



WINNING THE ALGORITHM

Q2 2026 RESEARCH STUDY

**HOW CREATORS, EMPLOYEES, AND TRUST DRIVE
RECRUITMENT DISCOVERY**

AI answers questions. Algorithms create discovery. People
create trust.

www.flockity.com

Executive Summary

Recruitment marketing is entering a new era, but much of the conversation is focused on the wrong destination.

Across the industry, employers are investing in Answer Engine Optimization (AEO), Generative Engine Optimization (GEO), AI-ready career sites, and strategies designed to help their organizations appear in AI-generated responses. As artificial intelligence reshapes how people search for information, these investments are both logical and necessary.

They are also incomplete.

The assumption behind today's AI conversation is that the journey begins with a search. It doesn't.

Before someone asks ChatGPT where they should work, something far more important has already happened: a social algorithm has decided what that person is likely to discover.

Discovery, not search, is now the first stage of recruitment marketing. Candidates don't spend their days searching for jobs. They spend their days scrolling.

They discover companies through employees who share their experiences, creators who discuss careers, friends who celebrate new opportunities, and communities that recommend employers worth considering. Every social feed is curated by an algorithm designed to maximize attention, engagement, and relevance. Those algorithms consistently amplify people over brands, conversations over campaigns, and authentic voices over corporate messaging.

This changes the recruiting equation.

Context

Daily Active users on TikTok

1.2 billion

Indeed monthly traffic

350 million

Average time on TikTok/day

90 minutes

Average length of Indeed visit

10 minutes



The Discovery Gap

The companies that earn discovery become the companies candidates remember.

The companies candidates remember become the companies they search for. Only then do search engines and AI assistants enter the picture.

In other words, before AI answers a question, an algorithm decides what people discover.

This research argues that recruitment marketing has reached a pivotal inflection point. While organizations continue to optimize for search, the next competitive advantage will belong to those that optimize for discovery. Discovery creates awareness. Awareness builds trust. Trust drives curiosity. Curiosity leads to search, applications, and ultimately hiring.

This shift also redefines the role of employer branding. Brand perception is no longer shaped solely by career sites or corporate content. It is increasingly influenced by employees, creators, and trusted individuals whose voices carry further than branded channels ever could. As social platforms continue to prioritize authentic human engagement, the organizations that empower people to tell their stories will outperform those that rely exclusively on traditional recruitment marketing tactics.

Throughout this report, we explore how algorithms shape job discovery, why trust has become the most valuable currency in recruitment marketing, and how organizations can combine employee advocacy with external creators to build a sustainable discovery strategy.

Drawing on Flockity's platform insights, customer results, and broader market trends, we present a new framework for understanding recruitment marketing, one built around discovery, trust, and distribution rather than search alone.

The future of recruiting will not be won by the organizations that simply rank highest in search results or appear most often in AI-generated answers. It will be won by the organizations that are discovered first.

Because before AI can answer a question, people have to know which question to ask.

Before AI Answers, Algorithms Decide

For the better part of two decades, recruitment marketing has been built around one assumption: candidates search for jobs.

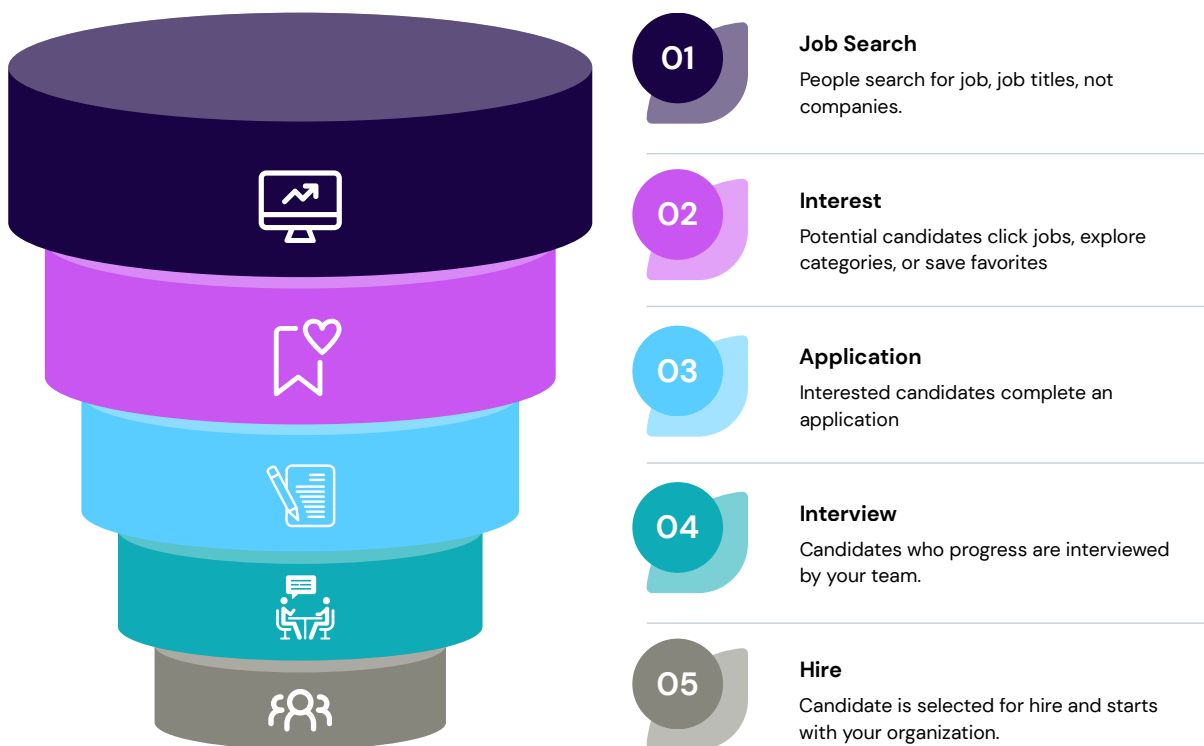
That assumption shaped an entire industry. Employers invested in career sites, search engine optimization, job boards, pay-per-click advertising, and applicant tracking systems designed to capture intent once someone had already decided to look for a new opportunity.

Today, a new assumption is taking hold.

Artificial intelligence is changing how people search. Organizations are investing in Answer Engine Optimization (AEO), Generative Engine Optimization (GEO), structured data, and AI-ready content to ensure their employer brand appears when candidates ask questions of ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, or other generative search tools.

These are important developments. As search evolves, employers should absolutely be preparing for a future in which AI plays a central role in helping candidates evaluate opportunities. This development is upending the funnel as we have known it.

The Funnel as we knew it



Before AI Answers, Algorithms Decide

But there is a critical question that far fewer organizations are asking:

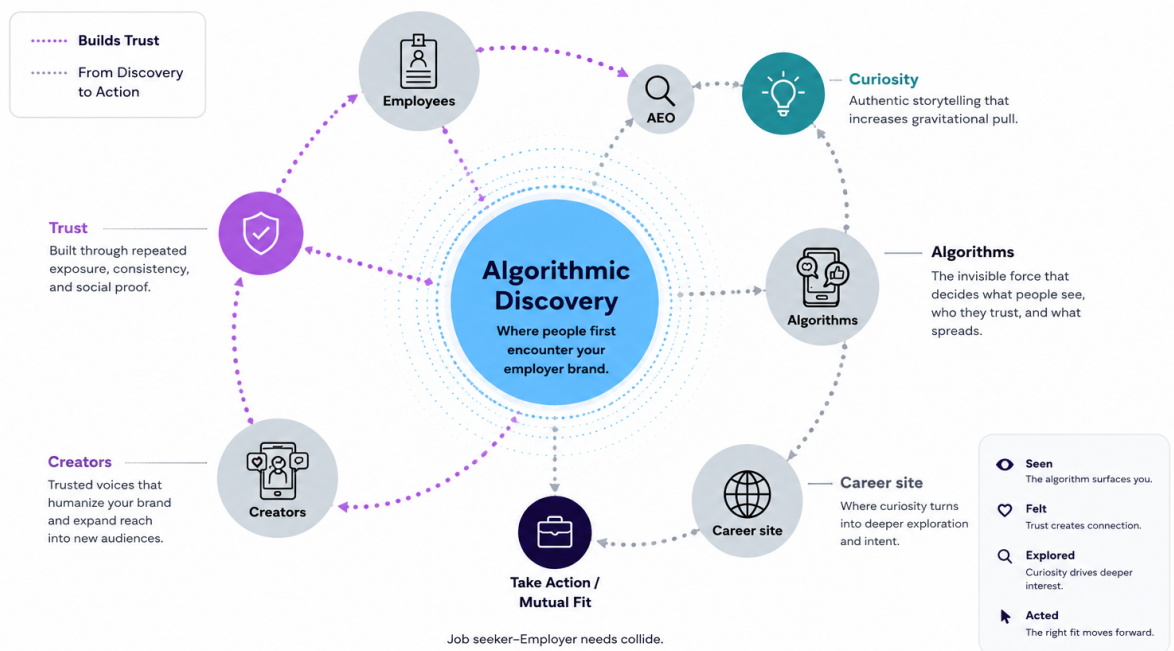
What happens before someone opens an AI chat?

That question matters because AI does not create curiosity. It responds to it. Every search begins with awareness. Every prompt begins with recognition. Before someone asks, "Is this a good company to work for?" they must first know that company exists. Before they compare employers, they must first discover them.

Discovery is the stage of recruitment marketing that has been hiding in plain sight.

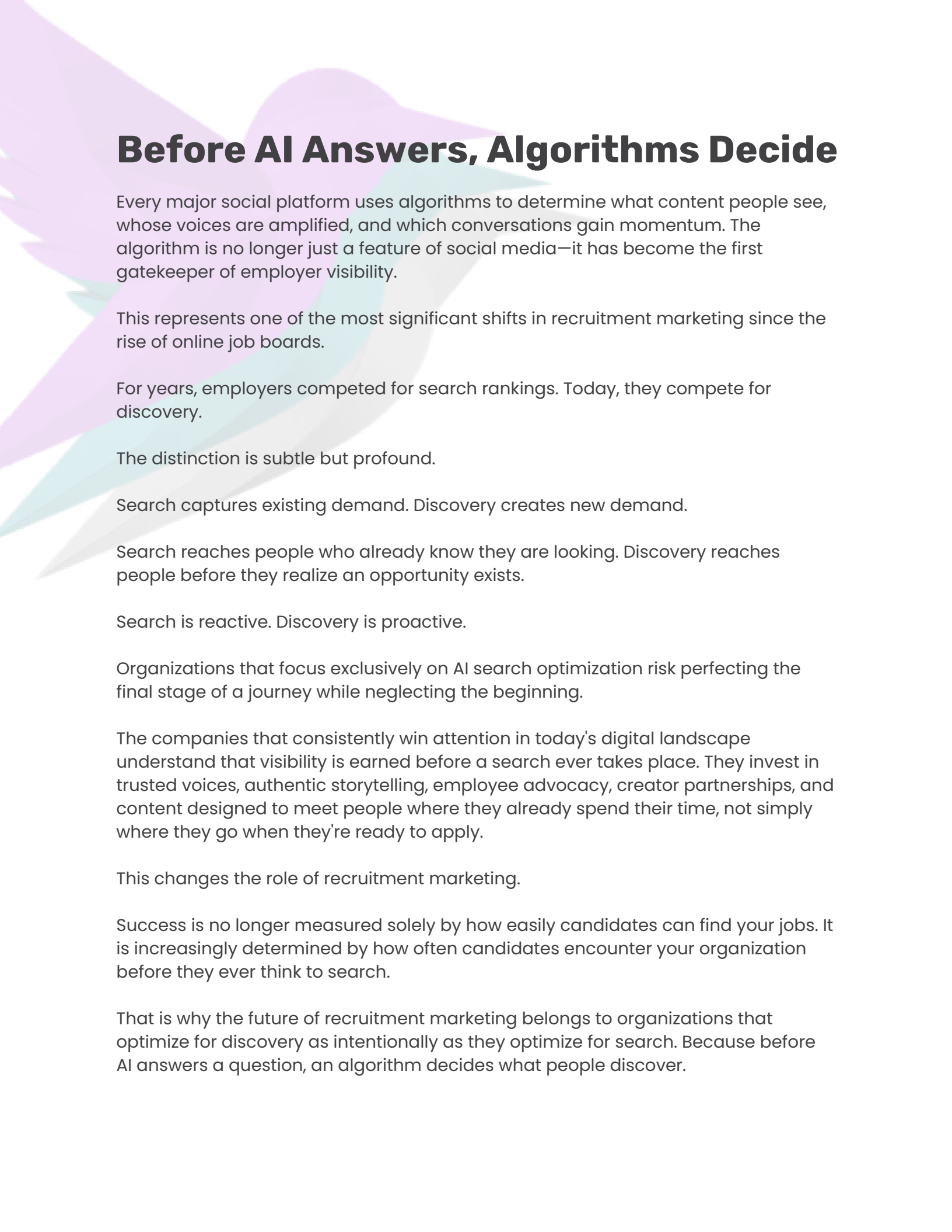
Today's candidates spend far more time scrolling than searching. They move through TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, Reddit, LinkedIn, newsletters, podcasts, and professional communities. Along the way they encounter employee stories, creator recommendations, workplace conversations, career advice, and authentic glimpses into company culture. These moments rarely feel like recruiting. Yet they are often the moments that shape perceptions of an employer long before a job search begins.

Those moments are not random. They are orchestrated by algorithms. Think less funnel, more orbits. This is really how recruitment marketing exists:



Hiring isn't a funnel. It's a gravitational system.

Great employers build enough gravity that the right people pull themselves closer.



Before AI Answers, Algorithms Decide

Every major social platform uses algorithms to determine what content people see, whose voices are amplified, and which conversations gain momentum. The algorithm is no longer just a feature of social media—it has become the first gatekeeper of employer visibility.

This represents one of the most significant shifts in recruitment marketing since the rise of online job boards.

For years, employers competed for search rankings. Today, they compete for discovery.

The distinction is subtle but profound.

Search captures existing demand. Discovery creates new demand.

Search reaches people who already know they are looking. Discovery reaches people before they realize an opportunity exists.

Search is reactive. Discovery is proactive.

Organizations that focus exclusively on AI search optimization risk perfecting the final stage of a journey while neglecting the beginning.

The companies that consistently win attention in today's digital landscape understand that visibility is earned before a search ever takes place. They invest in trusted voices, authentic storytelling, employee advocacy, creator partnerships, and content designed to meet people where they already spend their time, not simply where they go when they're ready to apply.

This changes the role of recruitment marketing.

Success is no longer measured solely by how easily candidates can find your jobs. It is increasingly determined by how often candidates encounter your organization before they ever think to search.

That is why the future of recruitment marketing belongs to organizations that optimize for discovery as intentionally as they optimize for search. Because before AI answers a question, an algorithm decides what people discover.

Algorithms Reward People

The word algorithm often carries a negative connotation. It evokes images of mysterious formulas, ever-changing social platforms, and marketers scrambling to keep up with the latest update.

But algorithms aren't designed to make recruiting harder.

They're designed to make content more relevant. Every day, billions of pieces of content compete for attention across LinkedIn, TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Reddit, and other digital communities.

Social platforms have one job: determine which of those pieces of content people are most likely to engage with. The result is a simple but powerful reality: Algorithms don't optimize for brands. They optimize for human behavior.

Content that sparks conversation, generates comments, earns shares, encourages watch time, and creates meaningful interactions is rewarded with greater visibility. Content that feels promotional, repetitive, or disconnected from authentic experiences is shown to fewer people.

This presents a fundamental challenge for employer brands. Most recruitment marketing is still built for broadcasting. Job postings, hiring announcements, employer branding videos, and recruitment campaigns are polished corporate communications designed to inform. Social platforms are designed for something else.

They reward human connection.

That's why employees and creators consistently outperform corporate accounts. They don't sound like organizations. They sound like people. They tell stories, share experiences, and invite conversation.

The difference matters.

71%

discover new products on TikTok

142%

Lift in ads featuring creators vs traditional brand ads.

Algorithms Reward People

Candidates rarely stop scrolling because they see another hiring announcement. They stop because someone they trust shares a story.

Whether it's an employee celebrating a promotion, a creator offering career advice, or a recruiter sharing insights, authentic voices create engagement, and engagement earns visibility.

The organizations that succeed in this environment won't simply produce more content. They'll activate more storytellers.

Instead of asking, "What should we post?" they'll ask, "Who can tell our story better than we can?"

Employees become advocates. Creators expand reach. Recruiters become educators.

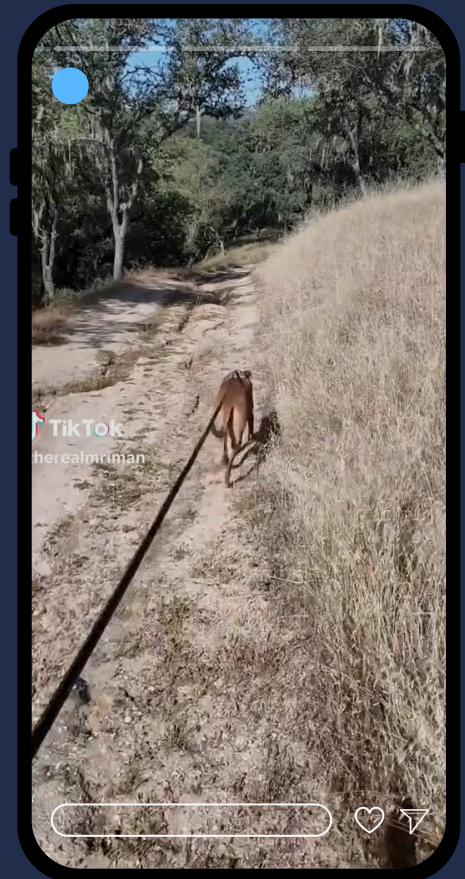
Together, they generate something a corporate account cannot: **sustained algorithmic momentum.**

This is the shift from broadcasting to distribution. Broadcasting assumes people will eventually see your content. Distribution ensures trusted people help your content get discovered.

For years, employer branding focused on creating better content. The next era of recruitment marketing belongs to organizations that build better distribution.

Because algorithms don't decide which company has the best jobs. They decide which stories people see first.

Algorithms don't optimize for brands. They optimize for human behavior.



Employees: The Trust Multiplier

If algorithms determine what people discover, trust determines what they do next.

For decades, employer branding has relied on corporate channels to communicate culture, values, and career opportunities. Career sites, recruitment marketing campaigns, and social media accounts remain important, but they all share one limitation: they represent the company's perspective.

Employees represent something different.

They represent lived experience.

That distinction matters because trust is built through people, not logos.

When an employee shares why they joined an organization, celebrates a career milestone, or offers a glimpse into their daily work, the message carries a level of authenticity that corporate content struggles to replicate.

These aren't advertisements. They're experiences.

Repeated across dozens—or even hundreds—of employees, those experiences become a powerful distribution network.

This is where employee advocacy shifts from a communications strategy to a discovery strategy. Look no further than the [Staples Baddie](#) for what an employee can do for your brand. Increased foot traffic, increased brand affinity, and introducing your brand to a whole new world of people who forgot they needed office supplies. Discovery works in consumer marketing and it works in recruitment marketing.

Every employee has a network. Every network contains potential candidates. Every authentic story creates another opportunity for someone to discover an employer they may never have encountered otherwise.

Unlike traditional recruitment campaigns, employee advocacy doesn't interrupt the conversation. It becomes part of it.

"Employees
don't just build
culture. They
distribute it."

Employees: The Trust Multiplier

Measuring Discovery Through Employee Advocacy

To better understand the impact of employee-driven distribution, Flockity launched Linkity, a platform that helps employees share jobs and employer content through personalized, creator-inspired profile pages.

Early results suggest that employees can play a meaningful role in expanding employer visibility and driving high-quality engagement.

These early findings reinforce an important idea: employees are more than brand ambassadors. They are trusted distributors.

Every employee who shares a job, career story, or workplace experience extends the organization's reach beyond its owned channels. More importantly, they introduce opportunities through relationships that already exist.

That is the foundation of trust.

Employee advocacy also creates momentum

Every story increases the likelihood that someone will recognize the employer's name in the future. Familiarity becomes curiosity. Curiosity becomes exploration. Exploration becomes action. This is why employee advocacy is no longer an employer branding initiative. **It's infrastructure for algorithmic discovery.**

Organizations that activate employees are not just publishing more content. They are multiplying the number of trusted voices introducing their brand into conversations where careers are increasingly discovered.

And while employee advocacy creates credibility, its reach is naturally limited by the size of an organization's workforce. The next opportunity is extending that same trust beyond employees to trusted creators who can introduce employers to entirely new audiences.

That is where discovery begins to scale.

Travel + Leisure

Employees sharing

10

Profile views

2,751

Clicks to career site

744

View to click conversion rate

27%

Creators: Scaling Discovery

Employee advocacy is one of the most powerful ways to build trust. But trust alone isn't enough. People can't trust an employer they've never discovered. This is where external creators change the equation.

Employees bring credibility because they work for the organization. Their stories validate the employee experience and help candidates answer an important question: *"Would I enjoy working there?"*

Creators answer a different question: *"How do people discover this company in the first place?"*

Unlike employees, creators aren't limited by the size of an organization's workforce or the reach of its internal networks. They introduce employers to entirely new audiences—communities that may never visit a job board, follow a corporate careers page, or search for open positions.

They expand the top of the recruitment ecosystem by creating moments of discovery where none previously existed.

This is not about celebrity endorsements or viral campaigns.

It's about trusted voices introducing meaningful opportunities to people who weren't actively looking but are open to the right one. That distinction is becoming increasingly important.

Employees

Build trust

Validate culture

Internal networks

Authentic experience

Credibility

Strengthens relationships

Creators

Build awareness

Expand reach

New audiences

Authentic introductions

Discovery

Create relationships

Creators: Scaling Discovery

Today's workforce spends hours each day consuming creator content across LinkedIn, TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, Reddit, podcasts, and newsletters. Career advice, workplace trends, salary discussions, interview tips, and professional development have become part of everyday social media consumption.

Jobs are becoming part of those conversations.

When creators share opportunities in a way that is authentic, relevant, and useful to their audience, they transform recruiting from an interruption into content people choose to engage with.

The result is something traditional recruitment marketing has struggled to achieve for years:

Net-new discovery.

Early results from the Flockity platform demonstrate the power of creator-led distribution.

These results reinforce an important principle. Creators are not replacing recruiters. They are replacing anonymity.

They introduce employers to audiences that otherwise may never know those opportunities exist.

This is where employee advocacy and creator marketing become exponentially more powerful together.

->Employees build confidence. Creators build awareness.

->Employees validate the employer brand. Creators expand its reach.

->Employees strengthen trust. Creators accelerate discovery.

Highlights

Creator reach

8.4M

and growing

Career site stickiness

3X

89%

Net new candidates visiting the career site

13%

Conversion rate from click to apply

Creators: Scaling Discovery

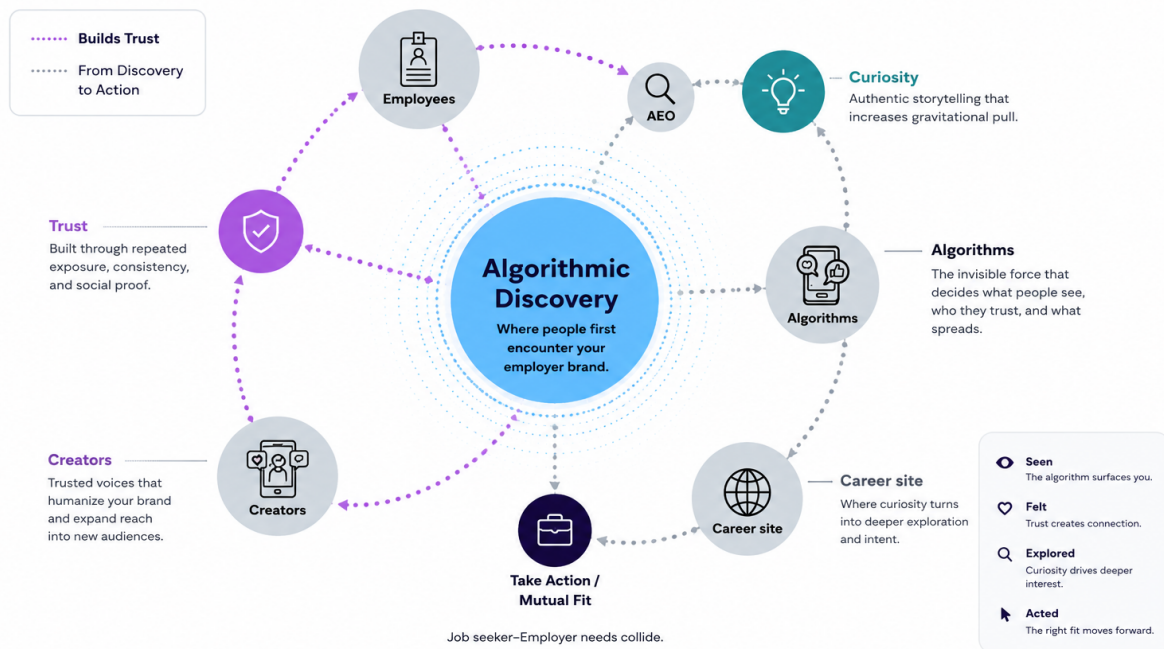
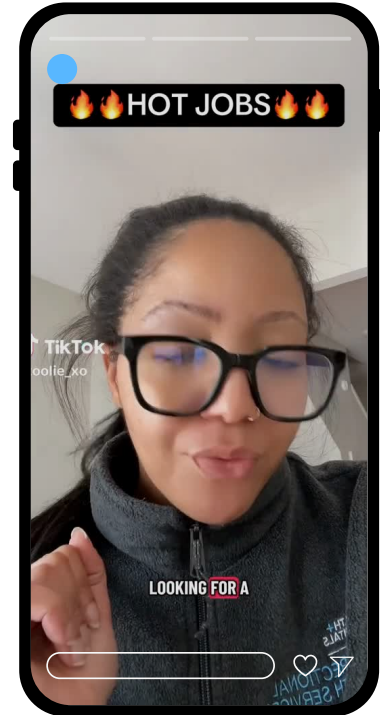
Together, they create a continuous system of distribution that works with the algorithms shaping how people consume information every day.

Organizations no longer have to choose between employee advocacy and creator marketing.

The greatest opportunity lies in combining both. Employee voices establish authenticity. Creator voices generate scale.

Together, they transform recruitment marketing from a campaign into a living network of trusted discovery.

In a world where algorithms decide what people see before AI answers what they ask, that network becomes one of an organization's most valuable competitive advantages. And discovery sits as the gravitational pull for job seekers.



Hiring isn't a funnel. It's a gravitational system.

Great employers build enough gravity that the right people pull themselves closer.

Key Findings

1

Discovery Happens Before Search

Candidates don't start with a job search. They discover. Before someone searches for an employer, or asks AI, they have to know the employer exists.

2

Algorithms Are the New Gatekeepers

Social algorithms increasingly determine what people see, who they trust, and which employers enter their consideration set.

3

People Outperform Brands

Employees and creators generate more engagement, reach, and visibility than corporate channels. Algorithms prioritize human connection.

4

Trust Drives Action

Discovery creates awareness. Trust creates momentum. Candidates explore opportunities when they hear about them from people vs. brands.

5

Employee Advocacy Creates Credibility

Employee stories provide authentic proof of culture. They transform employer branding from a message into a trusted recommendation.

6

Creators Expand Discovery

Creators open you up to new audiences, generate awareness with people who never visit a job board, follow a careers page, or search for jobs.



THE NEXT GEN OF CREATOR-LED RECRUITING IS HERE



**Startup of
the Year**

Because Great Talent Doesn't Search. They Discover.

Meet Flockity Amplify

The future of recruiting isn't automation. It's amplification. Not algorithms. People. As the first company to bring influencer marketing to recruiting, it's become more clear than ever: The Power of People Is the Future. In a world full of bots, scams, data grabs, ghost jobs, and posers, we found the magic remains in humanity, authenticity, trust, and learning. Together.

Flockity

The flagship, offers real creators sharing real jobs in their public profiles, not because we tell them to, but because it aligns with who they are, what they talk about, and what their community values. 89% of the traffic Flockity drives is net new to your career site.

Flockity+

Choose the creator, give direction, and own the final content. Think Cameo for jobs, whether it's a welcome video for a finalist or a creator talking about why your product team is a place they'd want to work. Flockity+ delivers clicks plus commissioned video.

Linkity

Turn your employees into influencers, effortlessly. Automate the right jobs to the right team members to share jobs with zero lift. All those times you wished employees would post your EB content and they didn't because it was hard? Linkity makes it simple.

Trusted by



Ask your Agency about Flockity or drop us a line: tracey@flockity.com