

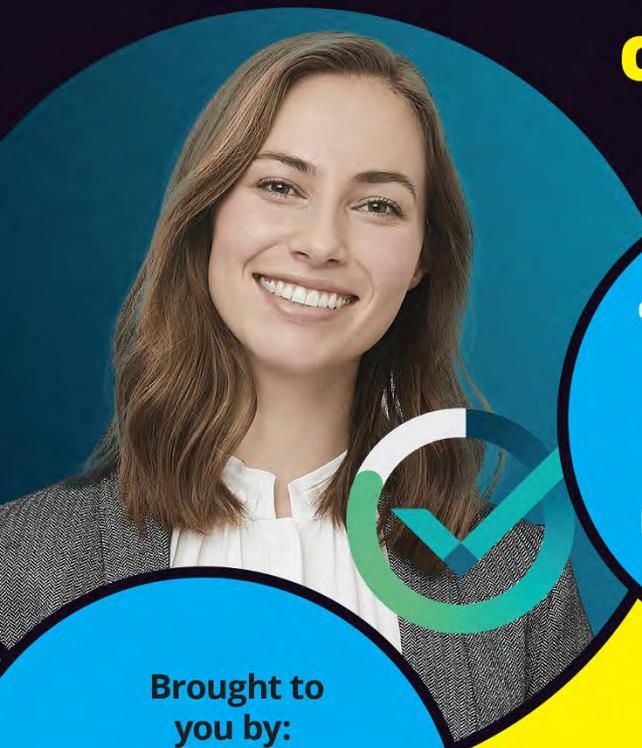
LEARNING MADE EASY



PXT Select  
Special Edition

# Hiring Successfully

for  
**dummies**<sup>®</sup>  
A Wiley Brand



Reduce bias and  
complement instinct

Make data-driven  
talent decisions

Determine job fit for  
future success

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Steve Kaelble

## About PXT Select

To perform their best, organizations need the *right* people in the *right* jobs. The traditional tools — résumés, education, training, and interviews — help organizations know a candidate's past and present performance, but they fall short in predicting for the future. Hire confidently with PXT Select assessment data for your organization's needs for today and tomorrow.

At PXT Select, we help organizations worldwide create high-performing workforces through a scientifically validated understanding of their people. Our powerful hiring assessments help companies translate job requirements into measurable cognitive and behavioral traits to find the ideal candidates with the best fit for each role.

With over 30 years of research-validated assessments, your organization will have the tools necessary to hire, select, and replicate top performers — taking the guesswork out of the selection process.

Are you ready to experience a more in-depth look of PXT Select? Get a demo today: [www.pxtselect.com/Get-a-Demo.aspx](http://www.pxtselect.com/Get-a-Demo.aspx).

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**dummies**<sup>®</sup>  
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PXT Select Special Edition

**by Steve Kaelble**

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**dummies**<sup>®</sup>  
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# Hiring Successfully For Dummies®, PXT Select Special Edition

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# Introduction

Placing the right people in the right jobs has always been crucial, but these days, it's more important than ever. Rapid technology transformations and other social, economic, and global health events have caused workforce havoc. The result: staffing shortages and unprecedented change with tremendous consequences for individual and organizational success.

Hiring managers need to fill job openings quickly, while still ensuring their new hires have the right abilities, behaviors, and interests to perform their best. That's never been easy, and everyone involved in hiring decisions has at some point struggled with selecting the best people.

Success boils down to a concept called *job fit*, which is pretty much what it sounds like: connecting people with job roles and environments where they can thrive, contribute, succeed, and perform their best. Getting good at job fit can reduce unnecessary costs, improve your organization's culture, reduce turnover, boost the bottom line, and eliminate biases that stand in the way of diversity and equitable workplaces.

The key to ensuring job fit is creating consistent hiring processes that rely on objective and scientifically sound data. You need to fully understand which attributes each role requires and then measure candidates to see who has those attributes. More reliable data can complement experience, gut feelings, and instincts, leading to better decisions.

## About the Book

*Hiring Successfully For Dummies*, PXT Select Special Edition, is your guide to mastering the art of job fit. It's filled with information and tips from experts on gathering key data about job candidates and extracting insights from that data.

Read on and find out more about just how costly it is to make a bad hiring decision, why your gut feelings aren't enough, and how unconscious bias happens and how to overcome it. You'll see

how to gather and apply data that tells you more about how each candidate ticks, how the candidate may fare in the job now and later, and how different candidates compare. And for good measure, you'll also find the key competencies for good leadership.

## Foolish Assumptions

I made some assumptions about you, the reader, as I wrote this book:

- » You're a hiring decision-maker, talent acquisition professional, hiring manager, talent management professional, sales vice president, or chief experience officer.
- » You're challenged by the seemingly competing needs for speedy hiring and effective hiring decision-making.
- » You'd appreciate ideas for structuring your hiring and selection process and obtaining actionable data to achieve better hires.

## Icons Used in This Book

Take a look in the margins of this book, and you'll see icons on most pages. They connect you with important points. Here's a guide to what the icons mean:



REMEMBER

You're in a hurry, but even as you speed-read, you won't want to miss the key points marked by the Remember icon.



TIP

You want advice? The Tip icon spotlights something that'll help you understand and master the art of job fit.



WARNING

Lots can go wrong in the hiring process, and the Warning icon points to things you'll want to be aware of and avoid.

# Beyond the Book

This book has lots of answers, but it may also inspire more questions on your part. Here are some helpful resources for additional information:

- » **PXT Select** ([www.pxtselect.com](http://www.pxtselect.com)): A tool for helping you assess job roles and candidates, understand the data, prepare for effective interviews, and achieve job fit.
- » **Checkpoint 360°** ([www.pxtselect.com/solutions/Discover-Next-Generation-Leaders/Discover-CP360.aspx](http://www.pxtselect.com/solutions/Discover-Next-Generation-Leaders/Discover-CP360.aspx)): A survey tool that helps you evaluate the effectiveness of your managers and leaders, so you can help them develop leadership skills for better performance.
- » **State of Hiring** ([www.pxtselect.com/Learning-Hub/eBooks-and-White-Papers/state-of-hiring-2022.aspx](http://www.pxtselect.com/Learning-Hub/eBooks-and-White-Papers/state-of-hiring-2022.aspx)): The latest trends impacting hiring.

- » Understanding the cost of a bad hire
- » Choosing new hires based on a gut feel
- » Hiring based on job fit

# Chapter 1

## Avoiding Bad Hiring Decisions

Let's face it: Hiring people is a pain. Wouldn't you rather have a full, seasoned staff of happy, high-performing individuals? Don't you hate feeling like you're rolling the dice with a new hire, crossing your fingers that it'll work out well?

This chapter explores just how costly it is to make the wrong hiring decision, but how tricky it is to make the right one. It explains why hiring needs to be based on solid, insightful information about the candidate, more than just a gut feel. And it outlines the benefit of really working toward exceptional job fit, the key determining factor of future success and the real indicator that you made the right hire.

### The Cost of Making the Wrong Decision

It certainly sounds simple enough. You're trying to hire for a particular role. You have a decent idea of the skills required to do the job, so you just need to look through potential candidates and find the person whose background and experience matches the requirements of the job.

Piece of cake, right? Except it's not. Companies make the wrong hiring decisions more often than anyone cares to admit. And the costs of making that wrong decision are a lot higher than many people care to acknowledge. The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that the cost of a bad hire can be up to 30 percent of a first-year salary and up to 50 percent for managerial roles. And that doesn't even account for all the time a manager spends supervising and coaching bad hires.

At a very basic level, making the wrong hiring decision often means the job won't get done as well as you want it to get done. Maybe the new hire really wasn't as well qualified as you thought, and you're seeing mediocre job performance.

*Harvard Business Review* has reported that an employee who's a good fit for a job is more than twice as productive as someone who's not a good fit. In other words, a poor hiring choice means you're likely missing out on a lot of potential productivity.



WARNING

That would be bad enough, but that's just a small part of the cost of a bad hiring decision. What's even more damaging is how the wrong hiring decision can impact relationships with clients, brand reputation, and employee engagement, for the new hire and everyone nearby.

Put simply, engaged employees are emotionally connected to their jobs. They're committed to doing their best, to operating well together, and to working collectively to help the organization succeed.

Indeed, when they're engaged, employees do just that. A company is doing pretty well if every employee who isn't engaged is balanced by nine who truly are. Gallup research suggests that companies in that enviable spot have earnings per share that are 147 percent higher than their competitors'. The converse of that, of course, is that the more disengaged employees you have, the less likely it is that you'll achieve a competitive advantage. And many companies don't have nine highly engaged employees for every one employee who's disengaged.

Gallup also has tried to tally the cost of *active disengagement*, referring to those employees who not only are failing to do their best,

but whose presence could even be described as a detriment. There are more actively disengaged employees than you may think, and together they cost American employers more than half a trillion dollars in lost productivity, according to Gallup.

Imagine you've got a ten-person bicycle. To get that contraption up and running well, everyone needs to pedal. But some studies have found as few as 30 percent of employees are fully engaged, which in this metaphor means only three people are pedaling their hardest. Five of the riders are just pretending to pedal but aren't really contributing much, and two are slamming on the brakes (those two represent a common percentage of actively disengaged employees). That bike's never going to hit a decent speed, and it may well tip over.

Now consider the fact that employee engagement can be a contagious thing. Same with disengagement. A poor hiring decision can end up having a detrimental effect on the engagement of others. And you can end up in a costly downward spiral.

That's because decreased morale and lower engagement can lead to higher turnover. And higher turnover can overload other employees with work, first as you have open positions while you're hiring replacements, and then as new hires learn their jobs and go through costly training. Too much turnover can increase burnout for those already on the team.



REMEMBER

Probably the most obvious price tag associated with turnover is the simple fact that you have to recruit, hire, and onboard replacements for people who leave. Even if you don't factor in all the other costly disruptions — from morale issues to lost customers to reputational hits — a bad hire will cost you thousands of dollars in replacement costs.

Any unnecessary uptick in the need to hire also puts a strain on training. The higher the turnover, the more you need onboarding. Call it whatever you want — a downward spiral, dominoes tipping and falling, a snowball picking up size and speed as it rolls downhill. They're all metaphors you don't want to have play out at your organization.

# Going on a Gut Feeling

Of course, no one sets out to make a bad hiring decision. But the fact is, hiring can be a guessing game if you're going about it with inadequate data and without the right tools. If you're relying on the traditional tools of a résumé and an interview or two, you're likely to end up relying too much on a gut feeling.

The problem is, a résumé really only gives you a glimpse of someone's background and training. For that matter, you're getting only the nicest highlights of a person's career. It's not all that different from the way you typically get only a superficial glimpse into the lives of your social media friends if all you know is based on the happy highlights they post.

Similarly, a traditional job interview only goes so far toward revealing a person's ability to perform on a given role. It usually provides information about past experiences and how the candidate can apply that experience to a similar job. But how about your future expectations? How can you determine candidates' future performance in terms of how they'll cope with the cognitive challenges of the job, their key behaviors that will impact how they perform the job and interact with others, and their interests and motivations?

Some people are better at interviewing than others. One Career-Builder survey found that one in five respondents admit that they don't have the adequate skills required to interview and hire people effectively. Just because someone is a manager doesn't mean that person is great at interviewing.

Companies with standard interviewing processes are on the right track, and those with such processes in place have been found to make fewer bad hiring decisions. But even the best interviewer with the best set of questions may not dig as deeply as necessary into the characteristics that go into finding the person with the best fit for the job.

What you're often left with is a gut feeling that drives the final choice. You're making a big decision on a vibe you're getting or a sense that this particular person is going to really fly.

And gut feelings definitely play a big role. One Princeton University study found that forming a first impression about a stranger takes only a tenth of a second, and a CareerBuilder study found that half of all hiring managers make a decision within the first five minutes of an interview.

It may well be that your instincts have been right before. You've picked the person whose experience may not have been quite as deep as one of the other candidates, but you just had a feeling that individual would have the personal drive to learn and excel. And your gut was right.

But does it really make sense to base all your hiring decisions on your gut alone? That's probably not the way you handle your investment portfolio, picking stocks and pumping big dollars into investments based on a gut feeling rather than extensive research.

The bottom line is that your hires are big investments, too, costing big dollars and promising incredible returns on your investment — that is, if you've really done your homework. Turn to Chapter 2 for more on the challenge of hiring on instinct rather than data.

## Finding the Right Fit



REMEMBER

The point of this chapter so far has been to illustrate the importance of doing your homework in the hiring process. What I'm talking about is known as the *job fit* approach to hiring. It's an enlightened way to maximize talents, abilities, and interests. It's your ticket to reducing turnover, replicating top talent, and discovering the next generation of leaders.

Job fit refers to just how much congruence there is between open positions and the candidates' innate talents and tendencies. Those talents and tendencies are measured by three key areas: cognitive abilities or thinking style, behavioral traits, and candidates' interests or motivations. The point of establishing job fit is to place new hires into positions where they're likely to do well and perform at their full potential.

The job fit approach takes a deep dive into personality traits, abilities, and behaviors, with the aim of determining:

- » If the candidate can do the job
- » How well the candidate will do the job
- » Whether the candidate will enjoy the job



REMEMBER

All three of these factors are vitally important. The job must match the employee's abilities, it must provide stimulation that connects with the employee's interests, and the cultural demands of the workplace must match with the employee's personality.

Make all that happen, and productivity will be far higher, while turnover will be far lower. Job satisfaction will increase, job stress will decrease, and there is bound to be less workplace conflict. You'll save money, too, when you make the best decision from the start.

Here's the problem with hiring approaches that don't mix in enough data and insights beyond gut-level instincts: Only a little bit of what you need to know about a person's capabilities and potential can be observed on the surface. It takes having the right tools to learn about thinking style, behavioral traits, and interests.

What about education, experience, and job training? It's not that those things are unimportant, but they're often not accurate predictors of job fit. You can have a person who is a top-performing sales executive at one company, which is clear enough to see on paper, but that's no guarantee that the person will perform at the same level at your company.

A job fit assessment can improve hiring and selection decisions, because it helps you better understand what core characteristics are needed to succeed in a particular role and how candidates compare against your requirements. Will they be able to perform at your expected level? What are their strengths and possible pitfalls?

With that understanding, your talent acquisition team and hiring managers can better predict a person's job suitability, making better matches between people and jobs. This kind of approach can increase consistency in the hiring process and lead to greater success.

## FINDING THE RIGHT FIT

Here's a real-world look at how a job-fit approach can make an enormous difference. It involves a health-care organization that operates hospitals and clinics in the West, and the troubles it was having hiring and retaining nurses and certified nursing assistants in its oncology department.

The company hadn't used job-fit assessments in the past. It found that 33 percent of its registered nurse hires failed in the first six months on the job. The same was true with 40 percent of its certified nursing assistants. The company calculated that each failure cost about \$80,000 to fix.

As a solution, the company started using PXT Select assessments in its hiring and selection process. Each new candidate was required to complete an assessment as part of the application. The company also created performance models by doing assessments of high-performing nurses and assistants who had been on the job there for at least two years.

Here's the key: The company could then compare the assessments of potential new hires with the performance models that were based on high-performing current employees. That process generated selection reports that helped narrow down the finalists and guide their interviews.

Another part of the program was a mentoring initiative. New hires were matched with mentors, who had themselves also completed the assessment to help them better understand how to interact with mentees on strengths and opportunities.

So, how did this job fit approach work? Early hire failures were cut in half. In fact, all the new nurses whose PXT Select assessment match results were 80 percent or greater were still on the job two years later. And of the nursing assistants, three quarters of those who scored at least 80 percent were still on the job after two years. Overall, two-year retention more than doubled.

Expected return on investment (ROI)? Using job fit, the hospital reported saving \$350,000 by avoiding bad hires. Based on the hospital's costs, this was a return of \$17.50 for every dollar invested. That's a healthy ROI, in health care or any industry!

## IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Rethinking the value of instinct
- » Appreciating consistent hiring processes
- » Gathering data about job candidates

# Chapter 2

# Tapping into the Value of Data

If you were totally satisfied with your organization's hiring processes, you probably wouldn't have opened this book. Improving the overall process to achieve more successful hires starts with data. This chapter explores why instinct alone can mislead your hiring managers, why consistency in the hiring process is essential, and what kinds of data are out there waiting to be collected and analyzed.

## Moving Past Instinct

PXT Select regularly surveys hiring managers to find out about the state of hiring — trends, problems, and potential solutions. In one survey, hiring managers were asked to pick a single word to describe a good hiring process. Their most common replies were words such as *fair* and *structure*.

That sounds like a pretty good and attainable aspiration. But then they acknowledged that their own hiring processes leave something to be desired in that regard.

Indeed, about two-thirds said they more often rely on instinct than data when making a hiring decision. If structure is the goal, it doesn't seem like instinct would add value. And instinct can make it difficult to achieve a process that counts as fair.

Though hiring managers are often unaware of it, their instinctive decisions may lead them to pick candidates that share their interests or backgrounds. They may inadvertently pick candidates based on what they unconsciously think an employee should look like.



REMEMBER

In other words, they may be falling back on unconscious biases, and that's a ticket for accidentally missing out on some qualified candidates. Maybe even the most qualified candidate in the bunch. (Turn to Chapter 3 for more about biases.)

Here's another challenge about instincts: They're even less reliable than they used to be. That's because so many interactions these days, including many job interviews, are happening virtually. That was a necessity during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, but it continues to be a common practice, especially when making initial connections with candidates in another city.

Face it, in a virtual meeting it's a whole lot more difficult to pick up on such things as nonverbal cues, including body language. Regardless of whether instinct has value, there goes part of the information upon which instinct is sometimes based.

The bottom line is that relying so heavily on instinct tends to crowd out other insights that truly do lead to better hires. Too much emphasis on instinct means too little consistency and real structure in the hiring process.

In this situation, the candidates in line for a particular role aren't being assessed with equal levels of rigor, and that opens the door for uncertainty, bias, and unfounded intuition to enter hiring decisions. The best person for the job may or may not end up getting it.



TIP

What's the alternative? You need a consistent, data-driven approach. That's the key to building upon instinct and gaining a valuable addition to the résumé, the interview, and your review of past job performance.

# Driving Consistency

What makes up a healthy, consistent hiring process? Here are three of the key steps:

- » Align on job requirements.
- » Assess all candidates and follow a structured interview process.
- » Effectively onboard new hires.

Seems fairly straightforward, but you may be surprised to learn how often hiring processes miss some of these important steps.

For example, PXT Select surveying finds that more than half of all hiring managers don't always align with colleagues or recruiters on the job requirements. Two out of five said candidates aren't always assessed with a structured interview process. And more than two-thirds admit that their organizations don't always onboard effectively.

Altogether, fewer than one in five companies performs these three steps in each and every situation. These ingredients aren't the only important ones, of course; this book outlines many additional components for obtaining the best job fit. But these three factors are the basics, and as the surveying indicates, few companies are consistent in these three areas.



REMEMBER

And yet, consistency is absolutely vital for achieving the best results in hiring. Your hiring managers need to be able to make apples-to-apples comparisons by following a consistent approach that covers all candidates and all involved in the hiring process.

Another thing research indicates is that hiring managers truly *want* that consistency — inconsistent practices undermine the confidence they have in the hiring process. Only about three of every ten hiring managers have expressed that they're very confident in their organization's ability to consistently hire the right people, which means seven out of ten are less than fully confident. The ones who are the most confident just happen to be the same ones whose organizations have consistent processes in place.

Here's one more correlation: The hiring managers most confident in their processes are those who rely more on data than on instinct. Humans may have a natural tendency to trust their instincts in a lot of situations, but when you ask them, hiring managers will tell you that they'd rather have a more data-driven approach.

## Digging into the Data

So, hiring managers feel the most confident if you arm them with data. That data, of course, includes the usual stuff: job skills, experience, education, and that kind of thing. But what other kinds of data about potential hires can be helpful? What would be good to learn that doesn't fit on a résumé or come out in a job interview?

The processes and tools employed by PXT Select offer insights into the kinds of individual information that help lead to better decisions. They show a scientifically driven approach for assessing candidates at a deeper level — gathering behavioral assessments, building consistency and fairness, and digging into data that just doesn't come to the surface in such traditional methods as interviewing or résumé analysis.

Later chapters explain how to make the job-fit approach work for you and your organization. But this section offers a small taste of the many things you can and should learn about candidates, but which you won't learn through yesterday's inconsistent and instinct-driven approaches.



REMEMBER

Keep in mind that none of this data should come with judgment attached. It's not good or bad, just information about the person that you can then compare with the requirements of the role to see how good the fit may be.

### Assessing a candidate's thinking style

This refers to data about a candidate's cognitive ability and how that candidate analyzes and communicates information. Gathering this data requires testing the candidate's core learning concepts, base knowledge of vocabulary and numerical concepts, and

how the candidate can apply that knowledge in the workplace. How well can the candidate solve problems? Draw conclusions? Make predictions? Communicate knowledge to others?

Here are four key cognitive abilities you can gather data about:

- » **Verbal skill:** This is all about the words the person chooses to communicate with others, how suitable they are, and how effective they are.
- » **Verbal reasoning:** Verbal skill is about vocabulary, whereas verbal reasoning is about how the person uses those words to create relationships between concepts. It also looks into how the candidate processes messages from others, reasons, and draws conclusions.
- » **Numerical ability:** Numerical ability is how the candidate fares at numerical calculation — in other words, math.
- » **Numeric reasoning:** You can think of numeric reasoning as applied math, maybe even those word problems you faced in school. Numeric reasoning measures how a person can apply an understanding of numbers and calculations in order to solve problems.

These concepts have more bearing on job performance than many people realize. Consider that all human beings start the learning journey by exploring numbers and letters — it's part of how we gather and analyze information from the time we're little.

As we grow, it becomes more complex, but the baseline is the same. The baseline defines how we cope with all life situations, including workplace interactions and performance. That's why it also serves as a predictor of future success, because it helps explain how a person can apply different concepts.

## Checking behavioral traits



REMEMBER

Behavioral preferences help shape what a candidate is like on the job because they influence that person's behaviors. We're not talking about "good behavior" or "bad behavior" in the way that comes to mind when you're thinking about how your kids are acting at school. In this case, we're talking about a set of traits that vary and are reflected as strengths or areas to develop that ultimately determine behavior in the workplace.

Following are some behavioral traits that you can assess in job candidates to help you determine job fit. Each candidate lands somewhere between two ends of the spectrum, and neither direction is inherently right or wrong. You can only determine fit by comparing them to the desired performance for a particular role.

And remember, in all these areas, both sides of the spectrum have their own pros and cons. Something that would seem to be good for a particular role can sometimes be overutilized and become a pain point. The idea is knowing what candidates bring to the table, their level of awareness, and how willing they are to work with or past their traits.

- » **Pace:** Some people prefer a steady pace, some act more from a sense of urgency. A candidate on the steady side likes routine and thinking things through carefully, while someone trending toward the urgent side works through tasks quickly, often multitasking.
- » **Assertiveness:** This measures the range between unassuming and forceful, whether the person is okay with others taking the lead, or whether the person pushes hard for the ideas they believe in.
- » **Sociability:** Is the person more outgoing or more reserved? Someone on the reserved side may still interact well with others in smaller settings.
- » **Conformity:** Strong-willed people prefer to do things their own way, while compliant people are rule followers even if they don't totally understand the reasoning behind the rules.
- » **Outlook:** Skeptical people are realistic but may be a bit suspicious, while trusting people are optimistic and believe most people are honest and good.
- » **Decisiveness:** The poles here are deliberate versus bold. Deliberate people analyze carefully and methodically when making decisions, while bold people make decisions quickly and have a higher tolerance for risk.
- » **Accommodation:** Those who are steadfast have strong opinions about how things ought to be done, while those who are agreeable are pretty easygoing.
- » **Independence:** Autonomous workers want to make their own decisions and like to come and go as they please, while reliant workers would rather have more supervision.

- » **Judgment:** People assessed to be intuitive trust their own feelings and believe there's often an emotional component to a decision, while those with a factual style of judgment tend to be very analytical.



REMEMBER

## Learning about interests

People are usually most satisfied and motivated when their job matches their interests. Here are six different ways you might characterize candidates' interests:

- » **Creative:** Someone with creative interests is often imaginative or artistic, full of ideas and interested in designing things.
- » **Enterprising:** This kind of person enjoys leadership, presenting ideas, and persuading other people.
- » **Financial/administrative:** This is a numbers person, someone very process- and detail-oriented.
- » **People service:** This interest ties into collaboration, helping others, and compromising when need be.
- » **Mechanical:** Someone who likes to build or repair things would fit into this category.
- » **Technical:** This is a worker who enjoys interpreting complex information, solving abstract problems, and learning technical material.

- » Recognizing hiring biases
- » Building awareness to reduce bias
- » Using data appropriately

# Chapter 3

## Reducing Bias in the Hiring Decision

As spotlighted in the previous chapters, instinct can sometimes serve people poorly, even though it's a powerful tool in certain situations. In hiring and selection, going on instinct alone can be detrimental to efforts to build equitable workplaces, and many hiring managers recognize it can open the door to unfair bias.

This chapter explores the concept of unconscious bias and discusses how it can seep into the hiring process. It describes the problem and explains how companies can use data and structured hiring processes to reduce bias.

### Seeing the Bias

Why do so many hiring managers rely on instinct? Beyond being a habit, people rely on instinct for its quick approach. In recent years, complex labor situations have left companies struggling to fill open roles. Teams are understaffed and overworked, people are burned out, turnover is high, and there is an urgent perceived need for speed in hiring.



WARNING

Problem is, if speed is the driving factor in hiring decisions, it's easy to rely on past experiences and beliefs to arrive at an instinctive decision, which usually means overlooking vital information. Whatever proactive measures an organization may want to put in place for creating a diverse and equitable workforce may end up being sidelined. What remains are reactive, speed-driven practices.

Instinct is one of those speed-driven practices. Say what you want about its shortcomings, but instinct or intuition certainly can be speedy. Still, it's a ticket to making automatic associations based on characteristics that may have nothing to do with hiring factors that matter most.

Note that the assessment processes discussed in this book can actually help with the need for speed, even as they help you avoid the potential hazards of instinct. They set a healthy pace in the process, reinforce organizational structure with consistency and reliability — and help you reduce the potential for bias.

What is *unconscious bias*? A pair of social psychologists, Anthony Greenwald and Mahzarin Banaji, came up with the concept in the mid-1990s to counter earlier ideas that people consciously developed their attitudes and stereotypes. They argued that on the contrary, stereotypes and attitudes are impacted by past experiences, even things people have forgotten.



REMEMBER

The general definition is that unconscious bias refers to those automatic associations anyone might make involving characteristics such as race, age, gender, disability, height, weight, accent, beliefs derived from prior experiences, or even the college a person attended — and how those associations impact interactions with others in those groups. Here are three (out of many) ways that can show up:

- » **Confirmation bias:** The tendency to see information as validating a preexisting belief
- » **Affinity bias:** The tendency to favor individuals who share your beliefs, experiences, or appearance
- » **Halo/horns effect:** The tendency to take a look at just one specific trait and end up seeing the person's overall character as positive or negative

The fact that unconscious bias is called “unconscious” is important here. These are biases that are elusive, hidden so well in a person’s automatic actions that they’re not easy to recognize, much less do something about. These biases can impact just about any situation, but for the purposes of this book, we’re talking about how unconscious biases get in the way of hiring diverse, qualified candidates.

Picture in your mind a successful Fortune 500 executive. If you’re like most people, you do have a picture in your mind, maybe not a specific person, but you could probably specify about how old the person is, as well as their race or gender. You might even have a sense of that executive’s personality or values.

There’s nothing wrong with the fact that you have that picture in your mind — most people’s minds work that way. But when you’re interviewing real-life candidates for an executive role, you don’t want that mental image to influence your judgment of an actual person. You wouldn’t want to inadvertently skip over a great candidate or pick someone who’ll turn out to be a poor fit.

## Reducing the Bias

The fact that bias is often unconscious is a significant part of the problem. That means the first part of the solution is making ourselves more conscious of our biases.



REMEMBER

Bias isn’t inherently right or wrong — it’s a normal part of the way our brains interpret patterns and associations. But we need to pay more attention to what our brains are up to.

### Raising awareness

Many companies offer training to their workforce on recognizing and dealing with biases. This kind of training is a great idea, because biases can impact the work environment in all sorts of ways and get in the way of relationships with colleagues. As companies strive to create a more inclusive and welcoming environment, it’s vital for everyone on the team to be aware of their own biases and work to keep them from impacting how they interact with colleagues and customers.

It takes more than just a single training session to address the problem, though. Training may help employees start to become aware of their own biases, but it also may trigger feelings of denial, anger, or helplessness. Training needs to be ongoing, along with small group discussions and other opportunities to practice skills, get feedback, and build relationships.

## Tackling structural issues

As helpful as training and other awareness-raising efforts can be, they're not a complete solution. There may also be structural issues that open the door to bias. Hiring processes are among those corporate structures that enable bias.

Research and surveying by PXT Select reflect just how prominent this issue is. In one survey ([www.pxtselect.com/Learning-Hub/eBooks-and-White-Papers/state-of-hiring-2022.aspx](http://www.pxtselect.com/Learning-Hub/eBooks-and-White-Papers/state-of-hiring-2022.aspx)), about nine out of ten respondents identified hiring and selection as the number-one organizational process that could be affected by unconscious bias. Recruitment, promotion, and succession planning are potential trouble spots, too. Respondents see interviewing and résumé screening as areas where unconscious bias could seep into the equation.



TIP

That's why it's so important to create structured, data-driven hiring processes. That includes always using clearly defined hiring criteria, tapping into assessments and other rich sources of data, conducting structured interviews, and including interviewers with diverse backgrounds.

Structured processes help hiring managers select the best candidates, while reducing the impact of unconscious bias. Adding consistent, reliable data helps alleviate overreliance on instinct and reduce unconscious bias.

For example, the data provided through PXT Select assessments helps hiring managers learn about candidates at a deeper level and get a better determination about potential job fit. This kind of objective data sheds light on all candidates' cognitive abilities in order to determine if they've got what it takes to do the job. It offers insights into behavioral skills, which provide an objective understanding of not just if they can do the job, but how well

they'll do the job. And it examines candidates' interests to better predict just how much they'll enjoy performing the job, which is key to engagement and retention.

These data-driven assessments yield numerical projections about job fit, steering clear of potentially biased judgments. And they allow interviewers to prepare in a structured manner so that the interviews are more likely to provide helpful insights and less likely to be impacted by bias.

Sample group research has shown that hiring decisions using these kinds of assessments lead to decisions that aren't swayed by bias. That, in turn, helps boost fairness to all.

## Ensuring Data Is Serving You Well

Data can be powerful in improving the success of your hiring processes, and the right data can help you reduce the potential that bias will seep into the decision-making process. Here are some important thoughts about assessment programs that will help you hire and develop a diverse workforce:

- » Self-report assessments don't directly measure unconscious bias or any thought processes that contribute to bias. But assessments can control for bias on the part of candidates' demographic characteristics, including age, gender, and ethnicity. That can help ensure the assessment is fair and unbiased as it gauges traits that may be relevant in the workplace.
- » Just conducting assessments doesn't in and of itself ensure fairness in hiring. You must be sure you're following all the recommendations on how to use the assessments, tapping into support materials, and paying attention to technical documentation about best practices.
- » When you're picking an assessment provider, be sure the provider meets all the legal requirements pertaining to equitable access to employment. Assessment publishers are obligated to provide information supporting fairness and equity for all candidates. You'll find some thoughts in the

U.S. Department of Labor's Testing and Assessment: An Employer's Guide to Good Practices (<https://wdr.doleta.gov/opr/FULLTEXT/99-testassess.pdf>).

- » Pay attention to the potential for adverse impact. It's important that your assessment process doesn't inadvertently provide information that could unfairly exclude any demographic group from professional opportunities, such as recruitment, hiring, promotion, and performance appraisal. When you're choosing an assessment program, check for adverse impact studies that should be published in research and technical reports. There should be score equivalency results showing that employment tests don't introduce systemic bias in workforce development decisions.

## IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Gauging how a candidate will perform
- » Determining what drives success in each job role
- » Seeing how candidates measure up
- » Using data to find the best fit

# Chapter 4

## Scaling Performance

**H**ow does it work in practice to maximize objective data in order to choose the absolute best candidates for your jobs? The process is surprisingly straightforward and incredibly powerful.

This chapter talks about the need to hire for the long haul, finding candidates who will be great hires not just today, but tomorrow. And it uses the hiring solution from PXT Select to demonstrate how you can establish what it takes to succeed in each role, measure each candidate against that model, and then assess who will be the best fit.

## Predicting the Future

You've got an open position to fill. Or if you're like many leaders navigating today's unsettled environment, you may have several positions to fill, and a bunch of overworked existing employees eagerly waiting for the cavalry to arrive. You need to hire well-qualified people ready to hit the ground running and contribute as quickly as possible.



REMEMBER

But catch your breath for a moment. Unless you're hiring a temp position, you're making a decision for the longer term. It's hard enough to make the right hiring decision in the moment, using consistent and objective data and trying not to be misguided by instinct or bias. But never forget that people change, evolve, and adapt.

So, how can you anticipate how someone will perform down the road? How can you be confident that you're adding another player to the team who will turn out as great as your best performers?



TIP

It helps to take a close look at those current stars to gauge their strengths and cognitive and behavioral traits — whatever specific attributes make them top performers. You know who these people are; the challenge is figuring out their recipe for success so you can find new team members who bring similar ingredients.

In considering the attributes of your current stars, it's important to be sure you're looking at people in comparable roles. As American Psychological Association research has suggested, personality traits that are an asset in one job role could be a negative in another.

Take conscientiousness as an example — generally defined as exhibiting responsibility, dependability, good organization skills, and persistence. That sounds very positive and ideal, and it certainly is in most conventional jobs. But certain artistic or investigative roles that call for spontaneity and creativity may not work for someone who fits this particular definition of conscientious.

The point is to take a close look at the specific role for which you're hiring. You and your organization must really give some thought to what it takes to succeed in that role — not just what experience or educational background, but what kinds of personality characteristics. That way, you can measure your candidates on those characteristics.

You may think, “Oh, that sounds kind of like the Nine Box Grid!” That's a fairly traditional tool for trying to objectively compare different candidates on a grid, gauging both past performance and projected future potential.



REMEMBER

That tool is certainly going down the right path in terms of coming up with a way to graphically plot one person's qualifications against another's. But in practice, it helps you compare people against one another, not necessarily explain what makes them top performers in the role. Also, some of the information needed to fill out the grid can be subjective. You should always look to complement it with objective data to accurately replicate your top performers.



REMEMBER

Here's the better approach for trying to choose the next top performer. It's a three-step process:

- » **Identify and assess your top performers.** Decide who is outperforming peers, whether in terms of sales performance, output volume, quality metrics, customer satisfaction, or other important indicators. You'll be outlining their behaviors and traits that are most important to their success based on a given role.
- » **Create a model for the job.** After you've identified the top performers and their vital attributes, you build what's known as a *performance model*. This is an objective picture of what it takes to succeed in this particular role, mapping 20 different factors that can impact on-the-job performance.
- » **Evaluate future candidates against the performance model.** This is the data-gathering part of the process. Through careful assessment, you can gauge each potential candidate on how strong they are in the attributes identified in the model you just created. You know just what to look for when trying to essentially clone your top performers, your data is objective, and you can even compare one candidate against another to see who fills the bill best.

Read on to better understand how this process can work, using the tools offered by PXT Select.

# Knowing What Success Looks Like

To truly select the best candidates for the job, you need a deep understanding of what it takes to succeed in that job. You need the recipe for success, which in the solution offered by PXT Select is known as a performance model. It really is like a recipe, with ingredients and actual measures that suggest how much of each ingredient is ideal.

The performance model outlines the cognitive abilities, behavioral traits, and motivations or interests that spell success. As noted earlier, the very best place to get that information is from your own employees who are working in that position, but if enough of that data isn't available, there are other options.



TIP

To create a performance model entirely from your own specific employee data, you'll need data from a significant sample of employees in that position. If you've got, say, a big salesforce or lots of IT security people on staff, you've got what's needed. If not, it's not a problem, because PXT has a library of performance models for many different roles, as well as other available methods to help you create customized models. Thus, the model you use can be composed entirely of your own employee data, data from a PXT Select library model, or a combination of the two.

After it has been developed, the performance model includes all the various job attributes that are spotlighted in the last section of Chapter 2, "Digging into the Data."

As you can see in Figure 4-1, the model shows the various cognitive components that fit into "Thinking Style," a comprehensive list of "Behavior Traits," and an assessment of "Top Interests" that fit best with the particular job role. You'll note shaded areas for the various attributes — the goal is to find candidates whose individual measures of these attributes land somewhere in the shaded areas.



difficult follow-up question, while an incorrect answer triggers an easier question. That's the adaptive part, and the process continues until the algorithm is confident it has a good score for each particular attribute. Of course, the system doesn't only use one question per level of difficulty; it prompts multiple questions per level.

## Identifying Job Fit

So, what can you do with this information on how each candidate fits into the performance model? The possibilities are powerful.

First, you can get a report for an individual candidate's job fit for a specific position (see Figure 4-2 for an example). You'll get an overall fit score for that candidate and that job role, and also how that score breaks out by the three categories in the performance model. You'll also see how the candidate scores in each attribute. That lets you identify which specific attributes are the challenge areas, places where the candidate didn't quite meet the target range that the performance model suggests.



TIP

That's powerful stuff, but that's not all. The solution also suggests specific interview questions based on the candidate's assessment — and what to listen for in the answers. You can zero in on challenge areas with your questioning, and you can learn more about certain behaviors or abilities or interests. And because the solution is so data focused and structured, the process helps hiring managers steer clear of their own personal biases.

That's still not all you can do with this data. You can run a multiple candidates report and check how different applicants might fit the same role. This can help you narrow down and focus your interview process with those who have the higher fit. Check Figure 4-3 to see what that looks like — it shows where each candidate lands on each individual attribute within the performance model.



This information helps your hiring team objectively analyze which traits stand out with each candidate. And if you have multiple decision-makers, this helps to align their thinking.

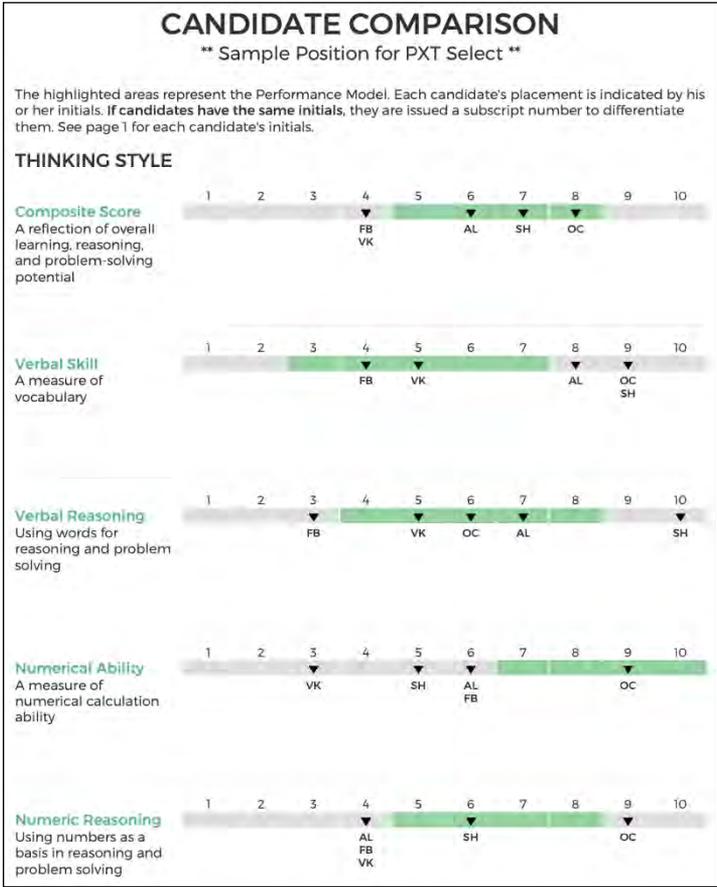


FIGURE 4-3: Comparing candidate assessments.

## IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Guiding and communicating effectively
- » Dealing well with change
- » Creating great team relationships
- » Getting things done and achieving results
- » Developing self and others on the team

# Chapter 5

## Ten (or So) Competencies to Avoid Leadership Blind Spots

If you've read the book up to this point, you now know just how powerful data can be in helping your organization select the best new hires. But that's only part of the power of data when it comes to maintaining a healthy, successful workforce.

This chapter spotlights competencies that are essential for successful leaders — if your leaders struggle with any of these competencies, that's a potentially costly blind spot.

PXT Select offers a multi-rater tool called Checkpoint360°, which helps organizations survey and gather information about their leaders — specifically, about how they excel or are challenged in these key competencies. Leaders are assessed with the help of surveys of their direct reports, their peers, their supervisors, and others with whom they work. Any gaps or red flags that are identified provide powerful information for individualized leadership development.

# Communicating Well

An exceptional leader is an active listener, attentive to the concerns of others. The leader is skilled in getting others to open up and share ideas and concerns.

A good leader can take in information from lots of different perspectives, analyzing it, and considering pros and cons and consequences. The leader then reaches a logical and clear conclusion.

The leader is also willing and able to express ideas directly, clearly, thoroughly, yet concisely. It's ideal for the leader to excel at communication both verbally and in writing.

# Leading Effectively



REMEMBER

Your best leaders are those who lead by example, who are honest and ethical, who keep promises, and who maintain confidentiality when that's expected. That's the most effective way to build a foundation of trust.

It's vital to make expectations clear, keep workloads manageable, and offer solid direction. The leader should keep the big-picture vision in focus while planning all the steps needed to get there.

A great leader also knows how to empower others so they can work and solve problems independently. And the leader is skilled at delegating tasks appropriately to the right people.

# Adapting to Circumstances

Circumstances are constantly changing, and a great leader can anticipate change and adjust well to setbacks. The leader can deal effectively with diverse work styles and perform well in varying environments.

A good leader is a creative thinker, with an imaginative approach that is infectious. That inspires innovation and creative problem-solving in others, and it facilitates appropriate risk-taking.

# Building Relationships



REMEMBER

The best leaders know the value of relationships and are considerate of others' feelings, tactful when offering criticism, and composed during stressful times. They're also free from unfair biases.

The leader is talented at building a positive, cooperative workplace, resolving any team conflicts fairly. That includes working toward consensus, setting appropriate team goals, and bringing in the best talent (as outlined in the rest of this book!).

# Managing Tasks

Effective leaders help their teams get things done. They make good use of the latest technologies, use outside resources wisely, and manage time efficiently.

Needless to say, leaders need to be competent in their job, mastering all the fundamentals. They should learn quickly as they apply new methods and new information to the tasks at hand.

# Producing Results

The ideal leader knows when the time is right to take action — and then goes ahead and takes action. The leader is assertive in handling problems and makes firm decisions in a timely manner.



REMEMBER

Under the guidance of the leader, the team achieves results, overcoming obstacles as needed. These results adhere to high standards and have a positive impact on the organization.

# Developing Others

A leader is a coach, and a good one coaches effectively and makes training available as needed or desired. The leader cultivates each individual's talents and offers objective performance feedback on a regular basis.

The leader offers positive recognition to all who do excellent work or give extra effort. The leader's enthusiastic attitude rubs off on others.

## Developing Themselves

An exceptional leader recognizes that learning never ends. The leader aims to learn positive lessons from mistakes and any constructive criticism that comes in. The leader actively seeks resources for improving and developing professionally, and the leader knows there are no limits to personal potential.

Through all of this, the leader shows commitment to personal development that is an example for others. The leader has a high level of energy, remains positive all the while, and perseveres.

Hiring Decisions Can Be *Daunting*,  
But They Don't Have to Be.



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# Make smarter, data-driven hiring decisions

Selecting the best person for the job has never been easy. Do you feel like you're relying on hunches and instincts even after carefully reviewing résumés and completing detailed interviews? You need a consistent process informed by deeper data to achieve the best job fit. *Hiring Successfully For Dummies* spotlights an effective approach for determining what each job requires, assessing candidates to learn who really has what it takes, and picking new hires who will thrive, contribute, succeed, and be engaged.

## Inside...

- The cost of making a bad hiring choice
- How a gut feeling can lead you astray
- Seeing and overcoming unconscious bias
- Creating a consistent hiring process
- How data can lead to great new hires
- Assessing candidates for job fit
- Developing more effective leaders

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**Steve Kaelble** is the author of many books in the *For Dummies* series, and his writing has also been published in magazines, newspapers, and corporate annual reports. When not immersed in the *For Dummies* world or writing articles, he engages in health-care communications.

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