

Process Optimization in Talent Acquisition

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Abstract

This paper is based on my observations and activities during a five-week internship at Human Connections Alliance LLP (HCA), a small HR consultancy. Instead of just describing my tasks, I tried to figure out what was slowing down the recruitment process and how to improve it. I kept track of things like where candidates came from, how many actually agreed to interviews after my calls, how often I forgot to follow up (embarrassing but true), and how many people just didn't show up for interviews. Then I tried a few simple changes – like splitting my time between two job portals instead of one, changing how I spoke with candidates, creating a proper tracking sheet, and sending reminders. The results surprised me: candidate conversion went from 34% to 62%, follow-up delays dropped from over 2 days to less than a day, and no-shows were cut in half. The main lesson? You don't need expensive software to optimize recruitment. Small, smart changes in behaviour and process can do a lot.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Let's be honest – when you study HR in a BBA program, most of it is theory. You learn about “strategic talent management” and “recruitment lifecycles,” but nobody tells you that a candidate might just ghost you after three phone calls. Or that keeping track of 50 candidates on sticky notes is a disaster waiting to happen. So, when I got the chance to intern at Human Connections Alliance LLP (HCA), I decided to treat it like a small research project. I wanted to see what actually works and what doesn't when you're trying to hire people quickly and well.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Here's the thing: small HR consultancies like HCA don't have big budgets for fancy Applicant Tracking Systems or AI screening tools. They rely on spreadsheets, job portals, and a lot of manual work. But nobody really studies these kinds of places. Most research talks about huge corporations. So, there's a

gap – we don't really know how to make recruitment smoother in small setups. My internship gave me a front-row seat to figure that out.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

I had a few goals, pretty straightforward:

1. Map out exactly how HCA's recruitment process worked (the good, the bad, the ugly).
2. Find the big bottlenecks – what kept slowing things down?
3. Try a few low cost changes (no spending money) and see if they helped.
4. Write down what I learned so other small consultancies could maybe use the ideas.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This isn't just an academic exercise. If you run a small HR firm, or you're an intern like me, you want practical tips – not theory. So, I focused on things anyone can do: changing how you talk to candidates, keeping a better spreadsheet, and sending reminders. No six-figure software. No consultants. Just common sense tested in real life.

1.5 Scope and Limitations

Look, I was only there for five weeks. That's not a lot of time. I only worked on a handful of roles – maybe eight or nine. And everything I saw was at one company. So don't take this as the final truth for every HR firm. Think of it more as one person's careful notes that might help you ask better questions at your own workplace.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

I did read some academic papers to see what other people have found. Here's the short version.

2.1 Process Optimization in Talent Acquisition

There's this framework called DMAIC – Define, Measure, Analyse, Improve, Control. It's from manufacturing, but people use it for recruitment too. Basically, you first figure out what you're doing (define), measure how long things take

(measure), find out why delays happen (analyse), try fixes (improve), and then keep checking so you don't slip back (control). I kind of did a mini version of that during my internship.

2.2 Sourcing Optimization

Research is pretty clear: using just one job portal is a bad idea. In my case, [Naukri.com](https://www.naukri.com) gave me lots of people, but many weren't a great fit. LinkedIn gave me fewer people but better matches. So, the smart thing is to use both and track which works for which role.

2.3 Talking to Candidates – It's a Process, Not Just “Soft Skills”

Here's something I didn't expect from the literature: the way you talk to candidates isn't just about being nice. It's a measurable part of the process. Signalling theory says every call or email sends a signal about your company. So, when I changed my script from “I have a job, interested?” to explaining the role's value and asking about their goals, I was optimizing a process – not just being polite.

2.4 Data Management and Operational Bottlenecks

Manual data entry is a huge source of errors. I learned that the hard way. In my first week, I'd write candidate details on a notepad, then lose the page, then miss a follow-up. Embarrassing. When I finally made a proper Google Sheet with status columns, things got way better. So yes, data governance sounds dull, but it's gold.

2.5 No-Shows and Resilience

Strangely, not many papers talk about candidate no-shows as something you can fix through the process. But Posthuma et al. (2002) hint that recruiter resilience matters. I found that a simple double reminder (email + WhatsApp) cut no-shows by half. That's huge for a zero-cost change.

2.6 What's Missing

Most studies assume you have an ATS or AI. But what if you don't? That's where my little project comes in – testing low-tech optimizations in a real, resource-tight setting.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

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3.2 Process Optimization Interventions

I broke my internship into phases. Not perfectly clean because real life is messy, but roughly:

- **Week 1 2 (Baseline):** Used only Naukri.com. Called candidates with a very transactional script (“Hi, we have a job, are you interested?”). Tracked things in personal notes and memory.
- **Week 2 3 (Change 1):** Added LinkedIn sourcing. Switched to a consultative call script (explain the role, ask about their goals, listen).
- **Week 3 4 (Change 2):** Built a shared Google Sheet tracker with columns: Name, Source, Status, Last Contact, Next Action. Updated it daily.
- **Week 4 5 (Change 3):** Started sending two reminders for each interview – email two days before, WhatsApp one day before.

3.3 What I Tracked

I kept a daily log. For every candidate I contacted (total 127 across 8 roles), I recorded:

- Where they came from
- Whether they agreed to an interview after my call
- How many days passed before I followed up (if at all – oops)
- Whether they showed up or ghosted

Nothing fancy. Just honest numbers.

3.4 Ethics Stuff

I didn't share anyone's real name or contact info. The company agreed to let me write this as long as I didn't reveal sensitive client data. So, all good.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings

4.1 First Big Finding – Don't Put All Eggs in One Sourcing Basket

Here's the raw data from my logs:

Sourcing channel	Candidates contacted	Got interview	Success rate
Naukri.com only (first two weeks)	78	32	41%
LinkedIn (added later)	49	28	57%
Combined (both)	127	60	47%

So yeah, Naukri gave me more people, but a lower percentage of them turned into actual interviews. LinkedIn gave me fewer people, but they were more serious. The best approach? Use both. For entry-level roles, I leaned more on Naukri. For senior or niche roles, I started with LinkedIn.

4.2 Second Finding – How You Talk Changes Everything

This one really surprised me. Same me, same candidates, same roles – but just changing my script made a massive difference.

Style of call	Calls made	Interview set	Success rate
Transactional ("I have a job, interested?")	52	18	34.6%

Style of call	Calls made	Interview set	Success rate
Consultative (explain value, ask questions, listen)	75	47	62.7%

That’s almost double. And it cost nothing. I just prepared a small script: “Hi [name], I’m calling from HCA. We’re helping a client in [industry] hire for a [role]. The reason I thought of you is [specific skill]. Would you have five minutes to hear more?” Then I’d shut up and listen. People responded so much better.

4.3 Third Finding – A Simple Spreadsheet Saves Your Sanity

Okay, this is boring but true. In my first two weeks, I was a mess. I’d call someone, note their number on a random page, then lose it. I forgot to follow up with at least 5 or 6 candidates. Embarrassing to admit.

Tracking method	Average follow-up delay (days)	Missed follow-ups
Random notes	2.3 days	11.5%
Central Google Sheet with status	0.7 days	2.7%

Once I made a sheet with columns – Name, Source, Status (Contacted/Screened/Interview Scheduled/Offered/Rejected/No-Show), Last Contact, Next Action – I never lost track again. I also set a daily 15-minute “cleanup” time at the end of each day. Huge difference.

4.4 Fourth Finding – Reminders Cut Ghosting in Half

Candidate no-shows were driving me crazy. I’d schedule an interview, confirm everything, and then... nothing. The person wouldn’t answer calls. After two weeks of this, I started sending reminders:

- Email 2 days before: “Just reminding you about your interview on [date] at [time]. Please reply to confirm.”

- WhatsApp 1 day before: “Hi [name], looking forward to our interview tomorrow at [time]. Let me know if anything changed.”

Reminder method	No-show rate
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No structured reminder	22%
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Email + WhatsApp double reminder	11%
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Cut it in half. And again, free.

4.5 Putting It All Together – The Improvement Summary

Metric	Before changes (Week 1-2)	After changes (Week 4-5)	Improvement
Candidate conversion rate	34.6%	62.7%	+81%
Follow-up delay (days)	2.3	0.7	-70%
Missed follow-ups	11.5%	2.7%	-77%
No-show rate	22%	11%	-50%

Not bad for five weeks and zero budget, right?

Chapter 5: What It All Means and What You Can Do

5.1 Talking Through the Findings

So, here’s my takeaway. A lot of people think “process optimization” means buying software. But in a small HR consultancy, the biggest inefficiencies are often human behaviours – using only one job portal, talking to candidates like a

robot, tracking things on loose paper, and assuming people will remember their interview times.

Once I fixed those, the numbers got better. Fast.

This matches what the academic papers say, but with a twist. The papers talk about multi-channel sourcing and communication quality – but they don't always give you a simple script or a spreadsheet template. So, I hope my experience fills that gap a little.

Also, I realized that “soft skills” aren't that soft. My consultative calls worked because I was actually listening and being helpful. That's a skill you can practice and measure. And resilience – handling rejections without getting upset – is also trainable. By week four, I didn't take no-shows personally. I just followed my reminder protocol and moved on.

5.2 Recommendations for HCA (and Similar Firms)

Small, Immediate Fixes (Cost: Nothing)

1. **Mix your sourcing.** Use Naukri for volume, LinkedIn for quality. Track which channel gives you the best conversion for each role type.
2. **Write a simple call script.** Put it on a card next to your phone. It should have: greeting, role value prop, question about the candidate's goals, then next steps.
3. **Build a shared tracker.** Google Sheets is fine. Must have columns for name, source, status, last contact date, next action. Update it at the same time every day.
4. **Send double reminders for every interview.** Email two days before, WhatsApp one day before. Log that you sent them.

Bigger Changes for Later (Still Low-Cost)

5. **Create a “backup candidate pool”** for each role. Keep 2-3 extra screened people who can step in if the first choice drops out. Saves you from restarting from zero.
6. **Run a weekly 30-minute check-in** with the team. Look at conversion rates, no-show rates, and average delays. Pick one small thing to improve next week. That's the “continuous improvement” idea.

7. **Write down everything in a “TA Playbook.”** A simple Google Doc with your scripts, tracker instructions, reminder templates. So, when a new intern joins, they don’t make the same mistakes you did.

Only After That, Think About Software

8. **Don’t buy an ATS until your manual process is already good.** Software just automates your mess if you’re not careful. Once you have discipline, then look at low-cost HRIS like Zoho People or BambooHR.

5.3 What I Plan to Do Next for Myself

- I’m going to take a short online course on Lean Six Sigma (Yellow Belt). Now I get why it matters.
- I’ll get better at Excel – pivot tables, data validation – so I can analyse recruitment metrics faster.
- Next internship, I want to try something in HR analytics or operations. This was a good start.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Look, I learned a lot in five weeks. But the biggest lesson wasn’t any single technique. It was this: process optimization is mostly about paying attention and fixing small things.

You don’t need a big budget. You don’t need AI. You just need to measure what’s happening, try a change, and see if it helps. My internship at HCA showed me that. I went from a 34% conversion rate to 63% just by talking differently. I cut follow-up delays from 2.3 days to 0.7 days with a spreadsheet. I halved no shows with two reminder messages.

Of course, there are limits. Five weeks is short. One company is not the whole world. But the principles – measure, analyse, improve, control – they work anywhere.

And the human side matters just as much. Candidates are people, not numbers. When I treated them with respect and actually listened, they responded. So maybe the secret to optimizing talent acquisition is half data, half decency.

I'm glad I did this. It made me excited about HR in a way that textbooks never could.

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