

# Always Looking:

# THE RISE OF CONTINUOUS CANDIDATES



This is the third in a series of four reports by ManpowerGroup Solutions analyzing the results of a proprietary Global Candidate Preferences Survey



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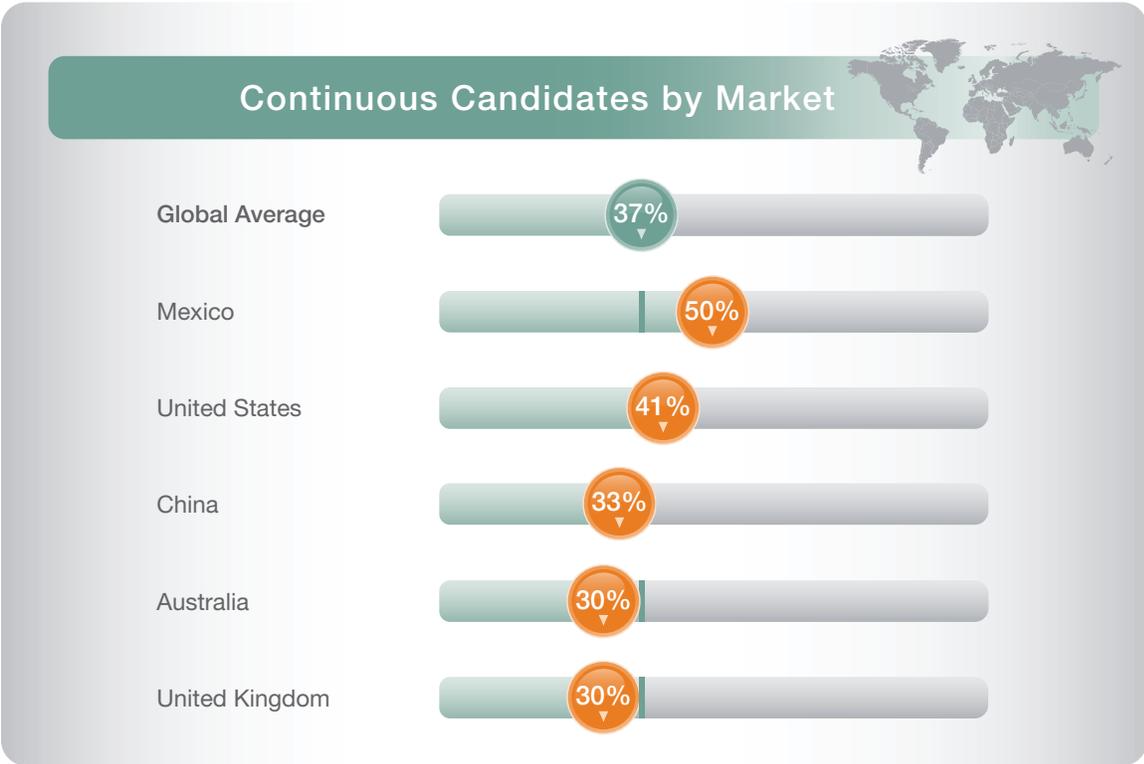
# [ Introduction ]

Loyalty is one of the most desirable attributes in employees and potential employees. Yet, the rise of a new group known as “Continuous Candidates” (those who are *always* looking for the next job opportunity) can make retention more challenging. Global corporations and other employers are regularly searching for ways to attract and retain the world’s top talent. **To better understand how employers can leverage global candidate preferences, ManpowerGroup Solutions, the world’s largest Recruitment Process Outsourcing (RPO) provider, surveyed nearly 4,500 job seekers in October 2015.** The global candidate preferences survey was fielded in five influential employment markets around the world (United States, United Kingdom, Australia, China and Mexico) and questions ranged from job search practices and preferences to motivators for change. A number of important trends and market-based differences emerged along with insights about how global companies and other employers can recruit and retain top talent.

**The third in the series, this report explores one of the newest phenomena in candidate preferences: Continuous Candidates. The research results reveal how employers can better understand the Continuous Candidates mindset and enhance their efforts to attract and retain the best and brightest employees.**

# CONTINUOUS CANDIDATES ARE THE NEW NORMAL

One in three candidates across the globe is a Continuous Candidate. Mexico and the U.S. are leading the trend at 50 percent and 41 percent, respectively.<sup>1</sup> In today's world, candidates who agree with the statement "I am *always* looking for the next job opportunity" are commonplace.



The prevalence of Continuous Candidates in Mexico and the United States far exceeds the global average. This can be linked to several factors:

-  Alternative forms of employment emerge faster in the United States than anywhere else. The popularity and visibility of the gig economy with companies like Uber, Lyft and Task-Rabbit are redefining how people work. Workers have flexibility and employers save money on capital costs and employee benefits.
-  Tech firms have also led the way on contract employment worldwide. Because these are the companies many people aspire to work for, there is greater acceptance of the new model.
-  Layoffs and job losses experienced in the wake of the Great Recession imparted a message to young and old alike that job security is not necessarily guaranteed.

<sup>1</sup> Continuous Candidates are defined as survey respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "I am always looking for the next job opportunity."

The rise of Continuous Candidates in Mexico is possibly correlated with another research finding: the number one career challenge among candidates in Mexico is a lack of access to quality jobs. 49 percent of Mexican candidates (vs. 43 percent globally) identify access to quality jobs as a barrier. This is also a key challenge in China, the market with the third highest number of Continuous Candidates. **In fact, “lack of access to quality jobs” consistently ranked first or second as the greatest personal career challenge among candidates globally.** Individuals without access to quality jobs continuously look to how they can improve their employment situation — whether they are unemployed, under-employed or seeking greater stability.



Ximena Cardenas, Program Delivery Manager for ManpowerGroup Solutions Latin America, identifies two important drivers for Continuous Candidates in Mexico. “During the last several years, many local companies have evolved into regional or multinational organizations,” explains Cardenas. “Many regional leadership positions have been localized in key countries like Mexico.” While there are more quality job opportunities in the market, many candidates are looking to multinational companies where there is often more room for personal growth and career advancement. The highly-competitive nature of these opportunities requires consistent, proactive engagement with the job market and has manifested into a persistent and assertive pool of job seekers.

“*Among Mexican candidates, a quality job is increasingly perceived as one that both allows the candidate to grow and provides access to highly global and collaborative environments. Competition is keen for these positions and candidates become savvy at using technology to increase their exposure to hiring managers.*”

**XIMENA CARDENAS**

*Program Delivery Manager  
ManpowerGroup Solutions Latin America*

The relatively lower incidence of Continuous Candidates in the United Kingdom and Australia is likely tied to strong employment contracting laws and the pensions associated with long-term employment. Yet, the writing is on the global wall; the Internet and social media provide candidates with more information about companies and open positions than ever before. In many cases, individuals do not even have to look because the information is pushed directly to them.

In summary, although the number of Continuous Candidates varies by market, **a full one-third of the potential global workforce** is now continually looking for the next job opportunity.

## THE CONTINUOUS CANDIDATE PROFILE PERSONA

Who are these Continuous Candidates? They are predominantly Millennials. Or at least, a subset of Millennials. 60 percent of Continuous Candidates are Millennials/Gen Y (aged 18-34). Yet, within that age group they skew older: 70 percent of the Millennial Continuous Candidates are aged 25-34 (versus only 30 percent aged 18-24). **This distinction is important because it indicates the Continuous Candidate mindset is less generational than previous research suggests.** Millennials with more experience in the workforce are more likely to be habitually looking for jobs. The “job-hopper” stigma often attached to Millennials principally applies to the 25 to 34 year-olds. And employers appear to be playing a role in creating Continuous Candidates; they may be unwittingly contributing to the Continuous Candidate phenomenon by not meeting candidates’ expectations for advancement or promotion.

The recent ManpowerGroup report, *Millennial Careers: 2020 Vision*, found that “job security is critical for Millennials but they define it differently. Given the chance, they will move on and move up, but more often than not they expect to advance with the same employer.”<sup>2</sup> The report further suggests “Millennials have redefined job security as career security,” and their journey is defined holistically not by a single job.<sup>3</sup>

Continuous Candidates are distinctive from their non-Continuous counterparts. **They have lower job satisfaction; they are twice as likely to express dissatisfaction with their jobs.** Many (43 percent) believe every job is temporary. They are almost four times as likely (38 percent versus 10 percent) to agree with the statement “the best way to advance my career is to change jobs frequently.” They are more than twice as likely (57 percent vs. 24 percent) to agree with the statement “the best way to increase my compensation is by changing jobs frequently.”

The attitudes of Continuous Candidates translate directly into action. They are more active on job sites and job-related social media (e.g., LinkedIn), apply for jobs more often and claim to be better informed on all aspects of a job than their non-Continuous counterparts. They also tend to be far more knowledgeable about positions and companies earlier in the interview process than their non-Continuous counterparts.

“One of the biggest threats Continuous Candidates present is the lack of business stability that comes from a revolving door for employees. In industries such as engineering and finance, there are negative implications for production timelines or the risk of compliance issues. In service industries, turnover can disrupt client relationships.”

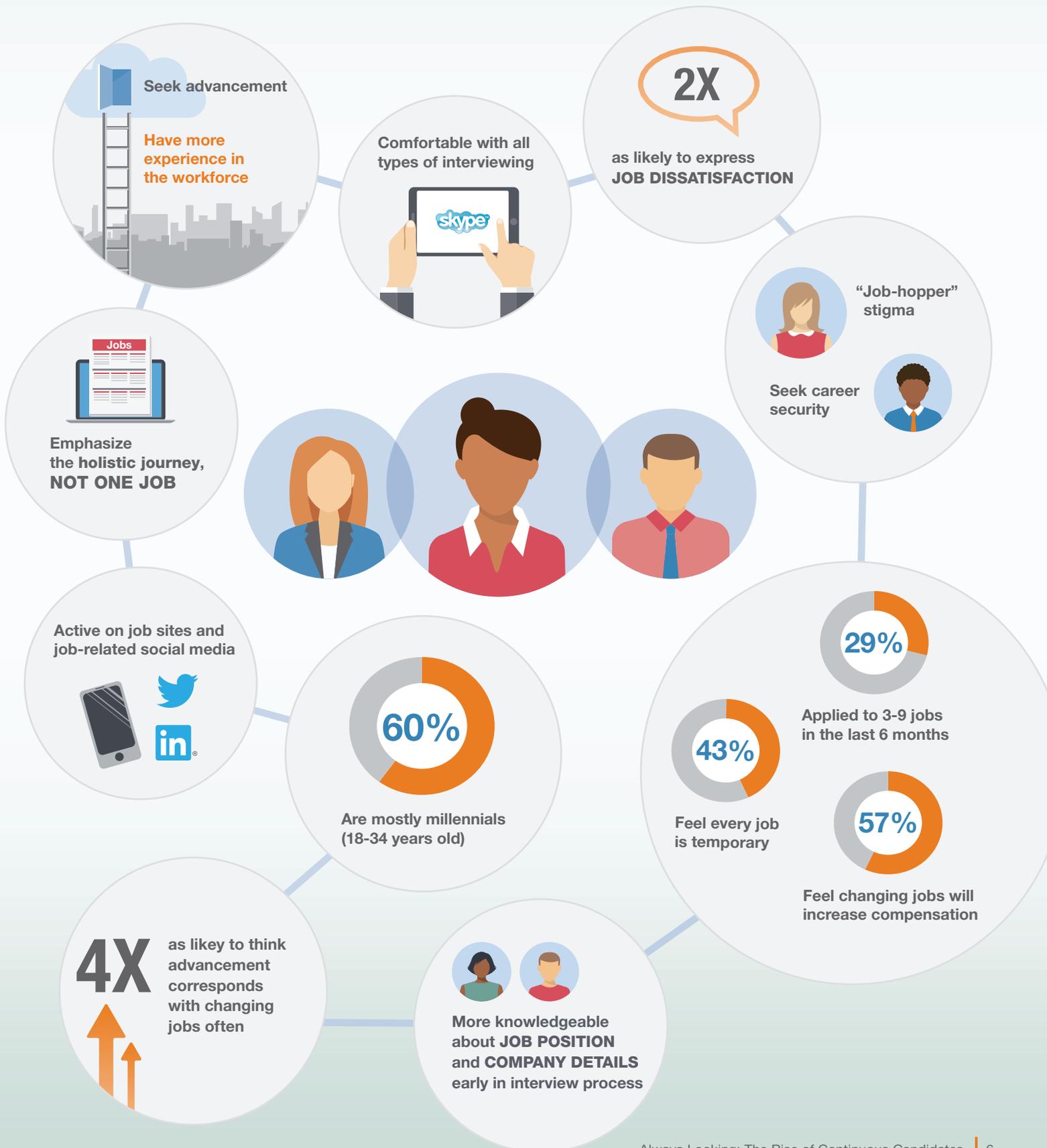
JON-RAY RIVERA

Vice President, Client Delivery  
ManpowerGroup Solutions North America

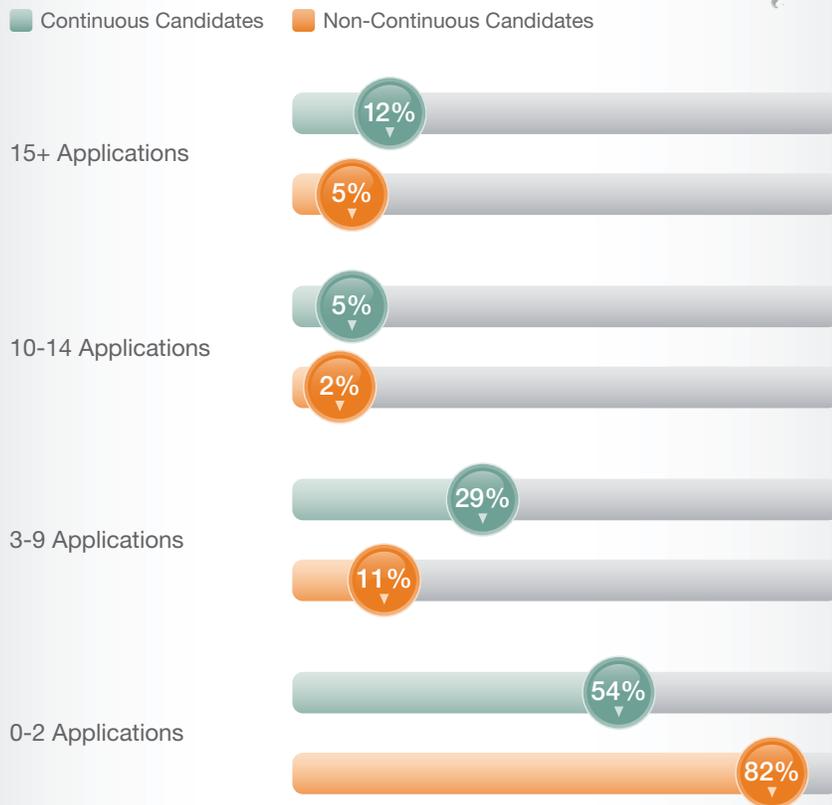
<sup>2</sup> ManpowerGroup, “Millennial Careers: 2020 Vision,” 2016, 9.

<sup>3</sup> ManpowerGroup, “Millennial Careers: 2020 Vision,” 2016, 10.

# WHO ARE CONTINUOUS CANDIDATES?



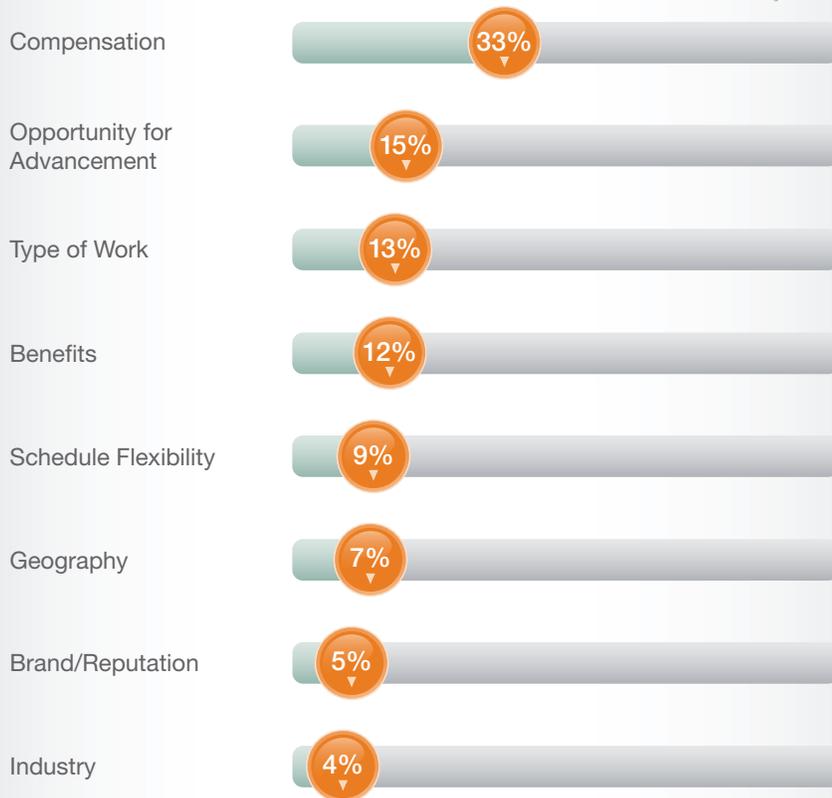
## Jobs Applied to in Last Six Months



They are more than just window shoppers, however; 29 percent of Continuous Candidates applied to between three and nine jobs in the last six months. 12 percent applied to more than fifteen jobs during the previous six months—almost three times as many as their non-Continuous counterparts.

Continuous Candidates are also quite comfortable with all types of interviewing practices—including newer formats like Skype and Vine, group interviews and teleconference. It is hypothesized that because these candidates are applying to more jobs more frequently, they are potentially exposed to a wider variety of interview formats and, thus, become more comfortable with them.

## Reasons Candidates Look for a New Position



## MOVING UP OR MOVING OUT

Although the presence of Continuous Candidates varies by market, one thing unites them: opportunity for advancement. While 15 percent report “opportunity for advancement” as a reason they look for new positions, 42 percent indicate this is also a top three motivator when making career decisions. Moreover, in four out of five markets (Mexico, United States, China and the United Kingdom) the percentage of Continuous Candidates who cited “opportunity for advancement” among their top three motivators was statistically significantly different from their non-Continuous counterparts.

“Opportunity for advancement” is an even stronger motivator when it comes to making immediate change; rising to second place, just behind “compensation” as a top three reason for immediately pursuing a new job opportunity among global Continuous Candidates.

“Employers are going to have to become an employer of choice. Companies need to create a culture that people don’t want to leave. Branding and trust are critical components.”

SARAH PEIKER

Head of RPO Practice, ManpowerGroup Solutions Europe

# NINE TIPS FOR RETAINING EMPLOYEES AND SCREENING FOR NEW ONES IN TODAY'S WORLD OF CONTINUOUS CANDIDATES

The global trend toward Continuous Candidates suggests the potential for higher workforce turnover than ever before. Churn is costly to companies financially and human resources managers are seeking out ways to increase return on investment for recent hires. Employers need to step up their retention efforts as well as improve their recruitment and screening processes. Here are nine recommendations that can help:



## 1) SPEAK FLUENT ADVANCEMENT

Hiring managers must be able to proactively articulate the opportunities for advancement to candidates. Career pathways are an increasingly important component of the employer value proposition (EVP). To engage the best and brightest talent, employers must offer this information upfront, in a variety of locations and interactions—and not wait for candidates to ask. In some cases, managing unrealistic candidate expectations may be an important part of this dialogue.

In markets like Mexico, small- and medium-sized employers seeking top talent who do not speak fluent advancement are at serious risk of losing the best candidates to the large regional or multinational companies where advancement and collaborative work environments are the norm. Moreover, the market is in danger of a talent drain as Continuous Candidates seek new opportunities for quality jobs across the globe.



## 2) WALK THE WALK

Differentiating a company and building an employer value proposition that has opportunity for advancement as a cornerstone is an important first step, however, following through on that promise is key. Employers must create an employment experience that authentically mirrors the messaging.

**Feedback and honest, real-time communication with employees is critical to retaining Continuous Candidates.** Because employment is not a reason for these candidates to leave the job search process, managers must assume Continuous Candidates translate to continuous competition for their best employees. Candid conversations about advancement should not be relegated to formal, periodic reviews. In fact, some companies are experimenting with eliminating the annual review process altogether. These employees must understand at all times what is needed for them to advance within the company.



### 3) SPOTLIGHT EXAMPLES OF ADVANCEMENT

If an employer is talking the talk and walking the walk, there will be examples of employees who have risen through the ranks or were selected for new assignments/responsibilities. Stories about these employees should be communicated internally to existing employees and externally to talent communities.

The most credible way to communicate these personal success stories is through peer testimonials. Employees should be encouraged (and potentially rewarded) for sharing their experiences on social media, employer review websites, at networking events, in interviews, at job fairs and other activities for employee ambassadors. **Peer testimonials are the most tangible proof points for an employer value proposition that is focused on opportunity for advancement.** And although peer-to-peer communication is key, employers should continue to leverage employee success stories in traditional ways, too, such as on their websites and in company newsletters.



### 4) EXPAND THE DEFINITION OF ADVANCEMENT

As the research shows, Continuous Candidates and Millennials may define advancement differently from previous generations. While compensation is still important and traditional concepts like promotions resonate, employers should expand their definition of advancement to include expanded roles, job variety, higher profile projects, projects that involve giving back to community or society and examples where ongoing education led to mastering new challenges.

One particularly attractive perk for Millennials is the opportunity to work internationally. Millennials tend to wait longer to get married and have families and therefore see chances to have cultural-experiences as valuable. Companies without multinational opportunities can supplement their offerings with volunteer opportunities or other Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs.



## 5) FOSTER “LEARNABILITY”

Continuous Candidates want continuous education. Millennials understand that learnability is important. “Learnability” is the desire and ability to quickly grow and adapt one’s skills to remain employable throughout working life. Having come of age in a rapidly changing world of technology, Continuous Candidates recognize the skills and knowledge needed to function effectively are morphing. Up-skilling is now part of everyday life. **Employers can nurture learnability through providing or reimbursing for professional development programs, internal and external training or advanced degree programs.**

In addition to creating a workplace culture that fosters learnability, employers should screen for the trait among potential candidates. More than just looking for managerial potential or teamwork, identifying characteristics such as curiosity, engagement and interest in education can help ensure a company employs a pool of talent ready to evolve in changing times, leading the business successfully into the future.

“*As companies evolve, their core businesses are changing. Xerox is responding, whereas Kodak could not. Hiring is becoming less about a specific job and more about the underlying skills needed to adapt to changing market forces.*”

SARAH PEIKER

Head of RPO Practice

ManpowerGroup Solutions Europe



## 6) MENTOR, MENTOR, MENTOR

Continuous Candidates benefit from a workplace where there is a culture of mentorship. Skill acquisition, regular feedback, teamwork and exposure to successful role models strengthen the bond between an employee and the company they work for. **Many savvy Millennials identify the position they want within an organization and cultivate relationships with incumbents.** Rather than be threatened by this, managers and executives should embrace it.

Companies must encourage and reward managers who are accountable for their own succession plans. A culture of mentorship not only helps retain Continuous Candidates, it prevents the development of a talent gap between entry-level and senior-level employees, protects institutional learning and combines the best of experience and out-of-the-box thinking. While a culture of mentorship is not created overnight and may be met with some resistance from older, established employees used to competition, the benefits to a company are significant.

“*Savvy employers are taking the word “talent” back. They are looking at their high-potential employees—where high potential meets high performance—and nominating them for mentorship programs.*”

SARAH PEIKER

Head of RPO Practice

ManpowerGroup Solutions Europe



## 7) BUILD A TALENT COMMUNITY

Make it easy for Continuous Candidates to add themselves to an employer's talent community. **Whether it is on social media, career sites or the company website, articulate opportunities for candidates to join your database and receive job alerts.**

Recognize also, that much of this activity takes place on mobile devices. The content and format of communication must be smartphone friendly; Continuous Candidates are likely to be job shopping while grocery shopping or at the gym.



## 8) VET AND RECLASSIFY APPLICANTS

The application activity of Continuous Candidates, combined with advancement as a motivator, implies that employers may receive a flood of applications and resumes from people who are under qualified for the open positions. How employers treat these cases significantly impacts the candidate experience and an employer's reputation.

**Under qualified applicants should be vetted, reclassified and transparently communicated with to avoid creating negative perceptions among applicants.**

Negative candidate experiences are amplified by social media and employer review websites. Writing clear job descriptions with specific educational or experience requirements can ease the potential tensions resulting from application rejection or reclassification.



## 9) CHALLENGE THE MYTH OF JOB-HOPPING

Older generation hiring managers may stigmatize the new generation of Continuous Candidates whose career paths reflect job-hopping activity. Continuous Candidates and Millennials may view variety as an asset, whereas older generations regard it as a sign of instability and disloyalty. Educating hiring managers about the Continuous Candidate phenomenon is important. To properly assess a candidate, hiring managers must dig deep into the reasons for this type of behavior. Candidates who moved jobs frequently may reflect a desire for geographic mobility or a lack of advancement opportunity...not poor job performance or disloyalty.

**Changing views on job-hopping are also driven by the tech industry, where employees often switch companies to stay connected to the latest cutting-edge technologies and products. Among tech companies, a lack of mobility is equated with stagnation and sometimes, a failure to rise to meet new challenges.**

*“Older generation hiring managers may view Continuous Candidates and their subsequent job-hopping as a bad thing. That is a myth we need to challenge. Many candidates are just searching for the best opportunity but they haven't found it yet. They can be loyal when companies fulfill their expectations.”*

XIMENA CARDENAS

Program Delivery Manager

ManpowerGroup Solutions Latin America

# Conclusion

Continuous Candidates present significant retention challenges for employers. Believing “the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence” is human nature. By becoming employers of choice and building an EVP that is based on opportunity for advancement, organizations can tilt the balance sheet of retention in their direction. That said, Continuous Candidates also represent an opportunity to build talent communities for current and future needs. Continuous Candidates are the new normal. Employers in denial about this phenomenon risk being left behind in the global competition for recruiting and retaining top talent.

## MORE ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

Overall, the job seekers surveyed were 18-65 years old and currently in the workforce (not retired or homemakers). In total there were 4,479 respondents from the UK (18.6%), U.S.(28.8%), China (17.7%), Australia (17.6%) and Mexico (17.4%). They represented a cross-section of age, income, employment status (i.e. full-time, part-time, contract), career level and industry. With respect to career level, experienced non-managers accounted for the largest group at 33 percent followed by managers (26 percent), entry-level employees (9 percent), students (8 percent), executives (5 percent) and senior-level executives (4 percent).



## About ManpowerGroup Solutions

**ManpowerGroup Solutions** is a global leader in outsourcing services for large-scale recruiting and workforce intensive initiatives. Our offerings include Recruitment Process Outsourcing, TAPFIN-Managed Service Provider, and Talent Based Outsourcing. Facing increasingly complex challenges, our clients rely upon our innovative workforce models and outsourcing solutions to deliver measurable results and business success.



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