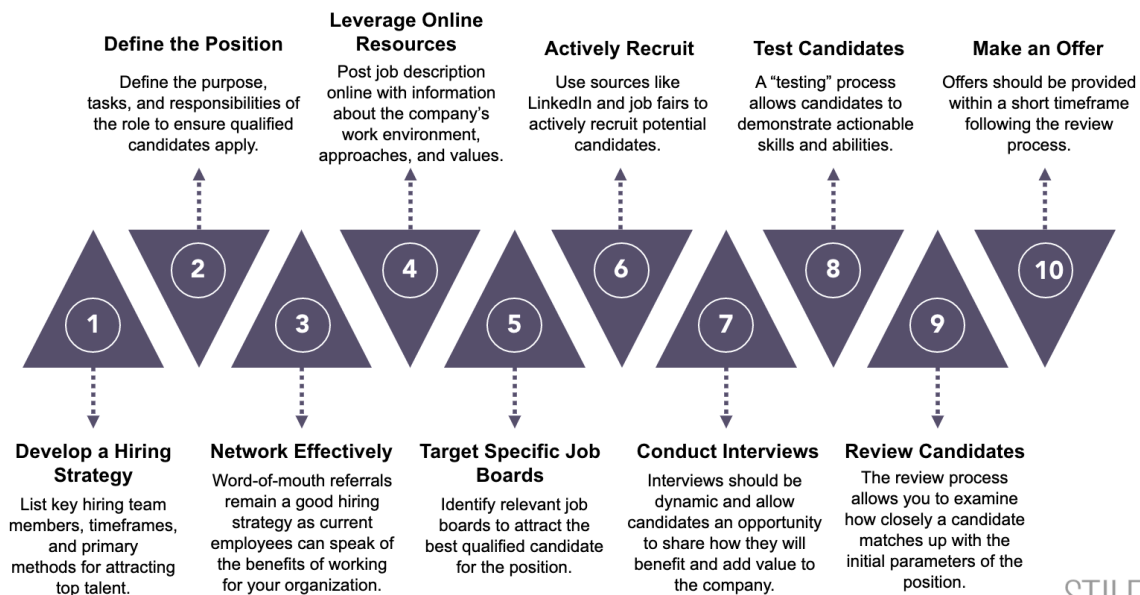


RESOURCES FOR HIRING GREAT CANDIDATES

This document outlines a 10-step process to help you find and hire strong, qualified employees. Developed in collaboration with community partners, each step is based on secondary research of current best practices. Tools and resources are included to guide your approach.

10 CANDIDATE SEARCH STEPS AT A GLANCE



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STEP 1: DEVELOP A HIRING STRATEGY

Developing a hiring strategy is an essential step in aligning your hiring process with your organization's broader values and goals. A hiring strategy will bring structure to the complex task of hiring, on-boarding, and training, saving you time, money, and frustration.

Hiring can be challenging and risky – as most employers know, a poor hire can be costly. At the same time, hiring can be a tremendous opportunity to acquire employees with new skills, perspectives, and experiences. A thoughtful strategy will help balance risks and opportunities.

What is a Hiring Strategy?

A hiring strategy is a structured, written plan that outlines an organization's hiring goals and the steps an organization will take to find and hire new employees. The strategy should also outline who will be involved in hiring, general hiring timeframes, methods of promotion, and primary methods of attracting top talent. You and your team can use the plan to facilitate individual job searches in a consistent, systematic way.

There are several key steps to developing a strong hiring strategy:

1. **Identify your organization's needs and gaps:** Look at skills gaps within the company. Think strategically about what strengths a new hire could offer that would help to fill those gaps. In addition, consider the extent to which your workforce reflects the diversity of the community / industry you serve. Companies with more diverse leadership and workforces outperform their less diverse counterparts.¹
2. **Assess current organizational structures:** Take time to consider the current company structure and corporate culture. Assess the company's current needs and goals at a high level. This task will provide an overview of the company's current successes and define what the company aims to achieve long-term. Important questions to ask include:
 - Who is in a position of leadership? What is their leadership style?
 - Are there current gaps in leadership that cannot be filled internally?
 - Does the leadership team reflect the diversity of the community you serve?
 - How many current employees will change their current roles in the next 12 months (promotion / retirement / reorganization)?
3. **Creating a hiring plan:** The hiring plan should provide more specific information that directly relates to each individual hire. Companies should consider:
 - The company's strategic vision / goals / values, including goals for diversity and inclusion;

- Current revenue, projected revenue, and funding requirements for the new hire(s);
 - The number of candidates who will be hired;
 - The steps in the process with timelines for each;
 - Hiring committee members and roles; and
 - The role of the new hire(s).
4. **Develop a great job description and posting:** The job description defines the position in detail. The job posting attracts candidates to apply. Make it easy for candidates to picture the job by being specific about roles and responsibilities. Ensure that key skills and qualities are highlighted. Keep in mind that candidates are also attracted to job postings that are creative. To attract diverse candidates, include an explicit statement about your organization's values and commitment to inclusion.
 5. **Identify the best places to find and attract candidates:** The current job market continues to benefit from word-of-mouth referrals, but online job boards are a key component of attracting top talent. Be sure to advertise your job in the places that will garner the most visibility for your position and industry. [To attract a more diverse group of job seekers](#), consider posting your position in contexts where more diverse candidates will see it.
 6. **Use the hiring strategy to guide your next hiring process.**

Exercise: Getting Started

Think through these two sets of questions to begin developing your hiring strategy. Your answers to these questions will help you understand how a new hire could contribute to your company.

1. **Make a list of gaps within your organization.** Consider what additional skills would benefit your organization. Try to think deeply about how those gaps affect workplace productivity and efficiency. Incorporate your organization's goals and values. How can you ensure that your hiring process reflects those priorities?
2. **Outline your company's organization structure.** Who is currently in positions of leadership? What current employees could assume greater leadership within your organization? How will a new hire(s) impact the overall organizational structure of your company?

STEP 2: DEFINE THE POSITION

After developing a hiring strategy, companies must clearly identify the nature of the individual job and define the responsibilities and tasks that the new hire will be expected to complete. By clearly defining the job, companies ensure:

1. A clear understanding of the role of the hire for their company.
2. A focused approach that attracts qualified candidates to apply.

Key characteristics to consider when defining a job include:

- Full-time or part-time
- Location
- Primary day-to-day responsibilities
- Required skills
- Required experience and / or education, if applicable
- Languages requirements
- Hours of work
- Pay and / or remuneration
- Benefits

When identifying the required skills and experience, consider which aspects are most important to you. Many employers establish a matrix or rubric prior to reviewing applications to help them evaluate and compare candidates in a consistent way. As part of your evaluation, you may decide to weight certain skills or experience more heavily than others. For example, you might decide to award candidates more points for on-the-job experience than for having a degree in a particular field (or vice versa).

STEP 3: NETWORK EFFECTIVELY

Networking is an important part of the hiring process for candidates and companies alike. Candidates can make use of networking opportunities to connect with individuals who could help them secure a new work placement. The chance to connect in-person or online allows job candidates to emphasize their skills and value to a company.

Similarly, companies can use the networking process to help them hire strong candidates. Active, ongoing recruitment allows companies to identify candidates that would add value to their organization. Good leaders will leverage their personal contact network to pinpoint candidates who they think will be a good hire for their organization.

Companies should also consider engaging with the local community leaders, educational institutions, and organizations. These groups can inform employers' approaches to recruitment and support community members in building skills to apply for future positions. Co-operative education and internship programs can also help identify future employees in a competitive labour marketplace.

Key methods of networking for companies

- Word of mouth and referrals remain a good hiring strategy as current employees can speak to the benefits of working for an organization.
- Maintain a strong, forward-thinking, attractive social media presence.
- Host events that attract candidates including information sessions, lectures, or presentations.
- Chat with potential employees at trade shows and other industry events.
- Adopt a social responsibility plan and encourage company volunteerism in the community.
- Attend local job fairs through business councils or post-secondary institutions.

These approaches allow companies to see networking as an ongoing, collective company goal, rather as an individual activity.

STEP 4: LEVERAGE ONLINE RESOURCES

Companies have access to a wide variety of online sources focused on hiring qualified candidates, as well as a selection of general online job boards. There are several methods for employers to best position their hiring process:

- Identify relevant online job boards.
- Build an engaging business website that showcases the company's environment, values, and approach.
- Build an active social media presence.
- Respond promptly to emails and inquiries about the position.

Making a strong sales pitch for your organization and the job is critical to attracting qualified candidates. Not only do online resources allow companies to post job descriptions, but they also allow them to showcase their work environments, successes, and employee engagement.

When turnover occurs, the ability to successfully leverage online resources can help reduce hiring costs by creating a more efficient, streamlined, accessible process for potential candidates.

STEP 5: TARGET SPECIFIC JOB BOARDS

Another method of attracting strong candidates is by targeting specific job boards. Many municipalities, industries, and occupations maintain their own job boards. Access to these boards is readily available online. Industry associations including science and technology, education, engineering, retail, and service all have job boards focused on candidates in their field. Targeting specific job boards will help you reach candidates with the skills and experience you're looking for.

Employers should establish a job posting budget. Posting on many job boards is free, but in some cases, fee-based or subscription-based job boards may better reach qualified candidates. As part of the planning process, employers should learn about the requirements for posting, cost, and potential reach of identified job posting boards.

STEP 6: ACTIVELY RECRUIT

Many employers are going beyond job boards, using other resources to reach out to potential candidates directly.

Companies can use a variety of methods to actively recruit candidates for vacant or newly created positions:

- Direct contact with candidates through referrals;
- Online job platforms including LinkedIn;
- Social media platforms and in-person and virtual job fairs;
- Post-secondary education institution job fairs; and
- Freelancers or temporary agencies to test potential new full-time employees.

Using these strategies, companies can maximize their ability to attract promising candidates whose skills and experiences meet job requirements.

STEP 7: CONDUCT INTERVIEWS

Interviews are a critical component of the hiring process to assess a candidate's suitability for a position. Whether virtual or in-person, interviews allow employers to have a conversation with a candidate to share more about the position and the company, and for candidates to share more information about their skills and abilities. Companies can explore a candidate's resume in greater depth and evaluate a candidate's abilities in a social setting. In addition, employers and candidates alike can learn more about each other's values and expectations.

Employers should select interview candidates from a carefully selected pool of applicants whose skills, experience, and abilities closely match the defined position. Interviews should be structured to allow candidates an opportunity to share their perspectives about how they will benefit and add value to the company.

Selected Best Practices for Conducting Interviews

- Using the job posting as a guide, develop interview questions, reference questions, and scoring scales before reviewing candidate resumes. This approach helps reduce bias, ensures consistency, and keeps the focus on required skills and experience.
- Inform candidates about the process for the interview ahead of time (e.g., location, length of interview, tests / activities, and who will be conducting the interview).
- Be prepared for interviews ahead of time, with all the materials needed for interviewer(s) and candidates.
- Allow candidates the opportunity to review questions before the interview so that they can thoughtfully present their best answers.
- Engage candidates personally, both at the beginning of the interview and throughout the conversation.
- Listen attentively to candidate responses and follow-up as needed.
- Ask open-ended questions that allow candidates to speak broadly and in conversational terms.
- Do not ask inappropriate or illegal questions (e.g., questions about political or religious beliefs, marital or family status, and age).
- Value the candidate's time by starting and ending on schedule.

STEP 8: TEST CANDIDATES

Testing candidates refers to providing potential employees with an assignment or task to perform that demonstrates their skills and abilities. The work to be completed generally mirrors common tasks employees would be asked to perform in the job on a day-to-day basis. A sample assignment gives employers an opportunity to assess candidates' skills beyond the descriptions candidates provide in their resumes.

Testing procedures differ between industries and organizations. Before using a pre-hiring assignment, investigate the standard approaches of other organizations in your field. You may uncover examples or insights that save you time and improve the quality of your assessment.

STEP 9: REVIEW CANDIDATES

During the review process, the hiring manager or committee examines how closely a candidate's skills and experience match up with the requirements of the position.

This review should be conducted as soon as possible after the interview stage, so that the interview(s) are still fresh in the hiring committee's minds. This stage of the process allows companies to reflect and make the most informed hiring decisions.

Many factors can be considered in the post-interview review including:

- Educational background;
- Work experience;
- Leadership qualities or potential;
- Communication skills;
- Critical thinking skills;
- Attitude, organizational fit, and motivation; and
- Quality of references.

References provide a strong means of verifying the accuracy of a candidate's skills, work history, and character. At the same time as you prepare your interview questions, establish a set of reference questions that all candidates' references will be asked. Organizations should reinforce that references and their responses remain confidential and are handled appropriately. Ensure that information from a reference is used only to critically evaluate a candidate's fit for hiring.

Complete notes on the interview and assessment process should be maintained for future use (e.g., courtesy discussions with unsuccessful applicants, legal challenges).

STEP 10: MAKE AN OFFER

An offer to the successful candidate should be made as soon as possible after the review process. Offers should be detailed and be structured to motivate the candidate to accept the position. Offers should include the important features of the position including starting salary and / or hourly pay, benefits, job title, and start date.

Companies can save time and resources by standardizing the offer process, such as by creating scripts or templates that can be reused.

Making an offer by phone (with an accompanying written offer) is generally preferable to making a written offer as a phone call is considered more personal and allows the employer to answer any questions the candidate may have. If you make an offer only by letter or email, make sure the template is clear, easy to follow, and uses language that is professional and personable.

ENDNOTES

¹ "Diversity Wins: How Inclusion Matters," McKinsey and Co., 2019, <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters>