BOOSTPOINT BENCHMARK REPORT

What a job applicant actually costs.

Cost-per-applicant benchmarks from 891 social recruitment campaigns across healthcare, trucking, skilled trades, senior living and frontline operations.

$8.02	**$13.88**	**891**	**15**
BLENDED COST PER APPLICANT	MEDIAN CAMPAIGN	CAMPAIGNS ANALYZED	ROLE FAMILIES BENCHMARKED

boostpoint

2026 EDITION
FOR TALENT ACQUISITION TEAMS

How this was measured

Most job advertising benchmarks publish one average and leave you to work out whether you are winning. **An average is a poor tool for a budget conversation.** This report publishes the distribution instead — median, quartiles and range — for every role family we have enough data to report honestly.

891
Distinct campaigns analyzed

1,334
Campaign-months of delivery measured

15
Role families with enough data to report

What "cost per applicant" means

An applicant is a **completed lead form submission** — someone who tapped the ad, opened the form and submitted their details. Not a click, not an impression.

Costs are stated as **total client cost including campaign management**, not raw media spend — the number that actually leaves your budget. Cost-per-thousand figures are grossed up on the same basis, so they read higher than raw media benchmarks published elsewhere.

The unit of analysis is a **campaign-month**: one campaign's delivery within one calendar month. This report is a **snapshot of the 2026 market**, not a trend study — figures are pooled across the period rather than tracked over it.

Rules we applied

- **Anonymized throughout.** No employer is named, and any segment with fewer than three employers or fifteen campaign-months is suppressed rather than published.
- **Traffic campaigns excluded.** 169 campaign-months ran with a click objective rather than a lead objective and produced no form submissions by design.
- **Medians shown alongside averages everywhere**, because these costs are heavily skewed by a few very high-volume, very low-cost roles.
- **Roles classified from campaign naming.** About a fifth run many titles under one always-on structure and are reported separately in Section 05.

The honest limit of this data

A submitted form is not a screened candidate, an interview, or a hire. We can measure what it costs to get an interested person to raise their hand; we cannot see what happened after your recruiters picked it up. Any benchmark claiming a cost per hire drawn from ad platform data is extrapolating. Treat these figures as the top of your funnel, not the whole of it.

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The full spread, and why the average misleads.

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SECTION 01

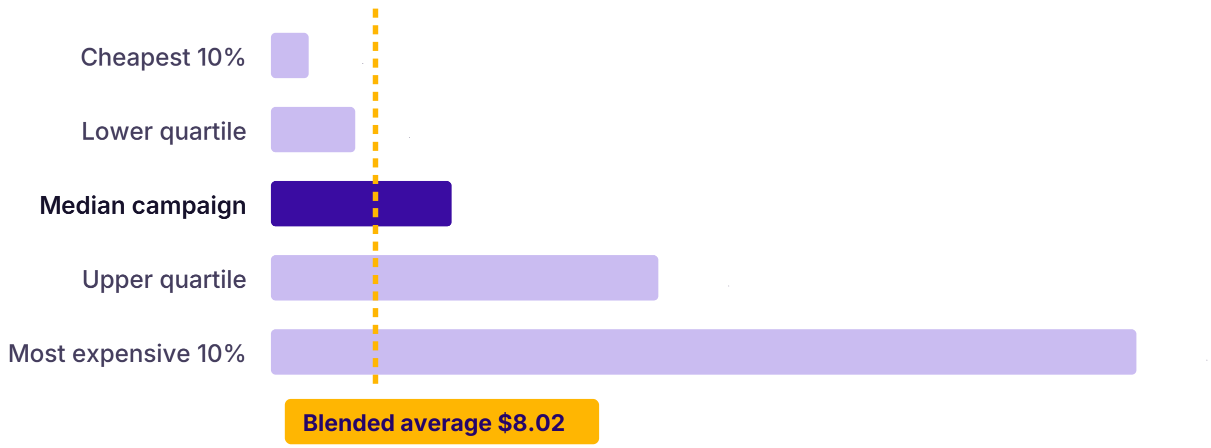
What an applicant costs

There is no such thing as the price of an applicant. There is a distribution — and where you sit inside it is the only question worth asking.

The spread

SECTION 01

Across every campaign in this study the blended cost per applicant is **$8.02**. The median campaign costs **$13.88** — nearly double. Both are correct, and confusing them is the most common error in job advertising budget reviews.



Each bar is a percentile of the 1,334 campaign-months in the study, ranked by cost per applicant. The gold line marks the volume-weighted blended average.

Why the gap exists

The blended average is weighted by volume, and volume concentrates in a few high-throughput frontline roles — caregivers, warehouse associates, customer service — that convert at exceptional rates. Those campaigns pull the average down for everyone. The median is the truer picture of what a typical requisition costs to fill the top of.

USE THE AVERAGE WHEN

You are forecasting total program cost across a large, mixed portfolio of roles, or sizing an annual budget across many requisitions at once.

USE THE MEDIAN WHEN

You are budgeting one requisition, judging whether a campaign is performing, or setting a hiring manager's expectations for a specific role.

The quartiles that matter

A quarter of campaigns delivered applicants for under **$6.48**. A quarter cost more than **$29.74** — a gap of more than 5x on the same platform, in the same market, in the same period. That spread is not luck, and it is not mostly role difficulty. Section 04 shows what it is.

SECTION 02

Benchmarks by role

Fifteen role families, each with the median cost and the range the middle half of campaigns actually landed in.

Cost per applicant by role

Median cost per applicant by role family, with the middle-50% range each role actually landed in. **The range is the column that matters** — a single number invites the wrong argument with your finance team.

ROLE FAMILY	MEDIAN	MIDDLE 50%	BLENDED	APPLY RATE	CTR	CAMPAIGNS
Customer service / admin	**$2.71**	$2.14 – $7.47	$2.98	25%	1.77%	24
Caregiver / home care	**$3.76**	$2.99 – $5.83	$3.87	31%	2.32%	34
Warehouse / production	**$9.83**	$3.15 – $18.72	$4.44	20%	1.67%	82
Management / professional	**$16.87**	$4.62 – $60.11	$5.45	16%	1.46%	50
Sales	**$11.61**	$5.99 – $21.17	$6.91	21%	1.45%	100
CNA / nursing assistant	**$7.72**	$6.18 – $12.06	$8.17	18%	1.15%	32
Technician / mechanic	**$13.41**	$7.40 – $23.58	$8.35	16%	1.17%	145
Skilled trades	**$14.14**	$7.58 – $21.49	$10.74	15%	1.07%	35
LPN / LVN	**$12.77**	$7.53 – $21.46	$12.09	21%	1.11%	57
Registered nurse	**$19.08**	$12.76 – $34.84	$20.00	11%	1.15%	173
CDL truck driver	**$26.86**	$17.00 – $42.31	$24.24	8%	0.88%	59
Teacher / instructor	**$30.95**	$16.60 – $56.74	$25.13	8%	1.12%	15
Allied health / imaging	**$54.37**	$10.27 – $106.51	$25.49	10%	1.01%	23
Behavioral health / DSP	**$55.55**	$18.36 – $334.56	$36.39	9%	0.75%	19
Therapy (PT / OT / SLP)	**$74.62**	$44.85 – $171.40	$64.12	5%	0.84%	39

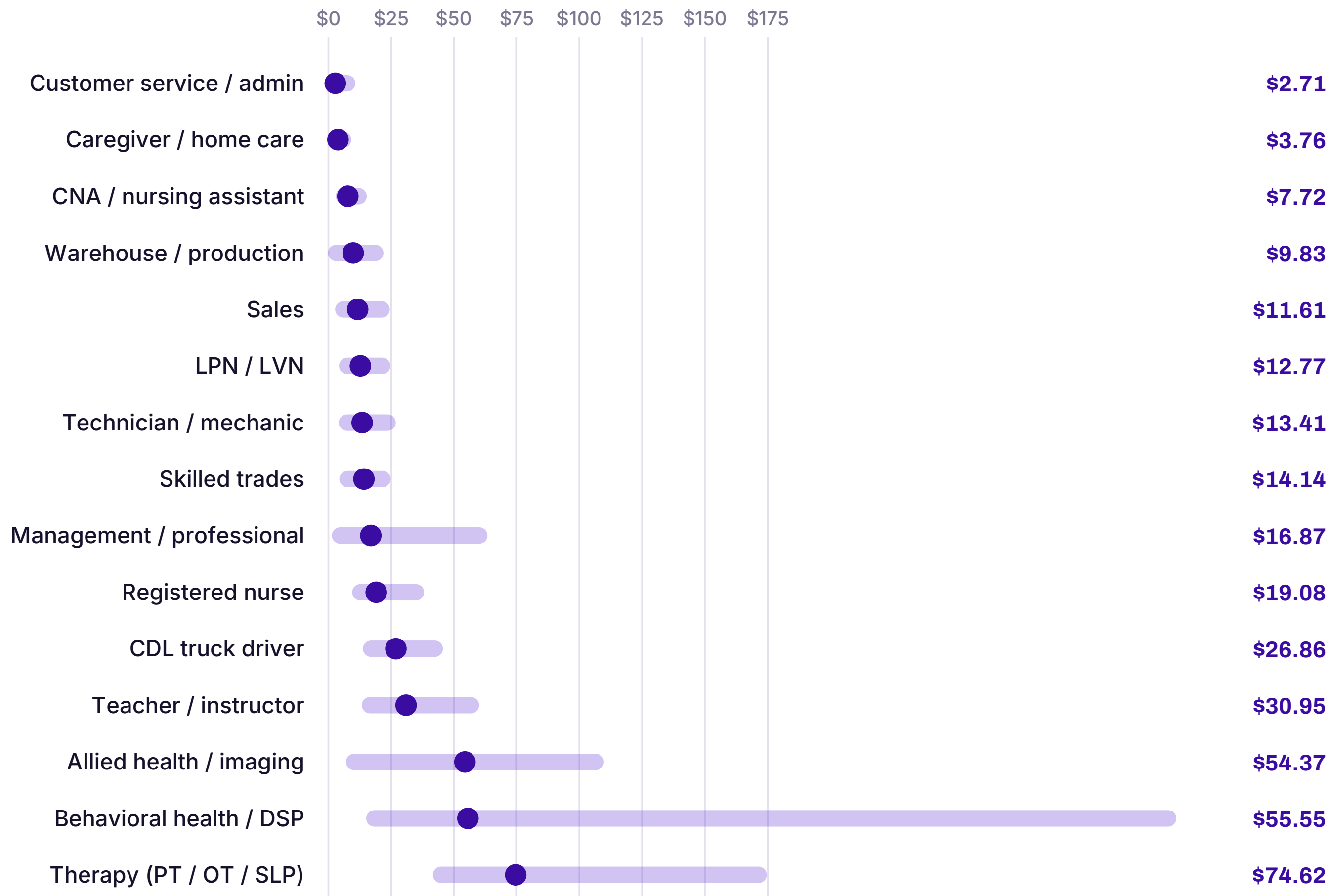
Sorted by blended cost per applicant. **Apply rate** is the share of clickers who went on to complete the form; **Campaigns** counts campaign-months. Role families represented by fewer than three employers or fifteen campaign-months are suppressed.

The pattern worth naming

Expensive roles are not expensive because attention costs more. CDL driver campaigns buy impressions **more cheaply** than caregiver campaigns — $17.88 per thousand against $27.88 — and still cost 6x more per applicant. The difference is apply rate: 8% of drivers who click finish a form, against 31% of caregivers. You are not paying for reach — you are paying for friction.

The range inside every role

The same data drawn as ranges. The bar is where the middle half of campaigns landed; the dot is the median. **Wide bars are opportunity.**



Bar spans the 25th to 75th percentile of campaign-month cost per applicant; dot marks the median.

What a wide band tells you

Behavioral health / DSP campaigns ran from $18.36 at the 25th percentile to $334.56 at the 75th — a 18x spread inside a single role family. When a band is that wide, difficulty is not the explanation. Two employers hiring the same job in the same period, with budgets of similar size, produced costs an order of magnitude apart.

And what a narrow one tells you

Where the middle 50% sits inside a tight range — Caregiver / home care runs $2.99 to $5.83 — the market has effectively priced the role, and gains come from volume and speed rather than efficiency. Promising a 40% cost reduction on a narrow-band role is promising something this data says does not happen.

A PRACTICAL READ

Sitting above your role's 75th percentile is not a reason to cut the channel. It is a reason to audit the apply experience first — that single factor explains more of the variance than every other input combined, as the next section shows.

SECTION 03

Benchmarks by sector

Five hiring sectors, ranked by what they cost and by how predictable each one is to budget.

Cost per applicant by sector

Rolled up to sector, the ordering is stable and the reason is consistent: sectors hiring credentialed people cost more, because credentialed people abandon forms.

SECTOR	MEDIAN	MIDDLE 50%	BLENDED	APPLY RATE	CPM	CAMPAIGNS
Retail / Corporate	**$8.58**	$3.72 – $17.76	$3.66	26%	$14.74	181
Skilled Trades and Field Service	**$11.89**	$6.50 – $24.89	$6.65	18%	$15.96	335
Transportation and Logistics	**$13.34**	$5.26 – $25.17	$10.28	13%	$14.82	184
Healthcare and Senior Living	**$15.42**	$7.89 – $39.61	$11.47	16%	$25.18	553
Behavioral and Education	**$27.50**	$15.35 – $76.67	$24.45	10%	$29.04	81

CPM is cost per thousand impressions, stated at total client cost including management — it will read higher than raw media benchmarks published elsewhere for that reason.

The predictability premium

Retail and corporate hiring held the tightest band in the study, a middle 50% of $3.72 to $17.76. Behavioral health and education ran the widest, $15.35 to $76.67.

For anyone building an annual plan, that difference matters as much as the cost itself. A predictable channel can be budgeted. A volatile one has to be managed month to month, with contingency built in from the start.

Where healthcare really sits

Healthcare and senior living is the largest sector here by campaign volume and sits fourth by cost at $11.47 blended. That single figure hides an enormous internal split: caregiver and CNA campaigns run under $8.17, while therapy campaigns run $64.12.

Reporting healthcare as one line to your executive team understates clinical costs and overstates frontline ones. Split it before anyone asks you to.

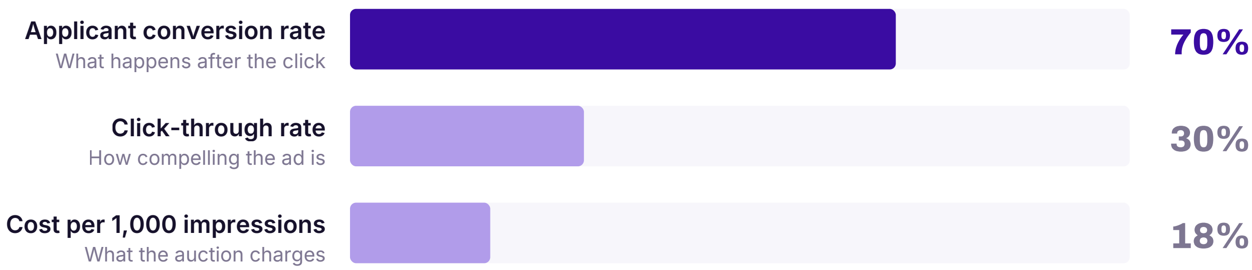
SECTION 04

What actually drives cost

Most teams tune the ad. The data says the money is lost after the click.

Where the money is actually lost

Cost per applicant is built from three inputs: what impressions cost, how many people click, and how many clickers finish the form. We tested how much of the variation between campaigns each explains on its own.

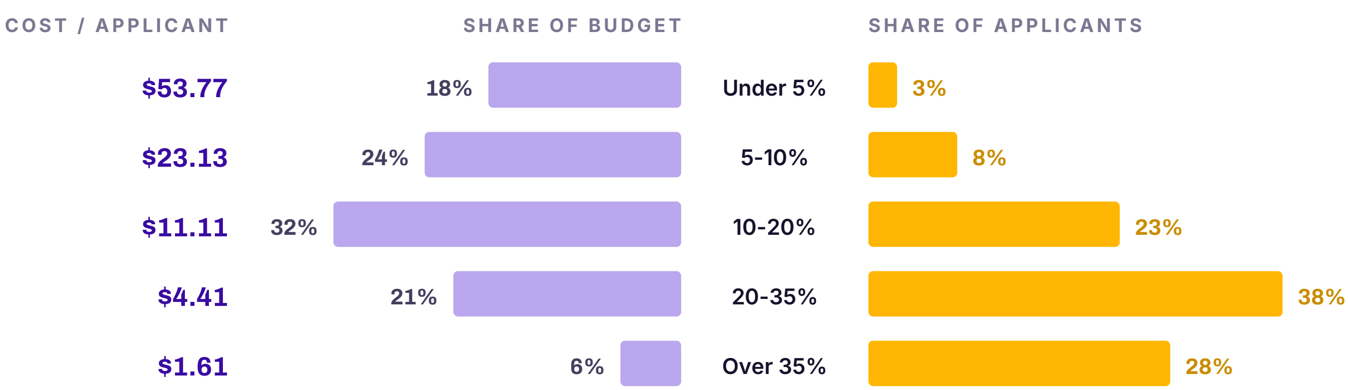


Share of variation in campaign cost per applicant explained by each input alone, across 1,334 campaign-months.

The finding

The apply experience explains **70%** of why one campaign costs more than another. What the auction charges explains **18%**. Nearly every hour most teams spend negotiating media efficiency is aimed at the smallest lever.

What that looks like in budget terms



Campaigns grouped by apply rate. Left bars are the share of total budget the band consumed; right bars the share of total applicants it returned.

READ THAT AGAIN

41% of all budget ran in campaigns where fewer than one in ten clickers finished the form — returning **11% of all applicants**. Campaigns above 35% used **6% of budget** to deliver **28%**, at $1.61 each.

What moves apply rate

If apply rate is the lever, the practical question is what moves it. Campaigns in the top bands of the previous page share a small number of structural traits.

They keep the application on the platform

Campaigns using a native instant form — where the candidate never leaves Facebook or Instagram — consistently populate the upper conversion bands. Campaigns routing to a career site or an ATS apply flow populate the bottom two. The mechanism is not mysterious: every additional page, login prompt and resume upload requirement removes a share of an audience that is, in most frontline categories, applying from a phone during a break.

They ask fewer questions

The campaigns in the under-5% band are recognizable by their form length. Screening questions do useful work — they are the reason a form submission is worth more than a click — but each one is bought with volume. The teams getting the best results treat screening as a budget with a price rather than as a free filter.

They screen for disqualifiers, not preferences

There is a meaningful difference between asking whether someone holds the license the job legally requires and asking about their preferred shift. The first removes people you could never hire. The second removes people you would have hired after a five-minute conversation.

The trade-off, stated honestly

A low apply rate is not automatically a failure. A campaign converting at 6% that delivers licensed, pre-screened, ready-to-interview candidates may be a better use of budget than one converting at 35% that hands your recruiters a pile of forms to sort. What this data can show is the price of that choice — roughly **12x the cost per applicant** between the bottom band and the 20–35% band. What it cannot show is whether the quality gain was worth it. That number lives in your ATS, and it is the single most valuable thing you could start measuring this year.

THE DIAGNOSTIC WORTH RUNNING THIS WEEK

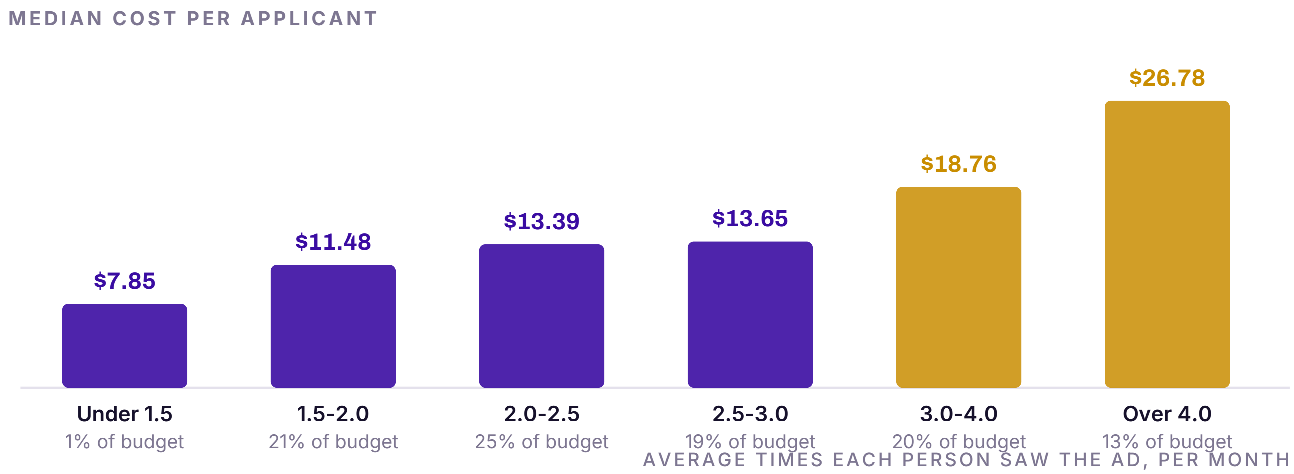
Pull your last quarter's campaigns. For each, divide form submissions by link clicks. Sort descending. If more than a third of your budget sits below 10%, you have found your cost problem — and it is not the auction.

Two levers with numbers attached

Frequency and campaign structure — measured, with the size of the prize on each one.

Lever one: frequency

Lever one: frequency. The average number of times each person in your audience saw the ad in a month. It is the most reliable early warning signal in the dataset, and almost nobody watches it.



Median cost per applicant by monthly frequency band, with each band's share of total budget.

The cliff is at 2.5

Below a monthly frequency of roughly 2.5, median cost per applicant sits between $11.48 and $13.39. Above 3.0 it rises to $18.76, and above 4.0 to $26.78 — more than double the low-frequency figure. Click-through rate falls in step, from 1.69% to 0.94%. The audience has seen it and stopped responding.

33% of all budget in this study ran above a frequency of 3.0. That is the clearest single pool of recoverable money in the report.

What causes it

High frequency is almost always a budget-to-audience mismatch: a daily spend large enough to saturate the targeted audience within days. The fix is rarely to cut budget. It is to widen the audience — expand the radius, drop an interest filter that was never a real requirement, remove an age band nobody could justify — so the same money reaches more people fewer times.

> **The operating rule**
>
> Check frequency weekly. When a campaign passes 2.5 within a month, widen the audience or rotate the creative **before** the cost curve turns. Waiting until cost per applicant rises means paying for the lesson first.

Lever two: campaign structure

Lever two: campaign structure. How you divide budget between campaigns turns out to matter more than how much budget there is.

CAMPAIGN STRUCTURE	MEDIAN	BLENDED	APPLY RATE	CTR	CAMPAIGNS
Event-driven	**$8.02**	$5.93	21%	1.53%	78
Multi-role / always-on	**$9.83**	$14.16	12%	1.10%	46
Single-role	**$14.45**	$7.82	18%	1.36%	1210

Event-driven campaigns promote a hiring event or open house. Multi-role always-on campaigns run a continuous feed of many job titles under one structure. Single-role campaigns target one job family.

Always-on is convenient, not cheap

Multi-role always-on campaigns — one perpetual campaign carrying every open requisition — blend to $14.16 per applicant against $7.82 for single-role campaigns, and convert clickers at 12% against 18%. The structure saves your team real setup time. It costs you specificity: a generic "we're hiring" ad has to work for every reader, which means it works well for none of them.

Hiring events are the cheapest structure in the study

Event-driven campaigns produced the lowest median cost of any structure at $8.02, converting at 21%. A date, a place and a reason to act outperform an open-ended invitation to apply. The deadline does work no amount of creative optimization replicates.

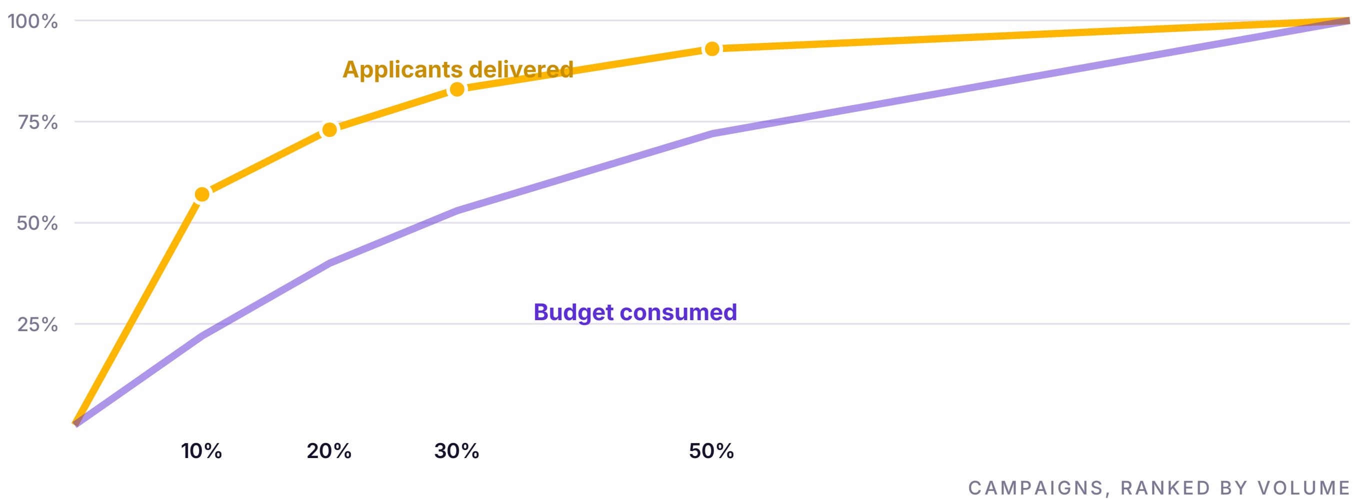
What a normal campaign actually looks like

$334	**20**	**6,061**	**2**
Median monthly campaign budget	Median applicants per campaign-month	Median people reached	Median campaigns live per month

Half of all campaign-months ran on less than $334. The upper quartile begins at $554 and the top decile at $988. If you have been told social recruitment advertising requires a large committed budget before it works, this distribution is the counter-evidence.

Where your budget actually works

A benchmark tells you what a campaign should cost. It does not tell you that your budget is wildly uneven in what it returns — and in this data, it is.



Cumulative share of applicants and of budget, with campaigns ranked by applicant volume.

The top tenth does most of the work

The top 10% of campaigns produced **57% of all applicants** on 22% of the budget. The top 30% produced 83% on 53%. Concentration this severe is not a sign of a broken program — it is what job advertising looks like when a portfolio contains both high-volume frontline roles and hard-to-fill specialist ones.

What it does mean is that **the average campaign is the wrong thing to optimize**. The highest-return move available to most teams is not making the middle better by ten percent. It is looking hard at the bottom third and deciding, deliberately, whether each campaign is a strategic necessity — a role you must keep advertising regardless of efficiency — or an unexamined habit that has simply never been reviewed.

The quarterly question

Rank every campaign by applicants delivered, then draw a line under the bottom third. For each one below the line, answer in a sentence why it is still running. Campaigns that survive that question deserve their budget. Campaigns that cannot be defended in a sentence usually cannot be defended at all.

A NOTE ON WHAT SHAPES COST BEYOND THE LEVERS

Role difficulty, employer brand recognition, market density and local hiring competition all move cost per applicant, and none of them are visible in a benchmark table. Where your program sits against these figures is a starting point for diagnosis, not a verdict on your team.

SECTION 06

Benchmark your own program

A worksheet to run against your last quarter. About twenty minutes of work.

Benchmark your own program

Run this against your last full quarter. It takes about twenty minutes and produces a defensible view of whether your job advertising is working.

1. What is your cost per applicant, all-in?	Total spend including agency or management fees, divided by completed applications. Compare with the $13.88 median, then with your role's band in Section 02.
2. What share of clickers complete your form?	Form submissions divided by link clicks, per campaign. Under 10% puts you in the bottom two bands in Section 04 — the largest cost driver in this study.
3. How much budget sits above a frequency of 3.0?	Anything above 3.0 in a month is paying rising prices for a shrinking response. 33% of budget in this study did exactly that.
4. Which third of your campaigns is unproductive?	Rank campaigns by applicants delivered. Decide explicitly whether each low performer is a strategic requirement or an unreviewed habit.
5. Is your campaign structure earning its convenience?	One always-on campaign carrying every requisition saves setup time and costs specificity. Section 05 shows what that trade is worth.
6. Do you know what an applicant becomes?	The one number no ad platform can give you: applicants to screens to interviews to hires, by source. Without it, every efficiency decision is made half-blind.

If you change only one thing

Measure apply rate per campaign, and treat anything under 10% as a defect to investigate rather than a cost to absorb. It explains 70% of the difference between a program running at $6.48 and one running at $29.74, and unlike the auction, it is almost entirely within your control.

> **A closing note on benchmarks**
>
> Every number in this report describes what happened, not what is possible. The employers in the lowest quartile were not luckier than those in the highest — in most cases they had simply removed friction the others had not yet looked at. Use these figures to locate yourself and to argue for resources, not to conclude that your current position is fixed.

Built from real campaigns, not survey responses.

Boostpoint runs social recruitment advertising for employers hiring frontline, clinical and skilled workforces. Every figure in this report comes from live campaign delivery across 891 campaigns in 2026 — anonymized, aggregated, and reported with the ranges left intact.

If you would like your own program benchmarked against this data, the worksheet on the previous page is where to start.

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