

## SLOW HIRING SHOOS TOP IT TALENT IN HK



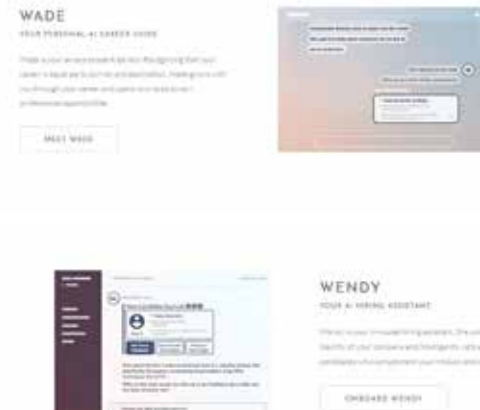
A four-month hiring process is too long for the fast-paced IT industry and even longer for Hong Kong, which has been suffering a shortage in digital talent for the past years. Robert Half reported that as Hong Kong companies prolong their hiring processes, they risk losing top IT candidates who could immediately work on the firm's IT needs.

The report showed that the average process for hiring staff-level professionals lasts three months whilst the average process for hiring management-level professionals takes four months. But really, what is taking the hiring process so long?

According to the Hong Kong chief information officers (CIOs) surveyed, 48% cite too many interview rounds, 47% say they could not find the right candidates with the perfect skill set, and 44% believe that there should be less stakeholders involved. Due to the shortage of talent, 92% of CIOs said that they also find it more difficult to hire IT talent compared to five years ago.

### Reducing the waiting game

On a positive note, 95% of CIOs are doing the best they can to reduce the waiting time for their candidates. Almost half of them already have a pipeline of potential hires in order to minimise starting from scratch whenever a new position is open. Almost half have also improved communication channels to enhance engagement with candidates, whilst one in five have sped up their shortlisting by conducting initial interviews via phone and video conferencing. Adam Johnston, managing director, Robert Half Hong Kong, said that companies can ensure they are on the front foot to win the IT war for talent by having a well-defined hiring process with a limited number of internal stakeholders and interview rounds. They should be able to identify where the delays are coming from and take proactive steps to address the problems that drag the recruitment process.



Wade and Wendy are AI-powered recruitment chatbots

## AI is taking the tedium out of recruitment

When recruitment firm Randstad Hong Kong invested in the AI chatbot Wade & Wendy through its Randstad Innovation Fund this year, the goal that they had in mind was to eliminate the time consuming administrative components of recruitment. Randstad is currently piloting programmes that automate some of the recruitment processes in its operations in Hong Kong.

“AI will take on a crucial role in the automation of simpler tedious tasks such as applicant profiles, processing applications and organising interviews,” said Natellie Sun, managing director at Randstad Hong Kong.

Wade is a chatbot that serves as a personal career guide and offers career advices based on a jobseeker's skills. Meanwhile, Wendy is an AI chatbot recruiter that joins hiring teams to automate many of their top-of-the-funnel recruiting efforts. Drew Austin, CEO of Wade & Wendy, reckoned that the response to the chatbot has been positive in spite of fears that AI will make

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Sample conversation using the Wade and Wendy chatbot

recruitment professionals obsolete. “As organisations become increasingly comfortable with bringing AI into the workplace, we’ll see a huge reliance on chatbots to automate many repetitive tasks. People will have more bandwidth to do the more human and cognitive intensive tasks,” he said.

Another firm embracing such a technology leap is recruitment agency Hays where Natural Language Generation (NLG) AI is utilised. From piles of resumes, NLG outlines the best fit for the role at hand, freeing the recruiter of tasks like poring over a wider pool of applicants who may not be suitable. The company has also enlisted the help of an external organisation with expertise in the area to ensure this relatively novel approach delivers on its promise.

“The early signs are that it works,” said Alistair Cox, chief executive officer at Hays. “Our consultants are freed up to concentrate on building relationships with their clients and candidates.”

### Need for human touch

Adam Johnston, managing director at Robert Half Hong Kong, said the boons of AI make its adoption a must for firms who wish to remain competitive, but a complete machine takeover of the industry remains an unfounded fear. “Whilst AI is a powerful tool to find and identify potential candidates with particular skills, it doesn’t cover the entire hiring process,” he said. “Assessing the attitude in the interview and corporate culture fit, negotiating remuneration, and persuading candidates to accept a job offer are all examples of where human interaction and judgement are crucial,” he said.