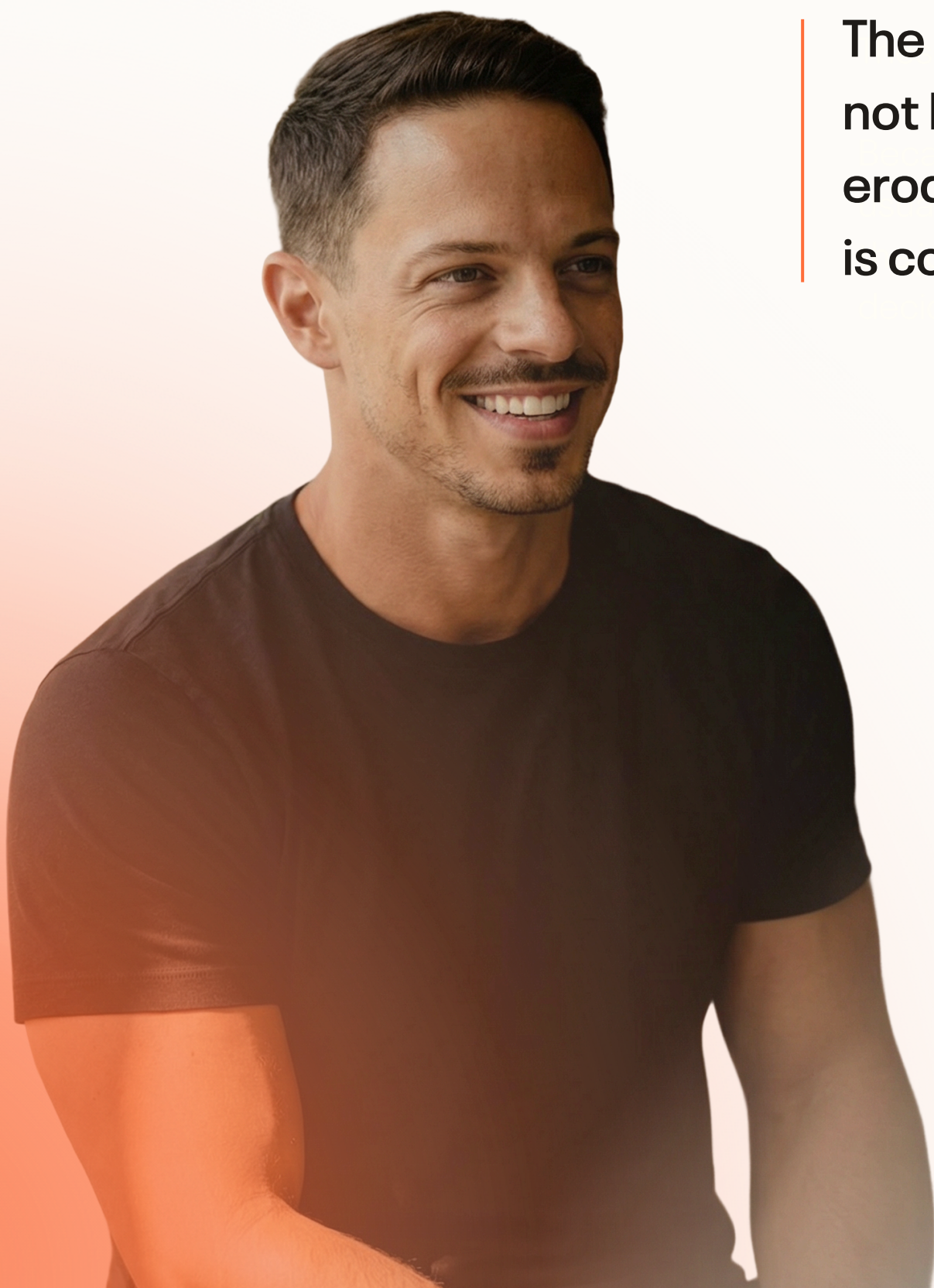
Volume fills the funnel. Conviction moves it.

Application volume has stopped being a reliable signal of hiring health. It was already soft. AI application tools have now finished the job. When a candidate can fire off fifty tailored applications in an afternoon, volume is no longer evidence of interest, intent or fit. It is evidence of friction being removed, nothing more. The measure that has not broken, and cannot be eroded by automation, is conviction. We define the candidate conviction gap as the distance between a candidate's initial interest and the informed confidence required for a meaningful first conversation. Careers websites that close this gap produce better hires. Careers websites that leave it open produce more applications and worse outcomes.

Why this matters commercially

When a careers programme is optimised around application volume, the costs compound in places that are easy to miss on the top-of-funnel dashboard. Recruiter productivity drops as more time is spent filtering than progressing. Offer acceptance rates fall as candidates arrive with the wrong expectations. Early-tenure attrition rises as misaligned hires leave inside ninety days. None of these costs are theoretical. They are the numbers that move when a careers programme shifts from optimising for apply rate to optimising for the quality of the conversation that follows.

The measure that has not broken, and cannot be eroded by automation, is conviction.



The conviction curve

Candidates move through four states before they apply well. Momentum breaks when the careers website cannot carry a candidate from one state to the next.

Use this lens across the rest of the worksheet. Each of the four states is a place where the careers website has a specific job to do.

Stage	Candidate state	The careers website's job
Aware	The candidate knows the company exists. They are scanning.	Give them enough reason to stay and look properly, not just enough reason to click apply.
Interested	The candidate has found a role that catches them. They are reading.	Tell the truth of the work specifically enough that they can tell whether this is for them.
Convinced	The candidate can picture themselves in the role. They are weighing.	Answer the questions they are quietly asking about team, environment, tradeoffs and process.
Committed	The candidate has made a decision. They are applying with intent.	Keep the voice, keep the commitment, and show them what happens next.

Where your funnel leaks. Most enterprise careers websites hold candidates fine through aware and interested, and lose them between interested and convinced. That is the gap. The rest of this worksheet helps you find exactly where it is happening on your own site.



Volume or momentum, a four-signal check

Answer each question honestly for your current hiring programme. One tick per row. A score of two or more in the right-hand columns is a signal worth acting on.

Signal	Not really	Sometimes	Often
Applications are rising, recruiter conversion is not.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recruiters are spending more time filtering than progressing applicants.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Top of funnel looks healthy, the quality of first conversations is flat or declining.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Offer acceptance and early-tenure retention are not improving in line with apply growth.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

How to read your result

Zero or one in the sometimes or often columns. Your programme is likely holding up. Use the rest of this worksheet as a health check, not a rescue mission.

Two in the sometimes or often columns. You have a volume problem that looks like a momentum problem on the dashboard. The pages ahead will help you find where.

Three or four in the sometimes or often columns. You have a conviction gap, and the careers website is almost certainly where it is being created. This worksheet is built for you.

The five pre-apply breakpoints

Conviction breaks in five specific places on most careers websites. For each breakpoint, score your site on a 1 to 5 scale, where 1 is "we are clearly falling short here" and 5 is "this is a strength of our site." Then write down the single most useful thing you would change, for each one you scored 3 or below.

Breakpoint 1

Role pages that describe responsibilities but not success

The question a serious candidate is asking is not what they will do, but what success will look like. If your role pages cannot answer that clearly, interested candidates quietly become uncertain.

Score 1 to 5 1 2 3 4 5

The one thing to change _____

Breakpoint 2

Culture content that feels generic rather than specific

Could your culture page be cut and pasted onto a competitor's site without looking strange? If yes, it is reassurance, not information, and candidates know the difference.

Score 1 to 5 1 2 3 4 5

The one thing to change _____

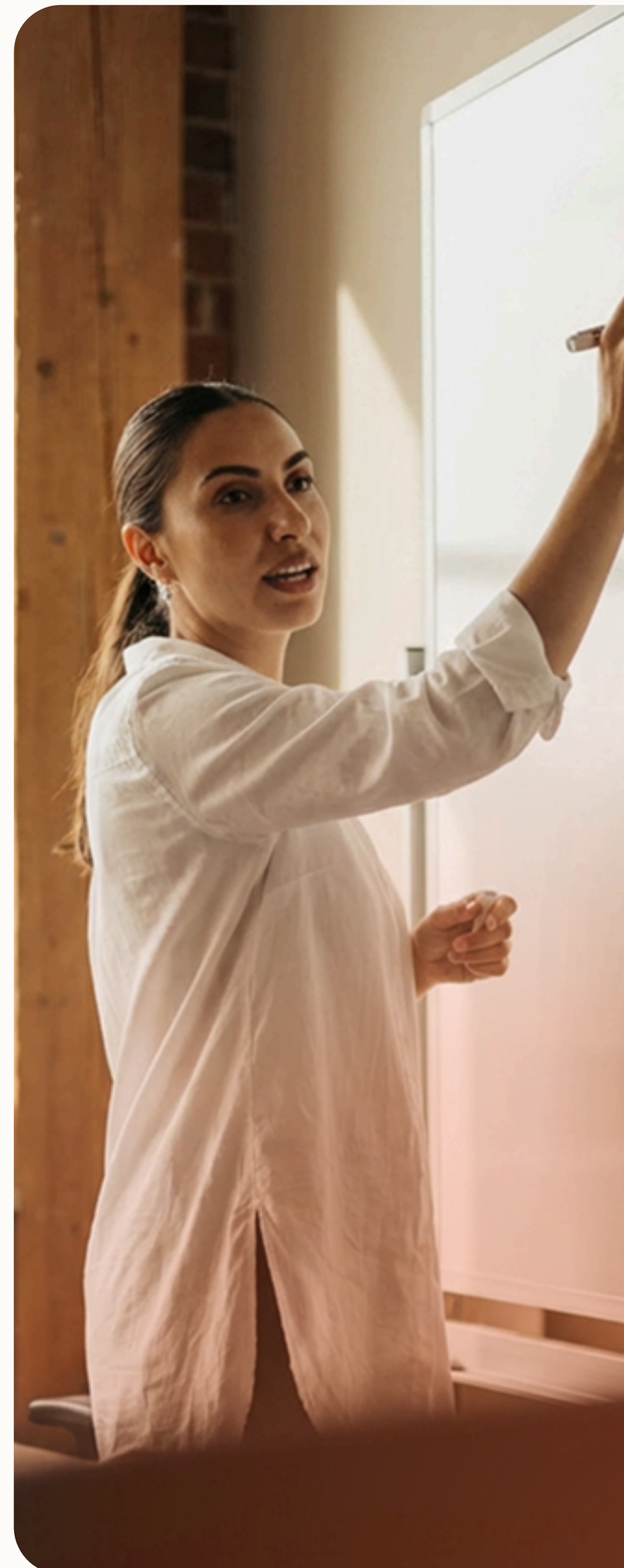
Breakpoint 3

Benefits or conditions content that lacks practical detail

Listing what is offered is not the same as explaining how it works. candidates want to know what flexibility looks like on a Tuesday in November, not just that it is available

Score 1 to 5 1 2 3 4 5

The one thing to change _____



Breakpoint 4

Process pages that do not explain what happens next

The candidate close to applying wants to know what they are signing up for. A clear process signals a serious employer. A vague one signals the opposite.

Score 1 to 5 1 2 3 4 5

The one thing to change _____

Breakpoint 5

Apply journeys that ask for effort before building commitment

The apply journey is the last place on the site where conviction can still be built, and the place it is most reliably destroyed by a sudden shift in voice and tone.

Score 1 to 5 1 2 3 4 5

The one thing to change _____



The conviction checklist

Run this against your five most-trafficked role pages. For each question you cannot answer clearly from the content on the page, you have found work that is either being avoided on the page or being done more expensively somewhere else in the hiring process.

#	Question	Answered clearly?
1	<p>What will the person actually do?</p> <p>Not responsibilities in the abstract. The shape of the work on a normal week, in specific enough language that a candidate can picture it.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partly <input type="checkbox"/> No
2	<p>What does success look like in the first year?</p> <p>What will the business need this person to make happen? What will a good first review look like?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partly <input type="checkbox"/> No
3	<p>What is the team and manager environment like?</p> <p>Who will this person work with? What is the manager's style? How does the team operate? What is the honest rhythm of the work?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partly <input type="checkbox"/> No
4	<p>What is genuinely demanding about this role?</p> <p>What is hard, tiring, or unusual about it? Where are the real tradeoffs? A role page that cannot answer this is a role page that is not telling the truth.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partly <input type="checkbox"/> No
5	<p>Who is this role best suited to, and who is it not suited to?</p> <p>The question most employers flinch at. Specific content about fit attracts the right people and respectfully steers away the wrong ones.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partly <input type="checkbox"/> No
6	<p>What happens next in the hiring process?</p> <p>How many stages, how long between them, who the candidate will meet, what the conversations will cover.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> Partly <input type="checkbox"/> No

A note on the exercise. Be honest about what the page says, not what you know to be true about the role internally. A candidate arriving cold only has what is on the page. If the page cannot answer a question, the candidate cannot answer it either, and the ambiguity moves to a recruiter or hiring manager to resolve later.

What to do next

If you have worked through this diagnostic honestly, you should now have a map of your own conviction gap. Four signals that tell you whether volume is hiding a momentum problem. A five-breakpoint view of where conviction most reliably breaks on your site. A six-question checklist for every role page you publish. Most teams doing this exercise find that their careers website is not having the conversation it thinks it is having. The candidate is asking one thing. The page is saying another. Closing that gap is the work. Everything else, including the apply rate, flows from here.

Three ways forward

Action	Not really	Sometimes	Often
Run the diagnostic with your team this week. Take an hour. Five people, one room, two or three of your most-trafficked role pages. Score honestly. The first list of fixes you generate will almost always be the most valuable one.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Share the diagnostic with a hiring manager you trust. Ask them to score a role page they recently hired into. Their answers will tell you more about your content gaps than any analytics report.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Talk to us. At Happydance, we run conviction audits on enterprise careers websites as a structured engagement. If you want a professional outside view on where your conviction gap is being created, and what it would take to close it, we can help.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Happydance

We build enterprise careers websites for companies that want hiring momentum, not just hiring activity. Our clients include Canva, Pinterest, Box, Dropbox and others.



Book a conversation: happydance.love
Or reply to the email that brought you this diagnostic.

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