

# The (Dis)Honest Job Search

Translating the New Rules of the Game

Kelly®

96%

of job seekers apply to positions they are not fully qualified for, while

78%

of hiring managers admit to interviewing for “phantom jobs”.

**Job seekers stretch the truth.  
Hiring managers post jobs they don't plan to fill.  
Welcome to the new rules of hiring.**

A new Kelly survey reveals the balancing act of (dis)honesty and strategy in today's job market. Both sides are navigating the gray area between authenticity and tactical positioning. Our survey sheds light on the 'new rules' shaping the job search and hiring process, revealing the unspoken tactics that influence outcomes.



## Now Hiring... Maybe

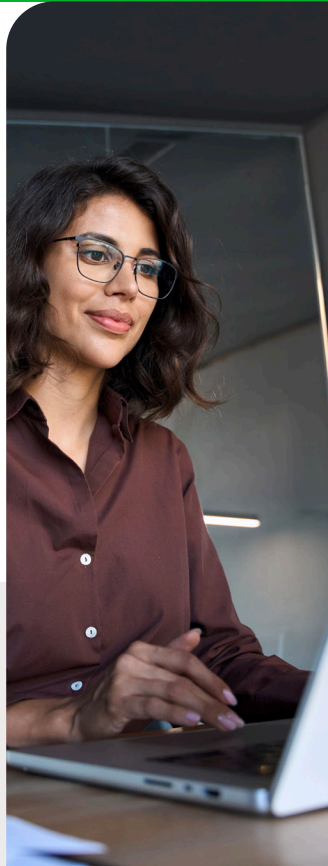
Think every job you apply for actually exists? Most candidates don't, and most hiring managers say they're right.

84%

of job seekers believe companies post “phantom jobs” with no intent to hire.

78%

of hiring managers say they have interviewed candidates for roles that weren't immediately available.



## Not Qualified? Not a Problem.

Qualifications seem to be more of a suggestion than a requirement. Both job seekers and hiring managers say it's fine to apply, even if you don't have every qualification.

96%

of job seekers apply for positions they aren't fully qualified for.

75%

of hiring managers say that's acceptable.

## Who's Most Likely to Shoot Their Shot?



45%  
Male Job Seekers



37%  
Female Job Seekers

50%

Gen Z

45%

Millennials



37%

Baby Boomers

30%

Gen X

## Top Reasons Companies Post Phantom Jobs



41%

Build a pipeline for future positions



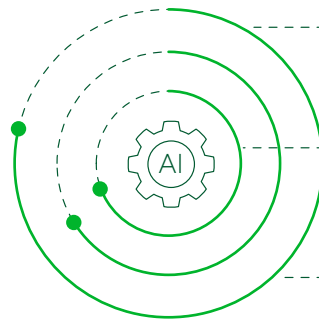
37%

Gather industry insights



## AI: The New Job Search Wingman

AI isn't replacing applicants, but it's helping them get the job. Job seekers are using it for almost every aspect of the application process and most hiring managers are ok with it.




**79%** of job seekers say they are using AI in the application process.

**67%** of hiring managers say using AI to enhance job applications is ethical.

**66%** say their company uses AI to screen applications.

### Top 3 Ways Job Seekers Use AI:

**36%**   
Building resumes

**30%**   
Finding openings

**24%**   
Writing cover letters

## Show Me the Money (and the Benefits)

Job seekers want the full picture before they apply, including pay, benefits and remote work policies. But that information is hard to come by and not always accurate.

**68%** of job seekers say salary should be included in job postings.

**48%** of hiring managers say they provide transparency about remote work.

**58%** of job seekers say companies are transparent about remote work.

**54%** of hiring managers say they have misrepresented remote work.

### Why the Disconnect? Depends Who You Ask

#### Job Seekers Say:

- 33%** Hiring manager presented the company more favorably.
- 31%** Company policies were unclear or changed later.
- 31%** They made assumptions based on the job description.

#### Hiring Managers Say:

- 45%** Candidates made assumptions based on industry trends.
- 43%** Candidates misunderstood the job description.
- 36%** Both sides avoided confronting an issue.

**In today's job market, the rules keep changing**—and no one tells you how they actually work. For nearly 80 years, Kelly has helped job seekers and employers navigate the evolving market.

We know the game and how to play it smarter. Because when the lines blur, experience is your sharpest edge.

**Ready for clarity? Let's talk.**

     [kellyservices.com](https://www.kellyservices.com)

An Equal Opportunity Employer. © 2025 Kelly Services, Inc. All rights reserved.