

The Hiring Manager Playbook

Land the right person faster, and stay out of trouble.

By Brent Morrell · BrentMorrell.com

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Grab it, use it, pass it to a manager who's hiring.

Hiring is the highest-stakes decision you make as a manager, and most managers wing it. A good process lands the right person faster and keeps you out of legal trouble. **Here's how to run one.**

Before you post: get clear on the job

You can't hire well for a role you can't describe.

- ✓ Write down what this person must accomplish in year one. Those outcomes are your scorecard.
- ✓ Separate must-haves from nice-to-haves. Every "required" you add shrinks your pool and screens out people who'd crush the job.
- ✓ Skip the degree requirement unless the work truly needs it. You're hiring for what someone can do, and a diploma is a weak proxy for that.

Write a posting a human wants to read

- ✓ Keep it short and plain. If it reads like a legal document, your best candidates close the tab.
- ✓ Lead with the work and why it matters, then the handful of things they actually need.
- ✓ Cut the wish list. Fifteen requirements shrink your pool without raising the quality of who's in it.

Move fast or lose them

Speed is the cheapest competitive advantage in hiring, and almost nobody uses it.

- ✓ Good candidates are off the market in days. Your process should move in days. Weeks means you're bidding on people who already took another offer.
- ✓ Reply quickly at every step. Silence reads as "we don't want you," even when you do.
- ✓ Compress the loop. Fewer, sharper conversations beat a five-round marathon.

Run a structured interview

- ✓ Ask every candidate for the same role the same core questions, tied to your scorecard. It's fairer to candidates, and it holds up if a decision ever gets challenged.
- ✓ Use behavioral questions. Past behavior is the best predictor you've got. "Tell me about a time you..." then push for specifics.
- ✓ Score right after each interview, before you talk to the panel. Memory fades, and the loudest voice in the debrief shouldn't win.

Questions to keep away from

Some questions are illegal or close to it. Keep every question tied to the job and steer clear of anything about:

- Age, date of birth, or graduation years.
- Marital status, kids, or family plans.
- Health, disabilities, or medical history.
- Religion, national origin, or citizenship beyond basic work authorization.
- Arrest record.

State rules vary, and some of these carry real penalties. When in doubt, run your questions by HR or counsel before the interview, not after.

Sell while you screen

The interview runs both ways. Your best candidate is evaluating you, and probably sitting on another offer.

- ✓ Give them time with the people they'd work with day to day.
- ✓ Be honest about the hard parts of the job. It builds trust and saves you a bad-fit hire.

Decide

- ✓ Decide on the scorecard. Gut-feel "fit" is where bias hides, so keep it out of the call.
- ✓ Get the panel's input, then make the call. Waiting for a flawless candidate costs you a good one.
- ✓ Check references before the offer, and ask real questions when you do.

When to bring in HR

- Before you make an offer or talk numbers. Comp and leveling have downstream effects you can't easily undo.
- For background checks and work authorization.
- Any time something feels legally gray. That instinct is usually right.

Hire with urgency and treat every candidate like a future customer, because plenty of them are.

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