

State of the Hiring Industry

Published December 2023



Introduction

We heard a lot about quiet quitting last year. And, while some people were doing the bare minimum at work, many were also rage applying and career cushioning to quell their fears of a possible recession and just to keep their career options open. These efforts may pay off in 2024.

This year will likely see a [drop in job growth](#), as the job market returns to its mostly pre-pandemic status. The [Congressional Budget Office](#) projects that the unemployment rate will increase to 4.7% by mid-2024 from 3.6% around the middle of 2023.

“The 2024 job market is going to be more complex than any we’ve seen in the past,” says Kyle Lagunas, head of strategy at Aptitude Research, a human capital management research and advisory firm. “The catalytic changes wrought by the Covid pandemic have been further complicated by uncertain economic trends, troublesome geo-political environments, and paradigm shifts in the employee-employer social contract.”

Still, layoffs may be possible, but potentially just in certain industries, like tech. The advertising and marketing sector is expected to grow 6% over the next few years, according to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#).

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Here's the good news. Even with the looming job market shifts, [unemployment is still lower](#) than it has been in years. And, [workers remain in the driver's seat](#) when it comes to employment. According to a [2023 User Survey by The Muse](#), 63% of employees were undeterred by the economic ups and downs and said the economy wouldn't affect their plans to seek new jobs.

While those who are in jobs that they love will likely stay there, those who aren't will seek other options. Employers will need to take a few extra steps to lure them. It all starts with knowing what employees are looking for these days.


Here are five trends to guide you through your hiring in 2024




Trend #1: Flexible work is more important than salary for job-seekers.

Work-life balance is the top factor for all job-seekers (but, especially for Gen Z and women across generations)—more so than compensation, benefits, and company culture, according to [The Muse's 2023 User Survey](#).

This year, the debate over remote work and flexible hours will remain at the forefront. Working from home has become the norm for many organizations, while others have implemented hybrid work, and some have mandated a return to the office. There's a growing push-pull of employees wanting to work remotely, and employers wanting everyone back at the office. [More than a third](#) of workers who can work remotely want to continue to do so. If they had the option, 62% would choose flexible work over a job with higher pay and a strict in-office requirement, according to a [Robert Half](#) survey. That number is even higher for Gen Zers and working parents.



Companies that are [requiring people to return to the office](#) might turn off many employees. Offering flexible work schedules and workplace options will help them win out over their competitors when it comes to recruiting top talent. They'll also keep their best employees. [Research](#) suggests when employees have certain levels of autonomy at work, they feel more satisfied.



Finding ways to offer more flexible work solutions is on the minds of employers. In a [survey](#) of HR and diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) leaders by The Muse and Fairygodboss, 27% said identifying flexible work solutions was their most pressing challenge for 2024.

Women's preference for work flexibility

is overwhelmingly apparent and aligns with previous research from the Fairygodboss team. When surveying our user community regarding their work preferences, we found that, of the 9,800+ women who participated, [only 3% of respondents preferred in-office-only work](#).

So, what does this mean for employers? Our data suggests that companies aiming to engage, recruit, and retain women talent will find it beneficial to offer flexible, hybrid, and/or remote options in order to remain competitive and support their diversity hiring efforts.

54%

prefer hybrid/flexible work

43%

prefer remote work only

3%

prefer in-office only

Trend #2: If talent doesn't feel valued and well-compensated, employers should expect to see some departures.

The next big opportunity is constantly on employees' minds. Many people have been keeping their eye out for new open positions that better align with their goals or values, or that pay more. About a [quarter of employees](#) plan to quit their jobs in the next year, according to PwC.

While flexible work is preferred over higher pay, salary still matters, of course. For those employees planning to stick with their current jobs, [two-thirds plan to ask for a raise](#) this year, as they face inflation, take on more responsibilities, and generally feel undervalued. And, if they don't get it, many plan to look for a new job.

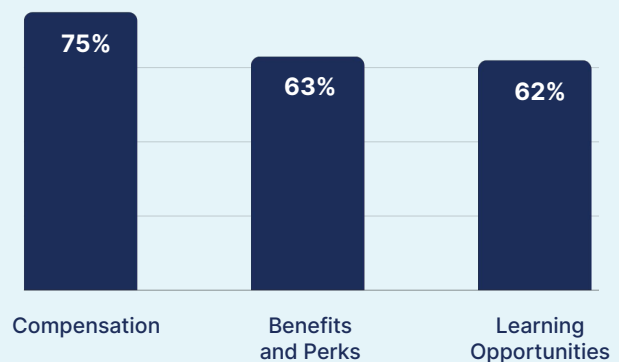
For people already employed, 75% ranked compensation as their top consideration if they were to apply for a role at a new company, followed by benefits, perks, and learning opportunities, [The Muse's 2023 User Survey](#) revealed.

To attract the best candidates, about [half of employers](#) plan to increase starting salaries in 2024, along with adding new benefits and perks.

Employers also must be more transparent about salaries to attract the right people and stand out from their competitors. Job-seekers expect it—most won't even apply for a job at an organization if a pay range isn't listed.

Employees who [feel valued](#) are more likely to stick around. And, it's more [cost-effective to retain](#) existing people than hire new ones.

What are your top considerations when looking for a job at a new company?



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“People want to be paid fairly, at the least with a growing expectation for being paid more competitively in every sector,” Lagunas says. “People want meaningful opportunities to advance their careers and be recognized for their contributions, including meeting performance expectations—not only if they exceed them. People want to be treated with dignity as employees, as candidates, and as stakeholders.”

Trend #3: Organizations focusing on employee well-being will retain top talent.

Along with offering flexible schedules and competitive wages, employers will focus on other ways to show their support and keep their employees happy and engaged.

Mental health continues to be a big concern for workers and their employers—people are still experiencing fallout from the pandemic and also dealing with economic uncertainty. Climate change anxiety and worry over politics and current events are likely adding weight.



Most employees believe their employers should provide support for stress and anxiety, and they would like preventative mental health care. More organizations are coming through by offering (or planning to offer) more mental health resources.

Investing in helping employees grow their skills—via upskilling, reskilling, or mentorship—is another way companies are keeping people on staff. Some employees believe that a lack of good career advice and support is holding them back from climbing the career ladder.

Fostering relationships across a company's structure and offering opportunities for people to take career-advancement courses or learn about new roles benefit workers and their employers. They'll develop new skills, expand their knowledge, and feel valued and inspired.

Trend #4: A responsibility to DE&I efforts remains as important as ever—despite the U.S. Supreme Court's efforts.

Companies have accelerated their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) initiatives in the last few years. After last year's U.S. Supreme Court decision banning affirmative action, many mistakenly believed that it might impact DE&I programs. But, [private companies](#) shouldn't be concerned—2024 is the time for them to renew their focus and affirm their dedication to DE&I.

"Equity is top of mind for workers of every type," Lagunas says.

60%

of HR leaders are increasing their DE&I investments in 2024

Research shows that [diverse teams](#) make better decisions and are more adaptive, innovative, and supportive. They also lead companies to make better investments and inspire higher engagement across teams within organizations.

Almost all [employees factor DE&I into their decisions](#) about where to work and which companies to continue working for. Most would consider not working for an organization that doesn't have a strong DE&I initiative.

70%

plan to invest in DE&I training, learning, development, and ERG initiatives in 2024

Along with DE&I commitments, companies should create and expand their employee resource groups (ERGs). These programs promote inclusivity, togetherness, and psychological safety, and help employees feel like they're part of a community.

The [Muse x Fairygodboss survey](#) found that 60% of HR leaders are increasing their DE&I investments in 2024, as three-quarters believe DE&I is crucial to their company's future success. Specifically, 71% plan to invest in DE&I training, learning, development, and ERG initiatives in 2024.

Trend #5: Job seekers aren't afraid to ask potential employers the tough questions.

When hiring managers interview job candidates, they're no doubt looking for someone with the skills and experience to excel in the role, as well as the personality to fit in with the team. Employers want to make sure they're finding the best person, as retention is crucial.

Employers should know that job-seekers are interviewing them, as well. And, workers still wield plenty of power in the job market. Employees are looking for a company that offers the schedule and salary that they want, and that supports them through their career journey and day-to-day.

Job-seekers need to show the value that they bring throughout the application and interviewing process, but also ask key questions about company culture, daily tasks, and a company's mission and vision to make sure the job and company would be the best fit for them.

So, organizations will need to be as transparent as possible when meeting potential new hires. After all, hiring should be a mutually beneficial experience.



About Us



The Muse is the go-to destination for the next gen workforce to research companies and careers. More than 75 million people each year trust The Muse to help them win at work, from professional advancement and skills-building to finding a job. Organizations use our platform to attract and hire talent by providing an authentic look at company culture, workplace, and values through the stories of their employees.

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Fairygodboss is the largest career community for women. Fairygodboss provides millions of women with free resources like job listings, community advice, and the hard-to-find information about how companies treat women. Fairygodboss works with more than 200 major U.S. companies to help them attract top talent and enhance their employer brand among women. By partnering with us, employers can increase the number of qualified applicants to their open positions, engage their current workforce and leverage their endorsements, and share their story about why they are a great place for women to work.

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