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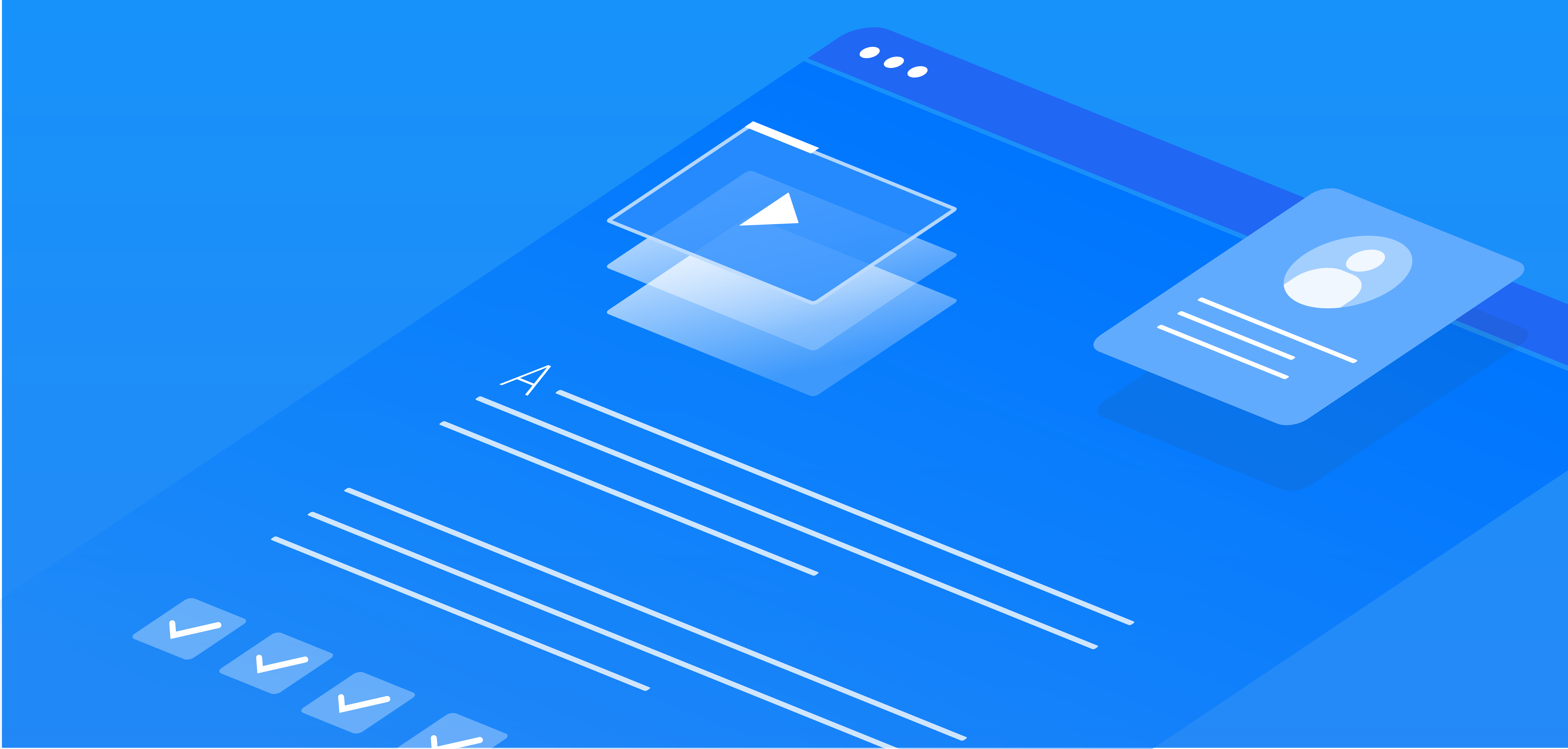
5 Ways to Improve Your Application Performance



The best application forms are ones that provide enough information for recruiters and HR professionals to differentiate between strong and weak applicants. Here at Fountain, we've analyzed several million applications for hourly jobs, and through this experience, we've identified design patterns for application forms that translate to meaningful results when screening applicants. For the New Service Economy, effective applications are even more important as companies are all competing for the same candidates in a tight labor pool. These five tips will help you hire more qualified candidates ensuring your hiring resources are being used in the more efficient way possible!

RULE #1

Identify your company's hiring priorities

There is a fundamental tradeoff between the volume of applicants that flow through a screening process and the quality of the applicants (in terms of job performance and retention). Understanding this tradeoff is the key to designing an application form that is best-suited to your screening process.

If your company needs to fill thousands of open positions immediately and can tolerate some worker churn, then the application form should be lightweight and quick to complete, presenting a low barrier to entry for each new applicant.

On the other hand, if your company requires a high-performing workforce with particular skills, or if your company is trying to minimize worker churn in an effort to reduce labor costs, then the application form should serve as a strong filter to identify the candidates that are most likely to succeed. Usually, this means a longer, more involved application form with several qualifying questions and additional stages.

RECOMENDATION

Identify your company's needs and answer the following:

- How many positions do I need to fill?
- Do we require high-performing workers with particular skills?
- Can we tolerate some work churn?

This will help you develop an application that either has a low barrier to entry or required more stages for proper vetting.

RULE #2

Avoid overly broad personality testing

To counter the overwhelming cost of hiring and retention, hiring managers and recruiters look to turn the risky process of picking the best candidate into more of an exact science.

As a result, some larger enterprises have invested heavily in personality tests and assessment tools. More affordable and accessible tools are now available, making it possible for even tiny businesses to put prospective new hires beneath the personality microscope. Regardless, the goal remains the same - to gain more insight into the candidate beyond the tangible skills that get discussed during the application and interview process.

The problems that have arisen, however, is that not all tests are created equal. As an example, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator groups people into 16 different types, separating introverts from extroverts, the logically minded from the emotionally driven, and so on. While this could be seen as thoughtful information for a company building out its sales team, or a restaurant hiring customer-facing staff, the company that offers the MBTI says using it for hiring is "unethical," stressing that personality type shouldn't be a dealbreaker for most positions.

RECOMENDATION

For customer-facing roles, it is best to design a survey that narrowly tests for 1-2 specific traits that are required for the job. For other roles, we recommend omitting personality questions altogether.

RULE #3

Split form into sections

Traditional thinking holds that lengthy applications will screen out apathetic candidates and good talent will be dedicated enough to fill out more information. The truth, however, according to SHRM, is that good candidates know their time is important and they have plenty of opportunities in the job market. Their tolerance for jumping through hoops is much lower.

Applicants are often frustrated when they encounter a long application form. This is even more apparent in the growing New Service Economy where jobseekers expect a short, seamless application process.

RECOMENDATION

We've found that splitting up the form into short chunks across several pages can increase conversion rate by as much as 15-20%. In practice, this means collecting the applicant's contact information on the landing page and putting the role-specific questions later in the process.

Applicants are also more likely to complete the application if they are provided a visual indicator of progress, or are told at the start how long the application process will take to complete.

RULE #4

Help your applicants disqualify themselves

New hires that are not properly vetted can cost your company two-fold. Not only does this cause a gap in your workforce and operations, but the time and resources to source, screen and onboard quickly add up.

The most common reason that workers quit is that their expectations around pay or the work itself do not match reality. An effective way to prevent this is to include as many of the job details and expectations in the post.

RECOMENDATION

One effective way to boost retention is to be upfront about what your job really entails in terms of schedule, pay, and the day-to-day routines. Workers who are not a good fit will then opt out themselves, saving you time and money.

RULE #5

Measure your screening performance

Every screening process is different, so the only way to truly know whether yours is working is to measure key indicators, such as the conversion rate and duration of the overall process. For screening, some important key metrics include:

Source of hire

This metric also helps to keep track of the effectiveness of different recruiting channels. A few examples are job boards, the company's career page, social media, and sourcing agencies.

Quality of hire

Quality of hire, often measured by someone's performance rating, gives an indicator of the first-year performance of a candidate.

Hiring Manager satisfaction

A recruiting metric that is indicative of successful recruiting metrics. When the hiring manager is satisfied with the new candidates, the candidate is likely to perform well and fit well and is considered a successful hire.

Applicants per opening

This gauges the job's popularity. A large number of applicants could indicate a high demand for jobs in that particular area or a job description that's too broad. The number of applicants per opening is not necessarily an indicator of the number of suitable candidates. By narrowing the job description and including a number of 'hard' criteria, the number of applicants can be reduced without reducing the number of suitable candidates.

RECOMENDATION

We suggest measuring the conversion and timing performance for each stage within the process. For example, identify bottlenecks by finding the stages with the longest duration, and see if there is a pattern that can explain why applicants are getting stuck or taking a long time to complete that stage.

Additionally, we recommend tracking the rejection reasons for every applicant that doesn't make it through the process. Be sure to consider both intrinsic factors, such as the time it takes your team to complete a phone screen, as well as external factors, such as the number of new applicants from week to week.