

Press release
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Hiring fatigue hits as overqualification and CVs flood the market

- 93% of employers report difficulty identifying standout candidates in today's job market.
- 82% say they've seen an increase in overqualified applicants in the past year.
- High volume of applications (37%), assessing AI-generated CVs (37%), and a lack of tailored or role-specific skills (35%) are the biggest challenges for employers to identify standout candidates.
- Employers say tailored experience (33%), clear communication in application material (33%), and evidence of adaptability or problem-solving skills (33%) are key to rising above the crowd.

Sydney, 10 February 2026 – A surge in job applications is offering employers more choice on paper, but in reality, standout talent is proving more difficult to find. New independent research by specialised recruiter [Robert Half](#) reveals that 93% of Australian employers face challenges in distinguishing exceptional talent in the current competitive hiring market.

With the latest unemployment rate sitting at 4.1%¹ and Seek job ad applications up 17.7% YoY², the employment market appears to be softening, yet competition for top roles remains high.

Why more applications don't always mean stronger candidates

A surge in job applications, driven in part by economic caution and shifting career priorities, has brought with it an unexpected challenge. In the past 12 months, 82% of employers have seen a rise in candidates applying for roles they are overqualified for.

Technology hiring managers (87%) have seen the highest number of overqualified applicants, compared to 82% in finance and accounting, and 73% in human resources.

"There's been a noticeable increase in candidates applying for roles below their experience level, particularly in technology and finance. But overqualification is not necessarily a win. An overqualified candidate may bring experience, but if the role underutilises their skills, both engagement and retention can suffer," says **Nicole Gorton, director at Robert Half**.

What's getting in the way of standout candidates

When asked about the biggest obstacles to identifying top applicants, employers cited several key issues:

Challenge	% of employers
High volume of applications makes it difficult to review thoroughly	37%
AI-generated CVs make it difficult to accurately assess candidate quality	37%
Many candidates lack tailored or role-specific skills	35%
Limited visibility into soft skills or cultural	31%
Generic CVs and cover letters that don't highlight unique strengths	29%
Overqualification or mismatched experience levels	28%

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

Want to stand out? Here's how

¹ [Labour Force, Australian Bureau of Statistics, January 2026](#)

² SEEK Job Ad Postings - 12-months to Nov 2025 (vs 12-months to Nov 2024)

In this saturated environment, the top qualities that help candidates cut through the volume, according to hiring managers:

- 33% say demonstrated, relevant experience tailored to the role
- 33% say clear and concise communication in CV and cover letter
- 33% say evidence of adaptability or problem-solving skills
- 31% say strong alignment with company values or culture
- 29% say professional presentation and attention to detail
- 27% say unique achievements or career story
- 27% say demonstrated understanding of the company or industry

“Hiring managers are navigating higher volumes of applications and many are struggling to distinguish the best person for their open role. Uniform formatting, templated language, and AI-generated content often blur the differences between applicants, making it more challenging to evaluate genuine skills and suitability.

“Amid the noise of high application volumes and AI-generated content, employers are focused on indicators of role-specific experience, problem-solving capabilities, and cultural alignment. Candidates who can effectively demonstrate these attributes stand out in an otherwise crowded and undifferentiated talent pool,” 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, Melbourne South-East, Perth, and Sydney. More information on roberthalf.com/au.

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