

# The State of BD 2025

A reflection on the state of  
Business Development in the  
recruitment industry in 2025

Produced by Resonant



## Methodology

This report draws on data from recruitment businesses worldwide, covering all industries and company sizes—from solo founders to large organizations. Data collection began in late 2024, ensuring a diverse and representative sample.

To enhance insights, industry experts contributed analysis, offering perspectives from suppliers, sales leaders, and recruitment executives. This collaborative approach provides a well-rounded view of business development trends. The report follows a structured framework used in Resonant’s playbooks, incorporating insights from top-performing recruiters across Europe, America, and Australia. Each section delivers strategic and tactical intelligence for businesses of all sizes.

## Acknowledgements

This report was made possible by 500+ recruitment businesses and expert contributors:

- **Neil Carberry**, CEO - The REC
- **Dougie Loan**, CRO - SourceWhale
- **Alex Reilly**, Head of Marketing - Firefish
- **Sam Slade**, CRO - Hinterview

Their insights frame this report as a reflection of industry evolution, not crisis. We thank **recruitment leaders** for sharing strategies that highlight ambitions to capitalize on opportunities in the coming years. The industry’s resilience, innovation, and commitment to excellence remain its defining strengths.

Finally, thank you for engaging with this report and considering its impact on your business. We look forward to continuing the conversation.

A large, stylized number '9' graphic in a dark purple color, positioned on the left side of the page. It has a thick, rounded stroke and a small tail at the bottom right.

# INTRODUCTION

## The State of BD 2025

This report represents a landmark set of data covering real strategies being deployed by over 500 recruitment businesses. We're presenting feedback on seven areas of business development from sales culture, systems and processes to metrics and data, along with coaching and training, and the finer aspects of positioning, prospecting and closing.

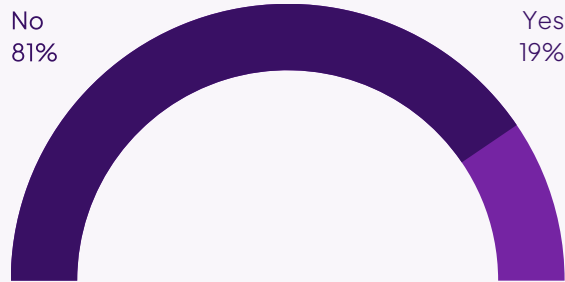
The report aims to help raise the standards of business development across the recruitment industry by sharing best practices, benchmarks, and actionable insights that you can implement immediately. By analysing what works and what doesn't across hundreds of recruitment businesses, we hope to elevate the entire industry's approach to business development.

There are things the recruitment industry should be incredibly proud of. There are also opportunities for growth. It's essential for us to embrace these opportunities and the challenges that come along with them, as the impact great recruitment has on employers has never been more keenly felt.

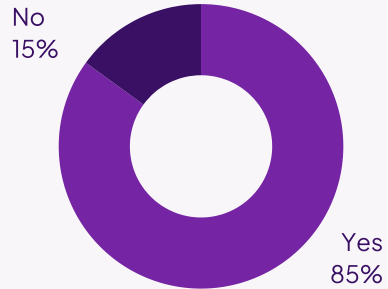
I hope you enjoy the data as much as we've enjoyed preparing it for you.

# ESTABLISHING A BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CULTURE

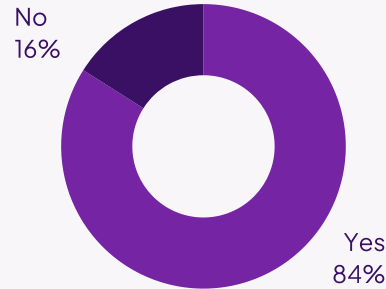
**My approach to sales puts buyers first:**



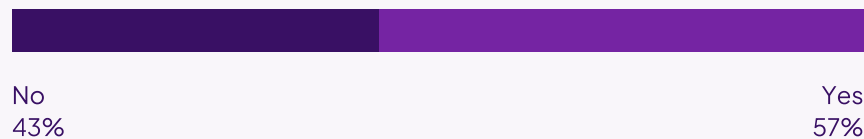
**I have strong positive beliefs about recruitment:**



**I have positive beliefs about sales that guide the way I sell:**



**I like the way I sell:**



“Sales Culture is strong in recruitment. It is heartening to see such strong data points around recruiters’ beliefs about both their value and their role as sales people.

However, only 43% of consultants say that they like the way they sell. Prompting us to consider, *what lays behind this apparent disconnect?*

Why is it that just half the number of people confident about sales and their value, are displeased with their approach to BD?

It could be that this reflects how tough business development has been over the last 18 months. A sustained period of high effort, with limited results could account for this gap. It’s one to keep an eye on in next year’s data.

However, there is another hypothesis worthy of consideration. Our data on systems shows that the vast majority of consultants have no clear process for BD. Perhaps then, it is this lack of certainty over how to approach BD is what leaves even the most upbeat consultant, feeling uncomfortable when it comes time for generating new business.”

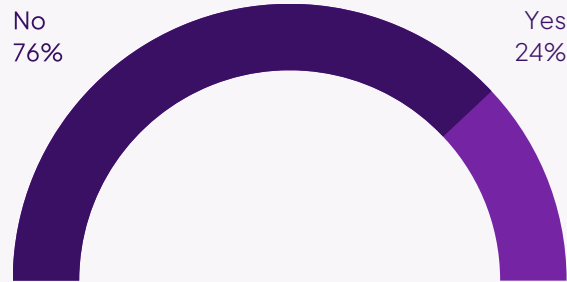


**COMMENTARY BY**  
Ben Browning,  
Founder,  
Resonant



# LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY AND SYSTEMS

I have a clearly defined sales plan including how to contact a target client, when, and how often:



I have access to tools that help me have more high quality conversations:



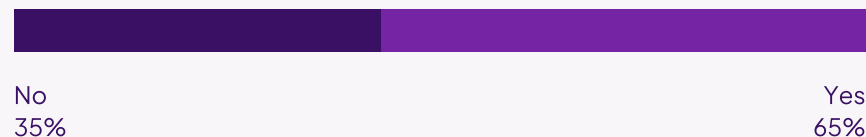
I often forget to update the CRM:



I'm often unsure what the next step in my sales process should be:



I often create new emails or documents without a set of templates or frameworks to work from:



"At Firefish there is an undeniable story that we see and hear time and again: Agencies that are able to get their recruiters to actually use the CRM are more profitable, and by a significant margin too.

Those that adopt a CRM-first approach typically see a **15% reduction in operational costs** and a **30% increase in revenue per recruiter**, simply by using the systems they are already paying for.

The data from this report by Resonant goes a long way to illustrating why this is the case - and why shifting recruiter habits can have such a big impact on your agency's profitability. With 44% of recruiters saying they **often forget to update the CRM**, it isn't hard to see the problem."

If you're losing data from half of your recruiters, the impact on your business is going to be huge. Remember that any CRM is only as good as the data you feed it - so failing to update relevant information will make your candidate searches and potential matches far less effective, making it unnecessarily harder to find candidates for your clients. But the blame can't be laid on recruiters' shoulders without looking at the structure within your agency and CRM.

65% of recruiters say that they often start from scratch with communications as they don't have structure or templates to follow, so is it really any wonder that people choose to dodge the CRM?

Investing the time to effectively optimise your CRM to your agency's needs is the fastest way to improve your agency's profitability. And once the system is actually useful to your recruiters they will see the value in taking the time to keep it up to date."

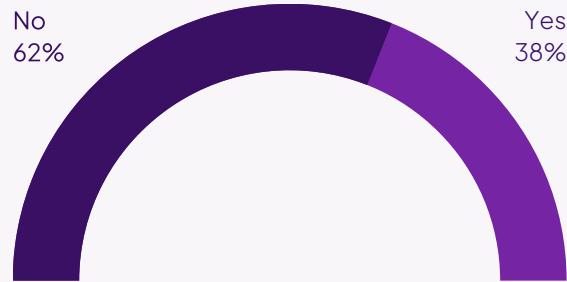


COMMENTARY BY  
Alex Reilly,  
Head of Marketing,  
Firefish

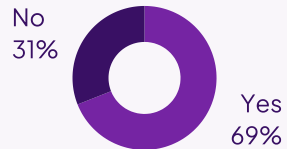


# MEASURING METRICS

I know how many calls and emails I get out each week:



My sales process is easily tracked and managed with every target client:



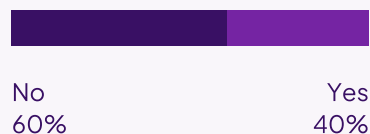
I don't know how many new clients I need to hit my billings target:



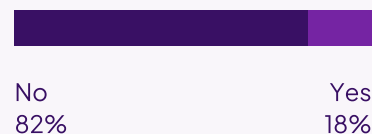
I understand exactly how the KPIs we track impact my billings:



I know what commitment I need to get from my target client at every step in the process:



I know my conversion ratios for every step of my sales process:



“The data here seems to present a somewhat of a mixed message. It is great to see that over two thirds of recruiters state that their process is easily tracked and managed. That bodes well for their ability to iterate and improve. It’s also unsurprising given the continuous development of CRM systems used across the industry, and the standard procedure of measurement and KPIs in particular.

However, it is telling that only two in five recruiters know how the KPIs they track relate to their billings. This either suggests that they don’t feel that they are tracking the right things, or that their sales process itself doesn’t offer enough clarity or consistency to make the data meaningful.

It is important that recruitment businesses build an effective process for measuring the relationship between activity and results so that they can drive improvement. Based on the data, only 40% are in position to do so.”

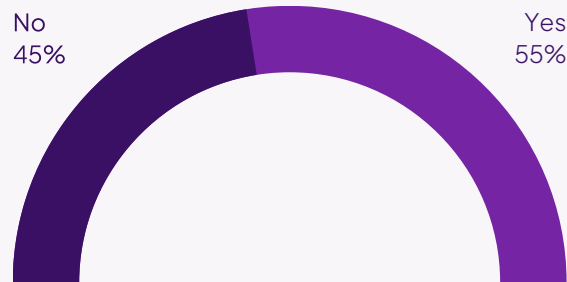


COMMENTARY BY  
Ben Browning,  
Founder,  
Resonant

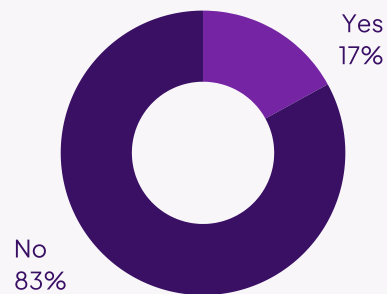


# AUGMENTING PERFORMANCE

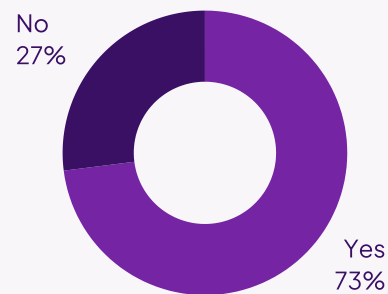
I take steps to improve my BD each week:



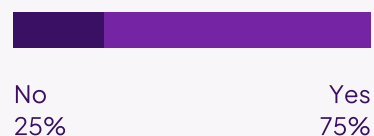
I am coached on a weekly basis:



I don't know which parts of my sales strategy need the most improvement:



I rarely get to review my calls:



The training I receive is based on a clear methodology that I understand:



“It’s often been said that agencies that train well, trade well. Consultants with strong processes, targeting and positioned as expert problem-solvers build relations that last.

That’s more true than ever right now. When we look at a labour market with lower candidate supply – and economic and technological trends that make hirers hesitant – we see a world where the focussed and skilful will do best.

This Report by Resonant, emphasises this point. **Consultants believe in the difference they make – but over half don’t like how they currently sell.** And when it comes to tools and processes, they voice real concern about wasted effort in the work they duplicate, and the lack of ability to focus effort.

**These are things that – as agency leaders – we have the capacity to resolve. Yet at the moment, there is uncertainty** reported in this data amongst consultants about how to improve – or the understanding of the interventions they do get.

As a profession, we need to re-commit to a career path that invests in consultants and builds productivity and skill, relying on more than just effort, despite how valuable hard work is to making a difference.”

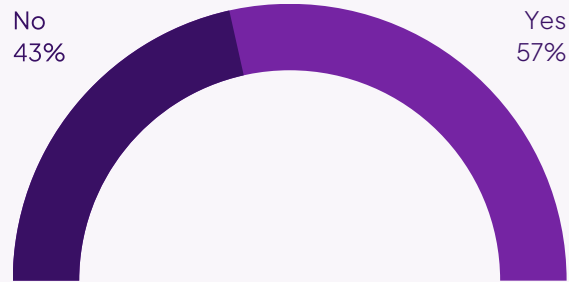


**COMMENTARY BY**  
Neil Carberry,  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Recruitment and Employment Confederation



# POSITIONING YOUR BUSINESS AND YOURSELF

I'm seen as an expert:



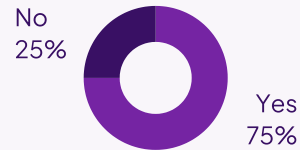
I work for a premium brand recruiter and my approach to sales reflects that:



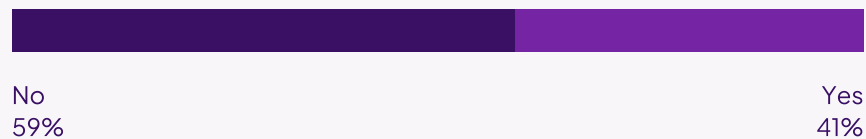
I know the precise reasons my target clients chose to work with me:



My approach to sales shows that I am a consultative, solutions focused, expert:



Most of my BD is focussed on presenting candidates:



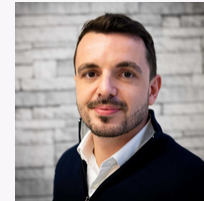
"One standout stat from the report: Only 24% of recruiters feel confident they can clearly communicate how their approach solves client problems.

*What does that tell us?*

Nearly three-quarters of recruiters can't articulate why they're worth engaging.

That said, the cultural responses were overwhelmingly positive. Recruiters believe in what they do – they're motivated and they're hungry.

But motivation alone doesn't move the needle. **Without the right frameworks, training, and tools, climbing the value chain feels like wishful thinking.**"

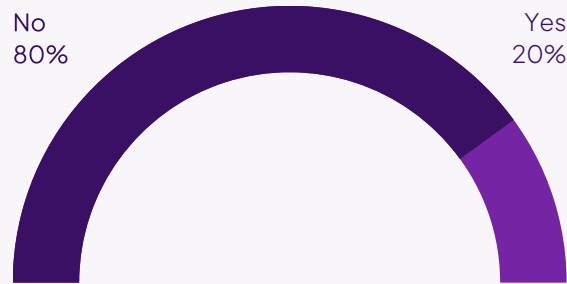


**COMMENTARY BY**  
Sam Slade,  
Chief Revenue Officer  
Hinterview

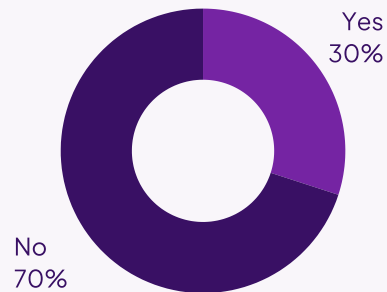


# GETTING PROSPECTING RIGHT

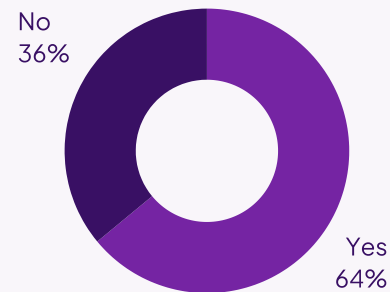
**I have a consistent process for booking meetings with target clients over the phone:**



**I tend to write long sales emails which describe the services we offer:**



**My prospecting list is made up of the exact type of business and person that I most want as a client:**



**I am reluctant to send voice-notes and videos as part of my sales process:**



**The main thing I aim for in a sales call is to uncover a problem (not a vacancy):**



“This report should serve as one of the biggest eye openers to leaders across our industry.

In a world where we’ve spent the last two years talking about the importance of sales, to see that only 24% of consultants feel they have a defined sales process is extremely damaging.

“From the basics of knowing whom to contact and when, to managing the process and improving it each day, it shows we still have a long way to go for our actions to match our desires.

We work with thousands of agencies each day at SourceWhale to drive this change, but it sounds like many have a journey ahead!”

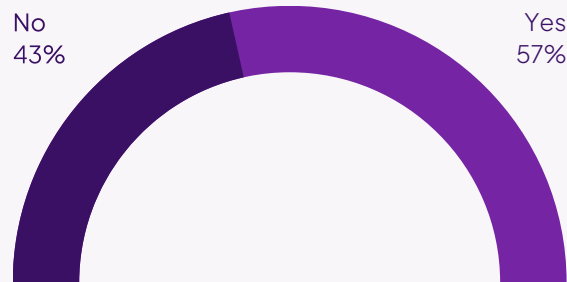


**COMMENTARY BY**  
Dougie Loan,  
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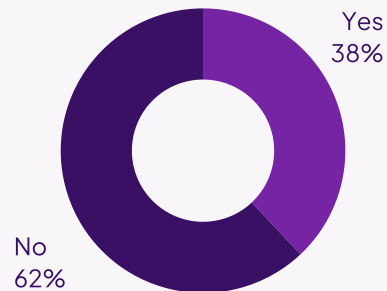
SourceWhale

# CLOSING THE SALE

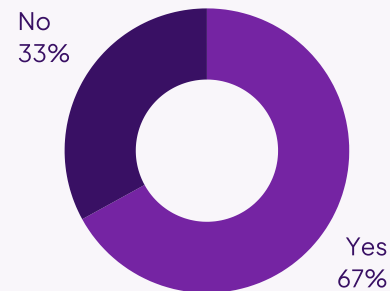
I ask questions that help me understand problems in the client's hiring strategy:



I use case studies that demonstrate how we help overcome problems:



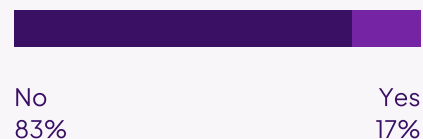
When selling, I clearly communicate how our approach solves our clients' biggest problems:



I have no set process for negotiating fees:



I have a clear process for bringing all the necessary decision-makers into the sales conversation:



“Of the recruiters we’ve worked with here at Resonant, those who perform most highly are those who do three things differently to the majority:

1. They actively seek out multiple stakeholders to bring into deals to make sure they have collaborative relationships across the client account;
2. They own their negotiation process with a clear framework and methodology to follow (this itself can save hundreds of thousands in lost revenue); and,
3. They use case studies regularly throughout their sales meetings

In fact, these three steps are the hallmark of the most efficient and effective sales processes we’ve seen. Our advice to recruitment leaders who want to increase the efficiency of their sales process is to get a clear structure for all three of these steps defined, documented, and deployed as soon as possible.”



COMMENTARY BY  
Ben Browning,  
Founder,  
Resonant



# CONCLUSION

## The State of BD in 2025 and Beyond

The coming years bring both challenges and opportunities for recruiters. Winning high-quality business is possible—but requires a strategic, structured approach.

Recruiters have the mindset and tools to succeed, but recognizing growth areas is crucial. There's strong commitment to refining BD processes for greater efficiency and impact. Industry experts hope this data helps businesses identify gaps and move forward—I share that hope.

Recruiters drive meaningful change. Communicating value effectively is key to recognition and success. By continuously improving BD, we better support the industries and communities we serve.

If you see opportunities for BD growth, now is the time to act. At Resonant, we offer a simple, scalable 4-step process:

1. **Define** what works — sales culture, closing strategies — using data and feedback.
2. **Design** new strategies to maximize growth areas.
3. **Document** strategies in an agile playbook that helps consultants in consistently.
4. **Deploy** the playbook across the business, ensuring execution and continuous improvement.

This isn't a one-time fix—it's a cycle of ongoing success, giving your team the confidence to win more.

The future of BD is evolving, and those with a structured, strategic approach will succeed. Are you ready?

**Book a call with me:**



Or click  
this link!



# Resonant:

**Intuitive,  
non-obvious.**

Resonant helps recruitment businesses increase revenue with simple, scalable processes for winning new business and account expansion.



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