



HIRING WORKBOOK

The Example Hiring Process Workbook — Our Best Practices

A tight hiring process is a competitive advantage — here's how we'd build yours, stage by stage, from screening call to signed contract.

When it comes to attracting talent, a tight hiring process makes a huge difference. If you're up against the best in the industry, you're up against talent teams who are on the ball — quick feedback, things moving along in the background, no dead air. You need to play the same game, keeping your process as smooth and efficient as possible so your hiring funnel is as optimised as it can be. This workbook walks through what that ideal process looks like, from your point of view (the best candidate, the quickest decision) and from the candidate's (a great first impression, a fast decision).

STAGE ONE · SCREENING

Screening Interviews: Quick Fit Decisions

A screening interview exists to quickly establish whether someone might be a good fit. If you've got a large pool of applicants, or you're working through a long-list from headhunting, you'll have a lot of these to get through — so they need to be absolutely on-point. Our separate Interviews workbook covers what to ask and how to structure them; here's what you need to know about the process itself.

Set your screening stage up like this:

- ☐ Keep them virtual and short — no longer than 30 minutes, and ideally 15–20 minutes is enough to make a snap decision on whether to shortlist someone.
- ☐ Set everything up through Calendly (or similar) so candidates can pick their own slot, with your meeting software linked in.
- ☐ Follow up within 24 hours, and don't be afraid to reject on the spot if someone isn't suitable — don't leave people hanging.
- ☐ If you've got too many to handle, outsource the screening stage to a recruiter (like us) and take the rest of the process on internally.

Giving Feedback: Why You Should Always — And How

Good market or bad, candidates want to know how they did — and if they didn't get through, they want to know why. If you've asked for someone's time, it's only fair to give them that. It also matters commercially: today's rejected candidate can be tomorrow's accepted one, careers go in all sorts of directions, and you don't want to leave a poor impression. Feedback doesn't need to be chapter and verse — a short, honest message with some encouraging words is usually enough.

IN THEIR WORDS



Hi <firstname>, thank you so much for taking the time to meet with us. Unfortunately, we've decided to progress with a couple of other candidates who were more closely aligned to our job specification, and who had deeper experience in specific marketing channels. Please do keep in touch though, if we have any relevant roles coming up, it would be great to hear from you again.

— EXAMPLE REJECTION MESSAGE



Hi <firstname>, thank you once more for meeting with us. I'm afraid that on this occasion, we've decided not to progress with your application. This is because we felt there were candidates more suitable to the role, but we do want to wish you all the best and please do stay in touch.

— EXAMPLE REJECTION MESSAGE



Hi <firstname>, thank you for meeting with us yesterday, we enjoyed our conversation. However, after consideration we've decided not to progress with your application as we felt the role wouldn't be appropriate for you right now. Please do keep in touch for any future opportunities we may have.

— EXAMPLE REJECTION MESSAGE

First Interviews: Considered Decisions

Candidates move quickly, and so do your competitors — so match their pace. Once you've decided who to progress from screening, settle on how many interviews you want to run and who needs to be in the room. We advise two interviews, and getting as many of the final decision-makers involved as early as possible. If the boss genuinely can't make the first round, that's fine — but use the first interview to whittle your list down to just two or three candidates.

- Most first interviews are virtual now, so schedule through Calendly (or similar) and give candidates a few days to prepare and research the company properly.
- Use a structured interview template — decide your questions or topics in advance, stick to them, and score fairly.
- Tell candidates when you'll follow up, and then stick to it — they'll appreciate both the honesty and the reliability.
- Stick to your scorecard rather than going on gut feel — it makes the decision genuinely easier.

Tests, Projects & Profiling: Practical Decisions

If you want to see how a candidate actually works, a short project or task is a good way to judge their thinking and the quality of their output. It doesn't need to be a long project, and it definitely shouldn't be 'build our marketing strategy for free' — you're testing a skill, not extracting free work. Cultural profiling tests are increasingly used at this stage too, but they only work well if you've already profiled your own team and hiring managers the same way — worth treating as part of a wider project rather than a bolt-on.

- Expect this stage to add delay, since candidates need time — so move quickly, have the test ready in advance, and schedule the second interview to present it back.

- If the task takes longer than a few hours, consider paying candidates for completing it — it signals you're serious.
- Free personality tests like 16personalities exist, but if you want to test values, test your own team first before you test candidates against them — we can help with this.

STAGE FOUR · FINAL INTERVIEW

Final Interviews: The Final 2 (or 3)

By this stage your funnel is closing — you may have started with a long-list of well over a hundred candidates, and you should now be down to a genuine shortlist of two or three. Every decision-maker needs to be in the room, so arrange and clear calendars in advance, and meet candidates in person if you can. Unstructured interviews work well at this final stage — consider a different setting for all or part of it (a coffee shop is a good call for senior hires).

- Aligning calendars around the most senior decision-maker matters most here — don't let them off the hook for attending.
- Unstructured doesn't mean unplanned — think in advance about what you want to cover, and keep a loose checklist.
- Don't rake over old ground, even for senior decision-makers meeting the candidate for the first time — brief them properly beforehand.

STAGE FIVE · THE OFFER

Making an Offer: Be Ready for Everything

Once you've made your decision, the real work starts. This is often where recruiters earn their keep, because they've usually seen every version of this conversation before. If you're prepared, and aligned internally on money and package, you'll be fine. The key is knowing up front what the candidate actually wants on remuneration, and having your offer letter and contract template ready so there's no waiting around. Agree your internal red lines on negotiation too — sometimes you'll need to go higher, sometimes you won't be able to.

Before you make the offer:

- ☐ Delays make you look unprofessional and can cost you the candidate — have the offer letter ready and the contract template drawn up in advance.
- ☐ Discuss package expectations early in the process. If you can't afford them, they shouldn't have got this far — and never lowball a candidate at this stage.
- ☐ Consider onboarding before day one — a few emails from the hiring manager can smooth the process and engage new starters ahead of their start date.

SPEED

Speeding Up the Hiring Process

Some things move your process along; others quietly stall it. Here's what tends to do which.

- Go faster — calendar management: block out interview times specifically in people's calendars, and use scheduling software like Calendly so candidates can pick their own slots.
- Go faster — get the boss involved early: the sooner senior stakeholders are engaged, and the sooner they've bought into the job spec, the quicker decisions get made.
- Go faster — score in structured interviews: a fair, unbiased scoring approach cuts through gut feel and indecision, and lets you combine everyone's scores for the full picture.
- Go faster — prep your offer letter: making candidates wait for paperwork is a bad look, so have the offer letter and contract template ready to send.
- Go slower — unsuitable candidates reaching first interview: if you're rejecting too many at this stage, revisit your screening or your brief to recruiting teams, since this adds significantly to time-to-hire.
- Go slower — too many cooks: senior decision-makers should be involved, but too many people in the process causes paralysis and slows everything down.
- Go slower — calendar battleships: by far the biggest source of lag is simply trying to find a slot that works in everyone's diary.

- Go slower — too many interviews: if you need more than two, ask whether the extra rounds are really worth it, or whether you should just get the right people involved sooner.

END TO END

A World-Class Hiring Process: The Timeline

Put together, here's the shape of a well-run process end to end, with the goal of each stage and a realistic timeline for getting through it.

- 1** Screening interview (1–5 days) — make a quick call on a high volume of candidates, impress the best of them with your professionalism and speed, and get a feel for skills and cultural fit.
- 2** Between screening and first interviews (5–10 days) — bring your shortlist down to a manageable size (around 5 for first interview) while impressing candidates with how quickly you reply.
- 3** First interviews (10–12 days) — narrow the shortlist to 2 or 3 final-stage candidates, assessed fairly and equally with a structured interview and scorecard.
- 4** Between first and second interview (12–18 days) — hold your shortlist at 2 or 3, send a test or project that probes a specific skill, and move quickly to ensure every stakeholder is available for the second round.
- 5** Final interview (18–20 days) — get agreement from all decision-makers on the preferred candidate, and make a deeper assessment of values and cultural fit through unstructured interviews.
- 6** Offer, negotiation and onboarding (20–25 days) — have everything prepared in advance: offer letter, contract template, and sign-off on salary.

20–25

days from the first screening interview to **offer, negotiation and onboarding** — in a well-run process.



Example Recruitment — marketing-led headhunters for SaaS and FinTech startups and scaleups in New York and London.

Read the live report and get in touch at theexample.co/reports/hiring-process-workbook