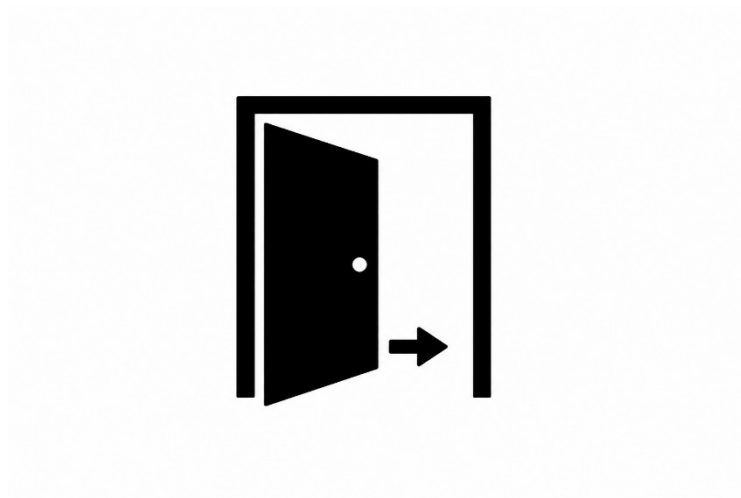


Kindel Leadership Development



Hiring Systems

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Introduction

Excellence in organizations starts and ends with hiring. Hiring has a disproportionate impact on a company's culture. This course teaches leaders how to be excellent at hiring, and how they can build Hiring Systems that ensure everyone they hire is also excellent at it.

The first time I saw how the Amazon hiring system worked from the inside, I remember thinking two things: First, this is a serious company. They are treating hiring as a real leadership mechanism, not an HR workflow. Second, holy crap, this is still mostly humans guessing about humans.

Both things were true.

That is the tension at the center of hiring. The stakes are enormous, and the evidence is weak.

A bad strategy can be fixed. A missed date can be recovered. The process can be repaired. But a bad hire joins, and they consume management energy, screw up the culture, lower standards, and create drag where everyone routes around them.

But the truth is not that hiring matters; everyone says hiring matters.

The truth is most ways we determine whether to hire someone are full of noise, subjectivity, and bias. I say most, because there's at least one mechanism that has been proven to result in excellent hires: Well-run internship programs. Unfortunately, few organizations can pay every potential employee to participate in a 6-month probation period before offering a full-time position.

Hiring is a high-consequence prediction about future performance made from incomplete, biased, and subjective evidence.

Signal to Noise Ratio

In many fields, the ratio of signal (good data) to noise (bad data) is critical for making decisions. A radio transmission with too much noise (e.g. static) and not enough signal makes what's transmitted indecipherable. Often the noise comes from levels of indirection, or proxies.

SNR is a good [mental model](#) for thinking about hiring. A leader's job is to squelch the noise and amplify the signal.

- A resume is a proxy.
- An interview is a proxy.
- A take-home exercise is a proxy.
- A reference is a proxy.
- A credential is a proxy.
- Years of experience are a proxy.

There is some signal in these proxies, but as proxies, they are rife with noise. The real signal is what it will be like to have this person working inside your organization six months from now. Unfortunately, we do not get to observe that during an interview loop. We get fragments, potential lies, and impressions.

Becoming excellent at hiring means becoming excellent at making the signals better.

Steve Yegge, who was a Bar Raiser at Amazon and later a technical leader at Google, recently wrote a piece called *The Last Technical Interview*. I do not agree with everything in it, but I agree with a lot of the diagnosis.

His gist is this: most interview systems collect too little signal, then treat the resulting opinions with too much confidence.

Yep.

He tells a story from Google where a hiring committee reviewed anonymized interview packets as a calibration exercise. The committee rejected many of them. The reveal was that they had rejected their own packets from when they interviewed at Google!

That should make every interviewer squirm.

The lesson is not that hiring is hopeless. The lesson is that interviewer confidence is not evidence. A strong opinion about a candidate is useful only when it is attached to specific observations.

No observation, no signal.

No signal, no decision.

No soup for you.

Get The Bias Out

Most forms of interviews are full of bias. Bias does not require bad intent. That is why it is so dangerous.

Good people can be biased. Smart people can be biased. Right-minded people who sincerely care about fairness can be biased. In fact, the most dangerous bias often comes from people who believe they are being objective.

Interviewers like candidates who remind them of themselves. They like familiar schools, familiar hobbies, familiar vocabulary, familiar communication styles, familiar jokes, and familiar ways of solving problems. They reward polish. They overvalue confidence. They confuse fluency with understanding. They mistake comfort for fit.

Then they call it judgment.

Leaders hiring other leaders must minimize bias and enable real judgment based on objective measures. Great leaders focus on making subjectivity inspectable.

What this course is:

- Philosophy first. Hiring First, before scorecards and committees.
- Then the operating system: lifecycle, roles, and mechanisms. Spin the ship up. Do not let it stop.
- Then the craft of the loop, the debrief, the close, and plans that do not fake the people.

What this course is not:

- A walkthrough of an applicant tracking system.
- A set of interview questions without a system.
- A class in being nicer in the debrief.

The goal is to expose leaders to the skills required to enable excellent hiring; like most aspects of leadership, becoming excellent at hiring is about mastering skills. Here are some of the skills this course teaches:

- Crafting job descriptions (and onboarding docs)
- Running the funnel
- Interviewing
- Running loops
- Running debriefs

- Closing candidates
- Onboarding new hires
- Building Hiring Systems

This course and handbook sit next to Leaders of Leaders Training. Tenets, mechanisms, date sanctity, and CBTO live there; it applies those ideas to the organizational motion that matters more than any other: who you let in.

The rest of this workbook is available on request.