Press release
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Why top talent is saying no to job offers and why employers are worried for 2026

- 88% of employers had a candidate decline a job offer in the past year.
- Top anticipated hiring barriers for 2026 include: lack of skilled applicants (61%), salary expectation mismatches (58%), and competing offers from competitors (58%).
- Employers are facing candidate job offer declines due to uncompetitive compensation (31%), poor job alignment (29%), and inflexible working models (29%).

Sydney, 13 January 2026 – While the 2025 job market appeared to favour employers, new research by specialised recruiter Robert Half highlights that hiring in 2026 will continue to require careful planning and adaptability.

Most employers are bracing for recruitment challenges, as nearly 9 in 10 (88%) admit to losing at least one candidate in the past year and anticipate facing multiple barriers in the year ahead.

Hiring headwinds for this year

Employers are entering 2026 with caution, with almost all (97%) of the surveyed hiring managers anticipating at least one recruitment challenge that could stall hiring efforts and impact business growth. The most common concerns include:

The challenge anticipated	% of businesses
Lack of skilled applicants	61%
Losing applicants to competing organisations/counteroffers	58%
Meeting candidates' salary expectations	58%
Finding candidates who align with our company culture	57%
Lack of applicants willing to work in the office	55%
Hiring quickly enough to reduce the cost of a vacant position	54%
Being ghosted by candidates in the recruitment process	52%

Independent survey commissioned by Robert Half among 500 employers in Australia.

Why candidates are opting out of job offers

Despite a more employer-leaning employer market, candidates continue to decline job offers for a multitude of reasons. The most common reasons, according to Australian employers, are:

Reason for declining job offer	% of businesses
Better offer received from another employer	32%
Salary or compensation not competitive	31%
Lack of flexibility or remote work options/office mandates	29%
Role misalignment with skills or career goals	29%
Lengthy or impersonal recruitment process	22%
Disconnect between individual purpose/values and company culture	20%
Unclear or limited career progression opportunities	21%
Concerns about job security or company stability	21%

Independent survey commissioned by Robert Half among 500 employers in Australia.

"While employers have had more control in the 2025 job market, the reality of hiring remains complex and never without its challenges," says **Nicole Gorton, Director at Robert Half**. *"The volume and variety of hiring obstacles businesses anticipate in 2026 point to a recruitment landscape where friction is increasing, not easing. Many companies are discovering that simply having an open role, on its own, isn't a guarantee to secure the right hire.*

"The high rate of declined offers highlights a critical disconnect between what businesses are offering and what candidates expect. Even in an employer-led market, top talent won't hesitate to walk away for opportunities they see as a better fit. Businesses need to think beyond transactional offers and address the full value proposition they present to candidates," concludes **Gorton**.

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Notes to editors

About the research

The study is developed by Robert Half and was conducted online in October 2025 by an independent research company of 500 finance, accounting, IT and technology, and HR hiring managers. Respondents are drawn from a sample of SMEs as well as large private, publicly-listed, and public sector organisations across Australia. This survey is part of the international workplace survey, a questionnaire about job trends, talent management, and trends in the workplace.

About Robert Half

Robert Half is the global, specialised talent solutions provider that helps employers find their next great hire and jobseekers uncover their next opportunity. Robert Half offers both contract and permanent placement services, and is the parent company of Protiviti, a global consulting firm. Robert Half Australia has offices in Brisbane, Melbourne, Mount Waverley, Perth, and Sydney. More information on roberthalf.com/au.

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