

Paid content

About theguardian

The
Guardian
Labs

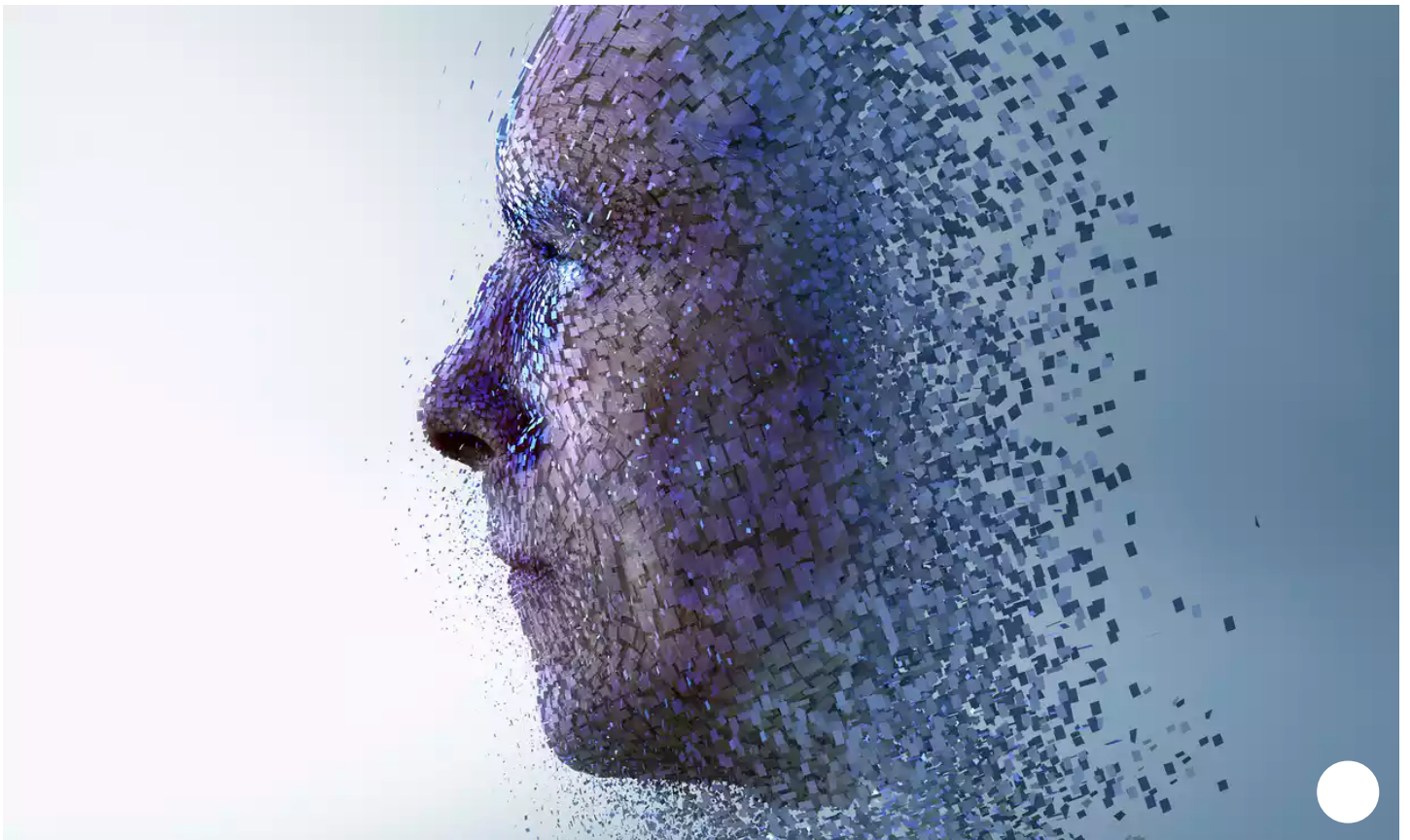
The tech startups using AI to disrupt the recruitment industry

Paid for by

Aldermore

Banking for the Bold

A new generation of tech startups are using artificial intelligence to give employers the edge in the recruitment stakes

Alison Coleman

Hiring the best talent and creating a diverse workforce is a top priority for businesses – and is arguably one of their biggest challenges. But help is now at hand from a new generation of tech startups using artificial intelligence (AI) to give employers the edge in the recruitment stakes.

Nicholas Shekerdeman is CEO and co-founder of Headstart, which uses AI to transform the graduate recruitment process. As a student at Oxford University, he was sending internship applications to the same companies as everyone else, when he had his eureka moment.

"The process was boring, repetitive and offered no opportunity to either differentiate myself or identify the roles best suited to my skills, experience and personality," he says. "I thought that there

must be a better way of doing this, for both the applicant and the employer."

Shekerdemian researched the market and found there wasn't anything out there to streamline the recruitment process. Teaming up with Jeremy Hindle, a graduate in neuroscience, who had the necessary technical expertise, they devised Headstart, a recruitment app that matches students from a range of backgrounds with opportunities at leading companies, using a series of contextual and predictive algorithms.

Headstart's matching system creates a detailed "fingerprint" for every applicant, using neural networks and machine learning. The fingerprint considers personality, interests, skills and demographic background as well as traditional criteria such as qualifications and experience.

"This allows applicants to apply quickly and simply for multiple jobs as themselves via just one, highly personalised application," says Shekerdemian.

Recruiters, meanwhile, receive a ranked list of prospective candidates for each role who meet the minimum grade requirements and are also a good cultural fit. Headstart now works with a number of global brands, including Vodafone, Expedia, and BP, who are using the system to help ensure truly diverse, talented and suitable intakes.

Simon Ashley, vice president of human resources at BP, says: "Diversity and inclusion is one of our core objectives as a business and we believe that Headstart will help build our brand awareness with diverse groups of people who wouldn't normally think of working for BP."

The system also works for small businesses and startups, enabling them to compete cost-effectively with large corporations for talent. In less than a year, Headstart gained more than 100 clients and 17 members of staff. The company recently secured funding and support from one of the world's leading startup accelerator programmes, Silicon Valley-based Y Combinator, and is set to open a US West Coast office.

Removing bias

When it comes to the hiring process, these intelligent recruitment technologies are not designed to replicate human decision-making.

"One reason why traditional recruitment processes are suboptimal is because of the human bias and subjectivity that reduces diversity and leads to suboptimal selection decisions," explains Juan Swartz, co-founder of talent management tech firm Pivotal Talent. The firm uses a performance prediction model to evaluate every candidate differently for every role, based only on the criteria for that specific job. This helps to better match candidates to performance and culture requirements, and to better manage the career progression of employees.

"We refer to our solution in the context of augmented intelligence; a solution to augment or enhance the final selection decision of a human," Swartz adds. "It will scientifically, accurately and automatically get you to a shortlist of suitable candidates. It is then up to the client to have the final interview, apply their experience and intuition, and make the selection decision from a shortlist of all suitable candidates."

Personnel analytics company Weavee is also helping companies tackle the unconscious bias issue, by recommending candidates on the basis of what they are capable of, not what employers assume they are capable of.

As a computer science and games technology graduate, Weavee's founder and CEO James Grant had experienced the challenges of job seeking. He says: "I was frustrated by the rigidity of corporate structures and how the definition of success simply didn't gel with what I had to offer. Rather than

set out to change companies' makeup, I thought it would be more effective to use data to improve matchmaking between companies and candidates."

Weavee combines performance and psychometric data on existing employees, enabling companies to seek out candidates with the potential to succeed within their culture. It also offers a test for candidates to determine which type of company culture would suit them and identify the personal skills they have to offer.

Companies using Weavee outline their specific challenge, and the system is configured to address it. For example, Weavee has helped insurance company NFU Mutual identify employees that are well suited to grow within their business.

Grant adds: "Remploy [a recruiter] is also using our platform to counter unconscious bias and help disabled job candidates secure roles on the strength of their ability."

Launched a year ago, Weavee has more than 5,000 users on its platform.

Content on this page is for and produced to a brief agreed by Aldermore, sponsor of The Disruptors on Guardian Small Business Network.

Topics

Seizing opportunities with Aldermore

/