

BEYOND TRADITIONAL STAFFING:

# THE NEW ERA OF TALENT SOLUTIONS



TALENT SOLUTIONS REPORT

# KEY FINDINGS

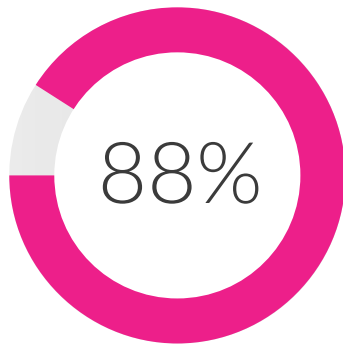
In a hypercompetitive business world where technology is transforming industries and leveling the playing field, talent still determines who wins. As a result, traditional staffing playbooks are being rewritten. Talent acquisition practices are undergoing a seismic shift, propelled by evolving workforce dynamics, new business imperatives, and rapid AI-driven technological advancements.

As organizations grapple with unprecedented change and a range of challenges in securing top talent, a fresh paradigm is emerging — one that demands a more agile, full-service approach to getting work done. This report, based on insights from a survey of nearly 1,000 management-level professionals across the marketing, creative,

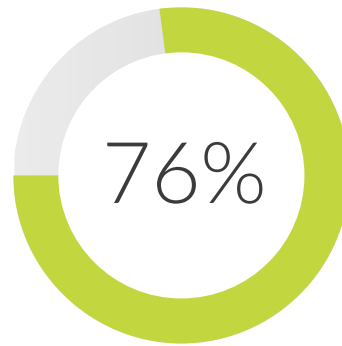
technology, beauty, fashion, and retail sectors, provides crucial insights for employers navigating this complex terrain.

Our survey findings illuminate the intricacies of the current talent solutions environment, revealing a disrupted landscape that necessitates innovative approaches.

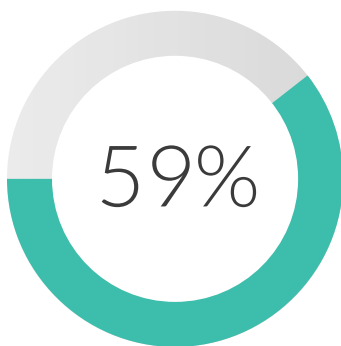
# Key survey findings



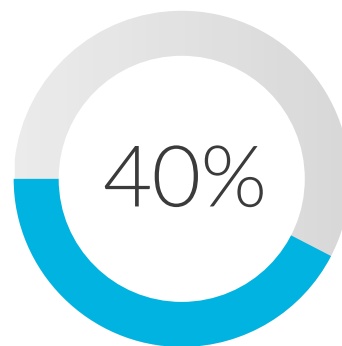
of survey respondents report their organization has significant difficulties filling open roles



of companies use freelancers, contractors, or consultants either frequently or occasionally



A majority of organizations no longer rely solely on in-house teams, opting for a mixed talent model



of companies partner with talent solutions/staffing agencies as their primary method of recruiting and sourcing new talent

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# SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS



NUMBER OF  
SURVEY  
PARTICIPANTS

951

## SECTOR

MARKETING OR ADVERTISING



TECH



CREATIVE



RETAIL (BRICK-AND-MORTAR OR E-COMMERCE)



BEAUTY



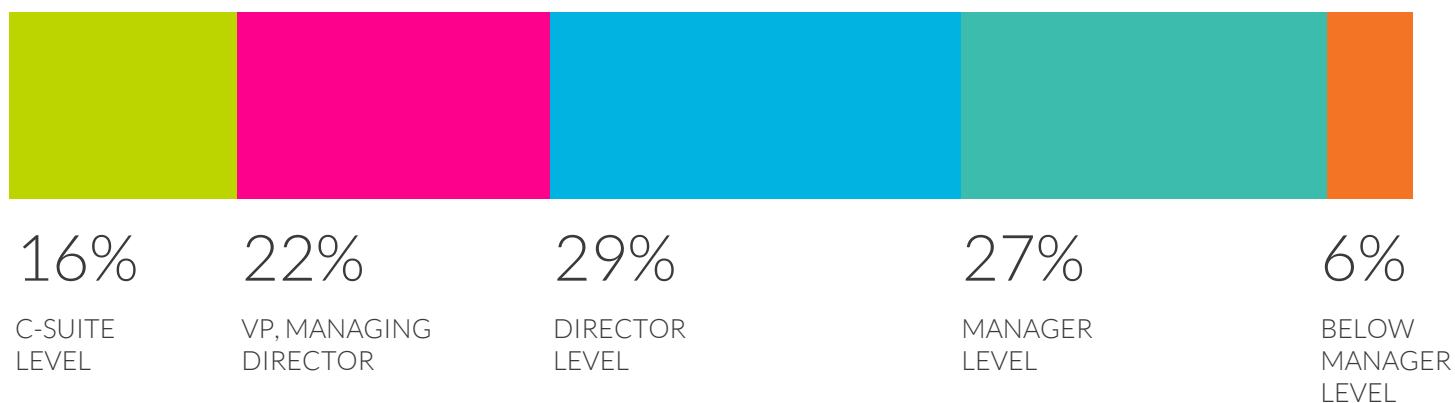
FASHION



\* Survey conducted September 2024

\* Some survey responses do not total 100% due to rounding

## SENIORITY LEVEL



## COMPANY SIZE

50 EMPLOYEES OR LESS



51-100 EMPLOYEES



101-300 EMPLOYEES



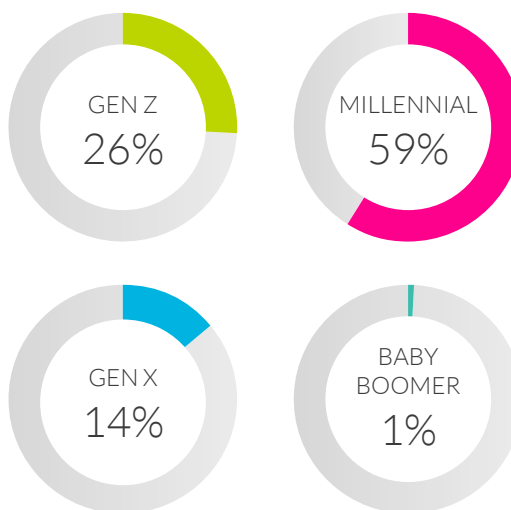
301-500 EMPLOYEES



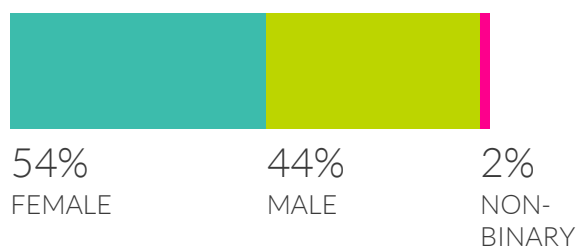
500+ EMPLOYEES



## GENERATION



## GENDER



## COUNTRY

UNITED STATES	91%
UNITED KINGDOM	4%
CANADA	3%
OTHER	1%

# THE STATE OF THE HIRING MARKET: TRENDS AND CHALLENGES



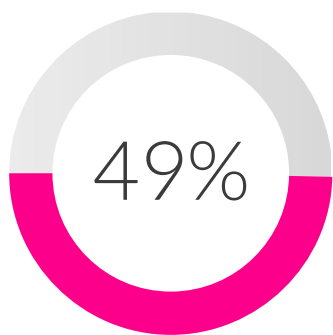


Our survey shows a hiring market in flux, presenting both obstacles and opportunities for employers. A staggering 88% of survey respondents report significant difficulties in filling open roles. This finding underscores the need for a reimagined approach to talent acquisition and management.

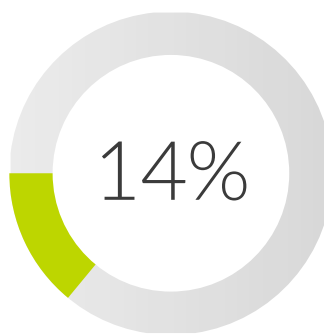
Despite the hiring hurdles, 71% of respondents believe their teams are adequately staffed to meet current and upcoming business demands. This apparent contradiction suggests that while companies are functioning adequately, many are likely operating at

suboptimal levels, potentially missing out on opportunities for growth. As demand for marketing, creative, and tech talent intensifies, our survey reveals diverging hiring strategies, changing market dynamics, and the growing role of talent solutions providers.

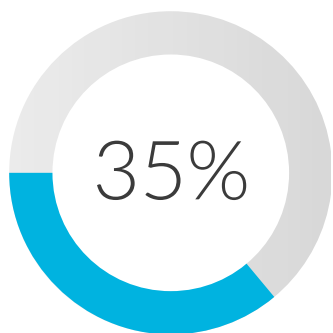
## HOW DO YOU DESCRIBE YOUR COMPANY'S CURRENT HIRING NEEDS?



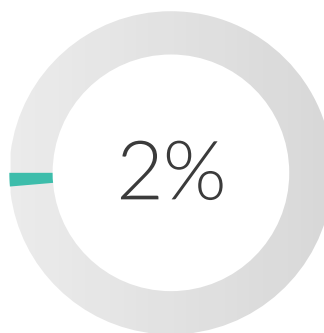
SELECTIVELY  
HIRING FOR  
SPECIFIC KEY  
POSITIONS



MAINTAINING  
OUR CURRENT  
WORKFORCE SIZE



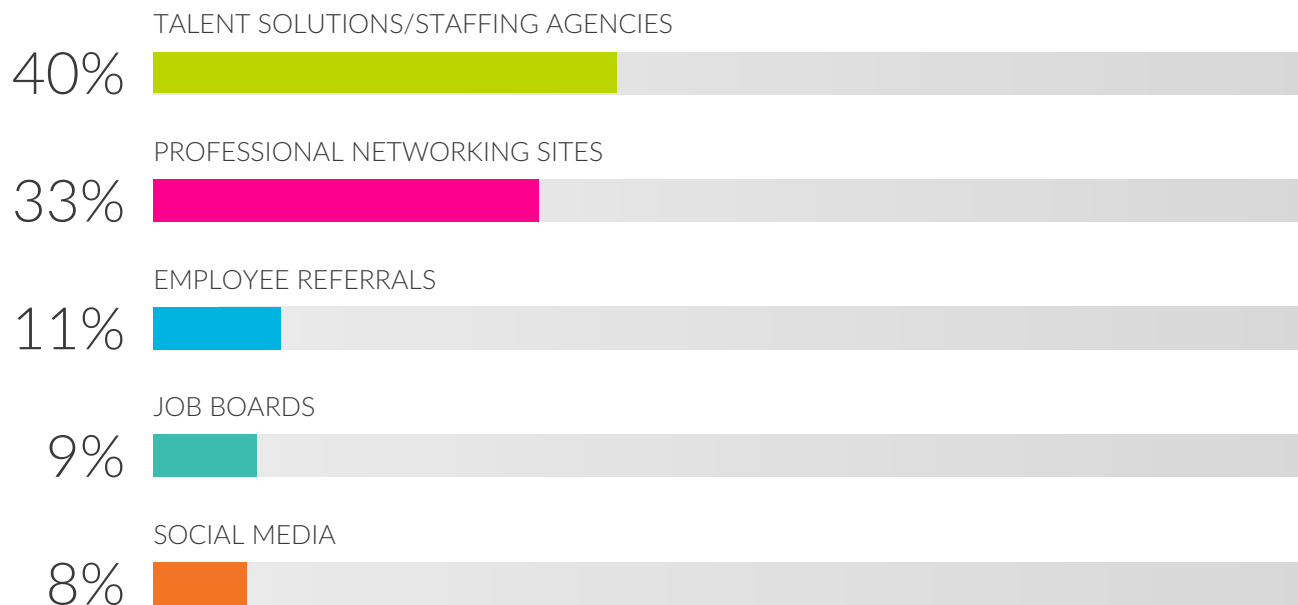
ACTIVELY  
EXPANDING AND  
HIRING ACROSS  
MULTIPLE ROLES



REDUCING OUR  
WORKFORCE

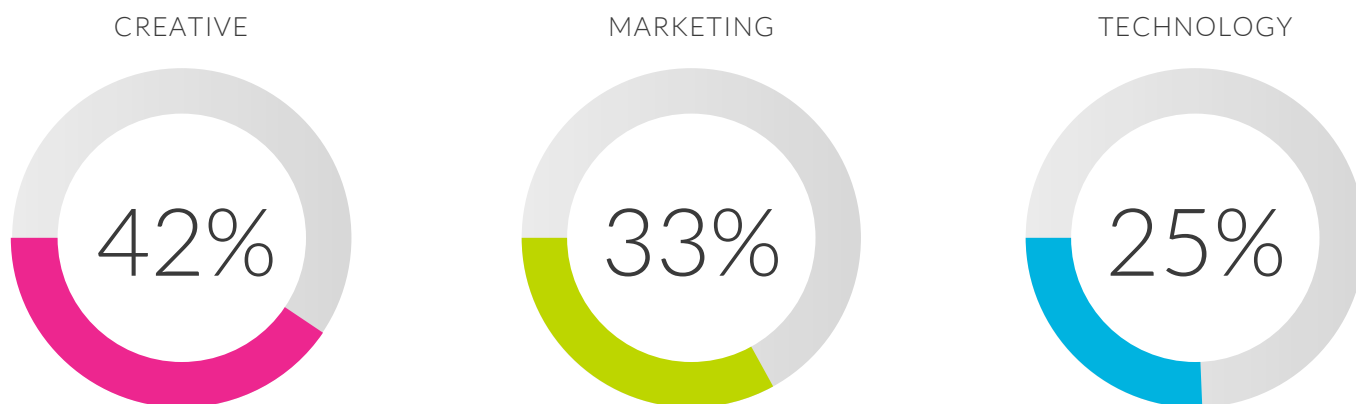


## WHAT IS YOUR PRIMARY METHOD FOR RECRUITING AND SOURCING NEW TALENT?



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## IN WHICH AREA IS YOUR COMPANY EXPERIENCING THE GREATEST SHORTAGE OF SKILLED TALENT?

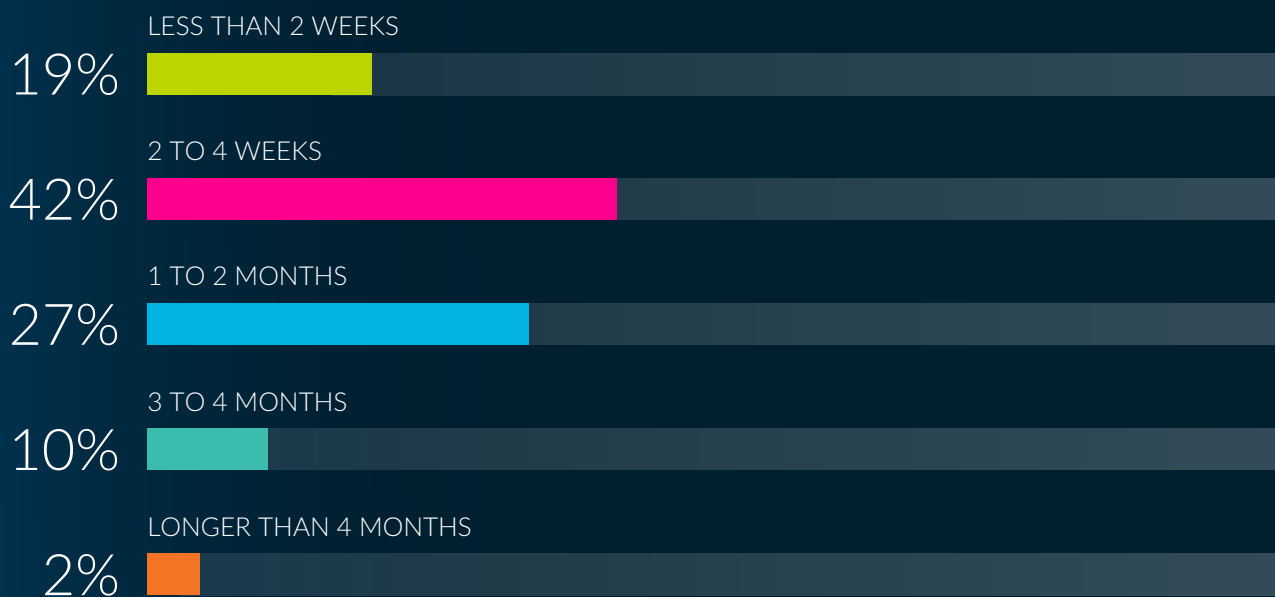


# TIME-TO-HIRE TROUBLES

It's often said that time is money. And time-to-hire data further illustrate the struggle to find the right talent, with many organizations taking months to fill open positions. These sluggish timelines are costly and impact productivity, morale and competitiveness. Companies that can swiftly access pre-vetted specialized talent pools stand to gain a significant advantage. Leveraging external talent solutions experts helps companies bridge gaps efficiently, ensuring they're well-positioned to handle their most pressing projects while building capacity for future needs.

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WHAT IS THE AVERAGE TIME-TO-HIRE  
FOR OPEN ROLES IN YOUR COMPANY?



# THE MOVE TO MORE COMPREHENSIVE TALENT SOLUTIONS

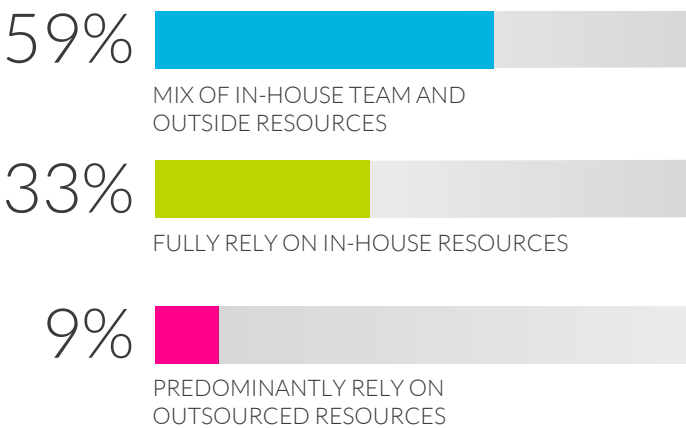


Hiring today resembles a menu, not a recipe. Many companies are abandoning the traditional notion of a static, in-house workforce in favor of a more adaptable and comprehensive talent solutions model.

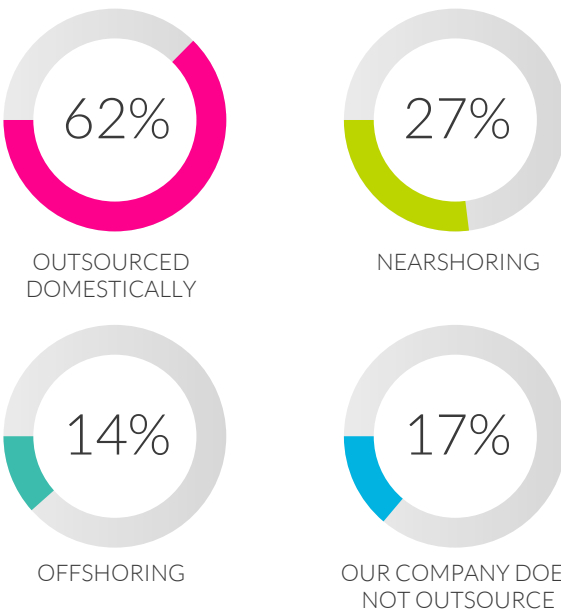
From outsourced embedded teams and consulting services to creative agencies and specialized project support, organizations are discovering better ways to cost-effectively configure their workforce.

As an example, more than three-quarters (76%) of organizations now use freelancers, contractors, or consultants either occasionally (54%) or frequently (22%). Far from just filling temporary gaps, this evolution in talent strategy allows companies to simultaneously access specialized skills, scale their workforce dynamically, and infuse their teams with diverse perspectives.

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES HOW YOUR ORGANIZATION OR DEPARTMENT GETS WORK DONE?



DOES YOUR COMPANY USE THE FOLLOWING OUTSOURCING APPROACHES?



# THE NEW SKILLS EQUATION



As conventional job boundaries blur and new specialties emerge, the skills landscape is shifting in tandem, presenting organizations with tough talent acquisition choices.

Our survey shows a fascinating split in priorities that reflects the multifaceted demands of modern businesses.

When it comes to the type of talent companies seek, there's a near-even divide: 56% of organizations prioritize well-rounded industry generalists, while 44% seek specialists with niche expertise. This balance underscores a key dilemma — the need for can-do-it-all adaptability versus deep, focused experts.

This dichotomy extends to hiring strategies as well. Different companies are taking different approaches, with some focusing primarily on candidates possessing immediate, applicable skills, while others prioritize potential, investing in on-the-job training.

Meanwhile, one-quarter of survey respondents said their organization aims to strike a balance, recognizing that the answer may lie not in picking one approach over another, but in blending strategies to create a workforce that is immediately effective *and* primed for long-term success.

WHAT IS YOUR COMPANY'S STANCE ON HIRING FOR POTENTIAL VERSUS HIRING FOR IMMEDIATE SKILLS?







# TECH SAVVY MEETS PEOPLE SMART

Our research reveals the importance of emotional intelligence alongside technical proficiency. The top two hiring challenges reported by survey respondents spotlight this dual focus: finding candidates with the necessary technical skills ranked as the single biggest hiring challenge today, followed by identifying those with the right soft skills. (Competing with other companies for top talent ranked third.)

Respondents said the most in-demand functional areas are analytics, design, and AI/machine learning; while the top sought-after soft skills are creativity, problem-solving, and communication.

As organizations look to build well-rounded teams capable of solving complex problems, soft skills have emerged as a critical factor in talent acquisition. These interpersonal and behavioral attributes are increasingly viewed as essential complements to

hard skills and functional expertise, enabling employees to collaborate effectively across the organization, adapt to change, and drive innovation in often remote or hybrid work environments.

Full-service talent solutions firms are uniquely equipped to provide access to versatile generalists, niche specialists, and professionals with the right blend of tech savvy and interpersonal abilities.



# MOST IN-DEMAND FUNCTIONAL AREAS



#1  
ANALYTICS



#5  
DIGITAL  
MARKETING



#2  
DESIGN



#6  
CRM



#3  
AI/MACHINE  
LEARNING



#7  
CONTENT/COPY



#4  
BRANDING

# MOST HIGHLY SOUGHT SOFT SKILLS



#1  
CREATIVITY



#5  
COLLABORATION



#2  
PROBLEM SOLVING



#6  
INITIATIVE



#3  
COMMUNICATION



#7  
EMPATHY



#4  
FLEXIBILITY

# ADOPTING A NEXT-GENERATION TALENT STRATEGY



Talent acquisition is no longer just about filling vacancies — it's about architecting a workforce that expands, contracts, and adapts on demand. As business needs continually pivot and skill sets evolve, forward-thinking organizations are embracing comprehensive, full-service talent solutions.

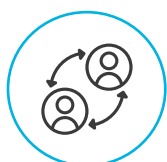
These solutions offer:



Access to a vast talent pool  
across multiple industries



Future-proof workforce  
planning



Flexibility to scale workforce  
composition based on changing  
needs, from freelance, contract-  
to-hire, and full-time roles



Holistic candidate assessment,  
considering both technical and  
soft skills



Managed services options  
including embedded teams,  
consulting, and an outsourced  
creative agency



Expanded international reach,  
providing access to global  
talent markets

The talent landscape has reached an inflection point. Organizations that cling to traditional hiring models risk falling behind, while those embracing comprehensive talent solutions gain the ability to strategically evolve their workforce as needed. They're not just staffing desks — they're building elastic teams that can capture every market opportunity.

Well-established organizations like 24 Seven, with our expanded suite of talent solutions and global reach, can be an invaluable partner in this journey, offering the expertise and resources needed to thrive. The question isn't whether to reimagine your talent strategy, but how quickly you can transform it to gain a sharp competitive edge.

# ABOUT THE 24 SEVEN FAMILY OF BRANDS





24 Seven partners with companies to get marketing, creative, and digital work done by providing the right talent, innovation, and insights. We drive meaningful impact by helping navigate change in today's evolving environment. Our comprehensive, high-touch approach enables 24 Seven to identify and deliver customized talent solutions for any situation. The 24 Seven family of brands includes these subsidiaries:

- **The Sage Group** provides exceptional marketing and business operations consultants, contractors, and permanent talent that drive results for leading companies across industries.
- **SketchDeck** is a next-generation creative agency that empowers organizations to seamlessly scale their marketing efforts by accessing all the design services they need in one place.
- **Simplicity Consulting** helps brands run their marketing and operations programs with highly specialized consultants in digital marketing, strategic communications, and project management.
- **The Cydio Group** is a specialized IT staffing firm that provides innovative, first-hand knowledge of the information technology space. With over two decades of direct industry experience, the team is uniquely positioned to connect top-tier IT professionals with notable organizations.
- **Marketers That Matter®** is a thriving community of influential marketing executives coming together to share innovation and insights.
- **McKinley Marketing Partners** is an award-winning, female-founded staffing firm that delivers top-tier marketing, marketing technology (MarTech), and creative talent. With a market-savvy approach and fine-tuned expertise, they cultivate personalized connections that fuel ongoing growth and success across your entire organization.
- **Filter** provides clients with future-forward managed solutions inclusive of embedded teams, consulting, and a creative agency to support ongoing creative needs.

