

5 reasons why companies struggle to hire

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Successful recruitment requires all stages of a hiring process to be managed well. In this article, I discuss, from experience and research, 5 areas where the process can fall down – and how to improve your chances of hiring success.

1) Not articulating what you *need*

A Job Description (JD) can serve as a useful communication tool to help identify specific skills or abilities that are necessary for the role and the environment in which it operates.

However, it's very important that Job Descriptions don't turn into 'wish lists' of requirements that make it difficult for recruiters to find and match candidates, and for potential candidates to understand if they fit the bill.

A helpful job description is one that is accurate – emphasizing the key responsibilities of the role – including line management and key relationships, and a summary of the critical experience and knowledge, education/qualifications and skills required to successfully perform it.

Leadership skills seen as essential for success should be included. For example, does the role have a large people management component, require a high degree of specialism or industry knowledge, or need someone with strong start-up or turnaround ability?

Once you've created a draft JD, review it and emphasize the priorities. Ask a couple of stakeholders/likely interviewers to review it and provide feedback.

In summary, a Job description (JD) should be seen as *a starting point* for discussion. It's equally important to spend time discussing the role with your interview team and your recruiter, ensuring they understand the key requirements, what experience you are seeking and the type of person who would be a good fit.

Build a partnership so that everyone involved has a consistent understanding of the role and its requirements.

2) Not understanding or responding to the market

Hiring from the outside means you are operating in a dynamic (i.e. changing) market. To be attractive and competitive you need to understand and respond to that market.

Market your company and the role appropriately. How are you describing the opportunity and your company? Is it something you could look at objectively and say you want to be part of.

Is the way you are defining the role in terms of rank, expertise and growth prospects consistent with reality and your ability to compensate?

Savvy candidates will know their marketability. If the required skills are in high demand, or there is a scarcity of skilled candidates, you may need to be more flexible with your requirements, particularly if your compensation is fixed.

Factors that can impact hiring include whether the role is in a high-cost-of-living location or a 'difficult-to-get-to' location.

If you are consistently seeing candidates whose compensation levels exceed that offered, you are likely over-positioning the role or misaligned with the market rate.

Promoting the values of your firm and the broader opportunities may help increase the attractiveness of the role. Share your firm's involvement in Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) that help to foster a diverse, inclusive workplace, and other benefits such as how the company goes about the development of future leaders.

3) Not treating candidates as consumers

Candidates can be turned on or off based on how they are treated.

What is the candidate journey like in your hiring process?
How can it be improved?

Have a compelling career site that provides a good first impression.

Make it easy for candidates to apply.

- Keep in touch and provide regular updates (text is becoming a popular method).
- Some companies are employing recruiting automation (chat-bots/AI) to help in answering questions, applications and scheduling.

Consider using video interviews for filtering candidates and to provide early face-to-face interaction.

Prepare your candidates. Brief them adequately before interviews. Provide them with context on the people who they will be meeting to set them up for success.

In parallel, prepare interviewers by discussing what you are seeking – not just giving them the job spec. Seek input from key stakeholders to involve them in the process and to gain their view on what a successful candidate will look like.

Make the entire process as predictable as possible so candidates know what to expect. If there are gaps between interview stages, explain what is happening.

Once you have made a decision to hire, make offers quickly. Candidates are likely to be interviewing with more than one firm.

4) Not having accountability in the hiring process

Have a clear, consistent evaluation and decision-making process.

Obtain action-oriented feedback from interviewers rather than just gathering information. Ask them:

“Would you hire this person or suggest we move them on to the next (evaluation) stage?”

“Why?” (or Why not?)

“If you do not have sufficient information to make that determination, what additional information should be sought?”

Ensure that their decisions and reasons map to the agreed evaluation criteria.

If you are holding panel interviews, agree roles, how information will be captured and a decision made. Ideally panel members will remain after the interview, but if not possible agree a time when the panel will regroup to make a collective decision.

Seek to eliminate unconscious bias. Have a diverse interview panel/group and use structured interviewing and testing processes. Be open to candidates whose views are different to your own (avoid trying to hire ‘you’) and to new possibilities (candidates with different experiences).

5) Holding out for the perfect fit

How likely are you to get an exact match for your role?

Some companies make the mistake of being too narrow in their search and filter out viable candidates who have the potential and learning agility to grow into the role.

Hiring a replacement for an existing role presents an ideal opportunity to re-think and refine the role based on future needs. Use the feedback you/your recruiter is receiving from candidates/the market (per section 2.) to refine your search, asking:

- What is the availability of candidates with the profile we are seeking?
- How does our compensation compare to the market?
- Are the majority of people applying of the right level?
- What are the main reasons we are deselecting candidates? (Or they us?)
- Can we reconfigure the role/reallocate some responsibilities?
- Are we exhausting all hiring channels and possibilities, including promoting an internal candidate, providing an internal lateral opportunity and leveraging internal networks?

Update your recruiter with your thinking, as well as your interviewing team.

In summary, if you clearly define and communicate what you need, understand and adjust to the market, treat candidates as customers, have an accountable process that incorporates feedback and flexibility, you significantly increase your changes of hiring.

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