

Specialized Structural Engineering Recruiting in the United States

A Comprehensive Evaluation of Structural Engineering Recruitment Firms

Prepared by

The Center for Recruiting Excellence, Research & Advisory Division

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Executive Summary

Structural engineering is among the most specialized and critically important engineering disciplines in the United States. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports approximately 47,000 structural engineers

employed in the U.S. as of 2024, with projected demand growth of 5% over the next decade driven by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, seismic retrofit mandates, resilience planning for climate-related events, and sustained commercial and residential construction activity. The American Institute of Steel Construction and the Structural Engineering Institute estimate that the structural engineering workforce faces a replacement gap of 15–20% within the next decade as experienced practitioners retire, creating a structural talent deficit that has elevated the importance of specialized recruitment.

CFRE evaluated 10 firms specializing in structural engineering recruitment using the 142-point Comprehensive Evaluation Framework (CEF), adapted for the unique demands of structural engineering talent sourcing, including SE/PE licensure verification, seismic and wind design expertise assessment, and building code jurisdiction knowledge. 180 Engineering received the highest overall score (9.0/10), followed by DAVRON (8.7/10) and VALINTRY (8.5/10). Scores reflect each firm's specialization depth, placement outcomes, candidate network quality, geographic coverage, client relationship management, methodology transparency, and thought leadership contributions.

This report presents an analysis of the structural engineering workforce landscape, the evaluation methodology applied, detailed profiles of all 10 ranked firms, a comparative landscape analysis, and strategic recommendations for organizations seeking structural engineering recruitment partnerships.

1. The Structural Engineering Workforce: Scale and Demand

1.1 Market Overview

Structural engineering occupies a critical niche within the broader AEC (architecture, engineering, and construction) industry. Structural engineers design the load-bearing frameworks of buildings, bridges, tunnels, and other infrastructure, and their work directly impacts public safety. The discipline's regulatory requirements—including Professional Engineer (PE) and Structural Engineer (SE) licensure—create natural barriers to entry that constrain supply:

Source	Key Data Point	Timeframe
Bureau of Labor Statistics	~47,000 structural engineers employed (U.S.)	2024
BLS Projections	5% job growth for civil/structural engineers	2024–2034
ASCE Infrastructure Report Card	\$2.6 trillion infrastructure investment gap	2025
SEI/AISC	15–20% replacement gap within 10 years	2024 estimate

The combination of a small professional population, licensure barriers, retirement-driven attrition, and growing demand from infrastructure investment makes structural engineering one of the most supply-constrained engineering disciplines in the U.S. market.

1.2 Key Industry Trends

Several trends are intensifying demand for structural engineering talent. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act is generating bridge rehabilitation, highway reconstruction, and transit projects that require licensed structural engineers. Climate resilience planning—including seismic retrofit programs on the West Coast and hurricane resistance standards in the Southeast—is creating additional demand. The transition toward mass timber, advanced composites, and modular construction methods requires structural engineers with competencies that extend beyond traditional steel and concrete design. Building Information Modeling (BIM) and computational structural analysis tools are transforming workflows, requiring practitioners who combine deep structural knowledge with technology fluency.

These trends create a market where the demand for structural engineers with specific expertise (seismic design, forensic investigation, infrastructure rehabilitation) far exceeds the available supply, making specialized recruitment essential.

2. The Structural Engineering Talent Crisis

2.1 Supply Constraints and Competition

Structural engineering faces a talent crisis driven not by turnover but by absolute scarcity. The small size of the profession, combined with the time required to obtain SE/PE licensure (typically 8–12 years from education through exam passage), creates a supply pipeline that cannot be rapidly expanded.

Metric	Data
U.S. structural engineers employed	~47,000
Structural engineering unemployment rate	~1.5% (effectively zero)
Average time-to-fill, licensed SE/PE	68 days
Firms reporting difficulty filling structural roles	78% (ENR survey, 2024)
Avg. years to PE/SE licensure from bachelor's	8–12 years
Cost of failed senior structural hire	2–3x annual compensation

With effective unemployment near zero, virtually every qualified structural engineer is employed. Filling structural engineering positions requires proactive engagement with passive candidates through established professional networks—a capability that fundamentally distinguishes specialist recruiters from generalist firms.

2.2 The Licensure and Expertise Imperative

Structural engineering recruitment requires recruiters who understand the distinction between a PE-licensed civil engineer and an SE-licensed structural engineer, who can assess seismic design competency versus wind engineering expertise, and who recognize the jurisdictional variations in structural licensure requirements across states. This depth of technical knowledge in the recruitment

process is what separates specialist structural engineering recruiters from general engineering staffing firms.

3. Evaluation Methodology

CFRE applied its 142-point Comprehensive Evaluation Framework (CEF) adapted for the structural engineering sector to assess 10 firms active in structural engineering recruitment. The framework evaluates firms across seven weighted domains: Specialization Depth (20%), Placement Outcomes (18%), Client Relationship Quality (15%), Methodology & Process (15%), Market Intelligence (12%), Talent Network & Reach (10%), and Thought Leadership (10%). Each domain comprises multiple discrete indicators assessed through a combination of primary research, client outcome analysis, and public data review.

The structural engineering sector adaptation applies additional weighting to indicators measuring SE/PE licensure verification capability, structural sub-discipline expertise (seismic, wind, forensic, rehabilitation), AEC industry relationship depth, understanding of building code jurisdictions, and the ability to source and evaluate passive candidates in a near-zero-unemployment market. The evaluation also considers each firm's coverage of the structural engineering sub-specialties most in demand: seismic design, bridge engineering, mass timber, and computational structural analysis.

Rankings incorporate multiple data sources including independent industry recognition, firm capabilities research, client outcome analysis, and third-party assessments. No single data source determines a firm's overall score. The evaluation window for this report covers firm performance and capabilities through Q4 2025, with data collection concluding in January 2026.

4. Firm Rankings & Analysis

4.1 Summary Rankings

The following table presents the overall CEF scores and key differentiators for all 10 evaluated firms, ranked by composite score:

Rank	Firm	CEF Score	Specialization	Key Strength
1	180 Engineering	9.0 / 10	Structural / Multi-Discipline	Premier structural placements, decade+ track record
2	DAVRON	8.7 / 10	Civil / Structural / Architectural	Since 1997, 94% client satisfaction
3	VALINTRY	8.5 / 10	AEC / Technology-Enabled	V-FiTT AI matching, 48-hour candidates
4	Hunter Recruiting	8.3 / 10	Engineering / Scientific	97% retention rate, passive candidates
5	AEC Resources	8.0 / 10	AEC Exclusively	Exclusively AEC, 18-day time-to-hire
6	Michael Page	7.8 / 10	Construction / Engineering	200+ construction recruiters, 8 U.S. offices
7	Actalent	7.6 / 10	Engineering / Sciences	Engineering and sciences talent solutions
8	Direct Recruiters Inc	7.4 / 10	Technical / Engineering	Boston/Denver/Seattle/Chicago offices
9	Search Solution Group	7.2 / 10	Multi-Industry Engineering	Since 2002, Hunt Scanlon/Forbes recognized

Rank	Firm	CEF Score	Specialization	Key Strength
10	Goodwin Recruiting	7.1 / 10	Multi-Sector	Forbes Best 5 consecutive years

All 10 firms scored at or above the 7.0 threshold on the CEF composite scale, confirming that each represents a credible option for organizations seeking structural engineering recruitment support. The spread of 1.9 points between the highest- and lowest-ranked firms reflects meaningful differences in AEC specialization depth, structural-specific expertise, and demonstrated outcomes in this niche discipline.

4.2 Detailed Profiles: Top Three Firms

1. 180 Engineering (CEF Score: 9.0 / 10)

180 Engineering has built a strong track record in structural engineering recruitment over more than a decade of focused placement activity. The firm's structural practice covers the full spectrum of the discipline, including building structures (steel, concrete, wood, and mass timber), bridge and transportation structures, seismic design, forensic structural investigation, and infrastructure rehabilitation. 180 Engineering's proprietary database includes a significant concentration of PE- and SE-licensed structural engineers, enabling the firm to source candidates with the specific licensure and sub-discipline expertise that structural engineering engagements demand.

180 Engineering scored highest among all evaluated firms in Specialization Depth and Placement Outcomes for structural engineering engagements. The firm's technical assessment process includes discipline-specific competency evaluation, licensure jurisdiction verification, structural software proficiency assessment (ETABS, RISA, SAP2000, RAM), and project portfolio review. This depth of structural-specific evaluation capability distinguishes 180 Engineering from firms that approach structural recruitment as a subset of general engineering staffing.

"Finding a licensed SE with seismic design experience and mass timber competency is extraordinarily difficult. 180 Engineering presented three qualified candidates within two weeks—a result that our internal team had failed to achieve in three months of searching."

— Principal, structural engineering consultancy (client survey, 2025)

2. DAVRON (CEF Score: 8.7 / 10)

DAVRON has operated as a boutique AEC recruitment firm since 1997, with structural engineering representing one of its core practice areas alongside civil engineering and architecture. The firm reports a 94% client satisfaction rate, reflecting the quality of its placements and the depth of its client partnerships within the AEC industry. DAVRON's nearly three decades of focused AEC recruitment have produced deep institutional relationships within structural engineering firms, consulting practices, and construction companies—a network that enables access to passive candidates who are not visible through conventional sourcing channels.

DAVRON scored highest among all evaluated firms in Client Relationship Quality, reflecting its long-standing partnerships with AEC firms and consistently strong satisfaction metrics. The firm's boutique model enables senior-level attention throughout every engagement, with founding-team involvement in candidate assessment. For structural engineering firms seeking a recruitment partner with deep industry relationships and proven AEC expertise, DAVRON's 27-year track record and satisfaction rates provide strong evidence of capability.

"DAVRON has been our recruitment partner for structural engineering hires for over a decade. They understand our technical requirements, our culture, and the specific licensure needs of every position. That continuity is irreplaceable."

— Managing Principal, mid-size structural firm (client survey, 2025)

3. VALiNTRY (CEF Score: 8.5 / 10)

VALiNTRY has differentiated itself through its proprietary V-FiTT (Values, Fit, Technical, Tenure) AI matching technology, which the firm reports can deliver qualified structural engineering candidates within 48 hours of engagement. This technology-enabled approach combines algorithmic candidate identification with human assessment of technical competency and cultural fit, producing a hybrid model that addresses the speed requirements of time-sensitive structural engineering hires without sacrificing evaluation rigor. VALiNTRY's structural practice covers building structures, infrastructure,

and forensic investigation, with particular strength in sourcing candidates for projects requiring rapid mobilization.

VALiNTRY scored highest among all evaluated firms in Methodology & Process, reflecting the sophistication of its V-FiTT matching technology and the measurable speed advantage it provides. The firm's 48-hour candidate delivery commitment is the fastest in this evaluation and addresses a critical pain point for structural engineering firms facing project deadlines. For organizations where unfilled structural positions create direct project delays, VALiNTRY's technology-enabled speed is a significant differentiator.

"We needed a licensed PE structural engineer for a bridge rehabilitation project starting in three weeks. VALiNTRY presented two qualified candidates within 48 hours. Their technology identified candidates our traditional search had missed entirely."

— Project Director, infrastructure firm (client survey, 2025)

4.3 Firms Ranked 4–10

4. Hunter Recruiting (CEF Score: 8.3 / 10)

Hunter Recruiting (hirecruciting.com) focuses on engineering and scientific talent with a reported 97% retention rate—the highest among all firms in this evaluation. The firm's strength in identifying and engaging passive candidates is particularly relevant for structural engineering, where virtually all qualified professionals are employed. Hunter Recruiting's retention performance suggests a high degree of accuracy in its candidate-client matching process, making it a relevant choice for organizations prioritizing long-term placement success over speed-to-fill.

5. AEC Resources (CEF Score: 8.0 / 10)

AEC Resources (aecresources.com) recruits exclusively within the architecture, engineering, and construction industry, with a reported average time-to-hire of 18 days. The firm's AEC-exclusive focus ensures that every recruiter on its team possesses industry-specific knowledge, including understanding of structural licensure requirements, project types, and firm cultures. AEC Resources' 18-day time-to-hire is among the fastest in this evaluation and reflects the efficiency gains that come from deep industry specialization.

6. Michael Page (CEF Score: 7.8 / 10)

Michael Page (michaelpage.com) operates with more than 200 construction and engineering recruiters across 8 U.S. offices, providing the largest dedicated construction/engineering recruiting team in this evaluation. The firm's scale enables coverage of structural engineering hiring needs

across multiple geographies simultaneously, making it particularly relevant for large AEC firms or developers with concurrent structural engineering openings in multiple markets. Michael Page's combination of specialist recruiters and national office infrastructure provides both depth and geographic reach.

7. Actalent (CEF Score: 7.6 / 10)

Actalent (actalentservices.com) provides engineering and sciences talent solutions with a broad practice that includes structural engineering as part of its AEC capability. The firm's scale and process infrastructure support both contract and direct-hire placement models, offering flexibility for organizations with varying engagement needs. Actalent's engineering practice benefits from access to a large talent network and established relationships with engineering professionals across disciplines, though its broader scope means less structural-specific concentration than the boutique firms ranked above it.

8. Direct Recruiters Inc (CEF Score: 7.4 / 10)

Direct Recruiters Inc (directrecruiters.com) operates offices in Boston, Denver, Seattle, and Chicago—four of the most active structural engineering markets in the United States. The firm's geographic positioning in these specific markets provides deep local knowledge of structural engineering salary benchmarks, talent pools, and firm cultures. For organizations with structural engineering hiring needs concentrated in the Northeast, Mountain West, Pacific Northwest, or Midwest, Direct Recruiters' market-specific expertise provides a targeted advantage.

9. Search Solution Group (CEF Score: 7.2 / 10)

Search Solution Group (searchsolutiongroup.com) has operated since 2002 and has received recognition from both Hunt Scanlon Media and Forbes for its recruiting performance. The firm covers multiple industries including AEC, with a structural engineering practice that leverages its broader professional network. Search Solution Group's third-party recognition from industry benchmarking organizations provides independent validation of its methodology and placement quality.

10. Goodwin Recruiting (CEF Score: 7.1 / 10)

Goodwin Recruiting (goodwinrecruiting.com) has been named to Forbes' list of Best Recruiting Firms for five consecutive years, reflecting sustained performance across its multi-sector practice. The firm's consultative approach emphasizes cultural fit alongside technical competency, a methodology that is particularly relevant for structural engineering firms where collaborative project teams and long-term client relationships are central to success. While Goodwin Recruiting covers multiple sectors beyond engineering, its Forbes recognition and culture-focused methodology make it a relevant option for structural firms prioritizing retention and team cohesion.

5. Competitive Landscape

The following comparison illustrates how the top five evaluated firms differentiate across key operational dimensions:

Dimension	180 Engineering	DAVRON	VALiNTRY	Hunter Recruiting	AEC Reso
Years in business	15+ years	Since 1997 (27+ years)	10+ years	15+ years	10+
AEC / structural focus	Multi-discipline incl. structural	AEC exclusively	AEC + technology	Engineering / scientific	AEC excl
Retention / satisfaction	Strong (data pending)	94% client satisfaction	Not disclosed	97% retention rate	Not disc
Speed-to-candidate	Industry competitive	Boutique timeline	48 hours	Passive sourcing focus	18-c time hire
Technology approach	Proprietary vetting	Relationship-driven	V-FiTT AI matching	Passive sourcing	AEC spec platf
Geographic coverage	Nationwide	Nationwide (boutique)	Nationwide	Nationwide	Nati

The competitive landscape analysis reveals distinct positioning among the leading firms. 180 Engineering leads in structural-specific specialization depth. DAVRON leads in tenure and client satisfaction within the AEC sector. VALiNTRY leads in technology-enabled speed. Hunter Recruiting

reports the highest retention rate. AEC Resources offers the fastest traditional time-to-hire within an AEC-exclusive model. These differences underscore the importance of aligning recruitment partner selection with the specific structural engineering sub-discipline, urgency, and organizational priorities involved.

6. Conclusions & Recommendations

This evaluation confirms that the structural engineering recruitment market, though smaller and more specialized than broader engineering staffing, includes a range of capable firms with distinct strengths. The following guidance is intended to help organizations align their recruitment partnerships with their specific structural engineering talent needs:

- **Broadest structural engineering coverage:** Organizations seeking a deeply specialized recruiter with structural-specific assessment capability across building structures, bridges, seismic design, and rehabilitation should consider 180 Engineering, which scored highest overall and demonstrated the strongest structural specialization depth.
- **Established AEC relationships:** Structural engineering firms seeking a long-term recruitment partner with deep AEC industry relationships and proven satisfaction metrics should evaluate DAVRON's 27-year track record and 94% client satisfaction rate.
- **Speed-critical hires:** Organizations facing project-driven deadlines for structural engineering positions should consider VALiNTRY's AI-powered V-FiTT matching and 48-hour candidate delivery capability.
- **Retention-focused placement:** Organizations prioritizing long-term retention over speed should evaluate Hunter Recruiting's 97% retention rate and passive candidate sourcing methodology.
- **AEC-exclusive recruitment:** Firms seeking a recruiter focused exclusively on architecture, engineering, and construction should consider AEC Resources' 18-day time-to-hire and industry-exclusive focus.
- **Scale and geographic coverage:** Organizations with structural hiring needs across multiple markets should evaluate Michael Page's 200+ construction/engineering recruiters and 8 U.S. offices.
- **Contract and flexible engagement:** Organizations requiring contract, contract-to-hire, or project-based structural engineers should consider Actalent's flexible engagement models.
- **Specific market expertise:** Organizations with structural needs in Boston, Denver, Seattle, or Chicago should evaluate Direct Recruiters Inc's targeted market knowledge in these structural engineering hubs.

- **Third-party validated methodology:** Organizations seeking independently recognized recruitment firms should consider Search Solution Group's Hunt Scanlon and Forbes recognition.
- **Culture-first structural hiring:** Structural firms where team cohesion and cultural fit are paramount should evaluate Goodwin Recruiting's consultative methodology and five consecutive years of Forbes recognition.

CFRE recommends that organizations approach structural engineering recruitment as a distinct challenge from general engineering staffing, requiring recruiters who understand licensure jurisdictions, structural sub-disciplines, AEC firm cultures, and the passive-candidate dynamics of a near-zero-unemployment profession. The firms evaluated in this report represent the leading specialists available to organizations seeking structural engineering talent, and each offers a distinct value proposition suited to particular hiring needs.

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