

# Navigating the **Cybersecurity** **Career** **Landscape**



Hey you job  
applicants, get  
off my lawn!

Nowt  
Hiring!



-Matt Scheurer

# About Me

I work for a big well-known organization...



As Vice President (VP) of Computer Security and Incident Response (IR). However, I have many years of hands-on technical experience, including Digital Forensics & Incident Response (DFIR).

I am also a Podcast Host for

**ThreatReel**  
<https://threatreel.com>

Connect / Contact / Follow Matt:



<https://www.linkedin.com/in/mattscheurer>



<https://twitter.com/c3rkah>

# Where I volunteer...

I am an Official



Advocate

<https://www.hackingisnotacrime.org>



Advisory Board: Information  
Technology and Cybersecurity  
<https://www.mywccc.org/>



Women's Security Alliance  
(WomSA) Technical Mentor  
<https://www.womsa.org>

# **Disclaimer!**

Yes, I have a day job.

However...

Opinions expressed are based solely on my own independent security research and do not express or reflect the views or opinions of my employer.

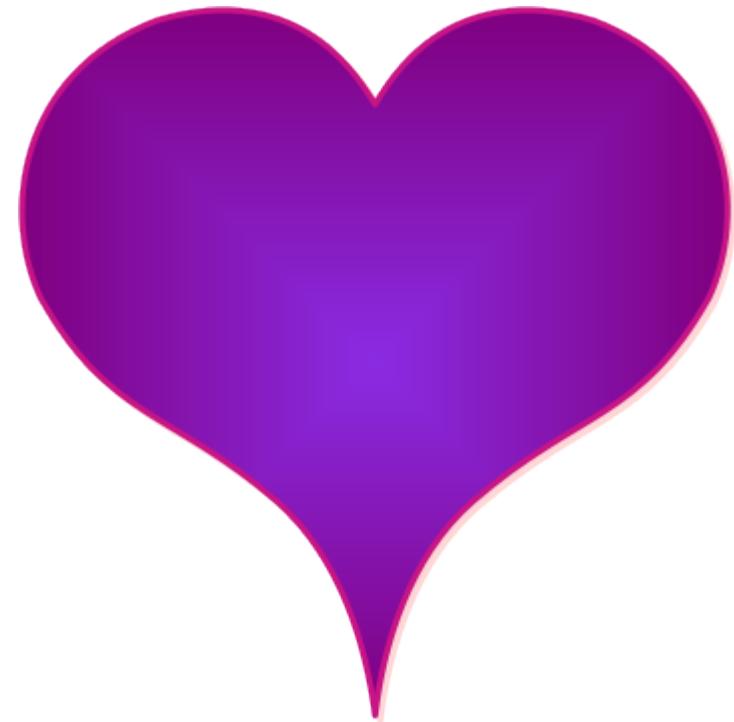


# Target Audiences

- For the recently laid off Tech/InfoSec worker(s)
- For the aspiring Information Security hopeful(s)
- For the Hiring Managers
  - Still looking for top technical talent

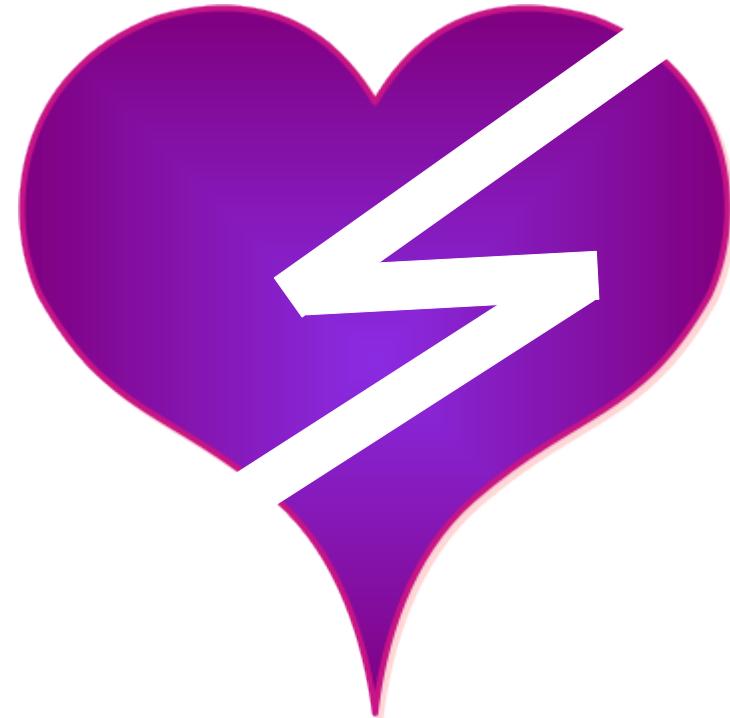
# Why this Talk

- Because this warms my purple team heart!



# Why this Talk

- But this breaks my purple team heart!



# In my own personal opinion

We are in the  
midst of a tough  
job market.



# Economic Slowdown Indicators

Conference Organizers



- Vendor Swag

Q1, 23	
Q2, 23	
Q3, 23	
Q4, 23	
Q1, 24	
Q2, 24	
Q3, 24	
Q4, 24	

Quality, Quantity, & T-Shirts

# Job Seekers



- Recently let go from an employer?
  - Most of these situations are beyond your control
  - Get help if you need it!

# Great Time to Reevaluate

- Is your heart still in Information Security?
  - *Really?*
  - There's nothing wrong with considering a career transition!



# Otherwise, press onward!

...If InfoSec is still your passion,  
...If InfoSec really is in your blood,

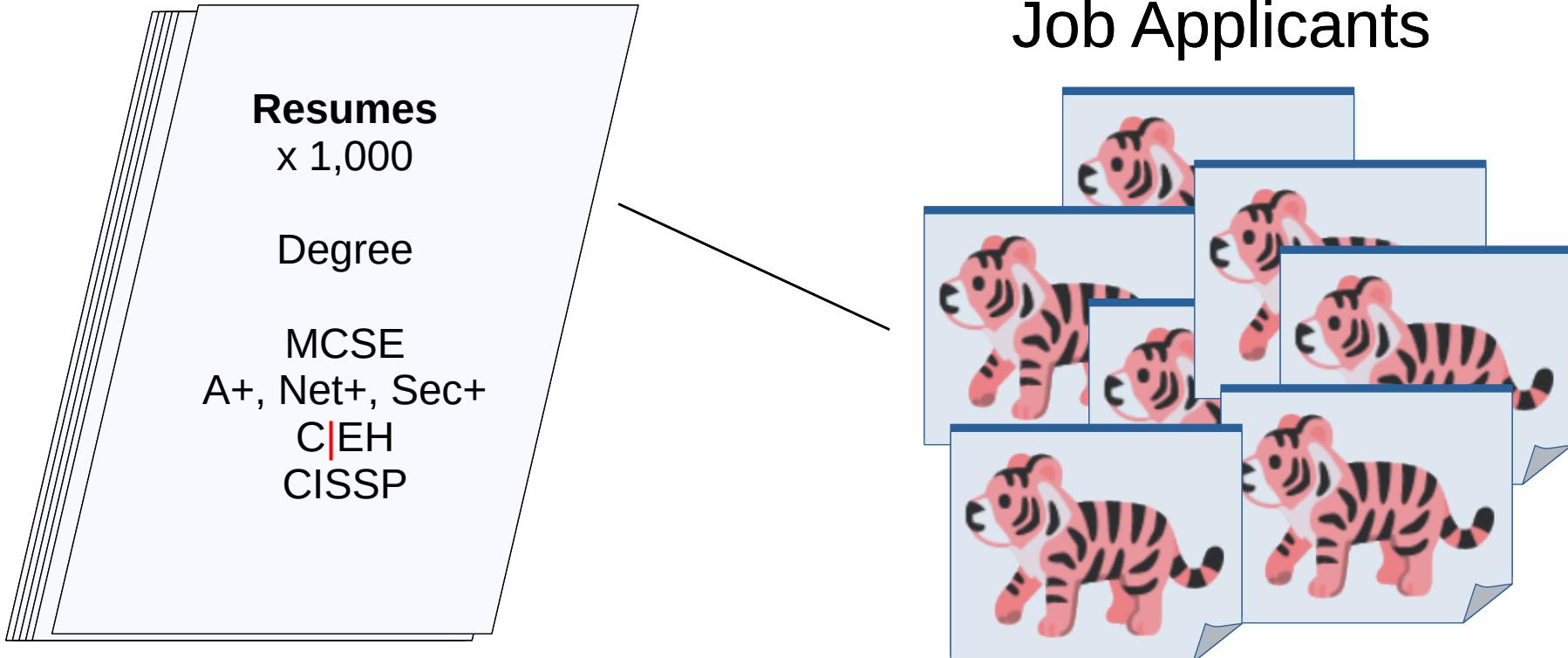
*We've seen times like these before!*

# 1997 – 2004 (The bubble years)

## Colleges & Universities

- “*Big shortage of tech workers!*”
- “*Great careers & salaries working in IT!*”
- “*High-demand, jobs of the future!*”

# Paper Tigers



# 2002 to 2012

Some applicants had a true passion for IT work!  
*...Or learned to love it along the way.*

But the job market stalled!

Schools stopped pushing IT courses ~2004/2005.

# Many by 2002-2004...



- *This is really hard!*
- *What do you mean  
this job isn't 9 to 5?*
- {
  - *After-hours patching?*
  - *On-call?*
  - *I'm done, I quit!*

**2008 to 2012...**

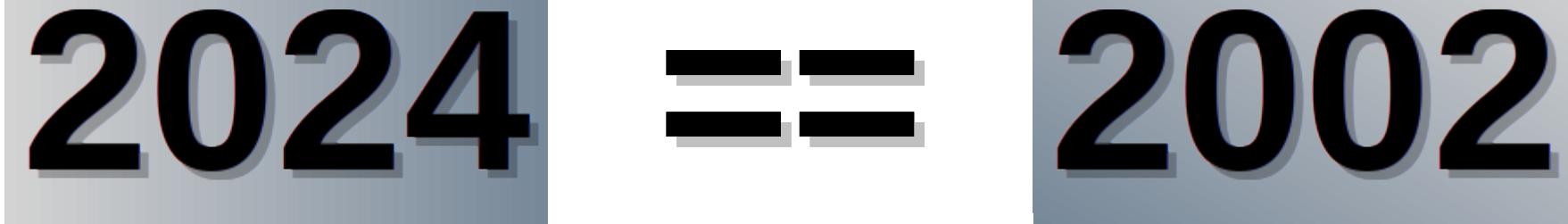
# The Economy

# However...

- Most paper tigers washed out of tech work
  - Creating a newfound good job market by 2012
  - Ample opportunity for those who stayed the course
    - Especially those with a true passion for tech work!

**It might be 2024...**

But it reminds me an awful lot of 2002:



*And if that is the case...*

Things will get better, eventually!

# What can you do?

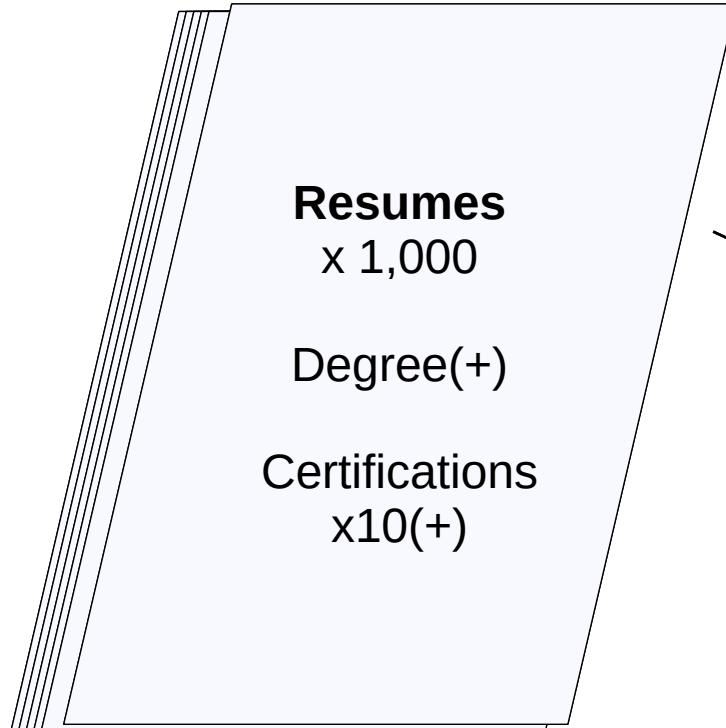


- Take care of yourself!
- Study/train/skill build
- Reconnect with others
- Professional Networking

# Aspiring Hopefuls

- Common pathways to an InfoSec career
  - 1) Luck into a good internship or co-op
  - 2) Slog things out in the job market for a long time
  - 3) Get out and network professionally (*in-person*)!
    - IMHO, this is the best & easiest path to landing a job...
    - And the one candidates seldom ever take!

# Today's InfoSec Paper Tigers



**Resumes**

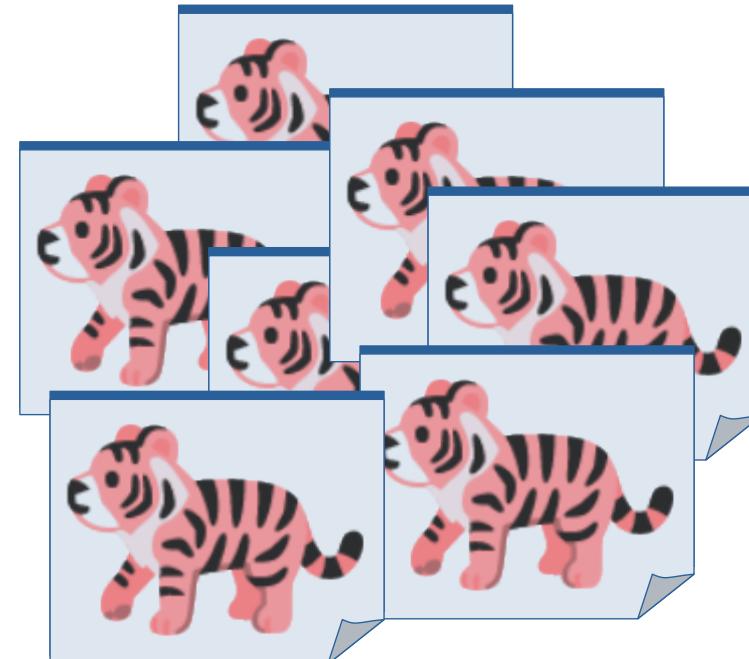
x 1,000

Degree(+)

Certifications

x10(+)

Job Applicants



# At least write a decent resume

## Resume

Email Address  
Phone Number

Something the  
hundreds of other  
resumes don't  
have, showing  
a true passion for  
InfoSec!

- Cool extras
  - Home Lab
  - GitHub
  - Social Media (selectively)
  - Blog Posts / Articles
  - Bug Bounty or CTF's
  - Etc.

# Prepare for your interview

## Before you Interview

- Learn about the business
- Learn about the job role
- Learn about the tools
- Learn about the interviewers

## During the Interview

- Be on-camera (if virtual)
- Smile!
- Don't type on a keyboard
- Have 3 quality questions

# Getting experience

- Volunteering
  - Conferences, Meetup Groups, etc.
- Bug Bounty
  - Write about your findings
- Dabble and publish stuff!

# The old-fashioned way

- Start out with Security-Adjacent careers
  - Help Desk
  - Systems / Network / Cloud Administration
  - DevOps
- Work on making inroads (InfoSec Managers)
  - Experience now, advancement later!

# Hiring Top Technical Talent

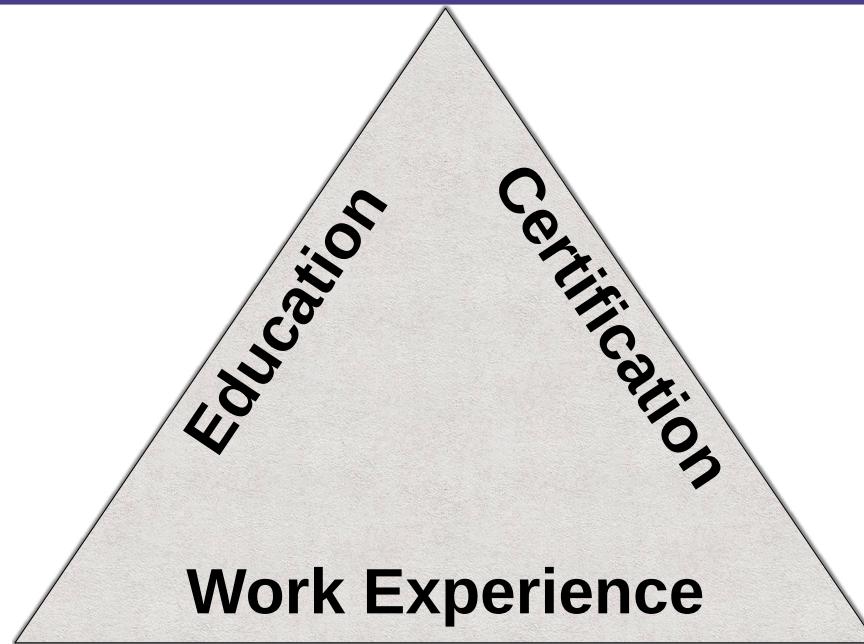
Finding & Hiring  
*highly-technical*  
Cybersecurity  
Unicorns



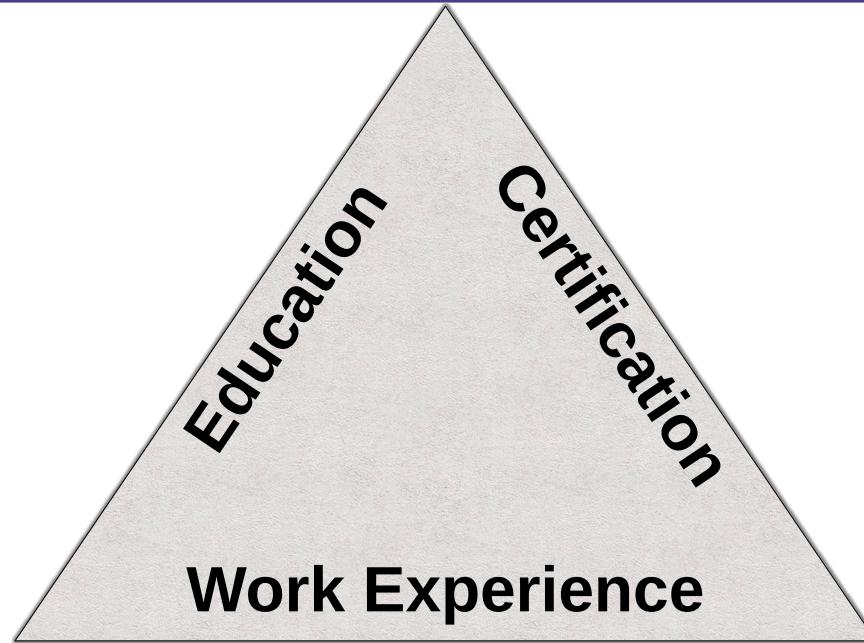
# Interviewing & My Results

- Conducted Interviews
  - Peer level candidates
  - One level above mine
  - One to several levels below mine
- Helped Others
  - Get job interviews
  - Get hired
    - After coaching & mentoring them

# Traditional Qualifications



# Traditional Qualifications



**Most Valued?**

# Where Unicorns Often Live

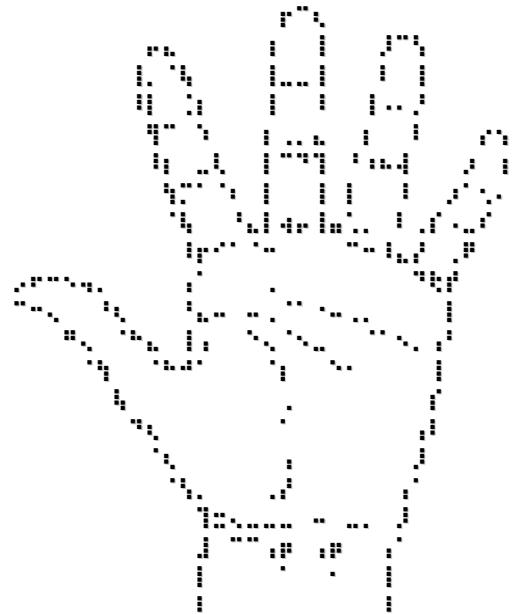


# Candidate Credentials

- Some possess
  - Fancy Degrees
  - Plethora of Certifications
  - Or Both!



# Showing of Hands



*How many of you  
know a CISSP?*

# Job Postings

- Sometimes I see this
  - Requirements
    - Four Year Degree in “X”
    - Four Year Degree in “X”, or a related field
- But I'd rather see this
  - Requirements
    - Degree, or equivalent experience

# Unicorn Self-Learning Activities

- Likely not on LinkedIn
  - Books read
  - Educational videos
  - Documentation read
- Not seen on resumes
  - Home Lab
  - Home Network
  - Hands-on practice

# Work Experience

- Strong indicator of skill level
  - But not always truly representative of actual skill

# Where to Look?



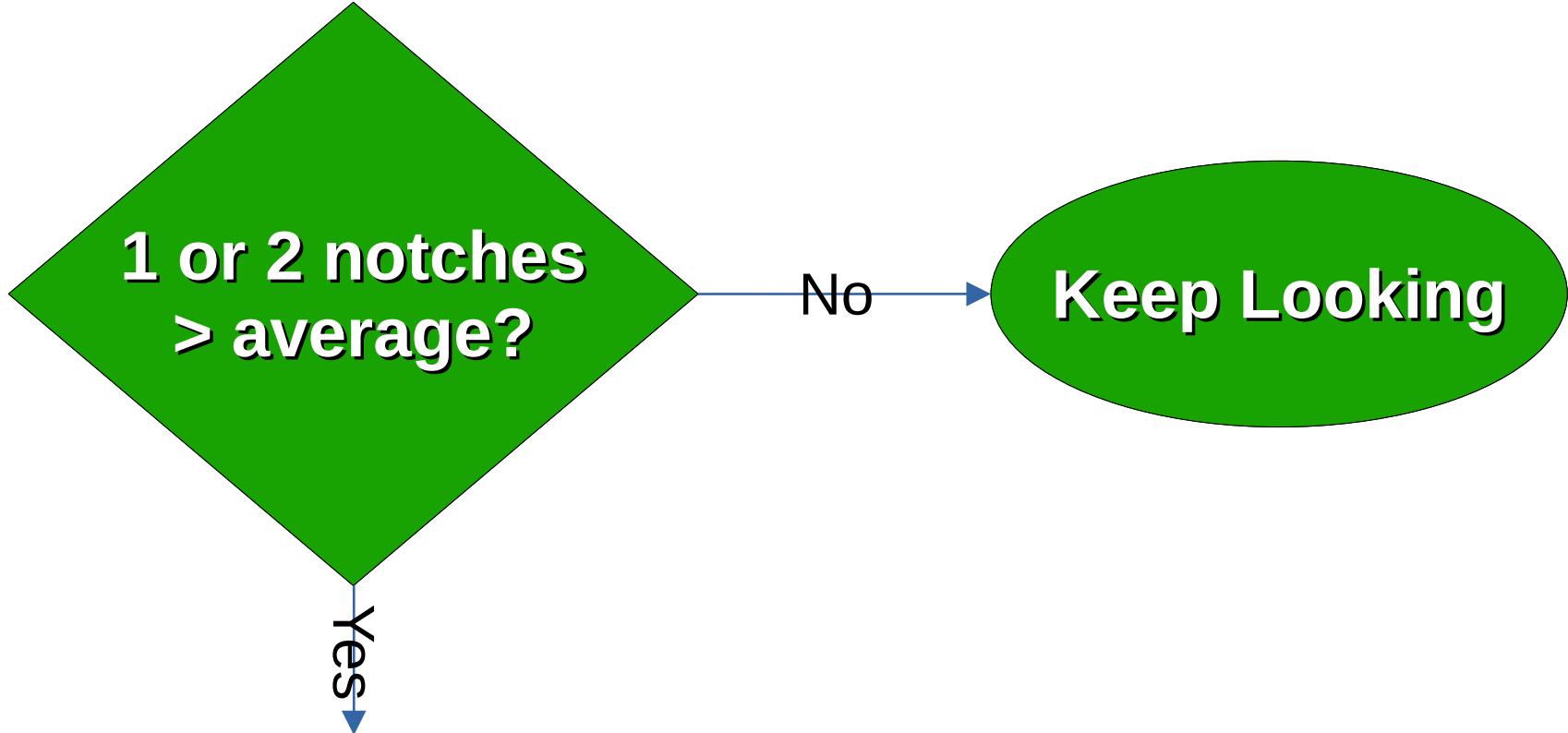
- Ask your current top performers
- Hacker and other Technical Security Conferences
- CTF Events
- Area Meetup groups

# Evaluating Talent

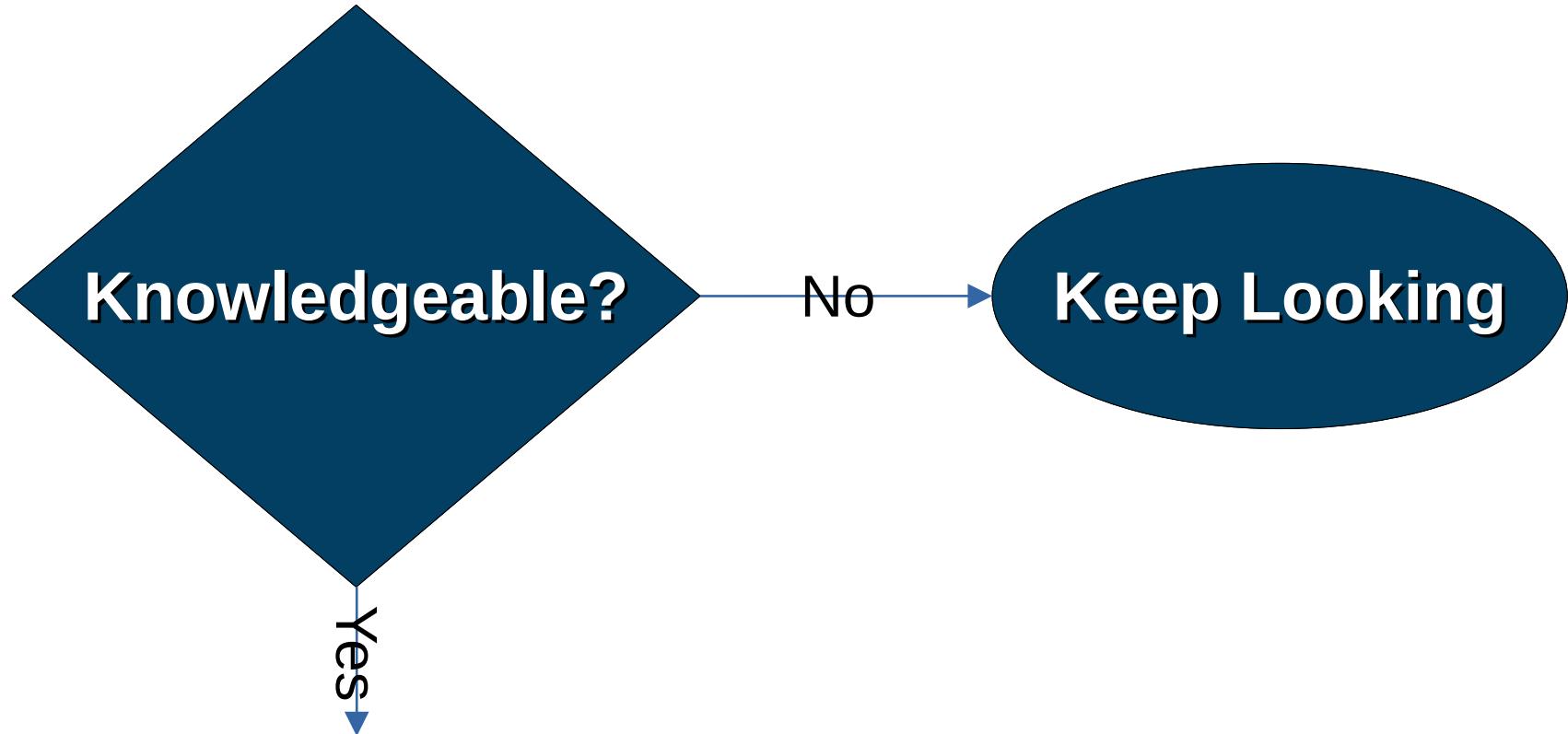
- In my experience, the only way to evaluate somebody's skill and suitability for a position is to simply sit down and talk with them

# *Evaluating Potential Unicorns*

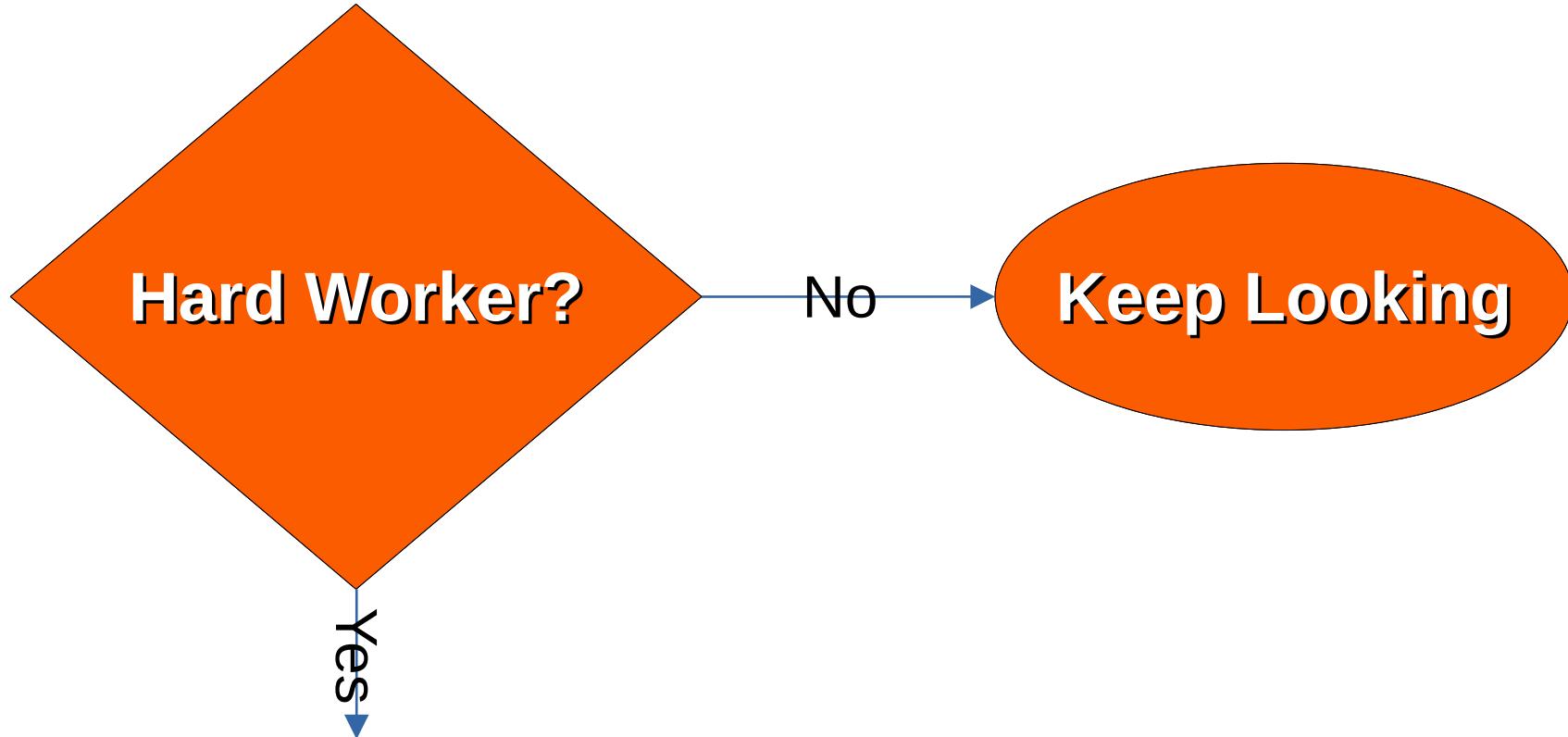
# Candidate Comparisons



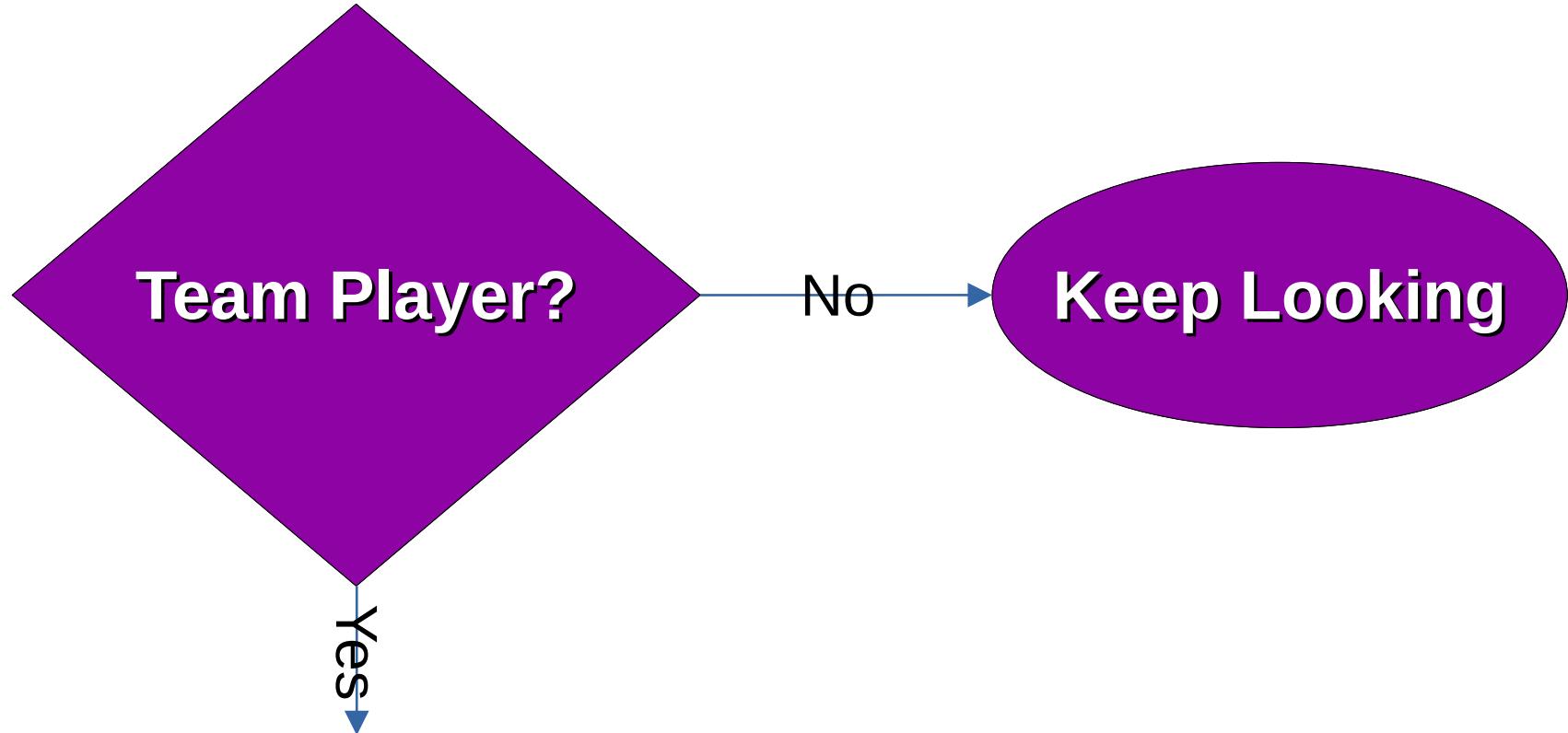
# Candidate Aptitude



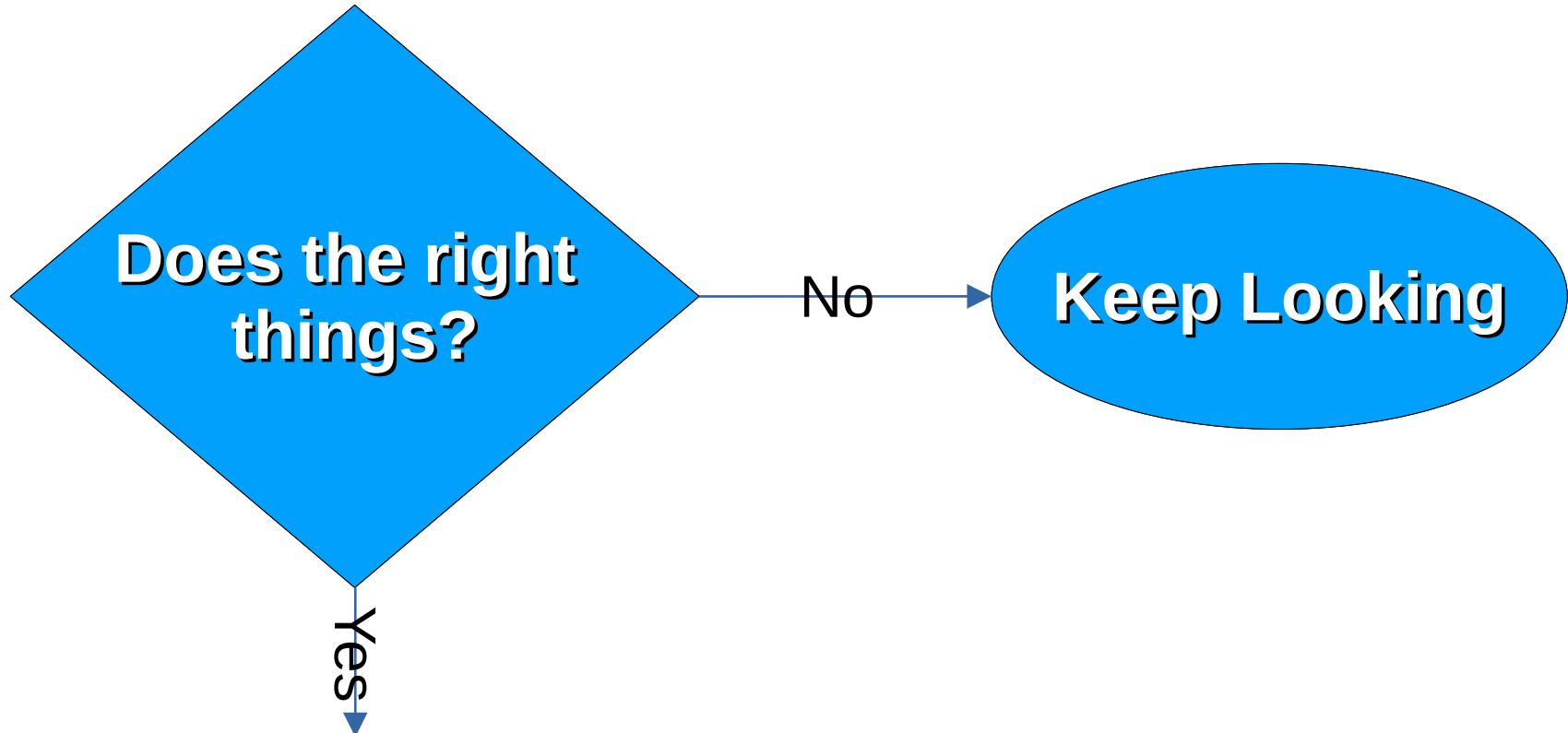
# Candidate Output



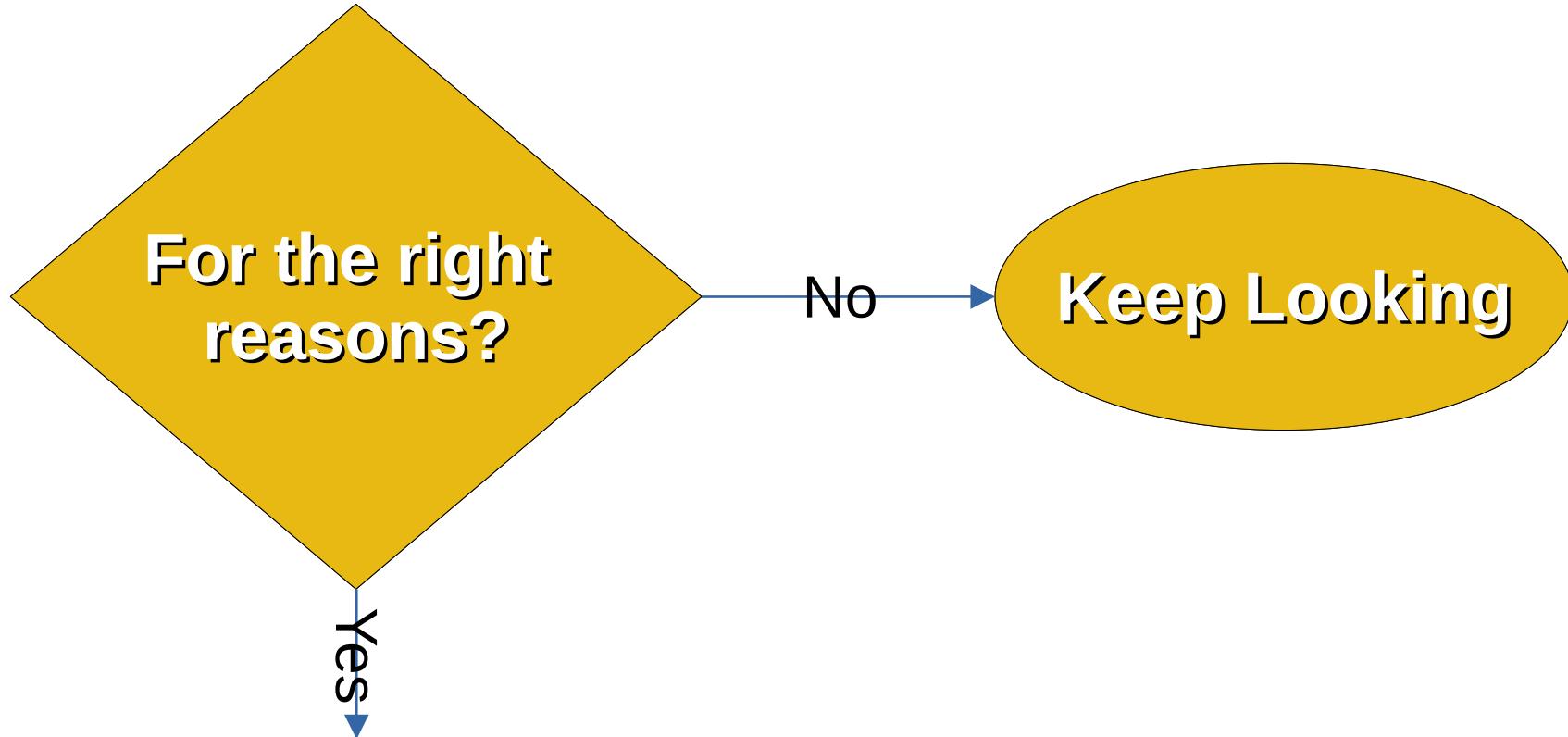
# Candidate Participation



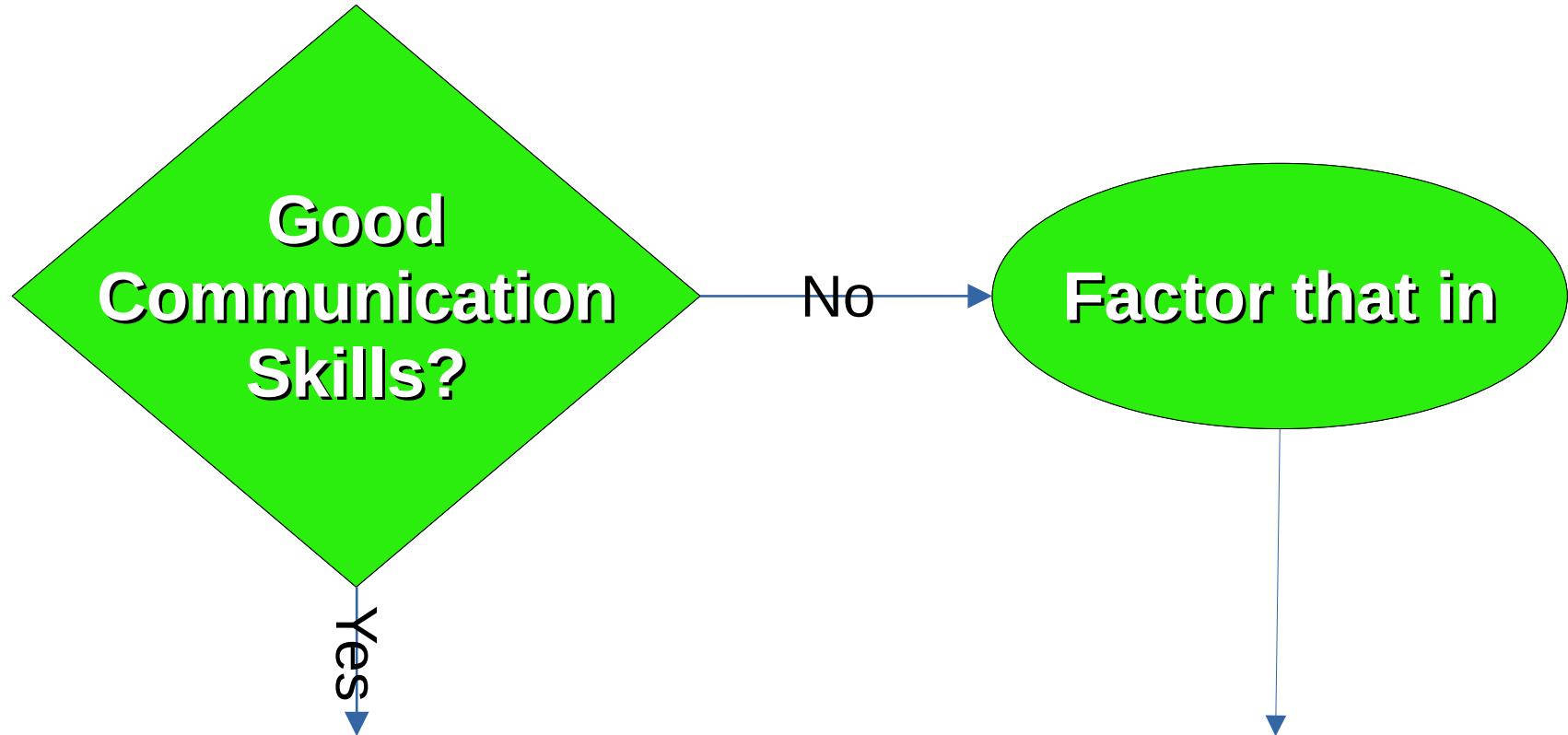
# Candidate Ethics



# Candidate Morals



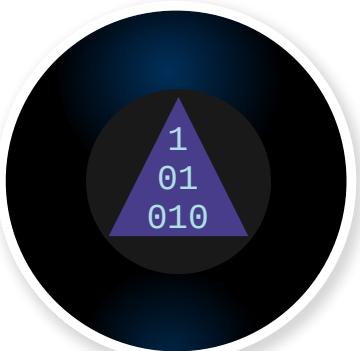
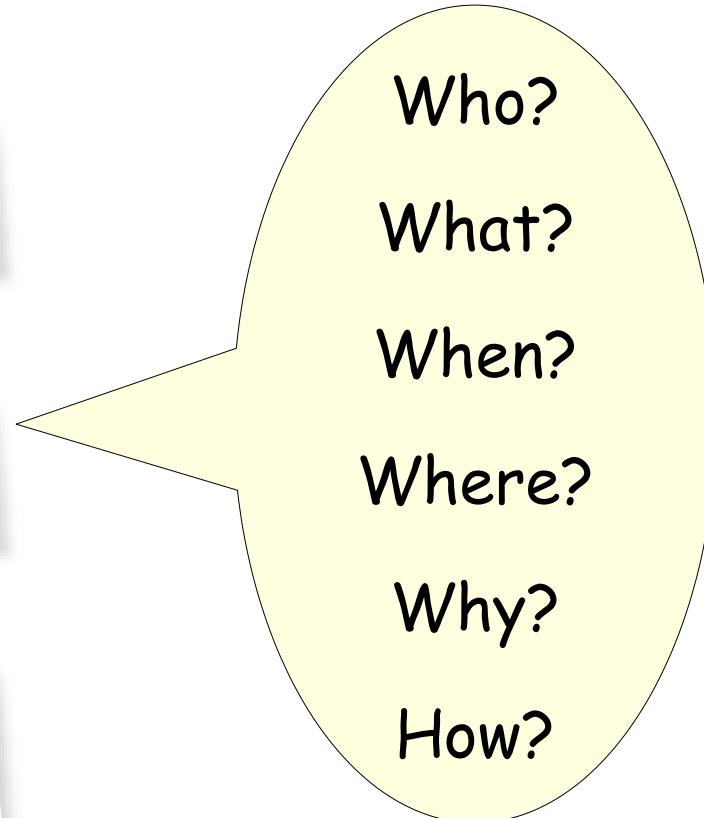
# Candidate Collaboration



# Unicorn Candidate or not?

```
if (thoseAnswers == "What you hoped for?") {  
    var Candidate = "Cybersecurity Unicorn";  
}  
else {  
    var Candidate = "Debatable";  
}
```

# Questions



# Navigating the **Cybersecurity** **Career** **Landscape**



Thank you for  
attending!

Now  
Hiring!



-Matt Scheurer