

## JOB APPLICANTS' EXPECTATIONS OF THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS IN THE IT SECTOR

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**Purpose:** The purpose of this article is to identify the expectations of IT employees towards the recruitment process. We intended to establish their preferences in terms of the forms of recruitment and the type of information that arouses their interest in a job offer.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The research focused on external recruitment. A survey method was used, in which most questions were closed questions. A descriptive research and observation method was also used. The research group is extensive but does not meet the condition of representativeness. Therefore, the research can be described as survey research. However, they provide an interesting insight into the recruitment process in the IT industry.

**Findings:** Job candidates adopt two strategies. The first is a passive strategy, which consists of waiting for an offer from the recruiter. The second strategy is characterized by an active candidate who undertakes a search with specific companies. Above all, candidates expect information that will enable them to assess the match between their technological competencies and those required by the employer. In addition, an offer that draws the candidate's attention should include information on: the project, salary range, location, and form of employment. An effective recruiter needs to know the employer and characterize it attractively in terms of the company's development prospects, future challenges for the employee, potential promotion path, as well as the working atmosphere (team of colleagues).

**Research limitations/implications:** Research indicates an increasing role for the recruiter and innovative tools in the employee sourcing process. A significant proportion of candidates prefer telephone contact with the recruiter, which implies that recruiters have 'soft' skills. Future research should recognize the mechanism of the recruiter's work with the candidate but also identify contemporary e-recruitment methods that are constantly changing and improving.

**Practical implications:** The practical value of the article lies in the possibility of using the research to design a candidate-friendly recruitment process, which can further improve the number of candidates recruited. The results of the research have led to the formulation of some important tips that can improve recruitment effectiveness in the IT industry.

**Originality/value:** The research and its interpretation are conducted from the perspective of a company seeking an employee for a specific position. Our article highlights the need to analyze the recruitment process from the candidate's perspective. We show that recruitment,

as a communication process, can be a deterrent for candidates to decide to change jobs, despite the real (objective) attractiveness of employment and working conditions in a specific company. In this context, our findings may be useful for recruiters - those who make the first contact with a potential candidate.

**Keywords:** job advertisement; employee recruitment; external recruitment; IT.

**Category of the paper:** research paper.

## 1. Introduction

In modern companies operating in the knowledge and innovation economy, a great deal of attention is paid to the employee recruitment process. However, a great deal of research is oriented towards employer needs, refining the recruitment process from this perspective. There are, however, markets in which the skilled worker dominates, and attracting and retaining him or her determines the achievement of company goals, the generation of significant revenues, and ultimately, the survival of the company. We can count the entire ICT sector among such sectors. It is in this market that we see many vacancies for skilled and experienced personnel, of course. It is therefore important to maintain a balance between the employer's expectations of the recruitment process and the candidates' expectations of the process (Finn, 2017). This inspired the authors to attempt to investigate the expectations of IT job candidates towards the recruitment process itself. By knowing these expectations, it is possible to delineate recruitment processes that will increase their effectiveness, improving the ratio of the number of candidates recruited to the effort spent on recruiting them. In the case under analysis, it is a matter of influencing the numerator and denominator of this measure, by increasing the number of employees recruited for the same expenditure and/or reducing the expenditure on recruiting the same number of candidates. Ultimately, the cost of acquiring one employee should decrease. The content of this article focuses essentially on external recruitment, i.e. targeting candidates from outside the organization.

## 2. The specifics of recruitment in the IT industry

According to Michael Armstrong (after Cieciewicz, 2021, p. 21), the main objective of the staffing process should be to ensure - at the lowest possible cost - that there are enough employees to meet the company's human resource needs. It is most often assumed that the staffing process consists of three stages, i.e.: recruitment, selection, and adaptation (induction to work) (Król, Ludwicyński, 2006, p. 197; Sobocka-Szczapa, 2014). Recruitment refers to the process by which potential candidates are sought and encouraged to apply for a current or

future vacancy. The essence of recruitment is to communicate to a defined labour market the desire to hire a specific type of employee (Mahjoub, Kruyen, 2021; Muduli, Trivedi, 2020). Recruitment activities aim to attract a quantitatively and qualitatively defined group of candidates who can apply for a given job position. In this sense, recruitment does not include tasks related to the selection of a specific employee from among the candidates who have declared their willingness to work for a given company. The process of identifying the person with the required competencies to fill a vacant position is the second stage of the sourcing process. The term 'selection' connotes placing the right person in the right position. Selection is a process in which various strategies and tools are used to decide which candidate is best suited for the position.

Recruitment should fulfil four functions (Kawka, Listwan, 2010, p. 115; Wojtaszczyk, 2012):

- Informational – the content communicated during recruitment should address the requirements for potential candidates and the terms and conditions of employment in the organization.
- Motivational – generating interest in relevant professional groups and encouraging the best candidates to apply.
- Preselection – recruitment should discourage people whose competencies significantly differ from the requirements of a given position from applying.
- Image-related – recruitment activities may significantly impact a company's reputation and image as an employer (employer branding).

Several types of recruitment can be distinguished according to different criteria (Lipka, 2000). Taking into account the type of labour market, we can distinguish between internal and external recruitment. Internal recruitment takes place among people currently employed in a given company, while external recruitment is the identification and attraction of candidates from the organization's environment, i.e. the external labour market. As the article is essentially concerned with external recruitment, forms of external recruitment are outlined below. These may include (Branowska, 2021; Dolot, 2014; Mahjoub, Kruyen, 2021; Wolniak, 2019):

- advertisement in the media,
- advertisement on the company website,
- advertisements posted on online portals and vortals,
- job fairs,
- cooperation with employment agencies,
- cooperation with universities and other training centers,
- cooperation with specialized personnel consultancies (headhunters),
- adexpress, i.e. sending a recruitment advertisement by e-mail to a selected group of candidates - matching specific parameters - from a database of registered users (such a service is offered by specialized personnel consulting companies and Internet portals),
- cooperation with local authorities,

- search among people known personally and/or through friends, among people they recommend (recruitment using so-called informal contacts),
- searches among people known personally to employees (recommendations made by employees),
- advertisements posted on the company's Facebook fan page,
- samodzielne poszukiwanie kandydatów przez inicjowanie kontaktu z nimi, networking (m.in. przez portale typu LinkedIn).

Most often, external recruitment involves the preparation of a job advertisement, which has different forms, depending on where it will be disseminated. In the case of e-recruitment, it must comply with the standards of the individual recruitment portals. When a company uses its website, there is a limitation due to the specific technological nature of the site and the functionalities introduced. Often such advertisements take the form of a downloadable file or a rather simply structured advertisement. The situation is different for specialized online portals.

IT (Information Technology), is the business sector dealing with information technology, including computer hardware, software, telecommunications, and generally anything related to the transmission of information or systems that facilitate communication. IT covers many areas. The technology and telecommunications industry is growing rapidly, resulting in a steady increase in demand for professionals. Table 1 shows the share of each industry in the offers posted on the pracuj.pl portal. The share of job offers in the IT industry is growing; in 2022, one in four advertisements concerned employment in this industry.

**Table 1.**

*Percentage of job offers on the portal pracuj.pl in years 2018-2022*

Sector	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
IT	15%	15%	14%	22%	24%
sale	31%	30%	33%	27%	24%
customer service	22%	21%	18%	15%	13%
finance	14%	13%	13%	9%	12%
engineering	12%	11%	10%	10%	10%

Source: Raport Pracuj.pl, *Rynek Pracy Specjalistów H1 2022*, <https://media.pracuj.pl/presskits/rynek-pracy-specjalistow-h1-2022>, 14.07.2022.

There is a shortage of specialists in the IT industry with increasing demand for their work. This results in high expectations of candidates. The labour market analysis of the IT sector also indicates that the labour market focuses on employees who currently have a job. This means that the job offer must be competitive in terms of the working conditions that the potential candidate is provided with by the current employer.

In addition to classic forms of recruitment, new ones are emerging such as sponsoring non-IT-related events and publishing values for rising salaries. Some of the activities related to building a culture and organizational climate focused not only on improving working conditions but also on shaping the employer's image. Another form of recruitment is programs aimed at young people, women, or people who have had a break in service. These programs are often training programs that allow specific groups of candidates to complete their professional

qualifications. Only after the training and placement process do those with the best qualifications receive a job offer. This extends the scope of recruitment to new social groups, and this requires recruitment channels tailored to them.

Increasingly, recruitment models are emerging that combine the idea of industry social networks with the implementation of a recruitment and selection function in the selection of employees. The key to the success of such a combination is to offer something that will attract IT talent. An IT community is therefore created to which job offers can be directed. Competitions, knowledge and skills competitions in the IT sector with cash prizes can be used as a magnet.

It should also be noted that the IT labour market is characterized by a high level of competitiveness. There is a battle for employees in this sector.

The efficiency of recruitment is threatened by a phenomenon characteristic of the IT sector, known as counteroffers. Agata Dzierlińska, IT recruitment specialist at Grupa Pracuj, even states that some people take part in recruitment just to argue to negotiate with their employer. It is also common for people who want to change jobs to be offered new more attractive employment conditions by their manager. A situation arises where it is not uncommon in the final selection phase for a given candidate to decide to stay with the previous company (Rekrutacja i budowanie zespołów..., 2019).

The vast majority of IT professionals, according to the author's experience in this area, do not look for a new job on their own, adopting an attitude of passively waiting for new job offers. In this context, innovative and diverse tools for reaching out to candidates and the activity of the recruiter play an important role. Two directions in the development of HR selection issues in the IT sector emerge from this. The first concerns the creation of new tool solutions. The second concerns the development of recruiters' competencies in terms of the expectations set by candidates, in this respect. At the same time, interviews with recruiters indicate that for IT professionals, a simple and concrete conversation is a good way to present an offer.

To summarize: the analysis of the IT labor market, the following characteristics of this work that determine the specificity of the recruitment and selection process can be identified. These include:

- greater number of job offers than new job seekers,
- the passive attitude of IT workers in the labour market,
- verifiable technological qualifications of candidates,
- publication of salaries offered,
- very high level of digitalization of the work process (remote and hybrid working),
- the dominant role of e-recruitment,
- counteroffer phenomenon,
- strong position in recruitment portals.

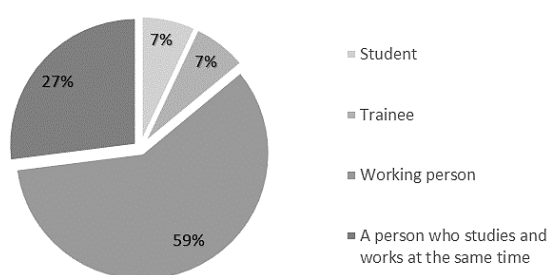
Building an appropriate job offer should respond to the information needs shown by potential job applicants. Hence the need to look at this very issue from the perspective of potential job candidates.

### 3. Methods and results

An important aspect of conducting an effective recruitment process is to propose such a course of action and the application of recruitment tools which, on the one hand, will suit potential candidates and, on the other hand, will ensure the appropriate level of competencies and skills required for the positions to be filled and the number of applications. The research posed several research questions of content:

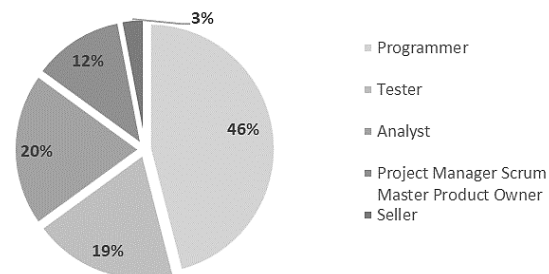
- What are the most important reasons for seeking a new job (reasons for wanting to change jobs)?
- What recruitment channels do candidates use for IT jobs?
- What information is most important for candidates to arouse their interest in a job offer?
- Which communication channel do job candidates prefer?

The research was conducted in 2022. As part of the research, a survey was conducted with 50 people involved in the IT industry. The survey was fully anonymous and contained 19 questions. The first four questions included data (gender, age, place of residence, etc.) to determine the demographic diversity of the survey participants. According to the survey data, the majority of respondents were male 64%. The respondents were in three age groups: 18-26 years, 27-40 years, and 40-65 years. The largest number of respondents were in the 27-40 age bracket, with the smallest bracket accounting for just under ¼ of respondents. Almost half (48%) of the respondents lived in a city of more than 100,000 inhabitants, with the other half mostly in cities of up to 50 (20%) or up to 100,000 inhabitants (28%). Only 4% of the respondents resided in a rural area.



**Figure 1.** Professional status of survey participants.

Source: own study based on the questionnaire.

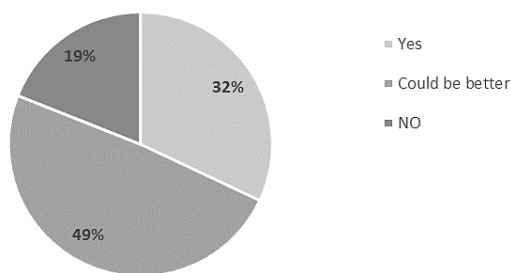


**Figure 2.** Positions occupied by survey participants.

Source: own study based on the questionnaire.

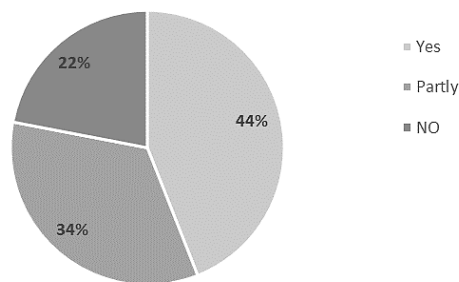
More than half (58.5%) of the respondents are employed, while 26.8% are both employed and studying. There are no respondents who are unemployed or on parental leave. Figure 2 shows the positions held by the respondents in the companies where they are employed. Almost half of the respondents hold the position of programmer. The other positions indicated (tester, analyst, project manager/scrumb master/product owner) are held by 12-19.5% of the respondents.

We assumed that expectations of recruitment are related to the evaluation of the current workplace, so we also surveyed respondents on their job satisfaction and salary. Figure 3 indicates the level of satisfaction with salary.



**Figure 3.** Survey participants' level of satisfaction with salary.

Source: own study based on the questionnaire.

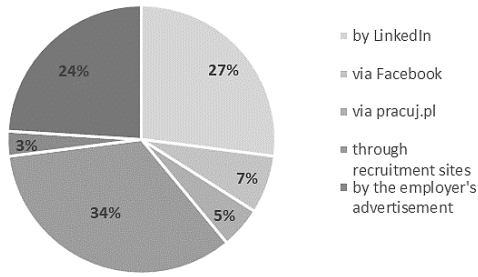


**Figure 4.** Level of satisfaction with current job.

Source: own study based on the questionnaire.

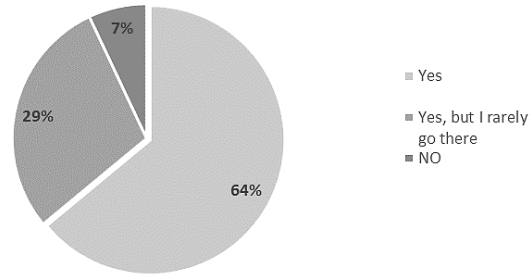
Almost half of the survey participants feel that their salary could be better and just under 20% explicitly state that they are not satisfied with their salary. Only 31.7% find the salary satisfactory. Figure 4 shows the respondents' level of satisfaction with their current job. Over 40% indicated that they were satisfied and 34% expressed partial satisfaction. 22% felt that they were not satisfied with their current job. These results indicate that around 20% of the respondents are dissatisfied with their current job. It can therefore be assumed that this is a group that would be happy to change to a better job. These results overlap with the proportion of people who are dissatisfied with their salary. This is therefore the group for whom the most motivating factor to change jobs is the level of remuneration.

The next series of questions asked respondents to identify their preferences in using recruitment channels. Respondents found their last job 66% through recruitment portals, 24% through direct contact with a recruiter, and 7% through IT groups on Facebook. Respondents were least likely to have used an advertising-driven incentive. This may indicate that, for the most part, respondents are not active in the labour market, some expect activity from recruiters and therefore adopt a passive attitude.



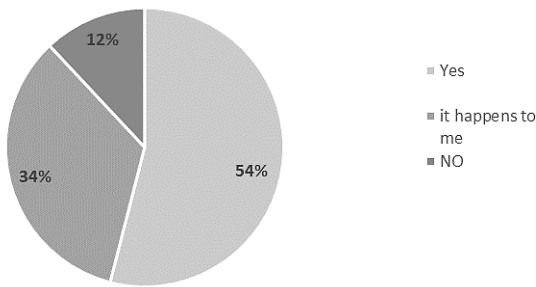
**Figure 5.** How survey participants found their last job.

Source: own study based on the questionnaire.



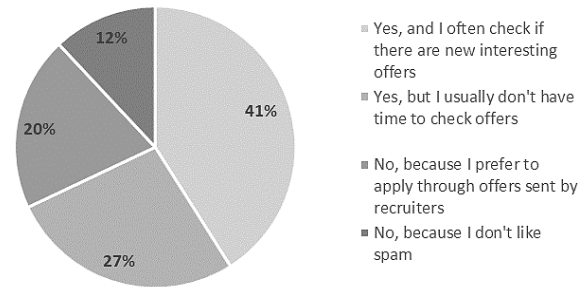
**Figure 6.** Level of use of LinkedIn by study participants.

Source: own study based on the questionnaire.



**Figure 7.** Level of use of recruitment platforms by survey participants.

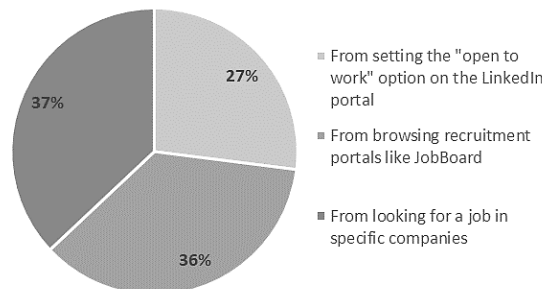
Source: own study based on the questionnaire.



**Figure 8.** Participation of people surveyed in groups with job offers on Facebook and LinkedIn.

Source: own study based on the questionnaire.

Figures 6, 7, and 8 show the level of use of recruitment platforms and social networks, among others, by recruitment companies. The vast majority of respondents are using, or have used, some form of recruitment portal, be it job board-type sites or Facebook and LinkedIn-type sites. They are also the first step to finding a new job. More than half of those surveyed use recruitment platforms, with just over 30% admitting that they also happen to use one. LinkedIn is already used by more than 60%, with an additional less than 30% using it infrequently. More than 68% use Facebook and LinkedIn groups related to the IT industry, with as many as 41.5% frequently checking these groups for new offers. Using portals may not only mean looking for a new job, but it may also mean wanting to compare one's working conditions with market offers.

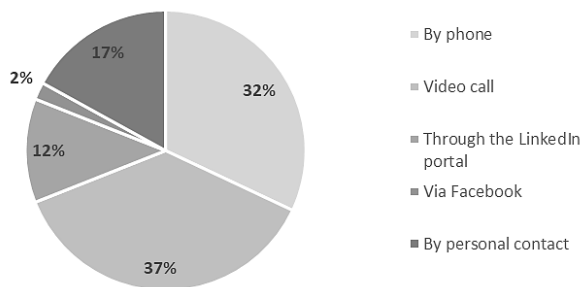


**Figure 9.** Job search methods used by survey participants.

Source: own study based on the questionnaire.

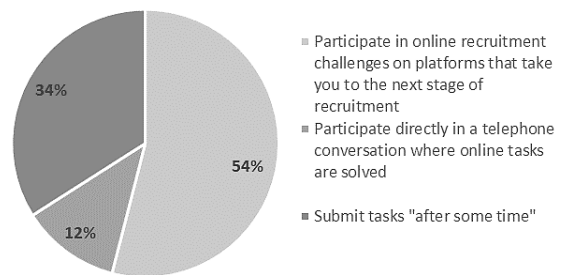


The next question concerns the respondents' activity in searching for a new job. Figure 9 presents how the respondents would start looking for a potential future job. More than one-third of the respondents would look for it in specific companies. The same number of respondents would start browsing recruitment portals like Job Board. However, previous results indicate that a certain proportion of respondents adopt a passive attitude, as their last employment was the result of direct contact with a recruiter. Some of the activity on recruitment portals involves the “open to work” option.



**Figure 10.** Preferred form of contract with a recruiter.

Source: own study based on the questionnaire.

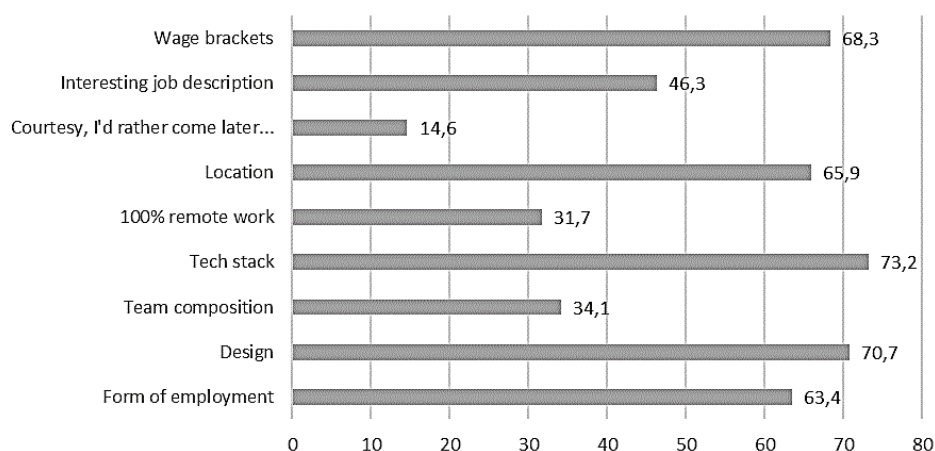


**Figure 11.** The preferred form of recruitment.

Source: own study based on the questionnaire.

The next figures, i.e. 10, 11, illustrate the respondents' preferences as regards the methods of recruitment. More than 1/3 of the respondents prefer a video interview as a form of recruitment. Slightly less, but still more than 30% would prefer a telephone interview. Only 17.1% preferred personal contact. More than half of those surveyed prefer to take part in online recruitment challenges on platforms that allow them to progress to the next stages of recruitment. One-third, on the other hand, prefer to submit the tasks “after some time”.

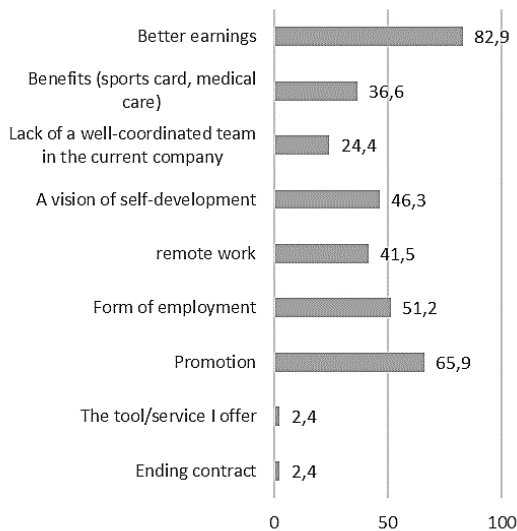
A further question reveals the issues that job candidates pay attention to when presented with an offer (Figure 12). The most important is the match between their technological competencies and the competencies indicated in the offer, the so-called tech stack (73.2%), followed by the type of project (70.7%), salary range (68.3%), location (65.9%) and form of employment (63.4%).



**Figure 12.** Elements of the job offer that draw respondents' attention.

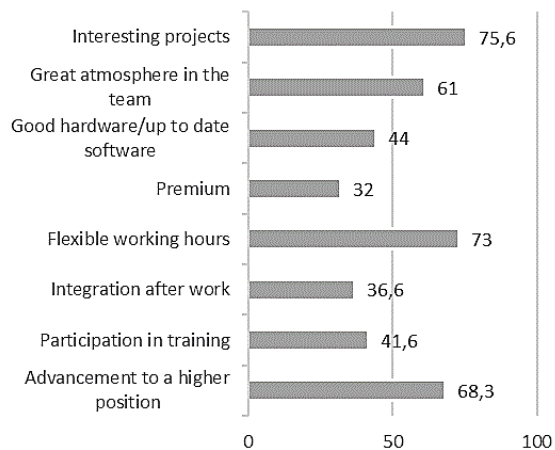
Source: own study based on the questionnaire.

The data in figure 13 shows that the survey participants' decisions to apply for a given company are most influenced by: better salaries (82.9%), promotion to a position higher than the one held (65.9%), and the form of employment (51.2%). In addition to information about the working conditions of the position offered, recruits are interested in information about future opportunities with a particular employer. This is illustrated in detail in Figure 14; respondents indicated: interesting projects (75.6%), flexible working hours (73.2%), career advancement opportunities (68.3%) and super team atmosphere (61%).



**Figure 13.** Factors influencing willingness to apply for a particular company.

Source: own study based on the questionnaire.



**Figure 14.** Expectations from the future company.

Source: own study based on the questionnaire.

## 4. Discussion

IT employees mainly come from large cities and are mainly men. There are no great differences between the age ranges, although those between 27 and 40 are slightly dominant. The vast majority of respondents held a position as a programmer. The survey results show that the important aspects of working conditions are not necessarily salary (although these are still important), but also flexible working hours, team atmosphere or interesting and engaging projects. Only one-third indicated satisfaction with their salaries, while 40% indicated satisfaction with their work overall. It can be concluded that the prospect of receiving higher salaries is an important reason for the decision to change jobs.

One can see a definite digitalization of IT work and recruitment in this segment of the labour market. Respondents mostly prefer to work remotely or in a hybrid form. It can be said that the issues that attract their attention to a given offer concern the comfort of work, but the most

important question candidates ask themselves is: Can I handle this position/project? Is the offer for me? These indications are important for building the offer and determining the order in which information will be communicated to candidates during, for example, a telephone interview.

As far as the forms of recruitment are concerned, video and telephone interviews dominate. This may be related to the pandemic that has dominated the job market and forced it to make changes to reduce face-to-face contact.

An important conclusion that emerges from the research is the need for the recruiter to guide the candidate individually. It can even be said that candidates expect the recruiter to carry out tasks that are characteristic of a manager of a competitor, such as in sports, music, etc. This manifests itself in expectations of fast communication with the recruiter, etc. Research conducted by Marta Pawlak-Dobrzańska (2018) indicates that 62% of the candidates surveyed by the author were dissatisfied due to a lack of willingness on the part of the recruiter to build relationships. This means that candidates want more personalized treatment so that the recruiter has a good understanding of the candidate's needs (Bieniak, 2015; Chawla et al., 2019; Finn, 2017; Kowalczyk, 2008).

The need for the recruiter to quickly provide detailed information about salary and other working conditions is also confirmed by a survey conducted by LinkedIn (Bednarz, 2023). They indicate that candidates expect detailed information about a job offer when a recruiter first contacts them. Survey respondents indicated that they expect detailed information about the job and the company. Among the most important information they expect are details about the position and salary. In this case, this is the same result that was obtained in the research presented in the article.

When considering the decision to apply, respondents also assess the attractiveness of a given job offer in terms of the employer's development prospects. To the highest degree, candidates want to participate in interesting projects implemented by teams with a 'super atmosphere', flexible working hours, a vision (development path) and the possibility of career advancement. In practice, this means that the recruiter must be prepared to answer questions about the future and the prospects of being employed by the new company. It is therefore not enough to know the offer alone, but it is also necessary to know the organization, both in terms of project challenges, promotion opportunities, and the organizational culture of the future employer itself.

## 5. Summary

Research clearly shows that candidates for IT jobs adopt two strategies. The first is a passive strategy of waiting for an offer to be made by a recruiter in the form of an email, post, phone call, or video interview. To meet the candidates' expectations of a good relationship with the recruiter, a phone or video call deserves attention. A certain passivity of candidates has been created by the specifics and functionalities offered by recruitment portals, social media groups or the high sourcing fees required by recruitment companies. This is causing an intensification of recruitment activities and the emergence of new models for the operation of recruitment companies. This means that the role of the recruiter and the demands placed on them are increasing significantly.

The second strategy is an active one, where the activity is undertaken by the job candidate, essentially seeking employment with specific companies. In this case, particular importance must be given to the presentation of the offer in question. It must be concise containing mainly the job title, the technological skill requirements of the position, the salary range, the form of work (remote and hybrid preferred), the location, and the project.

One of the most important clues for future research is to know the mechanism of how a recruiter works with a job candidate. Another important issue is the scale and scope of selection methods used such as Assessment center, knowledge tests, and simulation methods. Another issue that arises that has not been considered is the problem of the impact of the mode of selection on recruitment outcomes. To what extent does the method of selection influence the decision of candidates to apply for a particular position. An interesting dimension that should be explored is the relationship of the impact of motivating factors to change jobs depending on the management level at which the candidate is located. Research also points to the increasing role of the recruiter in the recruitment process. A significant proportion of candidates prefer telephone contact with the recruiter, which implies that recruiters have 'soft' skills. An important aspect that can be researched is the new business models of recruitment companies in terms of sourcing and building an information base about potential candidates and their competencies.

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