

44% of UK Professionals Say 'Ghost' Jobs Are Wasting Their Time

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According to new findings from global talent solutions partner [Robert Walters](#), over two-fifths of UK professionals state that their job search has been stalled by the appearance of 'ghost' jobs, vacancies that companies have no immediate intention of filling or that do not actually exist.

Additionally, a further third (35%) report that the appearance of these listings is causing them to lose trust in hiring processes.

Lucy Bisset, Director of Robert Walters North comments: "Ghost jobs are a lingering 'bad apple' in the UK job market - disrupting job hunts and damaging trust between employers and professionals.

"At a moment when many professionals are already struggling to get noticed by employers, applications that receive no response only deepen frustrations.

"They aren't straightforward to spot, and in some cases, can be the result of hiring processes buckling under the weight of AI-powered application volumes."

Jobseekers losing hours

When Robert Walters asked respondents how long they spend on applications, 35% said up to 30 minutes, a further 30% cited up to an hour and 18% reported two hours or over.

Separate analysis from StandOutCV found that in 2025, the average ghost job listing rate was 34.4% across 20 popular UK roles (including software engineers and accountants).

For jobseekers submitting 10-15 applications each week, this could mean they are losing anywhere between 1.5 - 10 hours each week on roles that could never materialise.

Lucy adds: “When roles appear active but aren’t genuinely open, it wastes jobseekers’ time and undermines confidence in an already highly competitive labour market.”

Rising Job Market Cynicism

Only a minority (9%) of professionals report feeling confident of their ability to spot a ghost job.

In response, many are now taking extra precautions. Over half (54%) state they are researching employers more, applying for additional roles (23%), and carefully tracking every application (17%).

Lucy remarks: “Greater due diligence is a positive, but we must be careful of healthy caution tipping into cynicism. Overapplying or dismissing legitimate opportunities based on suspicions will only compound problems.”

Processes Under Pressure

Recent data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) found there were 2.6 unemployed people per vacancy between October to December 2025.

As competition for roles increases, 40% of UK hiring managers now report rising job application volumes as a major challenge. While 31% say they struggle to find the right skills.

Lucy concludes: “Recruitment must evolve to keep up with the ways people apply for jobs today. Simple steps, such as using AI to assist with initial screening or partnering with specialists to manage high application volumes, can help employers identify the right talent while protecting jobseeker experience.

“A job listing is often a professional’s first impression of a company. When the experience is poor, it doesn’t just harm employer brand but can reduce application quality over time and deter strong candidates from applying in the future.

“While not every unresponsive vacancy is a ghost job, this issue reflects the need for hiring processes that prioritise transparency and human communication at every stage.”