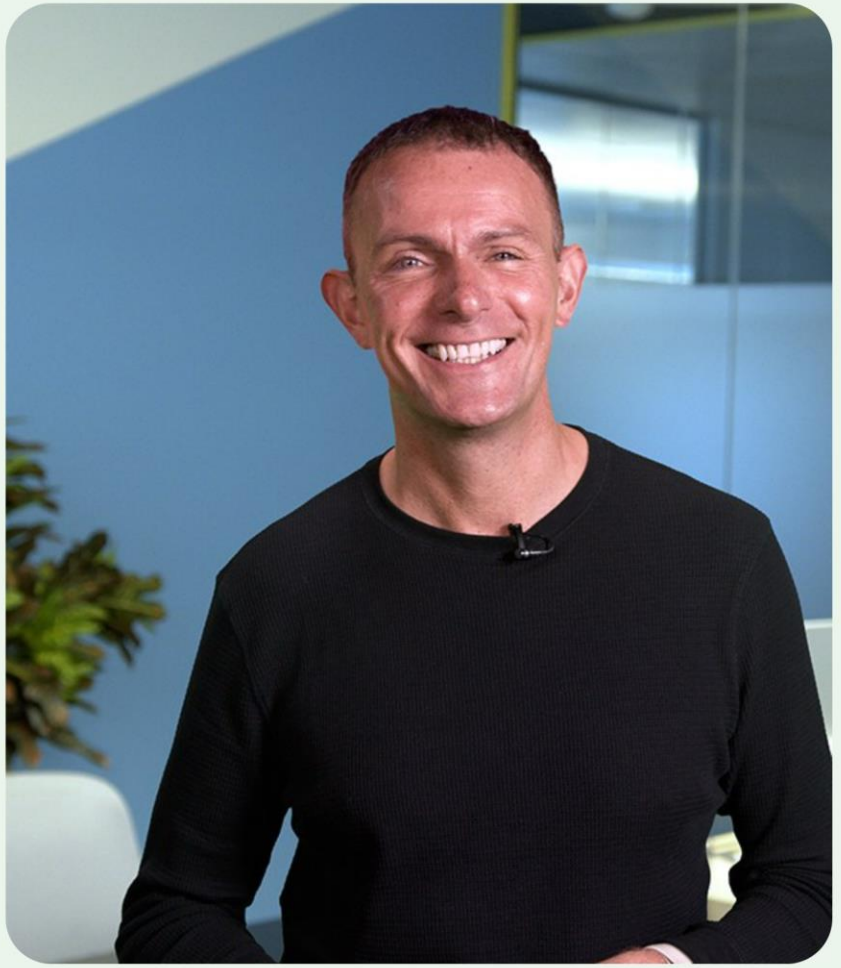
TALENT CONNECT 2026

How can recruiters become true talent advisors?



Johnny Campbell · SocialTalent

LinkedIn Talent Connect · New York · 29 and 30 September 2026

Two things are collapsing at once.

COLLAPSE ONE

The cost of the transactional work

The administrative half of hiring is close to free now. That part of the shift is real, and it is already happening in most of your teams.

COLLAPSE TWO

The trustworthiness of every signal

Every candidate can now look qualified. The résumé, the cover letter, the polished answer. All of it is cheap to manufacture at scale.

So the winning operating model is not just more automation.
It is automating the low-risk work so you can afford far stronger judgment where it actually counts.

True talent advisors. Three conditions. In this order.

ONE

Capacity

Nobody advises from a full calendar. Roughly 80% of the day is transactional, and this is where almost all current investment goes.

TWO

Capability

Freed time does not become advice on its own. Automation creates a vacuum. What fills it is a deliberate choice.

THREE

Contract

A capable recruiter with time still gets ignored if the scorecard measures throughput and someone else owns the relationship.

The market is buying only one of the three.

Where the money actually went in the last twelve months

45%
of organisations cut TA headcount

78%
held or grew their TA technology budget

64%
rank technology and tooling as their top 2026 priority

20%
rank capability and upskilling as their top priority

Technology gets more than three times the mindshare of upskilling. Hackett finds the same shape across HR: 9% more workload, fewer people, and a 9% rise in technology spend.

Sources: SocialTalent State of Hiring 2026; The Hackett Group, 2026 HR Key Issues Study

Eighty tasks in a hire. Eighteen are genuinely human.

We broke down every discrete task in an enterprise recruiting process and sorted them

30

Automatable

Mechanical, rule based, no meaningful judgment call involved.

32

Hybrid

AI drafts, structures, aggregates or flags. A person reviews, personalises or decides.

18

Human only

Judgment, negotiation, relationship, accountability. Nothing here is mechanical.

Source: SocialTalent task level analysis, 2026

THREE C'S SERIES

Your recruiting process, all 80 tasks.

What AI can own end to end, what stays hybrid, and what stays human. The full list.

● Automatable (30) ● Hybrid (32) ● Human-Only (18)

AUTOMATABLE

30 of 80 tasks · 37.5%

Mechanical, rule-based, no meaningful judgment call.

- 4 Create job requisition (ATS)
- 16 Publish job ad
- 17 Distribute to job boards
- 18 Post to social/referral channels
- 21 Boolean/X-ray sourcing search
- 24 Follow up with non-responders
- 27 Manage inbound applications
- 28 Triage resumes vs. minimums
- 29 Run knockout/eligibility questions
- 33 Verify basic candidate facts
- 35 Send screen-stage rejections
- 40 Schedule interviews (calendars)
- 41 Coordinate interview logistics
- 42 Send interview confirmation/prep
- 44 Administer skills tests
- 47 Chase interviewers for feedback
- 58 Run background/RTW checks
- 64 Issue formal written offer
- 66 Confirm start date/notice
- 67 Send rejections to remaining
- 68 Collect candidate feedback/NPS
- 69 Preboarding paperwork/IT setup
- 70 Coordinate Day 1 with HR
- 71 Close out requisition (ATS)
- 72 Update pipeline/pool records
- 73 Maintain ATS data hygiene
- 74 Produce pipeline/funnel reports
- 75 Track time-to-fill/source-of-hire
- 77 Maintain decision audit trail
- 78 Stakeholder status updates

HYBRID

32 of 80 tasks · 40%

AI drafts or flags; a person reviews and decides.

- 1 Headcount planning vs. budget
- 5 Set salary band/comp range
- 7 Run the intake meeting
- 8 Clarify scope & must-haves
- 9 Agree success criteria
- 10 Agree interview process design
- 11 Review JD for compliance
- 12 Draft the job post
- 14 Brief the interview panel
- 15 Build interview guide/scorecards
- 19 Manage referral submissions
- 20 Build sourcing strategy
- 22 Build talent pipeline
- 23 Personalised outbound outreach
- 25 Manage agency/vendor submissions
- 30 Screen resumes vs. criteria
- 31 Run screening calls
- 34 Disposition w/ reason codes
- 36 Shortlist for hiring manager
- 39 Adjust search on feedback
- 43 Brief interviewers on focus
- 46 Submit interview scorecards
- 48 Consolidate feedback (all stages)
- 49 Flag red-flag feedback
- 50 Reschedule/handle no-shows
- 51 Manage candidate questions
- 52 Keep candidates warm
- 54 Compare candidates side-by-side
- 57 Conduct reference checks
- 60 Build offer within bands
- 76 Legal/compliance checks
- 79 Prioritise own workload

HUMAN-ONLY

18 of 80 tasks · 22.5%

Judgment, negotiation, relationship, accountability.

- 2 Build the business case
- 3 Get req approved (Finance/HR)
- 6 Confirm budget/headcount sign-off
- 13 Get job post signed off
- 26 Attend/organise talent events
- 32 Assess motivation & salary fit
- 37 Present shortlist to HM
- 38 Gather HM feedback
- 45 Conduct structured interviews
- 53 Facilitate decision debrief
- 55 Make final hire recommendation
- 56 Get decision sign-off
- 59 Resolve background-check issues
- 61 Get offer approved internally
- 62 Extend the verbal offer
- 63 Negotiate offer terms
- 65 Manage counter-offers
- 80 Calibrate with HMs on the bar

Every table has this in front of them.

Where would you move something?

AI owns the middle. Humans own the two ends.

Where the eighteen human tasks actually sit in the process

BEFORE THE REQUISITION

Is this the right role at all?

The business case. Requisition approval. Budget and headcount sign-off. Getting the job signed off in the first place.

Tasks 2, 3, 6, 13

THE FUNNEL

Finding, sorting and moving people

Sourcing, screening, scheduling, coordinating, reporting. Almost entirely automate and hybrid. This is where the tooling lives and where the capacity comes from.

Tasks 14 to 52, with few exceptions

AT THE DECISION

Is this the right person?

The interview. The debrief. The recommendation. The negotiation. Calibrating the bar with a hiring manager.

Tasks 53 to 80

Advisory is not one thing. It is judgment at both ends: what we should be hiring for, and who we should hire.

Automating 62 tasks is how you afford to take the 18 seriously.

AUTOMATE

is Capacity

Where you win back the day. Front loaded: fix the waste at the top of the funnel and the effect runs downstream through everything after it.

HYBRID

is Capability

Where capability is built or quietly lost. Knowing when to trust the draft and when to override it is the skill, not the tool landing.

HUMAN ONLY

is Contract

Whether you have the mandate and the metrics to protect these eighteen as real work, rather than something squeezed the moment volume spikes.

This is not a headcount argument. It is a capacity argument.

The proven return is still automation, not decision-making.

32%

average improvement in time-to-fill and time-to-hire

72%

average improvement in automation of hiring activities

70%

increase in recruiter efficiency on daily tasks

Source: The Hackett Group, 2026 Talent Acquisition Vendor Assessments (12 providers, customer-reported), July 2026

The question isn't how many hours AI removes. It's where you reinvest them.

NORTH AMERICA

44%

reinvest capacity into capacity

EMEA

56%

convert capacity into capability

Source: SocialTalent State of Hiring 2026

Before the requisition | The funnel | At the decision

The first half of advisory: should this role exist at all?

The talent advisor has to own this. It happens before TA is usually in the room.

The questions nobody is resourced to ask

- Should this role exist at all?
- Is the level and the scope right?
- Is the salary remotely realistic?
- Build, buy, borrow, or redesign the work?
- Is this location viable for this skill?
- Could someone inside already do it?

Why it never happens

Because it happens before the req, and TA is not usually in the room before the req. That is a Contract problem, not a capability gap.

It is also the highest-leverage advisory work there is. A role that should not have been opened is the most expensive thing in the funnel.

Thales

Talent intelligence showed the problem was not recruiter performance. A manufacturing site had drifted away from its labour market. The work supported a business case to relocate the facility.

Before the requisition | The funnel | At the decision

The second half of advisory: claim, evidence, identity.

At the decision end, the work is no longer screening claims. It is producing evidence.

CLAIM

The résumé

Still useful as an index. It tells you where someone says they worked and what to ask about. It can no longer prove any of it.

EVIDENCE

The assessment

Structured interviewing, work samples, probing a claim until something real is behind it. This is the skill that gets scarce exactly as it gets valuable.

IDENTITY

The authentication

Running through the funnel rather than bolted on at the end. Discovering someone doesn't exist after five interviews is an expensive place to find out.

The résumé hasn't become useless. It's become unaudited testimony.

The eighteen are not human for the same reason.

Contract is whether you have the mandate to protect each kind

ALWAYS WAS

The business case. The offer negotiation. The counter offer. Calibrating with a hiring manager on the bar. Relationship and negotiation work, and no tooling changes that.

THE LAW NOW SAYS SO

Once AI materially influences a hiring decision, a genuine human path to review and change it is required. Not a rubber stamp on something nobody read.

NOTHING ENFORCES IT

The structured interview. The moment someone who does not pattern match on paper gets to make their case. This is the one that erodes the moment volume spikes.

Know which is which before you are under pressure to erode it.

Over to you.

Two rounds. Each table submits two answers.

ROUND ONE · 15 MINUTES

Rank your next three

Using the list on your table, agree two rankings. The top three tasks you would automate outright in the next 90 days. And the top three still done fully by hand that should move into hybrid. Then name what is actually stopping you: the tool, the trust, the data, or the policy.

Submit: three to automate, three to make hybrid, one blocker

ROUND TWO · 20 MINUTES

What is the time for?

If AI gave every recruiter on your team 30% of their week back next quarter, what has your organisation explicitly agreed they should do with it? Not what you hope. What has been agreed, written down and measured. Then: what would have to change for that to be real?

Submit: the agreed answer, and the one change required

Who owns talent advisory in three years?

Hands up. A or B.

Talent Acquisition
Talent Management
Talent Development

→

A. One talent function

or

B. HR Business Partnering

Global heads of TA do not agree where it lands. The only capability everyone agreed survives is influence.

Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany

Forecast task by task how the talent advisor role changes by 2030, and segmented requisitions so the answer differs by hire type.

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