MIND THE AI DEMO GAP · THE TALENT LABS

Minutes. That's a demo. Months. That's production.

Rolling out enterprise hiring technology is harder than any demo shows.
An hour on what it really takes, from inside a live deployment.

WITH
Dan Pitman, Compass Group UK and Ireland

AND
Alex Hanson-Smith, inploi

HOSTED BY
The Talent Labs · 5 November 2026

WHO YOU'RE HEARING FROM

One of us rolled it out.
One of us built it.



Dan Pitman

Head of Digital Attraction and WFM Solutions
Compass Group UK and Ireland

Runs digital attraction for one of the UK's biggest employers, and rolled out what this hour is about.



Alex Hanson-Smith

CTPO
inploi

Builds the product Dan rolled out. Here to be honest about what it took.

POLL 1 OF 3 · VOTE NOW IN ZOOM

Where is your team with AI in hiring right now?

- **A** Live, at scale, and we can show what it changed
- **B** Running a pilot
- **C** Talking to vendors
- **D** Asked to “do something with AI”, with no clear problem yet
- **E** Deliberately holding off

TODAY

Three chapters.
Then what to do on Monday.

01

The demo gap

Why a great demo turns into a slow rollout.

02

Start with the problem

What Compass actually needed, and why quality is a full-funnel job.

03

Making it real

The last mile: the people, the gates, and getting it used.

→

Takeaways

Five things to do before you start, and five questions to ask any vendor.

— Three quick polls along the way, in Zoom.

01

The demo gap

Why a great demo turns into a slow rollout.

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01 · THE DEMO GAP

Every vendor has a great demo.

IN THE DEMO

- One tidy job advert
- One happy candidate
- No ATS in sight
- Five minutes
- Everyone nods

IN MONTH THREE

- Thousands of adverts, and job titles nobody agrees on
- Candidates who ask the awkward question at 11pm
- Two ATSs and a spreadsheet
- A DPIA, an InfoSec review and a procurement queue
- Hiring managers who never log in

— A demo is a show home. Nobody has lived in it yet.

01 · THE DEMO GAP

0.5%

of big projects land on budget, on time, with the benefits they promised.

We know projects overrun, and we still plan for the demo. That's the planning fallacy.

Flyvbjerg and Gardner, How Big Things Get Done (2023), across more than 16,000 projects: 8.5% on budget and on time, 0.5% on budget, on time and with the promised benefits. The planning fallacy: Kahneman and Tversky (1979).

01 · THE DEMO GAP

“We need to do something with AI.”

A solution looking for a problem. Hand someone a hammer, and everything looks like a nail.

The law of the instrument: Abraham Maslow, The Psychology of Science (1966).

02

Start with the problem

What Compass actually needed, and why quality is a full-funnel job.

Start with the problem.
Then, maybe, AI.

01

What's the problem, in numbers?

Who feels it, how often, and what it costs today.

02

What would fix it?

A better process, a shorter form, a person, or a product.

03

Is AI the best way?

Sometimes. Often only for part of it.

— AI is a how. It is never the why.

POLL 2 OF 3 · VOTE NOW IN ZOOM

Which of these hurts your hiring most right now?

- **A** We're drowning in volume. Most applications never get looked at, so great people go unseen.
- **B** Our recruiters lose the week to admin, screening, chasing, scheduling, not to hiring.
- **C** Candidates drop off before they even apply, and we lose the spend that brought them.
- **D** We keep paying to re-source people we've already met, because there's no pipeline.
- **E** We can't connect spend to hires, so we keep funding channels that don't deliver.
- **F** Our ATS records the process, but the real work of hiring still falls on the team.

A million applications. Thousands of hiring managers. Nobody in the middle.

Hiring becomes a game of luck, not merit.

— Who is the guardrail when there's no central team?



Sort by time, and the fastest finger wins.

- **09:02** Applied. Interviewed.
- **14:20** Applied. Better fit. Never seen.

— Fastest finger first is a game show, not a hiring strategy.



Quality isn’t screened in.
It’s made at the top.

Where quality is made



Where most hiring looks for it

71% → 39%

Job boards bring 71% of applicants, and 39% of hires.

Nearly 3×

as likely to be hired when they come through your own careers site.

Quality is a full-funnel job.
And a team sport.

01 BEFORE THEY APPLY

The right people find a role that fits, and choose themselves in, or out.

WHO OWNS IT

Talent marketing, the careers site

THE AGENT'S PART

The Candidate Agent answers from your approved information, at any hour.

02 AFTER THEY APPLY

Every application is read, the strongest first, with the reasons attached.

WHO OWNS IT

Recruiters

THE AGENT'S PART

The Hiring Agent ranks and recommends. It never rejects.

03 THE DECISION

People decide who to interview, and who to hire.

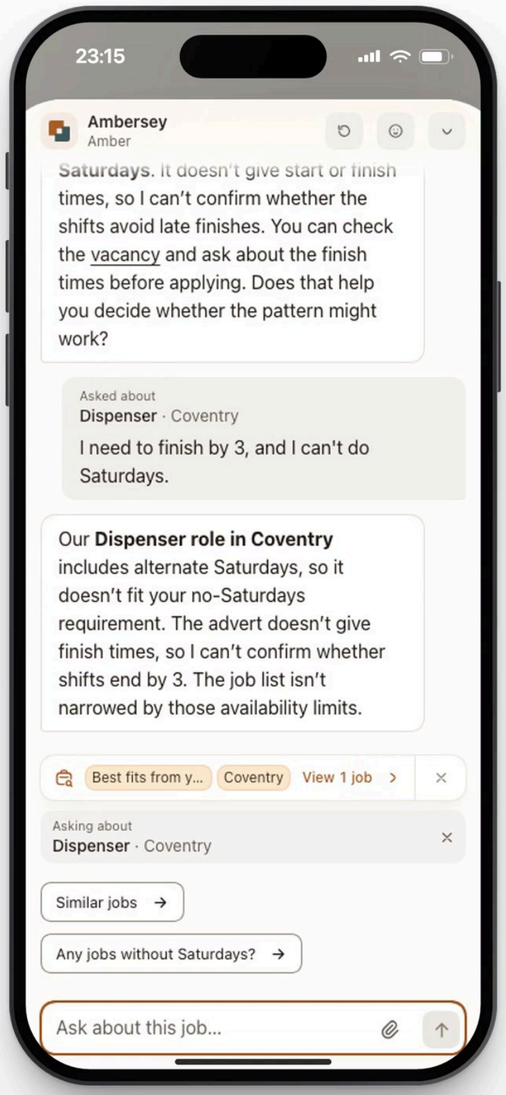
WHO OWNS IT

Recruiters and hiring managers

THE AGENT'S PART

Only the admin: booking interviews and keeping the ATS up to date.

— Agents do the admin. Humans do the hiring.



Tuesday, 11.15pm · Coventry

Ellie

The right no, early.

LIVE Matching, and honest answers from the advert

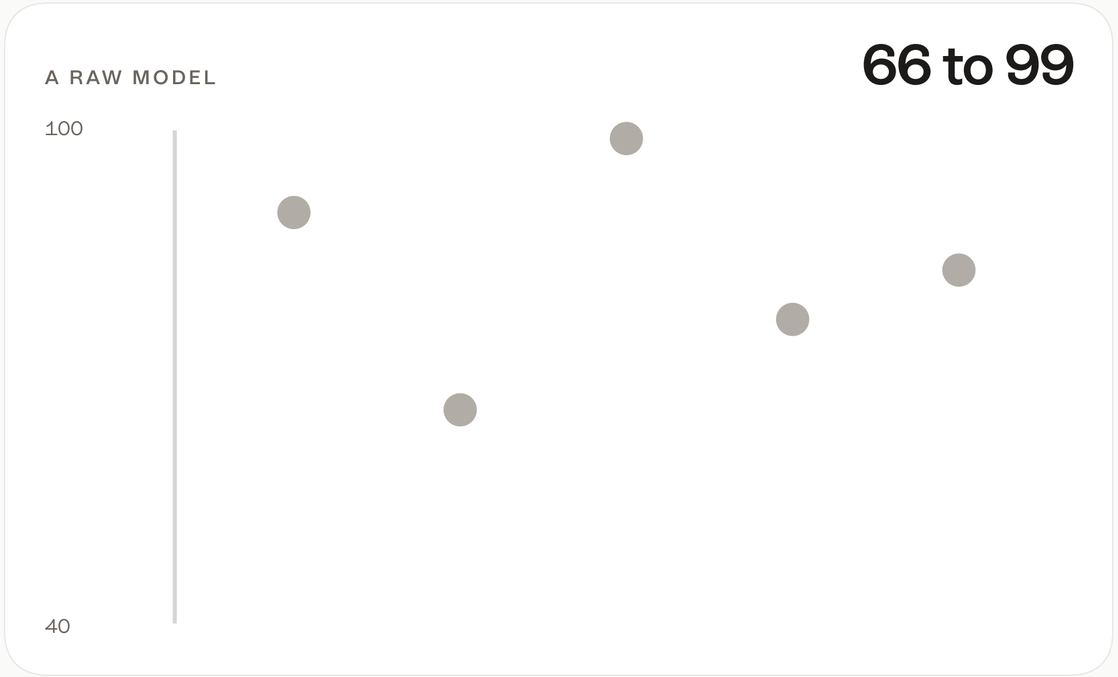
> NEXT Ellie hears first when a school-hours role opens

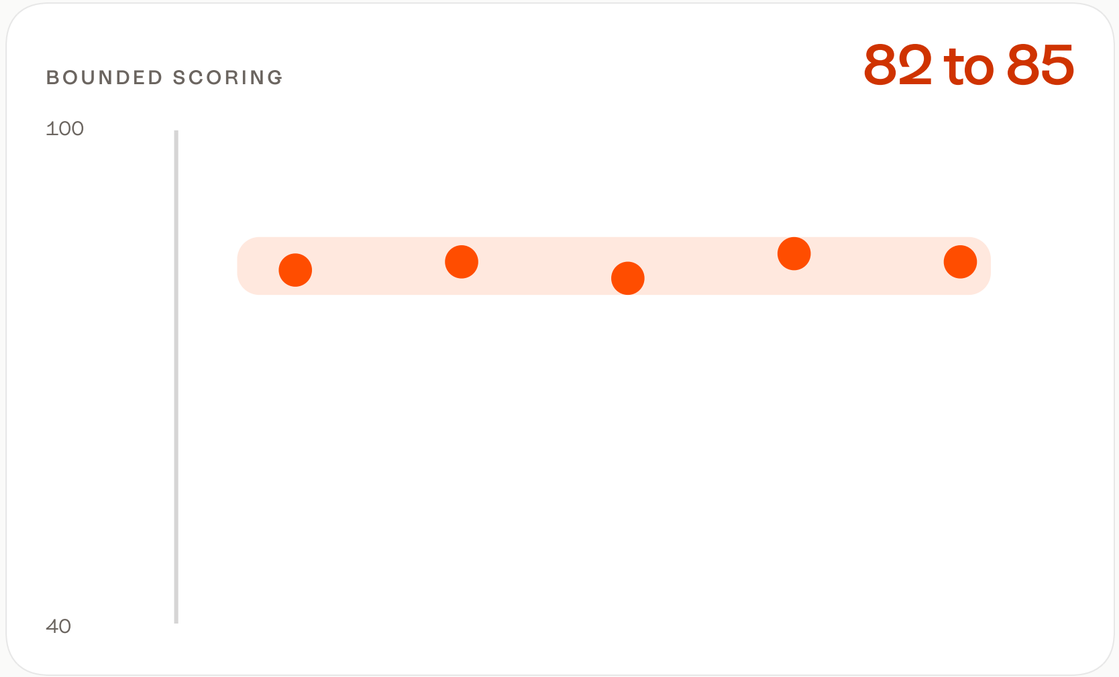
Recorded on 2 and 3 November 2026. Ambersey and every candidate are fictional.

02 · START WITH THE PROBLEM

One CV, five runs, thirty-three points apart.

The fix is bounded scoring: criteria your team sets, personal details removed, the temperature at zero, and the overall score worked out by maths rather than by the model. Bounded, with the reasoning attached.





Runs 1 to 5, left to right, plotted by score.

Would you trust a score you can’t explain?

02 · START WITH THE PROBLEM · NO AUTOMATED DECISIONS

Agents rank and recommend. People decide.

Every application stays in the queue and can be read in full. The score changes the order, not who is seen.

- Personal details are removed before the Hiring Agent scores an application, and scoring uses only the criteria your team sets.
- Every candidate is asked whether they are happy for AI to be used. They can say no and carry on, and neither answer helps or harms their application.
- A full audit trail of every agent action is available in Studio.

POLL 3 OF 3 · VOTE NOW IN ZOOM

What slowed your last HR tech rollout down the most?

- **A** Security, legal and data protection reviews
- **B** Integrating with the ATS and other systems
- **C** Getting recruiters and hiring managers to use it
- **D** No agreed goal, so no way to prove it worked
- **E** The product didn’t match the demo
- **F** Budget and sign-off

03

Making it real

The last mile: the people, the gates, and getting it used.

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03 · MAKING IT REAL

The edge is everything around it.

If everyone can buy the same engine, why does one car win?



01 **The engine**
The frontier model. Not your edge.

02 **Aero and chassis**
Real-time data and how it flows.

03 **Pit crew and strategy**
Orchestration. The real edge.

04 **Telemetry**
Bias auditing and monitoring.

05 **Safety and scrutineering**
InfoSec, compliance, guardrails.

06 **The driver**
The forward-deployed engineer.

— Chapter 3 is a walk around the car.

03 · MAKING IT REAL

Get everyone in the room on day one.

People back what they helped build.

The IKEA effect: Norton, Mochon and Ariely (2012).

01

Legal and data protection

They write the rules you'll be held to. Ask early and they help design it.

02

InfoSec

Their review is the longest queue in the building.

03

IT and the ATS owner

Data in, data out, and who looks after it.

04

Recruiters

If it doesn't save them time on day one, they'll work around it.

05

Hiring managers

They make the decisions. Design for the five minutes they have.

06

Candidates

Test it with real ones before you scale it.

Three gates before a single live decision.

GATE 1

Personal details out first

Personal details are removed before the Hiring Agent scores an application, and scoring uses only the criteria your team sets.

GATE 2

Independently audited

inploi's use of AI, including the Hiring Agent and the Candidate Agent, is independently audited for fairness and accuracy by Warden.

GATE 3

Security review passed

ISO 27001 certified, with UK and EU data residency and a DPA as standard. The security review was signed off before the first application was scored.

03 · MAKING IT REAL

The best tool is the one your team already uses.

People stick with the default. So build into the ATS and the inbox your team lives in, not one more login.

Status quo bias: Samuelson and Zeckhauser (1988).

34,254

CVs scored in 90 days, in production.

A further 47,582 shortlist runs after submission, over the same period. Studio's count to 18 August 2026.

TAKEAWAYS · WHAT TO DO

If you’re about to do this.

1. Write the problem down, with a number on it.
2. Agree how you’ll measure success before you sign.
3. Bring legal, InfoSec and IT in on day one.
4. Pilot with one willing team, then scale.
5. Build into the tools your team already uses.

TAKEAWAYS · WHAT TO ASK

Five questions to ask every vendor.

1. Can you show it working on our jobs, our data and our ATS?
2. How will we know it worked, six months from now?
3. Does any decision about a candidate happen without a person?
4. If we run the same application twice, do we get the same answer?
5. Where does our data go, and how do we leave?

THE POINT

Agents do the admin. Humans do the hiring.

Start with the problem. Make quality at the top, keep it through the funnel, and leave every decision with people. That’s the gap between a demo and a deployment.

NEXT STEP

Bring us your problem. Not your AI mandate.

A free, personalised look at your hiring experience: what's costing you candidates and hours, and what would fix it, whether that's inploi or not.

Book a demo

See what your hiring is costing you

How does your careers site score?

Grade it in four minutes: inploi.com/hiring-experience-audit