Skills-Based
Sourcing & Hiring Playbook

Step-by-step guidance, case studies, tools & tips

September 2023

Sourcing & Hiring Playbook

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What is Included in the Playbook:

This playbook outlines key skills-based practices to help improve your sourcing and hiring process, increase diversity, and reduce bias. Each section is aligned to a step of the hiring process and includes step-by-step implementation guidance, case studies, tools, and tips from leading employers to help you get started.

01 — **Write inclusive, skills-based job postings**
Focusing on the skills needed for the role rather than bias-prone credentials enables a broader set of applicants to see themselves in the position, increasing your reach and diversifying your pool.

02 — **Source a talented and diverse applicant pool**
Targeted expansion beyond your traditional channels enables you to reach a more diverse set of qualified candidates.

03 — **Screen to identify most-qualified candidates effectively and inclusively**
Reduce bias from your screening process and ensure top candidates advance to interviews.

04 — **Inclusive, skills-based interviewing and selection**
Use consistent, skills-based interviews to better evaluate candidates' abilities, reduce bias, and enable more informed selection.

05 — **Skills-based onboarding**
Leverage insights gained from the hiring process to inform onboarding and ensure that new hires have the skills and support they need to succeed.
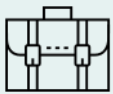
Ready to hire?

Check out the Rework America Alliance's Hiring Toolkits to access ready-to-use, customizable job postings, interview guides, onboarding plans, and other tools for select in-demand roles that typically don't require a degree.
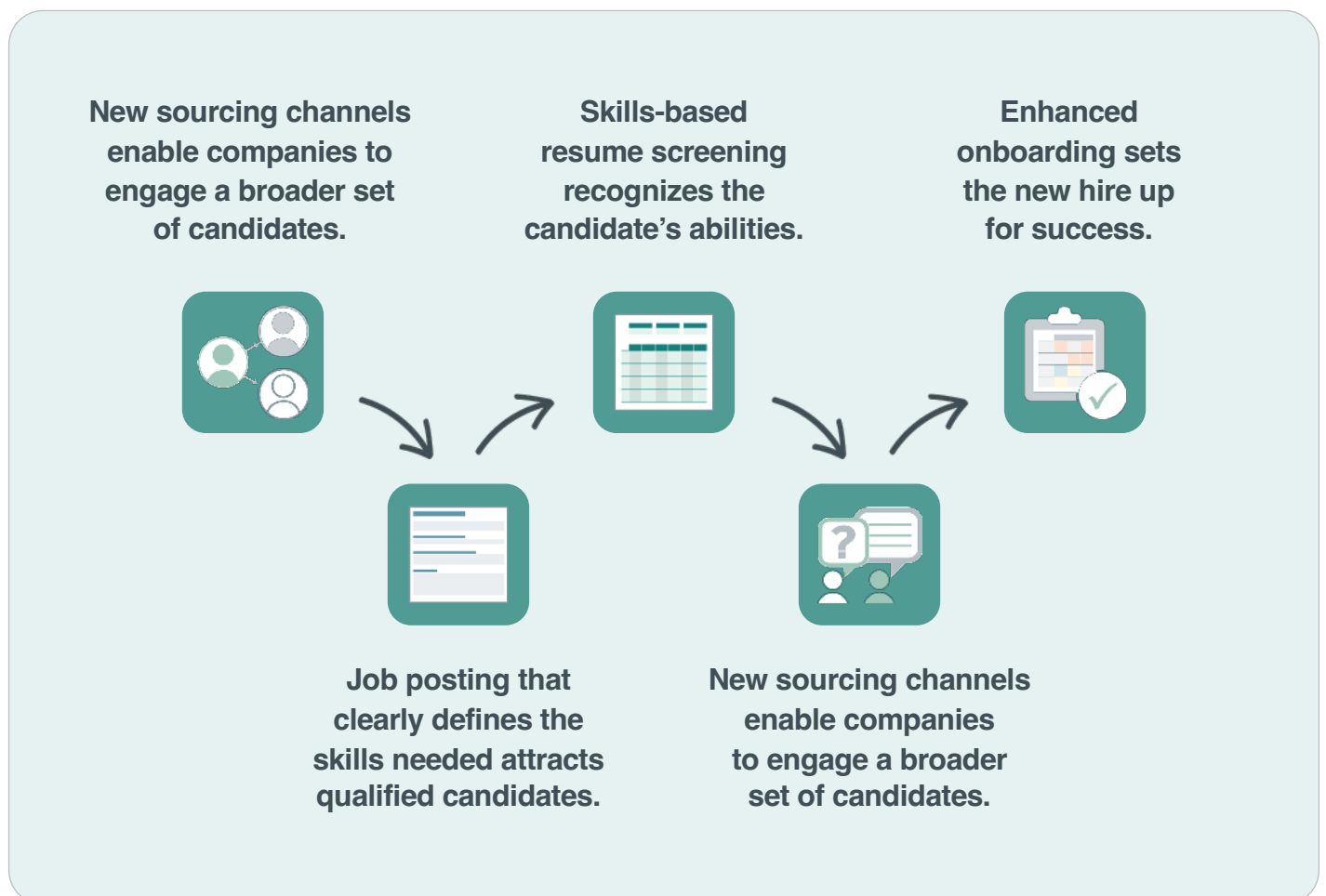
This playbook was produced by the Rework America Alliance.

The Rework America Alliance is a nationwide partnership of civil rights groups, nonprofits, private sector employers, labor unions, educators, and others. Alliance partners are working together to get people without a college degree into better-paying jobs that provide opportunities for career growth. In particular, the Alliance is working to support Black and Latino workers who face some of the most challenging barriers to economic mobility.

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What are inclusive, skills-based practices?

Rather than relying on education, credentials, past experience, and other proxies for ability, a skills-based strategy recognizes that knowledge and ability can be acquired in many ways. Skills-based practices help employers identify and articulate the skills needed in a role and build processes for assessing and validating those skills.

Implementing inclusive skills-based hiring practices can help employers reduce bias and increase diversity, identify and articulate the skills needed in a role, fill skill gaps, support career development, reduce turnover rates, and open the door to more skilled employees from various backgrounds and industries. Research has shown that hiring based on skills is 5x more predictive of future performance than hiring for education and 2.5x more predictive than hiring for work experience.

New sourcing channels enable companies to engage a broader set of candidates.

Skills-based resume screening recognizes the candidate's abilities.

Enhanced onboarding sets the new hire up for success.

Job posting that clearly defines the skills needed attracts qualified candidates.

New sourcing channels enable companies to engage a broader set of candidates.

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01 Write Inclusive, Skills-Based Job Postings

Prospects typically compare hundreds of roles in a single search, determining whether the position is a good fit in less than 90 seconds on average. If your job posting is turning off top candidates or dissuading them from applying, extra recruiting dollars and process improvements will do little to improve your hiring or increase diversity. This quick-start checklist builds on learning from leading employers and researchers to provide easy-to-follow guidance on how to write an inclusive job posting to engage prospects, reduce bias, and improve hiring.

What's Included:

Business case for taking action

Step-by-step guidance to get started

Helpful tips from leading employers

Case study

Tools and resources

Business Case

Inclusive job descriptions increase diversity and improve applicant quality.

- **5x better hiring:** Research shows that hiring for skills is 5x more predictive of job performance than hiring for education and 2.5x more predictive than hiring for work experience.

- **42% more responses:** Job descriptions that use gender-neutral language lead to 42% more responses and a two-week faster hiring time than those that use masculine-language (e.g., assertive, dominant, competitive).

- **Increased equity:** Women tend to apply to jobs only when they meet 100% of the job requirements, while men will apply if they meet 60%. Similar gaps exist for candidates of color.

- **2.5x more engagement:** Workers who strongly agree that the job description was a good reflection of their job are 2.5x more likely to be engaged as an employee.

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01 | Write Inclusive, Skills-Based Job Postings

Steps To Get Started

Step-by-step guidance and helpful tips from leading employers

1. **Identify a shortlist of priority jobs to focus on.**
   Start with up to three jobs that you need to fill and where you've had a difficult time recruiting a diverse applicant pool.

2. **Work with managers to identify skills required for the job.**
   What skills do new hires need to have in order to succeed in the role? Include both occupational skills and foundational skills like communication and teamwork.

   💡 **Tip:** Free tools like the Skillful Job Posting Generator, Skills Engine, and O*Net offer lists of skills mapped to job titles.

3. **Distinguish between required and preferred skills.**
   Which skills are most important to succeed in the job? Which skills does a new hire need to have on day one? Rank the skills in order of importance (low/medium/high). Then, divide them into skills that the candidate must have on day one and ones that can be taught on the job. Important skills that a candidate must have on day one are required skills. The rest are preferred. Embed descriptions of each competency in your job post. Use clear, plain language that avoids industry jargon.

   💡 **Tip:** Instead of specifying the exact software used at the company (e.g., Taleo), list the type of software (e.g., Applicant Tracking System). Also, each job description should have at most 10 skills. Too many skills can turn off applicants and de-emphasize the skills you need most.

4. **Remove credential requirements where possible.**
   Credentials and time-based experience requirements (e.g., 4 years sales experience) dissuade applicants, especially female candidates who are less likely to apply if they don't check all the boxes. Consider what skill(s) you are equating the credential to and ask if those can be acquired without earning a credential. If they can, work with managers to remove the credential and replace it with the specific skills needed for the position.

   💡 **Tip:** List credential requirements when necessary but allow applicants to highlight equivalent experience (e.g., "college degree OR equivalent experience").

5. **Check your job description for bias and clarity.**
   Copy your job description into the free gender decoder tool to identify gendered words and alternatives. Research shows that masculine words like "ninja", "rockstar", or 'decisive' act as a deterrent for female candidates. Also check for gendered pronouns (e.g., salesperson not salesman). You can also share your job description with a diverse set of employees or peers for feedback as a final check.

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01 Write Inclusive, Skills-Based Job Postings

Steps To Get Started (*continued*)

6. **Include an inclusivity statement.**
   Even a basic statement saying "We are an equal opportunity employer" can reassure candidates and signal a commitment to diversity. If your organization doesn't have an inclusivity statement, work with your DEI and/or communications teams to draft one. Here's an example from IBM: *"IBM is committed to creating a diverse environment and is proud to be an equal opportunity employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, national origin, genetics, disability, age, or veteran status."* You can find other examples [here](#). Ensure the statement complies with EEOC regulations.

7. **Collect feedback from candidates and new hires to inform further revision.**

8. **Make it easy for candidates to apply and keep them engaged through the process.**
   Keep applications simple and any pre-screen assessments brief (5-10 minutes). Give candidates the option to share their skills as part of the application. Where possible, leverage technology to make skill and job suggestions to help candidates highlight their skills and identify positions they may be qualified for. Keep candidates informed of their status via email or SMS.

9. **Consider adding an optional, anonymous demographic survey.**
   An optional survey can provide aggregated data to help track the effectiveness of your diversity initiatives, identify potential barriers in the process, and ensure you have sufficient diversity across key dimensions before moving to the next phase of the hiring process. You cannot ask for demographic information as part of the application and should never try to infer demographic information from resumes or other application material. Instead, consider sending an optional follow-up demographic survey to applicants. Clearly state that responses are anonymized and are only used in aggregate to help the organization improve its efforts to recruit a talented, diverse workforce. To further reassure applicants, consider sending the survey after hiring decisions have been made or using a third-party vendor.

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01 Write Inclusive, Skills-Based Job Postings

CASE STUDY:
JETBLUE

In 2013, JetBlue decided to implement a skills-based approach to hiring reservation agents.

The Problem: Reservation agents require extensive training before talking with customers, and many new hires were failing to make it through the training.

The Solution: Talent leaders conducted focus groups, interviews, and job shadowing to identify the skills most essential for success in training and on the job. They then redesigned their interview process to focus on a call simulation test that assesses those critical skills.

The Impact: 25% decrease in attrition during training. Scores on the assessment also became good predictors of performance. JetBlue is now working to extend a skills-based approach to all customer-facing roles. Learn more.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Create a customizable skills-based job posting:

- Skillful Job Posting Generator (Free)

Identify potential skills tied to your role

- SkillsEngine (Free); O*Net (Free)

Analyze job postings for bias:

- Gender Bias Decoder (free); Ongig; Textio; TapRecruit; Talvista

Compare a traditional vs. skills-based posting (Appendix figures 1 and 2)

Check out the Rework America Alliance's Hiring Toolkits

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02	Source a Talented and Diverse Applicant Pool

Traditional sourcing strategies focus on a narrow set of colleges, job boards, and peer companies. The result is a homogenous applicant pool mixed with inflated recruiting budgets and lower retention as companies compete over a small subset of the workforce. Expanding your sourcing channels enables you to reach untapped pools of talent, leading to faster, better, and more diverse hiring. And the best part: it doesn't have to take all of your time. This playbook builds on learning from leading employers and researchers to provide guidance on how to expand and diversify your sourcing strategy.

What's Included:

Business case for taking action

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Case study

Tools and resources

Business Case

Teams with diverse backgrounds and perspectives do better.

- Organizations with diverse leadership teams are "45% likelier to report that their firm's market share grew over the previous year and 70% likelier to report that the firm captured a new market."

- Diverse organizations are:

  - 3.8 times more likely to be able to coach people for improved performance,

  - 3.6 times more able to deal with personnel performance problems, and

  - 2.9 times more likely to identify and build leaders.

  - Diverse teams outperform their peers by 80%.

  - Did you know? The government provides funding to help support employers who hire from specific populations, including veterans, ex-felons, and people on federal assistance.

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02 Source a Talented and Diverse Applicant Pool

Steps To Get Started

Step-by-step guidance and helpful tips from leading employers

1. Review your hiring pipeline and set measurable goals.

Who is applying for your jobs? Who is making it to various stages of the funnel? Most organizations struggle to answer these questions. While there are tools to track pipeline diversity (see tools section), a low-cost way to start is to send an optional, anonymous demographic survey to applicants. Clearly state that responses are anonymized and only used in aggregate. Consider sending the survey after hiring decisions have been made or using a third-party vendor. You can also use anonymous surveys of existing staff to understand how they learned about the job and solicit ideas for reaching a broader set of applicants. Set specific goals around increasing representation of marginalized groups (e.g., 25% more female applicants for manager roles), and schedule regular reviews to track progress.

Tip: Make sure to set goals for increasing diversity in all levels of the organization--not just entry-level.

Tip: Many applicant tracking systems enable pipeline diversity tracking, giving you visibility into anonymized applicant gender, ethnicity, and age.

2. Embed diversity metrics into compensation plans and performance objectives.

Ensure that diversity objectives are included for all involved in the hiring process, including HR, objectives should include increasing diversity of applicants and new hires as well as pay gaps, promotions, and retention. Increasing diversity and removing bias requires a team effort. Where possible, consider hiring a chief diversity officer to help oversee this work, but be sure that diversity goals are collectively measured and not placed on one person or department.

3. Run targeted referral programs.

Referrals are widely used to build recruiting pipelines. However, people tend to have social groups similar to themselves, they run the risk of homogenizing rather than diversifying workplaces. Instead of generic referrals, consider a targeted program to share your diversity goals, progress toward meeting them, and importance you see in creating a more diverse workplace.

4. Leverage employee resource groups (ERGs).

ERGs can help spot potential bias in the recruitment process and identify new recruitment channels. Engaged individuals can also help attend recruitment events, blog about their experiences at the organization, or attend conferences. Offer additional compensation or budgets for ERGs to perform these extra duties.

Tip: Here are some tips to protect ERGs employees from feeling tokenized.

02 Source a Talented and Diverse Applicant Pool

Steps To Get Started (*continued*)

5. Expand your sourcing channels.

For campus recruiting, partner with a more diverse set of colleges, and, where possible, develop diversity-focused internships or co-ops.

Post your jobs on diversity-focused job boards (see tools section for a list to get you started). Foster relationships with community-based organizations, affinity groups, and networking groups.

6. Build your own local pipeline. There are many ways to get involved in training local talent:

- Partnering with local education providers to:

    1. Ensure the curriculum reflects your skill needs,

    2. Train educators on the latest technologies, or

    3. Help offset training costs

- Establishing paid pre-employment training programs, including apprenticeships, co-ops, and internships
- Developing and delivering role-specific training programs in the community and online
- Hosting information sessions to help students and other community members understand the jobs that exist at your organization

7. Recruit from roles outside your industry with highly transferable skills.

Expanding beyond the target role or industry opens up huge pools of talent exposing new ways of thinking and problem solving. Look for roles with related skills even in different industries. For example, a waiter or bartender likely has strong skills in customer management and organization that could translate into a role as a salesperson or executive assistant. descriptions and promotional materials.

8. Offer benefits that your target prospects value.

Offering fundamental benefits like a living wage, health insurance, and paid sick days and family leave ensures workers can take care of themselves while remaining productive at work. Use surveys and focus groups to understand how employees and applicants value different benefits. Consider expanding education, transportation, and family benefits. Highlight upward mobility opportunities and training programs (and tuition assistance) that are available to workers to help them advance. Explore offering flexible holidays to support workers of different faiths. Communicate the compensation, benefits, workplace culture, and broader social mission of your work in your job descriptions and promotional materials.

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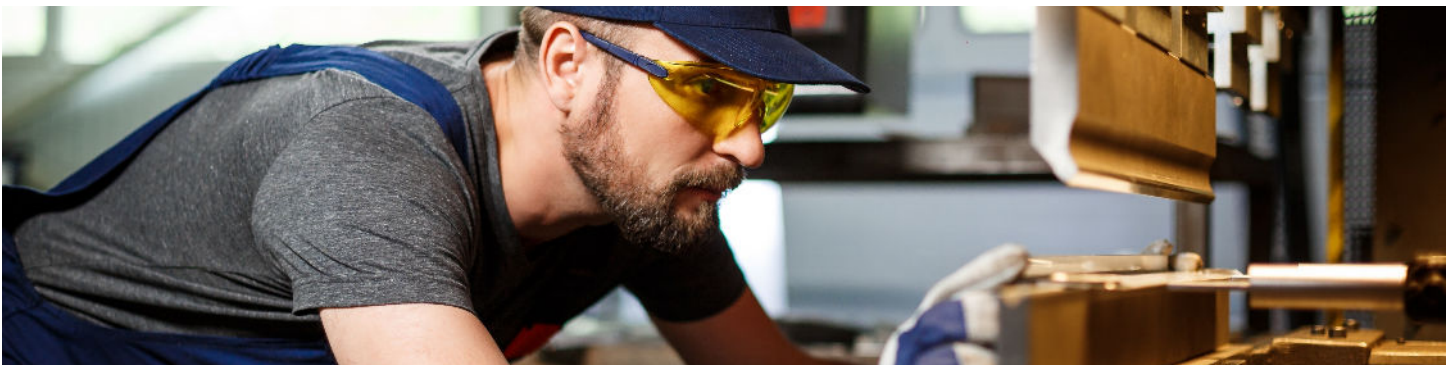
02 Source a Talented and Diverse Applicant Pool

CASE STUDY:
PINTEREST

In 2015, Pinterest tweaked its referral program by challenging members of the engineering team to refer "10x more candidates from underrepresented ethnic backgrounds and 2x more women over the next six weeks." This simple ask to be more aware of diversity "increased the percent of referrals from underrepresented talent by 55x, and referrals of women by 24% in just six weeks." Learn more.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES
Population-specific job boards for applicants:

Disabled: Recruit Disability, Hire Autism

Veterans: Veteran Recruiting

Criminal records: National Employment Law Project

LGBTQ: Out for Undergrad, Pink Jobs, Campus Pride, Out & Equal

Black and Hispanic: Jopwell, Diversity.com, PDN Recruits, iHispano, Black Career Network, Black Jobs, Hispanic/Latino Professionals Association (HLPA)

Female: Fairygodboss, PowerToFly, Career Contessa – focus on millennials, Female Executive Search – focus on C-level candidates, The Mom Project

Immigrant and refugee: Upwardly Global, Amplio Recruiting

Lists of top diverse institutions:

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), Women's colleges, Tribal colleges

Campus recruiting: Door of Clubs – platform to engage college clubs

Diversity hiring platforms: Seekout; Mathison; YUPRO; Turning Basin Labs

Check out the Rework America Alliance's Hiring Toolkits

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03 Screen to Identify Most-Qualified Candidates Effectively And Inclusively

You've done the work to recruit a diverse applicant pool. How do you ensure you select the best candidates? How do you prevent bias from screening out talented, diverse candidates and creating a homogenous interview slate? Research shows that screening -- whether via manual resume reviews or automated processes -- is prone to "like-me" or affinity bias.

This quick-start checklist builds on learning from leading employers and researchers to provide easy-to-follow guidance on how to reduce bias in the screening process to identify the best candidates for the job.

What's Included:

Business case for taking action

Step-by-step guidance to get started

Helpful tips from leading employers

Case study

Tools and resources

Business Case

Biased screening limits diversity and prevents top candidates from progressing.

Reduce bias: White-sounding names on resumes are 50% more likely to get an interview than those with black-sounding names. Resumes with male names are 40% more likely to get an interview than those with female names.

Improve retention: Employees who pass a pre-hire job test have higher retention. When employers override pre-hire test results, the new hires are much more likely to be fired or quit. (Pre-hire testing isn't the only approach to anti-biased screening, but it is a good example).

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03 | Screen to Identify Most-Qualified Candidates Effectively And Inclusively

Steps To Get Started

Step-by-step guidance and helpful tips from leading employers

1. **Focus screening processes on determining whether the candidate has demonstrated proficiency in required skills.**

   At this phase of the process, the only question you should focus on is: does the candidate have the specific skills needed for the job?

   > **Tip:** For manual reviews, use a screening guide that lists the required skills to help remind the reviewer of the skills they should focus on. Don't work just from memory, which can bias you simply to replicate folks who currently hold the job.

2. **Consider using anonymous resume and application reviews.**

   Many employers remove or hide bias-prone identifiers on resumes like name, address, and college. This further focuses reviews on skills and prevents "like-me" bias from creeping in. One study found that when orchestras switched to blind auditions in the 1970s, the odds of a female candidate getting selected increased by 30%.

   > **Tip:** One challenge with blind reviews is that they remove opportunity for cultural context and can end up reinforcing bias as a result (e.g., women are more likely to take time off from work when they have young children, leading to a gap in their work history).

   > **Tip:** Where possible, have two or more people with different backgrounds / roles in the organization review resumes.

3. **Utilize pre-screening assessments aligned with required skills.**

   It is difficult to evaluate proficiency from a resume. Pre-screen assessments enable you to quickly validate key skills and identify top candidates. They can also inform onboarding activities by providing greater insight on areas in need of further skill development. These assessments can include short answer questions, mini-tests, and work samples. Aim to keep assessments brief -- requiring no more than 5-10 minutes of time for the candidate. You can find a list of assessment providers in the tools section. To help ensure your assessments are EEOC compliant, refer to this SHRM guide and and procedures. Be sure to check for compliance with a lawyer when implementing an assessment.

   > **Tip:** To avoid turning off applicants, consider sending these assessments after candidates have applied either to help inform your resume review or provide greater insight for interviews.

4. **Reduce reliance on automatic screening capabilities within Applicant Tracking Systems.**

   Keyword searches or screeners like 4-year degrees remove top candidates before you get the chance to evaluate them. Reliance on automated screeners tends to encourage homogenization by rewarding applicants who have similar experiences as current employees.

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03 Screen to Identify Most-Qualified Candidates Effectively And Inclusively

CASE STUDY:
CLIFFORD CHANCE

In 2013, Clifford Chance, a major UK law firm, implemented college-blind hiring to increase representation beyond the most elite universities.

The Problem: After reviewing a study that revealed that attending one of the UK's elite universities was a de facto requirement for working at the firm, leaders at Clifford Chance decided to make a change. They knew that limiting hiring to a narrow set of universities was homogenizing their workforce and preventing them from reaching top talent. As one senior employee put it: "We're looking for the gems and they're not all in the jeweler's shop."

The Solution: The firm adopted a college-blind hiring process. Interviewers were prevented from seeing information on where a candidate went to university during the interview process.

The Impact: In the first year alone, the firm experienced a 30% increase in the number of schools represented in its entry-level hiring program, accepting candidates from 41 institutions. Learn more.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Add pre-hire skill assessments to your process:

GapJumpers -- custom skills-based assessments and blinds application materials

Pymetrics -- pre-set behavioral pre-hire assessments

ToggIhire

Evaluate EEOC compliance of assessments:

SHRM
EEOC

Blind application materials to reduce bias:

Entelo Diversity
TalVista
Pinpoint

Check out the Rework America Alliance's Hiring Toolkits

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| 04 | Inclusive, Skills-Based Interviewing and Selection |

The interview process is one of the points in the recruiting process in which the greatest number of qualified, diverse candidates are unintentionally screened out as interviewees select candidates most like themselves. This process inhibits diversity efforts and prevents employers from hiring the best talent for the role.

This quick-start checklist builds on learning from leading employers and researchers to provide easy-to-follow guidance on how to reduce bias in the interviewing process in order to identify the best candidates for the job

What's Included:

Business case for taking action

Step-by-step guidance to get started

Helpful tips from leading employers

Case study

Tools and resources

Business Case

Interviews that focus on skills lead to better, more diverse hiring.

Better understand the candidate's skill set and areas for growth, enabling informed hiring decisions and customized onboarding.

Make it easier to compare candidates' abilities.

Minimize like-me or affinity bias that encourages interviewers to prefer candidates like themselves. Even when hiring managers are trained to be objective, they are more likely to view male candidates favorably and offer them higher salaries.

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| **04** | # Inclusive, Skills-Based Interviewing and Selection |

Steps To Get Started
Step-by-step guidance and helpful tips from leading employers

1. **Create a skills-based interview guide aligned to required skills. Ask all candidates the same questions.**
   A structured, consistent interview guide enables interviewers to better compare responses. Questions should focus on a candidate's mastery of each required skill.

   Tip: Each question should be designed to evaluate one specific skill.

   Tip: Each required skill from the job description should be evaluated either via a question or assessment.

   Tip: Use behavioral questions that ask how a candidate has acted in the past (e.g., tell me about a time when…) and situational questions that ask how a candidate would respond to a hypothetical situation (e.g., What would you do…).

   Tip: Test questions with a diverse set of stakeholders to identify potential sources of bias or confusion. Avoid culturally specific terms and trivia.

2. **Focus on "cultural add" not "cultural fit".**
   Cultural fit evaluations tend to reward like-me biases. Instead, ask interviewers to consider how a candidate's background might bring something new to the organization.

   Tip: To combat the like-me bias, some companies tell interviewers to avoid asking about interests and background. Others ask interviewers to begin each interview by affirmatively highlighting something on the candidate's resume that they have in common, which can make the candidate more comfortable.

3. **Use diverse interview panels.**
   Panels that include racial and gender diversity help 1) communicate that you're serious about diversity, 2) show candidates that there are leaders like them at the organization, and 3) check unconscious bias of interviewers.

4. **Ensure there is diversity in your interview pool before starting interviews.**
   Research shows that the racial and gender composition of your interview pool has a big impact on selection. If there is only one woman or person of color in a pool, they have virtually no chance of being hired. Before make a final decision, make sure you interview at least two candidates for each group of focus (e.g., people of color, non-degree holders).

5. **Create inclusive and accessible interview environments.**
   Be mindful of how interview environments might impact people with different backgrounds and abilities. For example, as part of its Autism Hiring Program, Microsoft provides breaks after interviews. With many companies shifting to remote interviews during the COVID-19

04 Inclusive, Skills-Based Interviewing and Selection

Steps To Get Started *(continued)*

pandemic, be sure to offer phone interviews for people who may not have access to broadband or connected devices.

6. Utilize skill assessments to demonstrate ability.

Work assignments force candidates to go beyond talking about their skills to demonstrating them. Consider adding some sort of simulation / work assignment as a step to distinguish between top candidates. Assessments during the interview process or at later stages of the funnel can be more involved than pre-screen assessments.

7. Use rubrics to evaluate candidates on interviews and assessments.

The rubric should outline the skills interviewers should evaluate candidates on and provide benchmarks to help compare responses. Rubrics help keep interviews focused and forces reflection on how the candidate's skills align to the role. Forcing an interviewer to write out their rationale for why they support or do not support a candidate can help combat implicit bias.

💡 **Tip:** Define a minimum proficiency level required for each skill. The minimum level should factor in the team's capacity to train a new hire with a low level of proficiency in a specific area. Set this standard prior to interviewing candidates.

💡 **Tip:** Work with interviewers to shift their mentality from "is this how I would do it" to "does this achieve the desired result" to make them more open to new ways of thinking and problem solving.

💡 **Tip:** Prevent interviewers from comparing notes, especially before an interview, because this can frame the interviewer's perception and increase bias.

8. Provide unconscious bias training for recruiters and hiring managers.

Research shows when people are made aware of how bias works and how it can impact hiring decisions, they are better able to check their biases. As a first step, consider asking those involved in the hiring process to take an Implicit Association Test, a powerful tool for revealing implicit bias. You can also encourage members of the hiring team to learn about underrepresented groups you are trying to attract. Here's a list of some relevant books for those involved in hiring to increase their cultural competence.

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04 Inclusive, Skills-Based Interviewing and Selection

CASE STUDY:
INTEL

In 2014, Intel began using diverse interview panels for all interviews. The panels include at least two women and / or people of color. In the two years following the change, the share of women or people of color at the company increased by 32%.

Other companies like Accenture, Verizon, Cisco, and Proctor & Gamble also use diverse interview panels. At Cisco, the odds of making it through an interview increased by 50% for Hispanic women and 70% for Black women upon moving to diverse panels. Learn more.

CASE STUDY:
AIRBNB

The Problem: Despite representing 30% of applicants, in 2016, women made up only 10% of new data scientists.

The Solution: Airbnb worked to increase the profile of women in data science, which is a male-dominated field, hosting panels highlighting women and publishing articles describing experiences of women in the field. It also moved to a binary scoring system for take-home assessments and required women to make up half of the interview panel for female candidates.

The Impact: The share of new hires for data science increased from 10% to 47%, and overall representation of female data scientists at the company rose from 15% to 30%. Learn more.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Guide to writing skills-based interview questions:
Indeed   SkillsEngine Interview Question Tool

Bias-training providers:
Paradigm Facebook training series

Pre-hire assessment providers:
GapJumpers -- custom skills-based assessments and blinds application materials
Pymetrics -- pre-set behavioral pre-hire assessments
Togglhire

Check out the Rework America Alliance's
Hiring Toolkits

05 Skills-Based Onboarding to Get New Hires Up to Speed

While traditional onboarding plans are often one-size-fits-all initiatives that focus on compliance and HR, a skills-based strategy enables much more customization and training. An effective skills-based hiring strategy provides you with a lot of information on the abilities a new hire currently possesses and needs to learn to perform in their new role. This information enables you to tailor their onboarding plan to get them up to speed in areas identified as potential gaps or areas for growth.

What's Included:

Business case for taking action

Step-by-step guidance to get started

Helpful tips from leading employers

Case study

Business Case

Getting employees up to speed quickly boosts performance and retention

- Effective onboarding programs increase productivity by over 70% and retention by up to 82%.

- Only 12% of workers feel that their company does onboarding well.

- 58% of organizations say onboarding is focused on paperwork and processes, wasting opportunities to get new hires up to speed and engaged.

- Negative onboarding experiences make new hires 2x more likely to look for new opportunities.

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05   Skills-Based Onboarding to Get New Hires Up to Speed

Steps To Get Started

Step-by-step guidance and helpful tips from leading employers

1. **Use reference checks to better understand the candidate's learning style, management style, and other needs or accommodations that the new hire might need.**

   In addition to evaluating the candidate's skills and experiences, late-stage reference checks conducted before extending offers can provide insights on the candidate to set the stage for effective onboarding.

2. **Leverage evaluation materials to identify areas of focus for onboarding.**

   Interview and assessment evaluation rubrics should highlight skills where the new hire is relatively weaker. Make sure to address those areas first during onboarding.

3. **Write out an impact plan for what the new hire will accomplish at 1, 3, 6, and 12 months.**

   Even within the same role there can be variation on expectations depending on the team and events occurring at the business. Work with the manager to develop a refined set of tasks that the new hire will be expected to execute as they get on board.

4. **Stage onboarding activities over the first several months to avoid overwhelming new hires.**

   Where possible, integrate formal training with on-the-job learning to boost retention. Research shows that learning improves significantly if it is used in practice.

5. **Consider both external training (e.g., LinkedIn Learning, community college courses, etc.)** **and internal training (coaching & mentoring, internal trainers, cross-training, stretch assignments).**

   Structure your plan around specific skills. Leverage a variety of resources to ensure every required skill is addressed. For internal training, work to expose the new hire to different teams, mentors, and peers.

6. **Create transparency on the skills required for different roles within the organization.**

   Help new hires understand the skills they'll need to acquire and demonstrate mastery of in order to move into different roles within the organization. Show options for how they might acquire those skills, including any education benefits, internal training programs, or opportunities for stretch assignments. Creating this transparency early in a candidate's tenure helps motivate them and makes them more likely to take advantage of those resources.

7. **Create individual development plans for each new hire.**

   Work with managers to establish plans for each employee that enable them to set longer-term goals for growth at the organization. Include opportunities for skill-building -- whether through formal training or on-the-job mentorship -- and identify stretch projects or rotational assignments that enable employees to apply those skills to their work. This type of longer-term planning helps employees feel supported and bought in, leading to increased retention and improved performance.

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05 Skills-Based Onboarding to Get New Hires Up to Speed

CASE STUDY:
MICROSOFT

Autism Hiring Program

The Problem: Despite possessing a number of traits well suited for complex work, 90% of adults and 85% of college graduates with autism in the US are unemployed.

The Solution: In 2015, Microsoft launched the Autism Hiring Program, an initiative to proactively remove barriers candidates with autism faced in the recruitment process.

The program includes explicit outreach to autism communities, awareness training for interviewers, interview accommodations, and a multi-day event to bring candidates to the company's headquarters. It also works to create a smooth onboarding experience and transition to the company.

New hires made through the program are provided with a support system that includes a peer mentor, a mentor from the autism community, and a job coach. HR works to provide accommodations like noise-cancelling headphones, and managers and team members receive disability awareness training.

The Impact: Since 2015, over 100 individuals have been hired through the program. Learning from the program is driving changes in the general hiring process, especially around the idea of "screening in" talent from different backgrounds.

Check out the Autism @ Work Playbook, which codifies the learnings of Microsoft, SAP, JP Morgan Chase, and EY that have implemented similar autism hiring programs.

Note: The Markle Foundation is a grantee of Microsoft Philanthropies.

Appendix

Figure 1: Traditional, Pedigree-Based Job Posting

Figure 2: Skills-Based Job Posting

Figure 3: Skill Comparison Guide

01 TRADITIONAL PEDIGREE-BASED JOB POSTING

TITLE: Recruiter

JOB SUMMARY:

The recruiter role provides support in all processes and efforts to find and maintain relationships with all candidates. They draft hiring materials, source candidates for open positions, conduct screening, and interview candidates. They track information on applicants, arrange interviews, and build working relationships with hiring managers, HR staff, and community partners.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACTIVITIES:

- This role will be responsible for recruiting functions including:
- Processing, verifying, and maintaining candidate documentation in our Applicant Tracking System.
- Sourcing qualified candidates from various channels (e.g., online, job fairs, community partners).
- Drafting and refining hiring documents including job postings, screening guides, and interview guides.
- Preparing, coordinating, and conducting reference checks and screening, and phone and in-person interviews.
- Evaluating applicant eligibility and qualifications for employment.
- Engaging and collaborating with HR manager and hiring manager to understand open positions and long-term talent needs.
- Evaluating and using new sourcing techniques to identify, cultivate, and attract qualified candidates.
- Answering questions regarding the interview process, assessments, eligibility, salaries, benefits, etc.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- Requires a BA/BS in related field
- Minimum of 1 year of experience working in a recruiting environment
- Exceptional interpersonal and communication skills; friendly, tactful, good negotiator, ability to influence others
- Analytical skills
- Proficient using the Internet as a recruitment source
- Ability to manage the entire hiring process (from sourcing to offer stage) in an efficient and effective manner
- Experience with Workday ATS (Applicant Tracking System) application
- Ability to build dynamic relationships with hiring managers
- Sense of urgency is helpful
- Financially driven, energetic, confident go-getter who can maintain integrity
- General knowledge of various employment laws and practices

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02 SKILLS-BASED JOB POSTING

TITLE: Recruiter

JOB SUMMARY:

The recruiter role provides support in all processes and efforts to find and maintain relationships with all candidates. They draft hiring materials, source candidates for open positions, conduct screening, and interview candidates. They track information on applicants, arrange interviews, and build working relationships with hiring managers, HR staff, and community partners.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACTIVITIES:

- This role will be responsible for recruiting functions including:
- Processing, verifying, and maintaining candidate documentation in our Applicant Tracking System.
- Sourcing qualified candidates from various channels (e.g., online, job fairs, community partners).
- Drafting and refining hiring documents including job postings, screening guides, and interview guides.
- Preparing, coordinating, and conducting reference checks and screening, and phone and in-person interviews.
- Evaluating applicant eligibility and qualifications for employment.
- Engaging and collaborating with HR manager and hiring manager to understand open positions and long-term talent needs.
- Evaluating and using new sourcing techniques to identify, cultivate, and attract qualified candidates.
- Answering questions regarding the interview process, assessments, eligibility, salaries, benefits, etc.

REQUIRED COMPETENCIES/SKILLS:

- Interview and Assessment Techniques – Develop structured interview guides and use assessments to evaluate skill sets of applicants.
- Process Improvement – Monitor and evaluate recruiting processes and update recruiting and sourcing methods to improve the quality of candidates and reduce time to hire.
- Interpersonal Skills – Guide conversations to assess applicants' eligibility and qualifications in person and over the phone; build relationships with community partners to hire their clients/students.
- Judgment and Decision Making – Assess eligibility and qualifications of applicants during recruitment, screening, and interviewing; partner with HR and hiring managers to decide on new hires.
- Writing – Communicate clearly in writing as appropriate in email, digital platforms, and hiring documents (e.g., job postings).

PREFERRED COMPETENCIES/SKILLS:

- Employment Law – Have knowledge on legality for acceptable conduct and questions during interview and hiring process; understand employment eligibility.
- Recruitment Software – Ability to use Application Tracking Systems to track applicants for multiple open positions.
- Persuasion – Persuade top candidates online and at job fairs to apply to our positions.

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03 | SKILL COMPARISON GUIDE

OCCUPATIONAL VS. FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

Occupational Skills

These skills are specific to an industry or job. These skills are the technical skills a person needs to perform narrowly defined tasks and duties.

Foundational Skills

These skills are professional knowledge and skills that are transferable from one job to another and across industries.

Required vs. Preferred

Limiting your requirements to what is truly required increases your chances of finding a candidate with the skills needed to get the job done.

Required Skills

These skills are necessary to perform essential job duties at the specified level and there is no capacity to train; therefore, a candidate must have them on day one to complete job responsibilities.

Preferred Skills

These skills can be trained during onboarding and/or are used to perform non-essential job duties.