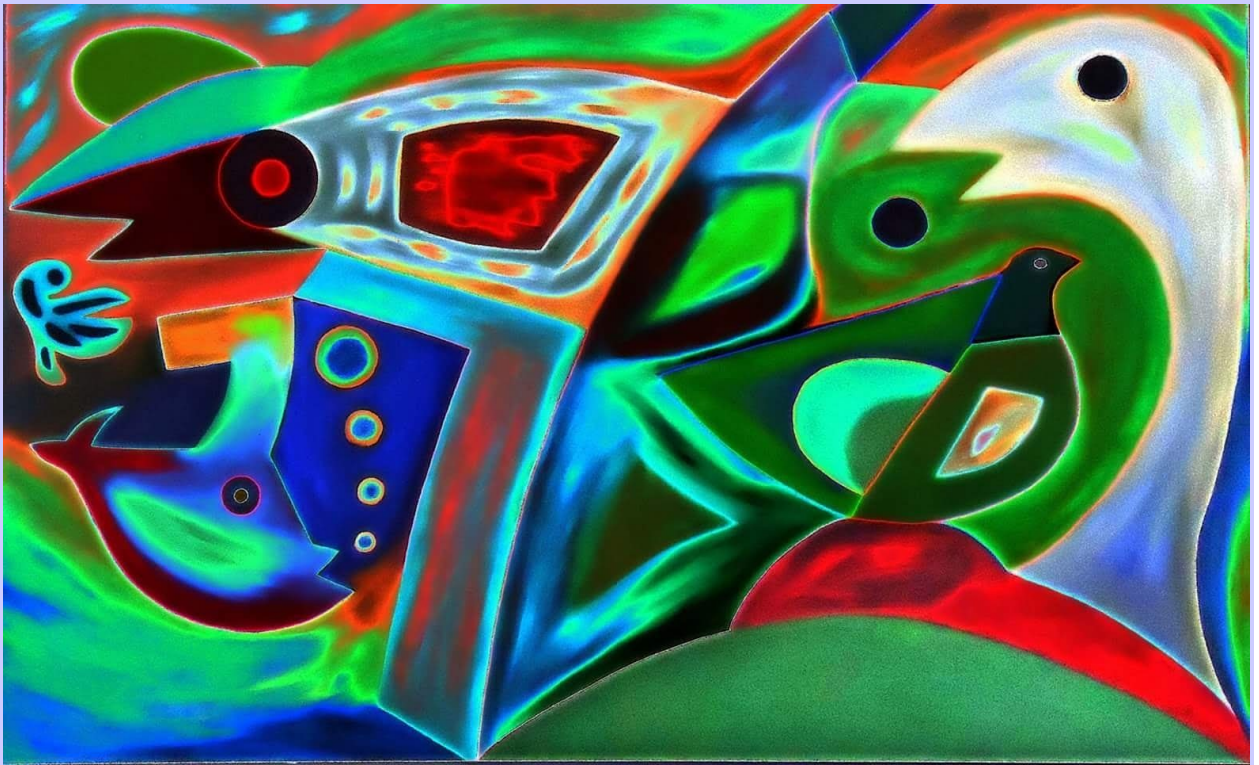


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Past Performance vs Future Potential: The Evolving Role of Human Judgment in AI-Assisted Recruitment

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Abstract. Artificial intelligence (AI) has rapidly transformed recruitment and talent acquisition processes. Organizations increasingly use AI-assisted technologies to support candidate sourcing, résumé screening, interview scheduling, skills assessment, and workforce planning. Recent studies demonstrate significant gains in recruitment efficiency and candidate selection quality when AI is integrated into hiring workflows. However, important questions remain regarding the ability of AI systems to assess transferable competencies, evaluate future potential, and interpret complex career trajectories.

This study examines the evolving relationship between artificial intelligence and human judgment in recruitment. The research combines academic literature analysis, international labor market studies, industry reports, and a practical recruitment case from the manufacturing sector. Particular attention is devoted to three recruitment contexts: high-volume hiring, professional recruitment, and executive search. The paper introduces a practical distinction between the evaluation of past performance and the evaluation of future potential. While AI systems demonstrate strong capabilities in identifying patterns within historical experience, recruiters continue to create value by interpreting transferable skills, motivation, adaptability, and long-term growth potential. The study also explores an emerging phenomenon in talent acquisition: recruiters increasingly evaluate AI-assisted representations of candidates through résumés, cover letters, and interview preparation tools. The findings suggest that AI delivers substantial value in structured and repeatable recruitment activities. However, human expertise remains essential when organizations seek candidates capable of succeeding in new professional contexts rather than simply repeating previous experience. The future of recruitment is therefore not characterized by competition between recruiters and artificial intelligence, but by increasingly sophisticated forms of human-AI collaboration.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, AI-Assisted Recruitment, Talent Acquisition, Human Judgment, Personnel Selection, Human-AI Collaboration, Skills-Based Hiring, Transferable Skills, Future Potential, Past Performance, Executive Search, Candidate Assessment, Workforce Mobility, Future of Work, Recruitment Technology

1. Introduction

Artificial intelligence has become one of the most influential technologies shaping contemporary labor markets. Advances in machine learning, generative AI, natural language processing, and predictive analytics have significantly transformed how organizations identify, evaluate, and hire talent. Recent empirical studies demonstrate that AI-assisted recruitment already delivers measurable improvements in recruitment efficiency, candidate screening, and hiring outcomes when integrated into human decision-making processes [1]. At the same time, industry evidence

indicates that the adoption of AI has become a mainstream practice among recruiters, with organizations increasingly embedding generative AI into sourcing, candidate communication, and recruitment workflows [2].

Recent research suggests that personnel selection is currently experiencing one of the most significant technological transformations in its history. Sackett, Lievens and Landers argue that contemporary recruitment increasingly incorporates AI-assisted assessment, asynchronous video interviewing, automated scoring systems, social media evaluation, and algorithmic decision support [3]. At the same time, the authors identify ongoing concerns regarding validity, fairness, algorithmic bias, and applicant reactions to AI-enabled hiring systems [3].

The adoption of AI in recruitment has accelerated rapidly across industries. According to Insight Global's AI in Hiring Survey Report 2025, 99% of surveyed hiring managers report using AI throughout some part of the hiring process, while 98% report measurable improvements in hiring efficiency [4]. These findings are consistent with broader industry observations reported by LinkedIn, indicating that recruiters increasingly integrate generative AI into daily recruitment practice. LinkedIn further reports that recruiters using AI tools save approximately 20% of their working time each week, highlighting AI's growing operational impact on talent acquisition [2,5].

The broader labor market reflects the same trend. The World Economic Forum identifies artificial intelligence and information-processing technologies as the most transformative technological force affecting organizations globally, with 86% of employers expecting AI to significantly transform their business operations by 2030 [6]. Simultaneously, employers continue to rank analytical thinking, resilience, leadership, creativity, and social influence among the most valuable workforce capabilities [6].

These developments raise an important question. Although AI has demonstrated remarkable capability in identifying patterns within large datasets, recruitment is not solely an exercise in pattern recognition. Organizations do not hire individuals only because they have performed a similar job in the past. They also hire people because they demonstrate the potential to succeed in future roles, often under conditions that differ substantially from their previous experience.

Recent research further suggests that organizations face a growing risk of what Leavell describes as *artificial certainty*—the perception that complex and uncertain situations can be represented as objective and definitive outcomes through increasingly sophisticated AI-generated representations [7]. While AI systems create powerful representations of reality, human experts remain necessary as interpreters between what is known and what remains uncertain [7].

This observation has direct implications for recruitment. Candidates increasingly use AI tools to prepare résumés, cover letters, portfolios, and interview responses. Consequently, recruiters are no longer evaluating only candidates themselves. They are increasingly evaluating AI-assisted representations of candidates.

Against this backdrop, the central research question of this study is:

Can artificial intelligence assess future potential as effectively as it identifies past experience?

While previous studies have extensively examined the efficiency of AI-assisted recruitment systems, algorithmic screening, hiring automation, and AI-enabled decision support, considerably less attention has been devoted to understanding whether artificial intelligence can assess transferable competencies, adaptation potential, and future performance in candidates with non-linear career trajectories. Existing research primarily focuses on the evaluation of observable qualifications, job history, and structured indicators of past performance, whereas the assessment of future potential remains comparatively underexplored. Furthermore, although previous studies recognize that the contribution of AI and human expertise varies

across recruitment activities, they do not provide a unified conceptual framework explaining how this balance changes across different recruitment contexts. These gaps form the foundation of the present study.

To address these questions, the study combines contemporary academic literature, international labor market research, industry reports, and a practical recruitment case involving the selection of professional-level candidates in a highly specialized sales environment. Beyond examining the practical boundaries of AI-assisted recruitment, the study makes several original conceptual contributions by introducing a conceptual distinction between the evaluation of past performance and future potential, proposing a Human–AI Collaboration Framework describing how the balance between artificial intelligence and recruiter expertise changes across recruitment contexts, and developing a Transferable Competency Identification Framework for assessing candidates whose future potential extends beyond conventional experience-based matching.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 describes the data sources, research design, and methodological approach. Section 3 reviews the existing literature on AI-assisted recruitment, human judgment, candidate reactions, and skills-based hiring. Section 4 presents the empirical findings of the study, including the practical recruitment case, the proposed Human–AI Collaboration Framework, the Project-Based Customer Workflow Model, and the Transferable Competency Identification Framework. Finally, Section 5 summarizes the principal findings, discusses their implications for recruitment practice, identifies the study's limitations, and outlines directions for future research.

2. Data and Methodology

2.1. Research Design and Data Sources

This study employs a mixed-methods approach combining literature analysis, industry research, and qualitative case study methodology.

The literature review incorporates contemporary academic publications addressing personnel selection, artificial intelligence, human resource management, algorithmic decision-making, applicant reactions, skills-based hiring, and human–AI collaboration. Relevant academic sources were identified through Google Scholar, publisher databases, and official publications of international organizations, while industry reports were obtained directly from the websites of LinkedIn, Insight Global, the World Economic Forum, and the Harvard Business School Project on Managing the Future of Work. Particular attention was devoted to recent research examining AI-assisted recruitment systems and their impact on hiring outcomes [1,3,5,7,8,9,11,12,13,14,15]. In addition to academic literature, the study utilizes international labor market reports and industry analyses, including publications from the World Economic Forum, LinkedIn, Insight Global, and the Harvard Business School Project on Managing the Future of Work [2,4,6,10,14].

The empirical component of the research is based on a practical recruitment project conducted for a manufacturing company expanding its direct retail operations. The project involved the evaluation of approximately 200 applicants for a professional sales position requiring both consultative selling capabilities and the ability to develop customized design solutions for clients.

Candidate assessment incorporated AI-assisted screening tools, manual recruiter review, structured interviews, and practical evaluation. The recruitment process provided an opportunity to compare algorithmic assessments with human evaluations of candidate potential.

The combination of literature analysis and practical observation enables a comparison between theoretical expectations regarding AI-assisted and human recruitment and actual recruitment outcomes observed in practice.

2.2 Time Period Covered

The study incorporates sources published between 2019 and 2026.

The practical recruitment case analyzed in this study was conducted during 2025–2026 and reflects contemporary recruitment practices involving AI-assisted candidate screening, recruiter assessment, and candidate evaluation.

2.3 Variables Examined

The analytical framework of the study is based on the distinction between:

- evaluation of past performance;
- evaluation of future potential.

This distinction serves as the central lens through which both literature findings and practical observations are interpreted.

The principal variables examined include:

- industry experience;
- job titles;
- educational credentials;
- technical skills;
- AI relevance scores;
- transferable competencies;
- adaptability;
- learning agility;
- customer communication capability;
- project management capability;
- recruiter assessment;
- hiring outcome;
- adaptation period following employment.

2.4 Summary Statistics

The practical recruitment case involved approximately 200 applications submitted for a professional sales and design position.

AI-assisted screening tools automatically analyzed the candidate pool and generated a shortlist representing approximately 10% of applicants considered most relevant according to predefined matching criteria.

Following AI screening, the recruiter conducted a manual review of the remaining candidate pool and identified additional candidates based on transferable competencies and broader career patterns that were not captured by the algorithmic screening process.

One candidate was selected for detailed analysis because the AI system classified the profile as low relevance, whereas the recruiter identified substantial future potential.

Following recruitment and onboarding, the candidate successfully completed the adaptation period and achieved independent performance within approximately one month.

2.5 Research Propositions

The study evaluates the following research propositions:

P1: Artificial intelligence improves recruitment efficiency by reducing administrative workload and supporting candidate screening in high-volume hiring environments.

P2: AI-assisted recruitment systems are more effective at evaluating structured evidence of past performance than indicators of future potential.

P3: Human recruiters are more effective than AI systems in identifying transferable competencies and adaptation potential in candidates with non-linear career trajectories.

P4: The most effective recruitment outcomes emerge when artificial intelligence and human judgment operate collaboratively rather than independently.

3. Literature Review

The literature reviewed in this study was selected based on its direct relevance to the research question of whether artificial intelligence can assess future potential as effectively as it identifies past experience in recruitment and talent acquisition.

The literature review is organized into five thematic sections, which can be grouped into three complementary streams of research.

The first stream examines the efficiency and effectiveness of AI-assisted recruitment systems (Section 3.1). Studies such as *Better Together* [1], the *LinkedIn Future of Recruiting Report* [2], and the *Insight Global AI in Hiring Report* [4] provide evidence that AI improves candidate screening efficiency, reduces administrative workload, and supports recruitment decision-making.

The second stream focuses on the limitations of AI-enabled hiring systems and the continuing role of human judgment in recruitment (Sections 3.2 and 3.3). Research by Sackett, Lievens and Landers [3], Tambe et al. [8], the World Economic Forum [6], and Leavell and Leonardi [7] highlights concerns related to algorithmic bias, validity, fairness, explainability, and the importance of human expertise when evaluating uncertainty, adaptability, and future potential. This stream also considers the growing role of AI-assisted candidate representation, applicant reactions to AI-enabled hiring systems, and the emerging challenges associated with validating AI-generated application materials [11–13].

The third stream examines the practical application of artificial intelligence in recruitment, including AI-supported recruitment tools, skills-based hiring, transferable competencies, and the evolving role of human expertise in AI-assisted hiring (Sections 3.4 and 3.5). Relevant contributions include the American Opportunity Index [10], Fuller et al. [14], OECD research on transferable skills and workforce mobility [15], together with recent studies describing the growing integration of AI into recruitment practice [2,5].

Collectively, these studies suggest that AI performs most effectively when evaluating structured evidence of past performance, while human recruiters continue to create value through the interpretation of transferable skills, motivation, adaptability, and future potential. These observations establish the theoretical foundation for the empirical analysis and conceptual frameworks presented in the following sections.

3.1. AI and Recruitment Efficiency

The growing adoption of artificial intelligence in recruitment has been largely driven by the need to process increasing volumes of candidate data while maintaining hiring quality. Contemporary organizations routinely receive hundreds or thousands of applications for a single vacancy, creating significant cognitive, temporal, and financial constraints for recruitment teams [1].

Recent empirical evidence suggests that AI-assisted recruitment can substantially improve hiring efficiency. One of the most comprehensive studies currently available is *Better Together: Quantifying the Benefits of AI-Assisted Recruitment*, which examined approximately 37,000 applicants through a randomized field experiment comparing traditional recruitment methods with AI-assisted recruitment pipelines [1]. The study found that 54% of candidates selected through the AI-assisted process successfully passed subsequent human interviews, compared with only 34% of candidates selected through conventional screening methods [1]. Importantly, the researchers concluded that the strongest outcomes emerged when artificial intelligence and human recruiters worked together rather than independently [1].

Corporate case studies provide similar evidence. Organizations increasingly report improvements in time-to-hire, recruiter productivity, and candidate management through the integration of AI technologies. According to Insight Global's AI in Hiring Survey Report 2025, 98% of hiring managers using AI report measurable improvements in recruitment processes, while 95% expect continued investment in AI-enabled hiring technologies [2]. The report further indicates that AI increasingly supports activities such as résumé screening, interview scheduling, skills assessment, candidate communication, onboarding, and workforce planning [2].

LinkedIn's Future of Recruiting research similarly demonstrates growing organizational adoption of AI-assisted recruitment technologies. Approximately 37% of organizations are actively integrating or experimenting with generative AI within recruitment processes, and recruiters utilizing AI report time savings equivalent to approximately one working day per week [5]. These findings suggest that AI's primary value currently lies in reducing administrative workload and improving process scalability.

The economic implications of these efficiency gains are substantial. Rather than replacing recruiters, AI increasingly performs repetitive and highly structured tasks that traditionally consumed significant portions of recruiter time. Consequently, recruiters are able to allocate greater attention to candidate interaction, stakeholder management, and strategic workforce planning.

The findings reported across recent academic and industry studies consistently indicate that AI reduces recruitment time, improves screening efficiency, and reallocates recruiter effort toward higher-value activities. To summarize these observations, Fig. 1 provides a visual synthesis of the evidence reported in the reviewed literature.



Fig. 1. Synthesis of Reported AI Efficiency Gains in Recruitment

Source: Author's visualization based on Better Together (2025), LinkedIn (2025), and Insight Global (2025).

Fig. 1 does not represent new empirical findings. Rather, it synthesizes evidence reported across the literature reviewed in this section and illustrates the common direction of observed recruitment efficiency gains.

The literature therefore consistently suggests that AI performs most effectively when applied to highly standardized recruitment activities characterized by large volumes of information and repeatable decision criteria.

3.2. AI Limitations and Human Judgment

Although recruitment efficiency gains are increasingly well documented, contemporary research also highlights important limitations of AI-assisted hiring systems.

Sackett, Lievens and Landers emphasize that personnel selection research has increasingly shifted toward questions of validity, fairness, algorithmic bias, and applicant reactions to AI-enabled selection systems [3]. These concerns are further reinforced by contemporary research on explainable AI, which highlights the risks of hidden cultural and social biases embedded within algorithmic systems and emphasizes the importance of transparency in AI-supported decision-making [9].

While AI systems demonstrate impressive capability in processing structured information, their ability to evaluate more complex human characteristics remains an area of ongoing debate.

Similarly, Tambe, Cappelli and Yakubovich argue that artificial intelligence should be viewed primarily as a decision-support technology rather than a fully autonomous replacement for HR professionals [8]. According to the authors, the greatest value of AI emerges when it augments human decision-making by improving information processing, reducing administrative workload, and supporting evidence-based assessment rather than replacing professional judgment altogether [8].

This distinction is particularly important because recruitment decisions are inherently future-oriented. Organizations do not merely evaluate whether candidates have successfully performed similar tasks in the past. They also assess whether candidates can succeed under future conditions that may differ substantially from their previous professional experiences.

Many AI systems rely heavily on observable indicators such as:

- job titles;
- industry experience;
- educational credentials;
- technical skills;
- keyword matching.

These indicators are often useful predictors of previous performance. However, they may provide only limited insight into characteristics such as:

- adaptability;
- learning agility;
- motivation;
- resilience;
- leadership potential;
- transferable competencies.

Recent research on workforce mobility further suggests that transferable skills play an increasingly important role in career transitions and long-term employability. Studies indicate that competencies such as communication, problem-solving, customer interaction, learning agility, and adaptability often enable successful movement between occupations and industries, even when direct experience is limited [15]. Consequently, recruitment decisions based exclusively on historical experience may underestimate candidates whose future performance depends more on transferable capabilities than on industry-specific knowledge.

The World Economic Forum reinforces this concern through its analysis of future workforce requirements. While AI and Big Data represent the fastest-growing skill category globally, employers continue to rank analytical thinking, resilience, leadership, creativity, and social influence among the most valuable capabilities within future workforces [6]. These competencies often emerge through complex combinations of experience, personality, context, and behavior that are difficult to capture through conventional algorithmic screening.

Furthermore, the Future of Jobs Report 2025 highlights that the future workplace is likely to be characterized by increasing forms of human-machine collaboration rather than pure automation [6]. The report explicitly identifies augmentation and collaboration as more sustainable workforce strategies than simple substitution of human labor [6].

Taken together, these findings suggest that AI and human recruiters may excel at fundamentally different forms of evaluation. While AI primarily evaluates evidence of past performance, recruiters frequently evaluate evidence of future potential, particularly when transferable competencies and adaptability become more important predictors of success than direct industry experience.

3.3. AI Evaluating AI

One of the most significant developments in contemporary recruitment is the increasing use of artificial intelligence by candidates themselves. Historically, résumés and cover letters served as indicators of communication skills, professional judgment, and personal motivation. They provided recruiters with insight into how candidates structured information, presented achievements, and articulated their interest in a

position. Today, however, large language models allow candidates to generate, refine, and substantially improve application materials within minutes.

Recent research suggests that candidates do not view AI-enabled hiring systems neutrally. Attitudes toward AI-assisted recruitment significantly influence applicants' willingness to engage in and complete the application process [12]. Research further indicates that trust and anxiety are among the most important factors shaping candidate reactions to AI-enabled hiring systems. Candidates who perceive AI-assisted recruitment processes as trustworthy are more likely to participate in recruitment activities, whereas anxiety regarding the use of AI may reduce participation and negatively influence attitudes toward potential employers [12].

This development creates a new recruitment challenge.

Recruiters are no longer evaluating only candidates. They are increasingly evaluating AI-assisted representations of candidates.

The Better Together study provides evidence supporting this concern. Researchers identified widespread discrepancies between candidate self-reported skills and skills demonstrated during AI-assisted interviews [1]. In a random audit of candidates, approximately one-fifth claimed proficiency in key technologies that subsequent AI-assisted interviews assessed as significantly weaker than stated on their résumés [1].

LinkedIn's Future of Recruiting research similarly suggests that AI adoption among candidates continues to accelerate [2]. Candidates increasingly use AI tools to:

- prepare résumés;
- generate cover letters;
- research employers;
- practice interviews;
- evaluate salary expectations.

As a result, recruitment increasingly involves AI-assisted candidates being evaluated by AI-assisted recruiters.

This phenomenon fundamentally changes the role of the recruiter.

Historically, recruiters focused on collecting information.

Today, recruiters increasingly focus on validating information.

The central challenge is therefore no longer determining whether a candidate used AI.

Instead, it is determining whether the candidate genuinely understands and can demonstrate the competencies described within AI-assisted application materials.

This challenge may be further complicated by what Dietvorst et al. describe as *algorithm aversion*—the tendency of individuals to reduce their trust in algorithmic systems after observing visible errors, even when those systems demonstrate strong overall performance [13]. In recruitment, cases where recruiters assess high-potential candidates overlooked by AI may reinforce skepticism toward algorithmic assessment and strengthen continued reliance on human judgment.

At the same time, AI-assisted recruitment introduces an important paradox.

Candidates evaluate AI.

Recruiters evaluate candidates.

And recruiters increasingly evaluate how candidates use AI.

Consequently, recruitment is evolving into a process in which both sides assess not only each other, but also the role of artificial intelligence within the interaction itself.

This shift mirrors broader developments identified in AI research. Leavell argues that the contemporary challenge associated with artificial intelligence is no longer information generation but information interpretation and validation [7]. As AI-

generated outputs become increasingly sophisticated, experts become more valuable because they provide context, judgment, and interpretation rather than simply generating information [7].

Recent studies also emphasize that the growing accessibility of AI-powered tools creates new challenges related to authenticity, verification, and digital resilience in professional environments [5].

In recruitment, this translates into a growing emphasis on validating authenticity, assessing consistency, and distinguishing genuine expertise from increasingly polished representations of expertise.

Future recruiters may therefore be required to evaluate not only candidate qualifications and experience, but also the quality of candidates' interaction with artificial intelligence. The emerging competitive advantage may no longer lie in identifying whether AI was used, but in understanding where algorithmic assistance ends and genuine human capability begins.

3.4. AI Tools in Recruitment Practice

The growing adoption of artificial intelligence in recruitment is not limited to specialized hiring platforms. In practice, recruiters increasingly rely on a combination of AI-powered tools to support candidate sourcing, profile evaluation, market research, communication, and interview preparation.

Among the most widely used technologies are large language models such as ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, and Microsoft Copilot. These tools assist recruiters in analyzing vacancies, comparing candidate profiles, identifying transferable competencies, reviewing résumés and cover letters, preparing interview frameworks, and generating communication with candidates.

At the same time, AI-enhanced recruitment platforms such as LinkedIn Recruiter, SeekOut, Eightfold AI, hireEZ, and AI-enabled Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) increasingly automate sourcing, candidate matching, skills extraction, and labor market analysis.

Existing studies consistently indicate that these technologies primarily function as decision-support tools rather than autonomous decision-makers. While AI efficiently processes large volumes of structured information, recruiters remain responsible for contextual interpretation, relationship building, and final hiring decisions. However, although the literature recognizes that the relative contribution of AI and human expertise varies across recruitment activities, it does not yet provide a unified framework describing this relationship. Addressing this gap constitutes one of the original contributions of the present study.

3.5 Human Expertise in the Age of AI

The literature increasingly suggests that artificial intelligence is transforming rather than eliminating the role of professional expertise.

The Cambridge Judge Business School research introduces the concept of *artificial certainty*—the perception that complex and uncertain situations can be represented as objective and definitive outcomes through increasingly sophisticated AI-generated representations [7].

Leavell demonstrates that experts continue to play a critical role because they function as interpreters between what is known and what remains uncertain [7]. The study argues that excessive confidence in algorithmic outputs may actually reduce decision quality by creating an illusion of certainty in inherently uncertain environments [7].

This finding is highly relevant to recruitment:

Hiring decisions involve uncertainty by definition.

No recruiter, hiring manager, or algorithm can know with certainty how a candidate will perform in a future role.

The objective is therefore not to eliminate uncertainty but to manage it effectively.

LinkedIn’s Future of Recruiting report supports this interpretation. As AI increasingly automates administrative and transactional recruitment activities, demand for recruiter skills such as relationship building, communication, advisory capability, and strategic influence continues to rise [5]. The report notes substantial growth in employer demand for relationship-development capabilities among recruitment professionals [5].

Similarly, the World Economic Forum identifies analytical thinking, leadership, resilience, creativity, and social influence among the most important future workforce capabilities [6]. These competencies remain deeply dependent upon human judgment and social interaction.

An additional implication emerges for the future development of the recruitment profession itself.

Historically, recruiters developed expertise through repeated exposure to large candidate populations, gradual accumulation of hiring experience, and continuous learning from hiring successes and failures.

As AI increasingly assumes responsibility for preliminary screening activities, fewer opportunities may remain for junior recruiters to develop this type of experiential judgment.

Paradoxically, the growing sophistication of AI may therefore increase the long-term value of experienced recruiters.

The more effectively AI processes information, the more valuable human interpretation becomes.

Consequently, the future of recruitment is unlikely to be defined by competition between recruiters and artificial intelligence.

Instead, it is increasingly characterized by collaboration between systems that excel at identifying patterns and professionals who excel at interpreting uncertainty.

Table 1. Summary of Findings from the Literature Reviewed in This Study

Study	Main Finding
Better Together (2025)	AI-assisted candidates demonstrated higher progression rates in human interviews.
Insight Global (2025)	99% of hiring managers use AI; 98% report improved efficiency.
LinkedIn Future of Recruiting (2025)	AI saves recruiter time while increasing demand for human-centered skills.
Sackett, Lievens & Landers (2026)	AI introduces new challenges related to validity, fairness, bias, and applicant reactions.
World Economic Forum (2025)	Human skills remain critical despite rapid technological adoption.
Cambridge Judge Business School (2026)	Human experts remain essential interpreters under uncertainty.

Source: Author’s compilation based on referenced literature.

4. Results

4.1. Practical Case Study: When the Algorithm Missed Potential

4.1.1 Recruitment Context

To examine the practical boundaries of AI-assisted recruitment, a recruitment project conducted for a manufacturing company expanding its direct retail operations was analyzed.

The company sought candidates for a professional sales position combining consultative selling and customized product design. Unlike traditional retail sales roles, success in this position depended on a combination of commercial, analytical, and creative competencies.

The role required employees to:

- conduct consultative sales conversations;
- identify explicit and implicit customer needs;
- develop customized design concepts;
- present visual solutions;
- manage projects from initial consultation to final order placement.

Consequently, the position demanded not only sales experience but also spatial reasoning, visual thinking, customer empathy, project management capability, and the ability to translate abstract customer expectations into tangible product solutions.

Approximately 200 applications were received during the recruitment process.

AI-assisted screening tools integrated within the recruitment platform automatically analyzed candidate profiles and generated a shortlist representing approximately 10% of applicants considered most relevant according to predefined matching criteria.

Following AI screening, the recruiter conducted a manual review of the remaining candidate pool.

This secondary review identified an additional group of candidates who had been excluded by the algorithm but appeared potentially suitable based on transferable competencies and broader career patterns.

One candidate ultimately became a particularly illustrative example of the differences between algorithmic assessment and human evaluation.

4.1.2 Experience-Based vs Skills-Based Evaluation

The practical case presented in this study reflects a broader shift currently taking place in talent acquisition.

Historically, recruitment decisions have relied heavily on observable indicators such as educational credentials, industry experience, previous job titles, and direct role similarity. Candidates whose backgrounds closely matched existing job requirements were generally considered the strongest prospects.

Recent research increasingly supports a shift from credential-based hiring toward skills-based hiring models. According to Fuller et al., organizations that focus on demonstrated capabilities rather than formal qualifications are often better positioned to identify talent that may otherwise remain overlooked by traditional recruitment practices [14]. The authors argue that skills-based hiring expands access to talent pools, improves workforce mobility, and enables organizations to recognize capabilities that are not always reflected through conventional career histories or educational credentials [14].

However, recent research increasingly suggests that organizations should move beyond purely credential-based hiring models and adopt skills-based hiring approaches, where transferable competencies and demonstrated capabilities receive

greater attention than industry-specific experience alone.

According to LinkedIn's Future of Recruiting report, companies that actively apply skills-based hiring practices are more likely to improve quality of hire outcomes, while organizations increasingly recognize that skills often provide a stronger predictor of future performance than traditional credentials alone [2].

This perspective becomes particularly important when evaluating candidates with non-linear career paths.

Such individuals may possess valuable competencies developed outside the target industry, yet these competencies frequently remain invisible to traditional matching systems and algorithmic screening models.

The distinction between experience-based and skills-based evaluation is especially relevant in recruitment environments where future performance depends not only on technical knowledge but also on communication, adaptability, problem-solving, customer interaction, and learning capability.

The candidate examined in the present case illustrates this challenge:

From a traditional experience-based perspective, the candidate appeared to have limited relevance to the vacancy.

From a skills-based perspective, however, the candidate demonstrated multiple competencies directly associated with future success in the role.

The divergence between these two perspectives ultimately became the central point of difference between algorithmic assessment and recruiter evaluation.

4.1.3 Initial Algorithmic Assessment

At first glance, the candidate appeared largely unrelated to the target role.

The applicant possessed no direct experience in:

- furniture sales;
- interior design;
- furniture manufacturing;
- interior consulting;
- specialized retail furniture operations.

As a result, the AI-assisted screening system assigned a low relevance score and excluded the candidate from the initial shortlist.

From a conventional experience-matching perspective, this outcome appeared reasonable.

The algorithm primarily evaluated observable indicators of relevance, including:

- industry experience;
- job titles;
- previous employers;
- technical software experience;
- similarity to existing role profiles.

Because the candidate lacked direct furniture-related experience, the profile demonstrated limited alignment with historical hiring patterns associated with the vacancy.

Consequently, the candidate was classified as low relevance.

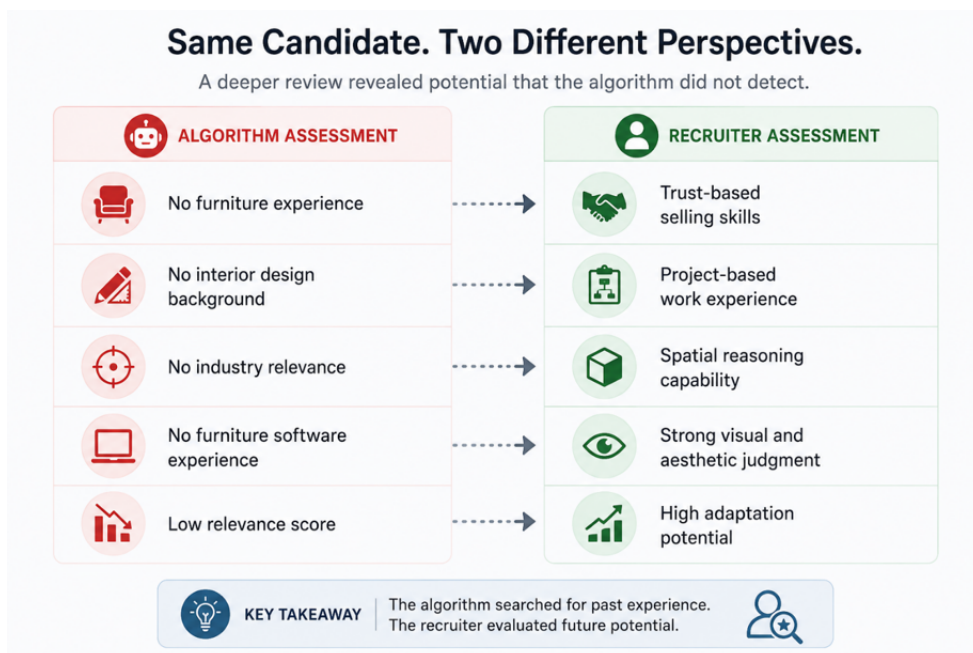


Fig. 3. Algorithm Assessment vs Recruiter Assessment
Source: Author's elaboration based on recruitment project data.

Description: Fig. 3 illustrates the analytical comparison developed in this study between AI-assisted screening and recruiter-based assessment. The comparison demonstrates that the algorithm primarily evaluated observable indicators such as industry experience, job titles, and keyword similarity, whereas the recruiter identified transferable competencies, adaptation potential, and indicators of future performance. This analytical comparison constitutes one of the practical findings of the study.

4.1.4 Human Assessment and Transferable Competencies

A deeper review of the candidate's experience revealed a substantially different picture.

Rather than focusing exclusively on previous job titles, the recruiter examined underlying competencies developed throughout the candidate's professional history.

Sales Through Trust

The candidate had extensive experience organizing and delivering highly personalized services within the field of tattoo artistry.

Although unrelated to furniture, this work involved a sophisticated form of consultative selling.

The candidate was not selling a standardized product.

The candidate was selling trust.

Customers purchasing customized tattoo services often make emotionally significant decisions involving uncertainty, personal identity, risk, and long-term commitment.

This type of customer interaction closely resembles the sales dynamics frequently encountered within customized furniture projects.

In both cases, success depends upon the ability to:

- establish trust rapidly;
- understand unspoken concerns;

- manage expectations;
- translate abstract ideas into concrete outcomes.

These capabilities were not visible through keyword-based screening but became apparent during manual assessment.

Project-Based Thinking

Further analysis revealed substantial experience managing individualized client projects. The comparison presented in Figure 3 demonstrates that the differences between algorithmic and human assessment cannot be explained solely by the amount of available information. Instead, they arise from fundamentally different approaches to interpreting candidate experience. To better understand how transferable competencies were identified during recruiter assessment, a conceptual workflow model was developed based on the empirical findings of the present study.

Each customer engagement followed a structured workflow:



Fig. 4. Project-Based Customer Workflow Model in Personalized Service Delivery
Source: Author's elaboration.

Description. Fig. 4 presents the Project-Based Customer Workflow Model developed in this study. The model illustrates how customer interactions in personalized service environments follow a structured sequence of consultation, needs assessment, solution development, approval, and implementation. The analysis demonstrates that this workflow generates transferable project-management competencies that can be successfully applied across industries, supporting the assessment of candidates whose previous experience differs from the target role.

This process closely mirrored the workflow required within the target role.

Although the products differed, the underlying project management logic remained remarkably similar.

The recruiter therefore identified evidence of:

- client management;
- project coordination;
- requirement gathering;
- expectation management;
- responsibility for final outcomes.

These competencies represented strong indicators of adaptation potential.

Spatial Reasoning. The candidate also possessed an engineering education.

For roles involving customized product design, spatial reasoning frequently represents a more important predictor of long-term success than immediate proficiency in specific software applications.

Software can be taught. Spatial reasoning is substantially more difficult to develop.

The recruiter therefore considered the engineering background as evidence of an underlying cognitive capability directly relevant to future performance.

Visual and Aesthetic Judgment. Years of experience creating customized visual designs demonstrated advanced understanding of:

- composition;
- proportion;
- form;
- visual balance;
- client-oriented aesthetics.

These capabilities represented a significant advantage in a role requiring the presentation and discussion of customized design concepts with customers.

The candidate’s previous experience suggested an ability to interpret subjective customer preferences and convert them into visually coherent solutions.

Customer Service and Empathy. Additional experience within premium hospitality environments further strengthened the profile.

This experience indicated:

- strong communication skills;
- service orientation;
- emotional intelligence;
- ability to work with demanding clients.

Customers purchasing customized furniture often make emotionally significant purchasing decisions involving large financial commitments.

Consequently, empathy and communication frequently influence outcomes as strongly as technical knowledge.

Entrepreneurial Responsibility. The candidate had also operated an independent business. This experience suggested:

- accountability;
- ownership mentality;
- financial awareness;
- self-management;
- personal responsibility for outcomes.

These characteristics are difficult to detect through conventional keyword-based screening but often contribute substantially to long-term performance.

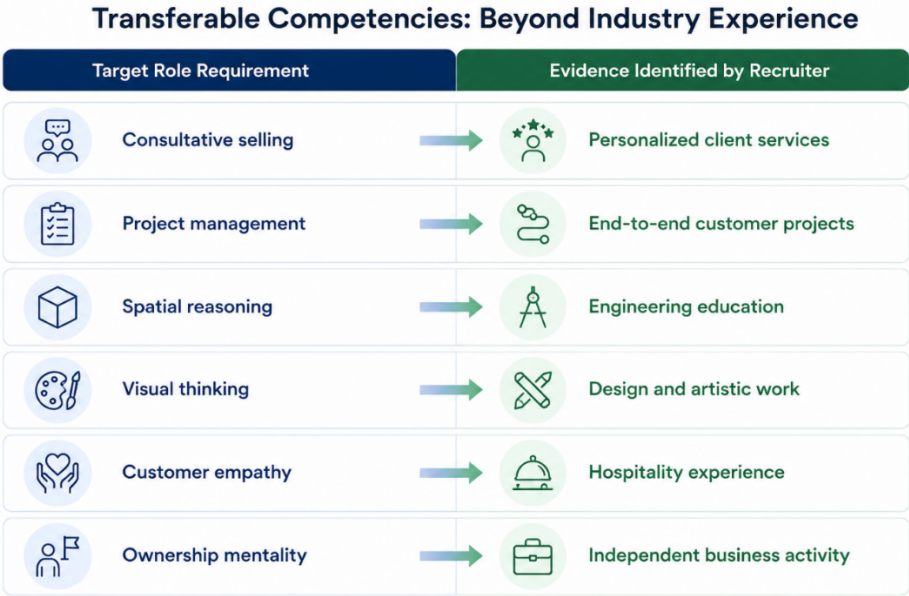


Fig. 5. Transferable Competency Mapping Framework Beyond Industry Experience
Source: Author’s elaboration based on recruitment project data.

Description: Fig. 5 presents the Transferable Competency Identification Framework proposed in this study. The framework demonstrates a structured approach for identifying competencies that may remain undetected by conventional keyword-based screening and experience-matching algorithms. By mapping previous professional experience to underlying competencies required for future job

performance, the framework supports the evaluation of candidates with non-linear career trajectories and provides a practical method for identifying future potential beyond industry-specific experience.

4.1.5 Recruitment Outcome

Following interviews and practical evaluation, the candidate received an employment offer.

The adaptation period required approximately one month before independent performance was achieved.

From an operational perspective, this adaptation period was comparable to that of candidates possessing direct industry experience.

Subsequent performance indicated successful integration into the role.

The candidate demonstrated the ability to:

- understand customer requirements;
- develop customized solutions;
- manage projects independently;
- communicate effectively with clients.

The outcome confirmed that the transferable competencies identified during manual review were relevant predictors of future performance.

This case does not suggest that AI screening systems are ineffective. On the contrary, the AI-assisted process successfully reduced recruiter workload by identifying highly relevant candidates within a large applicant pool.

However, the case highlights an important limitation.

The algorithm primarily evaluated evidence of past experience.

The recruiter evaluated evidence of future potential.

The distinction is subtle but significant.

AI identified what the candidate had previously done.

The recruiter identified what the candidate appeared capable of doing next.

This finding aligns closely with contemporary research suggesting that AI performs best when evaluating structured, observable information, while human expertise continues to create value when interpreting ambiguity, context, transferable skills, and adaptation potential [3, 6, 7].

The practical implication is therefore straightforward:

Artificial intelligence can significantly improve recruitment efficiency.

Human judgment remains essential when organizations seek talent capable of growth, transition, and successful performance in unfamiliar professional contexts.

The objective is not to replace recruiters with AI.

The objective is to combine the strengths of both.

AI reduces the cost of finding talent.

Human expertise reduces the cost of hiring the wrong talent.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study suggest that the relationship between artificial intelligence and recruitment is considerably more nuanced than the common narrative of automation replacing human decision-making.

The literature consistently demonstrates that AI creates substantial value when recruitment tasks are highly structured, repetitive, and data intensive. Studies such as Better Together show measurable improvements in candidate selection outcomes when AI-assisted assessment is integrated into recruitment workflows [1]. Similarly, industry reports from LinkedIn and Insight Global indicate widespread adoption of AI

technologies and significant improvements in recruiter productivity [2,4].

These findings are particularly relevant in high-volume recruitment environments, where organizations must process large candidate pools within limited timeframes. In such contexts, AI functions as an efficient filtering mechanism capable of identifying patterns, ranking applications, and reducing administrative workload.

However, the practical case examined in this study highlights a fundamental limitation of algorithmic decision-making.

The candidate ultimately selected for the role did not fit the historical profile associated with successful hires in the target industry. Because AI systems primarily evaluate observable indicators of similarity, the candidate's profile appeared weak when compared against traditional furniture industry experience.

The recruiter, by contrast, focused on transferable competencies.

This distinction reflects a broader conceptual difference between:

- evaluating evidence of past performance;
- evaluating indicators of future potential.

The candidate's previous experience contained little direct evidence of furniture expertise. Yet it contained substantial evidence of customer trust-building, project management, spatial reasoning, visual thinking, entrepreneurial responsibility, and customer empathy. These characteristics proved highly relevant to future performance despite being largely invisible to traditional matching systems. The case therefore supports the argument that AI currently performs best when identifying candidates who have already completed similar work, while recruiters continue to create value by identifying candidates capable of succeeding in new contexts.

Another important finding concerns the emergence of what may be described as AI-mediated candidate representation.

Candidates increasingly use generative AI to prepare résumés, cover letters, portfolios, and interview responses. As a result, recruiters increasingly evaluate AI-assisted representations of candidates rather than purely original self-descriptions.

This development creates a new challenge for talent acquisition.

Historically, recruiters focused on gathering information.

Increasingly, recruiters focus on validating information.

The practical implication is that recruiters must evaluate not only whether information appears persuasive but also whether it reflects genuine capability.

In this respect, the observations of Leavell regarding "artificial certainty" become particularly relevant [7]. The growing sophistication of AI-generated outputs may create an illusion of certainty regarding candidate quality, while substantial uncertainty remains regarding actual future performance.

Consequently, the role of the recruiter evolves rather than disappears.

The recruiter increasingly functions as an interpreter between observable information and future organizational outcomes.

Building upon both the literature reviewed and the empirical findings of the present study, this research proposes a conceptual framework describing how the relative contribution of artificial intelligence and human judgment changes across different recruitment contexts.

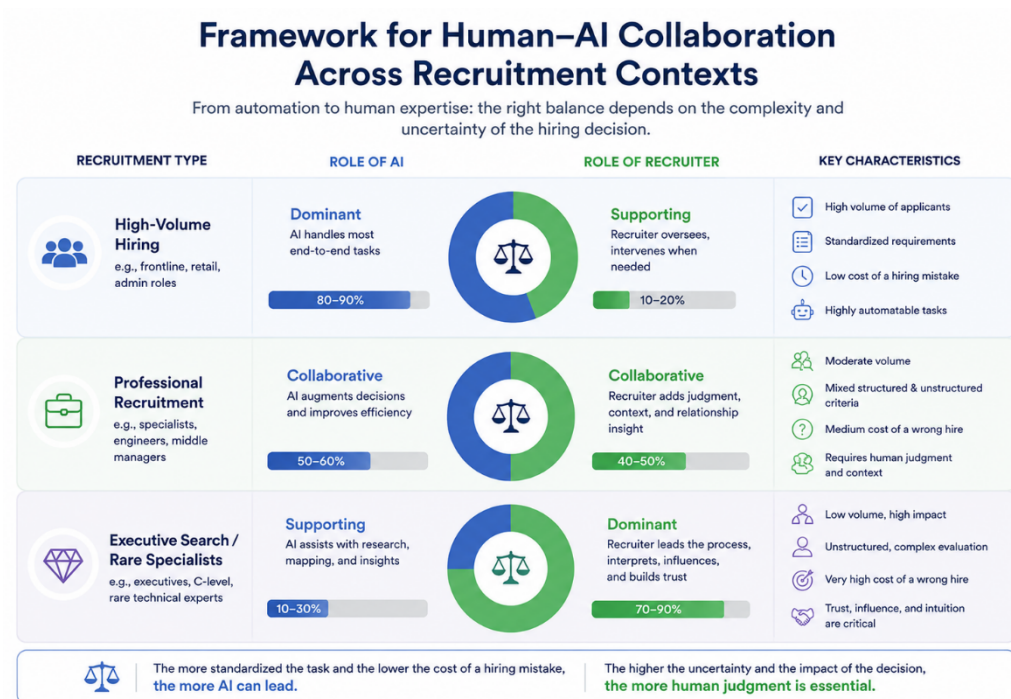


Fig. 6. Framework for Human–AI Collaboration Across Recruitment Contexts
 Source: Author's elaboration.

Description: Fig. 6 summarizes one of the principal contributions of this study. It proposes that the relative value of artificial intelligence and human judgment varies according to recruitment complexity, uncertainty, and the importance of transferable competencies. While AI assumes a dominant operational role in standardized recruitment activities, human expertise becomes increasingly important as hiring decisions rely more heavily on contextual interpretation, leadership assessment, motivation, and future potential. The framework therefore extends existing literature by integrating empirical observations with prior research into a unified conceptual model describing the changing balance between AI and recruiter expertise. The proposed framework also provides the basis for a practical classification of AI applications across recruitment activities.

Table 2. Classification of AI Applications Across Recruitment Activities

Recruitment Activity	Typical AI Support
Vacancy analysis	Job description optimization, competency extraction
Candidate sourcing	Talent search, market mapping
Resume review	Experience matching, skills extraction
Cover letter analysis	Communication quality assessment, motivation analysis
Candidate communication	Drafting emails and interview invitations
Interview preparation	Competency-based question generation
Talent market research	Salary benchmarking, competitor analysis
Executive search support	Long-list creation, company intelligence gathering

Source: Author's compilation based on LinkedIn Future of Recruiting (2025), Insight Global (2025), and practical recruitment observations.

Description: Table 2 presents the classification proposed in this study based on the combined analysis of academic literature and empirical recruitment observations. The classification demonstrates that AI creates greatest value in structured and repeatable recruitment activities, whereas human expertise becomes increasingly valuable in contexts requiring contextual interpretation, transferable competency assessment, and future-oriented judgment.

Finally, the findings raise a broader professional question regarding the future development of recruitment expertise.

Historically, recruiters developed judgment through repeated exposure to large candidate populations, continuous evaluation, and learning from hiring successes and failures.

As AI assumes responsibility for many preliminary screening activities, fewer opportunities may remain for early-career recruiters to develop this experiential expertise.

Paradoxically, the increasing sophistication of AI may therefore increase the long-term value of experienced recruiters.

The more effectively AI processes information, the more valuable human interpretation becomes.

The future of recruitment is therefore unlikely to be characterized by competition between humans and machines.

Instead, it is increasingly characterized by collaboration between systems that excel at pattern recognition and professionals who excel at interpreting uncertainty.

5. Conclusion

The primary objective of this study was to examine the evolving relationship between artificial intelligence and human judgment in recruitment and talent acquisition and to answer the following research question: Can artificial intelligence assess future potential as effectively as it identifies past experience? The findings indicate that, while AI performs exceptionally well in evaluating structured evidence of past performance, the assessment of future potential continues to rely heavily on human judgment, particularly when transferable competencies, contextual interpretation, and adaptation potential are involved.

To address this question, the study combined contemporary academic literature, international labor market research, industry reports, and a practical recruitment case involving approximately 200 applicants for a professional sales and design position. The analysis compared AI-assisted candidate screening with recruiter-based evaluation, with particular attention devoted to transferable competencies, future potential, and non-linear career trajectories.

The findings demonstrate that artificial intelligence creates substantial value in recruitment by improving efficiency, reducing administrative workload, and supporting decision-making in high-volume hiring environments [1,2,4]. AI systems perform particularly well when evaluating structured, observable, and repeatable information such as work history, educational background, technical skills, and job similarity.

However, the findings also indicate important limitations. The practical case examined in this study demonstrates that algorithmic systems may overlook candidates possessing strong transferable competencies when those competencies are not expressed through conventional indicators such as industry experience or job titles. This observation is consistent with emerging evidence suggesting that employee advancement and long-term career success are often driven by demonstrated capability, adaptability, and mobility opportunities rather than formal credentials alone [10,14,15].

The analysis suggests that AI and human recruiters excel at fundamentally different forms of evaluation. While AI primarily evaluates evidence of past performance, recruiters continue to create value through the interpretation of transferable skills, adaptation potential, motivation, contextual information, and future performance indicators. The distinction between past performance and future potential therefore emerges as a critical boundary between algorithmic and human decision-making.

The study also identifies a new challenge within contemporary recruitment environments. As candidates increasingly use AI tools to generate résumés, cover letters, and interview preparation materials, recruiters are no longer evaluating only candidates themselves. They are increasingly evaluating AI-assisted representations of candidates. Consequently, effective recruitment depends not only on algorithmic performance but also on candidate perceptions of fairness, trust, transparency, and authenticity within AI-enabled hiring systems [11,12,13].

From a managerial perspective, the findings suggest that organizations should avoid viewing artificial intelligence as a replacement for recruiters. Instead, AI should be deployed as a decision-support technology that augments human expertise. The strongest recruitment outcomes appear to emerge when AI-assisted screening is combined with human evaluation of transferable competencies, learning agility, and future performance capability. AI reduces the cost of finding talent, while human expertise reduces the cost of hiring the wrong talent.

Beyond its practical implications, the study contributes several original conceptual outcomes to the growing literature on AI-assisted recruitment. It introduces a conceptual distinction between the evaluation of past performance and future potential, proposes a Human-AI Collaboration Framework describing how the balance between artificial intelligence and recruiter expertise changes across recruitment contexts, and develops a Transferable Competency Identification Framework that supports the assessment of candidates whose capabilities extend beyond conventional experience-based matching. Collectively, these contributions provide a practical foundation for integrating artificial intelligence with human judgment in future recruitment practice.

This study has several limitations. The empirical component is based on a single recruitment case within a specific professional context and therefore should not be interpreted as universally representative of all recruitment environments. In addition, the analysis relies primarily on qualitative interpretation supported by literature and industry evidence rather than large-scale statistical testing.

Future research may explore how AI systems can be trained to identify transferable competencies more effectively, how recruiters develop expertise in increasingly automated environments, and how candidate use of generative AI influences assessment validity and hiring outcomes. Additional studies involving larger datasets, multiple organizations, and longitudinal observations would further contribute to understanding the evolving balance between artificial intelligence and human judgment in recruitment.

Ultimately, the question is no longer whether artificial intelligence will become part of recruitment.

It already has. The more important question is where artificial intelligence creates value, where human judgment remains indispensable, and how organizations can combine both to make better hiring decisions.

The future of recruitment therefore lies not in choosing between artificial intelligence and human expertise, but in designing increasingly effective forms of collaboration between both.

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