

ACHIEVING **EXCELLENCE**

IN DIRECT SOURCING FOR THE
CONTINGENT **WORK**FORCE



A Custom Research
Report by:

SIA
STAFFING INDUSTRY ANALYSTS

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INTRODUCTION

The onset of the pandemic in March of 2020 accelerated the search for new, more efficient business models across every industry. Within contingent workforce programs, significant gains have been made over the past decade with VMS and MSP models, yet both have already achieved widespread adoption among large enterprises – at 86% and 65%, respectively, according to the SIA 2020 Workforce Solutions Buyer Survey.

What will produce the next wave of efficiencies? For many, the answer is direct sourcing. Interest is high, with more organizations expecting to consider elements of direct sourcing than any other workforce strategy (60% of surveyed buyers plan to explore direct sourcing in the next two years). Positive indications from early adopters hint at gains in all dimensions, including candidate quality, process efficiency, program cost and hiring visibility.

Despite this promise, the business case for direct sourcing is not well understood by many who have yet to adopt it, and even the definition of direct sourcing itself is controversial, with differing views from leading buyers and suppliers. Does direct sourcing represent the next wave of newer, more efficient business models, or is it an idea whose time has not yet come?

The objective of this research report is to answer this question. We will explore the business case around direct sourcing, identify best practices, and recommend concrete next steps. In order to accomplish this, we conducted in-depth interviews with 15 leading practitioners and thought leaders to gain a more nuanced understanding of these issues, followed by a survey among 183 buyers at 158 unique companies to quantify current practices and outcomes. See the section on page 24 for demographics of the survey sample.

The following pages detail our findings. But first, we briefly review the history of direct sourcing and offer a definition.

60%

of surveyed buyers plan to explore direct sourcing in the next two years, more than any other workforce strategy.



Defining Direct Sourcing

In discussions with leading practitioners of direct sourcing, it became clear that there was little agreement on exactly what is and what is not direct sourcing. Rather than a discrete practice with mandated elements, conversations with these leaders suggest that direct sourcing may be best thought of through its historical evolution and the levels of maturity of several interrelated practices.

In that context, we offer the following definition of direct sourcing in a contingent workforce context (direct sourcing in a permanent hiring context is typically referred to as talent acquisition):

Direct sourcing

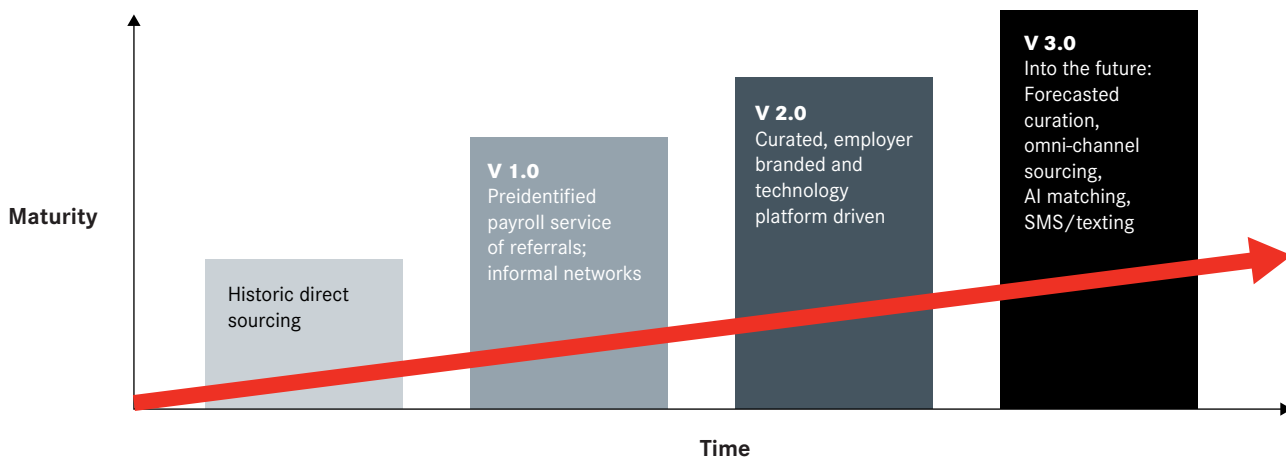
A term commonly used to refer to the process by which a company leverages its own candidate pool (e.g., former employees, retirees, silver medalist applicants from its own ATS) to place within the company, as contingent/temporary employees. Direct sourcing does not necessarily mean that 100% of a company's hiring will be done in-house and with no relationships with intermediaries. In earlier times, this practice for contingent workers largely consisted of informally sourced, pre-identified candidates who were placed on the payroll of a third-party payroll provider. More modern and mature direct sourcing programs typically leverage the employer

brand in job advertising to maximize candidate flow. More recently, the demand for direct sourcing has been accelerated by the evolution and multiplication of talent acquisition tools and services (aided by developments in artificial intelligence and big data). Such tools include software for managing and curating candidate talent pools. Next-generation direct sourcing programs often include a talent curation service layer (either internal or outsourced) and a partner to take on employment responsibility (employer of record/agent of record services in the US) for those workers who should not be or do not want to be classified as independent.

DIRECT SOURCING MATURITY MODEL

Building on this definition, one can consider direct sourcing for contingent workers as a continuum of practices moving from less mature to more mature, whereby Leaders produce superior outcomes in attraction, retention, cost and speed. Note that there is no single practice considered a “must” but rather widespread implementation of a suite of activities that represents what we describe today as direct sourcing.

Direct sourcing models have matured over time



Historic direct sourcing.

This includes direct hiring of contingent workers that would not normally be termed “direct sourcing” but nonetheless is direct. Examples include the hiring of interns as well as migrant farm workers, one of the largest single categories of contingent workers.

Version 1.0: Pre-identified payroll services.

Here, managers use informal networks of individual contingent workers who are either engaged as independent contractors or, if needed, put on the payroll of a payroll services firm. This is widely practiced across nearly all firms, and though it includes direct engagement with hiring managers, it is not typically thought of as direct sourcing because of its ubiquitous nature.

Version 2.0: Curated, branded, and technology platform driven.

These practices represent “modern direct sourcing” whereby leading-edge firms formalize and scale the above, leverage their employer brand, use direct sourcing technology platforms, and curate talent pools, managed either internally or by a third party, with the option of employer or agent of record.

Of the handful of practices identified as modern direct sourcing, leading-edge firms typically pick and choose the subset that makes sense for their own organization. For example, a minority of more mature direct sourcing programs choose not to leverage their corporate brands, yet they follow other leading practices and may still be considered advanced.

What we have learned from decades of permanent talent acquisition strategy, however, is that leveraging the employer brand leads to more and higher-quality candidates over time.

For clarity, it should be noted that there are a variety of technologies that some companies currently use to directly engage in some way with contingent workers without traditional staffing suppliers. While not direct sourcing technology platforms per se, tools such as freelancer management systems (FMS), chatbots and candidate engagement platforms, for example, would all fit in this category and automate some portions of the process.

Version 3.0: Into the future with forecasted curation, omni-channel sourcing, AI enablement, and SMS text messaging.

While the future is always speculative, we believe that as direct sourcing practices evolve, the employer brand job advertising, platform and curation best practices will become more widespread. Regular forecasting of future workforce needs will shape the talent pools in advance of job requisitions, and expanding advertising and sourcing to all available channels will grow the pools quickly. To improve curation efficiency, the use of AI-based job matching and SMS text messaging to rapidly engage candidates will become more widespread as a key enabler of success. As the adoption of best practices grows, direct sourcing hiring will expand. Within the US, leading companies are already able to achieve up to 85% of total hires via direct sourcing.

Defining contingent work and workers

This report focuses on direct sourcing among **contingent workers**, who are primarily distinguished by having an explicitly defined or limited tenure.

Contingent Workers

Contingent workers include temporary employees provided by an outside staffing agency and independent contractors/consultants. Contingent workers may also include temporary workers from an internal pool, and others (such as summer interns, seasonal workers, freelancers, “crowd-sourced” workers, etc.) employed directly by an organization for an intentionally limited time period.

From an employer’s point of view, **contingent work** also includes statement of work (SOW) consultants who work for the company on a short-term basis.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

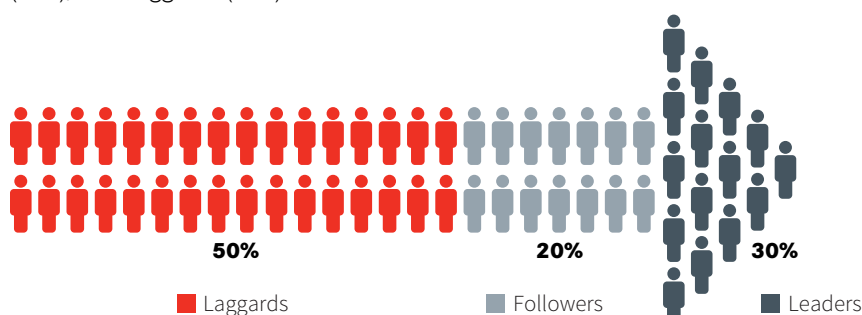
Is direct sourcing today's heir to VMS and MSP models, with the potential to drive a new wave of efficiency gains in contingent workforce management? If market interest is an indication, the answer is "yes."

In SIA's recent Workforce Solutions Buyer Survey, half of the top workforce strategies being considered in the next two years are key elements of direct sourcing (see page 6). As a result, overall direct sourcing implementations are expected to rise to 60% adoption within the space of two years.

Driving this interest is the promise of gains across the board – reductions in cost, increases in hiring speed and continuous program innovation – as well as a desire to leverage the employer brand to attract high-quality, diverse talent. Despite this high level of interest, buyers are less confident in their expertise around direct sourcing compared to their overall expertise in contingent workforce management strategies.

Leaders Are Winning the Game

We found this level of expertise to vary widely, and we identified three groups based on their direct sourcing practices and claimed level of expertise: Leaders (30%), Followers (20%), and Laggards (50%).



Do Leaders achieve the sought-after gains promised by direct sourcing advocates? The answer is a resounding "yes" – Leaders outperform Laggards on average by a factor of 4 to 1 on every measured outcome. The Leaders' advantage is particularly strong in talent acquisition and general business outcomes, with cost, time and retention still representing significant advantages over Laggards.

Throughout this report, we contrast the direct sourcing Leaders with Laggards to illustrate the differences in outcomes, barriers and practices.

Direct sourcing
leaders outperform
Laggards by an
average of

4:1

across all measured
outcomes.

What Is Direct Sourcing?

In discussions with practitioners and thought leaders, one consistent theme emerged: There is little consensus around the definition of direct sourcing. While we offer our own definition in the prior section (see page 2), following the analysis of practices employed by 158 separate companies, the reason for the lack of consensus became clear: Direct sourcing consists of an interrelated series of practices, not all of which any one leading firm follows.

For example, 58% of the Leaders outsource the overall process to a Managed Direct Sourcing (MDS) supplier, while others produce strong outcomes through in-house “self-sourcing.”

In general, Leaders in direct sourcing follow three key strategies:



As the practice of direct sourcing grows, we expect the next wave of capability building to focus on widening the sourcing net as broadly as possible and leveraging AI and SMS capabilities to improve talent pool curation efficiency and scalability.

Start at the Top

Among those who have struggled with direct sourcing, the lack of understanding of the business case combined with uncertainty around best practices have served as powerful barriers to adoption. This uncertainty has manifested itself in a perceived lack of resources: staff, budget and limited senior management support are seen by Laggards as the top roadblocks.

Leaders understand that direct sourcing success starts with commitment among senior management to create clear organizational program ownership, address (often overstated) co-employment concerns head-on, and provide visible c-suite support, as well as agreement to leverage the employer brand in job advertising and sourcing.

Our aim with this research is to better understand the limits and opportunities in the business case and establish a path forward for direct sourcing implementation. We will start with the market’s view of direct sourcing today.

Direct sourcing consists of an **interrelated series of practices**, not all of which any one leading firm follows.

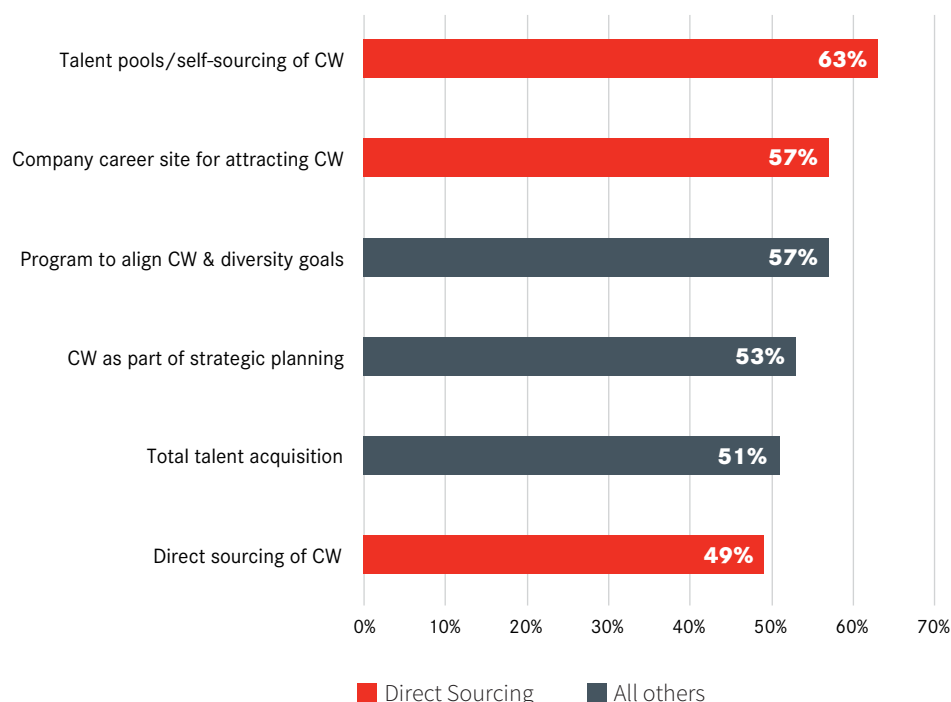
We expect the next wave of capability building to focus on **widening the sourcing net** as broadly as possible and **leveraging AI and SMS capabilities** to improve talent pool curation efficiency and scalability.

THE RISE OF DIRECT SOURCING

As part of the 2020 Workforce Solutions Buyer Survey, SIA assessed workforce strategies likely to be explored within the next two years. Among the 14 items tested, half of the top six spots shown below are direct sourcing strategies.

Direct sourcing strategies top buyer priorities

Top contingent workforce buyer strategies to explore within two years (% of companies)



Growth in direct sourcing practices is expected to **outpace all other workforce strategies** over the next two years.

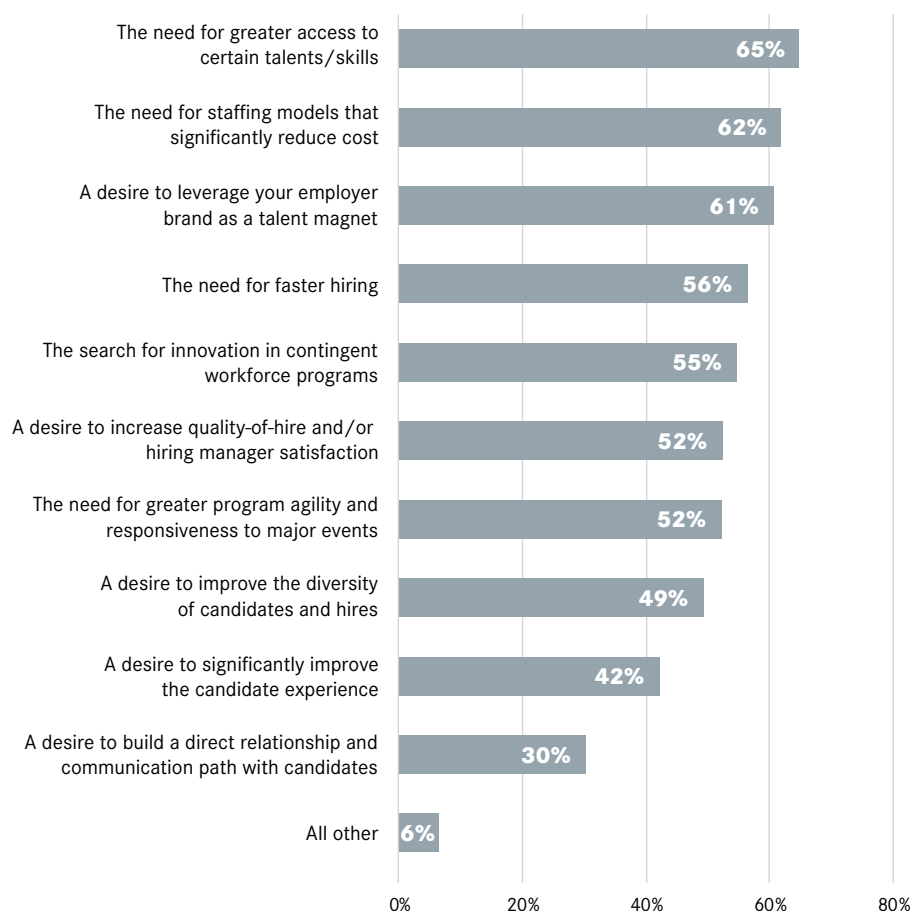
Source: SIA Workforce Solutions Buyer Survey 2020

What is driving this interest? Direct sourcing holds the promise of delivering the next wave of productivity gains, previously realized through the adoption of VMS and MSPs. According to the buyers we surveyed, the key drivers of direct sourcing adoption focus on access, cost, leveraging the employer brand, and speed.

Specifically, buyers see direct sourcing as a way to improve access to increasingly hard-to-find talent, while delivering cost savings at the same time. Perhaps the defining characteristic of direct sourcing is the usage of the employer brand as a magnet to attract talent, and this ranks as one of the top drivers in its adoption. Also appealing to buyers is the need for faster hiring and the general search for continued innovation.

Access, cost, employer brand, and speed drive direct sourcing adoption

Contingent direct sourcing drivers (% of respondents)



Question: Which of the following, if any, do you believe will drive and/or accelerate your adoption of contingent direct sourcing? (Select all that apply.) N=128.

Industries with the greatest need for specialized talents include technology, finance, pharmaceutical and professional services, and they are also more likely to be among Leaders in direct sourcing. However, direct sourcing leaders can be found across a wide range of industries, geographies and company sizes.

Despite this widespread interest, fewer believe direct sourcing is as high a priority today (34%) as it should be (47%). As we will explore in the next section, this may be driven by uncertainty around the business case for direct sourcing. Regardless, this imbalance represents pent-up demand for direct sourcing.

Nearly 2/3 of the buyers cite the need for greater access to certain skills as a driver of direct sourcing adoption.

Key point:

Access to specific talent, cost, leveraging employer brand, and speed will drive the growth of Direct Sourcing.

“

The contingent workforce share is expected to double to 40% by 2025 as companies seek more agility. The war for talent, and hence the importance of the employer brand in attracting the best contractors is well and truly underway.”

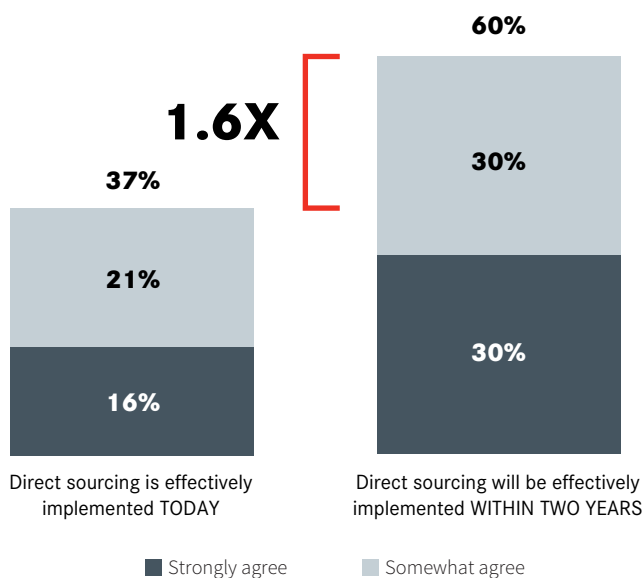
— **Dr. Mike Haywood**
LiveHire Founder

Looking to the future, buyers across the spectrum believe direct sourcing will grow in their organization, with an overall 1.6X growth in expected implementations within two years.

While this is likely overstated, it is a strong indicator that interest in direct sourcing is high and that concrete efforts will be made in the near term.

Most expect direct sourcing implementation within two years

% Agreement that direct sourcing implementations are effective today and within two years



Question: Percentage who strongly and somewhat agree: Regarding the IMPLEMENTATION of direct sourcing within your organization for your contingent workforce, to what extent do you agree with each of the following statements? N=158.

A separate analysis, conducted by Raise Recruiting, of Fortune 500 companies' careers sites suggests that few companies are utilizing a direct sourcing best practice of making contingent jobs publicly available. In the review of websites across the Fortune 500, only 6% provide links to contingent jobs on their corporate careers site. This more closely syncs with the 16% in the chart above who strongly agree their direct sourcing practices are effectively implemented today.

Regardless of the numbers, interest and enthusiasm for direct sourcing are high, but adoption of the practices is not yet widespread.

1.6X

expected growth of direct sourcing over the next two years

Only 6%

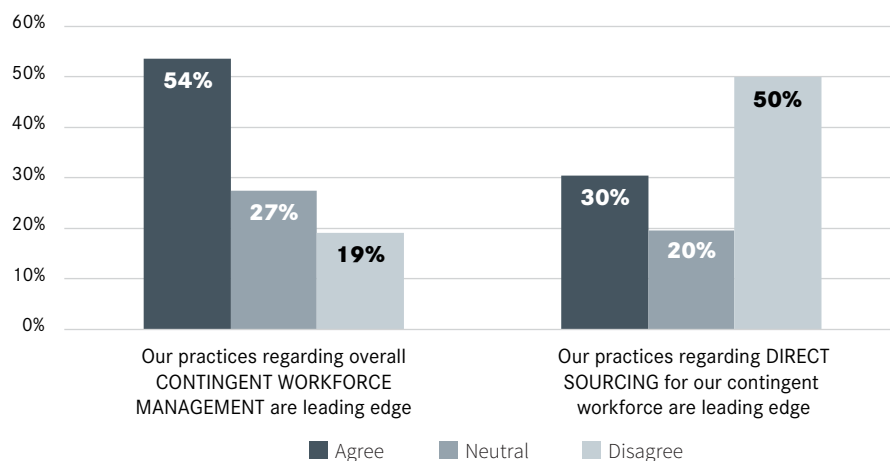
of Fortune 500 companies link their company career sites to contingent positions, a key best practice.

An Evolving Practice

Contributing to this hesitancy is the marketplace's view of direct sourcing as an emerging practice in its early stages of adoption. Among the 158 companies interviewed for this research, more than half (54%) view their overall contingent management practices as leading edge. When considering their current direct sourcing practices, the sentiments flip – half disagree.

Direct sourcing practices lag far behind contingent workforce practices

Self-evaluations of workforce practices as leading edge (% agreement)



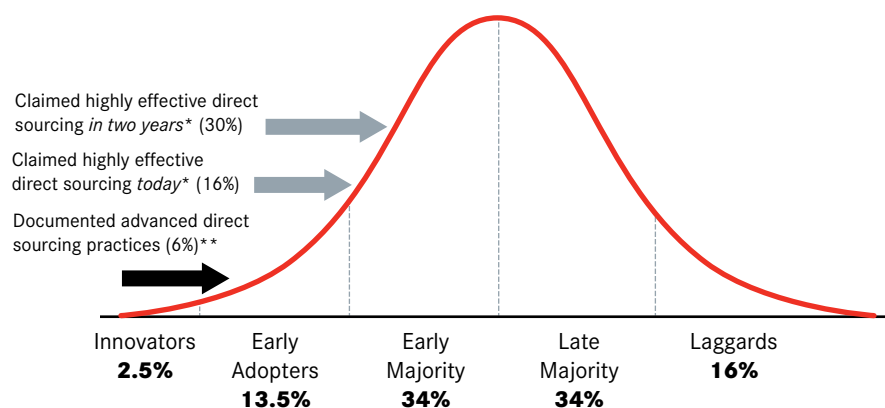
Only
30%
believe their direct sourcing practices are leading edge.

Question: Which of the following statements best describes your organization's practices? N=158.

The innovation adoption curve provides a framework through which to view the maturity of direct sourcing. This suggests that direct sourcing is in the process of transitioning from the minority of risk-taking early adopters to the larger, more conservative but still forward-looking early majority. This is an inflection point for technologies where adoption increases at its greatest rate.

Direct sourcing expected to expand beyond early adopters within two years

Diffusion of innovation over time



Source: Rogers, Everett (16 August 2003). Diffusion of Innovations, 5th Edition. Simon and Schuster. ISBN 978-0-7432-5823-4.

*"Highly effective implementations" – those who strongly agree direct sourcing is effectively implemented today/in two years.

**Percentage of Fortune 500 companies with links to contingent jobs on corporate website.

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR DIRECT SOURCING

To understand the potential business case for direct sourcing, we compared the outcomes for Leaders, who agree that their direct sourcing practices are leading edge, with Laggards, who disagree. Their self-perceptions were validated against actual practices, which are polar opposites across the groups and are detailed in the next section.

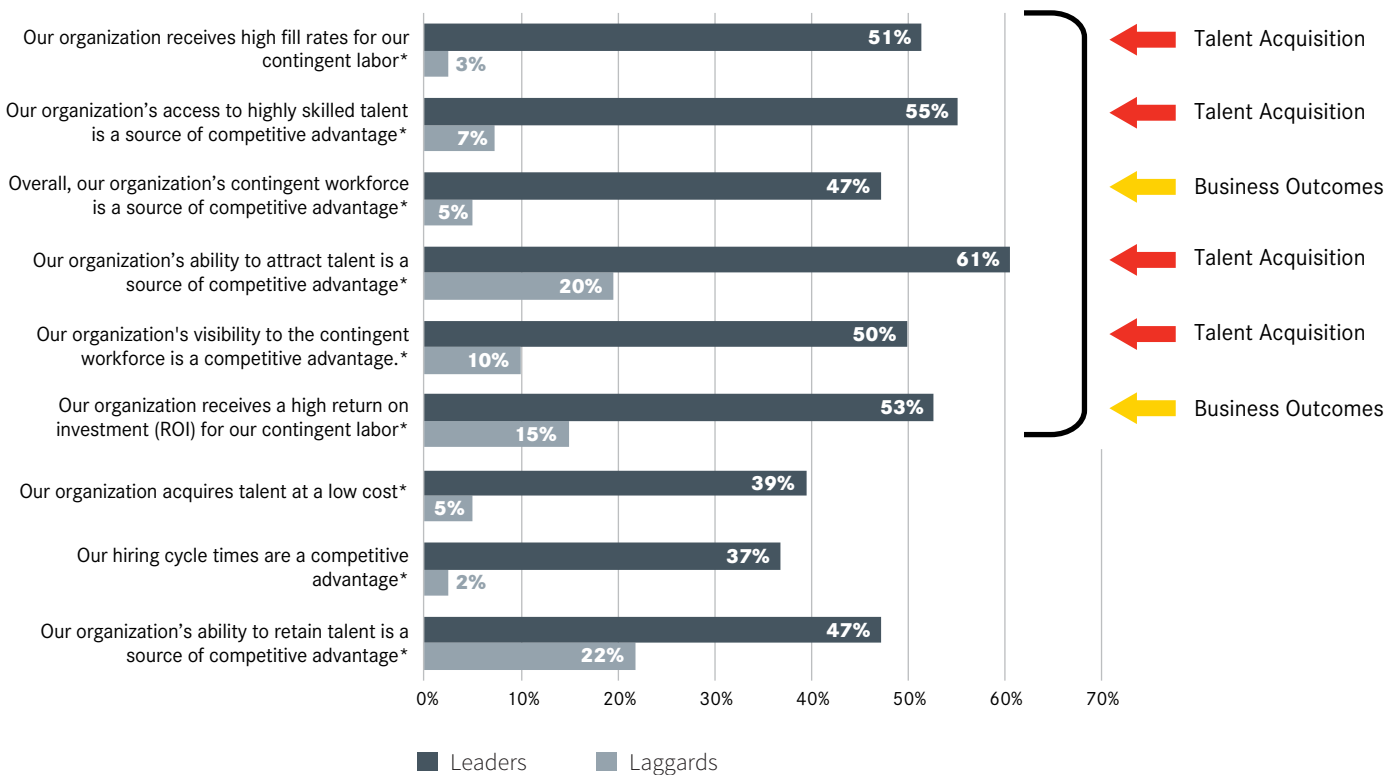
The result is clear: Leaders achieve superior outcomes across all metrics. Not only are all of the differences statistically significant, but Leaders outperform Laggards by a factor of 4 to 1 across all metrics. While this correlation does not imply causation, we will later demonstrate that Leaders also follow far more practices considered by industry experts to be advanced.

As shown in the chart below, the greatest differences relate to talent acquisition and general business outcomes. For talent acquisition, Leaders report much stronger fill rates, skilled talent access, attraction as a competitive advantage, and contingent workforce visibility. For business outcomes, they report their contingent workforce as a competitive advantage and achieve a high ROI, a key metric for proving the business case.

Leaders report **much stronger fill rates, skilled talent access, attraction as a competitive advantage, and contingent workforce visibility.**

Leaders outperform Laggards by a factor of 4 to 1

Direct Sourcing outcomes of Leaders vs. Laggards (% strongly agreeing)



Question: CONSIDERING ONLY DIRECTLY SOURCING, to what degree do you agree with the following statements regarding your contingent labor? N=97.

*Significant at 95% confidence interval.

The Laggards only rarely achieve any of these outcomes. For example, only 15% strongly agree that they earn a high ROI from their direct-sourced labor.

To cross-check this data and better understand the impact of a central tenet of advanced direct sourcing – talent pool curation – we obtained detailed information on 20,000 hires made between 2017 and 2019 from Australia and North America.

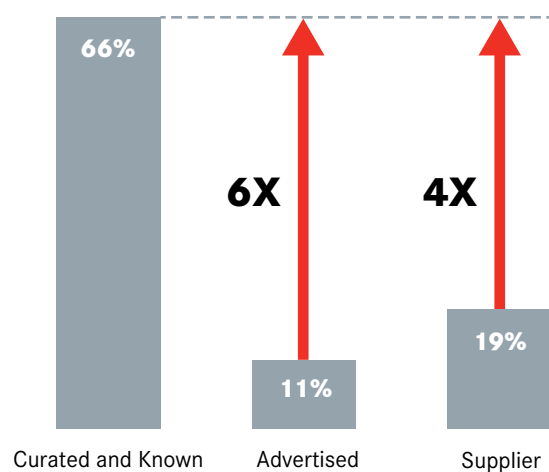
The data compares candidates from suppliers to those sourced directly, including both “curated and known” and through job advertising. “Curated” refers to sourcing from pre-populated talent pools, while “known” includes alumni, company-referred, and reassigned talent. See full definitions below the chart.

The results here are also clear – the ratio of shortlist to hire (the percentage of candidates presented to clients on a shortlist who are ultimately hired) is 6X greater for those hired through pre-curated or previously known candidates compared to advertised, and 4X the success rate vs. supplier-provided.

Both claimed and tracked performance support the outsized performance gains through direct sourcing. In the next section, we’ll catalog the set of practices Leaders employ.

Curated and previously-known candidates convert from short list at high rates

Percentage of those shortlisted who were hired (by source)



Source: LiveHire, 20,000 hires from 2017-2019 from North America (8%) and Australia (92%).

“Curated and Known” – All talent that have not worked for the organization previously, though they have been sourced, engaged, and talent-pooled in advance. Known includes sources such as alumni, company referred, and reassignments.

“Advertised” – Includes all talent that have not worked for the organization, yet were sourced after a job became open, using job board and social media as a job channel.

“Supplier” – All talent provided by a staffing supplier.

“

With direct sourcing, our speed to hire has significantly improved. On average, we reduced time to fill by a week compared to third-party fulfillment.

”

– **Wen Stenger**

DE&I Consultant and former
Sr. Manager, Global External
Workforce Program,
Thomson Reuters

DIRECT SOURCING PRACTICES: CURRENT AND FUTURE

More Is Better

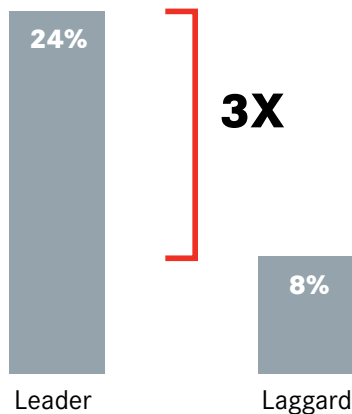
To understand what tactics Leaders employ in their direct sourcing programs, we polled contingent workforce enterprise buyers on the practices they follow today, and practices likely to be in place within two years.

Overall, Leaders on average follow over six of the 12 practices, while Laggards follow less than two. Still, even among Leaders, many of the potential strategies are not employed today; as is shown later, however, this is expected to change within the next two years.

In addition to their deeper toolkit, Leaders also hire a larger percentage through direct sourcing, also 3X greater than that of Laggards, although they average only 24% of their sourcing total. One of the leading buyers we interviewed indicated that she now fills 85% of her roles through direct sourcing, although this is atypical.

Leaders recruit far more through direct sourcing

Percentage of contingent labor recruited through direct sourcing



Question: Today, approximately what percentage of your total contingent labor force is being recruited through direct sourcing? N=136.

True global Leaders recruit an even higher percentage through direct sourcing. Looking again at a database of 20,000 hires, a total of 95% of hires were made through the direct sourcing channels of curated, previously known, and advertised, with the remaining 5% from staffing suppliers.

Although this percentage may be higher than most will be able to achieve, given the levels of interest seen and what some are able to reach, we believe it is likely that direct sourcing hiring will increase substantially within the next five years.

3X

more individual direct sourcing practices than Laggards

“

For the past 2 years, 85% of our contingent placement has been through the direct sourcing model. We still use third-party suppliers, but more for niche skillsets and markets, which is their specialty. ”

— **Wen Stenger**

DE&I Consultant and former Sr. Manager, Global External Workforce Program, Thomson Reuters

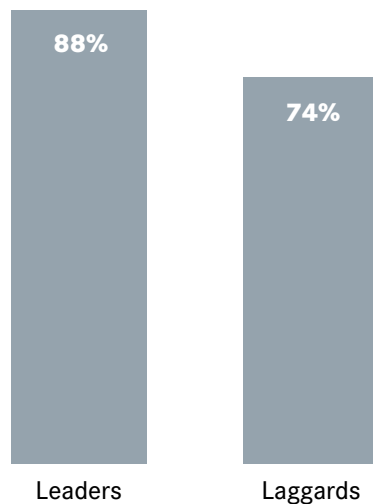
The Evolution of Direct Sourcing

Direct sourcing has existed for decades, though few would label the hiring of interns or migrant farm workers as direct sourcing models of contemporary best practices. We refer to these long-standing practices as “historic” direct sourcing.

More recently, managers began to leverage informal networks engaged as independent contractors or, if needed, put on the payroll of a payroll services firm. The use of payroll providers to engage pre-identified talent is ubiquitous and “table stakes” for leading-edge direct sourcing programs. We refer to this approach as direct sourcing 1.0. Much of the direct sourcing cited by Laggards is attained in this way.

Use of payroll providers to engage pre-identified talent is widespread

% who use a payroll service provider to payroll talent that was pre-identified by hiring managers



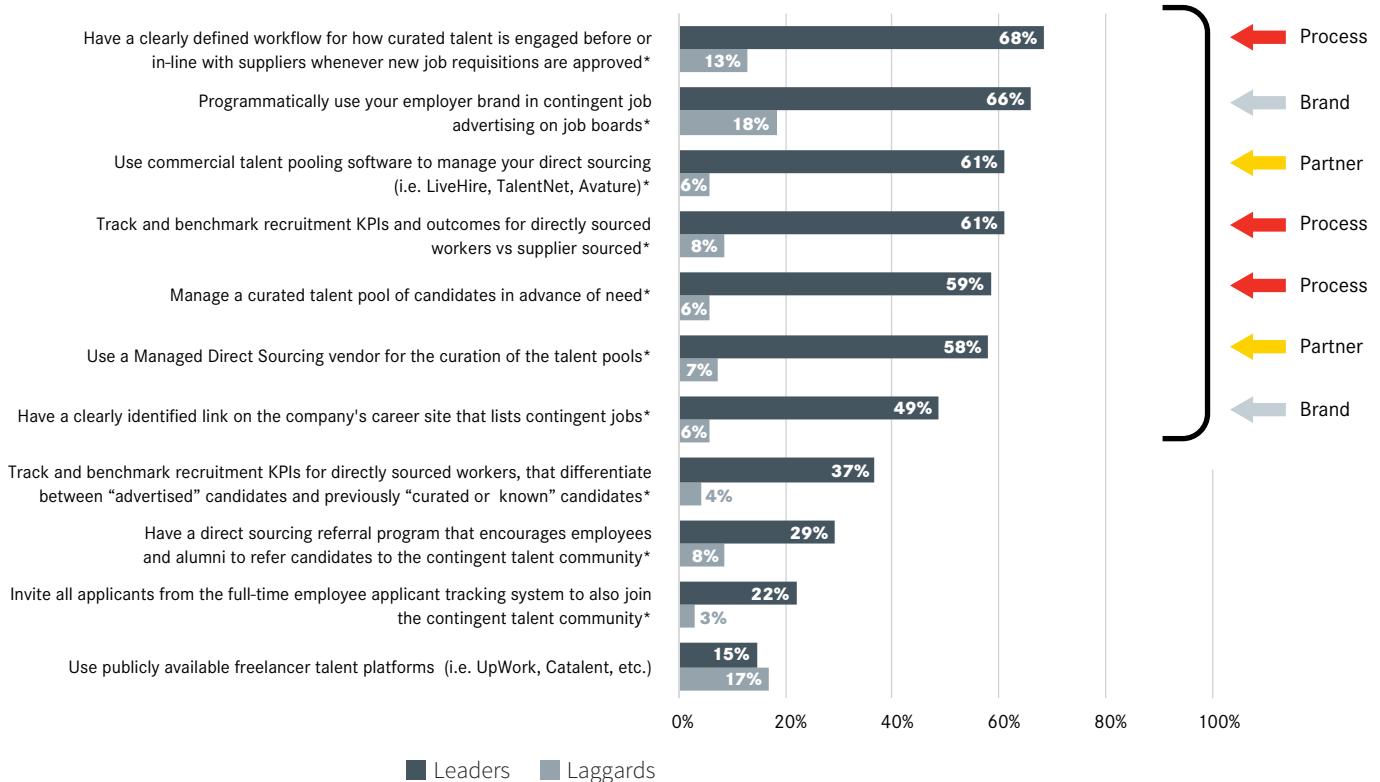
The use of payroll providers to engage pre-identified talent is “**table stakes**” for leading-edge direct sourcing programs.

Question: The following is a list of direct sourcing practices for your CONTINGENT WORKFORCE. For each, please indicate whether it is a current practice within your organization, will likely be implemented within 2 years, or to the best of your knowledge, there are no plans for its implementation. N=137.

In order to understand contemporary best practices, we contrasted the current approaches of Leaders and Laggards across 11 separate elements of direct sourcing. In initial discussions with practitioners, we found little consensus regarding a single, all-encompassing definition of direct sourcing, but we found a consistent set of activities used in its description. Overall, these include talent pool curation, use of employer branding, and leveraging of direct sourcing-specific technology. On average, Leaders follow 60% of these practices. This is what we term direct sourcing 2.0.

Leaders are much more likely to adopt direct sourcing practices

Direct Sourcing practice adoption for Leaders vs. Laggards (% following each practice)



Question: The following is a list of direct sourcing practices for your CONTINGENT WORKFORCE. For each, please indicate whether it is a current practice within your organization. N=137.

*Statistically significant at 95% confidence.

We can break down these practices into process, brand, and partner-related. For the process, Leaders clearly define the workflow regarding direct vs. supplier-sourced talent, track KPIs around direct vs. supplier-sourced workers, and, perhaps most importantly, create a curated talent pool in advance of need.

Leading-edge firms typically employ the following key direct sourcing strategies:

- 1. Use their employer brand to attract talent.**
All contingent jobs should be advertised on the careers site and on job boards using the employer brand and value proposition.
- 2. Leverage purpose-built direct sourcing technology platforms.**
Success in direct sourcing can be accelerated by tools that automate the growth and maintenance of talent pools beyond the functionality typically found in VMS and ATS tools.
- 3. Create pre-populated, curated talent pools.**
Leading-edge firms dedicate resources (either internal or external) to curate and nurture their talent pools in advance of job needs.



Inviting full-time applicants is the easiest way to quickly build your contractor talent pools. Just get the emails of everyone who has applied in the last three years and invite them.



- Edwin Jansen

Head of Corporate Development,
Raise Recruiting

They also leverage their employer brand for contingent job advertising, including links on the company's career site. According to one executive, programmatic job advertising combined with talent pool curation is actually the secret sauce for success. And many forge partnerships with talent pool software providers and Managed Direct Sourcing vendors.

To this last point, one common myth is that direct sourcing implies managing all the processes internally. In reality, 58% of Leaders currently partner with Managed Direct Sourcing firms to provide the technology and curate the contractor talent pools. Related to this is the concern about direct sourcing investments: While Managed Direct Sourcing pricing models vary, many have no up-front costs for technology or talent pool curation and they provide discounted maximum markups, which means that each hire is a net cost savings.

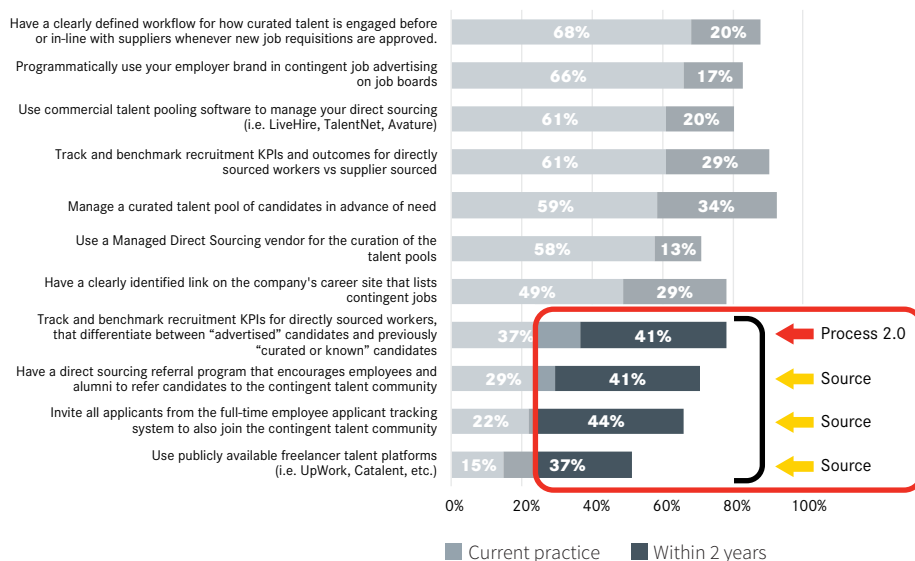
From a purely statistical standpoint, we cannot conclude that superior outcomes are a result of the practices – correlation does not necessarily imply causation, and other factors not measured may contribute to the Leaders' success. However, these findings match views expressed in the in-depth interviews and, in our opinion, are likely significant contributing factors in their success.

What does the future hold? While the Leaders expect to expand their services in the next two years by upgrading their KPI tracking and opening up talent sourcing to the full corporate ecosystem, direct sourcing 3.0 has forecasted talent pools that are omni-sourced and use AI for job matching.

This includes finer measurement of direct sourcing KPIs, and expanding sourcing to include referrals, ATS candidates, and increased use of public freelancer platforms.

Leaders expect to expand their talent sources and KPIs

Current and future Direct Sourcing practice adoption among Leaders (% following each practice)



Question: Among Leaders only: The following is a list of direct sourcing practices for your CONTINGENT WORKFORCE. For each, please indicate whether it is a current practice within your organization, will likely be implemented within 2 years, or to the best of your knowledge, there are no plans for its implementation. N=41.



Programmatic job advertising combined with talent pool curation is actually the secret sauce for success. That's a strategy typical contractor staffing programs are not leveraging.

- Tim Masson

CEO, Raise Recruiting

Myth:

Direct sourcing is always managed internally.

Fact:

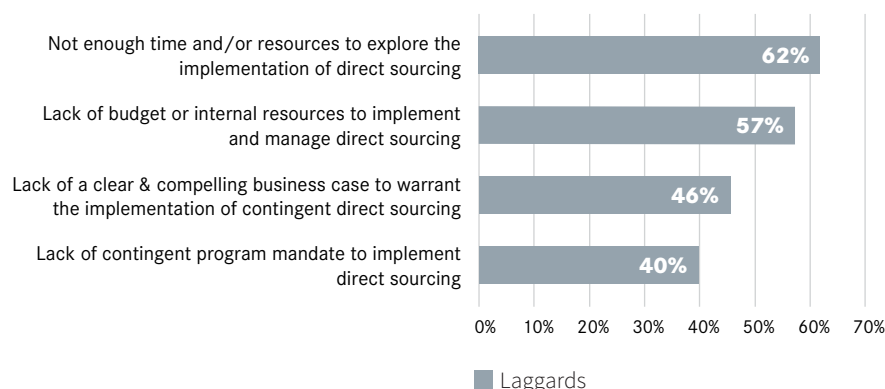
58% of Leaders outsource their direct sourcing through a Managed Direct Sourcing partner.

DIRECT SOURCING BARRIERS

A perceived lack of resources represents the major barrier faced by Laggards. The resources include staff, budget, management attention and a compelling business case. We view these as interrelated, since a strong business case will generally free up resources needed to pursue a direct sourcing program.

Laggards face multiple barriers stemming from lack of resources

Barriers: Laggards only (% experiencing barrier)



38%

more Laggards face barriers around time/resources than leaders.

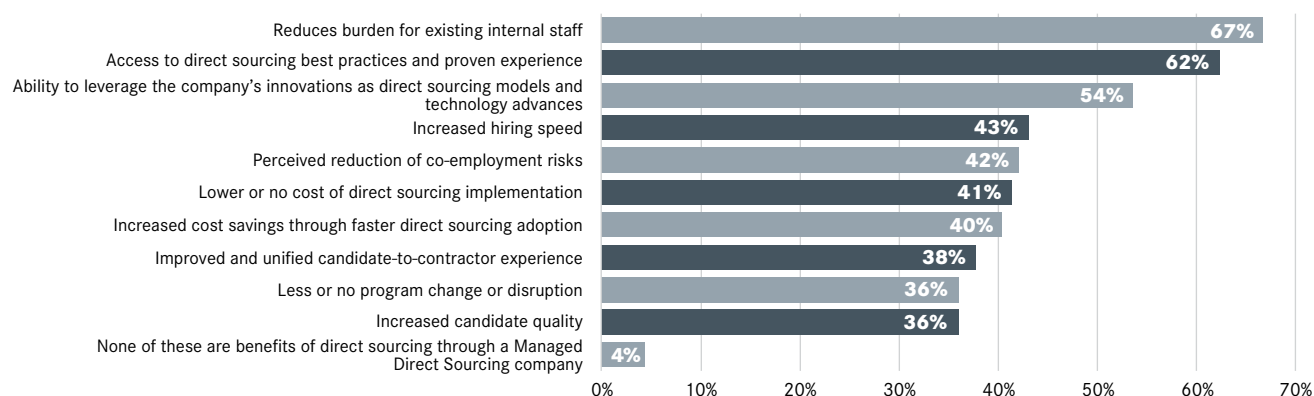
Question: Which of the following are CURRENTLY significant barriers to success in implementing or further scaling direct sourcing for your contingent workforce?(Select all that apply.) N=128.

Concerns about resources may be driven by an assumption that direct sourcing implies internal management of the program. As noted earlier, more than half of the Leaders partner with Managed Direct Sourcing providers, and a number of their pricing models include their services within the contractor markup, with no up-front or ongoing expense. In these cases, the investment of people and financial resources is minimal or nonexistent.

To understand the potential of Managed Direct Sourcing as one solution to these barriers, we asked the program managers about the potential benefits within their organization. Mirroring the barriers expressed above, two-thirds of overall program managers cite resources, in the form of reducing burdens on their staff, as the top benefit. Other benefits include access to direct sourcing best practices and ongoing innovation.

Managed Direct Sourcing reduces staff burden and leverages best practices

% of respondents citing benefit



Question: Direct sourcing may be done internally, known as self-sourcing, or through a staffing supplier, known as Managed Direct Sourcing. A Managed Direct Sourcing supplier operates the people, process, and technology of the direct sourcing program, proactively curates the private talent pools of contingent workers, and offers a reduced markup for the talent which is selected. In your view, which of the following would be the benefits of outsourcing through a Managed Direct Sourcing supplier? Please select all that apply. N=114.

Among direct sourcing Leaders, none of these barriers impacts more than a third of the group. Leaders face different and more nuanced challenges focused on possible conflict with the supply chain, lingering co-employment concerns, and resource concerns arising at relatively low levels.

Less than one third of Leaders experience any given barrier

% of Leaders experiencing barriers



Question: Which of the following are CURRENTLY significant barriers to success in implementing or further scaling direct sourcing for your contingent workforce? (Select all that apply.) N=128.

Regarding co-employment, as one executive said, “There is no history of an EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) claim from talent recruitment, including direct sourcing. Co-employment claims arise during talent engagement and can be mitigated by a payroll provider as the employer of record.” All of these concerns, arising at their relatively low levels, may be seen as a general sense of risk aversion.

Less than
one third
of Leaders experience
any given barrier

“

There is no history of an EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) claim from talent recruitment, including direct sourcing. Co-employment claims arise during talent engagement and can be mitigated by a payroll provider as the employer of record.

”

– **Wen Stenger**

DE&I Consultant and former
Sr. Manager, Global External
Workforce Program,
Thomson Reuters

BEST PRACTICES OF DIRECT SOURCING LEADERS

Start at the Top

To understand best practices, each executive evaluated a series of 16 individual practices related to corporate initiatives, technology, process, and outreach within direct sourcing. These were developed through the initial in-depth conversations to represent the full breadth of potential issues. The executives then rated the importance of each factor, as well as their own company's capabilities.

From these evaluations, it became clear that the road to successful direct sourcing implementation begins at the executive suite. Getting management on board and aligned is the first order of business.

Buyers believe the most important single issue relates to organizational design – having clear ownership and accountability of direct sourcing. Following this is the need to have a clear understanding around the risks of co-employment, particularly as they relate to the use of the corporate brand to attract talent. As noted earlier, according to one executive, no EEOC cases have been brought based on recruitment tactics.

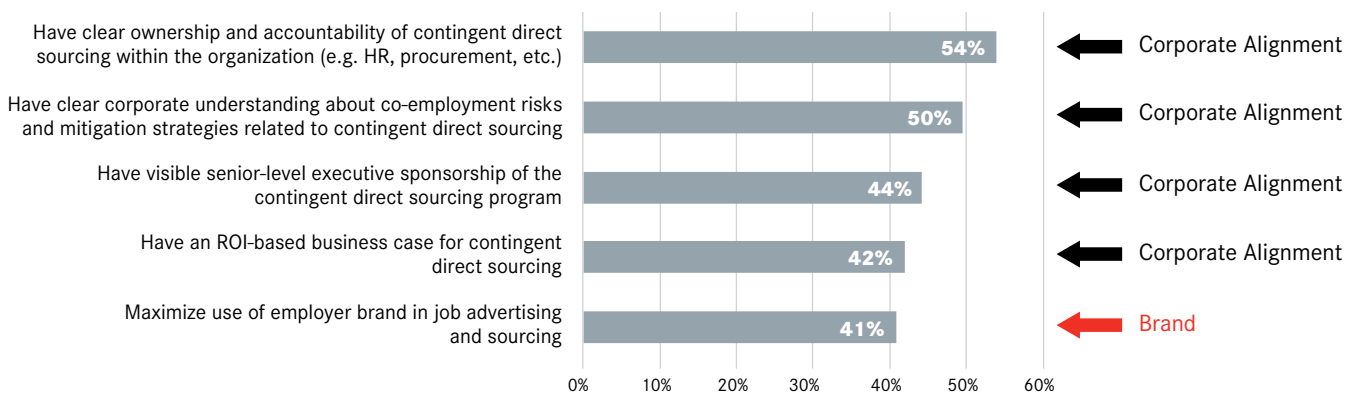
The other corporate alignment areas include the need for visible senior-level sponsorship, as well as an ROI-based business case. Often, the two go hand in hand, and it is our hope that this report will serve as a guide for creation of a business case.

Using the employer brand in job advertising and sourcing rounds out the most important areas. While this may be seen as a practice, it also demands that corporate alignment pursue a strategy that may be foreign to many organizations and is certainly a change to the prevailing practice of staffing suppliers advertising jobs with no mention of the employer.

Program **ownership and accountability** is the single most important factor in direct sourcing success.

The most important practices for direct sourcing success focus on corporate alignment

% of respondents indicating practice as “very important”



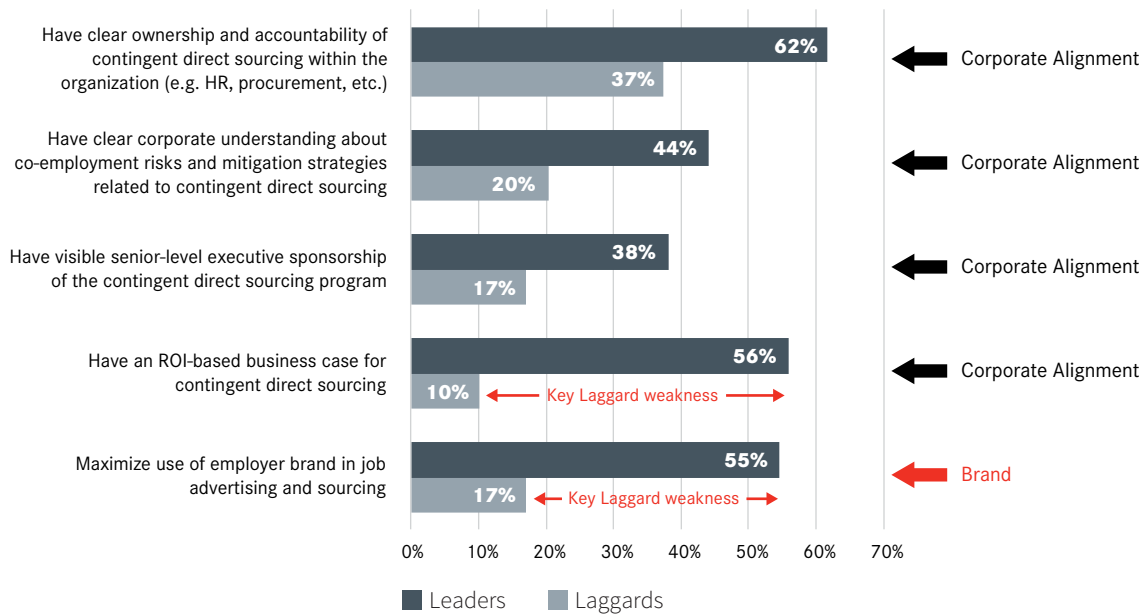
Question: The following is a list of actions that may be taken to enhance an organization's direct sourcing capabilities and performance. Which best describes your organization with regard to each practice? N=114.

When considering their own organization's capabilities, Leaders, as expected, report superior capabilities. They may receive somewhat less senior-level support than desired, but otherwise they perform well.

While Laggards find relatively strong corporate ownership of direct sourcing, they fall well behind in all other areas. Two that are particularly weak relative to Leaders are having an ROI-based business case and using the employer brand. This echoes the prior finding that proving the business case is a top barrier, and the difficulty in maximizing the employer brand advertising and sourcing may be a direct result.

Leaders prove the business case and leverage employer brand more effectively than Laggards

% of Leaders vs. Laggards rating practices "extremely capable"



Question: The following is a list of actions that may be taken to enhance an organization's direct sourcing capabilities and performance. Which best describes your organization with regard to each practice? N=114.

After reaching corporate alignment and maximizing the use of their employer brand, the second tier of actions revolve around the nuts and bolts of deploying a direct sourcing system – creating a process, leveraging technology, and widening sourcing options.

From a process standpoint, buyers emphasize the need to provide ongoing data and analysis to continuously improve performance, in line with the lean/agile development philosophy. They also highlight the importance of specialized expertise, with a direct sourcing manager accountable for overall success, and dedicated recruitment specialists for curation of the talent pool. Finally, they cite the need to regularly forecast job needs in order to fill the talent pools at the right size, balancing engagement and availability.

Buyers prioritize widening their sourcing net to invite candidates from their career site, job boards and even full-time applicants in their ATS to join their talent pool. For technology, they create a technology capability that separates curated talent pool from their active job requisitions.

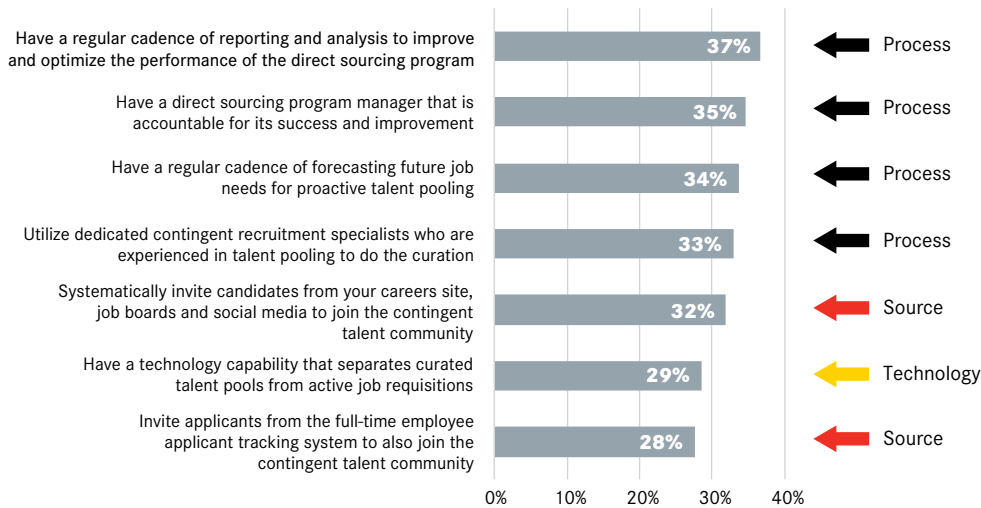
Leaders are

5X

more likely to have demonstrated an ROI-based business case.

Process, sources, and technology follow in priority

% of respondents indicating practice as “very important”



Question: The following is a list of actions that may be taken to enhance an organization's direct sourcing capabilities and performance. Which best describes your organization with regard to each practice? N=114.

Across all of these process, sourcing and technology areas, Leaders once again outperform Laggards. One area of weakness in both is the practice of continuously forecasting future job needs. In the absence of these projections, talent pool managers may be unable to sufficiently pre-populate pools for specific skills in advance of need, defeating the purpose of the pools. Establishing a disciplined forecasting process for job needs can largely mitigate this issue and is a cornerstone of direct sourcing 3.0.

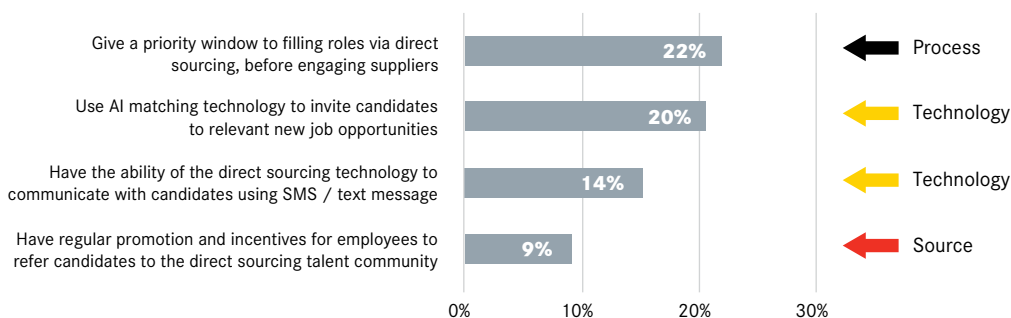
We expect the focus for direct sourcing today to be on curation, branding and usage of technology platforms, whereas in the near future, attention will shift to broadening sources and leveraging AI and SMS for more efficient talent pool creation and overall scalability.

The remaining areas considered less important today become key elements of that future vision.

In the near future, attention will shift to **broadening sources** and **leveraging AI and SMS** for more efficient talent pool creation and overall scalability.

Lower-importance practices may represent longer-term priorities

% of respondents indicating practice as “very important”



Question: The following is a list of actions that may be taken to enhance an organization's direct sourcing capabilities and performance. Which best describes your organization with regard to each practice? N=114.

EIGHT STEPS TO ACCELERATE YOUR DIRECT SOURCING

Ready to launch your direct sourcing effort, or accelerate the processes already under way? Here are eight steps and a pro tip that will put your program on a path to success, based on our analysis of 158 buyer organizations and leading practitioner advice.

Create Stakeholder Alignment

While successful direct sourcing initiatives require sophisticated, purpose-built processes, it is important first to create the corporate alignment that will enable these changes to take root within your organization.

1 Prove the business case.

Approximately six of 10 Leaders have decided to outsource much of the process through Managed Direct Sourcing suppliers. Consulting with these suppliers can be a quick way to develop realistic estimates of cost savings, and a fast way to scale. In conjunction with the findings from this study, a high-level business case can be created within a few weeks.

For organizations seeking more concrete results before committing, consider running a limited pilot, either outsourced or conducted internally. Talent pools are ideal for the test/measure/refine/scale cycle followed in agile development. In either case, it is essential first to set up systems able to measure KPIs on monthly growth, outcomes and returns separately in direct sourcing vs. supplier-based sourcing.

2 Gain agreement to leverage your employer brand.

For many buyers, lingering concerns of co-employment and perhaps also PR concerns around promoting their organization's use of contingent work have prevented them from leveraging their employer brand, a key element of direct sourcing. The practitioners we spoke with suggested three points to emphasize in discussion with internal stakeholders:

- Direct sourcing provides better control of your corporate brand, which is the best asset for attracting talent.

- Direct sourcing involves talent attraction and curation; this is distinct from hiring the contractors, which can still be managed by a payroll provider, if you choose to separate the two parts of the process.
- As one executive said, she found no history of EEOC claims based on recruitment, which is the focus of direct sourcing. There are many Fortune 500 firms which are publicly sharing contingent jobs using their employer brand and have faced no legal repercussions.

As with all legal matters, we recommend consultation with legal professionals.

3 Create organizational structure and accountability.

There is no best place for direct sourcing to reside within an organization, and both procurement and human resources were equally represented among the Leaders. Whatever is the case in your organization, it is critical to have clear ownership for your direct sourcing initiative. As a new discipline, this will encourage accountability and the development of separate KPIs, which are critical to measuring and optimizing ongoing success.

We also recommend assigning a direct sourcing program owner early on to facilitate the discovery, scoping and decision phase, should you decide to pursue Managed Direct Sourcing.

Deploy the Enabling People, Process and Technology

Once you have made the business case, reached agreement to use your employer brand, and created clear structure and accountability, the next step is to focus on execution. Depending on whether you choose internal development or Managed Direct Sourcing, your involvement in each step may vary.

4 Assemble an experienced team.

If you haven't already in the earlier stages, now is the time to appoint an accountable direct sourcing program manager and a team of experienced talent pool curation specialists, who are trained in proactive curation of talent pools vs. reactively responding to job advertising applicants. While curation shares skills leveraged in both staffing and corporate recruiting, it is a unique, hybrid position and should be treated as such.

5 Create and populate talent pools.

It is critical to create talent pools in advance of need – this unlocks the advantages of direct sourcing – and do your best to forecast job needs. As a reminder, even Leaders found forecasting difficult; starting this discipline early in your process will provide time and experience to hone your skills.

Populate the pool sourcing widely from multiple sources: your career site, job boards, social media, referrals, and prior FTE applicants. A few pointed out that the FTE pool may become your largest source for early growth. Using technology that is specialized for contingent direct sourcing and talent pooling helps facilitate the process.

6 Create clear workflows.

Create a workflow for the order in which you will engage directly sourced vs. supplier-sourced talent. Once the talent pools are full, some provide direct sourcing a day or two of exclusivity, while others continue to send jobs to both simultaneously. Either way, create, communicate and follow a structured process, and test exclusivity windows before rolling them out across the board.

7 Proactively manage conflict.

With the introduction of direct sourcing, as happened with the widespread adoption of MSPs, relationships with existing suppliers may well change. Proactively manage any supply channel conflict. For one executive we interviewed, this involved making clear they would lower the volume sent to suppliers and asking them to focus on niche skills. Among others, direct sourcing was viewed as simply an alternative supplier that focused on high-volume roles.

8 Harness the right technology.

Most ATS or CRM systems were not designed to accommodate the speed of recruitment involved in direct sourcing from talent pools. Ensure that your technology is specialized for direct sourcing and is able to separate active jobs from curated talent pools, and that it has advanced candidate communication capabilities that quickly and efficiently match and engage talent.

Pro Tip: Think Agile

Direct sourcing processes and technologies are changing fast. In this rapidly evolving environment, the test-and-learn approach is well suited to growing your process. And as mentioned earlier, success depends on capturing the right data, so make sure your KPI measurement is set up early to take full advantage of the learnings each iteration of your program will provide. Direct sourcing is not a “set it and forget it” initiative.

IN CONCLUSION

Does direct sourcing represent the next wave of newer, more efficient business models, or is it an empty promise? Our analysis of 158 buyer organizations provides a clear answer: Direct sourcing offers a potential impact on the scale of VMS and MSP models of a decade ago.

Interest is exploding, yet direct sourcing is being held back by uncertainty around its business impact and confusion around best practices. We hope the data and recommendations presented in this report will help organizations overcome both.

Driving this confusion is the contemporary practice of direct sourcing itself. Rather than a prescribed set of actions, it is rather the adoption of three pillars: using the employer brand, leveraging direct sourcing technology platforms, and creating pre-populated talent pools. Leaders pick and choose which work best with their organization, adopting some and omitting others.

We believe that over the next two years, more of these core practices will become as standard as payrolling is today, while Leaders will look to expand their sources of talent pools to all facets of the corporate ecosystem and leverage AI for efficiency and scale.

While the true current state of direct sourcing adoption is debatable – have we passed from early adopters to the early majority? – the future is more certain, with expected widespread adoption in the next few years. Driving this expectation are the strong performance gains that Leaders have long claimed and our analysis supports.

These performance improvements are open to all who pursue the path toward direct sourcing. With a clearer business case and roadmap for implementation, 2021 is a perfect time for all to begin this transformational journey.



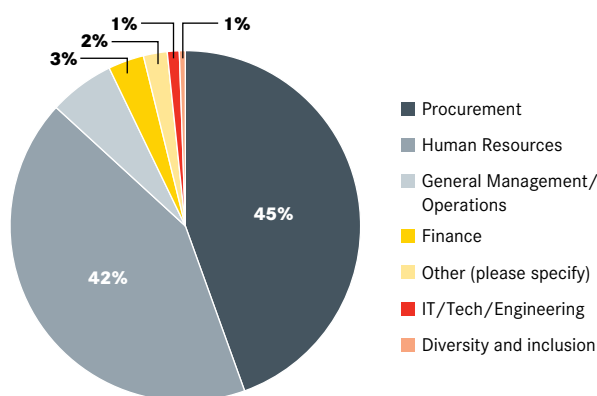
SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

As part of this research study, we surveyed hundreds of leaders in, primarily, enterprise US and European organizations.

At the commencement of this project, in-depth interviews were conducted among 15 executives. Interviewees represented large (primarily) international organizations across multiple industry sectors, including the public sector. These interviews were used to shape the narrative of the report and design appropriate survey questions to test our hypothesis. Additionally, some of the insights gained from these interviews are included as quotes in this report.

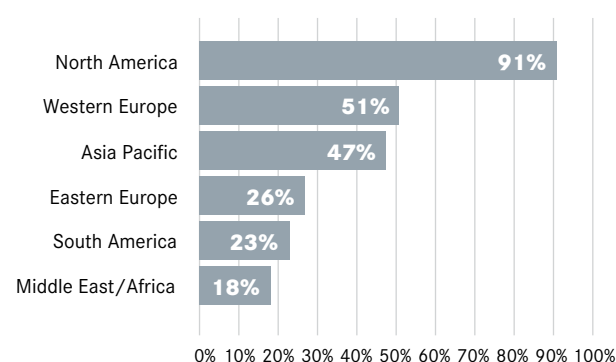
The survey was distributed to 12,332 individuals in leadership roles in major organizations. It was open from February 16, 2021, to March 11, 2021, and we received 183 complete responses (a response rate of 1.5%), with 158 unique companies represented. Respondents were primarily human resources and procurement, with most having a corporate presence in North America as well as many in Western Europe and Asia Pacific.

Function in organization



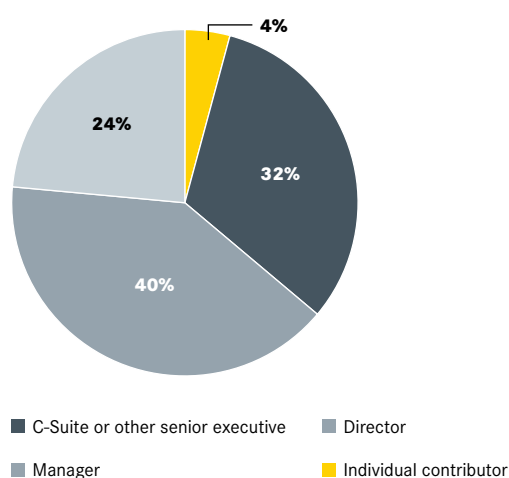
Question: Which division or functional area does your role report to? N=182.

Region where company operates



Question: In which regions does your company employ a significant number of workers? (Select all that apply.) N=181.

Role in organization



Question: Which of the following most closely describes your role? N=119.

Primary industry

| | |
|--|-----|
| Technology/Telecom | 20% |
| Finance/Insurance | 14% |
| Pharma/Biotech/Medical Equipment | 10% |
| Business/Professional Services | 8% |
| Other (please specify) | 8% |
| Transportation/Warehousing/Packaging | 7% |
| Energy (incl. Oil & Gas) & Mining | 6% |
| Manufacturing—Other | 5% |
| Healthcare (Hospital/Clinical not including Insurance) | 4% |
| Manufacturing—Consumer Products | 4% |
| All other | 14% |

Question: What is your company's primary industry? N=119.



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