

# Alpha Packaging Knew Its Recruiting Needed a Re-Boot. When Other Chat Solutions Bombed, They Got Real with PivotCX

For the last three years, Alpha Packaging, a global manufacturing company, has struggled to keep positions at its eight plants across the United States and Canada fully staffed. At first, a tight job market was the issue. Then large employers like Amazon raised their hourly pay, which created a new dynamic. Generational pressures also made recruiting for manufacturing positions difficult. But it was the global pandemic that finally broke the camel's back and forced the company to rethink and ultimately transform its recruiting processes.

Tracy Laxton, senior vice president of Human Resources (HR), joined Alpha Packaging in 2018. A veteran of 20 years in manufacturing HR, she has never seen a more challenging time for recruiting than today. "The generational differences in the workforce are profound. Boomers, GenX, Millennials, and GenZ are all different in their approach to work and life. This has impacted hiring, motivating, and retaining people, while also affecting how we reach them. The original job board, Monster.com, has been replaced by Indeed, which is more complex in its algorithms. So HR professionals have had to adjust."

The other big change, Laxton points out, is the growing popularity of artificial intelligence (AI). Specifically, AI-enabled chat solutions. In HR recruiting circles, chatbots are hot.

Recognizing the need to transform its recruiting processes, Laxton researched how best to engage candidates. Chatbots were at the top of every thought leader's list of must-haves. For two reasons: a generation of people used to immediate gratification in nearly every aspect of life and how ubiquitous smart phones have become.



Social media and texting have taught people to chat, and website career pages have gone all-in on having a chat function. But there's just so much that AI-powered chatbots can do. They're impersonal and candidates quickly get frustrated.



- Tracy Laxton, Senior VP, Human Resources, Alpha Packaging



- Global manufacturer of plastic bottles + jars
- Headquarters: St. Louis, MO
- 1,000 team members
- 7 facilities in the United States
- 1 facility in Canada
- 2 facilities in Europe
- <https://www.alphap.com>

## Alpha Packaging Uses PivotCX to Fill These Positions

- Production managers
- Maintenance technicians
- Machine operators
- Shipping + receiving specialists
- Quality inspectors
- Material handlers
- Inspector packers
- General labor

“Social media and texting have taught people to chat and there’s now an expectation of an immediate response. Website career pages have gone all-in on having a chat function as a way to speed up response times to candidates,” Laxton says.

Quicker response time to applicants was an attractive value proposition so Alpha Packaging piloted not just one but two AI-powered chat solutions. Both bombed. “The concept is good, but we found there’s only so much AI-powered chats can do.

Candidates want to believe the person on the other end is real, but they’re not. It’s quickly obvious when the chatbot can’t answer basic questions. Because they’re impersonal and as such don’t truly represent a company’s brand, candidates quickly get frustrated, and leave the conversation,” Laxton says.



## Pivoting to a Different and Real Conversation

Alpha Packaging was ready to throw in the towel on chat-enabled recruiting when a new option, PivotCX, was suggested by a board member. Instead of chatbots, PivotCX employs real thinking and breathing people to power its chats, improving the user experience and ultimately results. Like the chatbots, PivotCX agents follow a script, collaboratively developed with our recruiting team. Because they actually listen and can discern nuances in a conversation, they respond with empathy not robotically and can address off script candidate requests. Candidates appreciate and know the difference.

Other aspects of PivotCX stood out. First, candidates can engage in a live chat within seconds across a company’s recruiting enterprise, including the company’s career website, social media platforms like Facebook, job board posts, and applicant tracking systems (ATS). The PivotCX chat platform conversations are fully sharable and visible to the customer. PivotCX provides real-time access to this data and collaboration. Finally, PivotCX’s candidate conversations are seamless, from initial engagement to hiring, all on a single platform.

This, says Laxton, earned PivotCX a trial with three of the company’s manufacturing locations—Cleveland, St. Louis and Salt Lake City—starting in February 2021 and running through June 2021. Game on.

## Rules of Engagement

Alpha Packaging was looking for specific deliverables from the pilot with PivotCX: faster response times to candidates, more meaningful engagements with candidates, only prescreened candidates passing to their inhouse recruiters, and significant time savings. Ultimately, says Laxton, the trial came down to one thing. “Our senior vice president of operations said nothing is more important than getting people hired. If PivotCX can help us do that, that’s the win.”



There’s a general expectation among jobseekers of getting an immediate response yet it can take busy HR departments days to respond to an online application. That doesn’t cut it today. With PivotCX, we’re connecting with candidates in seconds.

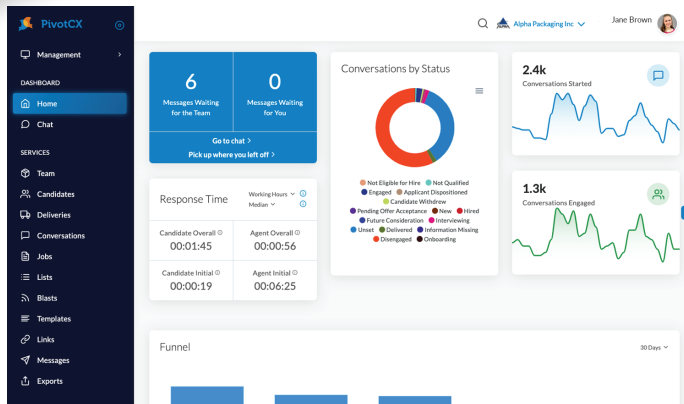
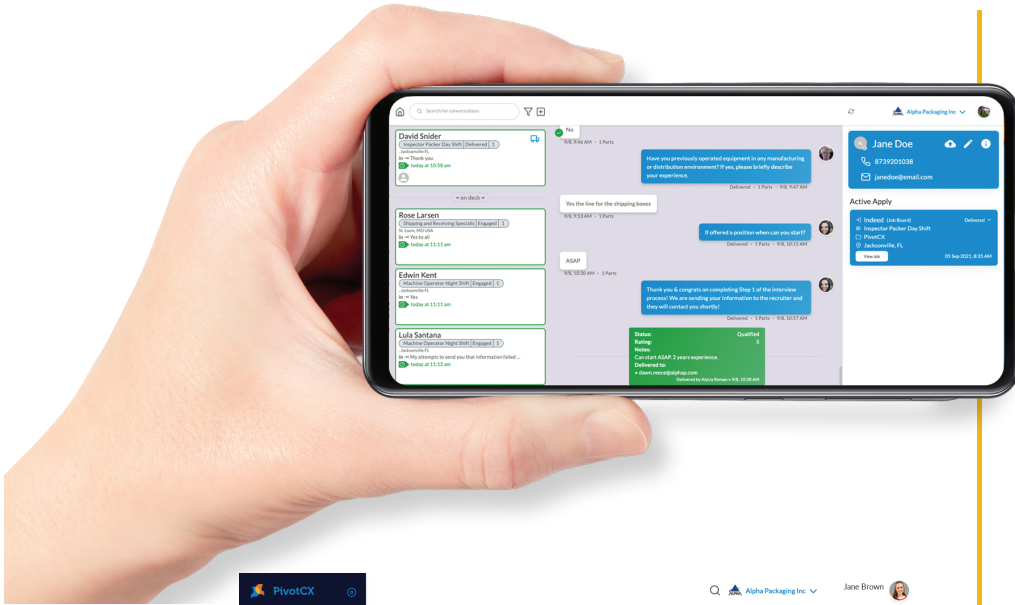


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The first problem to solve was ensuring an immediate, real-time response to candidates. Up until the pilot, it wasn't unusual for it to take days for Alpha Packaging's HR team to respond to clicks on their job ads.

"Recruitment isn't the only thing we do. We also have payroll and there are always unplanned events that need immediate attention. You can start a day thinking you'll work on recruiting and then something interrupts your plans. The ten resumes you were going to review get added to the stack. It's hard to keep up with," Laxton says.



There were other pain points Alpha Packaging didn't know it had. Despite spending healthy budgets on Indeed, they weren't getting many clicks on their ads—at least, not as many as they anticipated. PivotCX researched the issue and determined that the way Alpha Packaging's ads were written was causing Indeed's algorithms to push the ads to the bottom of the page. The net result is few people were seeing them. Says Laxton, "PivotCX taught us how to properly title and brand our job posts so the algorithm would push our ads to the top; it worked."

There was another unanticipated obstacle to overcome: pushback from Alpha Packaging's HR team. "It was difficult for some to accept that they no longer had to do a 'pre-interview' with candidates; PivotCX does that in the initial chat through their scripted screening process. I told our HR team not to repeat the questions, but they were so used to asking them, it was hard to change behavior. The team kept throwing stones at PivotCX, looking for ways to get me to get rid of it. Eventually, what won everyone over was the PivotCX team's responsiveness and flexibility to customize the service around our requests," Laxton says.



We chose PivotCX for the live chat, but they also provided insight into why our job board ads weren't working. Now, our ads are better branded and messaged so they're at the top of the search and getting lots of clicks instead of several pages in with few clicks.



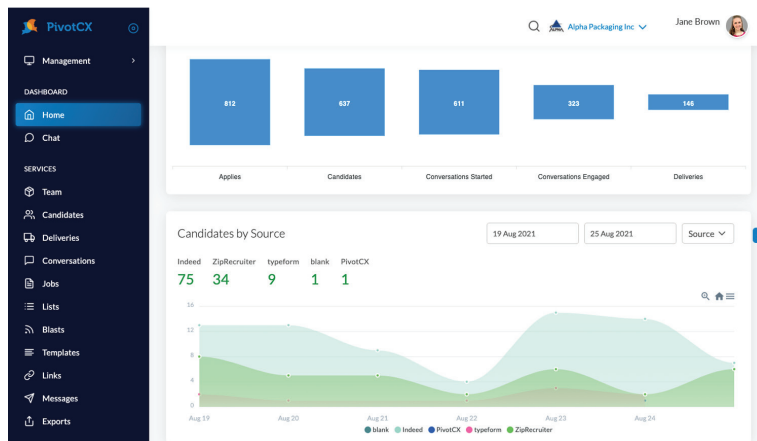
- Tracy Laxton, Senior VP, Human Resources, Alpha Packaging



## Customizing the Final Solution

As the Alpha Packaging HR team got deeper into the trial, they saw just how powerful PivotCX was but also identified ways to improve it. “When we weren’t seeing as many candidates as we wanted due to COVID, the PivotCX team was on it. When candidates were dropping off of the chats, we were able to pinpoint exactly where it was happening and adjust our script. And, when we asked for changes in the dashboards, they customized them to our needs. Everything we asked for, they did. PivotCX was a true partner, with a vested interest in our success,” Laxton says.

The dashboards proved to be the key to the success of the trial because of data-driven insights and visibility into their recruiting process. The PivotCX dashboard is centralized information from across the company that HR didn’t have visibility to before. Now the HR team can see all of its job postings, ads, and how many candidates it has across the organization and for what positions, how ads are working and where they need to spend more. This level of insight allows data-driven decisions and is improving the company’s recruiting efforts and results. At the end of the day, says Laxton, “People respond so much better to live chats by real people in real-time. We are exceeding expectations.”



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Alpha Packaging

## Keeping the Conversation Going

When the five-month trial concluded in June 2021, Alpha Packaging made the decision to continue with PivotCX and has added two additional plant locations to the platform. If all goes well, the remaining three North American facilities will move to the platform by the end of October.

Alpha Packaging is working with PivotCX to capture hard metrics. Laxton would also like to re-engage with candidates, those the company has hired and those who chose not to pursue a career with the company. “I’d like to determine what they liked about the experience, but also go back to those who dropped off and ask them why and what we can do to improve. If we’re lucky, they’ll re-engage and we’ll hire them.”

When asked if she would recommend PivotCX to other companies facing similar hiring challenges, Laxton says yes. “You will save time and get better results from your recruiting spend. We don’t have all the metrics yet, but one thing is certain, PivotCX is getting more clicks, engaging candidates faster and making our recruiters more productive.”

And in an age of immediate gratification,  
that’s a real conversation starter.

**Save time.**

**Engage candidates.**

**Increase productivity.**

**Achieve better results.**

**Get more clicks!**

