Glassdoor's Employer Review Marketplace

Idea In Short

Glassdoor built its business on a simple asymmetry: employees can post reviews, salaries and interview questions about their employers for free, while employers pay to respond, promote job listings and shape how they appear on the platform. Three former Expedia executives started the company in 2008 after one of them accidentally left confidential salary data in an office printer and wondered what would happen if that kind of information were public by design. Recruit Holdings, the Japanese staffing conglomerate that also owns Indeed, bought Glassdoor for $1.2 billion in 2018. Starting in 2025, Recruit began folding Glassdoor's operations into Indeed, cutting jobs and, by mid-2026, completing a legal merger that ended Glassdoor's run as a separate corporate entity. This article explains how Glassdoor made money as an independent company and what changed once Indeed absorbed it.

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A printer mishap becomes a business idea

Glassdoor's origin traces to an incident at Expedia, where co-founder Rich Barton accidentally left a printout of confidential employee salary and stock data somewhere a colleague could see it. 1 Barton wondered what would happen if that kind of information were available to everyone by design rather than by accident, an idea he shared with fellow Expedia veteran Robert Hohman. The two brought in a third former colleague, Tim Besse, and the trio self-funded the company, initially paying friends to cold-call Silicon Valley engineers and offering a raffled iPod in exchange for salary data and reviews. Glassdoor launched publicly in 2008 with roughly 3,300 reviews covering 250 companies and reportedly crashed under traffic on its first day. 2

How the review marketplace actually works

Glassdoor operates as a two-sided platform connecting job seekers and current or former

employees on one side with employers on the other. Employees and job seekers can search listings, read and post anonymous reviews, share salary data and browse interview questions at no cost, which is what built the platform's user base and content library over time. Employers create company profiles, respond to reviews, and use the platform to attract candidates, though basic visibility into what employees say about them costs nothing to observe. The company verified reviews through a combination of automated tools and a content moderation team, a process meant to filter out fabricated or retaliatory posts without giving employers the ability to remove reviews they simply disliked.

Where the actual money came from

> Glassdoor's revenue model let employees use the platform for free while charging employers for visibility, branding and job promotion.

Glassdoor generated revenue almost entirely from the employer side of its marketplace, following a structure that combined freemium job postings with paid premium packages. Small businesses received three free job listings before Glassdoor charged roughly $249 per additional posting, while larger organizations negotiated more complex enterprise packages priced around volume and features. Job advertising let employers pay to promote specific listings at the top of relevant search results, a common model across job platforms that rewards employers willing to pay more for visibility. Employer branding packages, the highest-value tier, let companies feature positive reviews prominently, add photos and videos to their profile, and run targeted recruitment campaigns aimed at specific candidate pools.

A Japanese staffing giant buys the platform

Recruit Holdings, the Tokyo-based staffing and technology conglomerate that also owns Indeed, acquired Glassdoor for $1.2 billion in May 2018, ten years after the company launched. 3 The deal placed two of the largest English-language job platforms under common ownership, though Recruit initially kept Glassdoor and Indeed operating as separate brands with distinct products and leadership. Robert Hohman remained chief executive after the acquisition until 2020, when he moved to chairman and Christian

Sutherland-Wong, previously the company's chief operating officer, took over as chief executive and president. Before the acquisition, Glassdoor had raised roughly $204.5 million across ten funding rounds from venture investors betting on the anonymous review model.

Layoffs and the slow fold into Indeed

Recruit Holdings announced in July 2025 that it would cut about 1,300 jobs across Indeed and Glassdoor, roughly 6% of its combined HR Technology workforce, and merge Glassdoor's operations into Indeed. 4 Recruit's leadership framed the cuts and consolidation as a response to Artificial Intelligence changing how people search for jobs, arguing that AI-driven search reduced the need for some roles that had existed when the two platforms operated as fully separate businesses. Christian Sutherland-Wong announced he would step down as Glassdoor's chief executive, transitioning out of the business in November 2025 as operational control shifted toward Indeed's leadership. The restructuring marked the clearest signal that Recruit no longer saw value in running Glassdoor as an independently branded, independently staffed company.

The legal merger and what changed for users

New Glassdoor users had to register and sign in using an Indeed account rather than a separate Glassdoor login starting in November 2025, and existing users faced an April 20, 2026 deadline to link their accounts or lose full access to reviews and salary data. Glassdoor LLC then formally merged into Indeed, Inc. on July 1, 2026, closing out more than a year of gradual operational integration between the two platforms and five years of convergence that began with a 2020 sales partnership between the sites. 5 Despite the shared account infrastructure, Glassdoor's product identity persisted: Indeed remained oriented toward searching and applying for jobs, while Glassdoor continued to focus on reviews, salary transparency and interview insights. The distinction between the two products survived the corporate merger even as the underlying company structure did not.

Competing while owned by a rival's parent company

Recruit Holdings has told investors it expects margins in its HR Technology segment, which houses Indeed and Glassdoor, to keep expanding even as the total volume of job postings on Indeed has declined, a gap the company has closed partly by raising prices for employers. 6 Before the Indeed merger, Glassdoor competed with a range of platforms

serving overlapping but distinct niches, including LinkedIn's professional network, Indeed's own job search engine, and smaller specialists such as Comparably, which focuses on compensation and culture data broken down by demographic factors. Once Recruit Holdings owned both Glassdoor and Indeed, the competitive relationship between the two became more complicated, since they technically competed for some of the same job-search traffic while sharing a parent company's balance sheet and strategic direction. Regional competitors, including Jobstreet in Southeast Asia and CareerBuilder in the United States, continued to compete for the job-posting side of Glassdoor's business even after the merger. Glassdoor's remaining differentiator is its accumulated library of anonymous reviews and salary reports, a dataset that would be difficult for a new entrant to replicate regardless of how the corporate structure around it changes.

Key Partners

Recruit Holdings, as Glassdoor's parent company and now the entity that owns Indeed as well, functions as its most significant partner and capital source. Employers themselves act as a partner category in a loose sense, since Glassdoor depends on their willingness to engage with reviews and pay for branding tools rather than avoid the platform entirely. Data verification and content moderation vendors support the trust mechanisms that keep reviews credible. Following the merger, Indeed's product and engineering teams became an internal partner responsible for shared account infrastructure and technical integration.

Key Activities

Collecting, verifying and publishing anonymous employee reviews, salary data and interview insights remains Glassdoor's core activity, since that content is what draws job seekers to the platform in the first place. Selling and managing employer accounts, including job postings, advertising placements and branding packages, generates the revenue that supports the free employee-facing side of the business. Content moderation, screening reviews for authenticity and removing fraudulent or retaliatory posts, protects the platform's credibility with both employees and employers. Since 2025, integrating Glassdoor's systems and account infrastructure with Indeed has become an additional major activity as the two platforms consolidate operations.

Key Resources

Glassdoor's database of employee reviews, salary reports and interview questions, built up over more than a decade, is its most valuable resource and the hardest asset for a competitor to replicate quickly. Its digital platform, including the website and mobile app, delivers that content to job seekers and employers at scale. The Glassdoor brand itself, associated specifically with anonymous employer transparency, remains a distinct resource even after the underlying company merged into Indeed. Access to Recruit Holdings' broader financial resources and, since the merger, Indeed's technical infrastructure now support Glassdoor's continued operation.

Value Propositions

For job seekers and employees, Glassdoor offers free access to anonymous reviews, salary data and interview questions that would otherwise be difficult to find before accepting a job offer or during salary negotiations. For employers, the platform offers tools to monitor and respond to how their company is perceived, along with paid options to promote open roles and shape their public profile. The anonymity built into the review system is itself a value proposition, since it lets employees share candid feedback without fear of retaliation from current or former employers. Comparison tools that let job seekers evaluate multiple potential employers side by side on culture, pay and management approval add further value for people weighing competing offers.

Customer Relationships

Glassdoor maintains a largely self-service relationship with individual job seekers and employees, who create free accounts, browse content and post reviews without direct interaction with company staff. Employers purchasing job postings or premium branding packages typically work with dedicated account managers, particularly for larger enterprise contracts. Community-driven dynamics, where users generate the platform's core content through reviews and salary submissions, function as an ongoing relationship distinct from a typical customer-vendor dynamic. Since the Indeed merger, that self-service relationship increasingly runs through a shared Indeed account rather than a Glassdoor-specific login.

Channels

Glassdoor's website remains its primary channel for both job seekers researching employers and employers managing their company presence. Its mobile app extends that

access for users who prefer browsing reviews and job listings from a phone. Since the 2026 merger, Indeed's own platform and account system function as an additional channel, since new Glassdoor users now enter through Indeed's registration flow. Email notifications and alerts continue to drive repeat visits from users tracking specific companies or job searches.

Customer Segments

Job seekers and current or former employees researching companies, salaries and interview processes make up Glassdoor's largest user segment, though they generate no direct revenue. Small businesses posting a limited number of job openings represent one paying employer segment, drawn in by the free initial listings before conversion to paid postings. Medium, large and enterprise employers negotiating custom packages for job advertising and branding represent the more valuable paying segment, given the scale of their recruiting budgets. Recruiters and hiring managers within those employer organizations are the specific individuals who typically manage the paid employer account day to day.

Cost Structure

Platform development and maintenance, covering the engineering work behind the website, mobile app and underlying review database, represents a significant ongoing cost. Employee compensation across product, engineering, sales and content moderation teams made up a large share of costs before the 2025 layoffs reduced headcount as part of the Indeed integration. Content moderation and review verification carry a specific cost tied to maintaining trust in the platform's core anonymous review system. Since the merger, integration costs tied to migrating account systems and consolidating infrastructure with Indeed have added a new, temporary cost category.

Revenue Streams

Job posting fees, charged once employers exceed their free listing allotment, form one core revenue stream, alongside premium job advertising that promotes specific listings for a fee. Employer branding packages, which let companies customize their profile, respond to reviews and run targeted campaigns, represent the highest-value recurring revenue stream on the employer side of the marketplace.

- 1Origin Story Of Glassdoor From Its Founder

- 2Glassdoor Company Background And Founding Details
- 3Recruit Holdings Acquires Glassdoor For $1.2 Billion
- 4Indeed And Glassdoor To Cut 1,300 Jobs Amid AI Shift
- 5Glassdoor's Merger With Indeed Reaches Completion
- 6Recruit Holdings' AI-Driven Restructuring Of Indeed And Glassdoor

Summary

Glassdoor's independent existence lasted close to two decades, long enough to establish anonymous employer reviews as a category that reshaped how job seekers research companies before applying. Its monetization model, free access for employees and paid tools for employers, proved durable enough to justify a billion-dollar acquisition and outlive plenty of competitors that tried to copy it. What ended that independence was not competitive failure but its own parent's decision that running two overlapping platforms no longer made sense once Artificial Intelligence tools could search and summarize information across both. Glassdoor's reviews, salary data and employer branding tools now live inside Indeed's product, tied to Indeed accounts rather than a standalone login. Whether that consolidation strengthens the underlying data or simply subordinates a once-distinct brand to a larger platform is still an open question for the millions of users who built the Glassdoor habit before the merger.