TAD PRIMARY INSIGHTS · HIRING MANAGERS

The Most Overlooked Bottleneck in Hiring: Clarity

The hiring manager bottleneck is real. It isn't the one most teams are solving for.

Ask TA leaders why hiring managers slow things down and the word you hear most is accountability. Ask what they'd actually fix, and the answer is a clearer brief. This report draws on conversations with **700+ TA leaders** about hiring manager effectiveness. The problem most often named and the problem most often described are not the same, and they need very different fixes.

AT A GLANCE



would fix the role definition process first



blame indecision when hiring managers miss deadlines



see delays of five or more days on most open roles



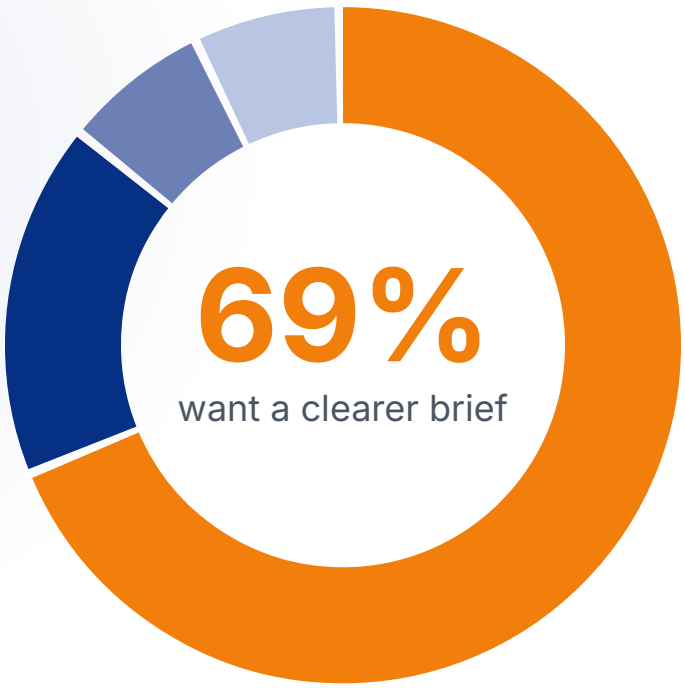
have trained most of their hiring managers recently

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THE ONE THING TO FIX

Given one wish, leaders asked for a clearer brief, not better interviewers.

"If you could only fix ONE thing to improve hiring manager effectiveness, what would it be?"



Clearer role definition process	**69%**
Better interview training / calibration	**17%**
Reduce their hiring load / volume	**7%**
Pre-screened, better-qualified candidate slate	**7%**

Given a single fix, most leaders went straight to **the brief**. Not interview skills, not workload, not the quality of the shortlist. **Clarity beat capability roughly four to one**, and capacity and pipeline came last.

That shifts the question. Whatever is slowing hiring managers down, leaders don't think it's skill or bandwidth. They're describing **a role that was never defined sharply enough to hire against**. It's hard to pick the right person quickly when nobody has agreed what right looks like.

Before a role opens, agree three things with the hiring manager: what this person must deliver in year one, the skills that are truly essential, and what would rule a candidate out.

WHY DEADLINES GET MISSED

Fewer than one in ten blame indecision. That's worth pausing on.

"What's the SINGLE biggest reason hiring managers miss deadlines?"



56%

Lack of accountability / consequences



35%

Competing priorities



9%

Indecision / perfectionism

READ TOGETHER

69% say a clearer role definition is the one thing they'd fix → **9%** say hiring managers miss deadlines out of indecision

The industry has a favourite story about slow hiring managers: they're too picky. The people who work alongside them every day **rank indecision last**. Most point to **missing accountability**, and a sizeable group to competing priorities.

Put this next to the first question and another reading appears. When the brief is vague, taking longer isn't perfectionism. It's **what happens when nobody has settled what good looks like**, and no amount of chasing settles it for them.

When a hiring manager stalls, check the brief before you chase the person. A slow decision is often the sign of an unclear one.

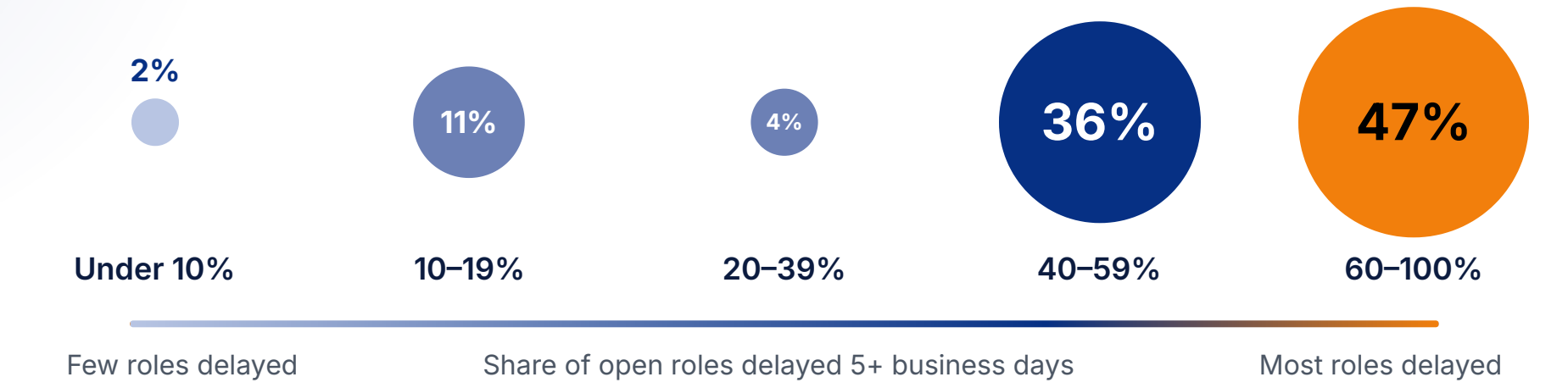
WHEN SLAS SLIP

Enforcement is already happening. It just isn't landing.

"What actually happens when hiring managers consistently miss SLA deadlines?"



"What percentage of open roles experience hiring manager delays of 5+ business days?"



This isn't a picture of organisations ignoring the problem. Almost all of them **raise it**, either through a quiet word or an escalation to leadership. Very few let a missed SLA slide without comment.

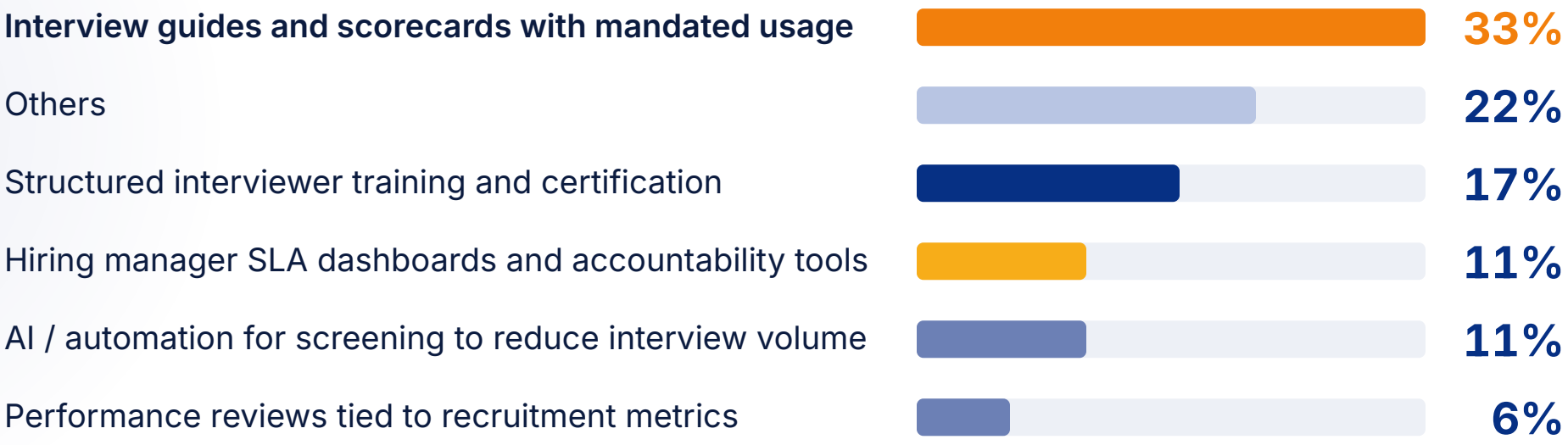
Yet the delays are everywhere. For nearly half, **most open roles** wait five or more business days on a manager, and strong responsiveness is close to non-existent. Raising the issue isn't the same as resolving it, and **more of the same is unlikely to move the number**.

If conversations and escalations haven't shortened the delays, another round won't. Change what the manager is given, not how often they're reminded.

WHERE LEADERS WOULD INVEST FIRST

Asked where to spend, leaders chose workflow support over pressure.

"Where would you invest FIRST to fix the hiring manager bottleneck?"



READ TOGETHER

56% name missing accountability as the biggest reason deadlines slip → **11%** would invest first in SLA dashboards and accountability tools

The top pick isn't pressure. It's **interview guides and scorecards that managers are required to use**: tools that put the criteria in front of people at the moment they decide.

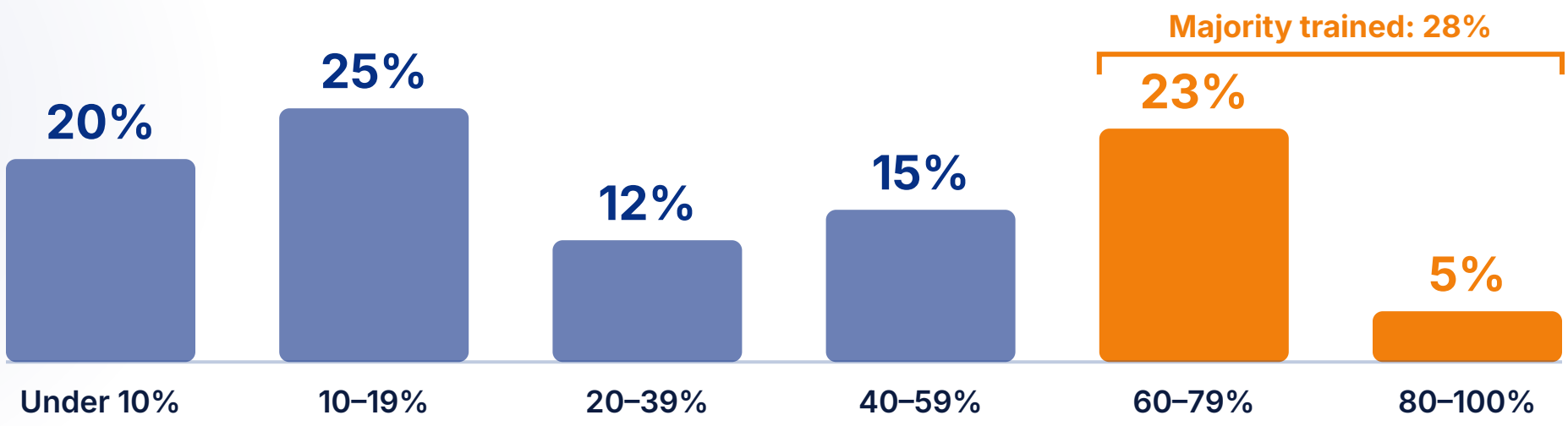
Notice the gap between blame and budget. Accountability is the cause leaders name most, yet it sits near the bottom of where they'd spend. The likeliest reason is experience: **pressure has been tried, and it doesn't fix a vague brief**.

Make the scorecard the brief. If the criteria agreed at intake are the ones managers score against, clarity and accountability arrive together.

TRAINING COVERAGE

Few have trained most of their managers. Almost nobody is asking for more.

"What percentage of hiring managers have completed structured interviewer training in the past 18 months?"



Share of hiring managers trained in the past 18 months

READ TOGETHER

28% have trained a majority of their hiring managers recently → **17%** would make interview training the one thing they fix

Coverage is thin. In most organisations **only a minority of hiring managers** have been through structured interviewer training recently, and a fifth say almost none have.

A gap that size should create demand. It hasn't. The most plausible reading is that teams have tried building capability and found **it doesn't work on its own**. Teaching someone to interview doesn't help while they're unsure **what they're interviewing for**.

Train against the scorecard, not in general. Training lands best when it's built around the criteria for the roles managers are hiring for.

CONCLUSION

Clarity, then tools, then training, then accountability. Most of us run it backwards.

Across conversations with **700+ TA leaders**, the same thing keeps showing up from different angles. Leaders want a clearer brief, rarely blame indecision, and would spend first on the tools that carry criteria into the decision. Meanwhile, **the enforcement most often named as the answer is already in place almost everywhere**, and the delays haven't moved.

That points to **an order, not a single fix**.

01
Clarity
Define what good looks like before the role opens.

02
Tools
Put those criteria where the decision happens: guides and scorecards.

03
Training
Train managers against the criteria they'll actually use.

04
Accountability
Hold people to a standard they've been equipped to meet.

Run it in reverse and each step undermines the next. **Accountability without clarity asks managers to be decisive about something nobody has defined.** Training without criteria teaches technique with nothing to aim at.

> The hiring manager bottleneck isn't a people problem to be chased. It's a clarity problem to be designed out, and the work starts before the role is ever posted.