



A 2026 guide

How to build a recruitment website that **wins clients**



What to budget, what to build, why AI generated sites all look the same, and what a marketing agency adds that a template cannot.



Written for recruitment and executive search leaders
in the UK market.

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Contents

What is in this guide

01	Decide who the website is for	Two audiences, one page
02	The four jobs of a recruitment website	The brief
03	Builders, templates and bespoke builds compared	Routes
04	What to budget in the UK	Cost
05	Why AI generated sites all look the same	Differentiation
06	Custom graphics beat stock photography	Imagery
07	The pages every recruitment website needs	Structure
08	Build the job board properly	Technical
09	Speed, mobile and SEO structure	Performance
10	Accessibility and candidate data	Compliance
11	Measure whether it is working	Metrics
12	Timeline, common mistakes and when to bring in help	Delivery

How to use this guide

Read sections 01 to 04 before commissioning anything: they decide the outcome. Sections 05 to 10 are the specification — take them into a supplier conversation and ask how each point will be handled. Sections 11 and 12 are how the build gets held to account after launch.

01 – Audience

Decide who the website is for before deciding what it looks like

Recruitment is one of very few industries where the website has to sell in two directions at once. Hiring managers need to trust the firm with a mandate. Candidates need to trust it with a career. Most agency sites are built as though only the second group exists.

The pattern is consistent: the homepage leads with a job search bar, the navigation is jobs, jobs by sector, upload your CV and about, and somewhere in the footer sits a single "employers" page of generic text about partnership and excellence. Meanwhile the fees come from clients.

CLIENTS

80%

Gartner puts roughly this share of the B2B buying journey ahead of any contact with a supplier. The email lands, the hiring manager does not reply, they open the website in a new tab and decide there whether the firm is worth twenty minutes.

CANDIDATES

50ms

Carleton University research, published in *Behaviour and Information Technology*, found a reliable judgement of a page's visual appeal forms in about fifty thousandths of a second — faster than a single word can be read.

Stanford's Web Credibility Project found something related and less comfortable: people judge an organisation's credibility heavily on the look of its site, citing visual design far more often than the quality of the content. Layout, typography, colour, spacing. The things that feel superficial do most of the persuading. A first impression formed before the value proposition is read cannot be argued away — only designed better.

Answer these four questions before writing a brief

In plain language, in writing, before anyone opens a design tool.

1. Which two or three sectors do we want to be known for, and would a stranger know that from thirty seconds on our homepage?
2. What do we want a hiring manager to do next, and is that action visible without scrolling?
3. What do we want a candidate to do next, and is it a different action in a different place?
4. What proof do we have that we are good at this, and is any of it currently on the site?

Most rescued recruitment websites failed at this stage, not at the build stage.

02 – The brief

A recruitment website has four jobs

01 Prove the firm is credible

Real names, real faces, real placements, real numbers. Recruitment has a trust problem nobody created individually and everybody pays for. The website is the cheapest place to fix it.

02 Be findable

Hiring managers search for things like "engineering recruitment agency Manchester"; candidates search job titles. With no page matching those searches the firm is invisible, however good the design.

03 Convert

Traffic that leaves without doing anything is a cost, not an asset. Every page needs an obvious next step suited to whoever is reading it.

04 Run without you

Vacancies should publish themselves from the CRM and enquiries should land where consultants already work. If updating the site requires a developer, it will not get updated.



Everything else on the site is in service of those four things.



03 – Routes

Builders, templates and bespoke builds compared

There are four realistic routes. None is wrong for everybody.

ROUTE	UK COST	WHAT YOU GIVE UP	SUITS
Website builder / DIY	Free to ~£1,000 a year	Precise control of job URLs and structured data; CRM integration means a plugin, a monthly fee and a fragile connection. Add-ons at £10—£50 a month, and £50—£100 an hour to a developer the moment the platform will not do something. The template is shared.	A solo recruiter or brand new agency, first twelve months, no budget.
Recruitment template	£1,000 — £4,500	Differentiation. A job board, CV upload and basic CRM hooks come ready, but other agencies are buying the same design — the problem shrinks rather than disappears.	An established small agency needing the functionality quickly, able to live with looking similar to peers.
Subscription platform	£250 — £900 a month	Ownership and flexibility. The design sits inside their system; leaving usually means leaving with the content, not the site. Over five years it costs more than most bespoke builds.	Agencies who want the operational burden gone and never to think about a website again.
Bespoke design	£2,500 — £15,000	Time and budget up front. What is bought is not custom code but the thinking: positioning, distinctiveness, what a hiring manager in the niche needs to see, and a design system that belongs only to the firm.	Agencies competing on more than price, firms with a niche worth owning, anyone whose average fee makes one extra mandate pay for the site.

Two tests that settle it

Work out what one placement is worth. If a single additional mandate a year covers the difference between a template and a bespoke build, the decision makes itself — for a firm placing at a £15,000 fee, arguing over a £6,000 site is arguing about forty per cent of one placement. The second test is time: this site will be looked at every day for four years, so disliking it in week one means the wrong thing was bought.

04 – Cost

What to budget in the UK, and what quotes leave out

OPTION	RANGE	NOTES
DIY, or a favour from a friend	£100 — £1,000	Usually lacks recruitment specific features; rarely holds up on mobile.
Website builder	Free — £1,000 a year	Plus plugin fees and developer time when outgrown.
Recruitment template	£1,000 — £4,500	Basic job board functionality included.
Bespoke build	£2,500 — £15,000	Most independent agencies, over two to four months.
Enterprise	£10,000 — £45,000+	Large multi-region firms, complex integrations, six months or more.
Subscription platform	£250 — £899 a month	Hosting, updates and support included.

Ask about all of these before signing anything

- **Hosting and domain**, if they are not bundled.
- **Maintenance and security updates**. On self-hosted platforms this is neither optional nor free.
- **Content**. Somebody has to write the sector pages, the employer page and the case studies. If it is not in the quote it is on the agency — and unwritten content is the single most common reason a build stalls.
- **Photography and graphics**. Custom assets cost money. Stock is cheaper and looks it.
- **ATS integration**. Sometimes a line item, sometimes assumed. Get it in writing with the name of the system in the sentence.
- **Migration and redirects**. Every old URL mapped to a new one. Skip it and years of search equity can go in a single afternoon.

FROM AUDIT

One agency lost roughly two thirds of its organic traffic overnight because a new site launched without redirects from several hundred old job and blog URLs. The design was lovely. Recovery took eight months.

05 – Differentiation

AI generated websites all look the same, and in recruitment that is a problem

Generating a whole website from a prompt is now trivial, and the output is genuinely impressive on first glance. The problem is the second glance — and prospects are now taking one.

These models learned from the most popular pages on the internet, so they reproduce the most popular patterns. An enormous number of newly built sites now share the same handful of design decisions.

The tells

- The same big centred headline with a soft gradient behind it.
- The same geometric sans serif, same weight, same generous letter spacing.
- The same three or four column grid of rounded cards with a small icon top left.
- The same alternating image and text bands down the page.
- The same pill shaped buttons, soft shadow and border radius.
- The same faintly abstract illustrations of people who do not exist.
- Copy that reads well and says nothing: empowering, tailored, end to end, trusted partner.

Put ten of them side by side and a recruitment agency is indistinguishable from an accountancy practice or a physiotherapy clinic. Once noticed it cannot be unnoticed — and clients are noticing.

Three costs of a generic site

Trust

Cheap reads as risky. A hiring manager comparing three agencies registers that two feel interchangeable and one feels like a real firm with a point of view.

Fee

Nothing visible is different, so nothing justifies a higher fee. Commodities compete on price — a bad place for a recruitment agency to be.

Search

Generated copy says what everyone else's says. Thin, interchangeable content does not rank, so the cheap site does not deliver the traffic meant to justify it.



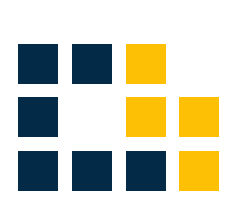
05 – Differentiation, continued

What a marketing agency does that a generator cannot

A generator starts from the average of the internet. An agency starts from the firm. The work begins with questions rather than layouts: who do you beat and why, what do your best clients say when you are not in the room, what does your sector expect and never see, what would make a hiring manager in your niche pause. Looking at the firms you lose deals to shows which visual and verbal territory is already taken, so you can be put somewhere else.

Out of that comes an actual design system: a typographic scale chosen for positioning rather than fashion, a palette that is not the same three blues everyone in staffing uses, a photography direction, an icon style, a way of handling data and proof, and a tone of voice with rules. Every page is then built from that system, which is why a properly designed site holds together from the homepage to a single job advert, and a generated one falls apart two clicks deep.

That system is also an asset. It carries into proposals, LinkedIn, job adverts and email campaigns, so everything a prospect sees reinforces one recognisable identity. These tools are excellent for drafting and prototyping. What they cannot do is know what makes an agency worth choosing, because that information is not on the internet — it is in the founder's head, in clients' heads, and in the placements already made.



A generator starts from the average of the internet. An agency starts from you.



06 – Imagery

Custom branded graphics beat stock photography every time

Nielsen Norman Group's eyetracking work found that large decorative images are essentially ignored, while images carrying real information get genuine attention — the distinction being photos of actual people and things versus stock photos of models. Nobody consciously decides to skip the picture of four colleagues laughing at a laptop. Their eyes simply do not go there, because they have learned it contains nothing. A header photo of a generic team in a generic office is not neutral: it is wasted space that quietly signals there was nothing specific to show.

What to put there instead

- **Your actual people, photographed properly.** One decent half-day shoot gives headshots for every consultant profile, candid shots for the about page and material for social. It is the highest return spend in the whole build.
- **Your actual office, or your clients' environments.** If the desk recruits into manufacturing, photographs of a factory floor say more about specialism than any strapline.
- **Custom graphics that carry information.** A diagram of the search process. A chart of salary data from your own placements. A map of where you place. A breakdown of time to hire in your sector.
- **Data visualisations built from your own numbers.** Design salary survey charts properly, in brand colours, with the logo on them. Those images get screenshotted, shared and linked to — one of the few reliable ways to earn backlinks in this industry.
- **Branded document and report covers.** When a hiring manager downloads a market report, the cover is the last thing they see and the thing they remember.

CONSULTANT HEADSHOT — REAL TEAM MEMBER

CLIENT ENVIRONMENT — SITE, FLOOR OR OFFICE
YOU RECRUIT INTO

The details that quietly signal quality

Consistent icon weight. Images cropped to a repeating ratio. Real numbers rather than round approximations. Alignment that holds on every page. Text spaced to be read rather than to fill a box. Nobody will compliment any of it — they will just find the site easier to believe.

07 – Structure

The pages every recruitment website needs, in priority order

Homepage

One job: make it obvious within seconds who the firm recruits for, what it specialises in, and what happens next. Lead with a position, not a job search bar. Split the two audiences early, so a hiring manager has a route and a candidate has a different one. Put proof near the top — sectors, placements made, average time to fill, client names where permitted, and a testimonial with a real name and job title attached.

Sector and specialism pages

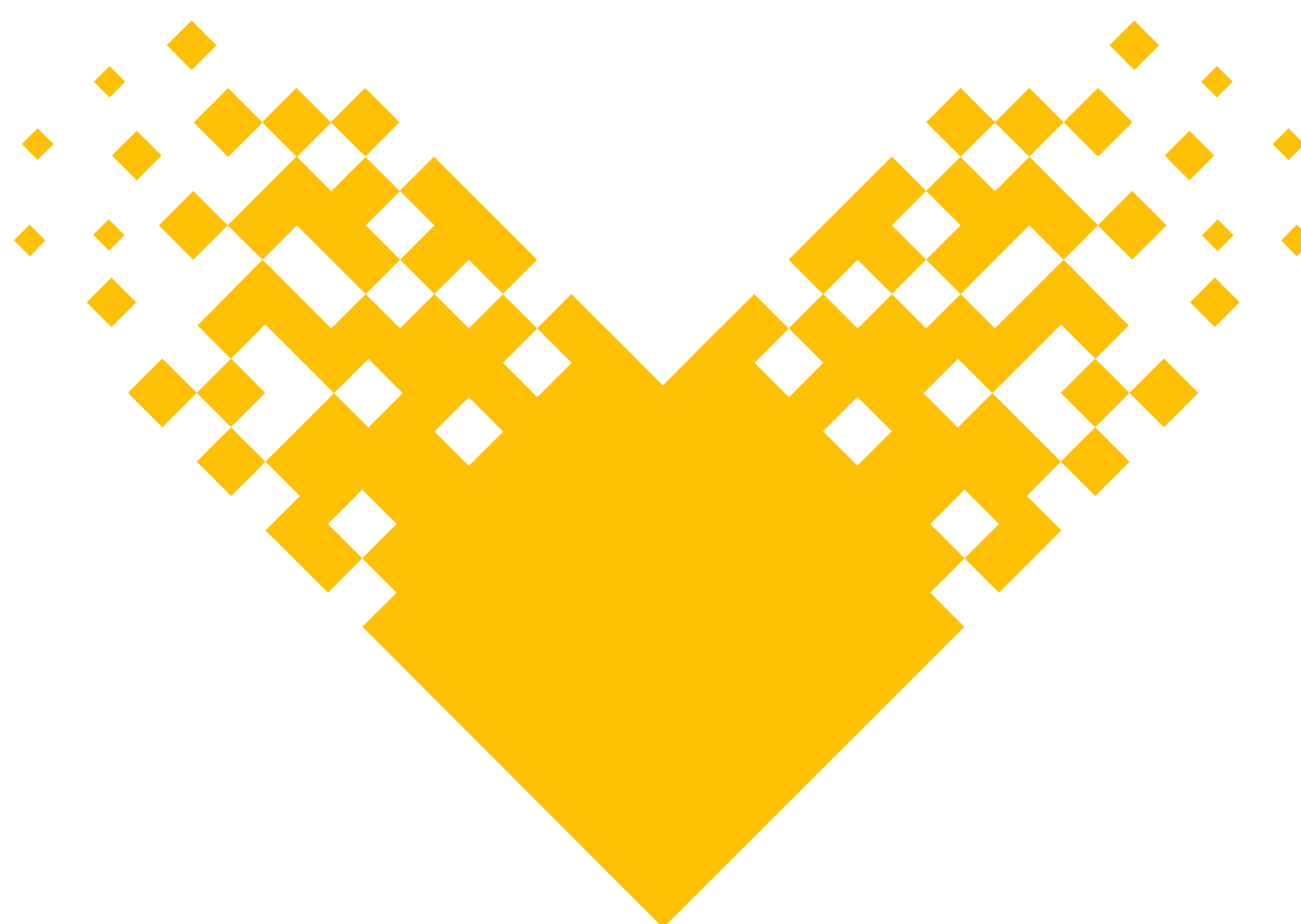
The most valuable pages on a recruitment website and the ones most often skipped. One page per sector, written for the hiring manager in that sector: the roles filled, current market conditions, the salary ranges being seen, how the process works for that discipline, who leads the desk, and proof of delivery. Nobody searches "recruitment agency" — they search "fintech compliance recruitment agency London". A single page trying to cover everything ranks for nothing.

An employer page that pitches to hiring managers

A real one, not a paragraph. What the firm does, how, what it costs in broad terms, what the terms and guarantee look like, how long it takes, and who they will deal with. Hiring managers want to derisk the decision: give them what they would otherwise have to ask for and the result is fewer exploratory calls and more briefed roles.

The job board

Live vacancies, searchable and filterable by sector, location, salary and contract type, on their own indexable URLs. One honest caveat: for retained executive search a public job board can undermine the proposition — three thin vacancies suggest a quiet desk. Put the space into client proof, market insight and confidential search process instead.



07 – Structure, continued

The pages every recruitment website needs

Consultant profiles

Recruitment is a people business and the site should look like it. A photo, the sectors covered, how long they have done it, what they have placed, and a direct route to contact them. Named people convert better than a general enquiry form, because the visitor knows who will pick it up.

Case studies and proof

The hardest pages to get written and the most persuasive once they exist. Short and concrete: the brief, the constraint, what was done, the outcome with a number in it. Three specific case studies beat a wall of client logos.

Insights

Salary benchmarking, hiring trend commentary, interview guidance for the discipline. This earns search traffic from people not yet ready to buy, and gives consultants something worth sending. A long game that compounds.

Contact and register

Separate routes for clients and candidates, because they need different forms and different follow up. Keep both short — every additional field costs submissions, and the rest can be asked on the call.



Three specific case studies beat a wall of client logos.

08 – Technical

Build the job board properly

This is where most recruitment websites are technically weakest, and where the gap between a good build and a cheap one is most measurable.

Wire the site to the system the desk already runs

Vacancies live in the CRM or applicant tracking system. They should publish to the website automatically, and applications should flow back automatically. If a consultant has to copy a job advert into a CMS by hand, the site falls behind and eventually somebody stops bothering. Ask any prospective builder to name the platform, describe the integration method, and say what happens when a role is closed. Vague answers here are a reliable warning sign.

Mark up every vacancy with JobPosting schema

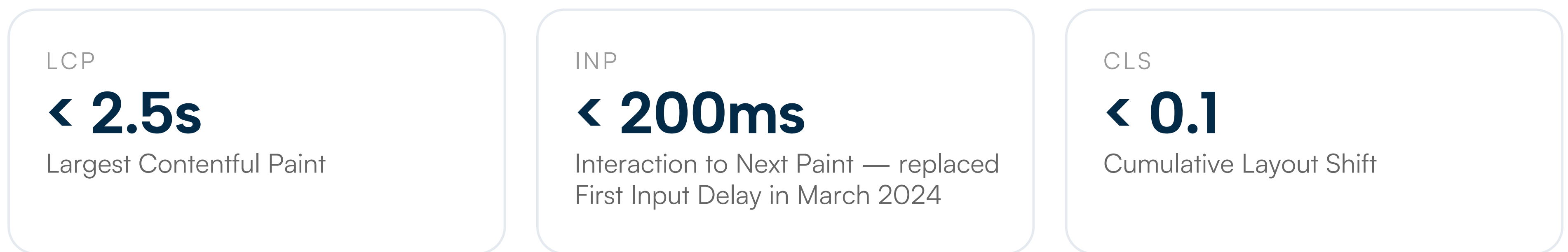
Structured data is what makes live roles eligible for the job listing experience in search results — for many agencies a meaningful traffic source that costs nothing per click. Google's documentation is specific, and the rules are worth knowing before commissioning a build.

REQUIRED	title • description • datePosted • hiringOrganization • jobLocation
STRONGLY ADVISED	baseSalary (currency + unit) • employmentType • validThrough • sc-camel-job-location-type = TELECOMMUTE for fully remote
PLACEMENT	Only on pages containing a single job posting — the individual vacancy page, never the search results page.
EXPIRED ROLES	Remove them: set validThrough to a past date, return a 404 or 410, or remove the structured data. Leaving dead vacancies live is common and avoidable.
SITEMAP	Accurate lastmod timestamps, and no search or filter pages included.

Two practical additions. Give every vacancy a clean, readable URL containing the job title and location. And write real descriptions — a three line advert marked up perfectly still will not rank, and it tells a candidate the role was not worth explaining.

09 – Performance

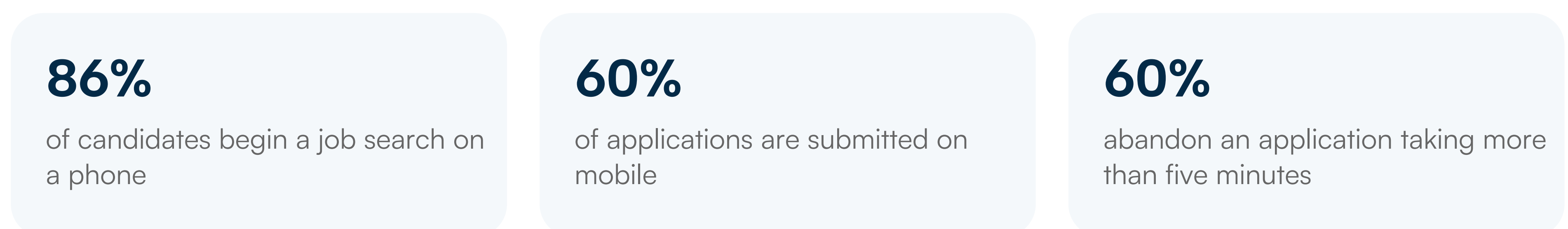
Speed, mobile and SEO structure



Assessed from real users, at the 75th percentile, over a rolling 28 day window.

These are not abstract. A study Google commissioned from Deloitte Digital, covering 30 million sessions across 37 brands, found that improving load time by 0.1 seconds lifted retail conversions by 8.4 per cent and increased form submissions on lead generation pages by 8.3 per cent. A recruitment website is a lead generation site. The usual culprits are always the same: enormous uncompressed hero images, a stack of unaudited tracking scripts, embedded widgets loading fonts from four places, and a job search that queries the whole database on page load.

Mobile is not the secondary case



Design and test the mobile experience first, particularly the application flow. A CV upload that fails on a phone is not a minor bug — it is the candidate pipeline leaking. For hiring managers the mobile case is different but just as real: they read the site on a phone between meetings, then come back on a laptop later if it survived the first pass.

SEO starts with structure, not with a checklist at the end

- **Give every commercial term its own page.** One per sector, one per location genuinely served, one per major service — each with its own URL, title and content written for that search. Trying to rank one homepage for twelve terms is how agencies rank for none.
- **Write for the reader you want.** Most recruitment sites are written for candidates because candidates are who consultants talk to all day. If clients pay the invoices, at least half the site should address them directly, about their problem: a role they cannot fill and a deadline they are missing.
- **Link your own pages together.** Sector pages to case studies, consultant profiles and live roles; insight articles to the sector pages they support. Free, an hour's work, and almost nobody does it.
- **Keep the equity you already have.** Replacing a site means mapping every old URL to its new home before launch. Redirects are boring, and they are the difference between a relaunch that grows and one that sets the firm back a year.

10 – Compliance

Accessibility and candidate data belong in the build

Accessibility. In the UK the Equality Act 2010 requires reasonable adjustments so disabled people can access services, and WCAG 2.2 Level AA is the recognised benchmark for demonstrating that duty has been met. Public sector bodies are formally required to meet it; private sector organisations are not held to the same monitoring regime, but the duty exists — and for firms providing services to consumers in the EU, the European Accessibility Act has applied to private sector digital services since 28 June 2025. Beyond the legal position the point is obvious: if a candidate using a screen reader cannot complete the application form, they have been excluded from roles the firm is paid to fill. Sufficient colour contrast, keyboard navigation, labelled form fields, sensible heading structure and meaningful alternative text cover most of it, and cost very little when specified up front.

Candidate data. Every CV upload and registration form is a data collection point. Under UK GDPR people must be told, at the point of collection, who is collecting, what, why, how long it will be kept and how to exercise their rights. General practice in recruitment is to hold candidate data for two to three years from the last meaningful contact, then delete it or seek fresh consent. Get the privacy notice written properly, link it from every form, and make sure the form respects the preferences it collects. The ICO has taken action against recruitment businesses, and the pattern is almost always the same: a candidate asked to be removed and was ignored.



11 – Metrics

Measure whether the website is working

Traffic is the least interesting number on the dashboard. Agree these before the build starts, so success is defined by something other than whether everyone likes the homepage.

Client enquiries per month	Tracked separately from candidate registrations. If they cannot be separated, fix that first.
Which pages precede an enquiry	Usually a sector page and a consultant profile — which tells you where to invest next.
Applications per vacancy	And how that varies by role type.
Organic rankings for commercial terms	Not the brand name. Ranking first for your own agency name proves nothing.
Mobile conversion rate vs desktop	A large gap means something in the mobile flow is broken.
Core Web Vitals from real users	Field data, not a lab score on a fast connection.

12 – Delivery

How long a build actually takes

For a properly scoped bespoke build, expect eight to fourteen weeks. It can be compressed — but not without removing something, and the thing removed is usually content or testing, which are the two that show.

Weeks 1—3	Discovery and structure Positioning, audiences, competitor review, sitemap, page by page content plan, technical requirements including the ATS integration.
Weeks 3—8	Brand, design and content The design system, key page designs, photography, custom graphics and the writing. Content is nearly always the bottleneck — start it early and assign an owner internally.
Weeks 7—12	Build and integration Development, CRM integration, job board, schema, forms, analytics.
Weeks 11—14	Testing, migration and launch Cross device testing, accessibility checks, speed work, redirect mapping, then launch and monitoring.

Mistakes seen most often, drawn from audits

- **Only speaking to candidates** while relying on client fees.
- **A single "sectors we cover" page** listing eleven industries in bullet points, ranking for none of them.
- **Stock photography everywhere**, which visitors ignore and which makes the firm look like the last four sites they saw.
- **Dead vacancies** still live months after the role was filled, damaging credibility and search performance.
- **Contact forms with fourteen fields**, most of which could be asked on the call.
- **No named people**, just an info@ address and a general enquiry box.
- **Testimonials with no attribution**. "Great service, HR Director" persuades nobody.
- **A relaunch with no redirects**, throwing away years of accumulated rankings.
- **Nothing published since 2023**, which suggests the firm may not still be trading.
- **No tracking**, so nobody can say whether any of it worked.

When to do it yourself, and when to bring in help

Do it yourself if

The firm is pre-revenue, something needs to be live this month, or the website is genuinely a placeholder while business comes from an existing network. A simple, fast, honest builder site beats an ambitious one that never gets finished.

What an agency adds that a tool cannot is the part that happens before design starts: working out what makes the firm different, building a visual and verbal identity around it, then making every page serve a commercial objective agreed at the outset. The build is the easy half. Knowing what to build is the half that determines whether it works, and it is why two agencies with similar sites get very different results from them.

Bring in help when

The website has to earn its keep: competing against firms with real marketing budgets, an average fee that makes one extra mandate worth more than the build, a niche worth being known for, or two internal attempts still half finished because fee earners are reasonably prioritising fees.



Frequently asked

Questions recruitment leaders ask

How much does it cost to build a recruitment website in the UK?

A recruitment specific template runs £1,000 to £4,500. A bespoke build for most independent agencies sits between £2,500 and £15,000, with large multi-region sites from £10,000 to £45,000 and above. Subscription platforms charge £250 to £899 a month. Budget separately for content, photography, ATS integration and redirect mapping if they are not in the quote.

Can a recruitment website be built on a website builder?

Yes, and for a new desk with no revenue that is often the right call. The limits appear later: precise control of job URLs and structured data is difficult, CRM integration usually means a third party plugin, and add-ons accumulate. Expect to outgrow it rather than extend it.

How long does it take?

Eight to fourteen weeks for a properly scoped bespoke build: three weeks of discovery and structure, design and content through to week eight, build and integration to week twelve, then testing, migration and launch. Content is nearly always what determines whether that holds.

What pages does a recruitment agency website need?

A homepage that leads with a position, a page for each sector, a real employer page that pitches to hiring managers, a job board on indexable URLs, consultant profiles, case studies with numbers in them, an insights section, and separate contact routes for clients and candidates.

Does the website need a job board?

For contingency and volume recruitment, yes — wired to the CRM, filterable, and marked up with JobPosting schema. For retained executive search it can work against you: three thin vacancies suggest a quiet desk, so the space is better spent on client proof, market insight and confidential search process.

Will a new website help us rank on Google?

Only if structure and content are part of the build. Ranking comes from one page per commercial term, real content written for those searches, internal linking, technically sound job pages and Core Web Vitals in the green — plus a redirect map that carries existing equity across at launch. A redesign alone changes nothing.

Where to start

Decide what the website is for before deciding what it looks like

Almost every expensive mistake comes from doing those in the wrong order. Then work through it in sequence.

1. Get clear on the two audiences and what each needs to do next.
2. Choose a build route that matches what a placement is worth to you.
3. Insist on a design that belongs to you, not to a template or a model's idea of the average business.
4. Put your own people, your own data and your own proof on the page instead of stock imagery.
5. Wire the job board to the system you already run, and mark it up properly.
6. Measure client enquiries, not visits.

Do that and the website stops being a brochure the firm is quietly embarrassed by, and starts being the thing that makes a hiring manager decide to reply.

Applications open

Should we work together?

We take on a small number of recruitment and search firms at a time, and we need to ensure a fit from the very beginning. If you would like a view on where your current site is losing you mandates, we do this for recruitment agencies every week.

Apply to work with us

[LIMIVEX.CO.UK/APPLY](https://limivex.co.uk/apply)