# Director of Growth Assessment Framework

## Internal Document — Not for Distribution to Candidates

---

## Overview

This document outlines Saltbox's assessment methodology for the Director of Growth role. It is designed for hiring managers, interviewers, and anyone involved in evaluating candidates.

### The Core Hiring Thesis

We are hiring for an **AI-native growth leader** — someone who operates at a fundamentally different speed and capability level because of how they leverage AI and automation tools. This is not a "nice to have" skill; it is the primary differentiator we are selecting for.

In a world where AI usage is becoming table stakes, traditional assessment methods (take-home case studies, portfolio reviews, behavioral interviews) are increasingly unreliable. Candidates can use AI to produce polished deliverables that don't reflect their actual operating capability.

**Our assessment is designed to reveal the candidate's ceiling** — what they can produce when given full autonomy, unlimited AI access, and a realistic time constraint. We are evaluating the *quality of their output* and *the sophistication of their process*, not whether they used AI.

---

## The Role in Context

### What This Role Owns

The Director of Growth will own Saltbox's growth engine across:

- Paid acquisition (Google, Meta, emerging channels)
- AI-powered outbound and GTM motions
- Conversion rate optimization and website experience
- Lifecycle marketing and lead nurturing
- Growth experimentation and new channel development
- Martech and AI stack strategy

## Why AI-Native Matters for This Role

The growth marketing landscape has fundamentally shifted. An AI-native operator can:

- Produce 10x the creative variations for testing
- Build sophisticated outbound systems that previously required a team
- Move from insight to execution in hours, not weeks
- Continuously scan and adopt new tools that create competitive advantage

A Director of Growth who is *not* AI-native will be outpaced by competitors and will not be able to unlock the efficiency gains this role requires.

## The Profile We're Looking For

- 6-10+ years of experience in growth marketing, performance marketing, or demand generation
- Proven success scaling paid acquisition and optimizing conversion funnels
- Deep, *practical* fluency with AI tools across the growth stack (not just ChatGPT)
- Experience building AI-powered outbound, content, or automation systems
- Strategic thinker who can also execute hands-on
- Entrepreneurial mindset with bias toward speed and experimentation

---

# Assessment Philosophy

## Why We're Assessing This Way

Traditional assessments fail in an AI-enabled world because:

1. **Take-home case studies** can be entirely AI-generated with enough time
2. **Portfolio reviews** increasingly contain AI-assisted or AI-generated work
3. **Behavioral interviews** test storytelling ability, not operating capability
4. **Technical questions** can be looked up in real-time

Our assessment is designed to:

- **Reveal strategic thinking** — Can they see what others miss?
- **Test AI fluency in practice** — How sophisticated is their actual usage?
- **Evaluate execution quality** — Can they produce work that could actually run?
- **Assess brand intuition** — Do they absorb and reflect a brand's identity?
- **Measure speed-to-quality** — What's their ceiling in a constrained timeframe?

## The One-Hour Constraint

We recommend candidates spend approximately one hour on this exercise. This constraint is intentional:

- An AI-native operator should be able to produce genuinely useful output in an hour
- It filters for people who can prioritize ruthlessly
- It reveals how they allocate time between research, strategy, and production
- It creates a level playing field — we're not rewarding candidates with more free time

We are *not* rigidly enforcing this. If a candidate spends 90 minutes and produces exceptional work, that's fine. If a candidate spends 4 hours and produces mediocre work, that's a red flag.

---

# The Assessment

## What Candidates Are Asked to Do

**Part 1: Reverse-Engineer Saltbox's Growth Engine**

Using publicly available information, candidates must map out their understanding of:

- Saltbox's core positioning and differentiation from alternatives (3PLs, traditional warehouses, self-fulfillment)
- Primary acquisition channels and how they appear to be deployed
- One specific gap or inefficiency in the current approach

**Part 2: Propose an AI-Powered Growth Initiative**

Based on their analysis, candidates propose one specific AI-enabled initiative they would launch in their first 30 days, including:

- What it is and why it matters (strategic logic)
- How they'd build it (tools and workflow)
- What success looks like (metrics)

**Part 3: Present It**

Candidates package their analysis and recommendation in a format that:

- Demonstrates their strategic thinking
- Reflects understanding of the Saltbox brand (voice, visual identity, tone)
- Shows the quality of work they can produce under time constraints

**Part 4: "How I Built This" Appendix**

Candidates include a brief summary of:

- What tools they used
- How they allocated their time
- What they would do with more time

---

# Evaluation Rubric

## Scoring Dimensions

Each dimension is scored 1-5:

| Score | Meaning |
|-------|---------|
| 1 | Significantly below expectations |
| 2 | Below expectations |
| 3 | Meets expectations |
| 4 | Exceeds expectations |
| 5 | Exceptional — top 10% of candidates |

---

## Dimension 1: Depth of Insight (Weight: 25%)

*Did they see something non-obvious about our business?*

| Score | What It Looks Like |
|-------|--------------------|
| 1 | Generic observations anyone could make from 5 minutes on the website ("Saltbox offers warehouse space for ecommerce brands") |
| 2 | Accurate but surface-level understanding; no original insight |

| Score | What It Looks Like |
|---|---|
| 3 | Solid grasp of positioning and GTM; identifies a reasonable gap but nothing surprising |
| 4 | At least one insight that demonstrates deeper research or original thinking; gap identification feels actionable |
| 5 | Non-obvious insight that makes us say "we should actually think about that"; evidence of research beyond the website (ads library, reviews, job postings, competitor analysis, etc.) |

**Questions to ask yourself:**

- Did they just describe what we do, or did they identify *how* we do it and *why* it might not be working optimally?
- Did they go beyond the website? (Check: did they reference our ads, social content, reviews, press, job postings, competitor positioning?)
- Is the gap they identified something we've actually discussed internally, or something genuinely new?

---

## Dimension 2: Strategic Clarity (Weight: 25%)

*Is their recommendation specific, defensible, and actionable?*

| Score | What It Looks Like |
|---|---|
| 1 | Vague or generic recommendations ("do more content marketing," "improve SEO") |
| 2 | Reasonable direction but lacks specificity; couldn't be briefed to a team |
| 3 | Clear recommendation with logical connection to their analysis; could be executed but needs refinement |
| 4 | Specific initiative with clear rationale, defined approach, and measurable outcomes; could be briefed tomorrow |

| Score | What It Looks Like |
|-------|--------------------|
| 5 | Recommendation is both strategically sound and tactically detailed; shows understanding of tradeoffs; success metrics are realistic and well-chosen |

**Questions to ask yourself:**

- If we handed this to the team, could they start executing this week?
- Does the recommendation logically follow from their gap analysis?
- Are the success metrics appropriate, or are they vanity metrics / unrealistic benchmarks?
- Did they consider what could go wrong or what assumptions need to be true?

---

## Dimension 3: AI Fluency (Weight: 25%)

*Does their proposed initiative (and their process) reflect genuine understanding of what's possible with AI?*

| Score | What It Looks Like |
|-------|--------------------|
| 1 | No meaningful AI component, or AI usage limited to "use ChatGPT to write copy" |
| 2 | Basic AI usage; tools mentioned but not integrated into a coherent system |
| 3 | Solid understanding of AI tools (Clay, Smartlead, etc.); proposed workflow is feasible |
| 4 | Sophisticated AI-powered system; shows understanding of enrichment, personalization, and automation at scale; specific about tool choices and why |
| 5 | Expert-level fluency; proposed system is genuinely innovative or shows non-obvious tool combinations; "How I Built This" reveals sophisticated prompting, iteration, and AI-assisted research |

**Questions to ask yourself:**

- Could they actually build what they're proposing, or is it theoretical?
- Do they understand the *limitations* of the tools, not just the capabilities?
- Does their "How I Built This" appendix reveal sophisticated AI usage (chained prompts, research synthesis, cross-referencing) or just basic generation?
- Are they using AI as a thought partner or just a content generator?

---

## Dimension 4: Brand Resonance (Weight: 15%)

*Does the presentation feel like it could come from Saltbox?*

| Score | What It Looks Like |
|-------|--------------------|
| 1 | No attention to brand; generic corporate aesthetic; wrong tone |
| 2 | Some brand elements present but inconsistent; tone partially aligned |
| 3 | Reasonable brand alignment; appropriate format; professional presentation |
| 4 | Strong brand alignment; visuals, tone, and format feel intentional and consistent with Saltbox's identity |
| 5 | Exceptional brand intuition; presentation could be mistaken for internal Saltbox work; demonstrates deep understanding of voice (warm, entrepreneurial, peer-to-peer) and visual identity (muted greens, cream, yellow accents, clean typography) |

**Saltbox brand reference points:**

- **Colors:** Sage green, warm cream/off-white, charcoal, yellow accents
- **Typography:** Serif for emotional headlines (often italicized), clean sans-serif for body
- **Tone:** Warm, peer-to-peer, entrepreneurial, community-focused; words like "home," "neighbors," "grow," "flexible"
- **Photography style:** Real people, real spaces, natural lighting, living green walls
- **Anti-patterns:** Cold/corporate, blue color schemes, stock photography, vendor-to-customer tone

## Dimension 5: Execution Quality (Weight: 10%)

*Is this work that could actually run, or is it a concept?*

| Score | What It Looks Like |
|---|---|
| 1 | Pure concept with no tangible artifacts |
| 2 | Some artifacts but clearly first-draft AI output; not refined |
| 3 | Solid deliverables that would need some refinement before use |
| 4 | High-quality artifacts (copy, workflows, targeting logic) that could be implemented with minimal changes |
| 5 | Production-ready work; if they proposed an outbound sequence, the emails are actually good; if they proposed landing page changes, the copy is compelling |

# Candidate Tiering

Based on aggregate scores:

| Total Score | Tier | Recommendation |
|---|---|---|
| 4.5 - 5.0 | Exceptional | Strong hire — move to final interviews immediately |
| 4.0 - 4.4 | Strong | Advance to final interviews |
| 3.5 - 3.9 | Promising | Advance with reservations; probe weaknesses in interviews |
| 3.0 - 3.4 | Borderline | Unlikely to advance unless pipeline is weak |

| Total Score | Tier | Recommendation |
|---|---|---|
| Below 3.0 | Pass | Does not meet the bar for this role |

## Red Flags to Watch For

Automatic disqualification or serious concerns:

- **No evidence of AI usage in their process.** If someone spent an hour on this without using AI tools, they are not the AI-native operator we need.
- **Accepting AI output without refinement.** If the copy or strategy feels like unedited ChatGPT output, they lack the critical judgment to use AI effectively.
- **Generic recommendations.** If their proposal could apply to any B2B company, they didn't do the work to understand Saltbox.
- **No specificity on tools or implementation.** If they can't name specific tools or explain how the system would actually work, they haven't built these systems before.
- **Significant brand misalignment.** If the presentation feels corporate, cold, or off-brand, they don't have the intuition for brand that this role requires.

## Green Flags to Celebrate

Indicators of a top-tier candidate:

- **Non-obvious insight.** They identified something we've discussed internally or something genuinely new.
- **Research depth.** Evidence they went beyond the website — ads library, reviews, competitor analysis, job postings, social content.
- **System thinking.** Their AI initiative isn't just "use AI for X" but a coherent system with multiple components.
- **Self-awareness.** Their "How I Built This" shows sophisticated process and honest reflection on what AI did and didn't help with.
- **Brand mastery.** The presentation looks and feels like Saltbox without being told exactly what that means.
- **Ready to ship.** Artifacts are good enough that we'd actually consider using them.

# Interview Flow Integration

This assessment should be used as follows:

1. **Application screen** — Review resume/LinkedIn for baseline qualifications

   **Screening questions: we can do these through rightmatch**

   1. In your own words, describe a recent AI-powered growth system you personally built. What tools did you use, and what was the outcome?

   **Why this matters:**

   This question filters for candidates who have actually *built* real AI-powered systems — not just ideated or delegated. We're looking for specificity in **tools**, **workflow**, and **results**.

   ✅ Green flag: "I used Clay + Smartlead + OpenAI API to create a dynamic outbound engine triggered by funding events. Resulted in a 25% increase in qualified demos over 30 days."
   ❌ Red flag: "Used ChatGPT to write ad copy."

   2. Talk about your experience overseeing demand generation channels, including paid platforms like Google and Meta, and email marketing platforms like Hubspot or Klaiviyo

   **Why this matters:**

   This tests **strategic clarity**, **prioritization under time constraints**, and the candidate's ability to connect ideas to Saltbox's business model. It's also a preview of how they'll approach the actual assessment.

   ✅ Green flag: A specific initiative tied to a known gap (e.g. "Build a retargeting sequence focused on the emotional moment of needing more space to grow")
   ❌ Red flag: Generic answers like "optimize the funnel with better CTAs"

   3. What brands (B2B or B2C) do you think do a great job blending performance marketing with strong brand identity — and why?

   **Why this matters:**

   This checks for **brand sensitivity**, which is critical for someone who will be running performance plays *without eroding* the Saltbox tone. We want someone who can speak to both performance *and* brand integrity.

   ✅ Green flag: "I love how Notion runs paid search on utilitarian queries but uses landing pages that still feel entirely on-brand."
   ❌ Red flag: "Nike" (with no explanation or relevance to performance marketing)

4. What's one emerging AI capability or tool you believe will significantly reshape GTM strategies in the next 12–18 months — and how would you test or apply it at Saltbox?

**Why this matters:**

This gauges the candidate's ability to **think ahead**, spot **competitive advantage**, and apply new tools in a way that's **strategically relevant to Saltbox's model** (local + digital, service-oriented, logistics-adjacent).

It also filters for curiosity, experimentation mindset, and relevance to *our* GTM motion — not just SaaS playbooks.

> ✅ Green flag: "Agentic workflows will make multi-touch, multichannel outbound fully autonomous. I'd pilot a 'reactive outreach' bot tied to location-based intent signals to drive tours in new markets."
> ❌ Red flag: "AI will improve content production" (generic, no strategic POV or application)

During final interviews, use the assessment as a foundation:

- "Walk me through your research process for this exercise."
- "Why did you choose this gap to focus on versus other options?"
- "If you had 4 hours instead of 1, what would you have done differently?"
- "Tell me about a time you built a system similar to what you proposed here."

---

# Appendix: Sample Scoring

**Example: Strong Candidate (4.3 overall)**

| Dimension | Score | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| Depth of Insight | 4 | Identified that our messaging doesn't speak to the acute "breaking point" moment; referenced our Meta ads and noted the disconnect between brand tone and ad copy |
| Strategic Clarity | 5 | Proposed "Breaking Point" outbound system with specific signals, clear workflow, and realistic metrics; could brief to team immediately |
| AI Fluency | 4 | Sophisticated Clay + Smartlead proposal; "How I Built This" showed iterative prompting and research synthesis; understood limitations |

| Dimension | Score | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| Brand Resonance | 4 | Presentation in Notion with correct color palette and warm tone; one section felt slightly off-brand |
| Execution Quality | 4 | Included three draft emails that were genuinely good; targeting logic was defensible |

**Recommendation:** Advance to final interviews. Probe on team leadership experience and how they'd prioritize across multiple channels.

---

**Example: Borderline Candidate (3.2 overall)**

| Dimension | Score | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| Depth of Insight | 3 | Accurate understanding of positioning but no original insight; gap identified was "could do more content marketing" |
| Strategic Clarity | 3 | Reasonable recommendation but vague on implementation; metrics were generic |
| AI Fluency | 4 | Good tool knowledge; proposed workflow was sound; "How I Built This" showed solid process |
| Brand Resonance | 3 | Presentation was professional but generic; didn't capture Saltbox voice |
| Execution Quality | 3 | Artifacts were adequate but clearly first-draft |

**Recommendation:** Unlikely to advance. Strong on tools but lacks strategic depth and brand intuition needed for this level.

---

*Document version: 1.0 Last updated: January 2026 Owner: VP of Marketing*