

A Pre-Post Intervention Case Study at Human Connections Alliance LLP

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Abstract

This paper examines a specific problem in small HR consultancies: low candidate conversion rates during initial phone outreach. During a five-week internship at Human Connections Alliance LLP (HCA), my success rate at turning first calls into scheduled interviews was initially 34.6% using a direct, transactional style – roughly “I have a job, are you interested?” That approach failed often. So, I changed tactics. I moved to a consultative style: explaining the role’s relevance, asking about career goals, and listening before making any request. Over three weeks, I used this new style for 75 calls while holding other factors constant – same job portals, same role types, same follow-up method. The conversion rate rose to 62.7% – an increase of 28 percentage points, or 81% relatively. The study demonstrates that a zero-cost change in conversation style can dramatically improve recruitment efficiency. A simple, reusable script is provided.

Keywords: candidate conversion, consultative communication, talent acquisition, process improvement, phone script, small HR firm

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Problem Statement

Let me be honest. When I started my internship at Human Connections Alliance LLP (HCA), I was not very good at my job. My task was simple: call candidates, tell them about a job, and set up interviews. But most people said “I will think about it” or “send me the details.” Many never answered again. After my first week, I had made 52 calls and scheduled only 18 interviews. That is a 34.6% success rate. I felt frustrated. I also felt responsible – because my team needed candidates.

So, I asked myself: is this normal? Or am I doing something wrong?

1.2 Significance of the Study

Small HR firms like HCA operate on tight budgets. They cannot afford expensive software or AI tools. Their recruiters – often junior staff or interns – make hundreds of cold calls each month. If each call has a low chance of becoming an interview, the company wastes time, misses client deadlines, and loses revenue.

Research shows that the way you speak to candidates sends a message about your company. A rushed, robotic tone makes candidates think the company does not care about people. A curious, respectful tone makes candidates feel valued. But most studies focus on large corporations. Very few examine the actual phone conversation between a junior recruiter and a candidate. Almost none test whether changing a simple call script can produce measurable results in a real office. That is what I tried to do.

1.3 Research Objective

My objective was simple:

- To measure whether changing from a transactional speaking style to a consultative speaking style increases the percentage of candidates who agree to an interview.
- No grand theory. No complicated model. Just a before-and-after test.

1.4 Scope and Limitations

This is a small study. Five weeks. One company. One recruiter (me). No control group. The results are not statistically perfect. But they are real, and they are practical.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundations of Recruitment Communication

Considerable research has examined how communication between recruiters and candidates affects hiring outcomes. One well-established view is that every interaction during recruitment carries symbolic weight. Candidates interpret not just the literal words but also the implied signals about organizational culture, respect, and professionalism. When a recruiter uses short, impersonal, or purely transactional language, candidates often see the organization as indifferent or mechanical. In contrast, when recruiters show curiosity, take time to listen, and personalize the conversation, candidates develop more favourable impressions. This insight has held up across decades of organizational communication studies.

2.2 The Impact of Candidate Treatment on Job Acceptance

Beyond signals, empirical work has shown a direct link between how candidates are treated and whether they accept a job offer. Key factors include courtesy, transparency, timely replies, and genuine interest. A large analysis combining dozens of individual studies confirmed that candidates who feel respected and heard during hiring are substantially more likely to accept positions – even when other factors like salary or

role are similar. This highlights that recruitment is not merely an administrative screening task but a persuasive communication exercise where relationship quality matters.

2.3 Gap in Script-Level Research

Despite much attention to general communication quality, very little research has looked at the specific wording and structure of recruiter call scripts. Most published studies talk about “good communication” in broad terms – active listening, empathy, clarity – without turning these concepts into testable scripts. A thorough search of available literature found no direct comparison between a purely transactional script (e.g., immediately asking about interest in a job) and a consultative script (e.g., offering value first, personalizing, then asking open questions). This gap matters because for small HR consultancies without advanced technology, the recruiter’s phone script is often the only controllable part of the process. The present study was designed to fill this gap by testing two distinct script protocols in a real-world setting.

2.4 Summary of Literature Review

In summary, existing research establishes that recruitment communication matters, that respectful treatment predicts job acceptance, and that personalization and reciprocity are sound strategies. However, a clear gap exists: no study has tested whether changing a recruiter’s phone script from transactional to consultative produces measurable improvements in candidate conversion rates. The present study fills this gap using a pre-post intervention design in an active HR consultancy. The next chapter describes the methodology.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

I used a simple pre-post intervention design. For two weeks, I used my old style (transactional). Then for three weeks, I used a new style (consultative). I measured the conversion rate for each phase.

Phase	Duration	Communication Style	Number of Calls
Pre-intervention (Baseline)	Week 1-2	Transactional	52
Post-intervention	Week 3-5	Consultative	75

3.2 Transactional Protocol

My original script was essentially:

“Hello [name], I’m calling from Human Connections Alliance. We have a [role] opening with a client. Are you interested in an interview?”

If they said yes, I scheduled it. If they hesitated, I had nothing else to say. If they asked questions, I answered briefly but did not ask about them.

3.3 Consultative Protocol

After two weeks of poor results, I wrote a new script with four parts:

Step 1 – Personalized opening

“Hi [name], this is Aniket Kaundal from Human Connections Alliance. I saw your profile on [Naukri/LinkedIn] and noticed your experience in [specific skill]. That is why I am reaching out.”

Step 2 – Give value first

“We are helping a [industry] client hire for a [role]. The reason I thought of you is [specific match]. Would you have five minutes for me to describe it and also learn a bit about what you are looking for?”

Step 3 – Listen and explore

- “What kind of role are you looking for right now?”
- “What matters most to you – salary, location, growth?”
- “Anything you want to avoid?”

Step 4 – Collaborative ask

“Based on what you told me, this role seems like a good fit because [repeat one thing they said]. Would you like me to schedule a short interview with the client? No pressure – just to explore.”

3.4 Controls

To ensure any improvement came from the script change, I kept everything else constant:

- Same sourcing channels (Naukri and LinkedIn, same mix)
- Same types of roles (entry-level sales and mid-level IT)
- Same follow-up method (one reminder email for both phases)
- Same time of day for calls (10 AM to 12 PM)

3.5 Dependent Variable

I measured **conversion rate** – the percentage of initial calls that ended with a confirmed interview date and time.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Baseline Results (Transactional Style)

Metric	Number
Total calls	52
Interviews scheduled	18
Conversion rate	34.6%

In my journal, I wrote that most calls ended quickly. Candidates sounded guarded. Several said “I will call you back” and never did. I felt like I was bothering people.

4.2 Post-Intervention Results (Consultative Style)

Metric	Number
Total calls	75
Interviews scheduled	47
Conversion rate	62.7%

The difference was obvious from the first day. Candidates asked more questions. Several thanked me for explaining the role clearly. A few said, “No one has ever asked me what I am looking for.” One senior IT professional told me, “That was refreshing. Usually, recruiters just read a script.”

4.3 Comparative Analysis

Style	Calls	Interviews	Conversion Rate	Change
Transactional	52	18	34.6%	–
Consultative	75	47	62.7%	+28.1 percentage points

Relative improvement: $(62.7 - 34.6) \div 34.6 \times 100 = 81\%$ **better**

4.4 Qualitative Observations

I kept a notebook. Here are a few entries:

Week 1: “Called 12 people. Most said ‘send the JD on WhatsApp.’ Sent it. Only 2 replied. This feels like a losing game.”

Week 3 (first day of new script): “Tried the new style on 8 calls. 6 agreed to interviews. The difference? I asked about their goals first. One guy talked for 10 minutes about wanting a short commute. I matched him to a role 15 minutes from his home. He was excited.”

Week 4: “A candidate told me: ‘You are the first recruiter who actually read my profile.’ That is not flattery – it is feedback. The extra 30 seconds of preparation before each call pays off.”

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Interpretation of Results

Three factors explain the jump.

First, candidates felt less defensive. A transactional opening – “Are you interested?” – puts people on guard. They worry about being trapped in a bad job. A consultative opening – “I noticed your skill in X” – feels like genuine interest.

Second, I gave something before asking for something. By offering information about the role and listening to their situation, I built goodwill. People are more likely to say yes when they have received something first – even just attention.

Third, personalization signals effort. Candidates know when a call is mass-dialled. Mentioning a specific skill from their resume proves I actually looked. That small effort builds trust.

5.2 Comparison with Existing Literature

What other researchers have said about respectful treatment and transparent communication matches my experience. People remember being heard. My study adds one practical thing: a specific, step-by-step script that any junior recruiter can use tomorrow.

5.3 Process Optimization Perspective

There is a common misconception that process optimization requires expensive software, formal methodologies like Lean Six Sigma, or artificial intelligence. What is often overlooked is that communication protocols are also processes. The way a recruiter opens a phone call can be standardized, tracked, and refined – just like any other workflow. The improvement potential is substantial. In this case, the only change was the script and listening habits. The cost was zero. The result was an 81% relative increase in conversion.

5.4 Limitations

Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged.

- Single recruiter. All calls were made by one person – the author. My own growing confidence or unconscious bias could have influenced the outcomes.
- No control group. There was no second recruiter continuing the transactional script throughout the five weeks. Without that, I cannot completely rule out external factors or a natural learning curve.
- Small sample size. A total of 127 calls is modest. Larger samples would provide more stable estimates.
- Short time frame. Five weeks is insufficient to test whether the improvement would persist over months or under different business conditions.
- Single organization. The study was conducted at only one HR consultancy. Findings may not generalize to other settings with different candidate pools or role types.

Despite these limitations, an absolute increase of 28 percentage points in conversion is practically significant. Any small HR firm would likely benefit from a similar intervention.

Chapter 6: Recommendations

6.1 Recommendations for Human Connections Alliance LLP

1. Adopt the consultative script as the default for all interns and junior recruiters. Place a printed copy next to each phone or on the recruiter's desk.
2. Introduce a two-hour training module on consultative communication, including live role-play and feedback sessions.
3. Monitor conversion rates weekly as a process control metric. If the weekly rate falls below 50%, schedule a refresher training.

6.2 Recommendations for Other Small HR Consultancies

1. **Review recorded or live recruiter calls.** If the recruiter asks "Are you interested in a job?" within the first 10 seconds, the approach is transactional.
2. **Teach the "value first" principle.** Before making any request, the recruiter should give something: a specific compliment about the candidate's profile, a clear explanation of the role, or an insight about the client.
3. **Delay the ask.** Do not request an interview until the recruiter has spent two to three minutes listening to the candidate's situation and goals.

6.3 A Practical Script Template

Below is the exact script I used. You are welcome to adapt it.

Opening (30 seconds):

"Hi [name], this is Aniket Kaundal from Human Connections Alliance. I came across your profile on [platform] and noticed your background in [specific skill]. That is why I am reaching out."

Value offer (15 seconds):

"We are helping a [industry] client hire for a [role]. The reason I thought of you is [specific alignment]."

Permission question (10 seconds):

"Would you have five minutes for me to briefly describe the role and also learn a bit about what you are looking for right now?"

Listening (2-3 minutes):

"What kind of role are you looking for?"

"What matters most to you in your next position?"

"Anything you want to avoid?"

Collaborative ask (30 seconds):

"Based on what you shared, this role seems like a good fit because [repeat one thing they said]. Would you like me to schedule a short conversation with the client? No pressure – just to explore."

6.4 Suggestions for My Own Professional Development

I plan to:

- Seek another internship focused specifically on recruitment communication and candidate experience.
 - Learn basic statistical methods (e.g., chi-square tests) to validate future observational findings.
 - Share this script with other interns at HCA and document their results to see if the improvement is replicable.
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Chapter 7: Conclusion

This project began with a personal failure. During my first two weeks as an HR intern, I was converting only one out of every three candidate calls into an interview. I felt ineffective and frustrated. Rather than accepting this as normal, I redesigned my approach. I stopped asking first and started listening first. I stopped transacting and started consulting.

The outcome was clear. My conversion rate nearly doubled – from 34.6% to 62.7%. The intervention cost nothing. No software purchase, no management approval, no budget line. Only a different script and the discipline to listen before asking.

The implication for small HR consultancies is straightforward: before investing in recruitment technology, invest in how your recruiters talk to candidates. Communication is a process variable. It can be measured, improved, and optimized. The return on that optimization can be dramatic.

Talent acquisition is not merely about finding people. It is about persuading them to say yes. And that persuasion begins with the very first phone call.

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