



**4MAT<sup>®</sup>**

10th May 2018

# The Future Of Careers Sites

I'm unsure when the term "Amazon effect" was first coined. I'm positive that it wasn't in the context of recruitment technology. Nonetheless it's a term we've been using at 4MAT for several years which describes how recruitment technology is at last borrowing from the best bits of the big e-commerce sites.

Recruitment technology has often played second fiddle to these behemoths, understandable when taking into account the tremendous budgets and tremendous potential for direct return on investment available to these organisations. The challenge for recruitment technology has always been, how do you transpose this amazing customer experience to an amazing candidate experience at a relatively low cost?

Myself and the 4MAT team have had the privilege of working with Metashift on several occasions over the last 10 years. In that time we've experienced a tectonic shift in the way that direct hiring works; equally so, in many ways direct hiring has remained the same, a point that this paper seeks to address. There is no greater expert in this field than Metashift and I'm absolutely delighted to be supporting this white paper. I do hope you share my view that it goes a great way in explaining and simplifying the recruitment technology stack required to provide the very best candidate experience, whilst providing the best returns for companies.

Best Wishes,



James Saunders, CEO, 4MAT.



# INTRODUCTION

The corporate careers site has now been with us for 20 years. In that time technology has advanced at a blistering pace, mobile devices and social media have revolutionised the way we experience the internet, and many employers have significantly changed the way they think about recruitment and employer branding. Despite this, careers sites have changed very little in the same time period. Design trends have moved on and thankfully flash websites are a thing of the past, but fundamentally the functionality and user experience of the vast majority of careers sites has remained unchanged for two decades.

The lack of focus and urgency that many employers have towards their careers site would seem to indicate that they are somehow no longer relevant, especially during a time where other aspects of recruitment marketing are transforming in line with technological advancement and audience communication preferences. However, when you dig below the surface, it is clear that the corporate careers site is still a vital component of talent acquisition strategy and is likely to play an even more significant part of the future.

With this in mind, I find the lack of meaningful debate about the importance of careers sites and the lack of progress evolving them to better serve modern recruitment marketing strategies beyond frustrating!



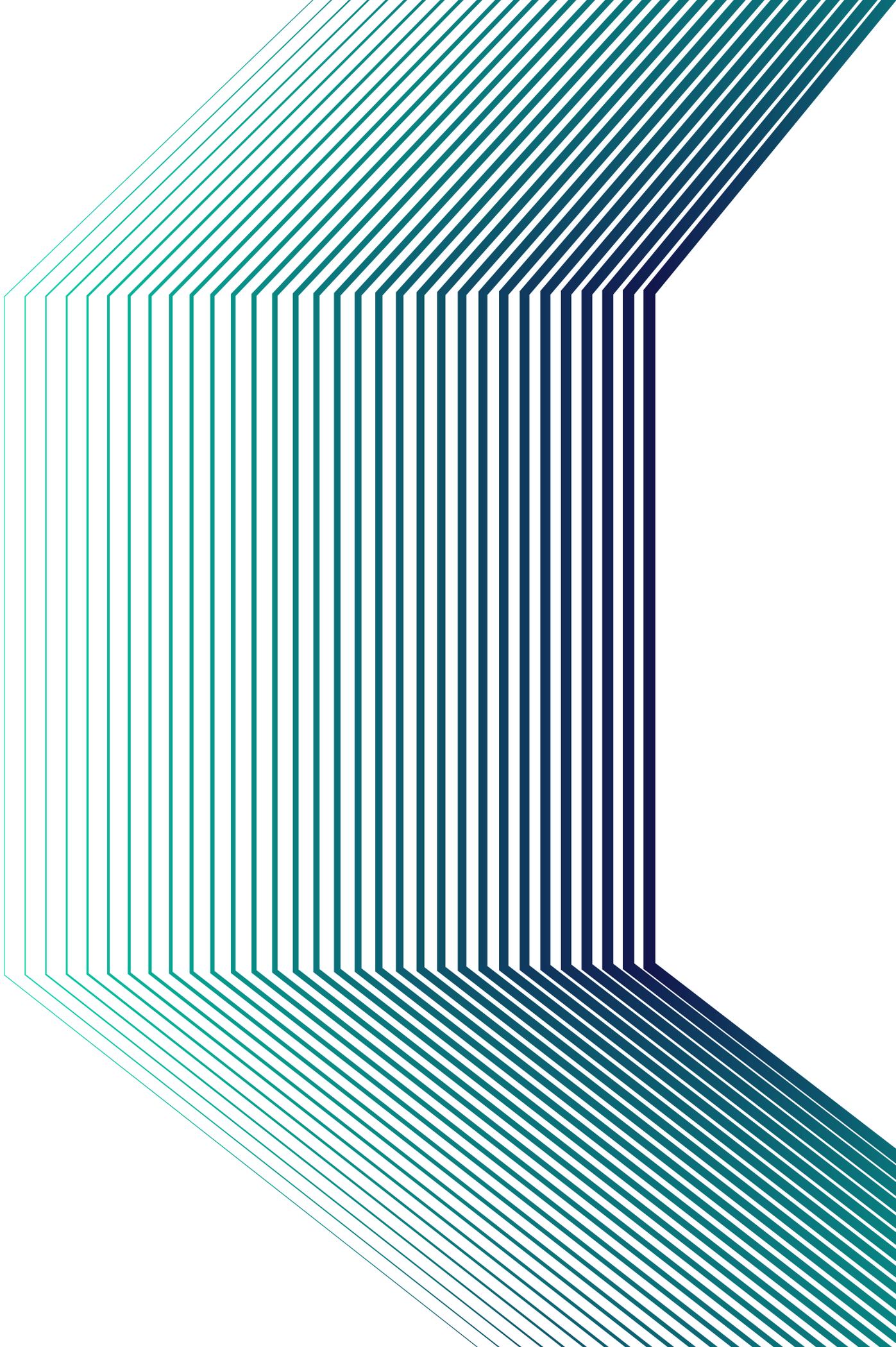
The purpose of this whitepaper is to kickstart the debate and apply some much needed focus on the future role of the corporate careers sites which I believe is to be the engine room that drives the effectiveness of the emerging talent technology stack. I will do this by looking at the current talent market context, exploring some of the legacy thinking that is holding careers sites back and outline a vision of the careers site as ongoing platform rather than being the output of a specific development project.

The whitepaper is very much evidence rather than opinion based. I've spoken to numerous talent acquisition leaders as well as the vendors serving the space to canvass opinion, and also performed qualitative research which sampled the views of 150 employers on careers site effectiveness.

The result is a practical view of the future which I believe will help employers fully harness the potential of their careers sites to supercharge their recruitment marketing and solve their resourcing challenges.

**Matt Alder**  
**Metashift**





Long-term skill shortages, low unemployment, uncertainty around immigration and the challenges created by digital transformation mean that an ever growing number of employers are finding it difficult to attract the talent they need to their business. In such a candidate driven market, companies must offer a compelling and persuasive case to convince the best people to join them, but changing target audience expectations mean that traditional recruitment marketing methods are not always delivering.

In order to meet the expectations of their target audience and convince talent to join their organisation, there are a number of challenges that employers now need to overcome. Firstly they need to get attention. We live in an age of digital noise and distraction and with fewer people actively looking for jobs, employers have to find innovative ways of targeting the right audiences in the right way to get their message heard.

If they do manage to get the attention of the right talent the next challenge is to convert that attention into interest and action. Not only does the employer have to be persuasive but as an additional challenge, they also need to offer a compelling experience which encourages the user to learn more and nudges them take action via an application or other expression of interest.

The rise of the mobile internet has driven an enormous increase in expectations and users expect a seamless experience whether they are using a desktop, a tablet or a smart phone.

With employers crying out for the right talent it is perhaps inevitable that we are currently seeing a boom in the development of recruitment technology solutions. Disruptive technology trends such as machine learning and programmatic advertising are being brought into the recruitment industry to drive better targeting and matching. At the same time, digital marketing demand generation and nurturing methodologies are being adopted to power talent acquisition funnels and deliver pipelines of talent.

In this climate of innovation, it seems crazy that careers sites and the technology that sits behind them are being largely ignored. Websites driven by e-commerce technology platforms are at the core of digital marketing strategies in other industries and the convince and convert parallels to recruitment should make adopting this approach for careers sites an absolute no-brainer.

No attempt to make recruitment marketing more sophisticated will ever work if careers sites don't evolve. They continue to play a critical role in talent attraction and unless employers give them more focus, their recruitment marketing efforts will never develop to the level of effectiveness needed in this hyper-competitive marketplace for talent.



*The basis of shortcomings in corporate careers sites have roots in the same issue. Despite the fact that they are selling to the candidate, they are built from the inside out and not the outside in.*

**John Wallace**, Author of “Hire Power” and former Resourcing Leader at Barclays, Tesco Bank and RBS

So what are specific problems with careers sites, what are the root causes of these issues and why haven't more employers innovated to solve them?

## OUTDATED THINKING

Digital recruitment marketing evolved by replicating the norms of newspaper classified advertising and 20 years on this legacy is causing problems. Newspaper classifieds only target people who are actively looking for what is being advertised and the binary nature of this classified advertising mindset does not serve the fragmented nature of current talent markets at all well.

Unfortunately many employers are still exhibiting classified advertising thinking and are marketing to ever smaller active audiences of job seekers rather than nurturing the more passive talent they actually need. This means that many careers sites have been designed to provide additional information to a captive audience rather than focusing on persuasion and conversion.

There is also a perception that careers sites are just another one of many marketing channels (they are often included in “source of hire” lists alongside channels like social media and job boards) rather than the hub of the entire recruitment marketing process. These are some of the key reasons careers sites don’t get the time, budget or attention that they need to be effective.

## SPECIAL PROJECTS

Careers sites have also historically been developed by advertising agencies as one off creative projects rather than the continually optimised conversion systems they need to be. This means careers sites are seen by many employers as a special project that only needs to happen every three to five years. Very often these projects involve multiple stakeholders from within the business and consequently suffer negatively from the inevitable compromises that happen to satisfy differing needs and objectives. The net result is that careers sites tend to be overly corporate and unengaging, fail to sell or persuade and do not communicate the employer brand in the way they need to. There also isn’t the agility to keep up with the rapid pace of change most employers are experiencing. Because of this careers sites tend to be universally disliked, not just by candidates but very often the recruitment teams within the companies they represent!

## ATS SCOPE CREEP

This focus on creativity and the legacy of the classified advertising mindset also mean that the technology needed to power careers sites has received very little focus. The scope of ATS software has grown to fill the gap. This is extremely problematic as ATS software has been designed to focus on processing applications that have already happened rather than nurturing, persuading and converting talent to apply in the first place. Rather than just powering the recruitment process these systems are also forced to provide a candidate facing interface for careers sites. These interfaces are not considered core functionality by the ATS providers and are nearly always badly designed and poorly integrated.

## MOBILE LAST

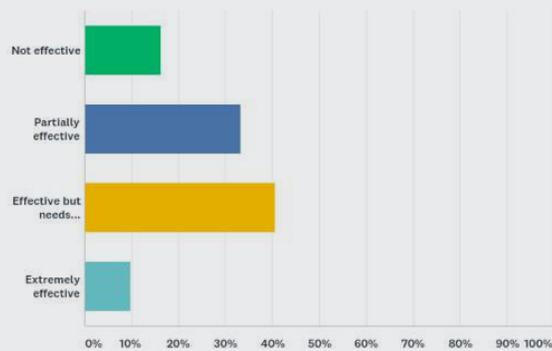
Finally while many do have a mobile friendly front end, careers sites are nearly always designed desktop first and their application processes can be incredibly frustrating for the predominantly mobile-first audience that uses them. The consequence of the poor candidate experience is an abysmal conversion rate. This means millions of pounds are being spent on various forms of recruitment advertising to drive traffic into a broken conversion funnel. Ironically most careers sites offer an inadequate level of data and analytics, making it difficult for employers to understand the damage that is being done to their talent acquisition funnels.



## SURVEY

The problematic nature of careers sites and employers' dissatisfaction with them is certainly something that was reflected in the results of the survey:

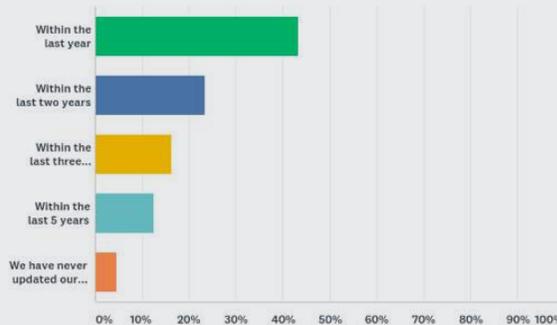
Q1 How effective is your company career site at supporting your talent acquisition goals?



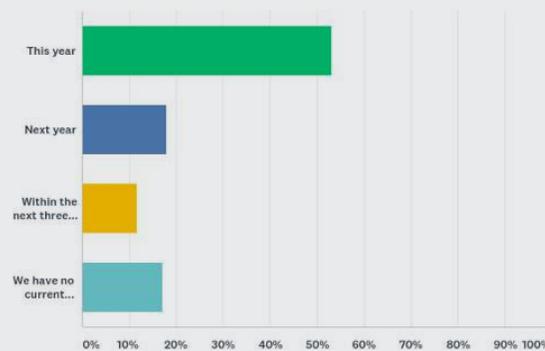
Only 10% of respondents were completely happy that their careers site was supporting them in achieving their talent acquisition goals. 41% were still needing some improvement and 49% have a long way to go to get the results they need.

Interestingly it does seem that many companies are finally moving away from the 3-5 year careers site life cycle:

Q2 When did you last refresh/ redevelop your company career site?



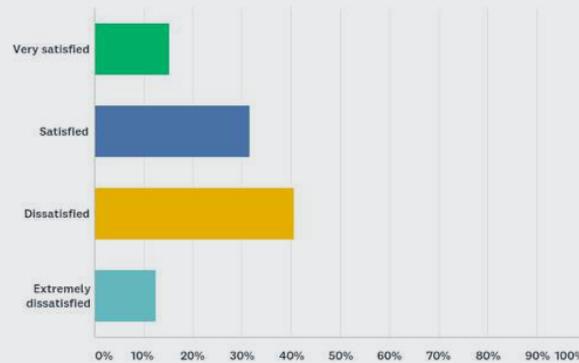
Q3 When are you next planning to refresh/ redevelop your company careers site?



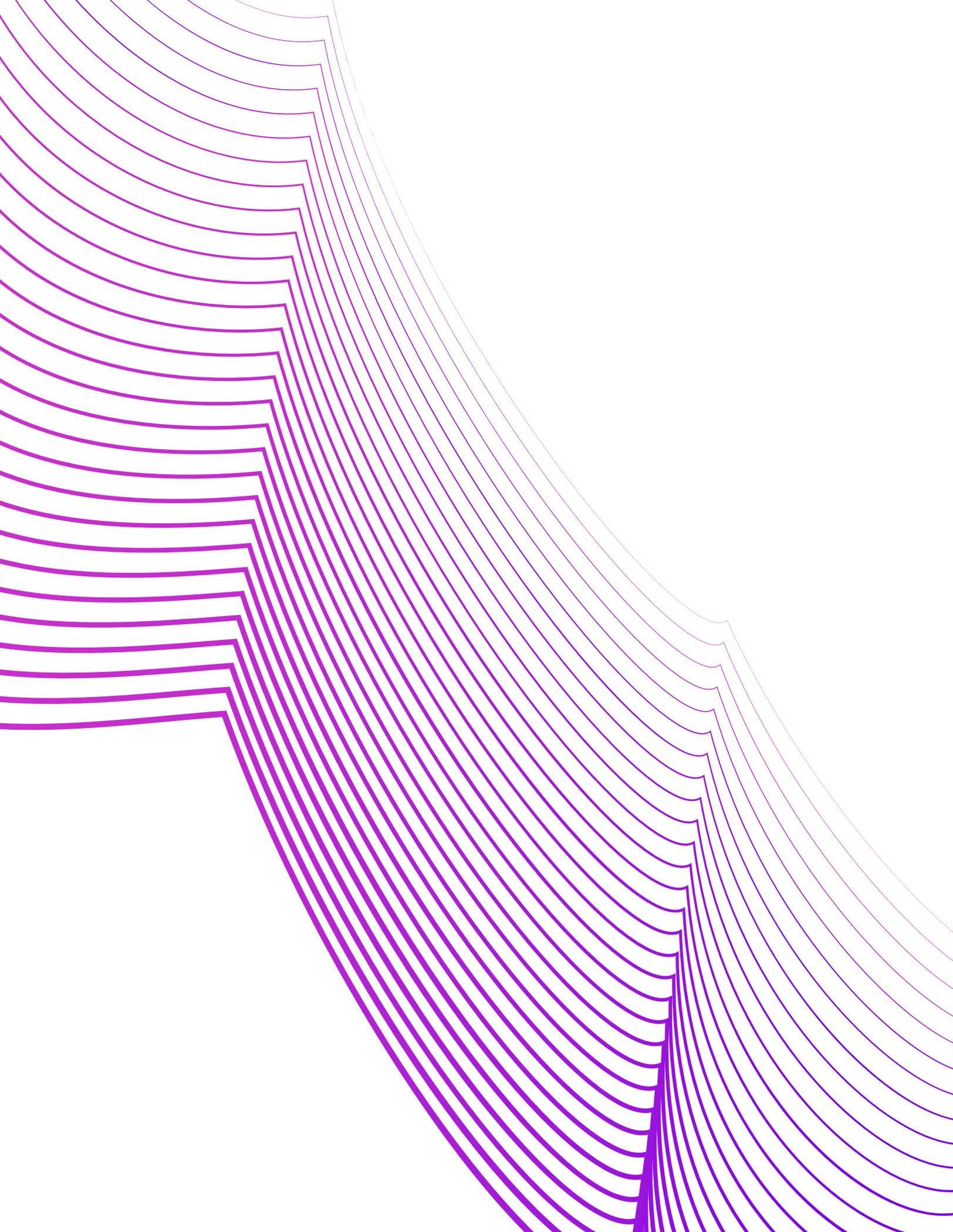
With 43% of respondents having updated their careers site in the last year and 53% planning to update next year, we are finally starting to see a level of focus and urgency. However, there is still a long way to go with 29% of respondents having not updated their sites for two years or more and 29% of respondents not planning to do anything to develop their careers sites in the next 12 months.

The survey also illustrates the problem with ATS / careers site integration:

Q4 How satisfied are you that the ATS integration with your career site offers a seamless candidate journey?



54% of respondents are still not satisfied that their ATS integration is offering a seamless candidate journey. There is some progress with 46% being satisfied to varying degrees, but this improvement is horribly slow in coming with ATS providers having now had the best part of 20 years to get things right. It is also worth noting that the candidates often have a much higher bar on what makes a seamless candidate journey than employers do!



*My frustration with current careers websites is that they are still being designed as “careers” websites rather than for an audience who are looking to carry out what is essentially a transaction i.e. find information, be informed, complete an action (application). Careers sites need to look over the fence to the wider world of commerce focusing on customer led design ensuring the best possible journey with the touchpoints that candidates need, rather ones that mirror recruiting processes.*

**Ben Gledhill** – Head of Resourcing, Yodel

It is inevitable that to solve their talent problems employers will be forced to adopt an ever more sophisticated digital marketing mindset. Recruitment marketing strategies will be built around the actual behaviour of digital audiences rather than assumed behaviours derived from legacy thinking. In order for these strategies to succeed, careers sites will have to become the epicentre of talent attraction, operating as e-commerce style platforms to persuade and convert in order to deliver relevant quality applications into the ATS.

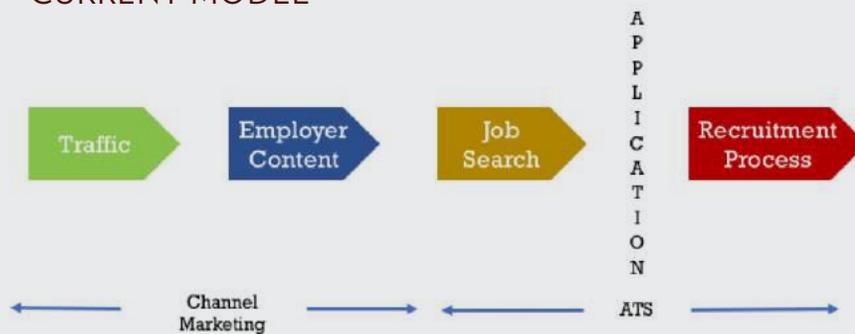
In order to facilitate this a radical rethink of careers sites needs to take place. It is great to see that this revolution is already being driven by those employers and suppliers who operate at the cutting edge of recruiting innovation.

Employer branding, persuasive content and effective engagement are still crucial, but careers sites need be underpinned by a robust

technology platform to offer the level of effectiveness and flexibility employers need. This technology platform needs to be fit for purpose as it's clear that the 20 year experiment of stretching ATS technology to power careers sites hasn't worked.

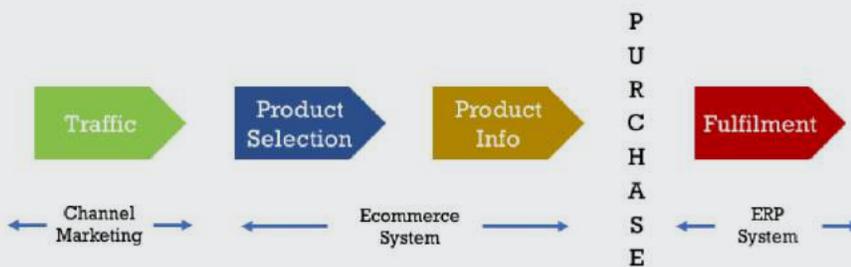
This is what the current model looks like:

### CURRENT MODEL



We can clearly see how this differs from current e-commerce models:

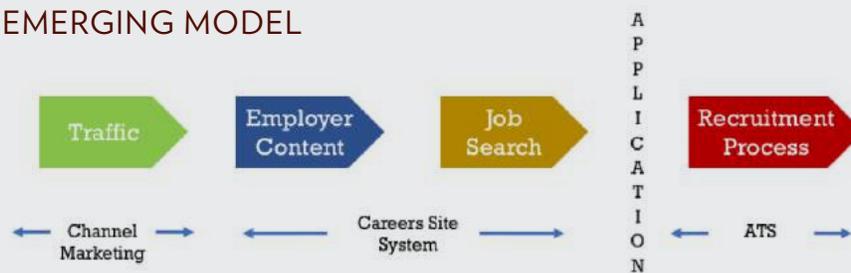
### E-COMMERCE



In the e-commerce model the software powering persuasion and conversion is separated from the system that fulfils the actual order itself. In the recruitment model the ATS is expected to run the recruitment process as well as providing a jobs search engine and candidate application interface for the careers website. At the same time, as previously discussed, the front end of the site is often seen as just another marketing channel rather than the hub of the marketing strategy.

A growing number of employers are using a different model to maximise talent acquisition effectiveness:

### EMERGING MODEL



This emerging model mirrors the e-commerce model with a separate specialist Careers Site Platform powering the front end of the website, the job search engine and also providing a candidate friendly application process which passes the completed data over to the ATS via API integration.

There are already a number of clear benefits to adopting a Careers Site Platform and, as these systems develop further, we would expect to see them offering even more value to employers in the future. Here are the key advantages employers should expect to gain from their investment in a Careers Site Platform:

## FLEXIBILITY AND AGILITY

Providers in this Careers Site Platform space are constantly innovating their products to keep up with current trends and technologies.

Adopting a software as service approach to careers sites finally moves employers away from the 2-3 year site lifecycle and allows them to move quickly and effectively as recruiting objectives change.

## OPTIMISATION & CONVERSION

Ultimately the success of a careers site is predicated on its ability to convert traffic into quality applications. Content and conversion optimisation are incredibly important in driving this success and speed is the key issue. Traditional careers sites typically don't have the reporting and testing tools to deliver in this area, and this is a gap that Careers Site Platforms will fill.

## PERSONALISATION

The days when employers could get away with using a single unified message for all of their recruitment communications are over.

Personalisation should sit at the centre of every talent acquisition strategy both in terms of messaging and in terms of user experience.

Using technology to personalise content and user experience is already a key feature of the best Careers Site Platforms and we would expect to see this grow in sophistication over the coming months and years.



## OMNICHANNEL RECRUITING

Not only do employers need to deliver a high degree of personalisation, they need to do this on every platform and channel their target audience wishes to use. Providing effective multichannel experiences should be in the DNA of every Careers Site Platform, and genuine omnichannel recruiting should be a clear future objective.

## DATA & ANALYTICS

Data and analytics are becoming an ever more critical part of effective talent acquisition. Sophisticated recruitment marketing needs data to drive its understanding of the behaviour of specific segments of users, and this is something the traditional careers site set up has never be able to provide. Effective analytics also provide the ROI transparency that makes continued investment in a careers site easier to justify. Careers Site Platforms are data driven by design and should be ready, willing and able to deal with the increasing demand for ever more sophisticated analytics we can expect to see from employers in this area in the future.

## SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Employers are facing increasing challenges in finding the right talent in today's complex market and correspondingly interest and investment in recruitment technology is on the increase. Careers sites should be sitting at the centre of this emerging Talent technology stack but they are evolving too slowly
  
- There are a number of challenges that have traditionally held the careers site back. These include:
  - Strategies based on outdated thinking
  - A special projects mindset
  - ATS scope creep
  - A “mobile last” approach
  
- A number of forward thinking employers are using Careers Site Platform software to solve these challenges by an e-commerce approach to their recruitment marketing. Key advantages of Careers Site Platforms include:
  - Flexibility and agility
  - A focus on optimisation and conversion
  - Personalisation
  - Omnichannel recruiting
  - Advanced data and analytics

## ABOUT MATT ALDER

Matt Alder is a strategic consultant focusing on all aspects of HR technology, recruitment marketing and employer branding. He is a globally recognised talent acquisition thought leader with 20 years' experience working with FTSE and Fortune 100 companies. Matt hosts the Recruiting Future podcast ([www.rfpodcast.com](http://www.rfpodcast.com)) and is co-author of the book "Exceptional Talent" published by Kogan Page in 2017 and named as one of People Management's HR books of the year.

## ABOUT 4MAT

4MAT are the number one provider of smart careers websites, working with leading brands including Vodafone, Travis Perkins, and Harrods. With 20 years' experience of working in the recruitment industry, 4MAT's Attrax software offers an outstanding user experience and a comprehensive suite of smart digital recruitment tools, providing brands with everything they require to attract quality candidates, engage them with relevant, personalised content, and convert them into the ATS. Furthermore, 4MAT's range of digital marketing services, including SEO, content marketing and conversion rate optimisation, complements Attrax by boosting visibility online, creating a market-leading user experience and maximising return on investment. Recruitment is changing and it's time to change with it.

Talk to the experts at [mycareersitesnotworking@4mat.com](mailto:mycareersitesnotworking@4mat.com)

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