

CULTURE HACKER
REPROGRAMMING THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE™

Your Recruitment Strategy



Recruitment Guidelines: Bringing the Best People to Your Team

As a leader, you've taken the time and effort to craft and shape an effective culture that speaks to what you want your organization to be. You've created policies and procedures, held training events for your teams, and communicated internally and externally in ways that mirror your organizational values. Now, to maintain the integrity of that culture, you need to be sure to bring people into your organization that fit not only the roles required but are a match with the culture as well.

The purpose of this guide is to help an organization recruit and select the best possible candidates who fit the job and company culture. Managers and leaders are responsible for selecting the best candidates for the role. As we discuss recruitment, please note that we are referring to the overall process of attracting, selecting, and appointing suitable candidates for jobs within an organization.

"Everybody can see the skillful players, but the question is, 'Are you willing to wait until you find the skillful player with high character?' because eventually, the character is what wins out on the court."

—Jerry Buss, American businessman

Job Fit vs. Cultural Match

When you recruit for positions within your organization, it is important that you bring in people that are both a job fit and a cultural match. Job fit means the candidate has the skills, expertise, and experience to do a job. Cultural match means the candidate adheres to a set of values and has a personality and disposition that are aligned with your organization's way of working.

Both job fit and cultural match are necessary in today's world. However, cultural match is as important (if not more so) than job fit. We can teach nearly anyone the skills required to do most jobs, but you cannot teach character. Not everyone should work at your company, so cultural match is about finding those people who are most likely to be successful based on the work, organizational values, and personalities of the team. Once a person meets the minimum job or experience qualifications, cultural match is a greater determiner of someone's success. The determination of cultural match is integral to each part of the recruitment process; we'll discuss each aspect in this guide.

Attraction

While the human resources department is primarily responsible for attracting talent to interview, every manager has a responsibility to be on the lookout for talent as well. Talent can be found in and around the organization, online communities associated with your industry, and even in the social circles of your employees. Everyone in your management team should keep an eye out for and engage in conversation with potential candidates to get to know them more.

If you feel they may embody the values of your organizational culture, then you should share your business card and invite them to send their resume to you (if no job position is open) or to apply online for an open position.

As a manager, you need to ensure you are connected with your company's LinkedIn page and support (like, share, etc.) promoted content regarding the culture, employee value proposition, and any available positions. Managers must also be aware of job fairs, employment centers, and other businesses and locations in the community where people may look for open positions or roles. Another critical responsibility for managers in the attraction process is ensuring the job description being used is up-to-date and reflects the necessary job requirements. Managers should review job descriptions every six months. Does the description accurately embody the job responsibilities? Will someone applying for the position know and understand what their role would be, and what the company is looking for both from a job fit and cultural match perspective? If there is any ambiguity in those areas, update the job description.

Reviewing a Resume

The next step in the recruitment process is the review of resumes and deciding what candidates to bring forward for an interview. When you have an effective job posting or are receiving resumes from those you've asked to apply, the hope is that you'll have a lot of really good applicants to field through. In that case, it's important to have a strong strategy for resume review.

To ensure that the process is fair and free of bias, try to determine ahead of time exactly what qualities you are looking for, and score each resume or application based on those. This can help reduce both explicit and implicit biases that could prevent the best person from being selected for the job. We recommend looking for the following:

- **Minimum qualifications:** Does the candidate meet the minimum qualifications met in the job posting? If they do not, their application cannot be considered further. The key here is to ensure from the beginning that the job description and job posting are truly indicative of the requirements for the position and the needs of the organization. If they are not, they need to be revisited long before the resume review period begins.
- **Look for the skills:** A job is a job, but what has the candidate learned? What will they bring to your company? Ultimately, the skills the candidate brings are more important than any former titles or the names of the companies they worked for in the past. Know what skills you need and look for them in their resume.
- **Experience match:** Look for experience that matches what you need, but be open when it comes to the level of experience. Many candidates want to stretch/grow into their next role, so don't hesitate to contact them even if they seem a tad too junior. Look for transferrable skills and previous industry experience that is interesting to you. Every candidate does not have to come from the same industry as what you are hiring for—value where they've previously worked. Those companies/industries may have taught them the skills that would be relevant to your company. If the skills are there, be open to the industry.

- **Look for the facts:** A strong candidate will back up any resume assertions with facts or data points (e.g., “Increased sales by 200% during year 14.” “Increased productivity by 25%, meriting an internal award for excellence.” “Closed \$2M of sales within first six months.”). Statements like these are facts. Statements about teamwork, being a people person, and leadership skills are fluff unless bolstered by facts.
- **Longevity:** As you review past work experience for a candidate, look for two or more years with each employer. This metric does depend on the field/industry, but the two-year benchmark serves as a good measuring stick for the average person. In general, you want to see that the candidate has stayed long enough with each prior employer to add value, learn new skills, and build longevity and loyalty with an employer.
- **Concise content:** Candidates should demonstrate that they can briefly articulate their expertise without using too much company-specific jargon or complex terminology. Ideally, one can write their experience on their resume clearly, articulately, and concisely. The general recommendation is that a resume should be no longer than one page, but that recommendation may vary in specific industries or disciplines that require more detail.
- **Grammar and spelling:** Make sure the candidate uses consistent verb tenses and has proofread their documents for spelling and grammatical errors. Attention to detail is important.
- **Invitation to connect:** Does the resume invite you to meet the candidate? If not, think about why not. Is it pages of fluff? Is the resume filled with meaningless acronyms? Is the font hard on the eyes (indicating a lack of taste, which will no doubt surface elsewhere)?

A last recommendation we make in regard to resume review is that when you have more than one person who will be reviewing resumes, do an initial review or scoring of resumes separately before coming together to compare notes. This prevents (or at least lessens) the bandwagon effect, where a group of people are likely to agree with the first or loudest voice to speak up when in the same room. If initial decision-making can be done separately, with each member of the committee or group preparing their own notes on candidates, then each member will be much more likely to speak up and stand for their true feelings on a resume or application. Involving a group in this way can also reduce the impacts of bias on the application process, simply because each person will view a resume slightly differently.

The Interview Process

Once a thorough resume review is done, it's time to start the interview process. There are three types of interviews you may use in and throughout your recruitment process:

- **Phone or video call interview:** Generally, this is the first type of interview available to you, especially if the candidate is not currently local. During this first interview, you mainly need to check for job fit, ensuring the candidate possesses the skills, experience, and qualifications you are looking for. Ideally, you should review the candidate's resume, asking about job history, skills and promotions attained, and previous ability to achieve goals. For those potential candidates that you like after a phone or Zoom interview, progress them to the next interview step.
- **Panel interview with current employees/managers:** Panel interviews are excellent in the employee interview process to help remove bias and ensure team and culture fit. Ideally, two to three staff members should conduct a five-minute interview over the phone or in-person with the candidate. Pick at least one behavioral interview question (examples of which are available on the final page of this document) from each of your organizational values to use in this interview. Then assign each employee one or two of those behavioral questions that will identify the candidate's cultural fit.
 - If interviewing for a leadership position, a similar process could take place to help reduce bias and assess leadership abilities and team fit. Assign other managers some of the behavioral questions around the leadership expectations and have them conduct a fifteen-minute interview.
 - The human resources manager could also conduct this step, as they will be sure to focus on cultural and team fit based on their knowledge of the organizational culture.

Once the panel is complete, be sure to collect feedback from each person involved in the interview. We recommend using a scorecard to ensure that feedback can be quickly quantified. Our Interview Scorecard, found in the Small Business Toolbox, asks interviewers to score each candidate they interviewed on job fit and cultural match, and leave a few comments or notes. By tallying up the results from each interviewer on each candidate, you can get a quick snapshot of how your team feels about each candidate interviewed. Be sure as well to read their notes in detail for any qualitative feedback on how the candidate may fit into the organization. Then, based on the panel's or HR manager's feedback, a few candidates should be asked to a final in-person interview.

- **One-on-one interview:** During the final interview, the department manager will have an opportunity to have a one-on-one interview with the candidate. This interview will clarify any of the candidate's questions regarding the position, discuss how to best lead the candidate, and identify their needs from a development perspective. In this interview, rate of pay, benefits, and any details regarding the role not already discussed should be reviewed.

The manager or leader may also want to ask one or two more behavioral questions of the candidate if any concerns came up in previous interviews.

This conversation should focus on any red flags that may have been raised to this point. It is also an opportunity to get to know the candidate a bit more personally, understanding who and what is most important to them, and how this role could align with their career path.

In addition to considering the process for conducting interviews, it is also important to consider the experience the candidate will have while interviewing. For most candidates, these interviews are the first interaction that they will have with your company, especially with your internal employee experience and culture. Their view of your organization can be shaped heavily by their interview experience. Research suggests that the following are important to a candidate in their interview experience:

- The location in which the interview takes place is easy to find, and they are given very clear and direct instructions on where to park, where to check in, or for a virtual interview, how to access the video or phone call.
- They are welcomed warmly—ensure that whoever they might see first (a receptionist, front-line staff, etc.) are expecting them, and know where to send them upon their arrival, if in a physical location. If on a video call, be sure that before you accept the candidate into the video conference, all participants are ready physically and mentally to be at their best and represent the company well.
- The interviewer is on time. It goes without saying that this will set the tone for any future interactions the candidate has with your organization. If your interviewer is not on time, it tells the candidate that they should not have to prioritize being on time for work if they were offered the position.
- The interviewer allows them to ask questions. Ensure that in any interview format, interviewers are prepared with enough questions for the candidate to get the information they need about them and their experiences, but not so many questions that the time is eaten up before the candidate has a chance to ask their own. Additionally, the kind of questions a candidate asks can give interviewers an insight into what they consider important in a work setting.
- The interviewer is gracious, respectful, and friendly. This may seem like common sense, but we've seen instances where candidates were treated poorly, and then expected to accept a job offer with the organization afterwards. Obviously, your interviewer needs to be able to communicate professionally, but professional does not ever have to mean unfriendly.
- Follow-up occurs, regardless of the outcome. It can be awkward to have to reach out to a candidate that did not earn a position with your organization, but it is critical that the follow-up happens. Not only is it just decent human behavior, but it improves the reputation of your organization when you communicate with those whom you've had interaction.

"83% of talent say that a negative interview experience can change their mind about a role or company they once liked, while 87% of talent say a positive interview experience can change their mind about a role or company they once doubted."

—*LinkedIn Business*, 2018

Selection and Reference Checks

Once the interviews are conducted and questions have been answered, as a leader or manager, you are responsible selecting the right candidate, and conducting a reference check on the candidate, based on the references they've provided. When you've narrowed down based on job fit and conducted an effective interview using value-centered behavioral interview questions, selection should be simple. Ensure that you've collected feedback from everyone involved in the interview processes, and take it all into consideration, along with the individual's resume and background.

Once you've made a decision, before making a job offer, it is important to check a candidate's references. Reference checks, when executed properly, can ultimately predict a candidate's future success in the role. Reference checks are also necessary because they:

- Reinforce initial perceptions gained during the interview process.
- Confirm titles, dates, tasks, personality traits, and the applicant's skill level.
- Validate job skills when we ask specific job fit questions.
- Reveal a potential cultural match when we ask specific questions about typical behaviors, attitudes, and dispositions.
- Show strengths when we ask about specific qualities found in their former work.

Reference Check Guidelines

- Ask to use former managers as reference (not the candidate's current manager), as they will likely be more open.
- Be considerate of the person's time, asking only a maximum of four questions. Choose your questions carefully, focusing on one behavior that you were not as sure of, and ask the behavioral question, "Can you tell me about a time when the candidate did [this]?"
- Ask, "How would I best work with or get the best out of the candidate?" This question will provide you with insights into the leadership style to use with them.
- Ask, "What is the one thing I should work on with the candidate?" This question will provide you with insights into a weakness, without using the word weakness that can sometimes make people go on the defensive.
- At the end of the conversation, ask, "Would you hire this candidate again?" This question is your best indication of the candidate's overall value.

One final selection note—when a candidate is no longer being considered, they need to be notified about that decision. Leaving a candidate hanging reflects poorly on your organization and is, frankly, unprofessional. Depending on how far the candidate progressed through the interview process, a different type of outreach should be appropriate.

If they merely applied and were not interviewed at all, an automated email notification will suffice. But if the candidate was brought to the final stages of the interview, a personal phone call is most appropriate.

Making an Offer—Presenting Your Employee Value Proposition

Making an offer to a candidate requires a few important steps. Depending on your organization's required processes, you may reach out to the candidate with an informal offer to ensure their acceptance before drawing up official paperwork. If this is the case, HR will likely send a more detailed offer letter to the candidate for their signature, and then you can set up a start date and send details for onboarding and orientation. More information on those critical first 90 days is available in other articles and guides in the Toolbox.

An important part of making your offer is presenting your employee value proposition (EVP) to your intended new hire. An EVP is the combination of rewards, benefits, and opportunities an employee is afforded by working at your company. The EVP is based on four core themes: reputation, purpose, development, and location. The recruitment process should articulate the company's EVP to prospective candidates through the job description, but they should be reiterated in detail upon your extending an offer (even an informal one, to start).

"An EVP is about defining the essence of your company—how it is unique and what it stands for. It encompasses the central reasons that people are proud and motivated to work there, such as the inspiring vision or distinctive culture."

—Michael Page, recruitment consultant

Behavioral Interview Question Tool

Behavioral questions intend for applicants to describe past behaviors on the job. We assume this will help predict future behaviors. The Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM) recommends behavioral questions because of the type of responses they can elicit from an interviewee. They state: "Answers to behavioral interview questions should provide verifiable, concrete evidence as to how a candidate has dealt with issues in the past. This information often reveals a candidate's actual level of experience and his or her potential to handle similar situations in your organization."

We use the employee behavioral questions to help determine if an applicant's past actions align with our values. We use the manager behavioral questions to determine that the candidate's previous actions align with the leadership expectations in place. We recommend using questions like those on the following pages.

"If you hire people just because they can do a job, they'll work for your money. But if you hire people who believe what you believe, they'll work for you with blood and sweat and tears."

—Simon Sinek, author & speaker

Behavioral Interview Questions | Employee

The behavioral questions you use with an employee should be based around your company values. While your organization may not have the same values as found in some of our sample questions, you should be able to use the examples we've provided to get you started on creating some questions that will be effective for your organization.

- Please describe to us a situation where you have had to work in a team to complete a project or task.
- Tell me about a time when you had a difficult problem to solve at work. What was your process like?
- Can you describe a time that you experienced failure? What was the impact of that experience?
- One of our organizational values is communication. Can you describe what effective communication means to you, and give an example of it from your previous experiences?
- In a previous role, how have you prioritized creative, out-of-the-box thinking? Please share a specific example.
- Can you give an example of how you have approached working alongside others who may have a different background or life experiences than you?
- Describe a time when you came across someone in your workplace who was behaving unethically. What was your response?
- Can you share how you have reacted to slow times at your current or previous workplaces?
- How have you maintained a positive attitude in your roles at work, even when under stress or experiencing other emotions?
- Please describe an experience when you've had to create a successful working environment with someone that you do not get along with.
- In a team environment, what role do you typically take? Why?
- Share with us a recent experience working on a team. What were your specific contributions?
- Describe a recent change you have experienced in your current or previous workplace. How did you navigate that change process?
- Please give an example of a time you disagreed with a decision made by your manager or leader, and how you managed the situation.
- Think of a time when you have had multiple projects or assignments to do all at the same time. How did you prioritize and manage your time effectively?
- Please share an experience where you were given a task or responsibility you did not know how to complete. How did you proceed?
- Describe a time when you had to communicate a complex policy or procedure to someone. How do you ensure that successful communication is happening?
- Think about a time when you've had the opportunity to work with a diverse group of individuals. Describe your approach; specifically, how did you ensure you took each person's perspective into account?

Behavioral Interview Questions | Manager

- How do you select team members to ensure they are a good fit with the company culture and other team members?
- Give me an example of when you selected someone who was a great fit.
- How do you welcome new team members and ensure they are set up for success?
- How do you get to know your team beyond the job? What is important to know about them?
- Many problems arise in the workplace due to poor communication. How do you communicate to your team so that they understand clearly what you mean?
- Tell me what empathetic listening means to you and a time when you did this with an employee.
- In a previous role tell me how you led by example when it came to one of your company values.
- How do you enable your team to be successful in their job?
- Tell me about a time you have empowered a team member and they were able to surprise and delight a customer?
- Tell me why it is important for you to be in the operation or around your team when things are busy, or they might need help?
- We define a person's performance based on what they deliver and how they deliver it. Tell me about a time when you have provided feedback to a team member who was not performing. What is your approach to having a performance conversation?
- When giving feedback what are two or three things that are most important to you when talking to a team member?
- Provide an example of when you have given recognition to another person in such a way that was unique yet meaningful to them
- Why is accountability important within a team? How do you approach having tough conversations and making tough decisions?
- How do you approach high performing team members who are focused on their development and career?
- Tell me about a time you have developed, communicated, and executed on a goal within your team
- Engagement is your team's interest and involvement in helping the company achieve its goals or get better. How do you engage your team members?
- Tell me about a time you took an employee's idea and implemented it
- Why do you think compliance with company policies and procedures are important?
- Tell me about a time you were able to increase revenues within your business.
- Tell me about a time when you were able to make significant savings within your business.
- How do you ensure your team delivers a consistent customer experience or level of performance?
- How do you own customer challenges or complaints?
- Tell me about a time you turned a frustrated customer into a loyal one
- What does it mean to you when we say you are expected to be an ambassador for our brand?