Hiring for Impact: Stop Settling for Technical Talent Alone

Why technical skill alone is not enough

If you're only hiring for technical skill, you're doing it wrong. And your culture, your teams, and your bottom line are already paying the price. Because while technical capability is critical, it's not what sets apart your high performers. What does? Impact and effort—someone's ability to show up accountably in every relationship and result.

As simple as it would be if certifications and years of experience guaranteed effectiveness, they don't.

Here's what you should actually be hiring for:

Capability. Impact. Effort.

This is the winning trifecta. Capability isn't just a set of skills—it's about how well someone applies what they know. Do they elevate the work of others, or bulldoze through it? Do they ask good questions, push toward shared results, and adapt

when things don't go as planned?

Impact is about presence. What's it like to work with this person? Do they increase the effectiveness of a team? Do they make other people better? Or do they create bottlenecks, tension, and drama for others?

And effort. Look, effort isn't about grinding the longest hours or always saying yes. It's about showing up fully. Being solution-oriented. Leaning in when things get hard instead of tapping out. It's initiative, ownership, and energy.

You can—and should—screen for all three.

The way you can do that is to filter for the right mindset. A person's mindset will determine whether they work from an inward space: self-focused, blame-oriented, self-protective, or an outward one: people-centered, collaborative, accountable.

It's impossible to just hire a skill set. That skillset will either become a multiplier or a liability—depending on their mindset. So how do you figure out which one you're talking to in an interview?

Start by shifting your own mindset.

Too many hiring managers walk into interviews thinking, *What do I need this person to do for me?* instead of *How will this person impact others around them as they accomplish their objectives?* That mindset alone will shape the questions you ask.

Stop asking robotic questions about strengths and weaknesses. Anyone can rehearse those. Ask about past conflict and watch how they talk about other people. Ask what feedback they've received—and what they did with it. Ask how they've helped others succeed. You'll learn more about their mindset in five minutes than you will in an hour of surface-level chat.

To ensure you have the right mindset and can ask the most helpful questions, start by testing your own. [Take our mindset assessment](#) to check where you're operating from—because if you're hiring from an inward place, you're likely to hire inward people.

What to listen for instead of what to look for.

People will tell you who they are if you're listening. Because it's not just what people say—but *how* they say it. Do they take responsibility? Do they speak respectfully about people they've struggled with? Do they recognize shared wins or make themselves the hero in every story?

If someone describes every challenge as someone else's fault—run. If they light up when describing how they helped a teammate win—dig deeper. You may have a gem in front of you.

Some candidates are charismatic, articulate, and excellent at telling you what you want to hear. But talk isn't work. You're not hiring the best storyteller—you're hiring someone who's going to get in the trenches and elevate the people around them. You don't want performers. You want partners.

Culture isn't just what you nurture—it's what you tolerate. And when you bring in someone who's not willing to take ownership, it communicates to the rest of the team that you are okay with that. At best, they'll coast. At worst, they'll erode what the team has built.

If you want accountability, hire accountable people. People who see problems and own them, who lean into feedback, and care about their impact.

How to gauge the effort a candidate will bring.

Effort isn't about a checkbox. It's not about saying, *"I'm a hard worker"* on a cover letter. It's something you *feel* when you meet someone who is all in.

Want to test it? Ask about a time when something was outside their job description. Did they step in or step away? Did they see the bigger picture or play the *"not my job"* card?

That will help you know if they are a team player, or there just for themselves.

Creating a culture of ownership.

If you want a culture of ownership, you've got to own the hiring process.

Stop settling for credentials over character. Start hiring for who a person is, in addition to what they know. Because the cost of a mis-hire isn't just one challenging employee. It's every hour your team spends managing them. Every ounce of energy drained. Every opportunity lost because others have to make up for them.

You can do better than that. It's time to hire like your culture depends on it—because it does. For additional ideas of how to evaluate mindset in the hiring process, [take our mindset assessment](). And next time you sit down across from a candidate, ask yourself: Is this person going to make us better as they do their job? Or do their job at the expense of others.