

# Recruitment is truly the hardest job there is.

Have you ever watched paint dry?

The change from moment to moment is imperceptible.

You apply it wet and come back a day later and it is dry.

Great for the wall, not so great for the ladybird that got caught in it.

Our lives are fast-paced.

It makes it even more difficult to notice anything slowly changing around us.

The slow steady decrease in the cost of computing power is a great, positive, slow change over the last decades.

The gradual erosion of our privacy by social media may or may not be so positive, but we are all living proof of how that went unnoticed until a scandal finally brought it to our collective attention.

What ever you think of the social media giants, you have to respect them because they deal with the trickiest problem known to the human race - people.

People are complicated, individually, as groups, as nations and as a species.

Computers, even cutting edge ones with "clever" artificial intelligence, machine learning, big data, block-chain and the like are still only as clever as the person programming them.

Historically this has been fine for situations where logic is the rule by which computers are programmed.

Logic is easy.

It is clear.

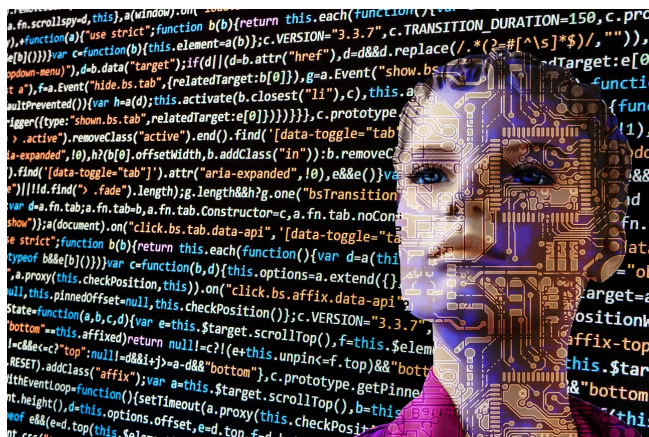
People by contrast are beautifully complex.

Logic is used more as a guide than a rule.

Emotions and individuality are the primary features of a person.



So what happens if you mix people and computers together? What happens is efficiency and effectiveness, but only as long as they only interact at a logic level. Your online banking app does exactly what you want it to do. Your web browser is perfect at being an invisible portal to content. Your online shop that tells you other customers who bought that item also bought other items. All purely logic and brilliant.



Unfortunately when people and computers interact at a more complex, emotional level, someone is called upon to create "an algorithm" to interpret the person and act accordingly. How many of you are so good at the softer skills that you can always correctly interpret your partner, your friends, your colleagues? The basic algorithm in your favourite social media site created blinkers on what posts it would show you, believing it knew they were "things you like, so we will show you more of that" and directly led to fake-news and all the terrible effects that has already had.

The algorithm is only as good as the person creating it. However it costs money to create and refine algorithms, so in the growth and profit driven society we live in, once the algorithm is generating profit, there is no reason to improve it. Or even worse, the only reason to work on it further is to create more profit. The trouble is, the reason for the algorithm has got lost in the process. It was not designed to extract profit. It was made to attempt to interpret and understand people.

Look around.

Where else is the same thing happening?

Think of something else that is fundamentally all about the intricate complexities of people, but where the need for speed and profit has meant almost total adoption of an incredibly basic algorithm.

Let's take recruitment.

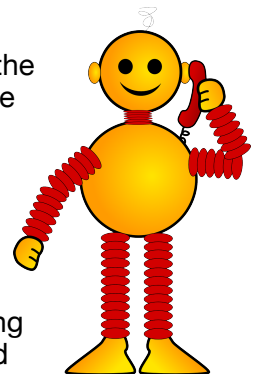
Years ago, for anything other than the most easily defined roles, recruitment would be performed by the person who would become the manager of the new recruit, or by a highly talented recruiter/headhunter using their great people skills to overcome the limitation of not being part of the recruiting company and its culture.



A job advert would be posted. A small number of applicants would apply. Each CV and cover letter would be read and thought about. The recruiter would imagine this person, what they can do, how they might fit and create a short list to interview face to face. This was always a 'black-art'. Of course it was about having some skills and aptitude for the role, but it was mainly about two people interacting and guessing if a relationship could be forged that would benefit the company.



A combination of far slower economic growth and the rise of a pervasive internet created a situation where many hundreds or thousands of people apply for a single role. Inundated, internal recruiters outsourced the initial part of the process to specialists. Soon those specialists also became inundated themselves with the sheer volume of CVs coming in. Clearly randomly binning 90% of CVs was not a justifiable way forward and so filtering algorithms were created. These filtered by keyword appearing on the CV. Success. Job done. A computer can do in a second what it would take days for a recruiter. The company gets the short list just as it always had and selects from them.



This has worked so well that it is not only the norm, but virtually the only way to proceed with recruitment at any level, in any industry or any type of recruit. But take a look back over the last 10-20 years and try to see the slow, normally imperceptible changes. Company and national growth has slowed.

Efficiency is low.

Recessions carry on for years merging into each other.

Morale within many companies is at an all time low and the fear of redundancy at an all time high.

What about job-seekers?

These are good times for any vertical specialist in high demand. People whose function in a company can be effectively summed up in a list of keywords are having a great time. Those search algorithms ensure they are rapidly snapped up. All is sweet.



However with this process having continued now for decades, these vertical specialists have been promoted and along with other more senior roles, their actual job cannot easily be defined with a list of keywords.



Their roles are about people not tasks. The job hunt that used to take days to deliver several offers on the table now takes weeks, months or longer with no success, rarely even an acknowledgement from the recruiter that their application has been received.

Their morale takes a beating. They don't understand how, being more senior, more experienced and generally a better employee matches up with their lack of success landing their next job.

Perhaps they become desperate and apply for anything. Perhaps they modify their CV to create keywords they think will get them past the filters. Sometimes this will work, but what happens when that person, who is unsuitable for that role starts working there? Morale, productivity, efficiency, culture all suffer.



Look around in your work place.

Can you see the signs?

How did we get here?

How did we not notice sooner?

It is not our fault. When a vital system appears to be working fine, you stop questioning the system. When the negative results of something take decades to manifest themselves, who could possibly notice that and work back to its root cause? Recruitment is truly the hardest job there is, and it is failing.



Recruitment by keyword search is like going fishing on a lake and scooping up all the fish floating on the surface. Seems a good idea at the time because it is so quick and easy, unfortunately the fish you actually want are those that are alive and productive, swimming around under water, unnoticed.

Recruitment by keyword search is like having no knowledge of engineering, but making a list of the parts of a car that are visible and proceeding to try and build it from them.

People are complicated.  
Interactions between people are amongst the most important, treasured and valuable possessions we have.  
The place we work potentially takes most of our waking hours for most of our lives.  
Get the people right and all the rest will tend to come into place.  
Swimming against the tide might not be easy, but you know when it is the only way to survive that is what you have to do.

Continue to treat the people as "interchangeable units of work", reducing them to keywords and using the most basic of algorithms to determine the most complex process your company undertakes and you are being swept down river with no chance of reaching your goal. Recruit people as a string of keywords and perhaps you undermine your company's very future. What ever way you decide to reverse the decline of productivity, morale and profitability within your company,



make sure that replacing your current recruitment processes with a truly people-centric system is your top priority. Until IT, computers, databases, applicant tracking systems, search and selection algorithm and any other automation you use can prove that it is at least as effective at selecting candidates that go on to add real value to your organisation, rather than ones that managed to tick the correct keyword boxes, don't let the computers near your recruitment process. Recruitment used to be a black-magic that worked, currently it is just a black-box that is eroding the very organisation you are trying to benefit.  
If you feel going back to a completely manual system would be impossible, then take a look at what can happen when you take the time to create an algorithm that can match the performance of the best traditional recruiters: CharacterISE [<http://characterise.strikingly.com>]

A photograph of a diverse group of approximately ten people of various ages and ethnicities. They are all smiling broadly and raising their hands in a celebratory gesture, suggesting a team that has achieved a significant success or is in a state of high morale. The background is a plain, light color, making the group the central focus.

# CharacterISE

**Why?**

**Recruitment and Job Hunting  
based on a person, their characteristics  
and their fit into the company**