From ATS to Ghost Jobs: How Employers Built the Hiring 'Doom Loop'

A new analysis traces 20 years of hiring dysfunction — and argues job seekers using AI is the rational response, not the cause.

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An analysis published today by [Remote Job Assistant](#) traces the origins of what Greenhouse CEO Daniel Chait has called the "AI doom loop" in hiring — and finds that employer-driven automation, not job seeker behavior, created the conditions for today's dysfunction.

Key Findings:

- **Employer automation came first:** 99% of Fortune 500 companies use Applicant Tracking Systems with automated filters that reject candidates before human review.

- **Ghost jobs are rampant:** 40% of companies posted fake job listings in 2024, and 81% of recruiters acknowledge their employers post ghost jobs.

- **Employer ghosting is the norm:** 75% of job applications receive zero response, and 80% of hiring managers admit to ghosting candidates.

- **Mass applying is a rational response:** When most applications go unanswered and one in five postings aren't real, volume becomes the only viable strategy.

"When 75% of applications get no response and 40% of job postings aren't even real, applying to more jobs isn't laziness — it's survival. Our job is to help candidates spend their time on opportunities that actually exist and where they have a real shot."

— Allison Goodlin, Product Manager, Remote Job Assistant

The analysis responds to growing industry commentary framing AI-powered job applications as the cause of hiring dysfunction. In July 2025, Greenhouse published survey data showing 67% of U.S. candidates use AI during their job search, with Chait describing the situation as a "doom loop" where both sides are "miserable."

Remote Job Assistant's analysis argues this framing misses two decades of context.

The Timeline: 20 Years of Employer-Driven Automation

1990s–2000s: Applicant Tracking Systems

Employers implemented ATS technology with "knockout filters" that automatically reject candidates based on keywords, employment gaps, or credentials. According to

Careerminds, 99% of Fortune 500 companies now use an ATS. A Harvard Business School study ("Hidden Workers: Untapped Talent") found 49% of companies automatically eliminate candidates with resume gaps of six months or longer.

2010s: One-Click Apply

LinkedIn's Easy Apply and Indeed's instant applications increased application volume — by design. According to LinkedIn, jobs with Easy Apply receive twice as many applications. Platforms and employers both benefited from larger candidate pools, but recruiters now report receiving 450+ applications per posting. Weekly application rates have tripled since 2021.

2020s: Ghost Jobs

A Resume Builder survey (June 2024) found 40% of companies posted fake job listings in the past year, and 30% currently have ghost jobs active. Greenhouse's own analysis found 18–22% of postings on their platform are fake or unfilled. A MyPerfectResume survey found 81% of recruiters acknowledge their employers post ghost jobs. Revelio Labs data (via CNBC) shows the rate of hires per job posting has halved since 2019. Tools like Remote Job Assistant's [AI Job Decoder](#) help candidates identify red flags in job postings before investing time applying.

2020s: AI Screening

Employers added AI screening before candidates had access to similar tools. According to SHRM's 2025 research, 51% of organizations now use AI in recruiting. Resume Builder reports 68% of companies will use AI in hiring by the end of 2025. HireVue processes nearly 20 million assessments per quarter.

Ongoing: Employer Ghosting as Norm

According to the Human Capital Institute, 75% of job applications receive zero response. Greenhouse's own July 2025 survey found 63% of candidates are left in the dark after interviews. A Resume Builder survey of 625 hiring managers found 80% admit to ghosting candidates. Glassdoor data shows employer ghosting has more than doubled since 2020. This is why [auto-apply tools](#) have become essential for candidates competing in a system designed to ignore them.

Implications

The analysis concludes that mass-apply behavior is a predictable response to systemic dysfunction — not its cause. When employers post fake jobs, use AI to filter candidates, and fail to respond to applications, job seekers rationally adapt by increasing volume and automating their own processes.

The report notes that solutions focused solely on candidate behavior — such as encouraging "quality over quantity" applications — fail to address the underlying incentives that created the current environment.

About Remote Job Assistant

[Remote Job Assistant](#) is a [remote job platform](#) featuring AI-powered job analysis, red flag detection, and [auto-apply tools](#) for non-technical professionals. The platform

analyzes job postings to identify what employers actually want, flags potential ghost jobs and unrealistic requirements, and helps candidates focus on roles where they have a real chance of success. For more original research, visit the Remote Job Assistant Research page.

Sources

• **Greenhouse "Doom Loop" / 67% AI usage:** HR Dive, July 22, 2025

• **ATS adoption (99% Fortune 500):** Careerminds

• **Hidden Workers study (49% gap rejection):** Harvard Business School

• **Ghost jobs (40% of companies):** Resume Builder, June 2024

• **Ghost jobs (81% of recruiters):** MyPerfectResume, 2024

• **Greenhouse ghost job rate (18–22%):** Greenhouse / LiveNOW from FOX, January 2025

• **Hiring rate decline:** Revelio Labs via CNBC, August 2024

• **AI in recruiting (51%):** SHRM, 2025

• **AI hiring adoption (68% by 2025):** Resume Builder, October 2024

• **75% no response:** Human Capital Institute

• **80% of hiring managers ghost:** Resume Builder, May 2024

• **Employer ghosting doubled since 2020:** Glassdoor

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