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Practical Guide to Executive Hiring: Proven Frameworks for Business Leaders

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Foreword

Welcome to the eBook **Hiring for Executives,** your go-to guide for mastering one of the most critical responsibilities of a business leader: selecting the right people to drive your organisation forward. Hiring isn't just about filling seats; it's about building the foundation for long-term success. Yet, many leaders enter this vital process ill-equipped, relying on outdated methods, gut feelings, or rushed decisions that can have far-reaching consequences.

This book offers a fresh perspective. Unlike traditional hiring resources that focus on theory or are geared toward HR professionals, this guide is built specifically for business leaders like you. Whether you're a seasoned executive or stepping into a hiring role for the first time, you'll find practical, actionable insights to help you make smarter decisions at every step of the process.

This eBook is based on a video course created in collaboration with Wisnio and with the Estonian Business School (EBS). The content is enriched with mini-lectures and example videos that illustrate real-world situations, providing a comprehensive and practical learning experience. Additionally, after each section, you will find a self-check quiz to reinforce your understanding. You can find the answers at the end of the book.

What You'll Gain

Through this guide, you'll acquire the skills and tools to transform your hiring practices and build a team that drives results. Specifically, you'll learn:

- **A proven, step-by-step hiring process tailored for executives**
  Avoid guesswork with a structured framework designed to reduce errors and maximise outcomes.
- **Tools to analyse roles, write compelling job descriptions, and identify the right candidates**
  Learn to articulate your needs clearly and find individuals who align with your organisation's goals.
- **Techniques to conduct meaningful interviews and reference checks**
  Go beyond surface-level questions to truly assess a candidate's potential and fit.
- **Insights into making data-driven hiring decisions free from bias**
  Replace intuition with evidence-based strategies to make fair, objective choices.
- **Strategies for onboarding executives to ensure a successful start**
  Set up your new hires for long-term success with a clear and supportive integration plan.

The course is built on the expertise of Tõnis Arro, co-founder of Wisnio and a seasoned executive search consultant with over 30 years of experience. His career has been dedicated to helping organisations make better leadership decisions, and his insights form the foundation of this guide.

Developed in partnership with the Estonian Business School, the guide combines Tõnis's practical experience with academic rigour to present a proven, evidence-based process for executive hiring.

Introduction: Why Hiring Matters More Than You Think

Hiring is one of the most critical decisions a manager can make. The quality of your team directly influences the success of your strategies and, ultimately, your business outcomes. Yet, many leaders rush through the hiring process or treat it as a secondary task, leading to costly mistakes.

When done well, hiring isn't just a task—it's a strategic advantage. The leaders you choose today will shape the future of your organisation. By investing the time and effort to hire the right people, you're not just filling roles; you're building a team capable of driving innovation, achieving ambitious goals, and fostering a thriving company culture.

Effective hiring is not just an HR function—it's a pivotal management responsibility. Managers must focus on selecting and supporting the right people to achieve great results. When the wrong hire is made, it leads to wasted time, disrupted teams, and expensive replacements.

Introduction to Hiring for Executives

Watch the video, which presents a typical hiring scenario. As you watch, consider the mistakes the manager makes during the process.

The Hidden Costs of Poor Hiring Decisions

Bad hires are more than just inconveniences—they're costly mistakes. At the executive level, the stakes are even higher. Studies by Heather Boushey and Sarah Jane Glynn reveal **that replacing a poor hire at the C-suite level can cost up to 213% of their annual salary.[1] Consider an executive earning $300,000 annually: replacing them could set your organisation back more than $600,000.** These costs include direct expenses like recruitment and severance as well as indirect impacts such as diminished team morale, lost productivity, and potential repetitional harm.

When a key leader underperforms or disrupts team dynamics, the ripple effects can be devastating. Yet, despite these high stakes, many leaders approach hiring with inadequate preparation, falling into common traps that lead to failure. By committing to a strategic, methodical approach, you can avoid these pitfalls and secure leaders who drive results.

The Impact of Talent Decisions on Private Equity Performance

Effective talent decisions play a pivotal role in the performance of private equity (PE) portfolio companies. Private equity firms face immense pressure to deliver high returns within a limited time frame, often relying on leadership changes and operational improvements to unlock value. The success of these efforts, however, depends on hiring and retaining the right leaders.

Leadership issues are a leading cause of underperformance, with 92% of deal teams said that waiting too long to take action on talent issues had resulted in portfolio company underperformance.[2]

An underperforming executive can cost millions in delayed growth, operational inefficiencies, and weakened stakeholder trust.

A common pitfall in talent management is hesitating to replace underperforming leaders due to subjective evaluations or outdated job descriptions. This delay in action often compounds performance issues, leading to missed business milestones and reduced organisational stability. Implementing data-driven hiring and performance evaluation processes—such as psychometric assessments and competency-based scorecards—aligns leadership decisions with organisational goals, reducing reliance on instinct or "gut-feeling" choices.

Hiring the right leader, however, is only part of the equation. Strategic onboarding plays a crucial role in aligning new executives with company objectives and setting them up for long-term success. A structured onboarding process that includes goal-setting, regular feedback, and continuous support during the early stages significantly increases the likelihood of positive performance outcomes while mitigating early risks.

Leadership decisions in private equity are particularly high-stakes, as they can determine the success or failure of a portfolio company. It is therefore unsurprising that most CEOs of private equity-backed companies are replaced during the hold period.

According to data from AlixPartners, 73% of CEOs are likely to be replaced during the investment lifecycle, with 58% of these replacements occurring within the first two years.[2]

This demonstrates the pressure to make quick yet effective leadership changes to maximise returns.

By prioritising data, clearly defined success criteria, and early performance assessments, private equity firms can strengthen their leadership outcomes and drive stronger portfolio performance. These strategic interventions reduce the risk of costly leadership missteps and position portfolio companies for sustainable growth.

Why Most Leaders Struggle with Hiring

Hiring is often treated as an HR function, but it’s fundamentally a management responsibility. As Tõnis Arro, co-founder of Wisnio, aptly puts it:

Tõnis Arro

Co-Founder of Wisnio, CEO of ExecutiveLab

Thinking that hiring is an HR matter is like saying that revenue and profit are accounting matters. Hiring decisions are the executives' responsibility. They need to become better at making these decisions.

Despite its importance, hiring is rarely taught as a core leadership skill. Few business leaders read books, take courses, or invest in learning how to hire effectively. Those who do, often find the material theoretical and disconnected from the realities of executive decision-making.

On top of that, leaders often face pressure to fill executive roles quickly, leading to hasty decisions that overlook critical evaluation steps. This urgency might stem from a sudden vacancy, competitive market pressures, or the sheer workload piling up in the absence of key personnel. However, rushing to hire is a short-term fix that often results in long-term problems.

When you fail to thoroughly assess candidates, you risk bringing in someone who doesn't align with your organisation's values, lacks the necessary skills, or struggles to integrate with the team. These missteps lead to wasted resources, frustrated employees, and, ultimately, another costly hiring process. Taking the time to implement a structured, data-driven approach is not just better—it's essential.

As Lawrence Bossidy, former CEO of Honeywell International, wisely noted:

"I am convinced that nothing we do is more important than hiring and developing people. At the end of the day, you bet on people, not on strategies."

Hire Slow, Not Fast

The belief that one can "recognise the right person in seconds" is a pervasive myth in corporate culture. Relying solely on gut feeling often results in poor hiring decisions, with research indicating that up to 40% of such choices are incorrect.[3] This underscores the necessity for a deliberate and data-driven hiring process.

Nobel laureate Daniel Kahneman, in his book "Thinking, Fast and Slow," emphasises the importance of slow, analytical decision-making in hiring. He advocates for defining measurable qualities for each role, developing specific evaluation indicators, and ensuring independent assessments to mitigate biases. This structured approach contrasts sharply with the "hire fast, fire fast" mentality, highlighting the value of thorough evaluation over snap judgments.

In essence, while the pressure to fill positions swiftly is understandable, adopting a "hire slow, fire fast" strategy is more beneficial. By investing time in a meticulous hiring process, organisations can reduce turnover, enhance team cohesion, and ultimately drive better business outcomes.

Avoiding Common Hiring Pitfalls

Even experienced leaders fall into traps when hiring. Let's summarise some of the most common mistakes in hiring:

1. Relying on Intuition Over Data
Intuition can be a valuable leadership tool, but it has no place as the sole basis for hiring decisions. Research indicates that most hiring decisions are made intuitively in only four minutes, with 75% of those hires resulting in costly mis-hires.[4] Instead, adopt a structured process supported by objective data to evaluate candidates effectively.

2. Rushing to Fill Roles
The pressure to quickly hire often leads to cutting corners, such as skipping reference checks or overlooking red flags in interviews. Remember: a rushed hire is rarely the right hire.

3. Overemphasising Credentials
It's easy to be dazzled by an impressive resume or prestigious degree, but these are not always indicators of success. Focus on identifying candidates with the right attitude, adaptability, and potential to grow with your organisation.

The Framework for Better Hiring

Good hiring practices don't happen by chance—they're the result of a thoughtful, structured approach. This book will guide you through a proven framework designed to reduce bias, improve decision-making, and increase the likelihood of a successful hire. The four foundational steps include:

1. Analyse: Start by understanding the true needs of the role. Avoid vague job descriptions and instead define specific skills, behaviours, and outcomes required for success.

2. Define: Develop a clear profile of the ideal candidate, going beyond experience to include cultural fit, leadership style, and long-term potential.

3. Evaluate: Use structured behavioural interviews, practical assessments, and reference checks to gather meaningful insights about each candidate.

4. Compare: Don't rush to conclusions. Take the time to compare candidates against your criteria and each other to make an informed decision.

In the chapters ahead, we'll delve deeper into each aspect of the hiring process, from defining roles and sourcing candidates to conducting insightful interviews and setting your hires up for long-term success. Whether you're refining your current approach or starting from scratch, this book will equip you with the knowledge and tools to transform your hiring decisions.

Are you ready to master the art of hiring? Let's begin.

The Best Practice Hiring Process: Stages and Outcomes

A structured hiring process is essential for identifying the right candidate while minimising the risks and costs associated with poor hiring decisions. A structured hiring process offers significant benefits, including:

- **Reduced risks and costs of poor hires:** Studies show that structured interviews are twice as effective as unstructured ones in predicting job performance.[5] To conduct structured interviews, you have to have structured hiring process since the beginning.
- **Improved team performance:** By focusing on consistent criteria, structured hiring ensures that candidates are evaluated fairly and objectively, leading to better team dynamics and higher overall productivity.
- **Higher retention rates for top talent:** Structured processes allow organisations to identify candidates who align well with the company's values and culture, contributing to longer tenure and reduced turnover.

The importance of structured hiring is magnified at the executive level, where the stakes are highest.

Research indicates that the direct cost of a poor hire in senior positions can exceed 200% of their annual salary, not to mention the ripple effects on morale, strategy, and company performance.[6]

This chapter provides an overview of the best-practice hiring process, breaking it down into clear, actionable stages and outlining their expected outcomes. In the following chapters, we will explore each stage in greater detail.

Best Practise Hiring Process

Begin by watching the video on the right, where our instructor, Tõnis Arro, shares insights into best practices for hiring and introduces the steps covered in this chapter.

The 9 Stages of the Best Practice Hiring Process

1. Position Analysis (Position Map, Vacancy Description, Role Description)

The foundation of every successful hire is clarity. A position map ensures all stakeholders agree on what the role entails and what kind of candidate they are looking for.

Outcome: A role description and candidate requirements agreed upon by all hiring managers.

2. Sourcing

This stage involves building a long list of potential candidates—both active and passive job seekers. The goal is to identify people who match the role requirements.

Outcome: A comprehensive list of potential candidates for the role.

3. Screening

Screening helps filter the long list down to a shortlist of viable candidates. This typically involves structured phone calls or initial video interviews to assess the candidate's qualifications, motivations, and readiness to proceed.

Outcome: A refined list of candidates to be formally interviewed.

4. Interviewing

Structured, behavioural interviews are key at this stage. Pre-determined, role-specific questions help evaluate the candidate’s knowledge, skills, and behaviours against the job’s requirements.

Outcome: Detailed insights to identify a shortlist of the most suitable candidates.

5. Executive Interviewing of Finalists

Whether handled internally or by an external consultant, this stage ensures a thorough assessment of finalists. The approach should be consistent, focusing on deeper evaluations and alignment with the company’s goals.

Outcome: 1-2 finalists identified for reference checks or final decision.

6. Reference Checks

References provide valuable, objective data about the candidate’s past performance. Focus on facts, not opinions, to verify their suitability.

Outcome: Confirmation of the candidate’s qualifications and character through reference feedback.

7. Making the Executive Hiring Decision

Use a combination of data-driven insights, reference checks, and interview evaluations to select the best candidate. A collaborative decision-making process among stakeholders ensures alignment.

Outcome: The hiring decision is finalised.

8. Making the Employment Offer

Extend a formal offer to the selected candidate, including salary, benefits, and role expectations. A well-structured offer ensures clarity and acceptance.

Outcome: The candidate accepts the offer and prepares for onboarding.

9. Onboarding

The hiring process isn't complete until the candidate is fully onboarded. Effective onboarding includes clear role expectations, an action plan, and cultural integration.

Outcome: The candidate is performing at full capacity and is fully integrated into the team.

Self-Learning Check: Understanding the Hiring Process

Test your understanding of the concepts covered in this chapter. Reflect on each question and select the most appropriate answer.

1. What should be the best starting point for a good hiring process?

a) You begin by sourcing on LinkedIn or other employment databases.

b) The job ad has been published.

c) Stakeholders have analysed the position and agreed on what the hire must achieve and who they are looking for.

d) HR has prepared a job specification.

2. What is the outcome of an interviewing process?

a) All the necessary information is collected to choose 1–2 persons to continue with.

b) The selected candidate has received an offer.

3. What is the recommended approach to hiring according to this chapter?

a) Hire fast to save time, and fire fast if it doesn't work out.

b) Slow down and follow a structured process to ensure better long-term results.

c) Rely on intuition to make quick decisions.

d) Prioritise hiring people with prestigious educational backgrounds.

Review your responses and compare them to the answers provided at the end of the book. Take note of any areas where further study might be beneficial.

STAGE 1

How to Analyse a Position: Creating a Strong Foundation for Hiring

In many hiring situations, the process begins when someone leaves or is promoted, prompting a message to HR to fill the vacancy. Often, the next step involves retrieving a years-old job description used for a similar hire and proceeding with it as if it were still relevant. This approach gives the hiring executive or manager the impression that everything is ready, and all that remains is to bring in candidates for interviews. While this method seems efficient on the surface, it overlooks critical changes that may have occurred, significantly increasing the risk of a poor hire.

Roles and organisations evolve over time, with responsibilities added or adjusted to meet new demands. A job description written years ago is unlikely to reflect these changes accurately. To ensure a successful hire, it is essential to revisit and update the job description by thoroughly analysing the role.

Another common scenario is that input from hiring managers is insufficient, overly generic, or irrelevant to the specific role. Characteristics like "motivated achiever" or "someone who gets things done" lack precision and fail to identify the actual competencies and skills needed for success.

An Executive Describes An Ideal Candidate

This is a video of a hiring manager attempting to describe their ideal candidate. Watch carefully, then try to draft a job specification based on the information provided.

How easy was it to write a job specification based on the manager's explanation? If you find it challenging, you’re not alone. Unfortunately, similar situations happen quite often in hiring situations.

To prepare useful and actionable information, it is crucial to guide hiring managers in articulating role-specific criteria.

Job analysis goes beyond drafting vague job descriptions in isolation. It is a collaborative effort among stakeholders—hiring managers, team leaders, and executives—focused on defining the expectations, requirements, and measurable outcomes of the role.

This process answers critical questions such as: What does the role require? What are the measurable objectives for the new hire? Which skills and competencies will set a top candidate apart?

Structured job analysis leads to clear expectations for candidates and hiring managers, better alignment among stakeholders, and a stronger foundation for sourcing, evaluating, and selecting candidates. By grounding the process in meaningful, role-specific data, organisations can ensure that hiring decisions are not only efficient but also effective in meeting long-term goals.

Ben Horowitz, co-founder of Andreessen Horowitz, emphasises the importance of hiring for strength rather than lack of weakness. He states, "I'd learned the hard way that when hiring executives, one should follow Colin Powell's instructions and hire for strength rather than lack of weakness." [7]

Importance of Scorecards

The right scorecard is the backbone of the entire hiring process. Throughout this book, you will notice how each step consistently ties back to this initial phase. To ask the right questions during interviews, you must first know the success criteria you're evaluating. To gather structured data for informed hiring decisions, you need a clear scorecard to compare evaluations fairly. Even during onboarding, the scorecard becomes an invaluable resource, helping you communicate the new hire's objectives, responsibilities, and expectations.

Ben Horowitz also advises:

> *"Look, we all fall into it. Let me talk about the general, and then more on the diversity case. So, in general, it's all about preparation. How do you prepare for the interview? Because if you don't know what you're looking for, guess what—you're going to hire the person who 'looks the part.' And so you have to get into it. And it's one of the most complex things that I work with CEOs on, is well how do you hire a CFO when you've never been a CFO? How do you hire a Japanese interpreter if you don't know Japanese?"*[8]

His insight serves as a reminder that preparation is the key to avoiding superficial hires based on appearance or charisma. This becomes even more challenging in roles where the hiring manager may have limited expertise in the field—such as hiring a CFO without having financial expertise or selecting a technical interpreter without speaking the language. The scorecard acts as a guide, helping hiring managers stay focused on what matters: the candidate's ability to meet the specific needs of the role.

By taking the time to analyse the position thoroughly and align stakeholders around a shared understanding of the role, you create a foundation for successful hiring, clear evaluations, and smoother onboarding. This step isn't just an administrative task—it's a strategic investment in finding and retaining the right talent.

Key Elements of a Hiring Scorecard

To ensure clarity and effectiveness, job analysis should follow a structured approach.

Job Analysis Best Practises

Watch the mini-lecture below as Tõnis Arro explains how to gather the necessary information and build a robust Hiring Scorecard (position map).

A well-structured hiring scorecard ensures consistency in evaluations and helps you select candidates based on clear, objective criteria. To create an effective scorecard, include the following:

1. Role Description

Provide a concise, 1–2 paragraph summary of the role, avoiding lengthy introductions or exhaustive lists of responsibilities. Focus on the position's core purpose and impact within the organisation.

Example:

"As a Senior Product Manager, you will lead the development of our next-generation AI-powered recruitment tools. Your primary goal is to define the product roadmap, collaborate with engineering teams, and ensure that our solutions align with client needs and market trends."

2. Key Objectives

Define 3–5 key objectives the new hire should achieve within their first year.These should be measurable, outcome-focused goals rather than broad tasks.

Example:

- *Within six months, establish a structured sales pipeline that increases lead conversion by 20%.*
- *Within one year, successfully launch a new B2B partnership program that contributes to at least 15% of annual revenue growth.*

3. Role Requirements

List the essential skills, experience, and qualifications required for success—focusing only on what cannot be quickly learned on the job. Be specific about the depth of experience needed and how it should be evaluated in interviews.

Example:

- *Five years of experience in enterprise SaaS sales, with a proven track record of closing $1M+ deals.*
- *Proven success in developing and executing demand-generation strategies that resulted in a 30%+ increase in lead pipeline.*

During interviews, consider probing candidates on their real-world application of these skills. For instance, instead of asking “Do you have experience with SaaS sales?”, ask “Can you walk me through the most complex deal you closed and the challenges you faced?”

4. Core Leadership Competencies

Identify 3–5 leadership competencies that distinguish top performers in the role. While technical skills determine whether a candidate can do the job, leadership competencies indicate their ability to excel, lead, and navigate challenges.

Example:

- *Influence: Capable of driving stakeholder buy-in for major initiatives.*
- *Resilience: Thrives in high-pressure environments and overcomes setbacks.*

Consider using a competency library, such as Wisnio’s, which is based on Spencer and Spencer’s research on 20 leadership competencies.

Job Analysis With An Executive

Once you've crafted the hiring scorecard, ensure it is practical and actionable. To see how this conversation can work in real life, watch the video below, where an executive search consultant facilitates a conversation with a hiring manager to refine the position map.

Mait Müntel

CEO of Lingvist

By using a systematic process of defining clear evaluation areas and then asking questions from candidates on those specific areas, we were able to have a process that helped us make a better choice and eliminate the emotional aspect of hiring. For this, I am very grateful.

This emphasises how a well-defined, data-driven process can remove subjective biases, leading to more informed and effective hiring decisions. For more details, you can read the full Lingvist case study here.

Hiring Scorecard Example

On the following pages, you will find an example of a Hiring Scorecard created using Wisnio's hiring tools. Wisnio is designed based on the structured scorecard best practices outlined in this chapter.

Wisinio Hiring Scorecards include an evaluation template for the interview process, outlining key objectives, role requirements with targeted questions, and leadership competencies paired with behavioural interview prompts.

Chief Financial Officer

Operations Growth

Created by Wisnio

The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) is a critical role in the organization, responsible for guiding financial strategy and decision-making. This role requires a strategic leader who can balance capital investment with expenditure, and leverage company performance data to guide future decisions.

The CFO will lead the acquisition of capital from investors, develop strategic plans for scaling, and build out financial infrastructure and processes. They will also assess potential risks, ensure compliance with tax authorities, and prepare the company for an IPO if necessary.

The ideal candidate will have a proven track record in strategic financial planning, data-driven decision-making, capital acquisition, and investor relations.

This hiring scorecard is AI-generated, and is based on the insightful work of leading venture capital firm, a16z - https://a16z.com/2023/06/14/hiring-a-chief-financial-officer/

Hiring scorecard

Evaluation scorecard

Use this scorecard as a short guide for interviewing and evaluating candidates. See the following pages for more detailed interview insights and recommended interview questions.

Position requirements						
Strategic Financial Leadership	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Data-Driven Decision Making	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Capital Acquisition and Investor Relations	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Infrastructure and Process Development	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Risk Management and Compliance	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Preparation for IPO	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Cross-Functional Collaboration	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

Competencies						
Strategic thinking	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Analytical thinking	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Business acumen	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

Team fit						
Trait diversity	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Values fit	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Gut feeling	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

Hiring scorecard

Key objectives

Key objectives help create the context for basic requirements and competencies. They describe objectives that the new employee has to achieve to be considered successful.

- The organization has shifted its focus from mere financial tracking to strategic financial planning. A well-defined business strategy is in place, and informed decisions are consistently made regarding where and how to allocate capital or control spending.
- The company effectively leverages performance data to guide future decisions. Insights and analysis are shared across the management team and throughout the organisation, ensuring decisions are made using sound financial data.
- Capital is secured from the right investors at the right price, considering the company's stage of development. This includes raising capital through private rounds, an IPO, or other suitable means.
- A strategic plan for scaling is developed while building out the financial infrastructure and processes. This is particularly critical for the sales team and overall business management.
- Potential risks facing the company are assessed, and proactive measures are taken to mitigate them. This includes managing internal audits as the company matures.
- Management is provided with accurate financial metrics and stays informed about the performance of those metrics. The audit process is managed, ensuring the company is compliant with various tax authorities.
- If an IPO is on the horizon, the focus is on getting the company ready to become public. This includes establishing an investor relations capability, implementing world-class internal controls and financial reporting systems, ensuring accounting and tax compliance, appointing independent board members, and handling external issues like banker selection and SEC filings.

Position requirements

Use this section to understand and evaluate whether the candidate has the right experience, qualifications, and skills required to achieve the key objectives of the role.

Strategic Financial Leadership

1 2 3 4 5 Not enough information

Proven experience in leading strategic financial planning in a high-growth environment. The candidate should have a track record of defining business strategy and making informed decisions about capital investment and expenditure.

- Can you share an example of a strategic financial plan you developed and implemented in a previous role? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when you had to make a difficult decision about capital investment or expenditure. How did you approach it and what was the result?

Look for specific examples where the candidate demonstrated strategic thinking and decision-making skills. They should be able to articulate their approach to financial planning and how they used data and analysis to inform their decisions.

Data-Driven Decision Making

1 2 3 4 5 Not enough information

Strong analytical skills with the ability to leverage company performance data to guide future decisions. Experience in sharing insights and analysis across the organization to ensure decisions are made using sound financial data.

- Can you describe a time when you used company performance data to guide a significant decision? What was the impact of that decision?
- Tell me about a time when your analysis of financial data led to a change in business strategy or operations.

Look for examples where the candidate used data to inform decisions and drive change. They should be able to explain how they analyze data, share insights, and influence decision-making.

Capital Acquisition and Investor Relations

1 2 3 4 5 Not enough information

Demonstrated success in securing capital from investors at various stages of company development. The candidate should have excellent communication skills to articulate the company's vision to investors and experience in managing investor relations.

- Can you share an example of a successful capital acquisition you led? How did you approach the investors and what was the outcome?
- How have you managed investor relations in the past? Can you provide an example of a challenging situation you navigated?

Look for examples where the candidate successfully secured capital and managed relationships with investors. They should be able to articulate their approach to investor relations and how they handle challenges.

Infrastructure and Process Development

1 2 3 4 5 Not enough information

Experience in developing strategic plans for scaling and building out financial infrastructure and processes, particularly in the context of a rapidly growing company.

- Can you describe a time when you developed a strategic plan for scaling a company's financial infrastructure and processes? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when you had to build out financial systems or processes from scratch. What challenges did you face and how did you overcome them?

Look for examples where the candidate demonstrated their ability to develop and implement strategic plans for scaling financial infrastructure and processes. They should be able to articulate their approach to overcoming challenges and the outcomes of their efforts.

Risk Management and Compliance

1 2 3 4 5 Not enough information

Extensive experience in risk assessment and mitigation, including managing internal audits. The candidate should also have a deep understanding of tax requirements and experience in ensuring company compliance with various tax authorities.

- Can you share an example of a significant risk you identified and mitigated in a previous role? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when you had to ensure compliance with complex tax requirements. How did you approach it and what was the result?

Look for examples where the candidate demonstrated their ability to assess and mitigate risks, manage audits, and ensure tax compliance. They should be able to articulate their approach to risk management and compliance, and the outcomes of their efforts.

Preparation for IPO

If an IPO is on the horizon, the candidate should have experience in preparing companies for public listing. This includes establishing investor relations, implementing internal controls and financial reporting systems, ensuring accounting and tax compliance, and handling external issues like banker selection and SEC filings.

- Can you describe your experience in preparing a company for an IPO? What were the key steps you took and what were the challenges?
- Tell me about a time when you had to establish investor relations or implement internal controls in preparation for an IPO. How did you approach it and what was the outcome?

Look for examples where the candidate has successfully prepared a company for an IPO. They should be able to articulate the steps they took, the challenges they faced, and how they overcame them.

1 2 3 4 5 Not enough information

Cross-Functional Collaboration

Ability to work closely with other leaders in the organization to develop business strategy and allocate capital based on the company's growth trajectory. The candidate should have a track record of building strong relationships across various functions within a company.

- Can you share an example of a time when you collaborated with other leaders to develop a business strategy? What was your role and what was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when you had to build relationships across various functions within a company. How did you approach it and what was the result?

Look for examples where the candidate has successfully collaborated with other leaders to develop business strategy and allocate capital. They should be able to articulate their approach to building relationships and working cross-functionally.

1 2 3 4 5 Not enough information

Competencies

Evaluate whether the candidate has the leadership skills and competencies required to achieve superior performance in the role. Pay particular attention to must-have competencies and competencies where the candidate indicates lower confidence levels.

Strategic thinking

1 2 3 4 5 Not enough information

Uses industry trends to anticipate future scenarios and develop effective strategies. Articulates a compelling vision and links strategic goals to daily work.

Ask Describe a time when you aligned your individual goals according to the organisational strategy.
What goal-setting methods did you use?
How did you monitor and review these goals?

Behavioral examples:

Understands organisation strategy and aligns activities with long-term company goals.

Anticipates emerging trends and is able to articulate possible future scenarios.

Develops complex strategies and communicates them effectively.

Analytical thinking

1 2 3 4 5 Not enough information

Understands a complex and ambiguous problem by breaking it down into smaller pieces and analyses information in a logical and systematic manner.

Ask Describe a time when you were tasked with making a big data-driven decision.
What data did you look at or gather to guide you?
What decision did you make and why?

Behavioral examples:

Uses logical thought processes to draw conclusions and identify patterns in data.

Demonstrates an in-depth understanding of analytical techniques and information modelling.

Applies complex analytical frameworks to identify and share solutions.

Business acumen

1 2 3 4 5 Not enough information

Capable of using internal insights and situational knowledge of trends and competitors to evaluate the impact of business decisions. Quickly takes advantage of new opportunities.

Ask Describe how you would approach turning a long-term business strategy into an actionable plan.
What internal and external data do you gather?
How do you present your findings?

Behavioral examples:

Considers multiple aspects of the business when planning and making business decisions.

Proposes new ideas and takes action to advance organisational goals.

Acts on a deep knowledge of the marketplace and presents this data to others.

Gut feeling

1 2 3 4 5 Not enough information

What is your gut feeling telling you about this candidate?
Would they be a good fit for the role and the team?

Self-Check Quiz: How to Analyse a Position

Test your understanding of the concepts covered in this chapter. Reflect on each question and select the most appropriate answer.

4. What is the primary benefit of structured position mapping?

a) It saves time in the hiring process.

b) It ensures alignment among stakeholders and builds a strong foundation for hiring.

c) It eliminates the need for collaboration among stakeholders.

d) It helps hiring managers rely on intuition when selecting candidates.

5. Why should vague descriptors like "motivated achiever" be avoided in position mapping?

a) They are too general and do not define specific skills or competencies.

b) They make the position map too long.

c) They confuse the hiring manager.

d) They take too much time to include in interviews.

6. Who is responsible for position mapping?

a) HR

b) Stakeholders (hiring manager and others)

c) External recruiters

7. What should be considered when specifying role requirements in a position map?

a) Include only the skills and qualifications that are essential and cannot be quickly learned on the job.

b) List as many skills as possible to avoid missing potential candidates.

c) Focus on soft skills and ignore technical qualifications.

d) Use generic terms to ensure the requirements apply to a broad audience.

Review your responses and compare them to the answers provided at the end of the book. Take note of any areas where further study might be beneficial.

STAGES 2 & 3

How to Conduct Sourcing and Screening

After creating your hiring scorecard, the next step is to build a list of potential candidates, known as a longlist. A longlist includes all candidates who could potentially fit the role at hand. It typically encompasses a large pool of individuals who meet the basic requirements of the role but may vary in terms of suitability, experience, or readiness. A longlist is usually compiled through an activity called sourcing.

Sourcing refers to the strategies and methods used to find and attract candidates. The goal of sourcing is to build a diverse and qualified pool of potential candidates to consider for the position. Usually, not all candidates on the longlist will be contacted, as the next step involves narrowing down this list through screening.

Screening is the process of evaluating candidates to determine which ones are best suited to move forward in the hiring process, thereby completing the shortlist. Screening typically involves reviewing CVs, cover letters, and application materials to assess qualifications. It may also include conducting initial phone or video interviews to evaluate skills, experience, and readiness to take on a new role.

Sourcing and screening are two critical steps in the hiring process that help organisations identify and evaluate potential candidates for a role.

Building Your Candidate List

To create a strong list, start with a long list of potential candidates. This can include leveraging job boards, social media platforms, professional networks, employee referrals, or directly reaching out to passive candidates who may not be actively seeking a job.

Active vs. Passive Candidates

Most of the top candidates you're looking for won't apply directly to job ads. While active candidates are those actively seeking new opportunities, passive candidates are professionals who aren't job hunting but may be open to the right offer.

Active vs Passive Job Seekers

Watch the video below to learn more about how these two groups differ and why targeting passive candidates is crucial.

As Tõnis Arro highlighted in the mini-lecture, only about 10% of individuals in the job market are actively responding to job advertisements. This means that even with a well-crafted job ad, there's a significant chance it may go unnoticed by the majority of potential candidates.

In contrast, approximately 70% of the global workforce is passive candidates—those who are not actively seeking new employment but are open to opportunities if the right offer comes their way.[9]

This underscores a crucial point: the most qualified talent is often among passive candidates. Therefore, to secure top-tier professionals, it's essential to adopt proactive recruitment strategies that engage these individuals rather than relying solely on traditional job postings. By actively reaching out and presenting compelling opportunities, organisations can tap into this vast pool of potential, ensuring they attract and hire the best talent available.

Screening: Reaching Out to Candidates

The initial contact with potential candidates is critical, as first impressions and your approach can significantly influence their interest in the role. A poorly handled outreach can easily deter candidates or gather irrelevant information at this early stage.

Calling a Prospect I

In the following video, you'll observe an executive reaching out to a prospect. Pay attention to the approach and evaluate what aspects were effective and where improvements could be made. How would you rate this call? Could you say it was successful?

If you thought this call was poorly handled and unsuccessful, you're correct. The video highlights several common mistakes often made during the initial outreach to a candidate.

A screening interview aims to establish whether the candidate is movable and if the position you have in mind might interest them. Look at the following video.

Calling a Prospect II

A screening interview aims to establish whether the candidate is movable and if the position you have in mind might interest them. Look at the following video.

Was this well done? Or was something still missing? The goal of screening calls is to get the prospect interested, and that was achieved. At the same time, does it make sense to meet everyone interested? Or only the people who might be a good fit and whom you might want to hire. It makes sense to qualify the leads you are talking to and decide whom to meet.

Qualifying a Prospect

Before arranging a meeting with a prospect, make sure you know enough to be sure the physical meeting makes sense. Please look at the follow-up to the previous video:

You saw one potential deal-breaker that makes a physical meeting unreasonable. Before you schedule a meeting, you'd better check the key must-have (or "threshold") competencies for the role.

For example, the profit/loss responsibility might be a must, and often you don't see if the prospect has had this experience. Sometimes, even a university degree is a must-have requirement (e.g. when a regulator requires it for a certain role). A scope of managerial experience is almost always the case, and it makes a big difference if someone has managed a small team, a department or a division consisting of several departments located in different geographical locations/cultures. All the things mentioned here can be checked during the brief screening interview easily.

To summarise, the goal of the screening interviews is to reach an optimal list of interested candidates to meet for personal interviews. The candidates must be affordable and have the “threshold competencies” required for the vacancy.

Self-Check Quiz: How to Conduct Sourcing and Screening

Test your understanding of the concepts covered in this chapter. Reflect on each question and select the most appropriate answer.

8. What is the primary goal of sourcing?

a) To directly hire candidates.

b) To build a diverse and qualified pool of potential candidates.

c) To schedule interviews for candidates.

d) To assess candidates’ qualifications and readiness.

9. Why is targeting passive candidates important in recruitment?

a) They are easier to hire than active candidates.

b) They represent the majority of the workforce and are often more qualified.

c) They actively respond to job advertisements.

10. Which of the following should be prioritised during a screening interview?

a) Highlighting the organisation’s strengths and benefits.

b) Understanding the candidate’s current compensation, location preferences, and availability.

c) Delving into the candidate’s detailed career history.

d) Discussing the specifics of the job responsibilities.

Review your responses and compare them to the answers provided at the end of the book. Take note of any areas where further study might be beneficial.

STAGES 4 & 5

How to Prepare and Conduct an Interview

Interviewing is the heart of the hiring process, but unfortunately often done wrong. In many organisations, interviews are conducted in an unstructured manner, where conversations flow freely, and different candidates are asked varying questions. This lack of consistency can lead to the collection of information that may not be pertinent to the role, resulting in an unfair evaluation process.

Watch and Reflect: The Pitfalls of Poor Interviews

Executive Interviews a Candidate I

Watch the video, to see an example of an unstructured interview that fails to gather meaningful data. What would you do differently?

Even seasoned professionals can fall prey to bias and noise during interviews. As Daniel Kahneman points out, decisions influenced by subjective impressions rather than structured evaluation can lead to poor hiring outcomes.

Noise And Bias

In this video, we explore how these factors influence interviews and discuss why understanding and addressing them is crucial for making fair and effective hiring decisions.

So how to overcome this noise and bias? The answer is well-structured behavioural interviews.

Research indicates that unstructured interviews have a lower predictive validity for job performance, with a validity coefficient of approximately 0.31, compared to 0.62 for structured interviews.[10] Simply put, structured interviews are about twice as likely to help you pick candidates who are better suited for the role.

Structured interviews are more effective because they establish a fair and objective foundation for evaluating candidates. By asking the same role-specific questions from every candidate, you ensure consistency in the information collected.

This approach eliminates discrepancies caused by varying lines of questioning and focuses on gathering data that directly relates to the job requirements. As a result, structured interviews allow you to evaluate all candidates on equal footing, enabling you to identify those who are genuinely the best fit for the role based on relevant skills, competencies, and other requirements.

A great interview is both structured and goal-oriented, encompassing three key components:

Preparation:

Clearly define the purpose of the interview and develop role-specific questions that align with the competencies required for the position.

Structure:

Implement a consistent framework for all interviews, beginning with an introduction, followed by key questions, and concluding with a summary. This approach ensures that each candidate is assessed on the same criteria, promoting fairness and reducing bias.

Evaluation

Apply standardised criteria to objectively assess each candidate's responses, facilitating a more accurate comparison between candidates.

Best Practice Interview Process

The initial contact with potential candidates is critical, as first impressions and your approach can significantly influence their interest in the role. A poorly handled outreach can easily deter candidates or gather irrelevant information at this early stage.

Best Practise Interview Process

To gain insights, watch the following mini-lecture where Tõnis Arro discusses the key elements of an effective interview process.

Your hiring process should include three well-defined interview stages:

01

Phone Screening

A brief call to confirm basic requirements and availability (covered in the previous chapter).

02

Primary Interview

A detailed discussion focused on the candidate's qualifications, competencies, and fit for the role.

03

Business Discussion

A strategic conversation about how the candidate would approach the role's key objectives and contribute to company goals.

This structure ensures you gather enough data to make an informed decision while minimising bias and noise.

Behavioural Interviewing: A Proven Approach

Behavioural interviewing is a technique based on the premise that past behaviour predicts future performance. Instead of hypothetical questions, candidates are asked to describe specific examples of how they've handled situations in the past. You should build up your interview questions based on your hiring scorecard.

Behavioural interviews are considered to be 55% predictive of future on-the-job behaviour, whereas traditional interviews have a lower predictive validity.[11]

Why Behavioural Interviews Work

- **Focus on Facts:** This approach elicits concrete experiences rather than abstract opinions, offering deeper insights into a candidate's actual behaviour.
- **Predictive Power:** Evidence suggests that past behaviour in similar scenarios is a strong indicator of future success.
- **Reduced Bias:** Structured, fact-based questions help limit subjective impressions, promoting a fairer evaluation process.

The STAR Model

A common method for structuring behavioural interview questions is the STAR model, which stands for Situation, Task, Action, and Result. This framework guides candidates to articulate their experiences comprehensively:

- **Situation:** Describe the context within which you performed a task or faced a challenge.
- **Task:** Explain the actual task or responsibility involved.
- **Action:** Detail the specific actions you took to address the task or challenge.

- **Result:** Share the outcomes or results of your actions.

The STAR model not only ensures that candidates provide comprehensive answers but also serves as a guide for preparing questions. These questions should be directly linked to the evaluation criteria identified during the position analysis.

Examples of Behavioural Interview Questions (STAR-Driven)

Problem-Solving:

- Situation: "Can you describe a time when your team faced a significant challenge or setback?"
- Task: "What was your role in identifying and addressing the problem?"
- Action: "What steps did you take to resolve the issue?"
- Result: "What was the outcome, and what did you learn from the experience?"

Leadership:

- Situation: "Tell me about a situation where your team was struggling to stay motivated."
- Task: "What goal were you working towards, and how did you aim to inspire the team?"
- Action: "What specific actions did you take to boost morale and focus?"
- Result: "What was the final outcome, and how did the team respond to your leadership?"

Adaptability:

- Situation: "Share an example of a time when your organisation implemented significant changes."
- Task: "What challenges did you face personally, and how did they affect your role?"
- Action: "How did you adjust to these changes, and what strategies did you employ to adapt?"
- Result: "What were the results of your efforts, and what feedback did you receive?"

Communication:

- Situation: "Describe a scenario where you had to explain complex information to a non-expert audience."
- Task: "What was your objective in conveying this information?"
- Action: "What approach did you take to ensure clarity and understanding?"
- Result: "What was the audience's response, and how did it impact the situation?"

Executive Interviews a Candidate II

In the next video, watch how an executive improves their interviewing approach by asking relevant, role-specific questions.

Practical Tips for Interviewing

Now that you know how to prepare for a structured and effective interview, it's equally important to consider how to make the later evaluation process smoother and more reliable. Here are some practical tips to ensure you get the most out of your interviews:

Focus on Fit, Not the Sell

Remember by the time of the interview, the candidate should already have a clear understanding of your company and the role. Avoid using the interview to "sell" the company; instead, concentrate on assessing the candidate's fit for the role and organisation. This time is for evaluating them, not convincing them.

Use Your Preparation Wisely

Bring your list of behavioural questions and evaluation criteria to the interview to ensure the effort you put into preparation is not wasted. Stick to these pre-defined questions to maintain consistency across all interviews, but be flexible enough to ask follow-up questions when a candidate's response is too generic or lacks depth. This ensures you gather the detailed information necessary to make informed decisions.

Take Structured Notes

During the interview, take notes specific to each evaluation criterion. It's recommended to use a rating system, such as a 3-point or 5-point scale, to rate the candidate's responses objectively. This approach makes it easier to compare candidates later and reduces the risk of relying solely on memory, which can be biased or incomplete.

Stay Objective

Avoid allowing personal impressions or charisma to overly influence your judgment. Stick to the predefined evaluation criteria and focus on the evidence provided during the interview. This ensures a fair and unbiased assessment of all candidates.

Manage Time Effectively

Allocate sufficient time for each interview to cover all essential questions while allowing room for follow-ups. Leave time at the end of the interview to summarise key points and clarify any uncertainties with the candidate.

Self-Check Quiz: How to Prepare and Conduct an Interview

Test your understanding of the concepts covered in this chapter. Reflect on each question and select the most appropriate answer.

11. What are the three key components of a great interview?

a) Flexibility, charisma, and preparation.

b) Preparation, structure, and evaluation.

c) Speed, consistency, and intuition.

d) Empathy, curiosity, and decisiveness.

12. How many interview stages are recommended in the hiring process?

a) One: A comprehensive interview.

b) None, you can make the decision based on the CVs.

c) Three: Phone screening, primary evaluation interview, and business discussion.

d) As many as possible.

13. What does the STAR model stand for in behavioural interviews?

a) Situation, Task, Action, Result.

b) Strategy, Teamwork, Action, Reflection.

c) Skills, Traits, Abilities, Readiness.

d) Success, Training, Application, Resources.

14. What is the primary advantage of behavioural interviews over traditional interviews?

a) They are quicker and easier to conduct.

b) They reduce bias and focus on evidence-based evaluation.

c) They allow candidates to express opinions about the company.

d) They eliminate the need for follow-up questions.

Review your responses and compare them to the answers provided at the end of the book. Take note of any areas where further study might be beneficial.

STAGE 6

Checking References: A Critical Step in Hiring

Reference checks are a critical component of the hiring process, offering an additional and objective data point to help validate a candidate's claims and uncover insights about their past performance. When conducted properly, reference checks provide a deeper understanding of a candidate's work history, capabilities, and potential fit within your organisation.

However, to gain meaningful information, reference checks must focus on facts rather than subjective opinions, and they must align with the hiring criteria established during the interview process.

Why Reference Checks Matter

Even high-level candidates, including executives, may misrepresent their experience or omit critical details about their careers. A thorough reference check process helps mitigate these risks by:

- **Validating Information:** Confirming the accuracy of the candidate's claims about their job history, responsibilities, and achievements.
- **Uncovering Potential Issues:** Identifying red flags or areas that require further investigation before making a final hiring decision.

Research underscores the importance of reference checks as a crucial step in the hiring process. Surveys reveal that 50% of people admit to lying on their CVs. Surprisingly, this issue is not confined to lower-level roles—approximately 25% of executives have been caught fabricating details on their resumes.[12]

While these statistics focus on inaccuracies in written applications, it's reasonable to assume that candidates who lie on their CVs are likely to maintain these falsehoods during the interview process.

According to another source, Robert Half, a survey of 2,800 senior managers in the United States revealed that 34% of job candidates were removed from consideration for a position following a reference check.[13]

"I once had a CEO candidate who said he had worked as a Marketing Manager for an entire region. With reference checking, it turned out that he was a marketing trainee without any real responsibilities.

Tõnis Arro

Co-Founder of Wisnio, Headhunter at Executive Lab

I had a case with an executive for a C-level position where the client was so happy with the candidate that they wanted to sign with them immediately. I had to keep them from signing as we needed to complete the reference checks. Later, it turned out the candidate had lied about pretty much everything - he hadn't even visited the schools from which he said he graduated! The worst part was that the contract the client was eager to sign with the candidate had a 100 000 € compensation if the candidate was fired for any reason.

This highlights the significant risks of skipping or inadequately conducting reference checks, as they are often the only way to verify the accuracy of a candidate's claims and uncover any red flags.

Ben Horowitz Take on Reference Checks

Ben Horowitz emphasises the importance of conducting both front-door and backdoor reference checks for executive-level candidates:

"For the final candidates, it's critically important that the CEO conduct the reference checks herself. The references need to be checked against the same hiring criteria that you tested for during the interview process. Backdoor reference checks (checks from people who know the candidate but were not referred by the candidate) can be an extremely useful way to get an unbiased view. However, do not discount the front-door references. While they clearly have committed to giving a positive reference (or they wouldn't be on the list), you are not looking for positive or negative with them. You are looking for fit with your criteria. Often, the front-door references will know the candidate best and will be quite helpful in this respect."[14]

Horowitz's approach underscores the value of integrating reference checks into a structured hiring framework. By aligning these checks with the evaluation criteria used during interviews, organisations can ensure consistency and gain a clearer picture of the candidate's suitability.

Horowitz's method highlights two key types of reference checks:

Front-Door References

These are the contacts provided by the candidate. While they are predisposed to speak positively about the individual, they can offer valuable insights into the candidate's fit with the role and organisation. The focus here should be on alignment with the criteria set during the hiring process rather than general positivity.

Back-Door References

These are informal checks conducted with individuals who know the candidate but were not listed as references. Backdoor checks provide an unbiased view and often reveal insights that front-door references might not. However, care should be taken to ensure that these checks remain professional and respectful of privacy boundaries.

This highlights the significant risks of skipping or inadequately conducting reference checks, as they are often the only way to verify the accuracy of a candidate's claims and uncover any red flags.

Common Mistakes in Reference Checks

Reference checks often fail due to poorly chosen questions, lack of preparation, or insufficient structure. Without a thoughtful approach, this step can become a mere formality rather than a valuable tool for decision-making.

Executive Makes a Reference Check Call I

In the video below, observe an ineffective reference check and consider how it could be improved.

Executive search consultant Tõnis Arro was clearly unsatisfied with the CEOs approach. Did you notice the mistakes made? Let’s break down the common pitfalls and how to avoid them.

What to Avoid in Reference Checks

Opinion-Based Questions

Avoid subjective questions such as “What are their strengths and weaknesses?” or “How would you describe their leadership style?” These questions yield opinions rather than objective insights and may not align with your company’s specific needs. Instead, focus on fact-based, role-relevant inquiries.

Asking Personal or Prohibited Questions

Steer clear of inquiries related to a candidate's age, race, religion, marital status, or other protected characteristics. These questions are not only irrelevant but can also expose your organisation to legal risks under employment discrimination laws.

Over-Reliance on Numeric Ratings

While asking for numeric ratings (e.g., "On a scale of 1–10, how would you rate their communication skills?") can start conversations, these should not heavily influence your decision-making. They are inherently subjective and lack the depth needed for a thorough evaluation.

Failing to Prepare

One of the most common mistakes is conducting reference checks without proper preparation. This often leads to vague or irrelevant conversations, resulting in missed opportunities to uncover critical insights. Prepare by reviewing the job requirements, defining the key competencies to explore, and aligning your questions with the hiring criteria.

The Right Way to Conduct Reference Checks

Conducting effective reference checks requires structure, preparation, and a focus on gathering relevant, factual information. Let's explore the key elements of a good reference check, what questions to ask, and how it all comes together in practice.

Preparing For Reference Checks

A systematic method ensures consistency and thoroughness across all reference checks. This involves preparing a standard set of questions aligned with the job requirements and competencies identified during the job analysis.

While preparing the questions focus on obtaining objective information about the candidate's previous job duties, responsibilities, achievements, and work ethic. Also, ensure that all questions adhere to legal standards, avoiding inquiries about age, race, religion, marital status, or other protected characteristics.

What Questions Make Sense During a Reference Check Call

Watch the mini-lecture to learn about the types of questions that yield meaningful insights during a reference check.

A typical reference call should cover the following questions:

- What the candidate did at the company
- What were their responsibilities and objectives
- What were the results
- Why the candidate left the company*

**Try to understand why your candidate left. An answer that they left with mutual consent is not helpful. Try to dig in and understand the reasons behind leaving.*

Here are examples of effective questions:

- Can you describe the candidate's key responsibilities in their previous role?
- What specific achievements did the candidate accomplish while working with you?
- How did they contribute to achieving team or company goals?
- Would you hire them again for a similar role?

Engaging with multiple references offers a more comprehensive understanding of a candidate's past performance and suitability for the role.

For executive-level hires, two or three reference calls are typically recommended. Each reference brings a unique perspective, offering valuable insights based on their professional relationship with the candidate. Together, these viewpoints help create a clearer and more accurate picture of the candidate's abilities and work style.

Remember, reference calls are a courtesy extended by the people you contact. Aim to keep the conversation concise, lasting between 10 to 20 minutes, with 10–15 minutes being the ideal duration. While some referees may be willing to speak longer, it's essential to respect their time by being prepared and efficient.

For high-level hires, it's crucial that the CEO or other senior decision-makers personally handle the reference checks.

Executive Makes a Reference Check Call II

Finally, see how these principles come together in practice. Watch the video below for an example of a well-conducted reference check call that demonstrates how to effectively gather useful, factual information.

Self-Check Quiz: Checking References

Test your understanding of the concepts covered in this chapter. Reflect on each question and select the most appropriate answer.

15. What is the primary purpose of reference checks in the hiring process?

a) To build rapport with the candidate's previous employers.

b) To validate a candidate's claims and uncover insights about their past performance.

c) To understand how liked the candidate was in the previous workplace.

16. Which of the following is NOT a recommended question to ask during a reference check?

a) Can you describe the candidate's key responsibilities in their previous role?

b) Why did the candidate leave the company?

c) How would you describe their personality and leadership style?

d) What specific achievements did the candidate accomplish while working with you?

17. How many reference check calls are typically recommended for executive-level hires?

a) One

b) Two to three

C) Four or more

Review your responses and compare them to the answers provided at the end of the book. Take note of any areas where further study might be beneficial.

Psychometric Assessments: Why They Matter

Psychometric assessments may not traditionally be part of basic best-practice hiring processes, but they can be absolutely crucial for executive hires. These tools offer insights that go beyond resumes, interviews, and reference checks, providing a clearer understanding of how candidates will perform and integrate within the organisation.
To understand where psychometric assessments fit in, let's recap the hiring process so far.

It begins with analysing the position and developing a hiring scorecard to define exactly what is needed. From there, potential candidates are sourced and compiled into a longlist, which includes individuals who meet the basic criteria but may not have been actively approached. This longlist is narrowed to a more qualified shortlist of 3–7 candidates through screening calls that evaluate interest, location, salary preferences, and availability. That leaves you with shortlisted candidates to interview.

During interviews, you likely used behavioural questions to evaluate how well the candidates align with the hiring scorecard criteria. By the end of this stage, you should have 2–4 candidates who clearly demonstrate the ability to do the job based on their competencies and prior experience.

However, one critical piece of the puzzle often remains unanswered: **Which candidate will best complement the current leadership team and align with the team culture? This is where psychometric assessments become invaluable.**

While psychometric assessments are not intended to replace other evaluation methods, they provide critical insights that enhance the selection process.

These tools allow you to:

- Identify candidates who align with the team's values and culture.
- Understand team dynamics and find candidates who complement existing leadership.
- Assess long-term potential, including adaptability, leadership style, and personal motivations.

Conduct psychometric assessments after the first interview to explore results in a follow-up discussion. Treat psychometric data as a conversation starter, not a final decision-maker. Use the findings to assess if the candidate will thrive in the team and organisation.

There are several widely recognised psychometric tools and providers that organisations can utilise:

- **Hogan Assessments:** Known for evaluating leadership potential, personality, and derailers that may affect performance in executive roles.

- **SHL:** Offers a range of assessments, including cognitive ability, personality, and situational judgement tests.
- **Korn Ferry Leadership Assessments:** Specialises in evaluating leadership competencies and development potential.
- **Wisnio's Candidate Profile:** Combines the Leadership Competency Map, Big Five Personality data, and Values Map based on Schwartz's Theory of Universal Values to deliver a holistic view of candidates.

These tools are rooted in established psychological frameworks that offer actionable insights into leadership potential, team compatibility, and cultural fit. For the purposes of this book, we will focus on Wisnio's Candidate Profile and its scientific foundations.

Benefits of Using Psychometric Assessments in Hiring

Wisnio's Candidate Profile provides a comprehensive evaluation of potential hires by focusing on three critical areas: Leadership Competencies, Personality Traits, and Values. Let's go over what each of these frameworks bring to the hiring process.

Leadership Competencies

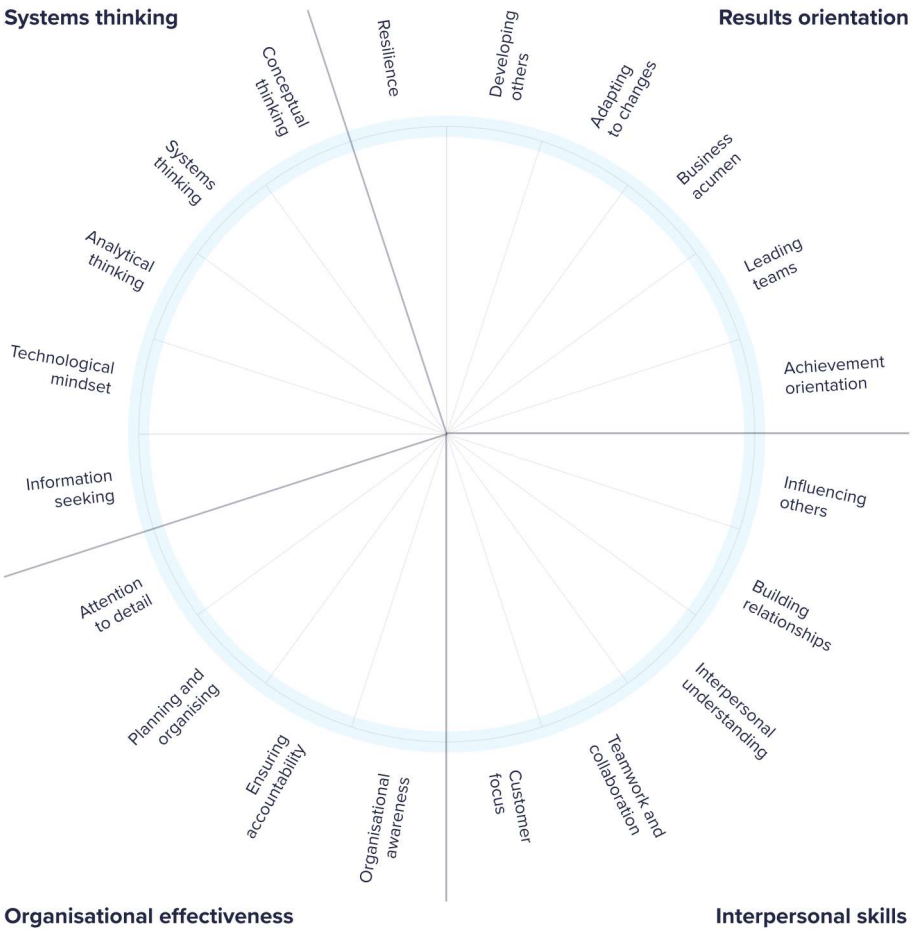
In Competence at Work (1993), Lyle and Signe M. Spencer defined competencies as traits that predict behaviours leading to superior job performance. Wisnio's Leadership Competency Library includes 20 key competencies covering essential leadership skills, behaviours, and attitudes.

Evaluating candidates' competencies during the hiring process is vital for several reasons:

- Competencies provide a dependable indicator of an individual's potential for future performance.
- Assessing these competencies enables informed predictions about how well a candidate is likely to succeed in a specific role.
- Understanding a candidate's competencies can highlight areas for development and training, helping employees start strong while equipping them to grow and adapt to evolving job requirements.
- Aligning competencies with the organisation's strategic goals and values ensures that new hires contribute meaningfully to long-term success.

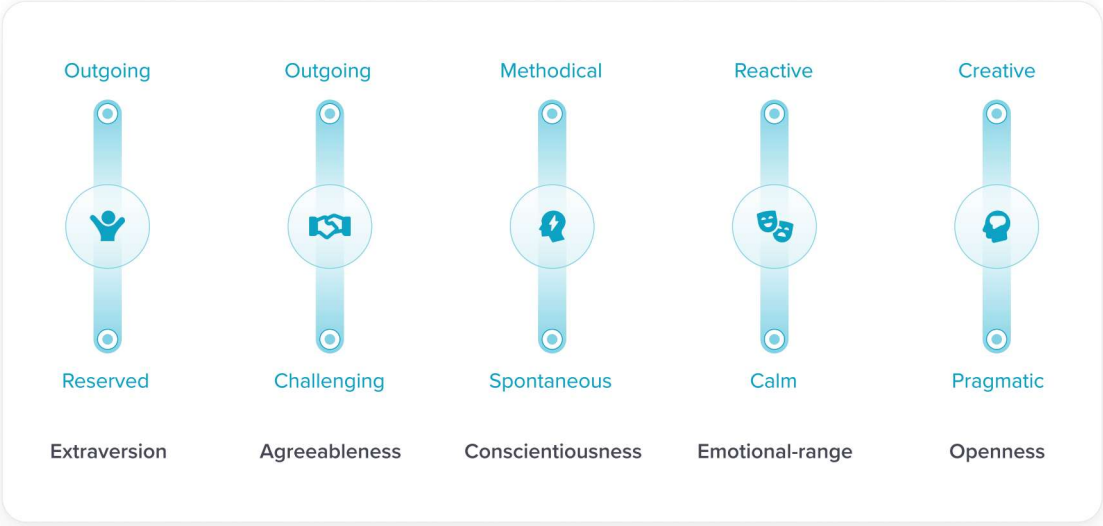
Leadership competencies should be incorporated into your job analysis (explored further in Chapter 3) and reflected in the hiring scorecard. Tools like Wisnio offer an interactive way to integrate competencies into the hiring process, though this can also be achieved without specialised tools.

Below is the Wisnio Competency Map, inspired by the frameworks of Spencer & Spencer and other leading experts.



The Personality Map

The Big Five theory, also known as the Five-Factor Model, categorises personality traits into five broad dimensions: Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Emotional-Range. These dimensions offer a comprehensive framework for understanding individual differences in behaviour, working styles and interpersonal interactions within the workplace.



As the most robust and widely used personality framework in academic studies, the Big 5 personality model (also referred to as the Five Factor model) was developed by Costa and McCrae in the 1970s. Since then, their model has been used on millions of subjects and consistently demonstrates high construct validity and test-retest reliability across cultures, age, and gender.

In the workplace, each person's unique blend of these traits influences their approach to tasks, interaction with colleagues, and overall job performance.

The behavioural characteristics of each individual in the work context show the ways they prefer to behave, revealing their most natural and comfortable behaviour. Over time, people can also adapt learned behaviours, meaning they can choose to act differently if the situation demands it, even though they might not feel comfortable doing so.

Why Personality Data Matters In The Hiring Process

By understanding the existing personality composition of the team, you can identify gaps or areas where the team could benefit from additional diversity in personality traits. This helps in selecting candidates whose characteristics complement those of the current team, fostering a more balanced and effective team dynamic. Studies show that diversity in personality types can lead to improved team performance and job satisfaction.[15]

For example, a highly agreeable team might benefit from the fresh perspectives of someone more challenging to avoid the team compromising too much to avoid conflicts. Or a team lacking in conscientiousness might benefit from someone strong in that trait to improve focus and drive (methodical).

While certain traits may be desirable, maintaining a balance and diversity of personalities within a team is crucial to fostering creativity, innovation, and effective problem-solving. Beyond role-specific considerations, personality traits significantly influence how well a candidate fits with the broader organisational culture. This alignment affects not only the individual's performance but also their well-being and engagement at work.

For instance, let's say the results indicate that a candidate is much more extraverted than the rest of the team and does not prefer a serious work environment. While this diversity can be beneficial, it's important to assess whether the nature of the role and the current team's working environment is conducive to welcoming someone who might significantly alter the culture.

The Values Map

The Theory of Universal Human Values, created by Shalom H. Schwartz, is a cornerstone in social and cross-cultural psychology for understanding human values across cultures. Originally identifying ten value orientations in 1992,

Schwartz and colleagues refined this to 19 values in 2012, presenting them as part of a circular motivational continuum. These values are not just beliefs but are deeply tied to emotions, guiding individuals in selecting or evaluating actions, policies, and people in their lives and workplaces.

Values act as motivational constructs, representing the goals individuals strive to achieve and guiding behaviour towards what isValuesorthwhile. Unlike norms and attitudes, which are situation-specific, values are abstract goals that transcend specific actions and situations, providing a framework for behaviour across various contexts.

People prioritise these values differently, creating a unique value system that influences their decisions and actions. This hierarchy of values is what distinguishes an individual's value system from mere attitudes or norms.

Why Values Data Matters In The Hiring Process

In the workplace, understanding and respecting universal human values can significantly impact hiring, team building, and organisational culture. Employees whose values align with their company's values are more likely to recommend it as a great place to work (70% vs. 25%), feel personal accomplishment (72% vs. 29%), and are less likely to consider leaving (33% vs. 44%).[16]

For hiring managers, this means looking beyond skills and experience to consider how a candidate's values align with the company's culture and goals. A values-based approach to hiring supports the development of a cohesive, motivated, and productive workforce.

For leaders and managers, acknowledging the power of values in influencing behaviour is crucial for effective team building, conflict resolution, and leadership strategies. Encouraging a workplace where values are openly discussed, understood, and aligned can lead to more motivated, committed, and cohesive teams. Ultimately, by embracing the significance of values in shaping behaviour, organisations can foster a work environment where both individuals and the company can thrive.

When team members share similar values, it fosters a stronger sense of unity and belonging. This can lead to improved communication and collaboration, as team members are more likely to be driven by similar motivations and understand each other's perspectives.

Aligning values helps in minimising conflicts. Disagreements may still occur, but they are less likely to escalate and are more easily resolved when there is a fundamental values-based understanding among team members.

If the team and/or candidate assessment reveals values that might not align with the rest of the organisation, it is recommended to address potential challenges during the interview. Having some differences doesn't immediately suggest that the team couldn't work together, especially if both parties are aware of these differences. Discussing such situations can help prevent future conflicts.

Timo Jäntti

Chairman of the Board, Taplow Finland

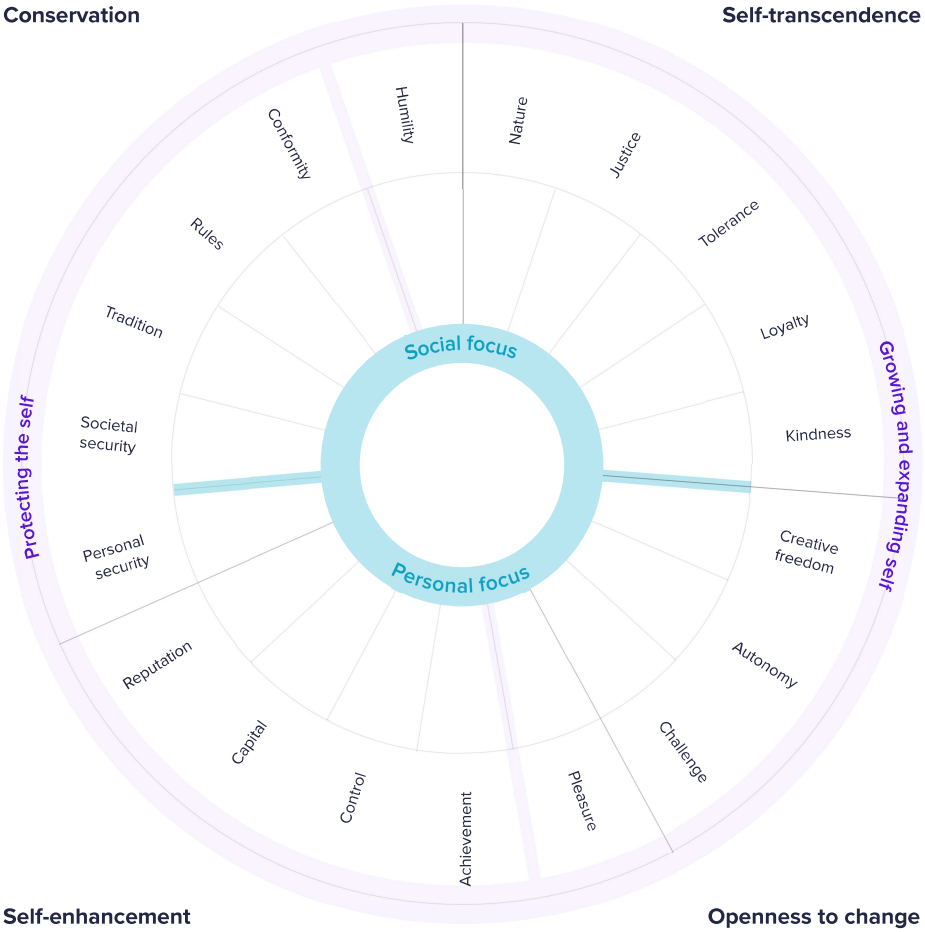
Wisnio helps us differentiate between candidates otherwise similar in profile and experience by simulating how these people would fit into the existing management team.

Employees whose personal values align with their team and organisational values tend to be more motivated and engaged. They find more meaning in their work, contributing to higher levels of job satisfaction and productivity. Teams that share a common set of values are likely to find it easier to make decisions, as these values provide a consistent framework or lens through which options can be evaluated.

While core value alignment is important, diversity in how values are prioritised and expressed can enrich a team.

Hiring managers should recognise the benefits of diverse perspectives and experiences that align under the umbrella of shared core values. Consider how a candidate's values might complement or disrupt the current team dynamics.

Below is the value map of Schwartz Theory of Universal Human Values.



Common Misconceptions of Psychometric Assessments

While the popularity and usage of psychometric assessments in hiring have increased significantly in recent years, many misconceptions and instances of improper use still persist. Let’s address one of the most common myths and provide clarity on how to use these tools effectively.

Psychometric Tests Are a Substitute for Interviews

A prevalent misconception is that psychometric assessments can replace interviews or other parts of the hiring process. This is far from the truth. Psychometric tools, such as Wisnio, offer invaluable insights, but they are not standalone decision-making tools. Instead, they complement other methods, such as interviews and reference checks, by providing additional data to enhance the hiring process.

Psychometric assessments are not designed to evaluate a person in isolation; their purpose is to facilitate more meaningful, candidate-specific interviews. The insights gained from these tools should help hiring managers better understand a candidate’s strengths, preferences, and potential challenges, creating a foundation for open, thoughtful conversations.

Best Practices for using the assessment results:

- **Use Data to Inform, Not Decide:** Leverage psychometric results to prepare personalised interview questions that address gaps, challenges, or areas requiring clarification.
- **Discuss Findings Openly:** Share assessment results with candidates during the interview, encouraging a two-way dialogue. This approach ensures clarity, promotes mutual understanding, and respects the candidate’s perspective.
- **Understand Behavioural Preferences:** Preferred behaviours indicated in assessments do not mean a candidate cannot adapt to other environments. However, doing so may require greater energy and conscious effort. The key is to explore how willing and motivated a candidate is to operate in an environment that demands this adaptability.
- **Avoid Sole Reliance:** Never exclude a candidate based solely on their psychometric results. Always consider the full context of their experience, interviews, and references.
- **Refrain from Assumptions:** Do not make assumptions about a candidate’s personality or values without discussing the findings with them directly.

Psychometric Tests Lack Accuracy or Reliability

Some believe psychometric assessments are unreliable or too subjective. However, well-designed assessments, backed by scientific research, are both valid and reliable when used appropriately. That's why Wisnio uses assessments that are widely tested and use academically proven frameworks.

The values inventory (based on Schwartz's refined values theory) has a mean Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.70 (SD = 0.08) measured across 49 cultural groups. For the four higher-order values, the mean Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient is 0.84 (SD = 0.03).[17]

The personality inventory is based on IPIP120, which is a shortened and simplified version of the NEO PI-R. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients of the 30 personality facets range from 0.63 to 0.88, with three facets with a reliability coefficient of less than 0.7.[18] For the five main dimensions, alphas range from 0.87 to 0.90, with a median of 0.88.[19]

A good reliability score, measured using Cronbach's alpha, typically falls at or above 0.7. Scores above 0.8 are considered very good, and above 0.9, are excellent. In this context, the values inventory demonstrates acceptable reliability for individual values (0.70) and good reliability for broader categories (0.84), making it suitable for general use, particularly in understanding higher-order values.

The personality inventory shows good to excellent reliability for the five main dimensions (0.87 - 0.90) and mostly acceptable reliability for finer traits (ranging from 0.63 to 0.88), with only a few falling below 0.7. These results indicate both tools are reliable for their intended purposes.

Psychometric Assessments Are Biased or Unfair

Critics sometimes argue that psychometric assessments are biased, suggesting they might unfairly disadvantage certain groups. While no assessment tool is entirely free of bias, high-quality psychometric tools are rigorously designed and tested to minimise cultural, gender, and other forms of bias. In fact, these tools are often more objective and reliable than traditional hiring methods, such as unstructured interviews, which are prone to subjective bias.

Psychometric assessments rely on scientific data to evaluate candidates, focusing on measurable traits like competencies, personality, and values. This approach reduces the influence of subjective factors like personal preferences or "gut feelings." For example, instead of favouring a candidate because they share similar experiences or interests, assessments help identify individuals who genuinely complement the existing team in terms of diversity.

Moreover, research shows that teams with diverse perspectives perform better, fostering innovation and problem-solving.[20]

Whereas hiring people solely based on a strong personal connection during an interview can lead to homogeneity, which can ultimately harm team performance. Psychometric assessments allow organisations to focus on team fit and diversity objectively, promoting inclusivity and better decision-making.

Psychometrics Are Expensive and Time-Consuming

While some psychometric tools come with higher costs, there are a variety of options available to suit different

organisational needs and budgets. For instance, traditional tools may require certified psychometric consultants to interpret the results, which adds time and expense.

In contrast, modern tools like Wisnio are designed with business leaders in mind, offering user-friendly, easy-to-interpret insights. Additionally, Wisnio's GenAI-powered chat feature (WisGPT) can clarify any data point, making the process accessible without specialised expertise.

Older assessment methods, which often involved lengthy conversations with psychologists while candidates received no feedback on the results, are becoming outdated. In today's hiring context, these approaches are unnecessary and less candidate-friendly.

> Wisnio's online surveys, **which take just 20–25 minutes to complete,** provide a more streamlined and engaging experience. This ensures the process remains efficient while avoiding loss of candidate interest or attention.

Moreover, Wisnio offers immediate feedback, delivering personal insights to candidates right after completing the surveys. This reduces anxiety and enhances the candidate experience by helping them better understand themselves.

Regardless of the cost of the assessment, the return on investment can be significant. Psychometric tools improve hiring decisions and reduce turnover, which can save organisations substantial time and resources. For context, replacing a bad hire can cost up to 200% of their annual salary. Investing in assessments is a small price to pay to mitigate such risks and improve the overall quality of hires.

Candidates Can Fake Their Responses

It's true that candidates can attempt to fake responses on psychometric assessments, but this is no different from the potential for dishonesty in other stages of the hiring process, such as embellishing a CV, providing fake references, or maintaining falsehoods during interviews. However, manipulating the entire outcome of a psychometric assessment is significantly more difficult.

High-quality assessments, like those used by Wisnio, are designed with safeguards to detect inconsistencies or overly socially desirable answers. These mechanisms ensure that the results remain reliable and reflective of the candidate's true traits. Additionally, psychometric assessments often involve hundreds of questions and statements, making it challenging for individuals to consistently maintain a false persona throughout the process.

If a candidate does manage to go to great lengths to fake responses consistently, it may indicate deeper ethical concerns. Such behaviours are rare, and robust hiring processes that combine assessments, structured interviews, and reference checks typically identify these red flags before a final decision is made.

Example Candidate Profile with Team Benchmark

On the following pages, you will find a Wisnio Candidate Report featuring a team benchmark. The report highlights the profile of Alo Arro, the CEO and Co-Founder of Wisnio.

Wisnio Candidate Profiles

To see how this data looks on the interactive in-product profile, you can watch the video, which explains how the assessment data in Wisnio profiles is presented and how it should be interpreted.

In addition to detailed data on competencies, personality, and values, the Wisnio profile also includes:

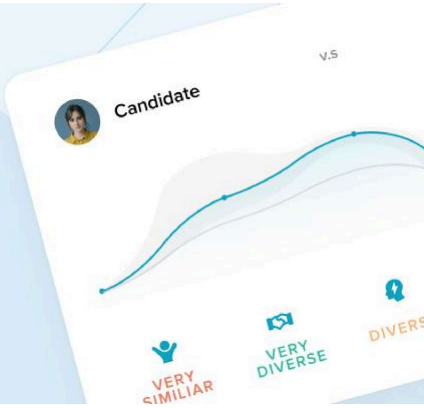
- **Executive Summary:** A concise summary of Alo's LinkedIn profile, created with just one click using Wisnio's GenAI summary assistant. This feature provides a quick overview of his professional background.
- **Key Highlights:** Customisable insights added by the report creator to emphasise relevant details.
- **Wisnio Profile Highlights:** A brief overview of Alo's assessment results, including key insights into his competency strengths, behavioural preferences, and core values.
- **Wisnio Profile Summary:** An optional one-click summary generated by Wisnio's GenAI tool. This feature analyses over 200 data points and provides a clear, accessible summary of the assessment data within a workplace context, making it easy to understand for all stakeholders.

If this report inspires you to explore what your own assessment data might reveal, why not try Wisnio for yourself? Creating a personal account is free, and you can invite up to three friends or colleagues to discover how your team dynamics work. Gain valuable insights into yourself and your professional relationships today!

See it in action

Sign Up to get insights into your own assessment data. Wisnio surveys take just 15-20 minutes to complete.

Create My Own Free Profile



IN WISNIO LINKEDIN DATA IMPORTED

Alo Arro

Chief Revenue Officer (CRO) / Leadership team

alo@wisnio.com +37253302919 https://www.linkedin.com/in/aloarro/

Executive Summary

Alo Arro is a seasoned professional with extensive experience in business development, supply chain management, and the implementation of data-driven processes for hiring and leadership development. As the Co-founder & CEO at Wisnio since January 2016, Arro has been pivotal in guiding the firm to assist team leaders and companies to enhance their hiring success rate significantly. Prior to Wisnio, Arro served as a Business Development Project Manager at Magnum AS in Estonia, where he notably improved warehouse efficiency. Additionally, Arro's role at Bacterfield as Operations Manager was marked by his exceptional handling of supply chain activities during a period of rapid company growth.

Throughout his career, Arro has demonstrated remarkable ability in project management and operational improvements. His achievements include the establishment of a business intelligence team, the development of a Medicine Unit Dose Packaging service in the Baltics, and the enhancement of picking efficiency in a regional modern warehouse. Arro's efforts have consistently resulted in substantial business impacts, evidenced by improved inventory turnover and profitability metrics that he was able to drive through his strategic initiatives.

Arro holds two higher education qualifications in the field of technology and management. He completed his Master of Science cum laude in Industrial Engineering from TalTech – Tallinn University of Technology and has a degree in Operations Research from Eindhoven University of Technology. Arro is multilingual, with proficiency in English and Estonian. His versatility is enhanced by his hands-on experience with modern data warehousing solutions and familiarity with tools such as Tableau.

Highlights:
- Successfully co-founded and has been leading Wisnio since 2016, facilitating an increase in hiring success rate from 50-60% to over 80%.
- Directed the business intelligence team at Magnum AS to transition from Excel-based reporting to a data warehousing solution.
- Spearheaded the launch of the Baltic's first Medicine Unit Dose Packaging service.
- Overhauled warehouse processes to improve efficiency and capacity by over 20%.
- Developed reports leading to a 20% increase in retail chain profitability per shelf meter.

Key highlights

Startup environment

Performs best in a high-growth environment.

Outbound sales

Track record in outbound-driven sales.

Data analytics

Proven ability to improve processes with data.

Wisnio profile

Candidate profile generated by Wisnio

Alo is a rule-oriented achiever who believes in advancing upward through hard work. They consider principles more important than people, which means that sometimes they ignore the feelings of others in order to get the job done. Others might see Alo as no-nonsense, instrumental, hard-working, tense, and reserved.

Top competencies

Competencies Alo is most confident in

Planning and organising

Effectively plans, coordinates, and prioritises work for oneself and others.

Analytical thinking

Analyses information in a logical and systematic manner.

Information seeking

Driven by the desire to enhance one's knowledge and abilities.

Personality

Top behavioral preferences and how they would impact your team

Initiating new projects

They are more active and energetic, which makes them strong at initiating new projects and working on many things at the same time.

Acting confidently

They feel more confident of their skills and abilities, which helps the team aim higher and take on more ambitious challenges.

Challenging authority and tradition

They like to challenge authority and traditions, which makes them great at working with unconventional people and ideas.

Core values

Alo's personal motivators and how they align with the team

Achievement

Success according to social standards.

Reputation

Maintaining one’s public image and avoiding humiliation.

Autonomy

Freedom to determine one’s own actions.

Wisnio Profile Summary

Enhanced with AI

Alo is likely to thrive in a workplace culture that values individual achievement, visible recognition, and independence. They are driven by personal advancement and an ambition to stand out, preferring environments where success is celebrated publicly. Additionally, Alo enjoys the freedom to act autonomously, making decisions based on personal beliefs and independent goals. This combination suggests they will be most engaged in roles offering career development opportunities, recognition, and a degree of independence.

Alo can leverage their behavioral strengths in a team setting by utilizing their methodical and goal-oriented nature, coupled with a competitive and pragmatic approach. They work systematically towards long-term objectives, demonstrating strong impulse control and organization. Their direct communication style and focus on individual success can drive team performance, encouraging others to achieve more. Their preference for practical and proven methods ensures stability and efficiency within the team.

Alo's combination of competencies suggests they excel in tackling business challenges that require meticulous planning, organizing resources, and optimizing productivity. They possess strong analytical skills, enabling them to decompose complex problems and identify patterns to draw meaningful conclusions. Additionally, their keen business acumen allows them to leverage internal insights and market knowledge effectively, advancing organizational goals and identifying business opportunities swiftly.

Alo's superpower lies in their ambitious nature combined with a methodical and analytical approach, making them a valuable asset in achieving strategic objectives. However, their competitive, low-Agreeableness trait could challenge team harmony if not managed carefully. Fortunately, the Leadership Team they would join shares similar values and traits, such as high Conscientiousness and low Agreeableness, suggesting a harmonious integration. Emphasizing Alo's organizational strengths and analytical mindset can complement the team's focus on achievement and goal-oriented tasks, fostering mutual growth.

Competency scores

TOP-RANKED

The candidate prioritized this competency, indicating high confidence. Validate with examples during the interview.

NEUTRAL

The candidate gave this an average priority, indicating moderate confidence. Assess track record and growth potential.

LOW-RANKED

The candidate rated this lower, indicating low confidence. Explore reasons and evaluate its importance.

Must have

Critical competencies for the role. Validate thoroughly during interviews with all candidates.

TOP-RANKED

Achievement orientation

Driven to meet or exceed a standard of excellence.

NEUTRAL

Developing others

Encourages professional and personal growth in others.

TOP-RANKED

Leading teams

Readily takes on a role as a group leader.

Important to have

Differentiating competencies for the role. Validate for final candidates to determine their potential.

LOW-RANKED

Ensuring accountability

Takes ownership of commitments, encouraging others to do the same.

TOP-RANKED

Analytical thinking

Analyses information in a logical and systematic manner.

LOW-RANKED

Building relationships

Develops relationships and builds formal and informal networks.

Nice to have

Beneficial but not essential. Explore during interviews if candidates are closely matched.

NEUTRAL

Business acumen

Recognises and takes advantage of new business opportunities.

NEUTRAL

Resilience

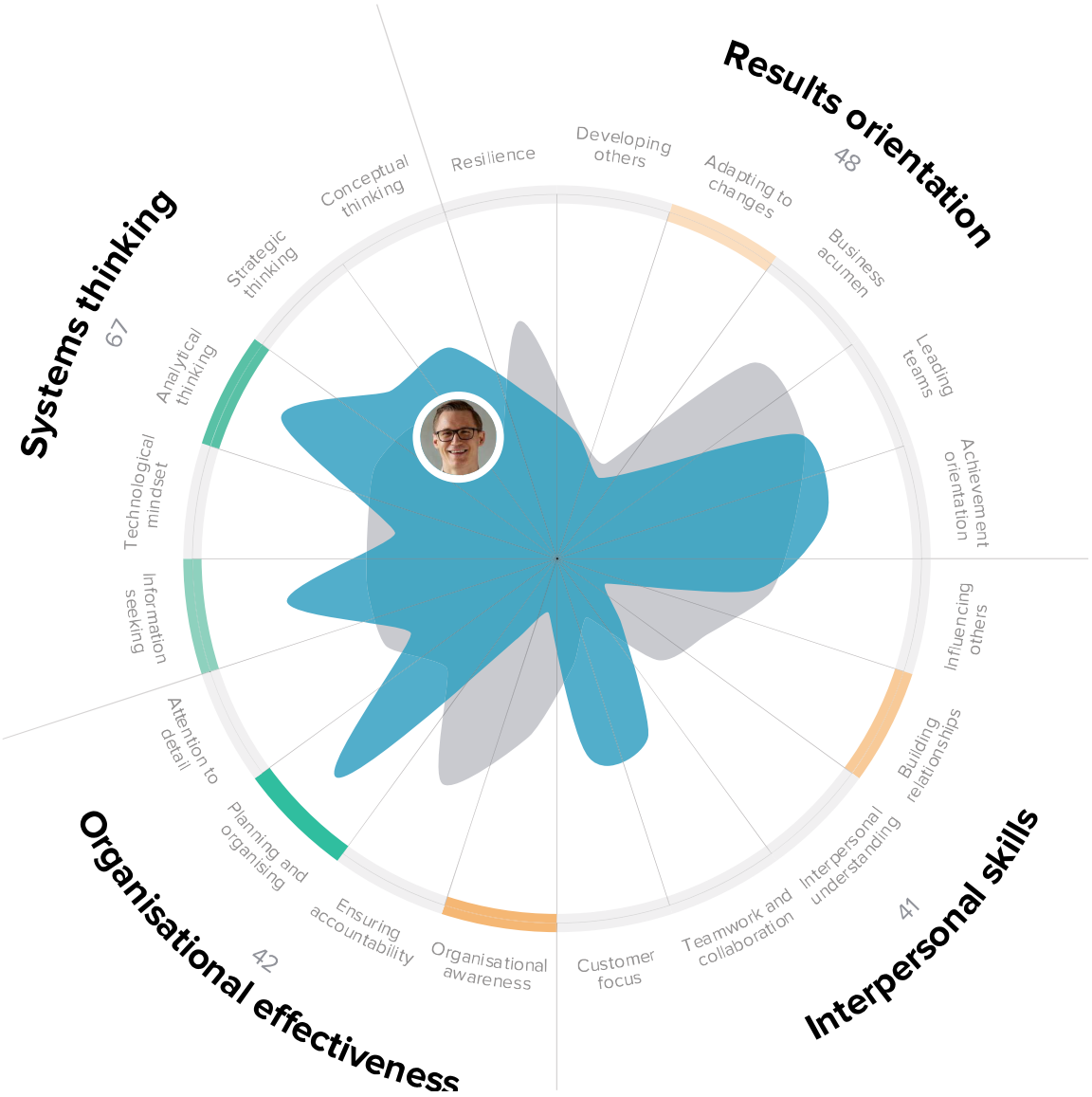
Stays calm and maintains high performance under pressure.

TOP-RANKED

Planning and organising

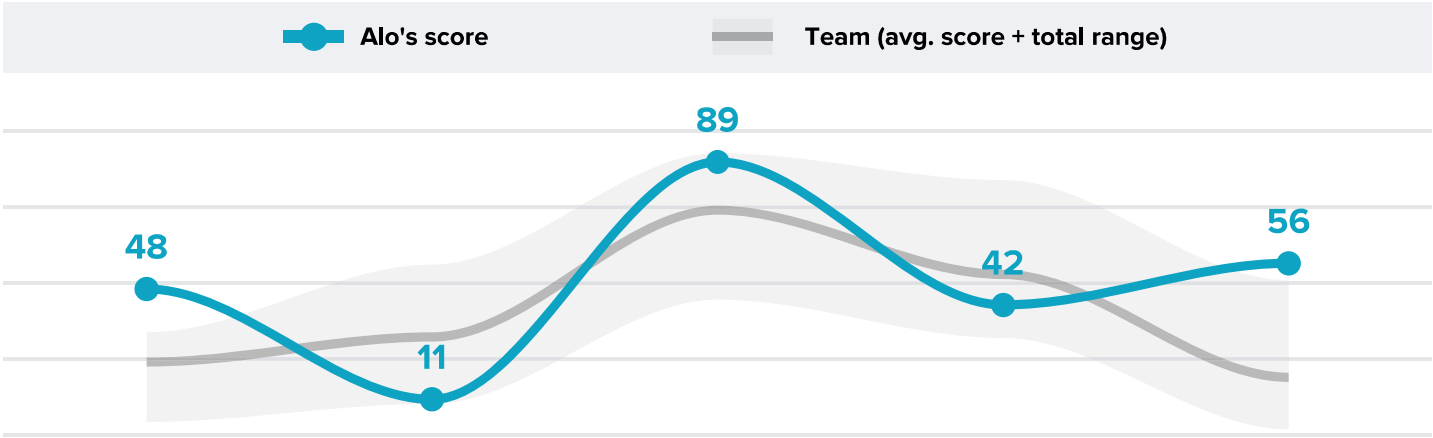
Effectively plans, coordinates, and prioritises work for oneself and others.

Alo's competency map



Personality map

Understand the unique behaviors Alo brings to the team and think about how this would benefit your team.

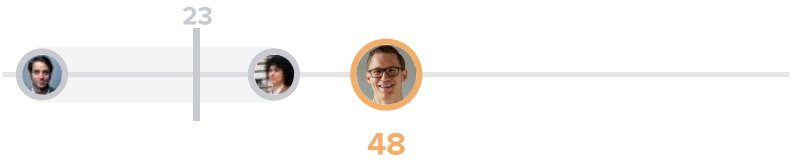


Extraversion	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Emotional-range	Openness
Similar	Similar	Similar	Similar	Diverse

Extraversion

Similar

Seeking energy by being in the company of others.



Reserved

Prefers independent work, focuses on complex problems and tends to be thoughtful.

Outgoing

Tends to be action oriented, builds relationships and is good at persuading and negotiating.

Stronger than the team at

Initiating new projects

They are more active and energetic, which makes them strong at initiating new projects and working on many things at the same time.

Not comfortable with

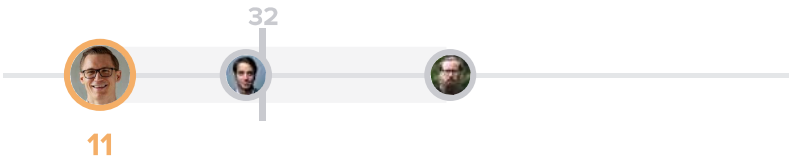
Slow work pace

They may struggle to focus on a single task and bring things to completion before taking on new challenges.

Agreeableness

Similar

Supporting and cooperating with others.



Challenging

Tends to challenge ideas, pushes others to achieve more, and is more willing to make tough decisions.

Supportive

Tends to compromise to avoid conflict, develops and supports others, and deals with people's concerns.

Stronger than the team at

Promoting their skills and abilities

They feel more confident of their skills and abilities and can help the team set more ambitious goals and claim credit for their accomplishments.

Not comfortable with

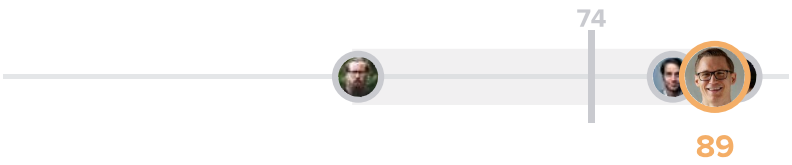
Letting others take credit

They are less humble about their skills and abilities, so they find it irritating when people question their actions or take credit for their accomplishments.

Conscientiousness

Similar

Acting in an organized and goal-oriented way.



Spontaneous

Mostly easy-going, keeps things open to change and jumps between tasks.

Methodical

Tends to set clear objectives and works in a systematic way towards long-term goals.

Stronger than the team at

Acting confidently

They feel more confident of their skills and abilities, which helps the team aim higher and take on more ambitious challenges.

Not comfortable with

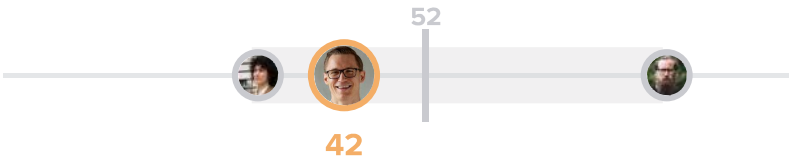
Evaluating risks objectively

They believe that they have everything needed for achieving success, so they might become overconfident and underestimate the time and resources required to complete a task.

Emotional-range

Similar

Ability to remain calm and balanced.



Calm

Copes well with challenging people, makes rational decisions under pressure, and is less easily upset.

Reactive

Notices potential threats, makes careful decisions, and solves problems before they occur.

Stronger than the team at

Handling public pressure

They are less likely to feel ashamed or embarrassed, which makes them stronger at handling criticism and public pressure.

Not comfortable with

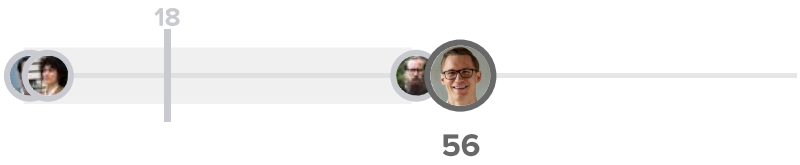
Analyzing personal shortcomings

They may struggle to notice their shortcomings and potential weaknesses, so they may need some support to determine the areas of personal development.

Openness

Diverse

Receptivity to new ideas and experiences.



Pragmatic

Works well with factual information, considers practical perspective and prefers proven methods.

Creative

Tends to prefer intellectual work, tackles unfamiliar problems, and embraces variety and change.

Stronger than the team at

Challenging authority and tradition

They like to challenge authority and traditions, which makes them great at working with unconventional people and ideas.

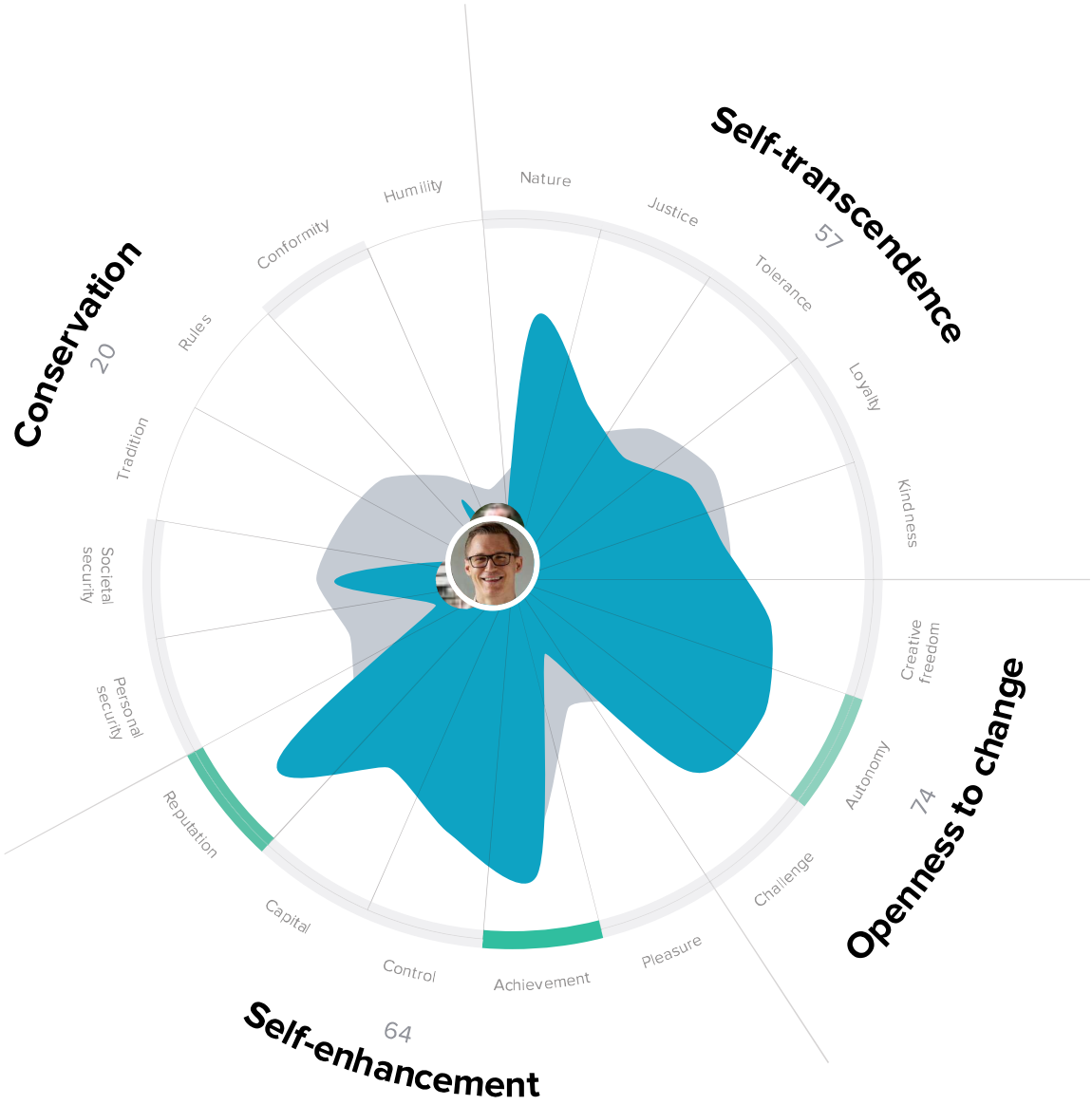
Not comfortable with

Dealing with dogmatic people

They may find it difficult to deal with people that are somewhat dogmatic and closed-minded.

Values map

Think about whether the role and the environment are aligned with Alo's expectations.

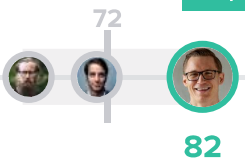


Alo's top motivators

Most motivating and would thrive when aligned with the team.

Achievement

Super aligned



Less Important

Cares less about socially desirable goals, doesn't need much recognition.

Very Important

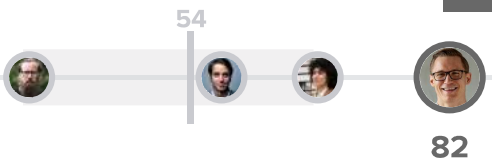
Sets ambitious goals, desires advancement and recognition.

Alo's attitude

They are motivated when they have ambitious goals and many opportunities for advancement, and where they can receive recognition for their accomplishments.

Reputation

Well aligned



Less Important

Humble about their achievements, more willing to make mistakes.

Very Important

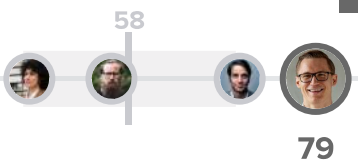
Looks for public recognition, high social status, and visible roles.

Alo's attitude

They are quite motivated by public recognition and high social status, so they would prefer to work on highly prestigious projects and have a more visible role.

Autonomy

Well aligned



Less Important

Prefers cooperation, clear guidelines, collectively agreed upon goals.

Very Important

Acts based on personal beliefs, sets their own goals, makes independent decisions.

Alo's attitude

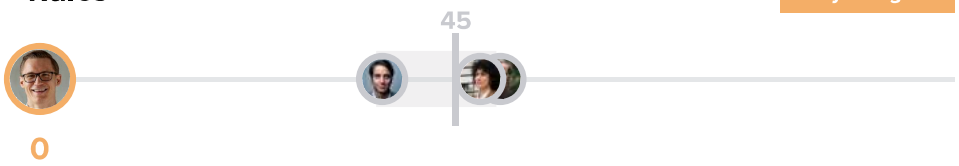
They need a lot of freedom to act according to their internal beliefs, set their own goals, and make decisions on their own.

Lowest priority to Alo

Might want to avoid or even oppose when not aligned with the team.

Rules

May disagree



Less Important

Avoids self-restriction, wants to use their own judgement.

Very Important

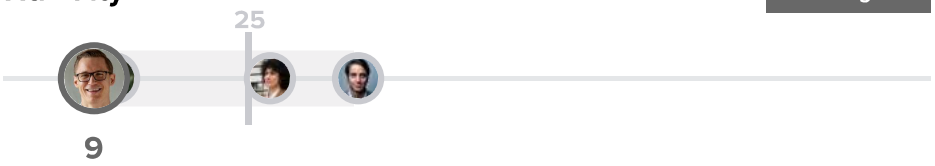
Looks for a well-structured workplace, clear guidelines, and specific goals.

Alo's attitude

They prefer to avoid self-restriction and want to use their own judgement instead of committing to formal rules and guidelines.

Humility

Well aligned



Less Important

Tends to be more ambitious, expects public recognition.

Very Important

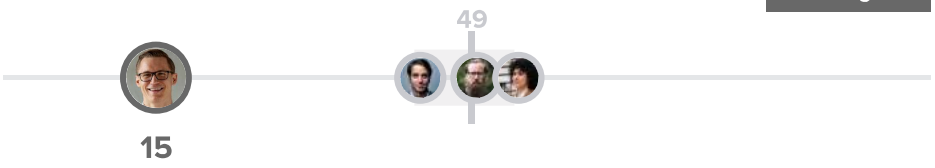
Promotes collaboration and cooperation, tends to be self-effacing.

Alo's attitude

They are less humble about their personal accomplishments, tend to set more ambitious plans, and expect more public recognition to feel energized.

Tradition

Well aligned



Less Important

Cares less about traditional practices, prefers change and novelty.

Very Important

Commits to accepted customs, respects traditions and seeks a strong culture.

Alo's attitude

They put less emphasis on the preservation of traditional practices, and tend to prefer to pursue change and novelty in their work.

STAGES 7 & 8

Making the Hiring Decision and the Employment Offer

Hiring decisions are often clouded by biases, gut feelings, or subjective impressions. Statements such as “I knew when they walked in” or “We just clicked during the interview” highlight a flawed approach that can result in poor hires. Studies show that **50% of hiring managers regret their decisions within a year.**[21]

This chapter brings together all the previous steps in the hiring process, emphasising how data gathered at each stage—from the hiring scorecard to interviews and assessments—leads to more objective, informed decisions. By using this data effectively, you can avoid pitfalls and make a strategic choice that aligns with both the role’s requirements and your organisation’s goals.

Why Bias in Hiring is Problematic

Bias and subjective impressions are common pitfalls that can skew hiring decisions. Common consequences include:

- **Rejection of qualified candidates for irrelevant reasons:** Judgements based on superficial traits rather than competencies.
- **Favouritism towards charismatic candidates:** Strong personalities may be favoured, even if they lack the necessary skills or values.
- **Dominance of stronger voices in decision-making:** Hiring discussions can be influenced by assertive stakeholders, sidelining more balanced perspectives.

Decision-Making Discussion I

Watch the video to see an example of how bias can affect hiring decisions.

The evaluations reveal how subjective impressions can overshadow objective data, leading to flawed outcomes: Miriam is dismissed as “too immature” despite her passion and enthusiasm; Daniela is labelled “unsettling” based on personal impressions rather than facts; and Hendrik, though experienced, is initially criticised for lacking visible passion.

Gut-Driven Decisions

Many companies rely on gut feelings or personal preferences when hiring. These instincts often lead to unproductive debates dominated by the strongest personalities in the room, resulting in candidates being dismissed for irrelevant reasons.

Gut-Driven Decisions

This video highlights how gut-driven hiring decisions (also known as feel-and-like decisions) often derail the process and result in poor hires. When the focus shifts to personal chemistry rather than role-specific criteria, strong candidates can be overlooked.

How to Reduce Bias and Make a Data-Based Decision

To counteract bias and make informed hiring decisions, adopting a scorecard-based framework for evaluating candidates is essential. A scorecard is a structured set of criteria against which all candidates are evaluated. This process not only ensures consistency but also helps keep the focus on relevant data rather than subjective impressions.

The importance of setting up a scorecard was discussed earlier in this book (Stage 1: Position Analysis). If the hiring process wasn't thoughtfully structured from the beginning, creating meaningful, comparable data at the decision-making stage becomes a challenge. This is why a robust hiring framework from the start is crucial for a data-driven approach.

Why the Hiring Process Must Be Structured from the Start

If you haven't used a structured scorecard from the outset, it becomes difficult to retroactively turn disparate notes into comparable data. Inconsistencies arise when:

- Each stakeholder asked different questions during interviews.
- Irrelevant or redundant information was gathered instead of data aligned with role requirements and competencies.
- Some evaluations were influenced by subjective impressions rather than clear evidence.

This lack of structure leads to confusion and unproductive discussions, where strong personalities may dominate the conversation and biases can overshadow facts.

To make unbiased, data-driven decisions, you must establish hiring criteria and compile a scorecard early in the process. This scorecard should be used consistently during each candidate interview to collect relevant data.

Here's what an effective data collection process looks like:

Define Clear Role-Based Criteria

- Establish clear success criteria at the outset by aligning on the key competencies, key requirements, and outcomes required for the role.

Standardise Interview Questions

- Ask the same role-specific questions from all candidates. This ensures you're collecting comparable data rather than anecdotal feedback.
- Behavioural interview questions aligned with your scorecard criteria help evaluate how candidates have performed in real-life scenarios.
- Prepare some candidate-specific questions related to their personality and values.

Document Evaluations Consistently

- Interviewers should take notes and score candidates immediately after the interview. This reduces the impact of hindsight bias or memory distortions.
- Each stakeholder should use the same scorecard to create comparable, objective evaluations.

Laszlo Bock, former SVP of People Operations at Google, stated in Work Rules! that "structured interviews and data-based evaluations can double your chances of hiring the right person".[22] Google's use of scorecards contributed to their reputation for building highly effective teams.

In summary, the scorecard approach offers several key benefits that enhance the fairness and effectiveness of the hiring process:

- Firstly, it **ensures consistency** by evaluating all candidates using the same predefined criteria, creating a level playing field.
- Secondly, it **promotes objectivity** by focusing on measurable attributes rather than subjective impressions, reducing the influence of unconscious bias.
- Lastly, it **supports data-driven decisions** by enabling clear comparisons between candidates, allowing hiring managers to base their discussions and final choices on evidence rather than instinct or personal preferences.

Integrating Psychometric Assessments into Decision-Making

Psychometric assessments provide objective insights into a candidate's competencies, personality, and values, helping reduce bias (less gut-driven decisions) and ensure better hiring decisions. Tools like Wisnio's Candidate Profile offer a structured approach to evaluating team fit and long-term potential, allowing organisations to build cohesive and high-performing leadership teams.

Here's a breakdown of the key elements provided by Wisnio's Candidate Profile:

- Leadership Competency Data: Highlights the candidate's core strengths and areas for development, indicating their readiness for leadership responsibilities.
- Personality Map: Assesses natural behaviours, motivations, and interpersonal dynamics, showing how the candidate interacts within a team and adapts to challenges.
- Values Map: Provides insights into the candidate's core values, ensuring cultural alignment and promoting collaboration while identifying potential areas of conflict.

Psychometric assessments should not replace structured interviews or scorecards but should be used as additional input to enrich the evaluation process. Combining this data with scorecard-based frameworks allows for a more comprehensive assessment of each candidate.

Although competency- and requirement-based evaluations should be standardised for consistency, interviews can still be personalised using candidate assessment data. This means ensuring all candidates are asked the same role-specific questions and their answers are scored against the scorecard criteria. However, when incorporating assessment data, you should customise follow-up questions to address each candidate's unique profile and insights.

For example, Personality Fit: If a candidate's profile indicates a preference for working independently but the job requires a lot of teamwork, before evaluating, you can ask, "Can you describe a time when you had to adapt to a highly collaborative team environment?"

One of the key benefits of psychometric assessments is that they help evaluate two often-overlooked aspects of decision-making:

Personality Diversity

Psychometric assessments can help prevent "groupthink" by identifying candidates whose personalities and leadership styles differ from existing team members. This diversity of thought fosters innovation and improved business outcomes. A Forbes Insights study found that diversity is a key driver of innovation, with 56% of senior executives strongly agreeing that diversity helps drive innovation.[23]

Values Fit

Shared values within a team contribute to trust, collaboration, and long-term engagement. According to research by Qualtrics, employees whose values align with their organisation are 39% more likely to feel a sense of accomplishment at work and 70% more likely to recommend their workplace.[24] Conversely, if the goal is to "shake up" the culture and bring fresh perspectives, candidates with different core values may be beneficial in driving change.

These two areas could be summarised and evaluated as two extra data points for the decision making–trait diversity and value fit. Using this data as input for the interviews alongside structured scorecards allows for a more holistic evaluation.

Using Data for Hiring Decisions

During the decision-making process, it is important to ensure that all stakeholders contribute meaningfully. Feedback should be collected from all interviewers and stakeholders involved in the process, but the focus should remain on aggregated data rather than individual opinions to minimise subjective input and prevent dominant voices from influencing the outcome unfairly.

Once the data has been gathered, it should be analysed holistically, comparing candidates based on their scorecard results, including aspects such as trait diversity and values fit. This helps identify which candidate aligns more closely with the role's requirements and team dynamics. It is also advisable to assign different weights to certain criteria based on the role's priorities, ensuring that the most critical attributes carry appropriate significance in the decision-making process.

The next video illustrates how scorecards and data-based evaluation can transform hiring decisions.

Decision-Making Discussion II

You will see the stakeholders analyse the candidates using Wisnio's scorecard system. While initial opinions favor Miriam for her energy, the data shows Hendrik is a better match due to his experience and maturity.

Ultimately, while the data provides invaluable guidance, the final decision should rest with the CEO or hiring leader to maintain alignment with the organisation's broader strategic goals and ensure accountability for the outcome.

"Despite many people being involved in the process, the ultimate decision should be made solo. Only the CEO has comprehensive knowledge of the criteria, the rationale for the criteria, all of the feedback from interviewers and references, and the relative importance of the various stakeholders. Consensus decisions about executives almost always sway the process away from strength and toward lack of weakness. It's a lonely job, but somebody has to do it."
— Ben Horowitz, The Hard Thing About Hard Things

Who Would You Choose?

At this point, you've seen the strengths and weaknesses of both Miriam and Hendrik. If you were the CEO, who would you choose? Watch the following video to see the decision and the reasoning behind it.

The CEO ultimately selects Hendrik for the role, citing his competencies and shared values as the key reasons. While Hendrik has weaknesses, his ability to get the work done and provide honest feedback outweighed other considerations. Breaking the decision-making process into pieces allowed for greater clarity and confidence in the choice.

In the video, you saw Wisnio's hiring tools in action. Wisnio supports best-practice hiring processes from start to finish. The available tools for structured and data-driven hiring decisions are listed below. Feel free to try out Wisnio for free—click here to get started.

Job Analysis tools | Team Benchmark | Success profiles | Candidate evaluation | Structured interviewing | Psychometric Assessments | Candidate Comparison | Onboarding Workshop

Pamela Ruebusch
CEO, TSI Group Inc.

The Wisnio platform brings more logical, linear thinking into the hiring process leading to leaders to be more confident when making hiring decisions knowing that their decisions are based on data and science and not on gut feeling alone.

Communicating the Decision to Candidates

Once the hiring decision is made it’s time to communicate the decision to the candidates. Effectively communicating hiring decisions is crucial for maintaining a positive employer brand and fostering goodwill among all candidates.

Here's how to approach this process:

For Unsuccessful Candidates

Provide Constructive Feedback: Offering specific, actionable feedback helps candidates understand their strengths and areas for improvement. This not only aids their professional development but also leaves a positive impression of your organisation.

According to LinkedIn’s Talent Trends report, 94% of candidates desire feedback after interviews.[25]

Maintain Respect and Transparency: Deliver rejection messages with empathy and clarity. A respectful approach can enhance your employer brand, making candidates more likely to consider future opportunities with your company. Remember, your current candidates might also be your future clients, so it's best not to burn any bridges.

For Successful Candidates

- **Clarify Role Expectations:** Clearly outline responsibilities, objectives, and success metrics to ensure mutual understanding and alignment. This transparency sets the foundation for a successful working relationship.
- **Highlight Benefits:** Detail compensation, perks, and growth opportunities to make the offer compelling. Emphasising unique benefits can differentiate your offer in a competitive job market.
- **Provide Room for Negotiation:** Be open to discussing terms to ensure alignment before onboarding. Flexibility during this stage demonstrates respect for the candidate's needs and can lead to higher acceptance rates.

By implementing these practices, you not only enhance the candidate experience but also strengthen your organisation's reputation, leading to long-term benefits in talent acquisition and retention.

Once the candidate has accepted the offer, there’s still one more step to go. It’s a common misconception that the hiring process ends once the offer is signed, but in reality, it is only truly successful when the new hire is onboarded and reaches their peak performance. More about this in the next chapter.

Self-Check Quiz: Hiring Decision

Test your understanding of the concepts covered in this chapter. Reflect on each question and select the most appropriate answer.

18. Why do hiring decisions often go wrong?

a) There are too many candidates to choose from.

b) They rely on gut feelings and subjective impressions rather than data.

c) Candidates provide too much information during interviews.

d) Hiring decisions are made too quickly.

19. What are the main benefits of using a scorecard in the hiring process?

a) It reduces the number of interviews needed.

b) It ensures consistency, objectivity, and data-based decision-making.

c) It focuses primarily on soft skills and first impressions.

d) It simplifies the negotiation process.

20.How should psychometric assessments be used during the hiring process?

a) As a replacement for interviews.

b) As supplementary data to enrich the evaluation process.

c) To replace scorecard-based evaluations.

d) To see who’s personality you don’t like.

21. What is "trait diversity" in the context of hiring?

a) Ensuring candidates have a range of technical and non-technical skills.

b) Hiring individuals who think differently and have unique personality traits compared to existing team members.

c) Ensuring that candidates have a broad educational background.

d) Hiring multiple candidates for the same role to cover various tasks.

Review your responses and compare them to the answers provided at the end of the book. Take note of any areas where further study might be beneficial.

STAGE 9

Onboarding The New Hire

Onboarding is the critical final step of the best-practice hiring process, yet its importance is often underestimated. While creating a warm and welcoming first day is important, effective onboarding goes far beyond that.

Employee onboarding is a comprehensive process aimed at integrating new hires into the organisation. It includes introductions, orientation, training, establishing performance expectations, and providing the necessary tools and support for success. Typically lasting from a few weeks to the first three months, onboarding is pivotal in shaping a new hire's perception of the organisation, fostering engagement, and driving early productivity. By investing in thoughtful onboarding, organisations can set the foundation for long-term employee satisfaction and success.

Why Onboarding Matters

The financial implications of hiring are substantial. Replacing an employee can cost between 6 to 9 months of their annual salary, encompassing recruitment, training, and lost productivity expenses. For senior executives or highly specialised positions, these costs can escalate to approximately 200% of the employee's annual salary. [26]

Effective onboarding minimises this risk, addressing potential issues early and setting the stage for long-term success.

In a study by the Brandon Hall Group, researchers found that a strong onboarding process improved new hire retention by 82%. Additionally, it was found that strong onboarding also improved the productivity of new hires by over 70%.[27]

Conversely, poor onboarding leads to disengagement, unmet expectations, and early turnover. A disorganised or unsupported onboarding process can result in new hires feeling overwhelmed or unsure of their role, increasing the likelihood that they will leave within their first year or during the 3 months probationary period.

The Importance Of Onboarding

Watch the mini-lecture to learn more about why onboarding is vital for both individual and team success.

So why does employee onboarding matter? The simple answer is that it can save organisations a lot of time, money and other resources.

A robust onboarding process is not merely a formality—it's a strategic investment in employee engagement, productivity, and retention, ensuring that new hires become long-term contributors to organisational success. Reflect on your own onboarding experiences—were they structured and supportive, or disorganised and unhelpful? Consider how these experiences shaped your integration and performance.

First Day in the Office I

This example highlights how ineffective onboarding can negatively affect a new hire's motivation, confidence, and engagement, reinforcing the need for a structured and thoughtful approach.

What Onboarding Is—and Isn't

Onboarding is not merely a procedural checklist involving office rules, safety protocols, and access codes. While these basics are important, true onboarding is a comprehensive, thoughtful process that extends well beyond administrative formalities. It is designed to help the new hire integrate into the organisation effectively and contribute to its goals.

A well-designed onboarding experience should focus on three key objectives:

1. **Role Preparation:** Equipping the new hire with the resources, information, and confidence needed to thrive in their role.
2. **Team and Organisational Alignment:** Providing insights into team dynamics and organisational goals to ensure a sense of belonging and direction.
3. **Stakeholder Readiness:** Ensuring that managers and colleagues are aligned and prepared to support the new hire's integration and growth.

Onboarding extends well beyond the first day and typically spans the first 100 to 120 days. This extended period allows the new hire to build momentum, establish relationships, and understand expectations.

Getting Onboarding Right: The First Day

The first day sets the tone for the employee's experience and can have a lasting impact on their engagement and confidence. A structured first day signals that the organisation is prepared and invested in the new hire's success.

The first day is pivotal in shaping a new employee's perception and engagement. To ensure a positive start:

- **Practical Preparations:** Ensure the workspace is ready, including a functional laptop and necessary tools. This attention to detail demonstrates organisational readiness and value for the new hire.
- **Dedicated Time with the Hiring Manager: T**he manager should allocate time to welcome, guide, and inform the new hire, providing clarity on role expectations and immediate objectives.
- **Team Introduction:** Arrange a social event or meeting to introduce the new hire to the team, fostering early relationships and a sense of belonging.
- **Stakeholder Meetings:** Schedule individual meetings to discuss role expectations, key responsibilities, and immediate goals, ensuring alignment from the outset.

First Day in the Office II

Watch the following video to see how a well-executed first day can make a difference. A positive first-day experience can significantly impact employee engagement and retention.

The Importance of Team Understanding

Fostering collaboration and minimising conflicts is essential for building a cohesive and productive team. A team workshop during onboarding provides an ideal opportunity to align expectations, strengthen relationships, and promote effective communication.

These sessions help the new hire understand the team's dynamics and their own role within it, while also enabling the team to learn about the new hire's working style, strengths, and motivations.

A key objective of these workshops is to identify individual and collective strengths that can facilitate collaboration. By discussing team workflows and responsibilities openly, potential collaboration opportunities become clear, and misunderstandings can be addressed before they arise. Open discussions about working styles and expectations also build trust, creating an environment where team members feel supported and valued.

If psychometric assessments, such as Wisnio profiles, were conducted earlier in the process, they can provide valuable insights during these sessions:

- **Personalised Development Plans:** Assessment data can inform tailored training and development strategies that align with the new hire's strengths and areas for improvement, taking into consideration also the caps in the team current skills.
- **Enhanced Team Integration:** Sharing relevant aspects of the new hire's profile—such as their leadership approach or preferred communication style—with the team helps foster mutual understanding and improves collaboration.
- **Improved Communication Strategies:** The assessment results can guide team members in adapting their communication to suit the new hire's preferences, building rapport and promoting trust from the start.
- **Values Alignment:** The values data can highlight the motivational drivers of both the new hire and the existing team, helping to align expectations and minimise potential cultural clashes. Understanding shared and differing values allows managers to tailor their leadership approach and foster a more harmonious working environment.

How to Use Wisnio for Onboarding

You can watch a following video to see how the data on the Team and Candidate profiles could be used for onboarding session:

By using psychometric insights during onboarding, organisations can make the integration process more personalised and impactful. This approach not only strengthens team cohesion but also supports the new hire's transition, increasing their sense of belonging and overall job satisfaction. A well-executed onboarding experience that focuses on team understanding and collaboration can significantly boost retention and long-term engagement.

The First Weeks: Building Momentum

The early weeks should immerse the new hire into the organisation and create opportunities for meaningful connections and role clarity. This phase isn't just about paperwork or formalities—it's about helping the new hire navigate their new environment and build early wins.

Engagement in Key Meetings: Introductions to stakeholders, collaborators, clients, and partners during the first few weeks provide the new hire with a broader understanding of the organisational ecosystem. For example, attending cross-departmental strategy meetings can help them see how their role contributes to overarching goals. Structured introductions, such as "meet-and-greet" sessions or team lunches, can foster rapport and break down silos early on.

Access to Essential Materials: Ensure the new hire has comprehensive access to relevant documentation, such as operational guides, organisational charts, and team plans. Beyond simply handing over documents, managers can walk the new hire through key materials and explain their practical application. For instance, reviewing previous team projects can provide valuable context and examples of expected outcomes. This approach helps the new hire absorb critical information more effectively and shortens their learning curve.

Development of a 100-Day Plan: Collaboratively work with the new hire to outline a structured 100-day plan that includes immediate goals, “quick wins,” and longer-term objectives. Quick wins—such as successfully managing a small project or resolving an operational issue—can build confidence and establish credibility. The plan should also include timelines for achieving key milestones and define how success will be measured.

A clear and achievable 100-day plan serves as a roadmap, providing the new hire with a sense of purpose and direction while also aligning their efforts with organisational priorities.

First 100 Days: Execution and Alignment

The 100-day period marks the transition from orientation to active contribution. During this phase, the focus shifts from familiarisation to performance and full integration into the team.

Focus on the 100-Day Plan: Encourage the new hire to focus on their established goals and track progress against defined milestones. Regularly reviewing these goals with the hiring manager ensures that any obstacles are addressed promptly. For example, if the new hire is responsible for optimising a process within the first three months, consistent check-ins can help them stay on track and refine their approach based on feedback.

Consistent Coaching and Feedback: The role of the hiring manager doesn’t end after the first day—it evolves into that of a coach and mentor. Providing regular, constructive feedback—both formal and informal—reinforces the new hire’s strengths and addresses development areas before they become larger issues. A 30-, 60-, and 90-day review structure can help frame performance discussions and provide opportunities for feedback loops.

Scheduled One-on-One and Team Meetings: Regular one-on-one meetings create a safe space for the new hire to ask questions, raise concerns, and receive direct guidance. These meetings should go beyond task reviews to discuss how the new hire is adapting, whether they feel aligned with team expectations, and how their role can evolve as they grow.

Team meetings also play a crucial role in reinforcing integration by encouraging collaboration and knowledge-sharing. For example, having the new hire present their insights or progress during team updates can foster a sense of contribution and belonging.

The Role of Feedback and 360-Degree Reviews

Regular feedback is one of the most effective tools for helping the new hire gain confidence and improve their performance. Incorporating 360-degree reviews during onboarding allows feedback to come not only from managers but also from peers, cross-functional collaborators, and even clients where relevant. This multi-dimensional feedback helps the new hire understand their strengths from different perspectives and identify areas where they can adjust to meet team expectations.

For example, feedback from a peer about communication styles in meetings may help the new hire adapt and improve their interactions. Similarly, feedback from a client after an early project can build the new hire's external credibility and help shape future approaches.

With a structured onboarding process in place, your new hire is set up for long-term success.

Self-Check Quiz: Onboarding the New Hire

Test your understanding of the concepts covered in this chapter. Reflect on each question and select the most appropriate answer.

22. What is the primary goal of employee onboarding?
a) To introduce new hires to office rules and safety protocols.
b) To help new hires integrate successfully and contribute to organisational goals.
c) To finalise the new hire's compensation package.
d) To assign the new hire their first major project immediately.

23. How long does a typical onboarding process last for new hires?
a) One week
b) Two to three weeks
c) One month
d) 100 to 120 days

24. How can psychometric assessments support onboarding?
a) By determining whether the hire should be dismissed.
b) By providing insights into the new hire's strengths, working style, and values.

c) By replacing the onboarding process entirely.

d) By showing what the employee can't do.

25. What should a 100-day onboarding plan include?

a) A list of company rules and regulations.

b) Immediate goals, quick wins, and longer-term objectives.

c) A review of previous hires' performance.

d) A focus solely on independent projects.

26. What is the purpose of 360-degree feedback during onboarding?

a) To gather feedback from all stakeholders to provide a well-rounded assessment.

b) To determine the candidate's eligibility for promotion.

c) To finalise the team's quarterly goals.

d) To monitor the new hire's schedule and time management.

Conclusion: Elevating Executive Hiring to a Strategic Advantage

Throughout this book, we have explored the intricate components that shape a successful executive hiring process. From understanding the critical importance of position analysis to conducting structured interviews, reference checks, and psychometric assessments, the journey to selecting the right leaders requires both strategy and precision.

Key Takeaways

- **Structured Approach:** A defined hiring process with clear stages—from position analysis to onboarding—enhances decision-making and minimises costly errors.
- **Behavioural and Data-Driven Insights:** Relying on hiring scorecards, structured interviews, competency frameworks, and psychometric assessments empowers hiring managers to make decisions based on evidence rather than intuition.
- **Cultural and Organisational Fit:** Effective hiring extends beyond basic role requirements—it involves selecting individuals whose values align with the organisation and team dynamics.
- **Avoiding Pitfalls:** Common mistakes, such as rushing to fill roles or relying solely on gut-feelings, can undermine the process. Adopting a methodical approach that prioritises role-specific needs ensures greater success.

Putting It All Together

Hiring at the executive level is a high-stakes endeavour, but by adhering to a structured, data-informed framework, you can build a team that drives innovation and long-term success. Each step—position analysis, sourcing, screening, interviewing, reference checks, hiring decision and onboarding—plays a pivotal role in building the foundation for strong leadership.

Executive hiring is not merely about filling vacancies; it’s about shaping the future of your organisation. By following the best practices outlined in this guide, business leaders can make hiring a strategic advantage, enhancing team cohesion and organisational performance.

Let this guide serve as a blueprint, but remember that the heart of successful hiring lies in thoughtful leadership, ongoing reflection, and a commitment to continuous improvement. Your diligence today paves the way for tomorrow's growth and success.

Answer Key

The Best Practice Hiring Process

1. What should be the best starting point for a good hiring process?
Correct Answer: c) Stakeholders have analysed the position and agreed on what the hire must achieve and who they are looking for.
Explanation: A clear understanding of the role and alignment among stakeholders is critical for defining the hiring process and ensuring success.

2. What is the outcome of an interviewing process?
Correct Answer: a) All the necessary information is collected to choose 1–2 persons to continue with.
Explanation: The purpose of the interview process is to gather sufficient data to narrow down your candidate pool for the next stage.

3. What is the recommended approach to hiring according to this chapter?
Correct Answer: b) Slow down and follow a structured process to ensure better long-term results.
Explanation: Taking time to carefully evaluate candidates through a structured process leads to better hiring outcomes and minimises costly mistakes.

Analysing a Position

4. What is the primary benefit of structured position mapping?
Correct Answer: b) It ensures alignment among stakeholders and builds a strong foundation for hiring.
Explanation: Structured position mapping facilitates clear expectations, better sourcing, and informed decision-making, ultimately improving hiring outcomes.

5. Why should vague descriptors like "motivated achiever" be avoided in position mapping?
Correct Answer: a) They are too general and do not define specific skills or competencies.
Explanation: Precise language ensures the position map is actionable and supports targeted hiring decisions.

6. Who is responsible for position mapping?
Correct Answer: b) Stakeholders (hiring manager and others)
Explanation: Position mapping requires collaboration among key stakeholders to ensure the role is clearly defined and aligned with organisational goals.

7. What should be considered when specifying role requirements in a position map?
Correct Answer: a) Include only the skills and qualifications that are essential and cannot be quickly learned on the job.

Explanation: Focusing on essential skills ensures the position map highlights the critical qualifications needed for success, avoiding unnecessary or overly broad criteria.

Sourcing and Screening

8. What is the primary goal of sourcing?
Correct Answer: b) To build a diverse and qualified pool of potential candidates.
Explanation: Sourcing focuses on attracting candidates from various channels to create a strong starting pool for evaluation.

9.Why is targeting passive candidates important in recruitment?
Correct Answer: b) They represent the majority of the workforce and are often more qualified.
Explanation: Passive candidates are less likely to respond to job advertisements but may bring higher qualifications and experience.

10. Which of the following should be prioritised during a screening interview?
Correct Answer: b) Understanding the candidate's current compensation, location preferences, and availability.
Explanation: These factors ensure alignment and save time by ruling out candidates who do not meet fundamental requirements.

Interviewing

11. What are the three key components of a great interview?
Correct Answer: b) Preparation, structure, and evaluation.
Explanation: These elements ensure the interview is focused, fair, and effective in assessing candidates.

12. How many interview stages are recommended in the hiring process?
Correct Answer: c) Three: Phone screening, primary evaluation interview, and business discussion.
Explanation: These stages ensure thorough evaluation and effective decision-making.

13. What does the STAR model stand for in behavioural interviews?
Correct Answer: a) Situation, Task, Action, Result.
Explanation: The STAR model provides a structured framework for eliciting detailed, relevant responses from candidates.

14. What is the primary advantage of behavioural interviews over traditional interviews?
Correct Answer: b) They reduce bias and focus on evidence-based evaluation.
Explanation: Behavioural interviews rely on specific past experiences, minimising subjective judgments.

Reference Checks

15. What is the primary purpose of reference checks in the hiring process?
Correct Answer: b) To validate a candidate's claims and uncover insights about their past performance.
Explanation: Reference checks provide objective data to confirm the accuracy of a candidate's claims and evaluate their suitability for the role.

16.How many reference check calls are typically recommended for executive-level hires?
Correct Answer: b) Two to three
Explanation: Engaging multiple references provides a well-rounded understanding of the candidate's suitability.

17. Which of the following is NOT a recommended question to ask during a reference check?
Correct Answer: c) How would you describe their personality and leadership style?
Explanation: Avoid subjective questions that elicit opinions rather than fact-based insights.

Hiring Decision

18. Why do hiring decisions often go wrong?
Correct Answer: b) They rely on gut feelings and subjective impressions rather than data.
Explanation: Hiring decisions based on subjective impressions rather than structured, data-based evaluations can lead to poor hires.

19. What are the main benefits of using a scorecard in the hiring process?
Correct Answer: b) It ensures consistency, objectivity, and data-based decision-making.
Explanation: Scorecards reduce the influence of biases by focusing on consistent, measurable criteria.

20. How should psychometric assessments be used during the hiring process?
Correct Answer: b) As supplementary data to enrich the evaluation process.
Explanation: Psychometric assessments provide additional insights but should complement structured interviews and scorecards.

21. What is "trait diversity" in the context of hiring?
Correct Answer: b) Hiring individuals who think differently and have unique personality traits compared to existing team members.
Explanation: Trait diversity promotes innovation by bringing different perspectives to the team.

Onboarding

22. What is the primary goal of employee onboarding?

Correct Answer: b) To help new hires integrate successfully and contribute to organisational goals.

Explanation: Onboarding supports the new hire's integration and helps them understand how they contribute to the organisation's success.

23. How long does a typical onboarding process last for new hires?

Correct Answer: d) 100 to 120 days

Explanation: Onboarding usually spans the first 100 to 120 days to provide ample time for role integration and performance alignment.

24. How can psychometric assessments support onboarding?

Correct Answer: b) By providing insights into the new hire's strengths, communication style, and values.

Explanation: Psychometric assessments offer data that can improve team integration and communication.

25. What should a 100-day onboarding plan include?

Correct Answer: b) Immediate goals, quick wins, and longer-term objectives.

Explanation: A structured plan provides the new hire with a roadmap for their role and performance expectations.

26. What is the purpose of 360-degree feedback during onboarding?

Correct Answer: a) To gather feedback from all stakeholders to provide a well-rounded assessment.

Explanation: Multi-dimensional feedback offers insights from various perspectives, aiding the new hire's growth and integration.

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