

eBook

Structured hiring 101

Your blueprint for confident hiring decisions

greenhouse



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Introduction

We're living in a new hiring reality. Application volume is climbing while recruiting teams stay flat or shrink. AI-generated CVs and growing candidate fraud mean more of what lands in your pipeline can't be taken at face value.

And everyone is being told to “use AI” without much guidance on where it helps and where it quietly introduces risk. Add the everyday reality – recruiters, hiring managers and interviewers who are busy and not always aligned – and it's easy for the wrong signals to slip through.

Structured hiring is how you stay in control

It gives every role a clear definition of success, every candidate a consistent evaluation and every decision a trail of evidence behind it. It's also what makes AI genuinely useful: AI works best inside constraints, surfacing signals for people to weigh, rather than guessing in open space.

In this eBook, we'll define structured hiring, walk you through our six-step implementation process and help you troubleshoot the most common blockers – whether you're starting from scratch or levelling up what you already have.



The case for structure – why it matters

Structured hiring delivers on the three things every hiring team is measured against today: hiring the right people, doing it efficiently and building an advantage that holds as the landscape shifts. Without structured hiring, the process turns inefficient and frustrating for everyone involved – recruiters, candidates and the business alike.

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What is structured hiring?

Structured hiring is an approach to hiring that starts the first time the role is defined and continues until a hiring decision is made. The core tenets of the approach are:

The core tenets of the approach are:

- The ideal candidate is defined by the business objectives of the job
- A deliberate process and rubric are used to assess all candidates
- Hiring decisions are based on data and evidence

Now let's take a look at why we recommend this approach.

“Structured hiring gives hiring teams a common language, clearer visibility into progress towards goals and a more efficient way to measure shared outcomes.”

Mark Tortora
Staff Talent Acquisition Operations, Squarespace



How structured hiring leads to better outcomes

The typical interview process leaves a lot up to chance: who runs the interview, what they ask and how they judge the answers. Questions get asked on the interviewer's whim, focus is scattered, and there's no consistent method of evaluation.

“When you're moving quickly and you involve more people in the process, there's more handoffs, there's more variability. Calibration is the key to everything. Once calibration breaks, so does consistency.”

Tracy St.Dic

Global Head of Talent Acquisition at Zapier



Structure replaces that chance with consistency – and consistency is what produces results across three dimensions: hiring the right people, maximising your efficiency and staying ahead.

Make smart decisions to hire the right people

Secure high-quality candidates, ramp them effectively, and give candidates and the hiring team an experience worth remembering.

When you define what success looks like before the search begins and hold every candidate to the same criteria, you select for long-term performance instead of first impressions – and the research backs it up.

Pro tip:

The signals hiring teams traditionally lean on hardest often tell us the least. Years of experience and a strong first impression feel like proof someone can do the job – but both rank among the weakest predictors of whether a hire actually works out. What does predict success is structure.

Top three predictors of a new hire's performance

1. Structured interviews
2. Job knowledge tests
3. Work sample tests

The most comprehensive [recent analysis of hiring methods](#) found structured interviews to be the single strongest predictor of job performance – ahead of cognitive ability, years of experience and the unstructured interviews most teams still default to.

Hiring the right talent should consider the decision as well as the surrounding experience. A structured process treats candidates consistently with honesty and respect, gives recruiters a clear pipeline view, tells interviewers exactly what they're assessing and sends hiring managers better-fitting candidates who are set up to succeed.

A better experience strengthens trust and attracts better candidates

Trust is harder to earn than it used to be – [nearly 40% of jobseekers](#) say their trust in the hiring process has declined over the past year, many tying it directly to the rise of AI. What they're reacting to is uncertainty: Was my application actually read? Did a person or a system decide? Candidates are looking for better experiences, and they notice the difference between a clear, organised process and one with vague timelines, post-interview silence or interviewers who skimmed their CV. Word travels – in reviews, in referrals and in cases where someone accepts a competitor's offer over yours.

Real-life example: By switching to a structured hiring process, global organisation **hipages hit 100% positive candidate satisfaction** and earned a 2025 TIARA Award for Candidate Experience – an industry honour recognising excellence in talent acquisition. Candidates consistently praised clarity and communication – a standout experience that strengthened hipages' employer brand and attracted stronger talent.



Spend your time on what matters

Better processes save money while improving results. Structure removes the redundancy that quietly drains a hiring process: repeated interviews that test the same thing, candidates who reach the hiring manager only to be screened out on a criterion no one aligned on and round-up meetings that relitigate decisions from scratch.

With a shared scorecard and a defined plan, every interview adds up to something concrete, total interview time drops and roles get filled faster – without adding headcount.



Hire with confidence, even as the rules change

Use AI with confidence while protecting against fraud, spam, misrepresentation and rising application volume.

AI was barely a blip when structured hiring was first defined, but it's where structure continues to earn its keep. Application volume is climbing rapidly, and teams are under pressure to adopt AI without a clear sense of why or how.

Structure is what makes all of it manageable: a defined rubric gives AI the constraints it needs to surface useful signals and makes it far easier to spot what applications aren't adding up. It also provides an evidence trail behind every decision to ensure the process is fair, explainable and defensible as scrutiny grows. It's the way a hiring team stays a step ahead instead of falling behind.

“Layer AI onto an undefined process and it accelerates inconsistency, reinforces gaps and introduces risk that stays hidden until something breaks. Built on structured hiring, it does the opposite – consistent evaluation across teams, decisions grounded in shared standards and a clear trail back to the evidence.”

Nkem Nwankwo
VP, Product Management at Greenhouse



The six-step structured hiring process

Six-step process:

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Step 1

Role kick-off

Articulating what short- and long-term success looks like for the role.

Have you ever:

- Made a hire who looked right on paper and interviewed well, only to watch them struggle once the work actually started?
- Sorted through a flood of applications, unsure how many were even real, and still wondered if the strongest candidate slipped through your hands?
- Advanced candidates you were confident about, only to find the hiring manager was screening for something else entirely?
- Reached the final round with multiple “maybes” and no clear way to compare them, so the decision came down to who interviewed best that day?

These are all common but avoidable problems. A good kick-off meeting sets hiring up for success and saves you time.

You and your hiring manager should have three primary goals for the kick-off meeting:

1. Align on the business objectives of the job
2. Define the skills, traits and qualifications that will make someone successful in the job
3. Agree to the roles and responsibilities for the search

Useful resources

Use the “Kick-off meeting” worksheet to guide your session. After the kick-off meeting, you can follow the “Roles and responsibilities” email template on page 16 to assign specific tasks and owners.



Goal 1

Business objectives of the job

Before defining what success looks like, get clear on why the role exists. A recruiter who understands the business case can pitch the opportunity to candidates and align stakeholders – not just list responsibilities.

Cover both what good looks like and why:

- What business need does this role address, and what becomes possible once it's filled?
- What's the cost of leaving it open, or getting the hire wrong?
- What must this person achieve in a year to be a success – and what would a top performer accomplish?
- To get there, what do they need to do in the first 90 days?

Focus on objectives, not tasks. Tasks are what someone does day to day (“manage a team of salespeople”); objectives are the results that matter (“support the sales team to outperform its goal”). Objectives are what separate a strong hire from an average one.

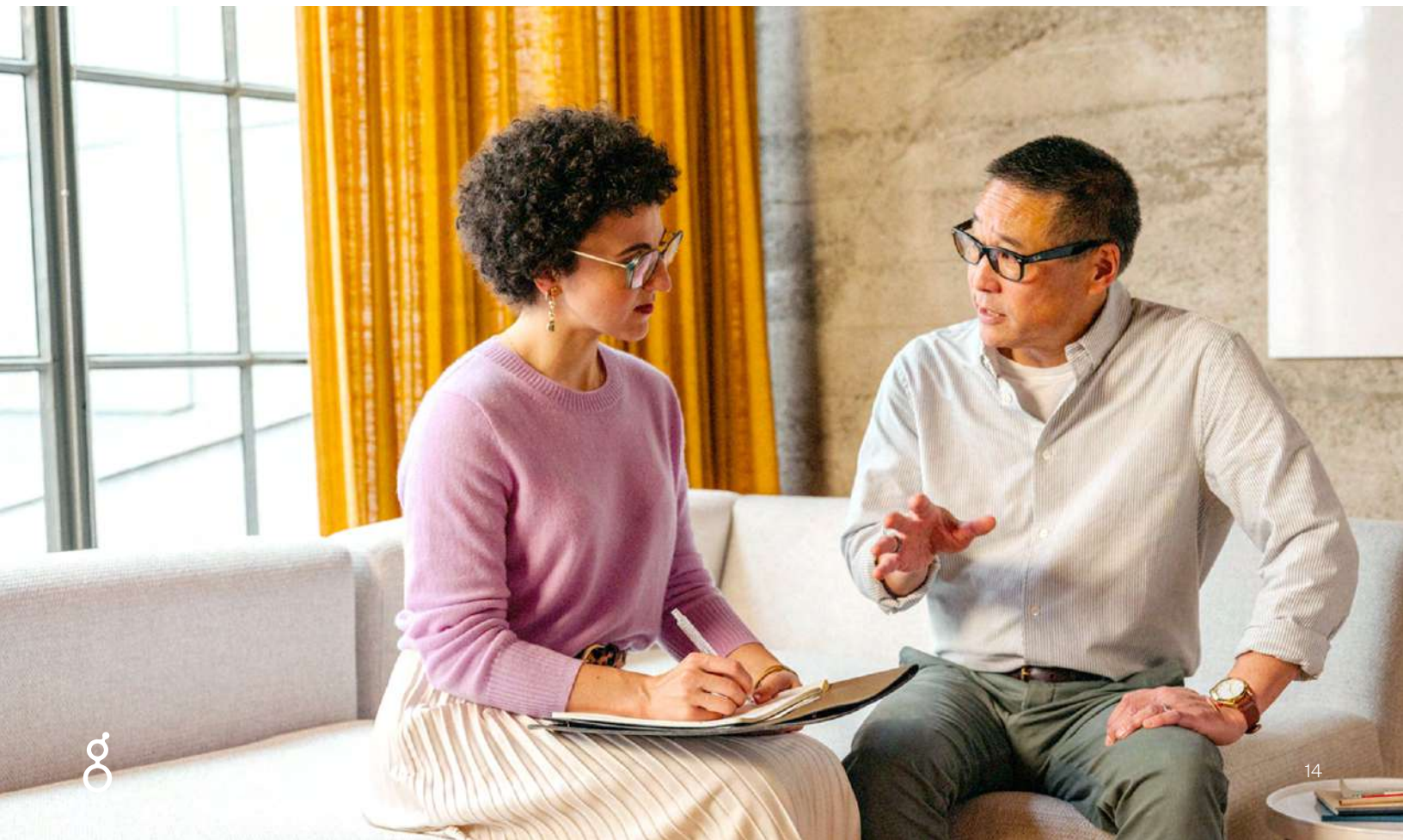


Goal 2

Skills, traits and qualifications

Once you've outlined the role and objectives, you can define the skills, traits and qualifications that will best set a candidate up for success.

We think of skills as well-defined abilities, such as knowledge of a particular type of software or coding language, while traits describe someone's personality, like action-oriented or team player. Qualifications and experience are things like degrees, certificates and particular career milestones. Lastly, attributes are specific qualities that stem from someone's experience, such as past project successes or achievements.



Goal 3

Roles and responsibilities for the search

The final step of the kick-off meeting is to go over the roles and responsibilities for the search. The recruiter's job is to guide the process and create an effective structure for success, while the hiring manager is the subject matter expert for the role. The recruiter can't necessarily design a code test or write a sample press release that requires reviewing in the same way a hiring manager can. Here's a helpful breakdown of what each person does.

Recruiter

Builds scorecard

Designs interview process

Drafts interview questions

Drafts outreach list

Hiring manager

Provides feedback on all drafts and candidate profiles

Writes technical elements of the interview, such as take-home exercises, code reviews and department-specific behavioural questions

Reviews and approves interview questions for role relevance

Validates target profiles and prioritises outreach

As recruiters, it's important to ensure you're not sending candidates who don't align with expectations to hiring managers. It's useful to review a few candidate profiles together and see if the attributes and requirements on paper translate to real candidates in the way you were both expecting.

You should allot an hour for most kick-off meetings, but you may want to schedule a 30-minute follow-up for more difficult or unusual roles. After you've completed the role kick-off with the hiring manager, you can use the template on the next page for your follow-up email.

Pro tip: Send a pre-read before the kick-off

A 30-minute meeting goes further when no one starts cold. Share the draft job description and a few guiding questions ahead of time so the hiring manager arrives ready to talk objectives – not draft them on the spot.

Roles and responsibilities email template

Hi {HIRING MANAGER},

Thanks for taking the time to chat today about {ROLE}. I know it was a lot of prep work, but all the information we've laid out will help us find the best person for your team!

So, here's what I'm going to do now...

- Use what I learned today to build out the interview plan by {DATE}
- Create a job description for our career page
- Build custom questions for {SPECIFIC INTERVIEWS} by {DATE}
- Sync with the interview team to ensure that we're all aligned

Here's what I need from you:

- Identify 3–5 ideal candidate profiles that can help inform the search
- Choose key interviewers who would be collaborators with this role
- Create the take-home exercise prompt by {DATE}
- Review the complete interview plan, interview questions and job description after all of our pieces are complete

As soon as we're able to put all this info into a solid interview plan, I'll route the job for approval so that I can develop a scorecard and post the role. Let me know if you have any questions or if you think we'll have to adjust any of our target dates.

Steps 2 and 3

Scorecard definition and interview planning

Define desired candidate attributes and design an interview process that screens for those agreed-upon attributes.

The kick-off informs your interview plan. By the time you build your scorecard, you should already know the details of the role you're hiring for, what will make someone successful in it and what the right candidate's profile looks like. The scorecard turns that knowledge into the specific attributes your interview process will test for.

The next two steps – scorecard definition and interview planning – are often done in tandem, which is why we've combined them here.

Useful resources

Have your “Kick-off meeting” worksheet nearby, and use the “Designing a scorecard and interview structure” worksheet to guide you through the process of defining your scorecard and planning your interviews.



Step 2

Scorecard definition

The scorecard is the list of skills, traits and qualifications someone needs in order to be successful in the upcoming role. These attributes are what the interview process will be designed to test and verify for each candidate.

Scorecard attributes should:

- Be mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive. The attributes shouldn't overlap and should instead create a complete picture of the candidate you're trying to hire.
- Focus on the need-to-haves. If you're including a nice-to-have, be sure to label it as such to keep things clear for interviewers when it comes time to make a hiring decision.

Here's an example of what a scorecard might look like for a sales manager.

Candidate scorecard	Attributes
Skills	Knowledge of sales acceleration tools. Has been a part of recruiting a team before. Detailed knowledge of sales metrics. Ability to create and execute on a training programme.
Personality traits	Superior communication skills. Player coach. Motivational. High integrity. Forward-thinking. Empathetic. Detail-oriented. Credible.
Qualifications	Experience exceeding quota. Proficient with SFDC. Prior experience with inside sales. Prior SaaS experience (nice-to-have). Experience managing a sales team.
Company traits	Inclusive and open-minded. Effective. Customer-focused. Collaborative. Authentic. Ambitious.

Step 3

Interview planning

With your scorecard defined, the interview plan is how you put it into action: a deliberate sequence that tests each attribute at the right moment, with the right person.

A good plan does a few things:

- Uncovers candidates' relevant experience and capabilities
- Measures every candidate against the same framework
- Gives candidates a consistent experience that previews the role
- Brings in the right internal stakeholders

Pro tip: Let AI give you a head start

Building a scorecard and a full set of interview questions for each role can be quite time consuming. Here's where AI can help. Prompt an (IT-approved) AI tool with the objectives, skills, traits and qualifications you defined to draft a first set of scorecard attributes and interview questions. Treat it as a starting point and make the appropriate edits with the hiring manager to finalise it. This way, the judgement stays human.

From there, your plan should answer three questions:

What are we testing for? These are your scorecard attributes – mutually exclusive, collectively exhaustive and boiled down to the need-to-haves.

When should we test it?

Balance thoroughness with efficiency. Use early interviews to screen for deal-breakers and skills you can check with a take-home; save harder-to-assess skills for later rounds.

Who should test it?

Assign each attribute to the interviewer best equipped to judge it – and keep the same interviewer on that attribute across candidates. That's what keeps evaluation consistent.

Step 4

Interview kit creation

Create interview questions that best assess a candidate on each attribute.

The next step is to create the interview kit – questions that will help interviewers assess candidates on the required attributes. This will provide a consistent framework for assessing candidates, giving you better data for making hiring decisions at the end of the process.

Let's take a look at some of the types of questions and how we recommend incorporating them into your interview kit.

Verification questions

Confirm qualifications early

They're often posed as yes/no questions and easily verify whether a candidate has the background to move forward. Best used in early stages to screen efficiently.

"Have you managed a distributed team before?"

"Do you have experience with [specific tool or certification]?"

Behavioural questions

Learn how someone has actually performed

Usually phrased as "Tell me about a time when..." These draw on real past experience – hard to fabricate on the spot and a strong indicator of future performance. They'll likely make up the bulk of your kit and they're best for assessing traits and skills.





Example: “Tell me about a time you had to lead a team without formal authority. Who was involved, what was the situation, what got in the way and how did you handle it?”

“Walk me through a decision you made with incomplete information. How did you approach it, and what happened?”

Follow up on specifics. Vague answers or evasions can be very telling.

Situational questions

See how someone thinks through a problem

Phrased “How would you approach...?” or “What would you do if...?”
The point is to draw out reasoning and problem-solving, not to hear a rehearsed “right” answer.

Example: “How would you approach [a realistic challenge from the actual role]?”

“What would you do if [a constraint or curveball specific to your team/ the role]?”

A few guardrails for these:

- Use scenarios specific enough to your business that they can’t be answered generically.
- Listen for the reasoning, not the conclusion. A candidate who reasons well through an unfamiliar problem is showing you more than one who recites a polished answer or the best possible outcome.

Skills assessments

Watch them do the work

This gives the candidate something to actually do or produce, giving you direct visibility into their work: Can they meet a deadline? Do they understand the assignment? Is the quality on par with what the role needs?

However, this is where AI is making the most impact. A take-home assignment is easy to outsource to AI – so a polished deliverable no longer tells you what it used to. To better assess this, consider the following:

Favour live or interactive formats. A working session, a pairing exercise or a live walkthrough shows you how someone actually works through assignments.

Ask candidates to explain their work. Candidates should talk through why they made the choices they did. Understanding survives AI assistance; a copied answer usually doesn't.

Assess how they use AI, not just whether they did.

For many roles, using AI is now part of the job. Rather than banning it, consider asking candidates to show how they'd use it and then assess the output.

“Interview kits and scorecards have made hiring easier for everyone – managers know what they're responsible for, interviewers feel prepared and confident and collaboration across teams is seamless. It's removed the stress and subjectivity from our process.”

Jason Lau

Head of Talent Acquisition, hipages

Step 5

Sourcing and interviewing

Find, interview and assess qualified candidates while catching red flags

This stage is largely execution: you're running the interview kits and applying the criteria you built earlier. Handling application volume and the risk of fraud or misrepresentation is the new challenge. Application counts have climbed and [91% of recruiters and hiring managers have spotted or suspected candidate deception](#).

- **Screen against the scorecard from the first touch.** Turn your need-to-have attributes into a few knockout questions on the application or first screen, so unqualified applications drop out before they consume interview time.
- **Add a verification checkpoint early.** Confirm work authorisation, identity and key credentials early on, not at offer. Catching misrepresentation before a final interview saves the most expensive hours in your process.
- **Build in “go deeper” follow-ups.** Watch for CVs that mirror the job description, answers that sound rehearsed or claims that don't hold up under a specific follow-up. Real experience survives probing questions; fabricated experiences don't.
- **Use AI to triage, then verify with humans.** Let AI rank against your scorecard and flag anomalies so recruiters start with the strongest candidates – but keep a person on every advance/reject decision.

Step 6

Round-up

Systematically review data and feedback on all final candidates to reach an evidence-based decision.

You've done the hard work, and it'll show with the quality of your final-stage candidates. The round-up meeting is the last step: a structured discussion to land on a decision. Aim to leave the discussion with one of three outcomes:

Your goal is to end the round-up meeting with one of three things:

- A decision on who to make an offer to
- A short list of actions required to make an offer (such as following up on one attribute)
- A decision on process changes to facilitate a timely hire

Before the discussion, sync with your hiring manager on who the decision-makers are and who has veto power. Review the feedback together so you know where everyone stands and ask what else they want to dig into.

How to run your round-up

Sometimes the discussion is easy: one candidate stands out and is the clear winner. Done.

More often, you'll have mixed feedback on all candidates, or several strong candidates. You may also need to steer the interview team away from its instinct to recap every interview and trade general (and often biased) impressions.

Keep the discussion anchored to the scorecard attributes – it's faster, and it keeps the decision evidence-based.



Here's the sequence we suggest:

1. Before the meeting, ensure all interviewers completed their feedback for the candidates.
2. Identify the low scorers early. Give people the chance to counter with something new from their interview.
3. Take remaining candidates one at a time. Run through the attributes each scored well on and focus the conversation on the open questions, not what's already been litigated.

Avoid these round-up pitfalls

Even a well-run round-up can stall. Three problems derail decisions most often – here's how to tackle each one.

Pitfall 1: Unclear roles and responsibilities

When someone with strong opinions but no real stake dominates the room, decisions wobble. Before the meeting, define who:

- Runs the round-up (usually the recruiter)
- Makes the final call (usually the hiring manager)
- Has veto power and should weigh in (one or two key stakeholders)

Clear roles set expectations and keep the meeting moving.

Pitfall 2: Missing feedback

If someone hasn't submitted feedback in advance, have them give it now and justify their assessment against the attributes. It's an uncomfortable position most people won't want to repeat, which reinforces the norm: feedback only counts if it's in on time.



Pro tip:

Think quality over quantity. When candidates tie on the number of attributes met, weigh the ones that matter most – a yes on two critical attributes beats a yes on two nice-to-haves.

Pitfall 3: Indecision

When a candidate has positive feedback but the team still “isn’t sure”:

- Pin down exactly which attributes need more data
- Design one more interview to test for them specifically
- Agree with the hiring manager that an offer/reject decision must follow

And if no late-stage candidate is hireable, the process needs a fix: either you weren’t testing attributes effectively, or the scorecard was missing one that actually mattered.

Making it stick – realistic adoption

Bring people along 29

Start small and build

Start with a high-level interview structure: the type of interview, the attribute it assesses and who runs it. That's enough to get value before you build full kits.

Interview stage	Attributes to assess	Interviewer
Application review	Meets core qualifications: SaaS sales experience; quota attainment	Recruiter
Recruiter phone screen	Has closed \$10K+ deals; experience selling SaaS	Recruiter
Hiring manager interview	Can coach junior team	Hiring manager
Take-home test or live skills assessment	Effective remote demo; objection handling	Hiring manager
Hiring team interviews	Cross-functional collaboration; stakeholder management	Interview panel
Final executive interview	Strategic thinking; alignment with company direction	Executive sponsor

You can go even leaner: start with a single interview purpose. Skip the scorecard for now – just make sure each interviewer knows what their interview is for. (“In this interview, can you assess whether the candidate can coach a junior team? That’s all we need from this one.”) Over time, expand from purposes to full kits.

Same with kick-offs: if you can’t do them for every role, pick one role and one willing hiring manager. Once you can show how much a kick-off improved the process, it’s easier to make the case that it saves time rather than costs it.

Bring people along

Real change needs three things: dissatisfaction with the status quo, a vision and a plan. Diagnose which one you're missing:

- **No dissatisfaction?** Run a retrospective on a painful recent search and show exactly where structure would have helped. Make the cost of the status quo concrete.
- **No vision?** Find a champion. Start with your most bought-in hiring manager and show how much time the approach saves them – a few early wins make critical mass much easier to reach.
- **No plan?** That's what this guide is for. Start here, then adapt.



Conclusion

The pressures on hiring teams aren't letting up – but a structured process makes hiring manageable. When every role has a clear definition of success, every candidate meets the same evaluation and every decision carries its evidence, you can move quickly and still trust the call you're making. That same structure is what lets you bring in AI on your terms, surfacing signals for people to weigh rather than guessing in open space.

You don't have to put it all in place at once. Start with one role, one kick-off, one scorecard – and build from there. This guide is your blueprint; adapt it to what your organisation needs.

Put structured hiring to work

See how Greenhouse turns the blueprint in this guide into a hiring process built for today's volume, fraud and AI pressures. Structure is the foundation, while your people own every decision.

[Request a demo](#)



Greenhouse is the leading hiring platform to help companies get measurably better at hiring. Our AI-powered software supports every stage of the hiring process, from sourcing to onboarding, giving businesses everything they need to hire top talent quickly, consistently and fairly – today and as their business grows.

To learn more, visit
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