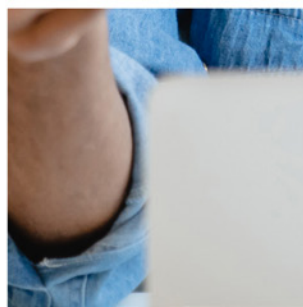
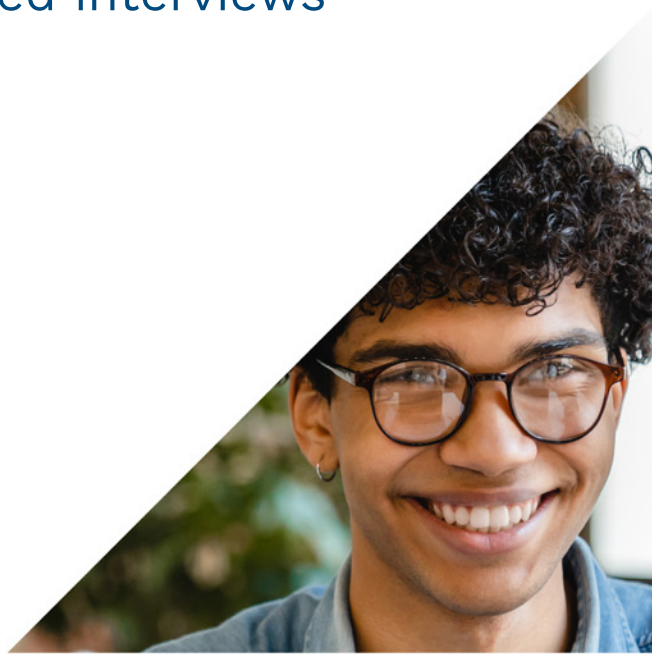


# Structured Hiring 101

Your hiring team's ultimate guide  
to leveraging structured interviews





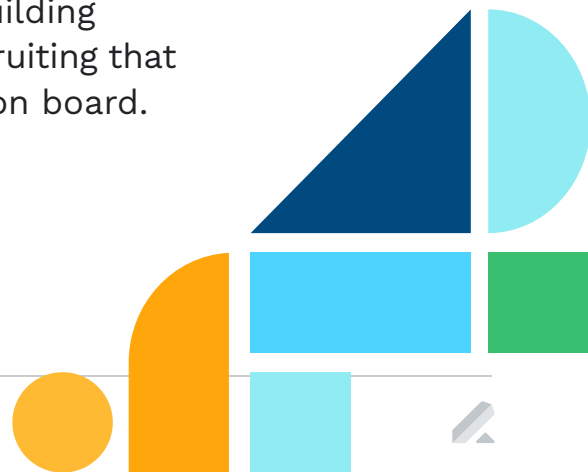
## Introduction

The first step in hiring the right talent for your organization is setting your recruiting team up for success with a structured hiring process. And there's no better place to start than with your interview strategy.

It may sound overwhelming, but regardless of your company size or hiring goals, implementing structured hiring practices can help you make the most effective hiring decisions while giving your organization a competitive advantage.

Structured interviewing has been shown to not only be more reliable but also more effective than traditional hiring, where interviews are unstructured. The crux of structured interviewing is putting a process in place that standardizes how you interview, in turn nurturing more equitable and productive hiring.

By investing in a structured interview process, you're building a foundation for better, more inclusive, and effective recruiting that will empower your hiring team to bring the best talent on board.



# Making the most of your interview process

Ideally, hiring managers, recruiters, and every stakeholder involved in your hiring process would be aligned with how you hire—after all, the goal of recruiting is to source, nurture, engage, and hire the best talent! However, this isn’t always the case.

While your hiring team may be aligned, other stakeholders and influencers have their own objectives and needs and will bring different perspectives and opinions to how and why your team recruits. This presents hiring teams with a new set of challenges, including mitigating misaligned recruiting goals, compromising on hiring strategies, and offsetting poor candidate experiences.

It’s easy to see how hiring teams and stakeholders can quickly become frustrated with the different aspects of recruiting when no one is truly aligned—and this couldn’t be more true for your structured interview approach.

In our Structured Hiring 101 eBook, we’re going to show you (through actionable tips and practical advice) how your hiring team can approach interviewing differently using a structured process that helps you hire and onboard the right people, every time.

## What you’ll learn:

<b>The importance of a structured interview process</b>	4
<b>How to create a blueprint for structured interviewing</b>	7
<b>Practical tips for consistently improving existing practices</b>	16
<b>Conclusion</b>	19
<b>About Lever</b>	19



# Why does structured hiring matter?

Have you ever had an interview where the conversation felt stilted or the questions felt random? Or, maybe you've been a stakeholder in an interview where the candidate was not equipped to answer a discombobulated list of questions fired at them. If that's been the case, it's likely you've experienced an unstructured interview.

The advantages of structuring your interview process are numerous, but chief among them are better candidate experiences and better hiring results.

## Let's cover:

- What structured hiring is
- Benefits of structured interviews
- 3 best practices for kick-starting structured interviews



## What is structured hiring?

Structured hiring is a strategy that involves clearly defining a role and its requirements, including the experiences, attributes, and skills a successful candidate must have, prior to opening the role. This approach to hiring starts with the role definition and continues through to the hiring and onboarding of a candidate.

The core benefits of structured hiring include more fair and inclusive hiring practices, positive candidate experiences, and more objective, effective hiring decisions.

### Structured hiring is further defined by a few simple yet important values:

- 1 The business's objectives and needs define the role and ideal candidate for the role
- 2 The interview process is intentional, where questions and assessments are deliberate and structured
- 3 The outcome or hiring decision is based on objective, data-driven decision making

**These values help hiring teams create a structured interview process that empowers equitable recruiting practices. Bearing that in mind, let's take a look at why this approach to hiring is recommended.**





# Benefits of structured interviews

We've all experienced an unstructured interview—one where the conversation is free-flowing and the interviewer asks whichever questions they like, often based on the direction of the conversation or the candidate's resume.

However, structured interviews require a hiring team to develop a clearly defined purpose for each interview, along with a specific set of questions for each interviewer to ask. This includes a rubric or scorecard of some kind that helps interviewers assess answers to each question. This means:

- All candidates are asked the same predetermined questions, in the same order
- All candidates' responses are evaluated using the same criteria or scale

By following a structured interview framework, hiring teams can make more informed, data-driven decisions rather than hiring based on emotion or those 'gut feelings' that don't always lead to onboarding the right candidate.



## Key benefits of structured interviews for hiring

Let's take a look at the key advantages of using structured interviews.

- **Better predict job performance**  
As we mentioned above, studies have shown that structured interviews can help you better predict a candidate's job performance.
- **Eliminate confirmation bias**  
All candidates are asked the same questions and are assessed using the same rubric, helping ensure your hiring is equitable while decreasing the risk of confirmation bias.
- **Data-driven vs emotional hiring**  
As candidates are assessed based on standardized criteria rather than 'gut instinct' or feeling, hiring teams can make more data-driven hiring decisions.
- **Optimize interview time**  
Having a structured interview framework in place can help managers and stakeholders optimize the time they have with each candidate.



# 3 best practices for kick-starting structured interviews

Before you dive into structured interviewing, there are a few best practices to keep in mind that will help you kick-start the process with your team (or improve upon an existing interview approach).



1

## Determine your needs or objectives

Your hiring team needs to determine what you're looking for in your ideal candidate. What core competencies, skills, and experience would they need to be successful in the role you're hiring for?

To answer these types of questions, lean on your job descriptions. You'll have already outlined the needs and job requirements, which can help you and your team establish the skills, behaviors, and competencies you're looking for.

2

## Develop your assessment criteria

A standardized rubric or set of criteria is crucial in helping every stakeholder in an interview process objectively assess candidates based on responses and conversations. And this rubric becomes even more essential if your team asks candidates to complete skill tests or panel presentations.

The purpose of a rubric is to help interviewers most accurately assess poor versus good responses, which typically follows a 1-5 scale rating, where 1 is 'poor' and 5 would be considered 'excellent.' Standardizing this rubric and ensuring all interviewers or panel participants use the same one will help in reducing bias and subjectivity.

3

## Have your feedback process ready

After you've interviewed candidates and have shortlisted potential hires, your team will need to debrief on the interviews and go over feedback that stakeholders have about each candidate. This is where your feedback process comes in.

Your team can leverage the rubric you used to consolidate feedback and review which candidates you'd like to move forward with into the final hiring stages. Consider having post-interview meetings slated in your team's calendars to review feedback or shortlisted candidates.



# Structured hiring blueprint

To implement a successful structured interview strategy, you'll want to have a blueprint or strategy in place that you can leverage for each role you're hiring for. Questions may change, and interviewers may differ, however, your structure should remain largely the same.

There are 4 parts to a structured hiring blueprint:

- 1

Defining your role
- 2

Creating your interview kit
- 3

Preparing for interviews
- 4

Wrapping up (post-interview)

## PART 1

### Defining your role

At this stage, you need to define what success looks like in the role (short and long term), along with the core business objectives of the role. This helps answer the 'why' behind the reason for hiring and filling the role.

To avoid misalignment among your team during this step of the blueprint, gather your team for a role kickoff meeting to determine the ideal candidate based on the role. This kickoff meeting will help you:

- Define the core business objectives of the role (the 'why')
- Outline the competencies, skills, qualities, and other 'must-haves' a candidate would need to be successful in the role
- Align on the primary responsibilities of the role

Let's look at an example of how you might outline a role during a kickoff meeting. If your team was hiring for a Marketing Manager, your team may define the role like this:

Role	Objective(s)	Competencies/ Qualities
Managing a team of marketing and creative professionals	Support Marketing and Sales teams in meeting quarterly lead and revenue goals	Proven success managing a team of marketers and external vendors
Oversee messaging and positioning of the brand	Optimize demand generation to drive sales and conversions via marketing activities	Track record of increasing public relations and communications for the brand
Develop marketing and communication strategies	Work alongside Customer Success teams to support customer marketing and retention	Demonstrated ability with improving pipeline of marketing qualified leads



# Creating your interview kit

When creating or compiling your interview kit, there are three key things to keep in mind: **the interview itself, how you'll assess a candidate, and the candidate's experience.**

## The interview

There should always be a specific goal or goals your team strives to meet when interviewing candidates for open roles. By having these goals mapped out prior to interviewing applicants, you have a better chance at objectively assessing and effectively hiring the right candidate.

**Think about an interview as giving your team the opportunity to:**

- Discover each candidate's relevant experiences and skillsets
- Assess all candidates using the same criteria or framework
- Optimize and deliver on a positive candidate experience
- Get buy-in from all stakeholders for your interview and hiring process

### KEY TAKEAWAY

**Ensure all stakeholders or influencers involved in the interview process are aware of, and understand the goals of each interview. This helps establish the role each stakeholder plays in the interview process and aligns hiring teams.**

## Assessing candidates

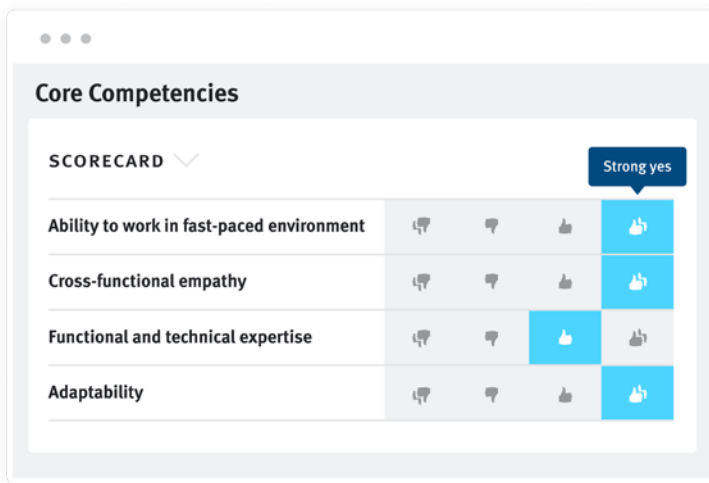
Just as your job descriptions tie back to the core objectives of each role, so too should the criteria you use to assess candidates. When the criteria are clearly defined and align with the business objectives of hiring for a role, your team is better equipped to predict a good hire.

**This is where your rubric or scorecards come into play. Remember, these tools are meant to help you assess candidates based on:**

- Skills and qualities candidates have as they relate to the core objectives of the role (versus personal preference)
- Asking the same questions and using the same standardized criteria for every candidate







Core Competencies				
SCORECARD				Strong yes
Ability to work in fast-paced environment	👤	👤	👍	👍
Cross-functional empathy	👤	👤	👍	👍
Functional and technical expertise	👤	👤	👍	👍
Adaptability	👤	👤	👍	👍

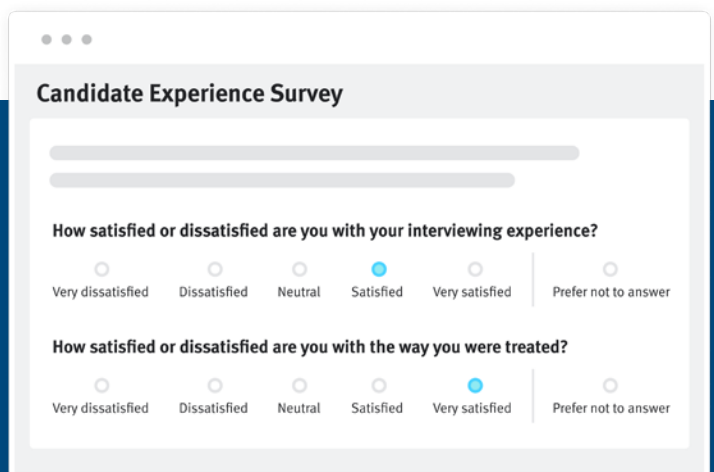
Using standardized scorecards or rubrics, you can help eliminate bias in interview assessments. For example, in [LeverTRM](#), recruiters can use standardized scorecards to provide feedback on a candidate. This feedback remains hidden from other stakeholders to eliminate groupthink. Interviewers can only see feedback from others when they've submitted their own

## Candidate experience

It's important to remember that your structured interview process impacts not only your hiring team but every candidate you come into contact with, too. This means that, while your team is collecting data and insights around your interview process, candidates also need enough information and insight from an interview to make an informed decision if offered the position.

Consider leveraging feedback forms or surveys post-interview that give candidates the opportunity to provide feedback and ask any questions they may have forgotten to discuss during the interview. This is especially relevant for candidates who move to a final hiring stage (such as panel interviews).

**At Lever, for example, we send candidates feedback surveys that empower them to provide feedback and insight into their interview experiences. And recruiters who use LeverTRM have access to pre-built surveys, too. This gives you the opportunity to further nurture candidates you're moving to final hiring stages.**



**Candidate Experience Survey**

How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your interviewing experience?

Very dissatisfied   Dissatisfied   Neutral   Satisfied   Very satisfied   Prefer not to answer

How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way you were treated?

Very dissatisfied   Dissatisfied   Neutral   Satisfied   Very satisfied   Prefer not to answer



## Preparing for interviews

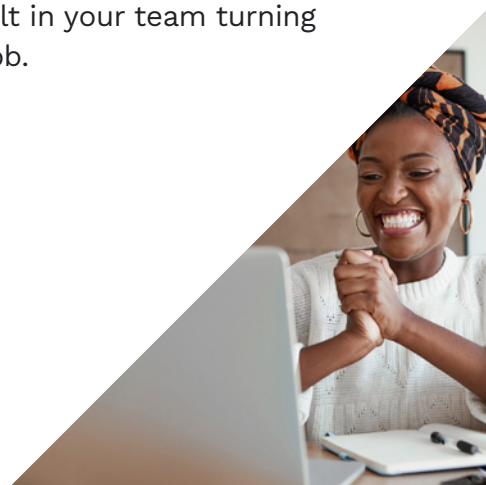
Now that you have your role defined and your assessment approach in place, it's time to plan out what your interview process will look like, or how it will flow. The core part of your interview process is the questions both you and your stakeholders will ask, along with any interview types you'll require candidates to go through.

Earlier on in this blueprint section, we mentioned that you should have a goal or goals in mind for each interview, and have those goals mapped out beforehand—and this is especially true when your interview process has multiple steps or tiers. Let's dive in.

### Start with your requirements

In Part 1, we talked about defining your role by examining the core competencies and skills you need a candidate to have. However, as you develop your interview plan or process, you may find that some aspects aren't necessary. Consider asking the following:

- **How can we assess for the 'required' skills or competencies?** In other words, your team may use assignments, test projects, or references to assess a candidate's abilities rather than relying strictly on stand-alone interviews.
- **Are the competencies or skills we've outlined 'must-haves?'** Look at different types of skills (hard and soft) that could benefit the role, not just static requirements. By doing this, you'll be able to better determine a candidate's fit for the role *and* for internal mobility.
- **Can the right candidate learn a skill on the job?** Hiring based on pre-existing skills alone can narrow your candidate pool and result in your team turning away talent that could learn or obtain skills on the job.



## Then, create your interview questions

Regardless of the number of questions your team asks a candidate, each question should be related to the role and the competencies you're looking for. In saying that, there are typically 3 categories or 'kinds' of questions interviewers will ask, which include verification, behavioral, and situational questions. Here are some examples of each.

Verification	Behavioral	Situational
<i>Do you have experience with Adobe Suite and Figma?</i>	<i>Tell me about a time you used Adobe InDesign and Photoshop to complete a project?</i>	<i>How would you measure the success of a creative campaign?</i>
<i>Have you managed a remote team?</i>	<i>Can you give me an example of how you managed a remote team of copywriters in your past role?</i>	<i>How would you manage a direct report who has difficulty meeting deadlines?</i>
<i>Are you familiar with Salesforce and Pardot?</i>	<i>How did you optimize your team's use of Salesforce and reporting in your previous role?</i>	<i>If we asked you to make predictions about our pipeline based on the data found in Salesforce, which metrics or data points would you use, and why?</i>

The goal in asking each type of question is to gain a better understanding of future job performance and how a candidate would approach or handle different situations. While these questions can be hyper-specific based on the role type, make sure everyone involved in asking these questions has a firm understanding of the role to assess the candidate's answers objectively.

## Standardize your questions

As a general rule of thumb, standardizing the questions everyone asks is a good start in ensuring your interview process is fair and objective. **Try passing your questions through a simple checklist like this one:**

- ✓ Each question is clear and concise
- ✓ Each question avoids jargon or brainteasers
- ✓ Situational questions are based on real-life situations
- ✓ Situational and behavioral questions can't be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no'
- ✓ Questions avoid excessive detail and don't give too much away



## Determine the flow of your interview process

Today, many recruiting teams leverage an array of interview types to assist their team in evaluating candidates for open roles. Depending on the role you're hiring for and how familiar you are with a candidate, your interview process could have a shallow or in-depth flow.

You'll want to choose the flow of your process based on what your team of stakeholders needs to effectively assess each candidate.



### The 1:1 interview

In a 1:1 interview, each stakeholder has the opportunity to ask a series of questions (preferably pre-determined based on a structured interview framework) to assess a candidate. This type of interview typically follows a preliminary call or discussion with a recruiter in which a candidate is asked verification questions before they're moved onto the next round. You may require a candidate to go through a series of 1:1 interviews. For example, let's say you're hiring for a Content Marketing role.

**Recruiter** → **VP of Marketing** → **Director of Content** → **Senior Content Marketing Manager** → **Demand Gen Manager**

This flow above, while not the same for every company, shows how a candidate interviewing for the role of a Content Marketer may speak with several stakeholders through 1:1 interviews based on who they'd work closely with.

### KEY TAKEAWAY

**During 1:1 interviews, stakeholders should ask different sets of questions to ensure candidates are evaluated from a broader perspective. This means creating pre-determined questions that each stakeholder would use to assess each candidate independent of what other stakeholders ask. For example, a Demand Gen Manager would ask different questions than those asked by a Director of Communications.**



## The panel interview

Panel interviews have grown in popularity, especially when hiring teams are looking to assess candidates based on assignments or test projects that showcase a candidate's skills, methods, and mindset. However, panel interviews can quickly become subjective, so ensure that every candidate is given the same test project or questions to answer.

This way, stakeholders will all hear the same answers and can ask questions based on a standardized assignment. **If your interview flow requires a skills test or test project, consider:**

- Only including the most pertinent or relevant stakeholders in the panel when a candidate presents their test or project
- Assessing the candidate's project/presentation using a standardized rubric or scorecard to determine whether a candidate understands the assignment, or is prepared to answer questions based on the assignment
- Leaving time for questions that stakeholders can ask after the presentation
- Giving the candidate the opportunity to ask questions, too





## Wrapping up your interview process

At this point, you've put together a structured interview plan or framework that will help you more effectively (and objectively) interview and assess candidates. Now, it's time for your hiring team to regroup to determine which candidate is best suited to the role you're recruiting for. This regroup usually takes the form of a meeting where everyone involved in the hiring process gathers to review what you've learned about each candidate and the final stages.

### KEY TAKEAWAY

**The main goal or outcome at this stage is to come to a consensus on which candidate you'd like to make an offer to, but not all stakeholders will be equally aligned; indeed, it's rare that everyone involved mutually agrees on one candidate. So, let's take a look at a few jobs-to-be-done for your regroup.**

### First, review feedback

This crucial first step will have you and your hiring manager carefully reviewing the feedback for every stakeholder to determine gaps in feedback, similarities or contrasts, and the overall sentiment your hiring team has for each candidate. For any candidates who are clearly not the right fit, let both your team and the candidates know you won't be moving forward with them.

### Next, review the existing candidates

It's now time to review the remaining candidates and narrow down your selection to determine who performed the strongest in terms of feedback and evaluation criteria that each stakeholder submitted. Ultimately, the hiring manager is responsible for making the decision as to who will be hired, so it's important that they review the remaining candidates carefully.

### Then, move onto the offer stage

Once you're ready to make a candidate an offer, notify every stakeholder who has been involved in your hiring process. At this time, you'll also be preparing an offer letter or even having one last touchpoint with the candidate (virtually, via phone, or in-person) to notify them. This is when you'll be announcing the new hire!



However, if you feel at this point that you or your team are still torn between one or more candidates, don't offer the role to someone simply to fill it. **Instead, go back to the drawing board and look at 3 key aspects of your hiring process.**

1

## Clarity on the role and requirements

Above, we recommend only including the most pertinent or relevant stakeholders in your interview process, and for good reason—when there are too many people involved in making a hire, indecision and subjectivity can quickly derail your process. To avoid this, ensure:

- You have one person overseeing or running each meeting
- The hiring manager or ultimate decision-maker is looped into each step
- The role and its requirements, along with the goal of each interview, is clearly aligned

2

## Unclear or no feedback

Structured interviewing is so effective because it requires feedback and clear evaluations from each stakeholder. However, if some fail to provide feedback or don't explain the 'why' behind their assessments, it makes it difficult for everyone involved to evaluate a candidate effectively.

- Explain the necessity of feedback to each stakeholder before they interview a candidate
- Check in with stakeholders after each interview to ensure they've recorded feedback and have used scorecards
- Have stakeholders submit prescriptive feedback confidentially, so that other stakeholders can't view feedback until after they've submitted their own

3

## Teams that are divided or undecided

If you find your hiring team stuck on a candidate who feels like the right team and culture add, but they're hesitant about certain skills or competencies, have these discussions during your wrap-up or regroup to ensure you can give candidates a fair opportunity to further showcase their skills. This could mean:

- Meeting as a team to determine the most-valued competencies or skills, and which ones the hiring team still needs clarity on
- Creating one more round of interviews (such as an additional panel interview) or skills test
- Setting one stakeholder as the ultimate decision-maker (such as the hiring manager)

**Keep in mind that candidates will also expect an answer or some level of insight into whether they've gotten the role, successfully answered your stakeholders' questions, or need to provide more information.**



# Preparing your hiring team

Hiring new employees is a team effort and, in many cases, hiring teams will be made up of different stakeholders based on the role being hired for. Not only that, but some stakeholders will have different interview strengths, weaknesses, and styles, making it doubly important that your hiring process is structured.

A simple way of mitigating a subjective hiring and interview process is to prepare your hiring team, especially if it will comprise stakeholders that don't interview candidates as frequently as you or others do. **To get everyone on board with following a structured hiring process, you should:**

- Teach everyone involved the merit of structured hiring and interviewing
- Make them aware of hiring objectives by explaining what the business needs are of each role
- Ensure they understand the use it correctly
- Impress upon each stakeholder the importance of feedback and objective assessments

Let's look at how you can onboard hiring teams to your structured processes.



## Train hiring and recruiting stakeholders

To train your hiring teams on how to use your process, consider hosting something like an all-team training session, or recording a tutorial that can be watched time and again by various stakeholders. While this is a more informal approach, training or walking people through your process allows you to help teams better understand the 'why' and 'how' behind structured hiring in your organization.

For example, some teams may have to create interview questions themselves or will have niche questions based on an open role and its requirements. If they know beforehand how to create structured interview questions, and how to leverage them, they'll be prepared to effectively interview and assess candidates.

### KEY TAKEAWAY

**Don't forget to train hiring teams on assessment criteria in addition to interview questions. It's crucial that everyone involved understands how your rubrics or scorecards work, why they're important, and how teams can use these resources to objectively interview candidates. If planned and executed effectively, training can happen once and be followed consistently.**



### Teach them about the importance of feedback

Regardless of the type or format of an interview, everyone involved in interviewing candidates should understand and be conscious of providing feedback. As feedback can be gathered in a number of ways, ensuring stakeholders know how to provide feedback is critical.

Notetaking is an example of an interview task where stakeholders can use scorecards and dedicate rubrics to record feedback about a candidate. **When recording feedback, train your teams on taking effective notes during interviews. For instance:**

- Make notetaking mandatory as part of your scorecards or rubric (such each to have mandatory feedback fields)
- Encourage interviewers to record facts and answers rather than judgments or personal evaluations
- Ask them to take notes during the interview, not just after; interviewers can notify candidates that they are taking notes

This means that interviewers should focus on recording feedback around important answers or details a candidate provides, any concerns or unanswered questions they have, and any odd or extreme behaviors the interviewer notes about the candidate.

**There are a few feedback ‘red flags’ you can encourage interviewers to avoid:**

- Recording characteristics or physical qualities of a candidate as feedback (such as commenting on race or gender)
- Providing feedback on subjective criteria, such as noting that the interviewer knows the candidate from a past company
- Any nervousness or anxiety the candidate presented (especially in panel interviews, where nervousness should not be an indicator of poor performance)



## Work to measure the effectiveness of your hiring process

Everyone involved in hiring at your company, whether it's at the recruitment stage or the interview one, should understand the impact that hiring has on the organization. For hiring teams and, more specifically, recruiting and talent acquisition leads, measuring how effective your hiring process is can help you optimize every aspect of your recruiting efforts.

Part of measuring the effectiveness of this process is by monitoring [key metrics](#) when looking at your interview and evaluation processes. For instance, metrics can help you identify how costly your hiring process is, whether your interview process is creating time waste, and if you're making the right hires.

### Here are some of the top metrics to consider:

- Interviews per hire
- Time-to-hire
- Time-to-fill
- Quality of hire
- Diversity of candidates
- Applicants per role
- Cost per hire



**As you hire more employees, keep an eye on these metrics and how they change each quarter. These data can reveal wins and losses in your hiring process while helping you pinpoint where, exactly, you could be optimizing your process. This is especially true for structured interviewing, where metrics like time-to-hire and quality of hire are particularly important!**



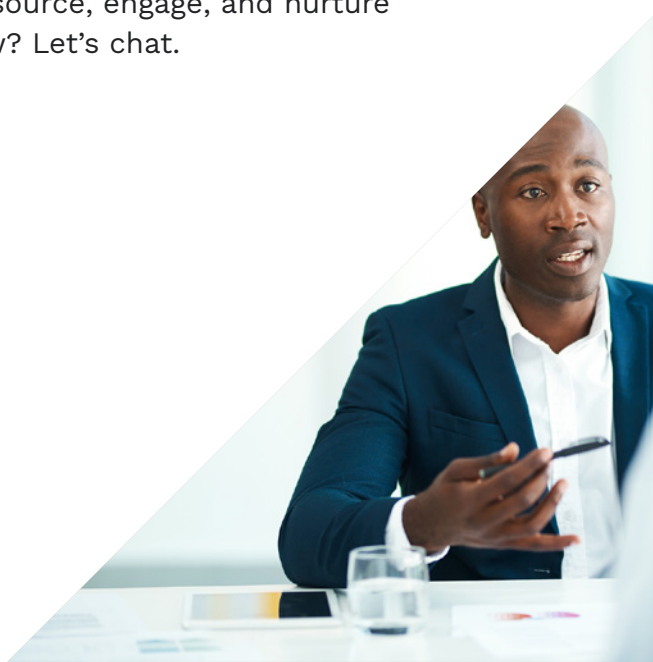


# Hire the right people, every time

As the competition for top talent continues to grow, so too must your hiring practices. But without the right process in place, recruiting and hiring candidates can feel overwhelming—and interviewing them, even more so. Enter, structured hiring. This guide gives you everything you need to build a foundation in your organization for a more structured, effective, and objective process that will enable you to hire the right people, every time. And, with the right talent relationship management solution, hiring top talent is a breeze.

Want to explore how LeverTRM is helping companies like Netflix, Atlassian, Spotify, and more source, engage, and nurture the top talent of today and tomorrow? Let's chat.

**Get your free demo**



## About Lever

Lever is a leading Talent Acquisition Suite that makes it easy for talent teams to reach their hiring goals and to connect companies with top talent. Lever is the only platform that provides all talent acquisition leaders with complete ATS and robust CRM capabilities in one product, [LeverTRM](#). The Lever Hire and Lever Nurture features allow leaders to scale and grow their people pipeline, build authentic and long-lasting relationships, and source the right people to hire. Lever Analytics provides customized reports with data visualization, see offers completed and interview feedback, and more, to inform strategic decisions between hiring managers and executives alike.

Our platform also enables companies to hire with inclusivity in mind, helping eliminate any hiring bias. Lever supports the hiring needs of 4,000 companies around the globe including the teams at Netflix, Atlassian, KPMG, and McGraw-Hill Education. **For more information, visit [www.lever.co](http://www.lever.co).**

