



Structured Interview Hiring Summary

Summary

- *“The most important decisions that businesspeople make are not what decisions, but who decisions.”* Jim Collins, Author of Good to Great
- *“I think success comes from having the right person in the right job at the right time with the right skill set for the business problem that exists,”* Nick Chabraja CEO of General Dynamics
- *“The validity or predictive power of a typical unstructured interview is around 20%,”* according to [HBR article](#). That means, if you’re not interviewing in a structured fashion, you only have a 1 in 5 chance of actually making a good hire (yikes)
- Average hiring mistake costs 15 times employee’s base salary in hard costs and productivity loss - £100k salary can cost the company £1.5m
- Founders who are resistant to hiring people more senior and more knowledgeable than they are tend to do less well
- But even when prepared to hire senior people success rate is low

Most Common Problems With Hiring

1. We think with experience we get better at predicting human behavior – it’s a myth (Camerer & Johnson, 1991). Leaders take hiring very seriously but faith in own judgement leads to poor hiring decisions. Overconfidence bias – managers believe they are solid judges of character (Highhouse, 2008) and make overly precise forecast of candidates’ potential e.g. predicting candidates’ potential based on unstructured interview or skipping important assessment processes just because gut says they are right

2. We are delusional about our biases. People are reluctant to acknowledge general imperfections in human judgement and that their judgement is tarnished by bias (Pronin, Gilovich & Ross, 2004; Schulz, 2010). Availability bias – inferences we make based on ease of recall or ease of retrievability i.e. rely on recent or emotionally charged memories. We too easily assume available recollections are truly representative e.g. even a name can cause bias or most natural search strategies don’t necessarily serve us well - people rely on social networks to identify candidates and hence people more likely to be of similar background, culture and education

3. The unstructured interview remains the most common way people are recruited despite it being a poor tool. Schmidt and Hunter (1998) concluded based on 85 years of relevant research that the traditional unstructured interview is low on list of useful tools to help us predict how someone will perform on the job

4. Mismatched expectations. Unclear about what is needed in a job.



5. Have a weak flow of candidates
6. Do not trust ability to pick out right candidate from a group of similar-looking candidates
7. Lose candidates they really want to join the team
8. Not evaluating for cultural fit
9. Legacy company issues
10. Superficial issues – like costs: founders are often penny-pinchers, while inbound executives often expect big budgets. Or technology: young founders often know all greatest new tools to use, while older inbound executives often make you wonder if they would be happier having secretary take dictation and print out email



1. List The Tasks, Activities And Skills Required

- Listing all the tasks the role is likely to involve.
- Next, link each role to an activity or function and then link it a skill

Task	Activity	Skill
Ensure newsletter is ready for publishing	Newsletter	1. Attention to detail 2. Design
Collate monthly newsletter content into Google Drive	Newsletter	1. Writing 2. Design 3. Attention to detail
Using newsletter content create posts for LinkedIn	Social Media	1. Creativity 2. Writing
Organise calls with potential clients and referrers	CRM	1. Coordination
Reach out to Level 2 LinkedIn Founders	CRM/Social Media	1. Writing 2. Creativity
Onboard new clients onto Xero	Coaching	1. Process

2. Write The Scorecard (i.e. the internal job description)

- Describes exactly what you want a person to accomplish in a role. What do you really want the person that you're hiring to accomplish, and why.
- This is going to be the basic tool which you will measure the candidate as they go through the selection process.

Job title

- Aim for traditional titles and avoid unnecessary title inflation

Purpose and Mission

- Summary of job's core purpose.
- Boils job done to its essence so everybody understands why you need to hire someone into the slot
- You will know you have set a good mission if people do not need clarification

Outcomes

- Transform list of tasks you have named in step one into list of outcomes/objectives (and key results) with a timeline
- Describes what must be accomplished.
- Three to eight outcomes ranked by order of importance.
- Typical job descriptions focus on activities or list of what people will be doing.
- Scorecards focus on what person might get done or outcomes.
- Not always obvious to quantify outcome but intention is to make outcomes objective and observable as possible.
- This gives candidates plan for what they need to do from the beginning.



Competencies - ensuring behavioural fit

- Define how you expect a new hire to operate in the fulfilment of the job and achievement of the outcomes.
- Create a list of most important competencies required to fulfil role
- They define skills and behaviours required for a job
- Competencies work at two levels - define skills and behaviours required for job and reflect broader demands of organisational culture
- NB more than one way to skin a cat – people can achieve same outcome using two different approaches

Values/Competencies – ensuring cultural fit

- Not evaluating cultural fit one of the biggest reasons for hiring mistakes.
- Create list of values/competencies that reflect broader demands of your culture.
- What adjectives would you use to describe your culture?
- Make sure the list captures what you value most for people reporting to you regardless of role

Known Challenges

- Outline known problems the recruit will inherit and what could make the job harder.

Key Stakeholders

- List all the people the recruit will frequently work with.

60 Day Goals

- Write out what they'll work on first.

Examples Of Competencies

- **Efficiency** – Able to produce significant output with minimal wasted effort.
- **Honesty / integrity** – Does not cut corners ethically. Earns trust and maintains confidences.
- **Organisation and planning** – Plans, organises, schedules, and budgets in an efficient, productive manner. Focuses on key priorities.
- **Aggressiveness** – Moves quickly and takes a forceful stand without being overly abrasive.
- **Follow-through on commitments** – Lives up to verbal and written agreements, regardless of personal cost.



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- **Intelligence** – Learns quickly. Demonstrates ability to quickly and proficiently understand and absorb new information.
- **Analytical skills** – Able to structure and process qualitative and quantitative data and draw insightful conclusions from it. Exhibits a probing mind and achieves penetrating insights.
- **Attention to detail** – Does not let important details slip through the cracks or derail a project.
- **Persistence** – Demonstrates tenacity and willingness to go the distance to get something done.
- **Proactivity** – Acts without being told what to do. Brings new ideas to the company
- **Flexibility / adaptability** – Adjusts quickly to changing priorities and conditions. Copes effectively with complexity and change.
- **Calm under pressure** – Maintains stable performance when under heavy pressure or stress.
- **Strategic thinking / visioning** – Able to see and communicate the big picture in an inspiring way. Determines opportunities and threats through comprehensive analysis of current and future trends.
- **Creativity / innovation** – Generates new and innovative approaches to problems.
- **Enthusiasm** – Exhibits passion and excitement over work. Has a can-do attitude.
- **Work ethic** – Possesses a strong willingness to work hard and sometimes long hours to get the job done. Has track record of working hard.
- **High standards** – Expects personal performance and team performance to be nothing short of the best.
- **Listening skills** – Lets others speak and seeks to understand their viewpoints.
- **Openness to criticism and ideas** – Often solicits feedback and reacts calmly to criticism or negative feedback.
- **Communication** – Speaks and writes clearly and articulately without being overly verbose or talkative.
- **Teamwork** – Reaches out to peers and cooperates with supervisors to establish and overall collaborative working relationship.
- **Persuasion** – Able to convince others to pursue a course of action
- **Ability to hire A Players** (for managers) – Sources, selects and sells A Players to join a company.
- **Ability to develop people** (for managers) – Coaches people in their current roles to improve performance, and prepares them for future roles.

Create Rating Scale

- You want to create data and scores when you are assessing and interviewing a candidate rather than rely on feelings due to our many unconscious biases.
- When you have selected the competencies required for to achieve the outcomes and get cultural fit you want create concrete examples of good and bad performance, rather than vague intuition.



Here is an example for listening skills:

- A score of 1: listening to respond, interrupting, look distracted, little eye contact
- A score of 5: focus on what is being said, give full attention, seek to understand, good eye contact

Here is an example for open communication and critical thinking:

- Interview question: What should we do to improve our product/business?
- A score of 1: a weak candidate either offers up no ideas or has many ideas not thought through and the delivery and style of the message is overly cautious or harsh
- A score of 5: a strong candidate should be able to offer up a critique and ideas for improvement without sounding overly cautious or harsh

Here is an example for empathy and emotional intelligence:

- Interview question: Tell me about a professional conflict you had at your previous job. How was it resolved?
 - A score of 1: candidates with low EQ may blame the other party, show a bias towards a win-lose solution, and be referring to “I” and “me” a lot.
 - A score of 5: candidates with strong EQ can explain the conflict from the perspective of the other person, not just their own and demonstrates they were looking for a win-win solution for both parties.
- If you don't want to create the rating scale ask yourself: What specific reasons would make me give a candidate a low or high score in an annual performance review?

Benefits Of Scorecards

- Set expectations for new hires
- Reinforces corporate strategy and culture
- Monitor employee progress over time
- Objectify your annual review system
- Allow you to rate your team annually as part of a talent review process



How To Create A Scorecard (in short)?

1. Mission – develop short statement of one to five sentences that describe why role exists
2. Outcomes – develop 3-8 specific, objective outcomes that a person must accomplish to achieve A performance
3. Behavioural Competencies – identify as many role-based competencies as you think appropriate to describe behaviours someone must demonstrate to achieve outcomes.
4. Values/Cultural Competencies. Identify 5 to 8 competencies that describe your culture and place e.g. competencies include efficiency, honesty, high standards and a customer service mentality
5. Ensure alignment and communicate. Pressure-test your scorecard by comparing it with business plan and scorecards of people who will interface with the role. Share scorecard with relevant parties

Example Of Internal Scorecard

Role: The Chief Revenue Officer

Candidate: Julie White

Interviewee: Mark Bronson

Source: Referral

Date: 21st October 2021

Overall Rating: Scale 1-5 (1 = Poor, 5 = Very Good) 4

Mission: The mission for this role is to increase sales of £1m achieved in 2020 to achieve £2m in sales in 2021

Outcomes:

	Outcomes	Ratings and Comments
1.	MARKETING: Increase number of followers on LinkedIn to 10,000 by end of 2021	Score: 5 Julie started her career in the marketing department of Mars and became a marketing manager within 4 years. More recently she has headed up marketing and sales for a fast-growing digital retailer. She was runner-up in the Retail Magazine's awards for marketing newcomer
2.	SALES: Increase revenues from £1m to £2m by end of 2021	Score: 5 In her most recent position she was responsible for taking sales from £5m to £10m in 2 years
3.	HIRING: Build a team of 3 account managers with 90% A players in six months	Score: 4 She built up a team of 4 in her most recent role. One left within 3 months of being hired and according to Julie only two out of 4 of the team were 'A' players



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Competencies:

	Competencies	Ratings and Comments
1.	Listening skills – Lets others speak and seeks to understand their viewpoints	Score: 5 Excellent listening skills. She calmly listened to everything I said and asked question to clarify her understanding before answering the questions
2.	Creativity / innovation – Generates new and innovative approaches to problems.	Score: 4 She says that her creative skills did not come alive until her most recent role where she had much more autonomy and freedom to try things out. Her most recent marketing campaign resulted in 500 new clients
3.	Ability to hire A Players (for managers) – Sources, selects and sells A Players to join a company.	Score: 4 She admitted that she is still relatively inexperienced at running teams but the team she created in the last few years achieved some impressive results

Known Challenges:

- Unlikely to be able to meet up with colleagues face-to-face before start job
- Some of the key stakeholders are on different time zones
- Reliant on others to create content

Key Stakeholders:

- Mark Bronson – the Founder
- Gina Mills – the Marketing Director
- Giles Hiller – the Finance Director

60 Day Goals:

- Recruit one account manager
- Increase LinkedIn followers to 5,000
- Record podcast downloads of 50,000



3. Write The External Job Description

The job description is often the first thing a potential hire will see from a company. The stakes are high. How do you leave the candidate wanting more, but feeling like they are well informed? How do you sell the company without seeming like you are trying too hard?

Each word or phrase is important. It sends a signal about what your culture is like, what your goals are and why your company is a great place to work.

- **Job title:** As above.
- **About the company:** Highlight mission and purpose of the organisation. This is a chance to sell the vision of the company and explain why this role is an important one. Spell out the opportunity for the candidate. Infuse some personality into this
- **Benefits:** Sell the benefits of the job, not the features — who they work with, what they work on, and what they'll master
- **Key responsibilities:** Remove anything sensitive that appears in the internal version
- **Qualities required:** Create a simplified version of the competencies here.
- **Experience required:** Detail any experience requirements in five or six bullet points.

Tips:

- Emphasise behaviours not traits. Behaviours can be developed and demonstrated
- State deliverables expected of them
- Infuse personality into job description – give candidate clear impression of what's it's like to work at the company
- Use second person (i.e. use 'You', 'You'll' etc)
- Use action verbs
- Use objective descriptors (e.g. 'experience in managing team of account managers') that are concrete. Phrase like 'expert in managing teams' is not objective since 'expert' is not defined

4. Sourcing

- a. Search all the time for talented people not only when need someone
- b. Ads are a good way to generate wave of CVs not a good way to generate right flow of candidates
- c. No 1 way is **referrals from professional and personal networks**



- d. Create list of ten most talented people you know and commit to speaking to one of them over 10-week period and at end of conversation: Who are the most talented people you know that I should hire?
- e. **Incentivise employees to find talent** – keep diversity in mind though
- f. **Incentivise friends of the firm** to introduce talent
- g. **Hiring external recruiters.** Remain a key source but need to expose them to inner culture and workings of the business. Build scorecard for them.
- h. **Hiring recruiting researchers.** Explore market, identify sources of talent and feed back names but don't conduct interviews. Orient them to your culture, business needs etc – the more you share the more you will get at the end
- i. **Sourcing Systems** - how to manage the whole process. Index cards with notes to spreadsheet allowing employees to add names and useful information. Make calls each week – one live conversation each week. “You have been recommended. I am always on lookout for talented people. Even if happy where you are, would love to introduce myself and hear about your career interests.” And remember to ask “Now you know a little bit about me, who are the most talented people you know might be a good fit for my company?”

5. Select

Summary of how to select an A Player

Screening Interview

- Start like this: “I am really looking forward to our time together. Here's what I'd like to do. I'd like to spend the first 20 minutes of our call getting to know you. After that I am happy to answer any questions you have so you can get to know us. Sound good?”
- Conduct 30 minute screening interview, using 4 key questions:
 - *What are your career goals?* Get them to talk first. Talented people know what they want to do and not afraid to tell you. Also want them to talk with passion and energy
 - *What are you really good at professionally?* Ask them to put strengths into context
 - *What are you not good at or not interested in doing professionally?* If don't get anywhere ask them what references will say they are not good at or not interested in
 - *Who were your last 5 bosses and how will they each rate your performance on a 1-10 scale when we talk to them?* Not if but when talk to them. What makes you think they would rate you as a 7?
- Questions to ask yourself after interview:
 - Does this person's strength match my scorecard?



- Are the weaknesses manageable?
- Am I thrilled about bringing this person in for series of interviews based on data I have?
- Only bring in ones excited about and appear to be strong match for scorecard

Who Interview

- Frame it – going to be a bit different from what done in the past. Talk about 5 questions for each job. At end will discuss career goals and aspirations and then you have chance to ask questions. If we mutually decide to take it forward we will conduct reference calls. I want you share your full story. I will go deep in some areas and not others and try to make sure leave enough time to cover most recent and relevant jobs. Do you have any questions about the process?
- Conduct a Who Interview of one and a half to three hours by walking chronologically through a candidate's career, using the same 5 questions for each job or chapter in the person's work. Firstly, go through highs and lows of educational experience and then ask career questions:
 1. *What were you hired to do?*
 2. *What accomplishments are you most proud of?*
 3. *What were some low points during that job?*
 4. *Who were the people you worked with?*
 - a. *What was your bosses name, and how do you spell that? What was it like working with him? What will she tell me were your biggest strengths and areas of improvement?*
 - b. *How rate team inherited? What changes make? Did you hire anybody? How rate team when left?*
 5. *Why did you leave that job?*
- Ideally hiring manager and one other colleague in the room



Top Tips when doing Who interview:

- Interrupt but maybe warn them at beginning may do that but do whilst trying to build rapport. Use reflective listening and match their enthusiasm levels.
- The Three P's how do you know if accomplishments were great, okay or lousy?
 - How did your performance compare to previous year's performance?
 - How did your performance compare to the plan?
 - How did your performance compare to that of peers?
- Push vs Pull. Do not hire someone who has been pushed out of 20% or more of their jobs. Those people who have are 3 times more likely to be B or C Players
- Painting a Picture. Try to put yourself in their shoes and understand why they are making decisions and handling problems. Get curious to truly understand
- Stopping at the Stop Signs. Think of yourself as a biographer interviewing a subject not investigative reporter

Focused Interview

- The purpose of the interview is to talk about (fill in blank with specific outcome or competency, matching it to outcomes and competencies of scorecard)
 - What are your biggest accomplishments in this area during your career?
 - What are your insights into your biggest mistakes and lessons learned in this area?
- Involve others in the hiring process by assigning team members to conduct interviews that focus on outcomes and/or competencies on scorecard
- Warn team not meant to be another Who interview. Everyone must follow script.
- Get various people to do interviews covering one or more outcomes on the scorecard.
- 45 mins to an hour.
- Make sure double check cultural fit.

Candidate Discussion

- Grade the scorecard using skill-will framework.
- Advance those whose skill (what they are fundamentally good at doing) and will (what they want to do, and in what type of culture) match the mission, outcomes and competencies on your scorecard.
- Look for candidates who are strong in most important places of your scorecard.

Reference Interview

- Without doing reference calls you lose 25% of information you should know
- Subordinates are key to reference and from own network.
- If only give bland information not a good sign. If people think someone is good will say more.
- Read between the lines as people don't like to slag someone off. Don't want to hear carefully chosen words. Faint praise can be damning praise.



- A truly positive reference should brim with enthusiasm and admiration.
- 3 things you need to do with referencing:
 - *Don't just use references given to you – use bosses, peers and subordinates with whom you would like to speak to*
 - *Ask candidate to set up the call*
 - *Do right number. Do four and ask colleagues to do three others – total of seven. Three past bosses, two peers and two subordinates*

Ask these questions:

- *In what context did you work with the person?*
- *What was the person's biggest strength?*
- *What were the biggest areas of improvement back then?*
- *How would you rate his overall performance in that job on a scale of 1-10? What about his performance causes you to give that rating?*
- *The person mentioned that he struggled within that job. Can you tell me more about that?*

Other potential questions:

- *Is there anything else relevant or useful to know about?*
 - *Would you like to work with the candidate again?*
 - *We need someone to do to do Can you tell me a story when ... did something similar in your organisation?*
 - *What was her exact role and responsibilities*
 - *To be effective in this role the candidate will need to be able to do*
- “Back then” liberates freedom to talk about weaknesses in the past
 - Get curious with What, How and Tell me more framework.
 - Looking for someone rated 8,9 or 10

Decide Who To Hire

- Examine their skill. What they can do. Ability to achieve outcomes. A rating if believe 90% chance of achieving that outcome. If data not supporting that outcome use B or C. Repeat this for each outcome
- Evaluate will. What they want to do. Will has to do with motivations and competencies candidate brings to table. Does data suggest 90% chance candidate will display that competency? Repeat for each competency
- Same say you should hire for will, more than skill as can train up someone's skills

Only hire if:

- 90% or more confident candidate will get job done because skills match the outcome on the scorecard
- 90% or more confident that the candidate will be a good fit because her will matches the mission and competencies of the role



6. Seal The Deal

Top Five Ways to Seal the Deal – the five F's!:

- a. Fit – Vision + Needs + Culture = Goals + Strengths + Values. People want to make an impact, show candidate how needs will be met. Be part of something which feels right
 - b. Family – What can we do to make this change as easy as possible for your family? Family is key in the decision-making process. Need to be committed to success of people in all their domains
 - c. Freedom – I will give you autonomy and will not micromanage. A Players want autonomy.
 - d. Fortune – stability of the company and overall financial upside. Pay on performance basis – that gets you good people who believe in themselves. Link variable compensation to employee's performance against the scorecard
 - e. Fun – we like to have fun and think this is a culture you will really enjoy
- At sourcing stage will be able to gauge what matters to candidate, spot the hooks.
 - Keep the selling towards end of the interview when have clearer idea how to frame things.
 - Between offer and acceptance don't back off, stay in touch, don't let contract negotiations get in the way. Most people undersell.
 - If say yes send them something meaningful. Keep in touch.
 - Alarming failure rate among new hires in first 100 days. Need strong on-boarding
 - Persistence pays off.

7. Red Flags

- a. Not mention past failures
 - b. Exaggerates
 - c. Takes credit for work of others
 - d. Speaks poorly of past bosses
 - e. Cannot explain job moves
 - f. People most important to candidate are unsupportive of change
 - g. For managerial hires, candidate has never had to hire or fire anybody
 - h. Candidate seems more interested in compensation and benefits than in the job itself
 - i. Tries too hard to look like an expert
 - j. Self-absorbed
- Take hard look at data if too many red flags



Marshall Goldsmith's Red Flag

- a. Winning too much – over petty things
- b. Adding too much value – ego gone awry
- c. No, I agree with you but – not a good sign
- d. Telling the world how smart we are
- e. Making destructive comments about previous colleagues
- f. Passing the buck
- g. Not their fault
- h. Excessive need to be me

Source:

Who: The Method for Hiring – Geoff Smart and Randy Street