



US Hiring Managers Tread Fine Line Between Optimism and Caution in 2025 Amidst AI Challenges and Talent Shortages

92% Expect to Face Headwinds This Year

OKLAHOMA CITY, Feb. 12, 2025 — U.S. hiring managers say they are navigating a market filled with both optimism and caution in 2025, as 92% expect to face challenges in the months ahead.

This is according to a recent Express Employment Professionals-Harris Poll survey.

Hiring managers report feelings of optimism (52%), hopefulness (46%) and confidence (45%) this year for their company. However, the most cited challenge continues to be finding qualified candidates, with 45% of respondents highlighting this issue.

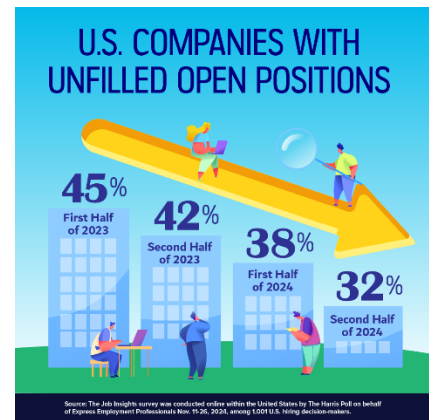
Navigating artificial intelligence (AI) is also a prominent concern, with 37% of hiring managers identifying challenges such as:

- Leveraging AI to reach more candidates
- Implementing AI for candidate assessment
- Processing job applications using AI

Additionally, 27% of respondents expect increased competition in the job market to be a hurdle in 2025.

More than a third (36%) of hiring managers report that their companies lack the tools to find the right candidates for their job openings. Nearly a third (32%) currently have open positions they cannot fill, although this proportion has been trending downwards over the past two years. Among those with open positions in the past year:

- 40% found it difficult to identify suitable candidates
- 44% noted that it has become more challenging to find the right candidates compared to five years ago



The inability to fill open positions is commonly attributed to several factors:

- A lack of applicants with relevant experience (39%)
- A shortage of applicants with hard skills (38%)
- A deficit of applicants with soft skills (33%)
- A general lack of applicants (33%)

Extended unemployment is believed to play a role in the skills gap, with 64% of hiring managers reporting that prolonged unemployment leads to a deterioration of both hard and soft skills, particularly among young adults aged 18 – 26.

“While the challenges are significant, the resilience and adaptability of companies will be the driving force behind navigating this evolving landscape,” said Express Employment International CEO Bill Stoller. “By embracing technology and prioritizing skill development, they can create a more agile and capable workforce. This proactive approach will address current challenges and position companies for long-term success in an ever-changing market.”

Survey Methodology

The Job Insights survey was conducted online within the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of Express Employment Professionals Nov. 11 – 26, 2024, among 1,001 U.S. hiring decision-makers.

For full survey methodologies, please contact Sheena.Hollander@ExpressPros.com, Director of Corporate Communications & PR.

If you would like to arrange for an interview to discuss this topic, please contact Sheena.Hollander@ExpressPros.com, Director of Corporate Communications & PR.

About Bill Stoller

William H. "Bill" Stoller is chairman and chief executive officer of Express Employment International. Founded in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, the international staffing franchisor supports the Express Employment Professionals franchise and related brands. The Express franchise brand is an industry-leading, international staffing company with franchise locations in the U.S., Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

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