

Join Our Company

How to Hire and Onboard - A Blazingly Simple Guide

A field manual for managers and HR teams who want to hire the best

By Rob Lambert

Disclaimer

Please note that much of this publication is based on personal experience and anecdotal evidence.

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Also, you should use this information as you see fit, and at your own risk. Your particular situation may not be exactly suited to the examples illustrated here; in fact, it's likely that they won't be the same, and you should adjust your use of the information and recommendations accordingly.

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Introduction

Hiring people into your business can be fun, challenging and ripe with lessons to learn, however, it is also one of the most strategic things you could do as a manager.

Get hiring right and you won't be dealing with low performance challenges very often or putting out fires created by your team. Your life as a manager will be much easier if you hire the right people.

I have spent many years scaling high performing teams by recruiting high performing people.

During that time, we conducted hundreds of interviews, hired hundreds of people and scaled our culture with staggering success. At the time, it was a period of busy madness, but looking back in hindsight, I can see why we were so successful – because we never stopped improving the recruitment process.

We never stopped making the process better for our potential candidates and we never took our eye off the goal of building the best company to work for in the UK.

After leaving this company I set up my own consultancy business, and now I spend my time helping other leaders and managers with all aspects of growing a business, including recruitment.

It's still, to this day, surprising how many managers pass the burden of recruitment to HR, ask questions bordering on illegal, have no real idea what behaviours they are really recruiting for and rush through the process as though it's just a tick in a box activity.

Get recruiting right and you will add immensely to the culture and community of your business. You will have an easier time leading and managing a team if you hire carefully. If you don't, you run the risk of diluting your culture and community, and I predict you will spend a lot of time putting out fires, dealing with performance conversations and your time will be dragged away from high performers to deal with those not meeting the bar.

Interviewing

I've always been fascinated by the activity of interviewing and recruiting. I used to love going for interviews, studying the art of interviewing and I often provided coaching to my friends on how to perform well in an interview.

Everything I ever learned about interviewing was brought into my hiring approach, fine tuned and optimised from a managerial lens, and is what I share in this book.

Our hiring process went from Meh to WOW. What do I mean by WOW?

- Our recruitment costs were insanely low, as many hires came from word of mouth, our own personal branding efforts or our own marketing activities.
- Our churn rate was around 3% - pretty good for the UK.
- Candidates who didn't make it through the interview process, waxed lyrical to other people about how amazing the process was, and how brilliant the company was. This generated more applicants with low to no recruitment costs.
- Our average elapsed time, from first speaking to the candidate to a decision, was around 10 days. Pretty good also.

In this book, I explain how we did this.

It's not a two way street but candidate's have choices

At the heart of my approach to recruitment and onboarding is a belief that great candidates have a choice of which company to join.

By realising that good people are hard to find, hard to pin down for an interview, hard to convince on the merits of our company, and that they have choices, we were forced to do something about our "meh" process.

We smartened up our marketing and our process. We brought professionalism to our interview technique. We aimed to be crystal clear about the problems every new hire would be hired to solve and we became focused on behaviours rather than skills and competencies.

In other words, we hired for the person not the position, and we made joining our company a choice candidates would have a hard time turning down.

The goal with this book is to encourage you to think about the recruitment and onboarding from the candidate and new employee perspective. By looking at the process from their perspective you can design a process that caters to their needs whilst ensuring you are hiring somebody who is right for your business.

At the end of the recruitment (and onboarding) process you want people to say "Wow" and not "WTF?".

You get to influence whether your recruitment process is "Wow" or "WTF". You get to design the process. It's mostly under your control. If your candidate experience is terrible - that's by design. If it's awesome - that's by design too. It's your choice.

The best way to design an amazing candidate and employee experience is to design a process that has both your company, and the candidates needs designed into it.

This is important for a number of reasons.

1. When people are treated well through the process, and the rest of the role package lines up, then you will become a priority choice for them.
2. If they join your business with a WOW feeling they are already engaged and motivated - and engagement is a hot topic.
3. It is the right thing to do.
4. It helps you create a cheaper, faster and more effective long-term process

Blazingly Simple

As with all of my Blazingly Simple Guides I break down a lengthy, hard and complicated process into a simple guide.

Although it can be quite simple to achieve greatness in hiring and onboarding that doesn't mean it is easy. In fact, to keep your processes simple, effective and free of clutter requires lots of hard work. It requires constant observation, suitable measures, a willingness to learn and the ability to drop parts of the process that don't work.

It's actually easier just to follow the path of least resistance and let your hiring and onboarding process become what it will become. Well, at least it's easier to do that in the short term but you'll be paying the debt for this in the long run.

Discipline to the process is essential.

I'm sure you've experienced a recruitment process that was wasteful, full of radio silence and poorly managed by people who didn't seem to care. A process where you felt utterly unappreciated. A process where you were treated as a commodity and pushed through the process without a care in the world.

This book is about helping you, as a hiring manager, avoid creating a process like that.

I do hope you enjoy the book and take away ideas to help you create an amazing hiring and onboarding process.

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1. Develop your superpower of effective [communication with my online course](https://www.cultivatedmanagement.com/online-communication-course/) :
2. Learn how to deliver amazing conference talks with the [Zero To Keynote book](https://www.cultivatedmanagement.com/zero-to-keynote/) :
3. [Coaching and Training](https://www.cultivatedmanagement.com/work-with-me/) services are also available :

The other way will also work

The other way also works. There will be somebody doing something different to what I suggest and achieving success. I've been hiring people for many years and the following guide is based on what works for me.

Your problems and context are different, and this guide, although as complete as I could make it, will no doubt be missing plenty of nuances and details surrounding hiring and onboarding people.

It's important to read around the subject and extract helpful insights for the problems you have. What you read here worked for me when I was hiring 100% growth year-on-year in a fast-paced technology start-up. It also works for those I consult with and help achieve amazing hiring feats too. But every company is different.

It's important to study your own problems and learn what is stopping you achieving a WOW hiring and onboarding process. Only through studying and becoming aware can you realistically make informed changes for the better.

Within these pages are slabs of wisdom that you can extract and use for yourself. Take what is useful and leave the rest. Put into practice that which helps, and leave alone the stuff that doesn't. It's your hiring and onboarding process, you get to decide what it looks like.

Assumptions

I have made a few assumptions in this book. These assumptions allow me to narrow down the advice and keep it on point - I didn't want this to be a lengthy book.

I have made the following assumptions.

That you care

I am assuming that you care about the person you are hiring. I am assuming that you want them to have a WOW experience and join your company having been through an amazing experience.

Many hiring managers and HR teams design a process that makes it easier for themselves to hire regardless of the effect on the candidate.

Just like Customer Experience is becoming the new marketing, I think that Employee Experience is becoming a big part of business success. It only takes a few disgruntled candidates or employees to spread the word about your hiring practices and you may be tarnished with a reputation that may be hard to shake.

That you want to hire good people

Truth be told there are still plenty of organisations that say they want to hire good people, but in practice they don't want to do the work, or change their culture, to do so. They just want bums on seats or they want to hire quickly, or they just want the cheapest people. Or, more realistically, they aren't yet aware of how to hire talented people.

If you make a mistake with hiring you run the risk of a problematic and stressful period of coaching, performance improvement and dismissal practices. These are not good for either the employee or you.

It's also very common for hiring managers to hire the wrong people and then never tell them they're underperforming, and keep hold of them! Why? Because it's hard to tell someone they're underperforming – most managers shy away from it. It's easier to give them work that isn't valuable, hide them from senior management or hope they leave. This is weak management and leadership and it often stems from not taking the requisite amount of time and care when recruiting. I see it often.

In this book, I am assuming you genuinely want good people and you want to keep the bar high in your organisation. I'm assuming that you care about the long-term value of hiring and you care about how much it costs when someone leaves.

That you are building a strong culture

It's important to hire for skills and role fit, but it's more important to hire for the right cultural fit.

Every person you bring into the business adds to, or removes from, the society, culture and community of your workplace. To nurture a positive culture, you need people who demonstrate and display positive behaviours. Hire carefully. The wrong hire can literally tear a team apart.

That you acknowledge talented people have choices

Talented candidates have a number of opportunities open to them. They are in demand and as such you need to make your organisation their first choice. This book explains some techniques on how to do that, especially for those of us that can't afford to pay very high market rates.

That you are willing and able to put in the time

Recruiting talented people is notoriously time consuming. A recruitment team or agency can do the bulk of the leg-work with sourcing, but there is still an enormous amount of work to be done with the interview process, training your managers and onboarding candidates with care and dignity.

The investment in time is worth it. Ask any manager who is dealing with a "wrong hire" and they will tell you they wished they'd taken the time to hire carefully.

That you want to do more than the minimum

There is a minimum that every company should do around hiring, yet surprisingly not every company even achieves this.

Some hiring managers still ask illegal questions, don't respond to unsuccessful candidates, make candidates take multiple days off for an interview, don't provide the right equipment on day 1 or don't even have anyone to greet their new starter on their first day.

This is not acceptable anymore, employees deserve more.

The structure of this book

I have split the process of hiring and onboarding people into four distinct sections.

1. The Hiring Plan - this stage is all about defining what problems and opportunities exist that a new hire will help you with.
2. Sourcing - this stage is all about attracting the right people through compelling communication, the right adverts in front of the right people, a clear value proposition for the candidate and balancing cash with other benefits.
3. Hiring - this stage is all about how people are taken through your hiring funnel and recruitment process ensuring at all times they are informed, looked after and treated with respect and dignity.
4. Onboarding - this stage is all about bringing people into your business with dignity, clarity and efficiency. By doing this your new starters will know they made the right decision to join you.

You have a choice

During the hiring and onboarding process there are plenty of touch points between the candidate and your company (or representatives of your company such as agencies, internal HR etc.). At each of these moments there is an opportunity for WOW, MEH or WTF?

You have a choice to design a process that creates a WOW moment, or one that does not.

It's not beyond any company's abilities to create an amazing process, but it does require investment, time, creativity and a willingness to address what's not working.

Competition is fierce and good people won't hang around, so it's essential to make the hiring process a fun, flowing, communicative and rapid process. Other companies have done it, so can you.

In this book, we'll look at the design of the hiring and onboarding process from the perspective of the candidate and new employee. By putting yourself in their shoes, you should be able to observe, study and describe the process using the following three descriptions of the experience.

1. WTF?
 - a. The process is wild, sporadic, inconsistent and frankly unpleasant for any candidate or new starter.
 - b. This is about barely doing the minimum, usually to cover legal requirements - not even industry standard. Dull. Boring. Ineffective.
 - c. WTF means What The F... "flip" of course.
2. MEH.
 - a. A bit "me too". Doing some obvious stuff and a few extras like "SWAG bags" and new starter hugs or whatever else is trending in our PR focused tech recruitment world.
 - b. Ironically, these kinds of activities get lots of attention on social media but they rarely genuinely add WOW past the first day impression. Behind some of the PR is still an overall poor experience. This is why studying the entire process is essential to add WOW at all points.
 - c. MEH is an expression of a lack of interest or enthusiasm.
3. WOW.
 - a. WOW is when unsuccessful candidates tell everyone how awesome the company is, even when they didn't get the job.
 - b. WOW is when new starters are productive, engaged and enabled in their first week.
 - c. WOW is when new starters know they absolutely made the right decision to join you.
 - d. WOW is having agencies waxing lyrical about your company.

You guessed it, I'm going to suggest you aim for WOW - anything else doesn't seem worth the effort.

As you go about identifying problems, tuning your process, improving your communication and enhancing your company's effectiveness, keep in mind these three experiences.

The Hiring Plan - what problems or opportunities exist?

A few years ago, a hiring manager told me they were just hoovering up the best people in their industry to scale and join their business.

This manager had a lot of fun and lots of people joined the company. As word got around, more talented people knocked on the door and the hiring manager brought them onboard. This manager even landed high profile Keynotes at conferences due to the publicity this approach generated. Everyone was buzzing.

A cash rich company hiring people at a phenomenal rate - with little due diligence required to get onboard. Turn up, show your credentials, join the gravy train, tell your friends, share on social media.

At some point this practice finished and over the following few months many people started leaving. Many of these talented people were made redundant and eventually the company shrank as in-fighting, egos and poor communication meant getting anything done was brutally hard work. There wasn't even enough valuable work to go around either. Talk about putting the cart before the Donkey.

Why did this happen?

The hiring manager told me they'd got carried away simply hiring anyone they could, irrelevant of whether they shared the same values as the existing teams, aligned to the culture of the organisation, or even whether the business had enough work for people to do.

They had money to throw around and paid very high rates, and they'd bloated the organisation. Not only did they have too many people and not enough work but they'd diluted the culture (behaviours) of the organisation in the process.

They had tried to keep the bar high by simply hiring "top talent", but they had no idea what "top talent" actually meant internally to the business. They hadn't spent the time defining what they wanted "their" culture to be and they certainly hadn't spent any time working out what the problems the new hire solved for them. As such, they bloated the company, wasted a LOT of money and created a toxic workplace.

Lots of companies do this – just hiring perceived "top talent". And it rarely solves their real problems.

Hiring somebody should solve a problem within the business, but hiring also creates a new set of problems (cost, communication channels, management etc).

For example, maybe your work involves a new process, method or technology that your existing team do not have experience and ability with. A new hire could help you solve this problem.

Maybe people have too much work to do and that work is expected to continue into the future. A new hire could help alleviate this problem for you.

Hiring is expensive and adds significant cost to your organisation - something the “hire-everyone” manager didn’t fully appreciate. It’s easy to get carried away when you have plenty of investment, but it still needs prudent allocation.

Hiring is also time consuming. There are plenty of people involved in the process. There are admin, IT, recruitment and other hidden HR costs involved usually. When you’re hiring and bringing in new people you’re not doing something else.

New hires also disrupt the team dynamics when they join. The team has to get to know each other and spend time showing people the ropes.

Every hire brings with them their own experiences, beliefs, values and behaviours. These will naturally flavour the workplace and add, positively, or negatively, to the melting pot of culture. You’ll have more opinions and more ideas. You’ll have more people to organise around the work. And of course, you’ll have more costs.

These new problems might be better than the problems you had before hiring people. Or they may not, as my friend, the hiring manager, found out.

My “hire-everyone” friend didn’t know what problems or opportunities they were trying to solve by hiring. He was simply hoovering up talent because he had money to spend. And he didn’t spend it wisely.

At the end of the day his costs were rising (as always happens when you add people to a business), he didn’t have any work for many people and the value being bought by customers didn’t keep up.

By overloading his business with people he lifted his cost base when he didn’t need to. The natural, corrective approach to this, was sadly, to let people go.

Don’t let this happen to you.

Every single new hire should solve a problem for you, or open up an opportunity and hiring should only be done when it’s clear your current employees are not able to keep up.

It’s as simple as that.

The clearer you can become about what problems and opportunities a new hire will address, the better chance you have of hiring the right people, and the right amount of people.

You should be able to answer the following question with absolute clarity.

What does success look like for this new hire?

Here are a few questions to help get clarity over what success looks like for that new hire.

- What activities are they expected to do?
- What is missing right now, that this person will unblock or unlock for us?
- How will they be measured?
- Why do I need them?
- Who will they work with?
- How will they use their skills or experience?
- Do I already have similar skills in the team?
- With more training, could someone in the existing team do this work?
- Is the workload going to continue at this rate, or is it temporary?

By defining what problems and opportunities you have, you stand a better chance of getting the right person and giving them a chance to excel and succeed.

Sometimes you may conclude you actually don't need to hire anyone, or maybe you only need one person instead of three, or maybe you need a different skill-set entirely.

By getting facts about the problems and opportunities upfront, you stand a better chance of hiring the right person.

Have open dialogue with other managers and team members about the role, the need for it and what the role will look like. Sometimes questioning the lunacy that happens in most companies - the belief that simply throwing more people at problems solves them - leads to deep insights about how to solve problems in other ways, sometimes without hiring new people.

Sometimes adding extra people might be the solution - only you will know by understanding your problems.

My belief is that most problems in business are simply communication and people problems - so why would adding more people solve that?

Saying that, growth **can** be good but isn't always the right thing. Growth can be a sign your company is hitting measures, finding a market and aligning with its purpose. As part of that growth you may need more people to help achieve more market share.

When you define your problems and opportunities clearly, you'll have an understanding about who you are looking for. This will help you articulate your needs to recruiters, candidates and your existing team. Don't forget your current team - they will need clarity over who is joining and why. They may also know someone who wants to join.

Good candidates want to succeed, so they will want to know what they are walking into, what problems they can help solve or opportunities they can unleash, and what success looks like.

They will want clarity over the direction of the team and company, and they will want to know what role they will play in achieving success. By understanding your problems or opportunities deeply, you should have no problem communicating this to them.

Simply hiring people because you "feel" like you need more people, or you're on an ego-trip, or you've not considered the cost implication, can lead to bloated teams and ineffective delivery of service. And of course, the chances are you won't have solved your original problem either.

Effective Employees

When I was recruiting 100% year-on-year it became super important to ensure I was hiring the right people. But who were these right people and how could we ensure we attracted more of them?

We wanted to recruit people who would fit with our cultural values and purpose, enhance our workplace, challenge our culture but not destroy it.

Culture is nothing more than group habits - what behaviours people exhibit every day - so we started to observe and study what our highest performers were doing and why that led to success.

It resulted in a lot of studying, observing and working out what behaviours we valued, and which ones we were less positive about. As a result, the 10 Behaviours of Effective Employees was born. You can find details of the 10 behaviours on the accompanying free mini eBook - <http://cultivatedmanagement.com/ten>

I have never met anyone who demonstrates all ten behaviours, although some people come close. Some only demonstrate two or three but in such abundance that they are a joy to be around, and handy to have in a team.

Once you are clear about what kind of culture you want (behaviours), then it makes sense to hire people who exhibit these positive behaviours in the first place - and this is why recruitment is such a strategic activity for managers.

Get it right during recruitment and your job as a manager or leader becomes much easier moving forward.

The ten behaviours I've identified are what I personally choose to look for, embrace in team members and promote as being good solid behaviours. You may find them helpful, or you may choose to define your own.

The reason I focus on behaviours is because behaviours are what people do, not what they claim they can do. Have you ever met someone who claimed to be an expert in something, but then couldn't demonstrate it? There's a world of difference between knowing something and doing something.

And who, in an interview, is going to say they're not a team player, nor a positive contributor, or nice person?

By defining the culture that you want - and describing the kinds of behaviours that will lead to this culture - you can then use these behaviours for interviewing.

To define your own list of behaviours for your company, consider the following questions:

- What behaviours do our highest rated and most prized people exhibit?
- How do they act?
- What do they say?
- How do they interact with people?
- How do they make others feel?
- What results do they get – and how do they get them?
- What positive behaviours might be missing?
- What approach to learning do they have?
- What behaviours cause problems or tear down the team?

The best way to find good employees is to hire people who exhibit the positive behaviours that lead to success in your business. Diversify, seek new views, hire widely and find people who will challenge the status-quo, but find people who will do so whilst exhibiting the positive behaviours you know lead to success.

Here are the 10 behaviours I have identified talented people exhibit.

1. They are visibly passionate
2. They are open-minded
3. They are not constrained by their job title
4. They become company smart
5. They focus on the customer
6. They relentlessly improve the process and system
7. They do what they say they will
8. They are good communicators
9. They add skills and skills and skills
10. They are brave

They are visibly passionate

Good employees are visibly passionate and a joy to be around. They exude positivity and a can-do attitude. It doesn't mean they don't question how things are done, but they do so in a way that encourages dialogue and isn't just grumbling or complaining. They attract other people to be around them. People want to work with people who are inspiring and positive.

They are open-minded

Effective employees are open to new ways of working. They are experimenters and enjoy trying new ways of working - exploring what works and what doesn't and how to improve their work.

They are not afraid to open their minds to new ideas. They don't always like change, very few people do, but they are open to it, as they appreciate that the world doesn't stand still.

They are not constrained by their job titles

As a manager, be careful about creating tight job descriptions and then managing people against them. HR Directors and managers the world over try to do this - don't be bullied into this route of managing people.

The reality is that effective employees are a nightmare to write job descriptions for - they take responsibility for more than you could ever define in a single job description.

Sure, create job descriptions if you really need to for compliance reasons, but celebrate those people that shun their job description and do what the business needs doing.

Effective employees do not stand by and watch failures and poor work being done because it's "not in their job descriptions". They do what needs to be done, they delegate, they work with others and they achieve success despite what their job description says. When was the last time you looked at your job description to make the right decision?

Oh yes, and they never say, "That's not in my job description".

Note: We're not expecting people to work epic hours, take on other people's work, do an entirely different job, nor anything illegal, immoral and unsafe. But you can't define an entire job in a JD.

They become company smart

Effective employees learn as much about the business as they can, quickly. They get smart right from the start.

1. Who is helpful?
2. Who is not?
3. Where does the work come from?
4. Where does the work go?
5. What are the company or team values?
6. How do we do X, or Y, or Z?

They work out what the company mission and vision is and get behind it. And if it's not a compelling vision or mission - they leave – remember, effective employees have choices.

They focus on the customer

Effective employees focus on the customer. Everything they do is considered from the customer's perspective. They know that without the customer nothing else matters. They prioritise their own work, but drop it to deal with customer issues.

They realise that they work for the organisation - and the organisation works for the customers they serve. No customers = no money, no company, no employees.

They work tirelessly to create the right processes and environments that support the customer, not internal politics, reporting lines or budgets. This is often classed as cheating by outdated managers – but it needs to be done – the customer must succeed.

They relentlessly improve the process and system they work in

The majority of the success in any business is down to the system and processes that people work in.

Effective employees know this and they work hard to create successful environments, processes and systems that enable people to flourish and for work to flow. Effective employees spend large chunks of time improving the system.

They do what they say they will

An effective employee does what they say they will. If they say it's going to be done, you can rely on them to do it – or at least attempt to complete it.

They are reliable, disciplined and consistent. They deliver. You can trust them.

They are excellent communicators

Effective employees are excellent communicators. They listen, they *respond* rather than *react* and they are clear in their language. They encourage others to contribute and are crystal clear in their communication. They don't waste other people's time when communicating and they put great emphasis on improving their own communication skills.

They are empathetic and unbelievably good at dealing with a wide array of people. They make it look easy.

They add skills and skills and skills

Effective employees never sit still and think they're good enough – they're always building new skills and seeking out new knowledge.

They are effectively adding skills, to skills, to skills, to skills to change their behaviours for the better. They are invaluable in this respect.

They add value by adding skills and improving behaviours which is both good for your organisation and for themselves.

Don't worry about them being valuable in the market and leaving. If you create a fabulous place to work they'll likely stay with you. What's the alternative? Do you have people who aren't employable, effective and relevant to the market?

They are brave

Effective employees are brave. They take risks, calculated risks. They are not afraid to speak their mind, ask searching questions or challenge the nonsense that often happens in organisations.

They are just the kind of people you need confronting madness and pushing the boundaries forward. This is even more of a positive behaviour if combined with good communication skills as it results in less conflict. Bravery can often be seen as a negative trait, but bravery to me means doing what is right and correct and challenging the nonsense.

They stand up for doing the right thing. They are not complicit in bad behaviours. They are brave.

These are the 10 behaviours I've seen effective employees demonstrate and are the basic foundations I use for interviewing and leading teams.

Define your own, use these, ignore them - it's up to you. But aim to hire people who demonstrate the positive behaviours your culture needs, because if you don't, you'll have a management nightmare ahead.

Sourcing - attracting talent

Now that you know what problems or opportunities you have, you can start to attract brilliant people to your workplace. This is the second distinct phase of hiring good people - attracting them to work with you.

The art of recruiting is to make your problems really interesting, exciting and compelling - so much so that people want to help you solve them.

It's really that simple. Most companies overcomplicate things.

Most businesses have similar problems; getting people to work well with each other, delivering on time, hiring, communicating with each other, leadership, retention, innovation, creative thinking, building products etc.

Your job is to make your problems or opportunities more interesting than anyone else's. You've already defined your problems and opportunities, it's now time to start communicating these in a way that gets people excited.

Yes. Excited!

It should be exciting to join a new company.

Balance Benefits

Many of us don't like to talk about money, but it should be a starting point when thinking about attracting people to your company.

A few years ago, a company approached me and offered me a senior level job leading a team.

I was bowled over. The problem was the salary was nowhere near market rates for a junior role, let alone a senior level executive.

As much as the role sounded interesting it also had to pay reasonably.

Very few hiring managers can offer so much money that they effectively take salary "off the table", but offering too little will mean you're going to lose good people too.

To find market rates simply search job sites for other roles like the one you have. What are others offering? There are various market analysis tools and online searches too that will give you rough numbers too.

However, don't be too worried if you can't quite match the competition or the market. As long as you're close you'll be fine.

Here's what I've learned; people will sacrifice (some) salary to join an amazing company with super opportunities that has a compelling vision, is well run and they know they'll be working with talented people.

Once you're close to market rates and know what you can pay, as long as it's not low balling people, you can then start focusing on other aspects of the company and the role.

Imagine a set of balanced weighing scales; the old style weighing scales with two baskets, one on each side, balancing each other out. Imagine salary and benefits on one side of the scale, and other reasons to join your company on the other side.

Your goal is to stack the non-salary side of the scales with things that balance out a potentially lower salary than a competitor may offer. Such as:

- A compelling Vision, Mission and set of Values
- Market potential of your organisation (Pre-IPO, huge unconquered market)
- Methodologies or approaches to work
- Office location and amenities
- Management approach
- Personal development opportunities
- Flexible working and remote working

- Free drinks and food etc.
- Social events and social clubs

If you don't have much for the "other" side of the scale, then you need to start improving the culture and community of your business, or looking deeper at the good stuff that likely does happen.

In my experience, people are equally motivated by the culture of the business, the purpose and opportunities for personal growth rather than just salary - but for many people there is a point where money overrides everything else.

Your job is to create compelling reasons for people to join your team and then deliver on these expectations.

Effective Job Adverts

You now know your problems, the sort of people you're after and how to make your role and company compelling. You now need to attract talent using the various channels open to you. There is no point having a compelling offer if nobody knows about it.

The first place to start is to create an internal job description outlining the role, expected accountabilities and responsibilities. You will likely need this for HR anyway and it will give you the basis for a job advert.

Spend some time considering the role, the problem you need solving and how this role fits into the other roles in your business. Think about who they will be working with and what other parts of the business they will interact or interface with too. Who they have to work with may be just as important as what they are expected to do.

Are they going to be interfacing to prickly characters with strong opinions? Are they going to be working in a team of people who are struggling to make decisions? Are they going to be customer facing? All of these aspects will give you insights into the behaviours and character of the person you need.

Whatever you do though, don't merely post the job description as your job advert. A job advert is just that - an advert. Adverts are designed to attract attention and lead people into some form of action. Adverts are interesting, well placed, tantalising and intriguing, job descriptions aren't.

Saying that you must also, in the advert, convey the role and the type of person you are seeking. I always suggest spending a fair bit of time on the job advert. The wrong advert, in the wrong place really can lead to an overwhelm of unsuitable candidates to sift through.

The job advert can then be used on jobs boards (if you really must - I avoid them at all cost), by agencies, by your internal recruiters, in your own networks or on your own social platforms.

Let us start with a job advert.

(1) It's an advert!

Head on over to any job board and you'll likely find many boring adverts. Uninspiring text going on and on about the role, the technology and giant lists of tools. There will be the must-haves, should-haves and nice-to-have sections. The person profile section. All boring.

You'll find impossible adverts where the hiring managers are looking for Unicorns capable of doing several different roles whilst juggling being the CFO, CTO and Customer Support Manager at the same time. You'll find the adverts with contradictory information, hyperbole, ridiculous targets, unlikely combinations of skills, 10 years of experience in a technology that's

only 2 years old and those looking for people with a wealth of experience yet paying minimum wage.

Urgh.

Dull, boring and uninspiring - all articulated and communicated with zero enthusiasm and all from the point of view of the hiring manager or company.

“Here’s what we want” is the sentiment of most adverts.

Please don’t create adverts like this.

A job advert is about attracting super talented people to your organisation. These brilliant people need to look at your advert and be excited and giddy to make the next move. The advert is nothing more than that - an advert. Do you buy products based on boring adverts? Unlikely.

An advert is an opportunity to start a conversation and compel people to take action, so make the advert interesting and about them. Articulate what’s in it for the potential candidate:

- Why should they apply?
- Why would it be awesome to work here?
- How will their career grow?
- Who will they work with?
- Why should they invest energy with you?
- What will they learn?
- What will you do for them?
- What is your company’s purpose and why is it so compelling that they should join?

Adverts like this stand out for the right reasons. If the right person reads it they’ll be inspired. Your goal is to encourage people to send the email, apply for the job or phone the number.

(2) Some ways to create a compelling advert

(a) Focus on your team’s values

Hiring someone who doesn’t meet your team’s values and behaviours will have a corrosive effect on your culture.

If you don’t have your values articulated - spend some time defining them. Values should lead people in your organisation to make the right decisions. Of course, it’s entirely possible to have values that management and leadership don’t live.... hence the people in the organisation don’t either, but most companies understand the value in defining their values.

Either add your company's values to the advert word for word, or even better, find a way to tell stories about the values or describe how people can live those values. Bring them to life through examples and behaviours.

For example, let's say you have a value that is something like "Own the solution". You might list this as a value and explain how you're looking for someone who wants ownership, autonomy and decision-making latitude around their work, all supported by managers who care. I can imagine a number of people excited about taking on a role like that.

(b) Articulate the problem you are trying to solve, or the opportunity that exists

You've done the research and you know the problem this person will solve, or the opportunity someone can open for the business. Get it nailed, simplified and articulated with clarity and passion.

You need the candidate to understand how they can contribute to the business's success and be excited to do so. Good people want to be excited about using their skills and experience to solve the right problems and succeed.

For example, you might be hiring a new Sales Manager who will be responsible for increasing sales in a region. You should express how their skills will be used, what the end goal looks like, how you will measure success and what support they will get in that journey.

(c) Create short adverts with clarity

Good communicators don't waste another person's time. Keep your advert short, sharp and informal.

People resonate with those that sound like themselves, so use language that is simple and accessible. Use language that your target audience (candidates) will resonate with.

Edit and remove nonsense, extra words and information that doesn't add value. Sell the role, the problems and specify the kind of person you want. Explain why they should invest energy and attention in you and your company. Make it exciting - you want them to make the next move with enthusiasm.

(d) Don't use *mandatory* and *nice to have* sections in your advert

Most job adverts contain two sections that are mostly useless. These are the "mandatory" and "nice to have" sections describing skills and experience.

The view seems to be that anything listed in the mandatory is, as expected, essential. Anything in the "nice to have", is optional.

The problem with this is that it doesn't cater for those who have the ability to learn new skills and gain new experiences. It rarely caters for personality or passion, and it rarely captures the behaviours you actually want.

How many good people will be deterred from applying because they don't tick all of the mandatory boxes?

What would happen if a positive, confident self-starter applied but they didn't meet one or two of the mandatory? Would you still hire them? Probably. Are those skills or experiences really mandatory?

What would happen if a candidate applied who could put a tick against all the mandatory items, but you sensed they would be a management nightmare, or a troublesome person for the company? Would you hire them even though you know they'll bring down the team? I doubt it.

What would happen if someone met all the mandatory but none of the optional? Or all the optional but none of the mandatory? Or a decent mix of both?

The job advert is just that, an advert, not an essay, white paper or booklet so remove these types of sections and focus on why someone should respond to the advert.

Don't try to appeal to every single candidate looking for a job and then use the job advert as a filter. Write the advert for the people you seek to hire - and get it in front of them - not the whole world. The goal is to get the right advert in front of the right people. It's not to appeal to everyone and filter based on definitions in the advert.

Try not to put great people off with a poor advert - use the advert to advertise your role and your company, to the right people and kick start a conversation.

(e) Focus on selling your amazing workplace

An advert is a chance to sell your amazing workplace and attract the right candidates. Your advert may be the first contact a candidate has with your company.

Your goal is to inspire them to discover more and communicate to them why your company would be a good fit for them.

Remember the scales with salary on one side and other reasons to join on the other? This is where you need to start articulating the other reasons to join.

You will face lots of competition to attract the right people, so your advert should create a wow moment. Don't forget though – your advert must be truthful. Take the truth and make it interesting.

(3) Sample Advert

Here is a sample advert that may provide some guidance.

Title

E.g. Talented Senior Software Developer wanted for vibrant tech company changing the world of work

A clear succinct industry recognised title works fine. In fact, deviating from industry recognised titles may confuse candidates. Effective employees really don't care much about job titles.

Be clear in your title about what the role is, as this will be listed on websites, jobs boards and included prominently in communications from recruiters.

Your Goal

This is where you list the kind of person you're after and what problems or opportunities await them. Make it compelling, interesting, exciting and be sure to make it about them.

Will they be helping you go agile, dominate a market or grow the business? Will they be working with amazing people to change the world, saving lives, changing lives, disrupting markets, opening up growth, helping people or just being part of a team shipping widgets?

Make it exciting! What does the future hold? How will they contribute to epic success?

Working Here

List here the types of work you do and what the candidate can expect to work on, as well as rich, compelling insights into what it's like to work in your company..

- Do you utilise cutting edge tech?
- Who else works there? Talented people are attracted to other talented and inspiring people.
- Is your product cutting edge, or archaic? How can you make the archaic sound more interesting?
- Is there a vibrant learning community?
- What do your market opportunities look like?

These should all be selling points. If they aren't, you'll have to work hard to make them appealing.

This section is also an opportunity to explain a little about the activities and culture of your company. Do you run social and learning events? Why is it cool to work at your company?

Values and Processes

This section allows you to list your values.

These values should guide your recruitment and inform the way you lead the team.

If your values are clear you'll attract people who share these same values and want to work in an environment that promotes working in this way. Your company or team values tell people how you deliver on your purpose. It's not just some fluffy wording, it should underpin the way you work and the decisions your people make.

Contact Details

Make it easy to apply but hard to get through the filtering system. We'll talk about recruiters in a minute but don't put lots of hurdles in the way initially. It should be relatively easy for people to send you their details and apply for the role.

The goal here is to remove the friction around applying for a job and increase the reward. We'll talk a little about this later.

It's also worth noting that some people you seek to hire may not be actively looking for a job, so how can you start a conversation with them that isn't intrusive or spammy?

Be creative and be where they are.

Use Agencies

I personally like to use recruitment agencies and have had overwhelmingly positive experiences with them. They solve problems.

However, it pays to understand, and be direct, around the relationship and expectations.

(1) You are their customer

Use recruitment agencies to get a job done. You are their customer and they are providing you with a service. Remember this - they are not your customer.

As such, ensure you know what you want and ensure the agencies you choose know how to serve your needs. There are plenty of agencies, some good, some not so good, so do your research and take the time to choose an agency that you feel you could build a good working relationship with.

Of course, a lot of this comes down to leverage. When I had 200+ roles to fill I had agency executives trying to win our business. When I had just 1 role to fill...well, I didn't get quite the same level of attention.

Recruiters find people that you seek to hire. Sure, you have to pay them for that, but the alternative is that you spend ages trying to do it on your own.

I made the mistake of using a job board once without using an internal recruiter or agency. The advert worked, but I received 300+ CVs from people mostly unqualified for the role. I had to review them all. It was my fault, I'd tried to save money and it backfired.

It was a waste of time and money. Since that day I have used agencies to hire a number of people, as well as word of mouth (we'll come to that).

For every hiring manager like you, who is looking for smart, engaged and talented people, there are 100's of companies looking for someone.... anyone. You need to find the agencies who are good at finding the people you want, not just good at finding anyone.

If you use an agency who are not specialists at finding the people you seek to hire, then you'll likely get poor quality candidates thrown at you, or nothing at all.

Finding the right agency is crucial to your success. What follows are some ways to work with agencies. Much of the following also applies to in-house HR/recruitment functions. The only difference may be around fees and negotiations. Don't forget, most internal recruiters will put

business needs above the candidates' needs also. Be sure to challenge or discuss anything you feel is ruining the experience for the candidate.

After all, the recruiter is often the first point of real contact with your company - so you need to find recruiters (internal or external agencies) that are going to make a WOW impression on this first touch point.

(2) Be Patient

As you have a problem to solve, hence you are recruiting, the chances are you're not looking for some generic person, to fill a generic role (nobody is when we really break this down).

As such, you will have to take your time to craft your advert and find the right candidate using an agency (again, internal or external to your business). And it can take a lot of your own time and it can take a long time, even with agencies involved.

But hold out.

Don't give in and hire someone who is not right for you. There are candidates out there, you just need to find them.

(3) Give exclusivity

As you want to form a strong relationship with your recruiter, and you are after high quality people, not just anyone, you may find that recruiters ask for "exclusivity". After all, with a high bar to meet (unlike many hiring managers), it may take your recruiter a significant amount of time, energy and attention to find the right person.

As such, they may want exclusivity, meaning that they are the only recruiter working on this open role. As in, you don't have the same role out for recruitment with other agencies.

This gives the agency the impetus to put in the hours. It must be frustrating to spend a lot of time finding hard-to-find candidates only to have another agency get in ahead of you.

Exclusivity gives recruiters the chance to see a return for their work. Just be sure it's short term until you build a strong relationship. What if they don't turn up the candidates? You don't want to be locked into an exclusivity deal when the recruiter is not delivering on their promises.

(4) Pay higher rates

I'm not a fan of this one but sometimes for hard to find roles you may have to pay higher agency rates.

This higher rate gives the recruiter the financial return after all of the hard work of finding you the perfect person. Rates fluctuate but I've never had to pay more than 25% of the candidate's starting salary as a commission rate before. Mostly I've had great success at the 15 - 20% rate.

The more roles you have to hire the lower the rate often goes. It's all about negotiation but be mindful of how much effort and work goes into finding people. If it were easy to find them you wouldn't need to use a recruiter, so don't lowball them.

(5) Create a compelling offer

Be sure to share with your chosen recruiter your compelling job adverts, double checking that you have balanced the scales of salary/package on one side, and culture on the other.

All of this will help the recruiter narrow down the search and find the right people.

(6) Meet them

I always recommend, where possible, that you meet the recruiter in person. Nothing helps to build a relationship like meeting someone and looking them in the eye.

Invite them to your office as a first step so they can get a feel for the culture, environment and work process. Of course, you may not have an office, in which case this will not be possible - but still aim to meet them face-to-face if you can.

As well as building a relationship by meeting them in person, this can also show the recruiters commitment to working with you. Sure, there are logistical reasons that may make travel impractical, but it shows willingness if they're prepared to meet you in person and start a strong professional relationship.

You will also get a much richer impression of the people you will be working with. Are they welcoming and friendly? Or does it appear they simply want your cash? I'm a firm believer in using as few agencies as I can, but building strong relationships with those I do use.

Trust your instincts and only work with those you feel you can trust.

(7) Measure

You must measure the effectiveness of each recruiter. In my experience executives and higher-level managers are obsessed with measures of scale. In recruiting this translates to how many candidates a recruiter can throw at you and how fast. And then ultimately how many of them you hire and at what cost.

Don't let these measures be your only measures, and certainly don't let them become targets.

It's entirely possible for managers to aim to meet targets of numbers like these, resulting in speedy hiring and poor quality control. Remember, a poor hire will make your life more difficult as a manager.

Focusing only on the number of submissions and conversion rates could lead you astray. Instead, I recommend using some of the following measures in combination:

- (a) How many candidates do they provide for review?
 - (i) The goal here is not to aim for high numbers of low quality people. It's to aim for lower numbers of really good candidates. It's better to have 4 solid candidates, than 20 middling candidates.
- (b) How many people make it through the various hiring stages (phone interview, in-person interview)?
 - (i) Assuming that you have a rigorous interview process, it's important to measure how many people make it through the various stages. For example, it could be that the recruiter sources 5 top sounding people, but none of them make it through the phone interview. What's going on? What's causing this? Then work hard to correct what is causing this problem.
- (c) How many, from each agency, make it through to joining your company?
 - (i) I worked with one excellent recruiter who would only send in one candidate compared to other agencies who would provide multiple more. However, without fail, his candidates were the best and typically made it through to join our company.
- (d) How long does the agency take to provide a successful hire? (Lead Time)
 - (i) It's worth tracking the elapsed time between each of the stages of both sourcing and hiring.
 - (ii) With measures of time you're able to assess how effective your agencies are - and how effective your own process is.
 - (iii) This will also help with future hiring needs. For example, if you know it takes the agencies 6 weeks to find good people, then you will need to factor this into filling a position.
- (e) Do those that are hired pass probation and remain employed?
 - (i) It's very possible to make a mistake and hire somebody who doesn't meet the high bar, even with a good interview and recruitment process. It's therefore important to track what percentage stay past any probation period.
 - (ii) How long do hires stay in the business? It's not so much a measure of the recruitment process as it is a measure of how good it is to work in your company. Retention is an important measure to track.
 - (iii) Recruitment is costly, as such it's important to ensure you're not losing good people at a high rate, and recruiting to fill the gaps. I'd suggest there is something

not right with your management, work and culture if good people are leaving in a short space of time.

- (iv) Be careful here. Retention of everyone is not the goal - only your high performers. Some turn-over of staff is expected. Regretted attrition is the loss of a good, high performer. Non-regretted attrition is the loss of lower performers. It's important to weave this into your numbers.
- (f) What is the overall ratio of submitted candidates to hires?
 - (i) It's important to track how many applicants in total are submitted to how many land a role - and how long this takes (as covered above). This will guide potential improvements in the process and help you with future forecasting and time management when it comes to hiring.

Some of these measures are end-to-end lifecycle measures but it's important to start gathering them as soon as you can. Trends and/or ratios are important here, not absolute numbers on their own.

For example, the ratio of people interviewed versus hired is an important number.

Your purpose with recruitment is to hire people and for those people to remain employed for a reasonable amount of time. Losing people and replacing them, over and over again, indicates something is not right somewhere.

One company I worked with had that blinkered set of measures in place. They were essentially hiring in the same number of people as they were losing. As more people left, more pressure mounted to hire backfills and new staff - the bar dropped even further due to pressure of workload, and soon the business had the wrong people all over the place. This is what happens when single measures become arbitrary targets.

In another example from my own hiring, one agency I worked with had a 20:1 ratio of people sourced to people hired, yet another agency had a 2:1 ratio. Where would you rather spend your time? Interviewing 20 people to find the 1? Or interviewing 2 people to find 1?

Measures will help you to focus your energy where it matters and improve the overall process. Measures will also help you to assess which agencies are worth continuing to work with. Don't be afraid to drop agencies who aren't delivering.

(8) Dialogue

Open dialogue between you and the recruiter is essential to ensure a smooth relationship and a clear understanding of what is, and what is not, working.

The recruiter will only be able to improve their service if you give them feedback on each candidate. It can often take a number of potential candidates being submitted before both you and the agency can settle on the kind of people you are looking for.

Therefore, it's important to be clear about why candidates are rejected and why others make it through the process. This saves everyone a lot of time and effort and makes it a much more relevant process for your potential new employees.

(9) Agree terms you're both happy with

At some point, you will have to agree to contractual terms. This is often dealt with by financial teams, procurement or HR. If you're negotiating yourself then work out a good deal for both of you.

Find a rate (and overall package) you are both happy with. Many of these legal agreements will be mandated by your HR team, so you may not need to worry too much about this, but it's important to ensure both parties are happy about the terms.

(10) Learn from them

Good recruiters know their domain deeply. There's often an assumption that recruiters don't know anything and that they are "just" sales people – this is derogatory thinking. Good recruiters know their work very well indeed and are genuinely trying to do a great job for you. As hiring managers, we can learn a lot from them.

Ask them how to stand out in a noisy market and what needs improving regarding your current recruitment process, job adverts or interview approach. They will have lots of insights about how to create a WOW hiring process.

Ask them whether they have competing clients in the same locale/area/domain and how this will impact their search for candidates. Recruitment agents are often recruiting for a number of clients. Some of these other clients may be in the same sector and locale looking for the same candidates. You need to work out how this will affect your recruiting and how to ensure you're the first port of call for suitable candidates and how to stand out.

(11) Only work with a few agencies

This is an important point. The fewer agencies you work with the easier the management of recruitment becomes. But more importantly the better your relationships become too.

Good recruiters don't rely on job-boards alone, they headhunt. Good candidates are hard to find and few in numbers. The more recruiters you work with, the more likely it is that these candidates get contacted several times for the same role by multiple recruiters. This is annoying for your potential candidates and can come across as aggressive and pushy. The first

impression someone has of your company is often from the recruitment consultant. Being badgered by several recruiters for the same role is not a good impression.

Working with a small number of agencies allows you to spend more time working with them to improve your relationship and find common ground too.

(12) Outline the roles and the people you're looking for – in depth

In my experience, the person fit is always more important than skills alone. Hire for the person, not the position. As such, I often include rich details about the culture, purpose and values of the business for the agency. This is why inviting them to the office (if you have one) is so important, as they will experience the vibe in the office and then be able to articulate this to candidates.

Job descriptions and “people” specifications are useful, however, a clear description of the behaviours expected from people for this role will be more useful for recruiters.

Outline the maximum salary you're looking for and what the overall package entails – ensure both you and the recruiter align around this. Is the package realistic? The agency will be able to tell you whether it's realistic or not.

Discuss any finer details such as career progression, management approach, rewards structure and social activities - I find these are the extra details many candidates strive to find out about.

(13) Outline the process

Ensure both sides clearly know what the process is for submitting candidates, giving feedback and making rejections/offers. It's important to align expectations so you don't muddle the process or step on each other's toes.

A professional process flow (outlined later in this book), from CV submission to onboarding your new team member, gives a great impression – although expect there to be unplanned problems in all processes and for the process to change over time.

(14) Be cautious of recruiters who source through a single channel

There are many channels open to recruiters and a good recruiter will tend to use the channels that make sense for your role. Some may just post to a jobs board or a website - avoid. This might work, but in my experience the best candidates aren't always looking for a role.

The approach I find works well is when recruiters post to a very niche jobs board, direct approach via channels like LinkedIn, and use their existing network to find the right people. But

we are all different and the sourcing approaches open to recruiters change all the time. The important thing is that you trust them, and they can clearly articulate how they source people. Good recruiters will have no hesitation explaining how they source candidates.

You need to be happy with them and their approach before entering a relationship with them.

Conclusion

Working with recruiters is about forming a relationship and opening dialogue with them. That can only start to form if both sides talk to each other and align expectations early.

Don't be afraid to use agencies if you have a budget for them. In fact, I would actively suggest you champion the use of agencies for those roles you're not sure you can find yourself.

And once you find a good recruiter stick with them and keep giving them your business. Until of course, things no longer work.

Hire Alone

You may not have enough money for agency use – this was certainly my experience when I first started out hiring. Or maybe you are dead set against using agencies. Here are some ideas on how to recruit without agency support.

I always use these strategies alongside agency and internal recruitment anyway. It increases my chances of finding the right people as quickly as possible.

(1) Offer a staff referral bonus

If you offer a decent staff referral bonus for successful hires, you may find that someone in your company already knows a great candidate. This is a simple but effective strategy.

It's unlikely that people will put forward someone who isn't going to be right for the business. We should also trust that people will not spend their time trying to boost their salary with referrals, at the expense of delivering against their day job.

If you get the payment structure right, and make sure that the payment is not made until the new starter has passed their probation, you will find that it is a fair and fun way to hire new people.

I like to use a set amount, say £4000. Some argue with this and say it's too much, but it's less than most agency fees and people will be motivated by a large sum like that. Sure, some may try to cheat the system and boost their salary by throwing unsuitable candidates at the process - but good management and a little feedback soon stops this.

If your recruitment process is robust, and your managers are unafraid to give feedback, then this model works well.

(2) Use LinkedIn

Use LinkedIn. Personally, I find LinkedIn to be extremely depressing. It's a place where people humble brag and oversell their experience. However, it can be a simple way to connect with people directly. Be careful though, not everyone welcomes unsolicited emails from hiring managers.

If you spend time fine tuning your approach message and are genuine in your message, you may get some success with LinkedIn. I've personally used LinkedIn to hire a number of candidates, even just using a normal license.

Make sure your own profile is complete and up-to-date. Give the candidate somewhere to go to read more about your company. Don't hassle people and respect people who say no.

But don't be afraid though – I've never had anyone be annoyed by my approach. Most people who create a LinkedIn profile expect to be "found" and may welcome being "head hunted" – especially if you're hiring top class people. Which of course you are.

It is also better to have a message from a hiring manager rather than a recruiter - it helps to create a good impression if the hiring manager themselves gets in touch.

(3) Build your personal brand

I've had a lot of success hiring directly as I deliver keynotes, write a blog, publish books and run podcasts. By adding value to people through my speaking and writing I've been fortunate to build a strong personal brand and platform. With this brand and platform, I've been able to attract people to work with me.

Encourage others in your team to build their platforms too, if that suits their goals and wishes. It's not quick or easy and it's certainly not for everyone, but it is very effective indeed - I must have hired around 30 people directly and indirectly through my own network. Of course, I didn't get the referral bonus...

The recruitment process

So, you've defined your role and who you want, and you've communicated with clarity and enthusiasm, and you've started advertising and working with agencies. The result is an influx of candidates into your process. Yay.

But wait. What if your process for interviewing and hiring people is shocking?

It's no good finding great people and then flowing them through a process that leaves them in the dark, makes them jump through hurdles and leaves them feeling mortified. What a waste of time and effort sourcing people to then fail them, and yourself, at the hiring stage.

If people currently flow through your process with ease then skip ahead, if not, you get to make a choice. Make it better for them or leave it as it is?

Your goal is to create a WOW experience from first contact to decision (and beyond).

You have a choice to create an experience that is WOW, MEH or WTF. The only way you will know what sort of experience you have is by observing it, getting knowledge and clearly articulating the current state to all involved, so changes can be agreed upon and then actioned.

I follow this 4-step process:

1. Map out the process
2. Add WOW opportunities
3. Make the process effective
4. Set a goal to have a decision made within 2 weeks from initial contact

It's relatively straight-forward to achieve (assuming you have control or influence over the process), but it requires focus and a lot of hard work.

Of course, you may find other people control parts of the process. That's why it's important to engage them in the improvements, involve them in the work and use every lever you can pull to get them onboard with improving the experience.

Staple yourself to a candidate

A powerful way of doing basic process improvement is to map out the process visually and then improve it.

In other words, staple yourself (metaphorically, not physically!) to a candidate and watch them flow (or not) through your current process. Note down each step or process, including who is involved and how long it takes.

You're trying to visualise and study what your current process looks like. Not what you want it to be, or wish it was, but what it currently looks like.

Here's a few thoughts on how to do it:

(1) Get the right people in the room

The stapling process requires knowledge - which comes from studying, and the best people to provide that knowledge are the very people who work within the process itself.

They usually know what problems exist and what needs to be done to improve them. So, they must be in the sessions with you. Give them a heads up before the meeting and ask them to bring data and insights about their own experience of the recruitment process. You should also encourage them to study any gaps they have.

You will likely have other hiring managers, maybe some recent recruits and HR, maybe some managers and leaders too.

(2) The room

You'll need a large room (physical or virtual) with a space to add plenty of post-it notes. Food is also welcome and tends to make the session go better.

Book at least 1.5 hours depending on how complicated the process is. Typically, you'll need a few of these sessions but for the first session keep it short.

In my experience, you'll likely be missing someone who has deep insights from this first meeting anyway, so don't make it too long. If you don't have all of the right people in the room you'll have incomplete information and may have to run another session.

(3) Staple yourself to the candidate

This is where you take the candidate (metaphorically) and you staple yourself to them.

Follow them through the process from responding to the job advert, all the way through to accepting, or being rejected, for the role.

Record, on a post-it note (digital or virtual), every single interaction, stage or process. It doesn't matter how small that interaction is, you want to record it. Ideally, you'll also track and record "does take" time – i.e. the exact amount of time it takes at each stage.

Map as many candidates as you can as they may all flow in different ways and take different amounts of time to complete.

- What does the process look like?
- Who do they interact with?
- How long does it take?
- Are there any bottlenecks?
- Does the process fall over at any point?
- What alternative paths through the process are there?

Your goal is to have an end-to-end picture of everything that happens, no matter how gnarly it is. The point here is to get facts and truth about what the process is really like - no sugar coating.

Including the "does take" time shows where the candidate is spending the most amount of time, and it might be eye-opening.

(4) Visualise it

It's super important to visualise it. Being able to see the process visually represented is powerful. You will see how big and complicated a process is when it is visualised.

Visuals are also a powerful way of engaging other people around the process. A load of words, and numbers may work, but a picture of the hiring process will be more powerful. Hence, using post-it notes and mapping it, left-to-right, creates something easy to understand.

There is something compelling about seeing, what should be a simple process, mapped with lots of handoffs and interactions. This visual representation is also a powerful lever to pull with managers and senior execs who may never have seen what is involved in hiring people.

Running left-to-right, horizontally, is the overall flow of the process from start to finish. At each of these stages I also suggest capturing specific details and showing these running vertically below each stage. This detail could include the "does take" time, who's involved, specific meetings and decisions, and whatever other information may help you make the process better.

(5) Study it and gain knowledge

Spend time studying what you have mapped.

Look for patterns, gaps, duplicate steps, bottlenecks, activities that rely on just a single person (single points of failure) and long wait times. These will lead to identifying ways to improve the process, or at least interesting points to discuss as a team.

Spend time discussing steps, times or flows that stand out. Get the opinions of everyone in the room about where they think the opportunities for improvement are and why. Encourage open discussions about how things are not as good as they could be.

Don't forget to focus on what is going well. Focus on what works and see if you can copy what works in one place to other parts of the process.

(6) Draw Utopia

Now spend time drawing or designing what you would like your future process to look like. What does Utopia for this process look like?

If you were to design an amazing candidate experience, from start to finish, what would it look like? Draw that.

Align it next to your current state and see how they differ. What needs to change? The gap between what you currently do and what you want to do can be a helpful catalyst and visual guide for how to improve. It may make you cry.

(7) Document, communicate and manage the change

This step is the hardest. After stapling to the work and mapping it out, it's now time to follow on with relevant improvements. It is hard though and often requires cross-team cooperation – which is sometimes not forthcoming for a variety of reasons.

Take a photo of the map you've built and store it somewhere safe. Add the context from the discussions, who was involved, where, when etc. This gives you supporting information and will help to jog your memory should the improvements get side-lined by other work.

Communicate your summary and visuals to everyone who was in the session. Ask them to add to it, delete it and correct anything. This way you get alignment and everyone is on the same wavelength as you. If you are in the office and still have it on the wall - then add these contextual details to the wall too.

Create a plan for change, detailing what needs to be done, in what order and who owns what aspects of it. The goal is to improve the recruitment process, so always consider this the core purpose.

Action the plans and measure that the changes you make are indeed making the process better. Review often and pivot where needed - always aiming to make the process effective for the potential employee, and yourself as the hiring manager.

Go smoothly and slowly – it can be tempting to go flat out and attempt to change the world, but you may be going more quickly than your team can realistically go. Smooth, methodical and well measured changes are important. You'll know what makes a positive difference if you do it carefully. Changing too many aspects of the process at once can lead to confusion over what worked and what didn't.

Often, when you change a process, you are changing the way people work. This requires calm and clear communication, a concrete vision and suitable managerial support. Change is often not a problem for most people, if they themselves don't have to change. However, if people have to change you may face resistance, a lack of cooperation and slow progress.

A word of caution. Always work on making the process effective first before making it efficient. It can be easy to try and make everything efficient – but being efficient at doing something wrong doesn't make sense.

Design a WOW service

Hopefully, you will have made improvements to your process and made it better for yourselves and the potential employee. You've likely already made it WOW - certainly compared to many other companies. But could you add more to it?

What WOW looks like is entirely up to you, but what follows are ideas I suggest to my clients. It's worked well for me and those I help, so it could be a good starting point for you too.

The following outline is very high level but it should give you a guide on how I create WOW hiring processes.

(1) Sourcing candidates

After the sourcing stage, when candidates move to the hiring stage, they should already have a really good understanding of why they should invest time and energy with your business.

At the sourcing stage the candidate should know about:

- Company Values
- Potential for their careers
- Learning opportunities
- The role
- Why they are right for it
- Who else works there

It could be you who communicates this, or your hiring team, or your agency, but candidates should be excited about moving forward with the process and speaking further to a hiring manager.

(2) CV Review

The next stage of the process is typically a CV/application/LinkedIn review by the hiring manager and maybe some of the hiring team too. The review should be timely so that the process can proceed quickly.

During this stage, you're reviewing the CV or online profile for suitability. Do they have the right experience? Do they have the right skills?

In a nutshell, do they meet your expectations and is it worth investing more time in interviewing them? If you get the sourcing stage correct you will likely move forward with most of the

candidates that come through. This is an interesting measure to start taking - how many CVs are received and how many make it through?

If you review a large number of CVs from people who don't make it through - what's wrong? Are they the wrong candidates? Did you articulate the sort of skills and experience you're after clearly? Are you being too picky? Are you and the recruiters in sync?

(3) Phone/Video Call

I always advocate a short video call or phone call.

There are two clear reasons for doing a screening (phone, video call) for 30 minutes prior to a face-to-face.

- (a) Firstly, this is an opportunity to get a good sense of the candidate.
 - (i) Do they turn up on time?
 - (ii) Can they communicate clearly?
 - (iii) Does their experience match the CV? (I have had a number of people submit what appears to be a made up resume of experience).
 - (iv) What's your general sense of them?
- (b) Secondly, it's for the candidate to also get a flavour of whether they wish to continue the process after they've met you and your hiring partners.
 - (i) It can be a significant investment to take time off, travel and be interviewed for a role that might not be right.
 - (ii) It gives them a chance to ask you questions and validate any thoughts, ideas or assumptions about the role or the company

This stage allows both parties to understand what each is looking for in a cost effective and efficient manner. It's much easier and cheaper to arrange a 30-minute chat than a full-on interview.

Of course, you're not going to get a great insight in 30 minutes but you should be able to ask a few clarifying questions and give them time to ask you questions too.

Always conduct these screening interviews with an interview partner. This goes some way to reducing bias and you get a different perspective on the candidate.

The call typically lasts 30 minutes. We'll cover how to conduct an amazing phone interview later.

(4) Face to Face

If both you and the candidate are happy to proceed after the call, then move to a face-to-face interview.

There is rarely a requirement to do multiple stages of face-to-face interviews. There are notable exceptions to this, particularly around executive roles where the influence, seniority and impact can be significant to the company.

For many roles though, a single face-to-face interview would suffice. Of course, with distributed work it's possible to conduct this interview via video call but aim for an in-person interview if you can. It makes it more challenging when you cannot meet someone in-person and get to know them.

However, coming back to the single face-to-face interview; how many talented people, who have options and choices of employment, would want to take multiple days off work for an interview? There is no need to drag the process out.

Instead aim for a single interview, about two to four hours in duration, depending on the role, and ideally at your office location (if you have one). I ensure there are three main sections of the interview and always ensure two people are present per section. Intense but worth it.

The three stages I suggest using are:

- People and Team Fit (behaviours, values, mission, goals, career ambitions, management etc.). This is usually an hour long and is conducted by managers and team leads.
- Technical Deep Dive (the specific technical aspects of the role, practical part, deep dive on experience). This is usually an hour and a half and is mostly run by their potential team mates.
- HR (shorter section with potential colleagues and HR). This is usually 15-30 minutes and always has someone from HR present.

Between each section the interviewers will come together to swap notes, highlight any areas to dig further into, or sometimes, call a halt to proceedings.

It may be that you need to cut the interview short if the candidate really isn't going to be successful.

This is not a problem if done with respect and dignity. If you do have to do this though, ensure, after the interview, you deep dive into why someone made it to an interview and you had to cut it short. Does the phone chat or CV review need tightening up? Or is the sourcing criteria and process not as effective as it could be?

I'm a fan of a technical exercise based on the specifics of the role you're recruiting for, but I know this divides opinion.

I believe that the only way to assess someone's skills is to see them in action. Why would you hire someone for technical skills, if you've never seen them display those skills?

For example, let's say you are hiring typical roles into a software tech company.

- (a) For Software Engineers I would recommend a relevant, modern pair coding exercise, with additional challenges of testing the code, refactoring it etc
- (b) For Software Testers something like a hands-on exploratory testing session on code with known bugs in it. You may also want them to explain the bugs to a Software Engineer or attempt to diagnose the bug further using technical log files
- (c) For Scrum Masters you may consider a walk-through of a sprint meeting trailing off in the wrong direction, looking at how they may respond to the situation.
- (d) For Managers you may consider a series of challenges around a low performing employee, or to see how well they can diagnose a systemic problem in a team.
- (e) For Marketing Managers you may want to ask them to come up with a strategy for entering a new region with the software,

The exercise you choose will be contextual to your world of work. The essence of this part of the interview is ensuring that the candidate can do the job, not just talk about it. There can be large and significant gaps between "knowing" and "doing" in some cases.

You're looking for someone who can do the job with the right behaviours, not someone who can recite information to sound plausible.

Of course, some unscrupulous hiring managers will use these technical exercises to barter salaries lower than advertised. Or they won't provide feedback or simply use them as a filter with zero explanation of what the candidate did well, or didn't. It's like any tool or process - used badly it can create a terrible experience.

That's why I suggest you keep the exercises relevant to the role and that you clearly explain how the candidate performed against any criteria. Having existing members of your team pair with them can be a really positive experience also. The more informal and relaxed the sessions are - which is why I like to pair the candidate with existing team members - the more comfortable people feel and the better they perform.

The point of the exercise is to see whether people really can do what they say, why they do it the way they do and whether they can articulate their thinking around the subject. It is not a binary yes/no test but an exploration of skills and thought coming together. It must be carefully conducted by knowledgeable practitioners and done with care and dignity.

If people are good at what they do, then there really is no reason why an assessment would pose a problem. In the hundreds of interviews I've conducted, nobody has ever complained - in fact, people really enjoy the fact it's hard to get a job; it means the quality of people they will work with is high.

Ensure you ask a large number of behaviour related questions during the interview. I have included some example questions later in the book. By focusing on behaviours, you are teasing out what people have actually done, not what they think they can do, or can recite from a book.

There are some incredibly good communicators out there who may try to convince you that they're excellent. The only way to find out whether they are, in the short space of an interview process, is to focus on what they have done, what they said, what failed, what succeeded, what they learned, what they did differently next time and what outcomes they directly achieved.

It's harder than it sounds but without focusing on what people can actually do, you are left with nothing more than opinions, well versed reason, plagiarised answers or hot air. Not an effective way to get the right people in my opinion. In later chapters, we'll cover good interviews and behavioural based questions.

At the end of the interview thank them for their time, outline the next steps and include a tour.

(5) Review

Each person involved in the interview should come together after the interview for open dialogue around the candidate using evidence, observations and behaviours to steer the conversation.

This meeting should be as soon as possible, so information is fresh in people's minds. If any one of the interview team says "No" to the candidate, then the others have a chance to convince them, but if they really aren't on board, then that candidate should not be hired.

It is expensive to recruit in this way, but it keeps the bar high and as long as the decisions are made based on evidence rather than opinions, there's a good chance you're making the right decisions. Always use evidence to make decisions. Always include someone from HR in this meeting. Always keep copious notes.

(6) Decision

A timely decision should be communicated to the candidate.

There is no reason why the decision should not be possible within 24 hours of the face-to-face interview. This is a worthy goal. Sometimes logistics just don't allow for this to happen but there is no harm trying.

One goal I like to set with all internal recruitment teams (HR and Management) is to go from initial CV submission to decision in 10 days or less.

For good candidates, actively looking for a new role, ten days is plenty of time for someone else to sneak in and offer them another opportunity. The faster you can move, and keep your hiring bar high, the better chance you have of landing the right hire quickly.

When I was heading up recruitment we would literally have a candidate come to the market, get their CV and a day later they'd be snapped up. Despite our 10-day goal there were always companies faster than us.

(7) The Offer

When you're ready to make an offer, be sure to make it as soon as you can.

Use recruiters or internal HR teams for making an offer - as they are pretty good at this. Sometimes you will need to make the offer yourself though, so keep it simple, be confident and ensure the offer is in line with your company's policies and market demands.

I can't advise further on offering as it's often very contextual, but the key is not to insult the candidate. If they are good they will have options of other roles, so don't low-ball on previously agreed rates to save a little money. I've seen this too many times and it can sour a relationship to the point where the candidate walks away.

Make the salary as consistent and inline as you can with existing employees' salaries too. As a manager, it can be tricky to balance out uneven salaries in annual pay reviews. However, you will have to ensure you pay market rates too, and for good people, these rates can increase frequently.

(8) The Rejection

Sometimes you'll need to reject a candidate. Again, your HR or recruiter can help with this.

The key to rejecting candidates is to do it with empathy and be clear in communicating the reasons for the decision.

It's not enough to send a generic rejection anymore. Some companies don't give feedback for "legal reasons". Sure, there may be some legal reasons but it feels like a cop-out to me. There should be no reason why, with care and dignity, you cannot articulate to a candidate why they were not successful. Be careful though, and speak to your friendly HR team.

How to conduct a good phone interview

I believe the phone interview is a really important step in the hiring process as it is an effective way for both parties (hiring manager and candidate) to speak to each other before a fully-fledged face-to-face interview.

Speaking to a candidate as soon as possible after their application is important, especially so if you're trying to hire the best talent. It is likely they are in demand, so getting to speak to them sooner rather than later is important. Most good candidates will also expect a phone conversation before putting in time, effort and cost to see you face-to-face.

Here are some ideas and thoughts on how to conduct an amazing phone interview.

(1) Expect to conduct the phone interview outside of work hours

It's not always possible to speak to a candidate during typical working hours. They may still be employed, or cannot find time. The key is being flexible, within reason - you have a life outside work too.

Make it easy for them to speak to you by being available before and after work, and at lunchtime, if that is something you can accommodate. This makes it easier for them to find some quiet time and space.

To be fair, it's become a lot easier with remote working for people to be available during the day for a video call.

(2) Time-box the interview

Keep your screening interviews short. There is no need for it to last longer than about 30 minutes. The purpose of the screening call is for both parties to work out whether they like each other and want to proceed. It's not about deep-diving on ideas or experience. You want to gain enough information and insights to be able to make a decision about the next step.

(3) Structure the interview

Provide a logical structure for the interview so that you ask the questions you need to and provide ample time to answer questions from the candidate.

I like to start by introducing myself and anyone else on the call. I then do an overview of the company, the expectations of the role and our goals for the future. This sets the tone, lets them

ease into the call and gives me a chance to add some humour and enthusiasm. It's important to make this call interesting and exciting.

After a couple of minutes of preamble, I then offer an initial chance for them to ask any questions. This tends to set them at ease and gives them an opportunity to find out more about us and the role.

During the chat, I focus on finding out more about their goals, experience and career plans. I want to make sure that we can help them achieve what they want in life, whilst delivering on our business goals too. I will also dive into their skills and experiences looking for how they will help us with our problems, or open up opportunities.

I then leave around 5-8 minutes at the end for them to ask any further questions. We then close out with next steps.

(4) Plan Accordingly

It's obvious to a candidate if you turn up to a phone interview having done very little preparation. Plan accordingly and make sure you are prepared. It will not only run smoothly but it will also show that you care about the candidate's time.

Ensure you have a quiet space at home, or a room booked in the office - and get rid of distractions.

Turn up early and check the audio and connectivity. Also make sure you have a consistent mobile signal if you're using a mobile phone.

Make sure you have the candidate's CV and any other information you need. Ensure you have the candidate's phone number and other contact details should you get disconnected. Make sure you have notebooks, pens or other note taking tools.

(5) Send them full details

It's really important that you make it easy for the candidate to prepare for the interview, so send them details of the people they will be speaking to, along with the relevant phone numbers. Sharing the agenda can be helpful also.

(6) Pair Up

Always pair up for a phone interview so that you get a more balanced view of the candidate. It's also nice for candidates to have more than one person to ask questions to. I try to organise a manager and a peer to be on the call if possible.

(7) Make Notes

Take copious amounts of notes. You are unlikely to remember everything you have spoken about, so make lots of notes. I like to use a mind map on a sheet of A4 paper.

I list all questions asked and highlights of their answers. Always keep a record of each interview and store it safely according to your HR and company guidelines. It's really important you have evidence to support any decisions you make.

(8) Compensate for a lack of visuals

If you are doing a phone call versus a video call, then you'll have to compensate by using obvious verbal clues. This will let the candidate know you're listening through your feedback. For example, you could say "yes", "uhum" or simply repeat parts of their statements every so often.

You will also have no body language to read, so ensure you ask clarifying questions and listen more intently to their tone, intonations and speech patterns. Use simple words and be sure to be as clear as possible on the phone.

(9) Don't eat or drink

It's really obvious when someone is eating, drinking or smoking when on the phone. It's really off-putting and somewhat rude, so don't do it.

(10) Video Calls

If you are using a video call then be sure it's safe and secure. Check your audio and video before the call and be sure to include clear instructions for the candidate prior to the interview.

It also pays to be patient when using video calls. In my experience, these sessions rarely run smoothly (technical problems, software problems, bandwidth problems), but the value I get from them outweighs the minor disruption.

Face to Face Interviewing

When interviewing be sure to use behavioural questions throughout the interview as much as possible. A quick internet search for “behavioural based interview questions” will bring you back hundreds of examples.

Behaviour based questions focus on what people can and have done, not what they think about situations or how they may deal with something. There is no harm in those sorts of questions too, but behavioural questions work better at finding out what people are capable of.

I remember an interview with someone who was an outstanding communicator. She was able to articulate very clearly her views and opinions on her work and what she had done. The problem was most of these statements were empty statements, rehashes of popular beliefs and even straight out quotes from books and online sources.

When we dug deep on behavioural questions she came up short. She couldn't explain why she had done the work, whether it actually worked and what the results were. She admitted she hadn't done much of what was claimed on her CV. I'll never forget one of the other managers advocating for hiring her because her CV was so great, even though he'd also witnessed her inability to actually articulate what she had done. When I asked him why we should hire her, he said “she must be able to do it, it must be nerves, it says she can do it on her CV”!

What people put on their CV, and online profile, may not be the same as what they can do. That's why it's important to cut through the opinions and rhetoric and get to what they're actually capable of.

Of course, you will also want to know what they think about strategies, ideas and plans, or how they might cope with future experiences, but these sorts of questions should be kept to a minimum. Your goal with an interview is to work out whether this person can solve your problems or open up the opportunities you seek. Not just whether they believe they can.

Be cautious of using any technique, tool or approach for the wrong reasons. For example, I'm a fan of doing some type of skills based assessment (as explained earlier), but only if it's relevant, done with respect and discussed in detail with the candidate afterwards. If it's just a test for the sake of it, or a trap for people to fall into, or an arbitrary measure to make it easier for you to hire, then it's unlikely to yield the results you desire - and could damage your reputation in the process.

Do what feels right, but ensure it helps you work out whether the candidate is a good fit for your company and can help you solve your problems, or open up opportunities.

Here's how to do a cracking interview.

(1) Prepare

Prepare well ahead of time. Read the candidate's CV several times. Discover more about their skills and experience before the interview.

Ensure you book the right room at the right time. There is nothing like a badly located room with distractions all around. Getting the physical environment right leaves you and the candidate the space to do a good interview.

Prepare the agenda ahead of time and be sure to share this with the candidate. It is important they know what to expect, especially if there are presentations or exercises to complete.

As mentioned, try to run a single interview with multiple people. Somewhere between 4-6 people interviewing is a good balance from my experience. By including multiple people, you iron out some of the inherent biases and often get a more balanced set of feedback about the candidate.

Plan this well in advance to ensure interviewer availability, and be sure to do a "wrap up" session after to get feedback from the interviewers. It goes without saying, but ensure anyone who is interviewing has done "interview" training and is aware of the legalities of questioning (for example, in the UK we have protected characteristics which need to be understood).

Make sure you know the candidate's name and what is written on their CV. Being prepared helps the interview run smoother, but it also communicates to the candidate that you care and have put in the work. I've been in an interview before where the hiring manager kept calling me Steve.

If you are going to use their CV as a guide then print a copy for you and the candidate.

Prepare your questions in advance so you're not winging it.

(2) The Introduction

On first meeting the candidate for the interview be sure to create a great impression by being welcoming and friendly. Be sure to introduce yourself and anyone else with you.

Take the time to explain the agenda for the day.

Repeat the candidate's name. By repeating someone's name you'll remember it better. Keep using their name, not too much that you freak them out.

Don't be afraid to make small talk but be careful about asking anything about where they live, how far they have travelled etc. There are plenty of legal traps you may fall into.

Keep up-to-date with the law so you don't fall foul, upset candidates or create a tricky legal situation for your company. You have been trusted with interviewing, so take it upon yourself to research the legal aspects of interviews.

Your goal is to make the candidate feel relaxed and welcome. Firstly, they are deciding whether to join your company. Secondly, they will be at their best if they are relaxed - and you want to see their best.

(3) Environment

During the actual interview avoid sitting directly opposite the candidate, especially if there is a barrier between you like a table. Sitting opposite someone often leads to conflicts, whereas sitting next to someone often leads to alliances.

Ensure the candidate has something to drink and that the room is the right temperature. Try to limit disruptions and interruptions such as noise, people walking past, windows that overlook interesting streets or rooms with lots of clutter. The best way to avoid this is to book a suitable room in advance.

(4) Baseline

As you speak with the candidate and they relax you'll start to build a baseline of their non-verbal communication - nothing more than how they carry themselves when they are relaxed and feeling content. In an interview, I doubt you'll ever get that level of relaxation but if you're approachable and friendly you can start to tease out their baseline.

The more you know somebody the more reliable this baseline is, so it's unlikely you'll get a solid baseline in a short interview. But by studying how someone is behaving when in normal conversation, you can start to spot deviations from this baseline.

Their body language is providing you with information. I often say that somebody's nonverbal communication conveys their emotions; their sincerity, enthusiasm and passion.

When they deviate from their baseline you'll have information to take in and respond to. The deviation doesn't mean "anything" - it's just information to feed into your next approach. If someone is feeling uncomfortable don't keep pursuing that question line. If they deviate and are excited about answering the question then let them talk - ask clarifying questions - keep them on track.

The deviation is nothing more than feedback, often about their emotions around answering a question. Study how to read body language and read around the subject, it will make you a much better interviewer.

My online Communication Superpower Course is a good place to start.
(<https://www.cultivatedmanagement.com/online-communication-course/>)

(5) Questions

Take some time to understand the types of questions you are asking so that you can use them strategically in an interview. There are good questions and bad questions, and lots in between.

It's quite common for interviewers to have a huge list of questions and pick them at random, or try to cram in too many. When you read someone's CV you will likely have some queries about how they can help solve your problems, or open up opportunities, or how they will fit with your existing team. These queries should be answered through the correct use of interview questions.

One of the core elements of communication is that people remember how you make them feel - you want people to feel good about the interview. That doesn't mean it can't be a tough interview or an interview that digs deep - but that should be done with the awareness of how the other person feels.

Always give the candidate a chance to ask their questions too - and always be cautious of a candidate who doesn't have any questions. I see lack of questions as a lack of interest in the company or the role itself. It's impossible to cover everything in a job advert, phone chat, website, blog or social media account. There are always stones left unturned, hence there is always plenty of scope for questions.

Throughout the interview process you're trying to ascertain whether this person is a good fit for your team and the role you have open.

I find it useful to ask these questions to myself during the many stages of the hiring process:

- Is this person going to add to the team and raise the bar?
- Is this person bringing something new, interesting and valuable to the team?
- Is this person going to solve a business problem we currently have, or will have?
- Is this person going to grow personally with the business?
- Is this person going to teach us new things?
- Is this person going to take ownership of work and problems?
- Does this person care about their career?
- Is this person learning and teaching what they know?
- Does this person share the same values that we do? Will they resonate with the values, or go against them?

Come up with your own list of questions, but be sure you keep the purpose of the interview in your mind. It will help you to ask really good, targeted and meaningful questions.

Behavioural Interview Questions

It's important to stick to behavioural based interview questions. You're trying to work out how the candidate behaves or behaved in certain situations. Don't rely on empty answers, resumes or CVs or well answered rhetoric copied straight from someone else.

Your job is to ensure the person you're interviewing can solve your problems or open up opportunities. You don't get long to interview somebody, so make sure your questions get to the heart of the matter quickly.

Plan ahead by printing the list of questions and marking those you want to ask.

Behavioural questions typically sound like this:

- "Tell me about a time when you did X, what happened and why do you think that was?"
- "What happened in that situation and how did you deal with it?"
- "How did what you learned from that mistake influence your next step?"
- "Tell me about a time when you worked in an agile team. What activities happened and why?"

It's too easy for good communicators to sit in an interview and wing it; to make things up, elaborate with confidence, steal what others did and wax lyrical about how good they are.

Your job is to see through that and get to the facts and underlying knowledge. Behavioural based interview questions are my favourite way of doing this.

(1) Leading Questions

Leading questions are questions that lead people to answer in a certain way, often with little scope to answer outside of what the questions suggest, such as:

"Don't you think it's great what's happening in the world of AI right now?"

In this question, you are leading someone to answer about the positive aspects of AI. An expected answer is one about how great things are. Some candidates may discuss the negative aspects, but most won't. Think about your intentions and what you're trying to achieve with your questions.

In an interview, it may come across as aggressive or overly pushy to use these sorts of questions, and is unlikely to lead to many insights.

(2) Loaded Questions

Loaded questions have an intentionally controversial topic or emotional angle to them. I try not to use these at all in an interview. Loaded questions are often political, emotional and divisive.

You're trying to work out whether someone can do the work, solve a problem and add to the culture of your team - not what their political views are or what they think of a controversial topic.

(3) Polar Questions

Polar questions are sometimes known as binary questions and are basically simple yes/no questions. There is often little reason to ask these. They don't lead to great insights, but can be helpful, possibly to clarify hard and fast facts.

Q - *"Is your name Rob?"*

A - *"Yes"*

(4) Direct Questions

These can be helpful, but can come across as being forthright and aggressive and often don't lead to clever insights.

Q - *"What did you study at University?"*

A - *"Media Science"*

(5) Open Ended Questions

These are my favourite as they can sow the seeds for a conversation but also give the candidate a chance to talk around the subject. I use these questions a lot.

Be careful with these questions if you're not good at "interrupting nicely" and facilitating the interview, as some people may talk for a long time around a subject.

Open ended means there is no natural close, so get good at closing down people or encouraging people to close on their own through subtle leads, nonverbal gestures and closing remarks.

A good interview candidate will also know when to close and stop talking. Nerves and a natural fear of silence though can often keep people talking for longer.

An example of an open-ended question would be:

"Tell me about what you did in this situation, and how did you resolve it"

(6) Prompting Questions

Prompting questions are questions that lead or clarify an answer. They are helpful for helping people to get to a natural close or to answer a tricky question.

For example, somebody may be struggling with an open-ended question that they cannot answer.

"Tell me about a time when you had a conflict - how did you deal with it and what did you learn from it?"

People are often afraid to talk about conflicts hence they don't narrow down on this, or they say they've never had a conflict.

A prompting questions would be:

"What about a time when you disagreed with a decision, or you brought something new to the table that someone disagreed with, or maybe you had a difficult colleague?"

These prompting questions can help someone get to an answer.

(7) Mirror Questions

I use these a lot. Often called the paraphrase question. In a nutshell, you are taking the answer given by the candidate and turning it into a clarifying question. I use these to encourage the other person to add more information or flavour to an answer.

Use these a lot - they are very powerful for getting to the root of ideas, thoughts and challenges.

As an example, let's say you ask them to explain about how they improved a process. They say they did X and Y.

You could then ask:

"So, let me clarify - you did X but why didn't you do Y?"

(8) Probing Questions

Probing questions are essentially questions that dig deeper into what someone has said. They can be helpful to find out more, but exercise caution in how far you go with these. They can often lead candidates to feel uncomfortable if you take it too far.

"Tell me more about that?"

"Why did that happen?"

(9) Hypothetical Questions

These can be very useful for finding out how candidates will behave or cope with new situations, but they won't necessarily tell you what they are capable of.

For example:

"You've never managed 15 people before, how do you think you will cope?"

Give plenty of time for their questions

A good candidate will ask lots of questions. They will be keen to find out more about you, the company and the role.

I tend to give at least 10 minutes at the end and 5 minutes at the beginning for questions. If you don't get lots of questions, try some prompting questions to see if you can trigger something from the candidate. Don't force it though and make them feel uncomfortable. In my experience though, a candidate who doesn't ask questions is often disinterested in the role.

End the interview like a pro

Don't forget to thank the candidate for taking the time to come for the interview. Explain the next steps, such as "Our recruiter will be in touch tomorrow" or "We'll be back in touch with the agency tomorrow".

Always try to use time-speak such as "tomorrow", "later today", "after the weekend" or "after 10am on Monday", so that you add certainty to your statement.

If you use time-speak be sure to follow up at the stated time and date. If you promise them a decision tomorrow, then get back to them tomorrow, even if it's to let them know that you haven't been able to decide on anything yet.

Always offer a tour of the office (if you have an office). Getting a tour allows the candidate to see the office, the people and the surroundings they will be working in. They get to see engaged people, how much fun is in the office and how much energy your people exude. If you don't have the sort of office that creates a good impression then you've got some work to do.

Say goodbye and field any last-minute questions.

Onboarding

Phew. What a journey so far. You've sourced good people, hired good people and now you need to onboard them into your business.

Onboarding is a term used in the HR industry to describe bringing people into your business and getting them productive quickly.

For me, onboarding is a vastly undervalued activity. I believe that onboarding people is about achieving the following goals:

- Removing the stress and upheaval of joining a new company
- Immersion into the culture of the business
- Enabling new starters with the right information at the right time
- Starting their learning journey
- Starting the relationship between them and their manager
- Ensuring the new starter knows they have made the right decision in joining your organisation

You may have other outcomes, but the above goals are always the starting point for designing a great onboarding service in my work.

Many HR professionals and managers merely go through the motions of bringing people into the company by following company legal requirements and not much else. This can lead to a formal and stale experience by the candidate and it may not match the experience from the interview process.

Onboarding new starters on their journey is no different to onboarding new customers. Would your business do the minimum for its customers? I hope the answer is "No"!

Your onboarding process is a service just like any other. As such you get to design it. You can make it great or passable. It's your choice as an organisation.

Remember the three core experiences when designing a great experience.

1. WTF - Doing the minimum, usually to cover legal requirements
2. MEH - Doing what some others are doing but not really setting the world on fire
3. WOW - Doing what is right and needed and impressive

Of course, you know I'm going to suggest you go for WOW.

WTF

I'll be honest, most organisations barely meet the minimum effort needed to onboard new starters. You'll know when you're experiencing minimum effort because you have to do the work. You'll also wonder whether you made the right decision in joining that company. I've had this feeling a number of times.

In these situations, you have to make up for the fact the organisation you're joining isn't putting in the effort.

I remember joining an organisation like this. Here's how my first day went.

As I rolled into the company carpark ready for a 9am start the barrier wouldn't rise. I called through to reception via the intercom to be abruptly told I wasn't expected. I had to park my car on the road.

I sat in reception for about an hour waiting for my manager to arrive. They never showed up. I was taken through to the main office by someone in HR who looked about as happy as I was.

He showed me to my desk, didn't introduce me to anyone and left me to sit there for another hour. Eventually someone from the team turned up, and didn't really do a great welcome – they certainly didn't exude happiness in being at work.

I had no computer on Day 1 either - in fact, it took 4 days before I even got my computer, not great given this was a technical computer based job. I literally had nothing to do. I was sent home early on Day 1 as nobody really knew anything about me. I was tempted not to go back on Day 2. I quit after 8 days.

On the way home on that first day, I thought "WTF have I done?".

You don't want candidates feeling like that. Amazingly it's still common-place to hear stories like that today.

MEH

Some companies are doing a good job onboarding people. They have people saying how good the onboarding is and social media is lit up with photos of first day welcome packs, group hugs and fun first day quirks. I'd say most companies are striving for this and many are succeeding.

However, look a little deeper and you often find that the onboarding process is little more than a single PR activity. Good for social media - not so good for achieving long term goals like the ones I mentioned above.

Someone I used to work with moved to another company and posted one of these “amazing first day” pictures on social media. It was impressive. Lots of stationery, clothing, tech etc. Three months later they had quit and moved on – it turned out that behind the scenes it was turmoil, chaos and swamped with poor leadership.

Saying that, many companies are getting it right and that’s brilliant - it’s raising the bar across the industry too. As social media fills with stories of free gear, group hugs (yes, that really is something), employee’s choice of technology, welcome parties and more, other companies will strive to offer the same.

Go forth and follow the trends, but ensure the process behind it stacks up too.

Onboarding people isn’t just about gifts, cheer, group hugs and parties. It’s about taking the stress out of joining a new company, making people feel welcome, setting them up for success and giving people the tools they need to get productive quickly.

That’s not to say all of this welcome pack and partying is a bad thing, far from it, but it should just be one part of the onboarding process. When you’re designing your onboarding, try not to copy what everyone else is doing unless you think it will help you. Otherwise you’ll end up with a MEH service like everyone else’s.

For example, would giving the new starters a party on Day 1 be something that would resonate with your culture and brand? Would someone who is painfully shy like to enter the office to cheers and claps from everyone? Maybe, maybe not?

WOW

I prefer to Lead with WOW.

WOW requires looking at the purpose of onboarding and delivering against it. That purpose is both from your employee’s perspective, and yours.

If you design your onboarding to WOW new employees - and you get them productive and engaged quickly, then you will build a service that achieves the goals mentioned above.

A sample onboarding process

There is no way for me to give you the perfect onboarding design in a book.

It must meet the goals outlined above, your own goals and also take into account your own culture. It must overcome the problems that are specific to your company and it must fit with your own requirements and legal compliance.

But, it is possible to give you a flavour of what a WOW onboarding experience could look like. I can provide some inspiration and thoughts in the following few pages. You can take what might be useful and ignore what isn't.

Designing an onboarding experience must ensure you meet the purpose of that process from the employee's perspective whilst balancing this with your business needs. This is not easy. It requires studying and reflection. It requires asking for feedback. It requires a relentless pursuit for improvement. It requires being honest about what is working, and what isn't.

(1) Tone of Voice

All communication has a Tone of Voice (ToV), it's important you find the right one to ensure a consistent feel for the candidate across the entire hiring and onboarding experience.

ToV is the language, style and attitude your company uses in its communication. Few companies appear to have a consistent ToV across all departments as it's hard to teach communication skills and it's a big task to define style guides for all communications. It is important though.

Imagine you go for an interview with a hiring manager who is relaxed, fun, informal and talks to you in a way that resonates. You accept the job and are very much looking forward to working in this team. You then receive offer letters and welcome packs that sound like a giant corporate from the 90s. It creates a disconnect - something doesn't feel right.

Imagine you then join the company and the corporate communications are all about push/pull blah blah and it's death-by-presentation at every meeting. These disconnects make it hard to create WOW for hiring managers.

It's not always possible to influence a consistent ToV across the business, but you should strive to merge the HR and hiring manager communication styles as much as possible to ensure consistency. Being consistent across all communications re-enforces your brand and your culture and it helps people to resonate with your company.

(2) Automation

Many HR teams, in their bid to be more efficient, are automating much of the onboarding and new starter process. This is a great strategy if the underlying approach to hiring is sound and effective. If not, then automating a poor process just automates more problems.

Be cautious of automated emails and process flow - review them heavily and work with each department involved to ensure it works well, doesn't duplicate work, has the right Tone of Voice and aligns with the rest of the process.

(3) Equipment

As part of this guide I'm going to assume that you have an IT process in place to ensure your new starter gets the right equipment on Day 1. This is essential.

On Day 1 they'll need their equipment and suitable software ready to go. As a minimum, this is a laptop, access to your email system, Intranet access and relevant work systems such as CRM, Finance tools, Dev tools etc.

(4) Scale

Not all of the ideas below will scale. Some will only suit a company in the early stages of growth, some may be too expensive or grand for a new company finding its feet. Some of the ideas will need to be bigger or smaller in scope depending on your goals, aims and budgets.

The Flow

What follows is a pretty standard flow from initial job offer to the end of the probation period.

A probation period is a period of time in which the employee is closely reviewed to ensure their continued employment is warranted. It's a pretty standard process for most companies. Durations may vary but for this example I'm going to assume there is a three-month probation period.

I always group what follows into a simple checklist for HR, managers and new starters to complete. Simple. Let's crack on.

(1) Offer

Ideally the offer should be discussed over the phone with the candidate as soon as possible after the decision has been made. Good people have options so moving quickly sends a strong signal that you're interested.

I would wait no more than 24 hours after the interview before getting an offer (or rejection) in. Most good candidates actively seeking a new role will be working multiple roles, often crossing time frames with one another. Be the one to put an offer in and make it known you want them to join you.

Once they have verbally accepted the role, I think it's prudent to get the contract out as soon as possible. Savvy candidates will not resign from their current role until they have seen the offer in writing and signed the contract.

Consider using email rather than postal letters, or even try using online signing tools to speed things up.

(2) Pre-welcome message

Once you've received the paperwork and you're as certain as you can be about them joining you, send your new employee a welcome video message. This message would ideally be from their manager, future colleagues or a department/regional executive, or maybe all of the above!

A personalised welcome video is a powerful WOW statement, and they haven't even set foot in the office as a new employee yet.

Ensure the message is full of enthusiasm and contains some or all of the following:

- How excited you are for them to be joining
- What they should do on Day 1 - arrival time, who they will meet etc.
- Details about parking, travel and directions
- What projects they'll be working on
- What reading or learning they may consider before joining
- Details of lunch for Day 1 (you're providing it right?)
- Who they should contact if they have any questions
- Who will be their mentor/buddy on day one
- And anything else relevant to your business/team

I would also accompany this video with an email explaining the same information too.

The video really is a WOW moment and shows a lot of respect and care. New employees are blown away by the personal touch and it is such a simple way of welcoming people to the business.

Of course, it doesn't have to be a video. For years I would just send an email outlining the above, which worked really well too.

To make this a repeatable process and less daunting for those creating the message, consider creating a checklist or template for them to follow, or even writing the content for them. It's also worth having a demonstration video showing them what it could look like. It's much easier to create good welcome content when you are shown what good looks like. Not everyone is good in front of the camera, but with some practice it gets easier.

(3) Book Meetings

During the first week, the new starter should meet various people from across the organisation. Book all of these meetings well in advance to ensure availability. We'll cover who they should meet in a minute.

(4) Posted Welcome Pack

A week or so before the new starter is due to join I would send them a welcome "Goodie Pack".

This doesn't need to be anything more than a letter and a few gifts like t-shirts, branded merchandise etc. I like to include a book for them to read also - as all new starters to my teams are expected to keep learning, it makes sense to give them something interesting or cool to read before they join. Maybe an email with some links to videos or other online resources is more your style.

The goal is to keep reminding them that they've joined an amazing company and that they are valued. It's also about giving them some useful gear for when they start. You could choose to give them the "Goodie Pack" on Day 1 - but I like to show more appreciation by posting something to them. The surprise element is a positive WOW opportunity.

(5) Day 1

It can be pretty tough to join a new company; new people, new location, new culture, new processes, new tools and new opportunities to succeed. As such it's important to take away as much of this stress as is possible. By now you should have already sent them the welcome pack outlining what time to start and who they will meet, and that lunch is provided already.

Day 1 Basics

I like to ensure my new starters also have suitable information about parking, directions for travel and dress code too. I suggest they turn up at 9:30am rather than the usual 9:00 but that's because I like to have time to prepare for them joining.

When they turn up make sure their manager is present and ready to greet them. There's something important about being greeted by the very person who will be your boss. If it's not possible for their manager to meet them, ensure they are greeted by a colleague rather than HR (of course, they may be joining HR!). It's nice to be welcomed by people you'll be working closely with.

A calendar entry will ensure everyone is synchronised around this, but it also needs a clear owner. Work out whether that should be HR or the manager - but ensure someone is tasked with the logistics of bringing your new starter on board.

As previously mentioned, make sure that their IT and work equipment is all ready for them.

Tour

A quick tour of the office would be next ensuring you point out relevant health and safety details, toilets, kitchen (and the associated rules around which mugs you can and cannot use), locations of departments and anything else relevant to keeping people safe and informed.

I will introduce the new starter to the heads of each department on this tour. I know there might be lots of names to remember but it's important others in the business also know someone new has joined.

Buddy and Team

After this I would recommend introducing them to their work team and ensuring they have a buddy assigned to coach them through the first few months. I like to pick a buddy from the same team they'll be working in, but I've seen it work really well with buddies from other teams.

The buddy's job is to answer everyday questions and to help them become familiar with the norms and culture of the organisation. Choose a buddy who is a cultural ambassador and who can be trusted to be positive. You will of course need to choose a Buddy well in advance of your new employee joining.

Welcome Induction Guide

It's a good idea to have a welcome training course, portal or Intranet page that introduces the basics of your organisation, has welcome messages from execs and gives your new starter a real sense of what the company is trying to achieve and what role they will play in this success.

Included in this welcome course should be any relevant details they will need in their first week, details of the product/service and suitable information about HR/Management processes such as performance, feedback and 1:1s.

Welcome Message

It's a great idea for the new starter's manager to send a welcome message out to the business. You will have your own communication mechanisms and channels, so stick to what is good practice at your work. This might include an all-staff email, or a team/department wide email or maybe a post on your internal chat/social channel.

This communicates to the wider business that someone new has started and it also shows the new starter that they are welcome to the business.

Templates can help managers get the message right.

Lunch

A nice lunch out with your new starter and maybe a couple of colleagues is a very positive WOW experience. As your team scales it may become too expensive to keep doing this, but try to ensure you have something planned at lunch for them.

Let the team own it

Over time it's common for teams to create their own onboarding process within the bigger process. This often becomes very fun and personal to the teams and is a brilliant way to give autonomy to those who will be working with the new employee. This should be encouraged and supported.

Chill Time

Your new starter should probably spend the rest of the day getting set up with email and other software and getting to know their buddy. Many managers want their new starters to be productive from Day 1 but this is insane in my opinion.

It takes a little while to acclimatise to a new business and the first week is a perfect time to do that. I also suggest some "chill" time on Day 1 for the team to kick start building relationships.

(6) Day 2 - Company Smart

I believe Day 2 is all about your new starter becoming "Company Smart". This is all about finding out what the company vision is, what the values are and what the purpose of the business is along with market information, products and plans for the future.

Much of this information might exist in company slide decks, Intranet pages and corporate email, but it's good to consolidate it into a neat welcome pack or course. I like the idea of new starters consuming the information at their own leisure and then later in the day getting face-to-face time with their manager and an executive. This gives them the freedom to learn at their own pace in the morning, followed by facetime with managers or execs to clarify any questions later.

There are loads of Learning Management System tools and Intranet services that can help you solve this problem. When you're small you might get away with communicating about the

business in person. As you grow though it might make sense to digitise this messaging and scale it online.

Lunch or coffee with an exec is a winning move on Day 2 - a good way to generate WOW. The new starter has just taken on information about the company so in-person time with an exec is a perfect opportunity to ask any questions and gain further clarity.

Of course, you may not be able to organise time with executives so work at whatever level you do have access to. It's a WOW experience to join a business and meet an exec who should be a torch bearer for the values of the business. Of course, it doesn't always work that way.

Execs and managers will need to be booked ahead of Day 2 and you may be able to save some time by bundling a few new starters together to make this more scalable, but be careful about losing the personal touch.

Facetime with their manager is also a requirement for Day 2. It's a perfect time to explain the management style, the manager/direct process, how 1:1s work and how the performance/appraisal process flows. Management is about building relationships and creating the best environments for people to flourish and this initial meeting is a great way to start that relationship.

The rest of Day 2 might be spent meeting more people in the team or interesting people from across the business. It's usual on Day 2 for many new employees to have lots of questions for their managers and/or Buddy.

(7) Day 3-5

By Days 3-5 your new employee will be finding their feet, meeting new people and learning more about the culture. It's really important that by the end of their first 5 days they have understood two major parts of your organisation - the product/service and the sales process.

This is important so that new starters become aware of the wider product or service they are contributing to and how it is sold to your customers. A wider awareness about these two aspects will provide more business context, commercial awareness and an appreciation of what goes into selling the product/service.

I recommend organising a meeting with the team responsible for training customers (product, training, professional services) to provide the same training for new starters, no matter what team they are in. Customer level training is likely to be broad enough to cover the whole product/service and how it works. For the sales side of this awareness training I recommend inviting a sales leader or manager to come in and explain the sales strategy. What markets are being targeted, what potential is there and what does the sales process look like?

Both of these presentations have the potential to be utterly tedious and a boring display of facts, complicated diagrams and boring workflows. They don't have to be. Your goal as a business is to make both of these sections utterly engaging. Good communicators can do this - so get those people who are good at communicating involved. Elicit feedback from attendees and keep improving.

The goal of these sessions is to immerse the new employee in why the company exists, why the customers pay for the service or products, what markets your organisation operates in and how the company is doing against its plans.

You may need to run multiple sessions and have speakers from many departments - kind of like an induction day or boot camp. To scale, it may make sense to turn this information into videos, online courses or reading material in the Intranet or Learning Management System. Or if you can, run these once a month for all new starters to attend - this works if you're scaling fast in the same locations.

The rest of this week should also be an opportunity to get some facetime with someone from HR to understand how HR operates, what benefits packages exist and what the company wellbeing schemes consist of. It's a chance to get to know HR and learn more about how they may support you if needed.

(8) Week 2

Week 1 is really all about company culture, awareness of other teams and learning more about the processes involved in the company. Week 2 is all about team building, bonding and doing some work. Don't get me wrong, the new employee may be doing some work in Week 1 but I like to ensure I've covered cultural aspects in the first week before looking at shipping work.

At some point during Week 2 I suggest sitting down with your new employee and working out what coaching and training they need or want. It's a good time to show them what learning resources are available and to start thinking about how you're going to help them develop their potential. These conversations may last weeks but Week 2 is a nice time to start thinking about this and at least planting the seed of thought about learning and personal development.

At a technical level this is all about getting set up with the right technology and tools and the right access to required systems. The new employee's Buddy will be helpful with this aspect, along with explaining the expenses, holiday requests, room bookings etc.

Week 2 onwards is also about getting face-to-face meeting time with executives, managers and leaders from across the business. It's also about forming new relationships with colleagues and customers. Your job is to facilitate these meetings and help your new employee find their feet.

(9) Week 3 onwards

My personal view is that the onboarding process is not an event but an ongoing process right through to when your new employee moves out of probation.

Of course, the new employee may not make it through their probation period, or it may be extended. Most probation periods span between 3-6 months depending on role and industry. This is about the right amount of time to assess how well the onboarding process went and what can be improved.

Even when employees pass probation there is still a lot of learning and discovery to do. In fact, learning and discovery should never end but that's for another book.

The first 1-3 months for any new employee will be a mix of emotions as they experience the frustrations and joy of working in your organisation. During this time, they will be learning more about your product/service and how your organisation works.

No workplace is free from friction and frustration, so it's important to learn from each new employee what could be improved. Feedback from all stages of the recruiting and onboarding process should be digested and reflected upon with suitable improvement plans in place.

Bringing it all together

The entire journey from sourcing a candidate to onboarding them with care and attention can be a long one. It pays to break sections apart and study what is actually happening through each stage. Once you have knowledge about what is actually happening, you can decide which parts of the process need improving.

During the entire process, there are many touch points between your organisation and the candidate. It is at these touchpoints where you have the chance to create WOW moments. I suggest you find as many of these moments as you possibly can.

Bringing about change is hard, so ensure you work with every department involved. A key department is HR who are intrinsically linked with onboarding new people. Build strong relationships with people in each department and bring them on the journey with you.

Communication is a key factor in creating WOW moments. Consistent simple language that resonates with candidates and new employees will give you a great start in creating WOW. A consistent Tone of Voice will help, so too will online systems, portals and modern HR tooling.

But all of the above is irrelevant if you or your team aren't willing to improve, face the reality of how good or bad your recruitment process is and put the new starter at the heart of the process.

And all of this starts with caring about creating a WOW experience for your candidates and new starters.

Thank you for downloading this book and taking the time to read it.

If you need any further help with anything discussed in this book then don't hesitate to get in touch via my website. www.cultivatedmanagement.com

Good luck with your journey and go forth and hire amazing people.

Rob..

Also by Rob Lambert

[Zero to Keynote](https://www.cultivatedmanagement.com/zero-to-keynote/) - <https://www.cultivatedmanagement.com/zero-to-keynote/>

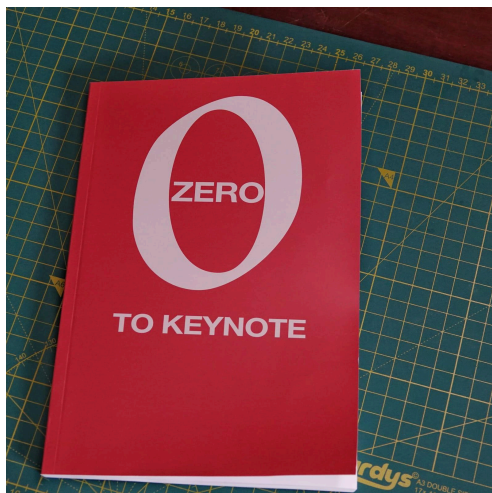
This is a book for the budding conference speaker.

In the book, amongst other topics, I cover:

- How to come up with ideas
- How to get your conference submission accepted - and how to be sure you're speaking to the right audience
- How to structure a talk
- The 11 principles of communication - and how they apply at different stages
- How to rehearse and never forget your talk
- How to deliver with confidence
- Dealing with nerves
- Logistics of conference speaking
- Dealing with Q&A - and haters

I called the book Zero To Keynote because I firmly believe that, no matter how far along your conference speaking journey, you can make every talk "keynote worthy", whether you are delivering a scheduled keynote or not.

And by making your talk the best it can be - and delivering it with clarity, purpose and enthusiasm, it will stand out at conferences for all the right reasons.



[Take a Day Off](https://www.cultivatedmanagement.com/take-a-day-off-the-book/) - <https://www.cultivatedmanagement.com/take-a-day-off-the-book/>

Take a day off is a collection of stories, ideas and insights into how to lead a better (work) life.

It is composed of posters and words. There are unique posters designed to compliment the words.

I designed and created all of the posters myself. All images are my own photos. And the words are straight from my own experience of trying to lead a balanced, effective and enjoyable career, and leading high performing teams.

You'll get to meet Colin who never really took a day off, and Malcolm who was attacked by seagulls, and Prickles the cat who liked to poop in the next door's garden.

Amongst these fun stories though is advice, insights and examples of how to be more effective at work, disregard the mass approaches and lead an interesting career.

Thanks
Rob..

