



Strategic Hiring Guide

This guide provides ideas for how to get better results from your hiring practices. It covers how to attract talented applicants, improve job postings, increase diversity through the hiring process, and interview for longevity.

Attract Applicants by Understanding What They Want

To appeal to applicants and keep them on after hire, employers need to offer the experiences, benefits, and company culture that future employees are looking for. So what *do* applicants and employees want? While individual desires vary, there are a few general themes: greater freedom and flexibility, a bigger say in the workplace, and better compensation and growth opportunities. Employers that can meet these demands have an advantage in the job market. Let's look at each in turn.

Greater Freedom and Flexibility

Most employees who have experienced the benefits of working from home want remote work as an option, at least part of the time. Some appreciate being able to pick up kids from school, take a midday exercise break, or use the bathroom without anyone tracking how long they're away from the computer. Most also enjoy getting their commute time back. All in all, they like the freedom and flexibility remote work provides.

But remote work isn't the only way to provide greater freedom and flexibility. Employees also value having a say in their work schedule, or at least receiving it in advance, and the option to take time off when they need it. Workers who feel constrained are less likely to stick around. And if they do, they may be frustrated, perhaps even resentful. Talk with your employees to see if there are ways you can make their schedule better work for them.

A Culture That Suits Them

Employees want their work and their workplace to align with their beliefs and values. Some are even willing to quit if the culture doesn't suit them. Consider whose beliefs and values take priority in your workplace. Does culture come from the top down or is it a collaborative effort? If employees don't feel comfortable expressing their opinions about what your culture should look like, think about how you can encourage open and productive discussions about it and how you can invite them to be part of culture creation.

Better Compensation and Growth Opportunities

The desire for higher pay, better benefits, and the ability to move up in an organization are obvious drivers for many applicants. Make sure you're paying what the market demands for your open roles, and if you can't, that you're offering other benefits that are attractive. What you can't offer in base compensation you might be able to offer in yearly performance bonuses, day-to-day schedule flexibility, or interesting perks like deep employee discounts or commuter benefits.

Applicants and employees want to know that they'll have the opportunity to grow within your organization. Establishing career ladders and succession plans and promoting from within can all help you deliver on this. If your organization doesn't have a lot of room for upward growth, consider whether you can offer lateral opportunities, training programs, or continued education.



Optimize Your Job Postings

A job posting is often the first impression a prospective job applicant has of your organization. It's important for that impression to be a good one. Job postings should convey not just what the job entails, but why someone would want to work for your company, what's exciting about your mission and vision, and the unique benefits you have to offer. Below are a few ways to get better results from your job postings.

List Minimum Requirements and Essential Functions

Be specific about what the job requires and what a "day in the life" of the position looks like. You can even include the full job description, if there's room for it. The requirements and functions you mention should be accurate and descriptive. You don't want to scare away great prospects by listing unnecessary requirements, but you also don't want unqualified people applying for the job.

Tout the Company's Strengths

Part of the purpose of a job posting is to sell your organization to prospective employees. It's a sales pitch that conveys your culture and brand. Be sure to include both traditional benefits (e.g., insurance offerings, retirement plan) as well as less common, more exciting perks (e.g., unlimited PTO, remote work options, product discounts). Be specific about the details of these perks wherever possible.

Highlight Growth Opportunities

Knowing that there's opportunity to move up in a company, or even to move laterally and try new things, is a key selling point for many applicants. If you have a system in place for helping employees move up the ranks, develop new skills, or try out new responsibilities or career paths within your organization, shout it from the rooftops! Or at least advertise it proudly in your job ads.

Include the Pay Range

Posting the pay range of the job can attract more applicants. It will also save you and potential applicants a significant amount of time by allowing them to opt out of applying if the range is too low for their needs or if it clearly indicates that you're looking for a more experienced employee. It will also promote transparency and help create a more equitable workplace.

Note that several large states now *require* that pay ranges, benefits, and other information be included in job postings. But employers that aren't operating in these states should be aware that pay ranges are becoming the norm rather than the exception. Applicants are now even more likely to bypass a job ad without pay information than they were before.

Analyze the Results of Previous Job Postings

Consider not only the upfront fee, but also whether you received a good number of applications from that source. Were the candidates qualified? Have you ever interviewed a candidate who found your ad on that website or publication? There's no sense paying to post job ads that aren't bringing in good candidates.



Consider Alternative Applicant Sources

Here are a few options:

- Overlooked talent pools (e.g., websites geared toward certain populations or groups)—these can be especially helpful for increasing diversity in your workplace.
- Community events and job fairs in your area—being able to answer questions about your company and open positions and meet potential applicants in person can help weed out those who may not be a good fit or might not be happy in the role.
- Local schools—many colleges have an entire department to help their students become employees and maintain internal communication systems that can get your job posting in front of a lot of students (or even alumni) in a hurry.
- Previous applicants—even those you interviewed who might have been a second or third choice. You already know they're interested in your company, and you may even have met them face to face.

Increase Diversity Through Recruiting and Hiring Processes

The recruiting and hiring process is supposed to select the best candidates while deterring unqualified job seekers from applying or advancing. But all too often the process creates obstacles or disadvantages for qualified candidates. Even a well-meaning process may be unintentionally limiting diversity by only reaching a narrow pool of applicants. Below are some actions you can take to increase diversity.

Reduce Barriers

Consider your company's recruiting and hiring process from a candidate's perspective. What obstacles might applicants face when applying and going through the resume review, interview, and job offer stages? For example, is your application unnecessarily long or complex? Do you require a college degree for positions where higher education isn't truly necessary? Do what you can to reduce or remove unnecessary barriers to entry.

Address Biases

Consider what biases your company may have when screening or interviewing candidates for employment. What unconscious biases might be affecting who gets interviewed or receives a job offer? Training hiring managers to be aware of unconscious bias, stripping resumes of information that can lead to bias (e.g., applicant names, addresses, and colleges) and maintaining a diverse hiring team can help reduce bias in the recruitment process.

Branch Out

We tend to network with people who are like us, so social networks and employee referral programs can easily become homogeneous and hamper diversity efforts. Although internal referrals are a favorite tool of hiring teams everywhere, they lead to a lack of diversity. Avoid giving too much weight to applicants who have been referred by current employees or your own network of friends.

Focus on Job-Related Criteria

Make sure managers can define what the "best" candidate might look like, both before and after the interview. Encourage and remind them to focus on capability—who is best qualified for the position. It's important that candidates meet expectations, but it's also important that those expectations are legitimately job-related. For example, strong verbal communications skills might be necessary for a customer-facing position, but aren't for a job where an employee works alone doing primarily manual labor.

Seek Culture Contributors

Look for candidates who can add or contribute to the company's culture, not just those that "fit" within it. Often, when employers and managers focus too intently on cultural fit, they end up hiring people with the same soft skills and experiences repeatedly. This doesn't mean you need to start hiring people who have wildly different values, but hiring managers should be encouraged to keep an open mind. For instance, while your organizational culture may value openness and transparency, an applicant or employee's tendency to keep their private life private doesn't mean they won't be a valuable team member.





Interview for Longevity

Ever hire that remarkably experienced, impressively skilled employee who just doesn't mesh well and leaves before they even know how to work the coffee machine? It happens. So how do you reduce the chances of a short-lived hire? Look for the candidates who want to put their knowledge and talents to work in service of the company's mission. Skills and experience matter only if the person who has them wants to contribute to the excellence of your organization.

Expand Your Panel of Interviewers

Your organization is comprised of people—people with various backgrounds, expertise, and perspectives. Take advantage of these differences by inviting employees from various departments or levels of the organization to participate in the interviews—the applicant's potential peers may be able to offer the best insight into whether they're likely to work well with the team. The more diverse your interviewers, the more likely you'll be to spot a red flag (or a diamond in the rough!) before extending a job offer.

Explain Your Company Values and Expectations

The interview process isn't just about the applicants—it's also about the organization. When discussing the requirements of the job, make sure to tell applicants about your organization, both where it has been and where it's going. Be clear about the company's values, how they're followed, and how every employee is expected to exemplify those values. Mention the behaviors and habits you want to see in an employee. Ask applicants why they'd want to work in a culture like yours and encourage them to be specific.

Ask About Specific Behaviors

When talking to candidates and their references, ask about their preferred way of doing things—not just what they do, but also how they do it. Have applicants name the values that matter most to them and what they did in their previous jobs to demonstrate those values. Ask about long-term projects and day-to-day operations. You can learn a lot about an applicant's work style and personality through real world examples of how they have behaved at work in the past.