



# Finding Success Without Unicorns

How to hire the candidate you need,  
not the one you think you want





















## Redefining your process

Instead of hunting unicorns, instead imagine recruiting as a two-stage investment process:

What you invest to get candidates into the firm

What you invest to turn good candidates into ideal employees after hired



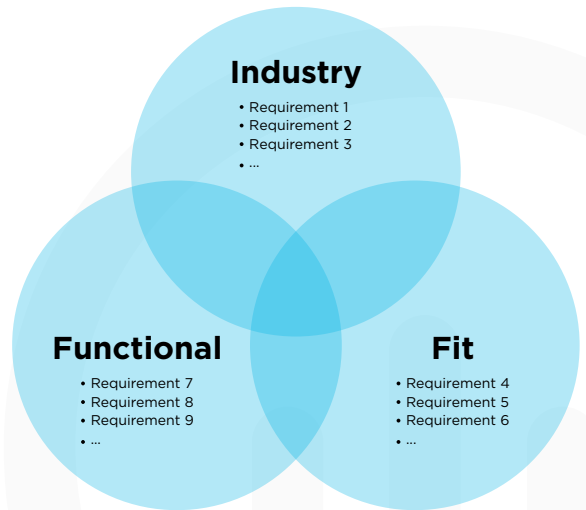
### Define Flexible Requirements

It still makes sense to begin by describing your “unicorn”. However, your requirements need to be accompanied by a realistic view of what is non-negotiable, important, and nice to have. This is especially crucial if you are outsourcing to a third party for candidate identification.

Your requirements should encompass the needs you have for the candidate to understand the relevant industry(ies), functional skills and elements of cultural fit. You want to capture discrete requirements and be thorough without being comprehensive.

Remember that your objective is to include, not exclude candidates. Your business cannot afford for you to skip truly important requirements, but it does not benefit from having an exhaustive list.

Having captured a thorough list of requirements, those requirements then need to high-graded so that time is not spent on candidates who lack non-negotiable qualifications. However, you also want to avoid passing on candidates who lack relatively trivial capabilities.





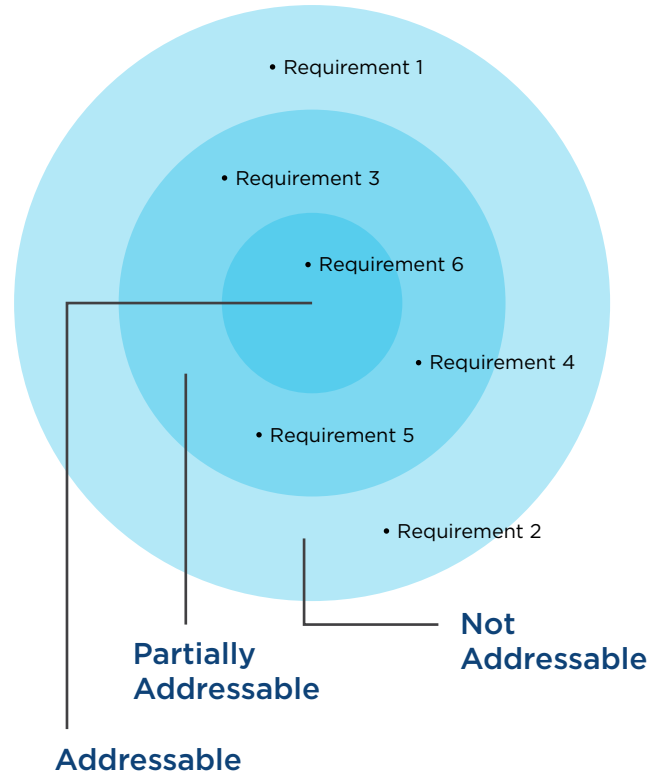
**Determine Addressability of Requirements**

This step is very novel for most companies but becomes the basis for your competitive advantage in quickly filling open positions.

For each requirement that you have defined as part of the profile, determine the level to which you believe the company could overcome the lack of that requirement and develop it in the individual.

For example, familiarity with a particular piece of software may be critical for the job, but it is likely something that could be taught by a week-long third-party training course making it a non-negotiable need, but an addressable need. However, if experience working as a drilling engineer on a rig is requirement for the position, that is something that cannot be addressed once hired for the position.

For each requirement, it is important to not only classify the requirement for its addressability, but also to specifically identify the specific mitigations available to address those gaps. Mitigations could include interventions such as:



**Example Mitigations for Addressable Items:**

- Training programs
- External courses
- Coaching
- Pairing or mentoring with existing employees strong in complementary skills





## Screen and Interview Candidates

As you screen candidates, the applicants should be grouped into based on their ability to meet prioritized requirements and addressable requirements. For example:

	1 UNICORNS	2 UNICORNS	3 UNICORNS	4 UNICORNS	5 UNICORNS	6 UNICORNS
▶ Non-Negotiables   Not Addressable	X	X	X	X	X	X
▶ Non-Negotiables   Partially Addressable	X	X	X	X	X	
▶ Non-Negotiables   Addressable	X	X	X	X		
▶ High Priority   Not Addressable	X	X	X			
▶ High Priority   Partially Addressable	X	X				
▶ High Priority   Addressable	X					

X - Indicates all requirements in the classification are met

Any candidates that fails to at least meet the not-addressable non-negotiables should be eliminated immediately from consideration. The rest can be prioritized by the from left to right. In addition to limiting the number of candidates you interview and sequencing them based on likeliness of match, having assessed each for their fit with the requirement set empowers you to customize the interview process.

There is no inherent need to drastically alter interviewing techniques. Companies that employ psychometric tests should continue to do so and the same selection of interviewers and gross anatomy for capturing and scoring assessments can continue to be used with a few minor additions.

Having assessed the candidate on paper, there should be a list of addressable and partially addressable gaps for each candidate. It is important that two things happen related to this list during the interview process:

- Confirm that there is a reasonable expectation that the intended mitigation would address the issue
- Set the expectation for the employee that if hired, this mitigation would be an expectation for them



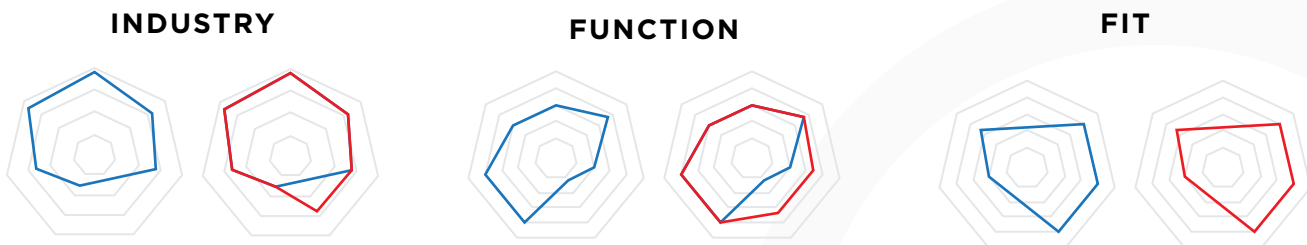
In most cases, employees welcome and appreciate the additional investment in their success. Your mitigation of risk to the company also mitigates their own performance risk. However, there are some cases, especially with senior positions, where ego gets in the way and the individual is unwilling to commit seriously to a mitigation. This tells you not only that this gap is likely to persist, but also exposes you to a generally negative aspect of the person's character. These situations, while disappointing are very helpful to recognize before hiring.

### Score Both "as-is" and Potential

The way candidates are "scored" is another topic altogether, but as far as the alternative to hunting unicorns is concerned, most scoring techniques can work. The main philosophical difference is a need to "score" the candidate twice. First, assess the candidate based on their "as-is" capabilities. This is exactly how you would traditionally assess the individual.

However, now there is a follow-on step in which you assess the candidate again under the assumption that the mitigations to gaps in the profile are successfully implemented and have the desired effect.

As depicted in the illustration to the below, you would expect to see greater coverage of capabilities following mitigations.



### Select Candidate & Plan Integration

When the company compares candidates, it should first look for candidates who score highly without any mitigation of gaps, but in the absence of a unicorn (or at least a candidate who meets the desired threshold inherently), companies should then consider candidates based on their post-mitigation scores.

If the impact of mitigation brings at least one candidate up to an acceptable performance level, the company should consider the costs of mitigation in comparison to the costs of continuing the recruiting process and seeking additional candidates. In many cases, the reduction in lost business opportunity will overshadow the added costs and risks of hiring somebody who has a less than perfect profile.



## Benefits to changing your approach

As you integrate this approach into your hiring behavior, you can expect to see many benefits typically anchored with the following four:

- ✓ Increased volume of candidates for consideration
- ✓ Increased acceptance rate as the approach demonstrates to candidates a unique level of investment in and commitment to them
- ✓ Improved retention rates due to better integration through pre-hire integration planning and better clarification of expectations for both sides early enough to avoid unanticipated incompatibilities in expectations
- ✓ Heightened understanding of true cost of hiring (and better determination of success metrics for ROI)

However, there are many more valuable benefits that can result with consistency and perseverance in applying the process:

- ✓ Greater consistency in cultural elements – As a company takes more responsibility to cultivate people to fit their roles and be what the business needs not what the candidate innately is, it can improve the consistency in culture
- ✓ Stronger ownership and commitment – When people invest in each other, they become invested in the business holistically. Creating ownership in the success of others within the business (through the mitigation activities) drives a level of collaboration and alignment that is absent in business populated with disconnected high performers
- ✓ Integration of new hires becomes a competitive advantage not a chore – When integration planning becomes a pre-cursor to extending an offer, successful integration becomes closer to a given than an afterthought. New employees feel valued, wanted and contribute quicker than muddling through the transition with a flimsy a plan

Ultimately, the renovations you make to your recruiting process to be able to accept the close, but not perfect candidates you need instead of holding out for the unicorn you think you want will result in better employees than you were seeking in the first place, sometimes without even changing your timeline or costs.

*To discuss your situation or topics presented in this paper in greater detail, please contact:*



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