Guide

Hiring manager’s guide to a structured hiring process

greenhouse
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Introduction

What is structured hiring?

When you have an open role on your team, it can be tempting to move as quickly as possible. You want to skip ahead to the most important parts of the process – the moments when you extend an offer to a promising candidate and they show up for their first day.

But we’d like to let you in on a little secret: every single part of the hiring process is important. This means you’re really doing yourself – and your team – a disservice if you try to skip ahead.

This is why structured hiring can be so powerful – it helps you balance purpose with process.

What exactly is structured hiring? It’s a framework that helps you plan out each step of the hiring process with intention and consistency.

Here are the key elements of structured hiring

• Candidates are identified by their ability to do the job
• The same process is used to assess all candidates
• Hiring decisions are based on evidence collected rather than feelings

When you take a structured approach to hiring, there’s minimal temptation to skip steps because every part of the process is designed to help you be more efficient and effective.

In this eBook, we’ll walk you through the essentials of structured hiring. You’ll discover why this approach works so well and how to put it in practice while picking up tips for being a better partner to your talent acquisition (TA) team. Join us for this journey and you’ll be ready to turn hiring into one of your superpowers.
Part 1

Why should hiring managers care about structured hiring?

As a hiring manager, you already have a lot on your plate. That’s probably why you’re hiring for your team in the first place!

But cutting corners in the hiring process can lead to all sorts of problems down the line. Here’s how structured hiring will ultimately benefit you, your team and your company:

**Structured hiring leads to fairer evaluation of candidates**

With structured hiring, you evaluate all candidates through the same process. All candidates perform the same tasks and answer the same questions in their interviews. This helps to mitigate unconscious bias by creating an even playing field for all.

**Structured hiring creates a better candidate experience**

When you’ve outlined all the interview stages ahead of time, you can easily manage candidates’ expectations and be more transparent about what to expect next. Plus, candidates won’t have to sit through countless interviews where they answer the same questions over and over. They’ll get a streamlined experience that’s respectful of their time.

**Structured hiring ensures interviewing efficiency**

You’ll send every team member into interviews with a clear purpose and plan. This minimizes interview redundancy (saving time for your team members and the candidate) while maximizing the relevance of the time your team spends with candidates.
Structured hiring helps you hire the right person

Since each team member is now collecting new data points throughout the hiring process, you’re able to approach hiring decisions armed with evidence. You can feel confident that you’re hiring someone based on their likelihood to succeed in the role rather than a gut feeling.

Sounds pretty great, right? In the next section, we’ll explore what hiring managers can do to support structured hiring.

Part 2

Your responsibilities and role in successful structured hiring

Now that you know the power of structured hiring, it’s time to create your action plan for putting it into practice. Keep in mind that this will be a team effort. As you go through these steps, consider how you might work with your talent acquisition team to divvy up these roles and responsibilities. You’ll bring the subject matter knowledge and understanding of the role while they’ll bring their expertise in interviewing and talent assessment.
Step 1: Define the role

Your first task is to articulate what success looks like in the role. What are the desired outcomes that the right hire will generate?

Think of both their long-term contributions and short-term accomplishments. Note that there’s a difference between tasks and objectives. Tasks are descriptions of the things a person will do on a regular basis like “manage a team of salespeople” and “set sales strategy for the region,” while objectives are looking at long-term, big-picture results like “support sales team to outperform sales goals” and “optimize sales strategy and conversion rates.” Outcomes describe what differentiates the superstar from an average performer.

Questions to consider include

• What goals would the new hire need to accomplish within a year for you to determine that this hire is successful?
• What would a superstar accomplish in a year?
• For a superstar to accomplish that, what would they need to do in the first 90 days?

Once you’ve answered these questions, you can translate the desired outcomes into attributes. What skills, traits and experiences/qualifications are needed to achieve those outcomes?

Skills are well-defined abilities, such as knowledge of a particular type of software or coding language.

Traits describe someone’s personality like “action-oriented” and “team player.”

Experiences and qualifications are things like degrees, certificates and particular career milestones.
Here’s an example of how you’d define the desired attributes for a sales manager role:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Tasks</strong></th>
<th><strong>Objectives</strong></th>
<th><strong>Attributes</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manage a team of salespeople</td>
<td>Support sales team to outperform sales goals</td>
<td>Proven success managing team of salespeople</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set sales strategy for the region</td>
<td>Optimize sales strategy and conversion rates (QoQ)</td>
<td>Demonstrated ability to improve sales pipeline efficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimize sales process</td>
<td>Diagnose process bottlenecks and create action plans</td>
<td>Problem-solving skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Role kickoffs promote alignment at Wunderman Thompson

Meet Sherine Kazim and Sara Guizzo. Sherine is the Chief Experience Officer and Sara is the Senior Vice President of Talent Acquisition at Wunderman Thompson. In the two years they’ve been working together, Sherine’s team has grown from 5 to 70 people.

How did they manage such incredible growth? “Alignment was key for us,” says Sherine. Whenever they opened a new role, they started by filling out a brief and holding a kickoff meeting. Sara says, “We’ve learned that every role requires a kickoff. It doesn’t matter what level. From just a level-setting expectation, having a kickoff and going over the brief creates a baseline of what we’re looking for in talent.”

Both Sherine and Sara say their success relied on maintaining an open dialogue. The TA team took a learner’s mindset, researching everything they could about the new roles and reporting their findings back to Sherine.

And this would sometimes change Sherine’s perspective. “When I show Sara what X looks like and then Sara goes out there and says, ‘Okay, X isn’t quite going to work, but what about Y?’ I think that was really key for us. It’s a genuine conversation taking place.

“Everyone is going in with their own set of assumptions, of vocabulary, their own history of what they’ve done in the past. But all that inevitably gets tossed out the window and you have to go advocate for a future you want to create together.”

Sherine Kazim
Chief Experience Officer at Wunderman Thompson
Step 2: Take an inclusivity interlude

Once you’ve defined the role, be sure to check your list of attributes for inclusivity. If you get stuck or even if you’d just like some extra insights, this could be a great moment to consult with your TA partner.

Here are a few points to consider

Do you have requirements that might unintentionally exclude qualified candidates, like a four-year college degree or certification? Is there another way you could screen or test for that attribute?

Can you reduce the number of qualifications a candidate needs to have?

Can you lean into looking for a growth mindset?

Can you better define the interpersonal attributes you’re testing for to make them less subjective?

Structured hiring in practice

Keeping inclusion top of mind at Wunderman Thompson

With her design background, Sherine already understood the importance of having an inclusive team. “It’s difficult to speak for the consumer – especially in our role as experience designers – and not be able to show that it’s an accurate reflection of our population that’s out there,” she says.

She was happy to find such a great partner in Sara. “From day one, Sara and her team cared a great deal about diversity and inclusion,” says Sherine. “When you have partners like Sara that are approaching this intentionally, it means you don’t continually turn out the exact same teams from the same places and you keep your biases in check.”

Sara took several steps to make sure she uncovered underrepresented talent for Sherine’s team. She says one of the most effective changes involved making a simple edit to job descriptions. Removing “must have agency experience” as a bullet point opened up the funnel in terms of where candidates came from. Sara also sees the power of structured hiring to limit bias. “Having focused areas for your interviewers clearly outlined and using a scorecard can help create a more equitable process,” she says.
Step 3: Design your interview process

Now that you’ve honed in on what you’re looking for, you can translate the attributes into interview questions and assessments.

Your goal is to uncover a candidate’s relevant experiences and capabilities with targeted questions or assignments that test for specific attributes.

This is another moment when it makes sense to work with your TA partner. Share the attributes you’re looking for and consult with your TA partner on how to assess candidates for these qualities. We’ve also provided a few tips here to help you get started.

It can be helpful to consider the 3 Ps of interviewing: purpose, process and people.

**Purpose** questions help you identify what motivates a candidate and assess alignment with your team and/or company’s values.

**Process** questions help you measure how a candidate solves problems, thinks creatively and manages projects and deadlines.

**People** questions help you determine how a candidate would interact with others in your organization and how they demonstrate emotional intelligence in the workplace.
How do you translate focus attributes into interview questions?

Look for ways to dig in and get detailed information based on specific situations. Here’s an example: Purpose – identifying what motivates a candidate. Attribute – learning and continuous improvement.

**Sample questions**

- Name three things you’ve done in the last few years to grow in your career.
- Describe a time when you proactively sought out feedback to improve your productivity or effectiveness in a role.
- What led you to seek that feedback?
- How did you determine the appropriate individuals to ask?
- How did you apply the feedback you received?
- How do you keep those learnings in mind in how you work today?
- Discuss an example of feedback that you received that you did not agree with.
- What was the feedback?
- Why did you disagree?
- How did you communicate with the person who shared it with you?

Once you’ve outlined what you’re testing for, decide when to test for it in the interview process and who should test for it. For example, if you have any required qualifications for the role, you’ll probably want to screen for them early in the process and dig into a candidate’s motivation and work style in later interviews or assessments.

Make sure your interviewers are calibrated to what you’re looking for. For interviews and take-home tests, your interviewers and graders should be aligned with your purpose and vision of what “good” looks like. Discuss what passing the test or interview looks like as well as any combination of elements that would disqualify a candidate.

To create a more formalized process, you can use interview scorecards to prompt interviewers to rate candidates and take detailed, objective
notes. We recommend creating rubrics for interviewers so they know how to assess responses for every question they ask during an interview. Here’s an example rubric for assessing responses to “Tell me about a time when you were communicating with someone and they didn’t understand you. What did you do?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strong No</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Strong yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| • Provides an unclear description of the relationship dynamic  
  • Struggles to summarize the situation | • Offers an indistinct summary of the intended message  
  • Does not acknowledge any unique relationship dynamic or offer added context  
  • Does not take accountability for their role (for example, “I don’t see why they didn’t understand”)  
  • Has not demonstrated what they learned from the situation for future conversations with the person or others | • Offers a vague depiction of the situation (the message, the relationship and where miscommunication occurred)  
  • Provides a loose outline of the steps taken to remedy the communication breakdown OR a cursory summary of what they learned  
  • Demonstrates empathy for the other person but does not leverage it in articulating their strategy for revising their approach to follow-up conversations | • Clearly defines the intended vision of the message  
  • Discusses where/how message was lost in translation  
  • Acknowledges any unique or relevant relationship dynamic that might have contributed to the message being misinterpreted  
  • Demonstrates empathy in identifying the source of the breakdown  
  • Holds self accountable for identifying an alternative way to communicate  
  • Clarifies any subsequent steps taken to preserve and/or grow the relationship  
  • Identifies any added measures taken in adjusting communication (delivery, style/approach, etc.) | • Clearly defines the intended vision of the message for the other person  
  • Discusses where/how the message was lost  
  • Acknowledges any unique or relevant relationship dynamic that might have contributed to the message being misinterpreted  
  • Demonstrates empathy in identifying the source of the breakdown  
  • Holds self accountable for identifying an alternative way to communicate  
  • Clarifies any subsequent steps taken to preserve and/or grow the relationship  
  • Identifies any added measures taken in adjusting communication (delivery, style/approach, etc.)  
  • Considers the experience a learning opportunity to iterate and situate their communication style to match the expectations of their audience |
You may need to provide some training to your team members to help them adapt to this approach to interviewing and candidate assessment. This is another opportunity to partner with your TA team to learn more about hiring best practices.

**Step 4: Monitor the hiring process on an ongoing basis**

Setting up all your systems is a great first start, but you’re not done yet. Once you’ve got everything in place, you’ll want to keep an eye on your hiring process on an ongoing basis. Here are a few key areas to track:

**Observe how candidates are converting throughout your pipeline**

Are your pass rates too high or too low? Are certain demographic groups falling out of your pipeline at disproportionate rates? If you don’t have access to this data, ask your TA partner to share it with you.

Sara Guizzo explains, “With Greenhouse Inclusion, we can look at who’s coming into the pipeline and where they are falling out. We can highlight this to our hiring managers and uncover what’s happening – is there a problem with response time or collecting feedback?” Take action as needed to make sure your process is as efficient and fair as possible. Remember that every person has a role to play in making the company more inclusive. And that as a hiring manager, your decisions and actions in the hiring process are critical for promoting inclusion.

**Be a role model of interview best practices**

Ensure your interviewers are showing up on time and aware of what they’re interviewing for. Enforce the practice of submitting interview feedback right away.
Help your hiring team avoid common biases

To avoid groupthink, make sure all members of the hiring team submit their feedback before consulting with others. Another way you can mitigate affinity bias is by removing biographical details from take-home assessments. Greenhouse Recruiting nudges interviewers with timely reminders at key points in the hiring process to help them limit bias and promote inclusion.

Monitor the feedback you’re getting from your candidates about the experience you’re delivering to them

Based on what you learn from your candidates, take action as needed. For example, if engineering candidates feel your technical assessment is too easy for a specific role, can you turn up the difficulty level a few notches? If candidates share that they’ve made it to the end of the hiring process without fully understanding what your company does, can you add a product demo to an earlier stage of the process?

Remember that this is an ongoing process. There’s no finish line. Even when you make a great hire — which we hope will happen easily and often — you should still take time to reflect and consider how you can do even better moving forward.

Part 3

Tips for being a good partner to your talent acquisition team

One of the best ways to improve your hiring processes is to partner up with your resident experts — your TA team! Your recruiters, recruiting coordinators and other TA pros can support you in meeting your hiring goals. How can you build a strong relationship with your TA team? Keep these pointers in mind:
Decide how you'll divvy up roles and responsibilities

When opening a new role, take some time to walk through the roles and responsibilities with your TA partner. Which steps will you own? Are there parts of the process where you’d like their input? What’s a realistic turnaround time for each of the various steps?

Generally, 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.

Here’s a quick overview of some common tasks and who is likely to be responsible:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recruiter</th>
<th>Hiring manager</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Build scorecard</td>
<td>Outline desired skills, qualifications and experiences for the role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design interview process</td>
<td>Provide feedback on proposed interview questions and stages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft interview questions</td>
<td>Write technical pieces of interview, such as take-home tests, code reviews and role-specific behaviorial interview questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft outreach list</td>
<td>Provide feedback on candidates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Leverage their expertise

Your TA partner has a deep understanding of the talent market. Their perspective can help you understand points like the competitiveness of a role (how long it will take or difficult it will be to fill) and salary expectations.
Sherine Kazim says, “My tip for working well with your TA partner? Come from a place of trust first when dealing with people who are unfamiliar with your world or your way of talking about things. Don’t make assumptions that they know. Don’t assume that you know. I think being able to admit what you do and don’t know is the basis of a good relationship.”

**Overcommunicate**

This is especially true in a remote environment and when you’re working with a TA partner for the first time. Don’t assume they can read your mind. Let them know what you think of the candidates you’re meeting, the interview stages and questions or anything else that comes up. Even when everything is going well, you’re not off the hook! That’s a great opportunity to give them some positive feedback.

**Invite them to challenge how you’re thinking about your ideal hire**

Hiring managers are often inclined to hire folks that are most like them. Do you have any blind spots that your TA partner could point out or keep in mind for you? You can also consult with your TA partner on ways to limit bias throughout your hiring process, whether it’s with more inclusive job descriptions or how to approach your hiring decision.

**Make them a part of your team**

Invite your TA partner to participate in your team meetings so that they can learn the culture and operations of your team. Depending on their familiarity with your team and the role, they might also appreciate the chance to observe some of your team members on the job.

**Respect their work!**

People are the most important aspect of any company, and that makes recruiting a crucial part of business success. Look for ways to be a true partner. Get involved in sourcing and leveraging your network to help amplify the efforts of your recruiter. The more you bring to the relationship, the more you’ll get out of it.
Conclusion

As a hiring manager, your decisions and actions don’t just shape your team – they also impact the rest of your company. When you choose to put structured hiring in place, you’re making a commitment to being inclusive, efficient and candidate-friendly. And who doesn’t want that?

Throughout this guide, we’ve provided a variety of steps that you can take to implement structured hiring. Though you may have noticed that we sound a bit like a broken record when it comes to one key theme: partnering with your TA team. The closer you work with your TA team, the easier it will be to roll out structured hiring.

So go ahead and share this eBook with your TA partner and use it to kick off a conversation about what comes next. And if your TA partner was the one who shared this with you? Give them a high five and then roll up your sleeves and get started!
Greenhouse is the hiring software company. We help businesses become great at hiring through our powerful hiring approach, complete suite of software and services, and large partner ecosystem – so businesses can hire for what’s next.

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