

# COACHRECRUITMENT

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A GUIDE FOR FOUNDERS AND HIRING MANAGERS

## The Ideal Recruitment Process

A step-by-step guide for better hires, with the things a specialist recruiter watches for at each stage.

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A good hiring process isn't complicated, but it's easy to get the sequence right and still lose the person you wanted, because the failure points usually sit between the steps, not inside them. This guide walks the process start to finish. Each step has what good actually looks like in practice, and a separate watch-for drawn from running this kind of search dozens of times a year across different businesses. None of it requires you to work with an agency to use it.

### STEP 01

#### Define & Align

**What this means in practice.** Before a role goes anywhere near the market, get the hiring manager, whoever the role will sit alongside day to day, and whoever signs off the budget, into the same conversation at the same time, not sequentially. Write down the three or four things that are genuinely non-negotiable and separate them clearly from what's simply nice to have. Agree the salary band as an actual number range you'd defend, not one so wide it's really hiding disagreement about seniority. This should happen once, properly, before a single line of the ad is written, not get discovered piecemeal through interview feedback three weeks in.

#### WATCH FOR

The brief that goes to market is very often written by one hiring manager working alone, with everyone else who'll actually work with this person seeing it for the first time when they push back on a shortlisted candidate in week three, sending the whole search back to the start. Separately, salary bands age faster than most businesses update them. In a tight segment, market rates can move meaningfully in a year, so a number that was competitive when it was approved can be quietly behind the market by the time the role actually opens.

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## STEP 02

### Build a Transparent Timeline

**What this means in practice.** Decide upfront how many stages there will be and who sits in each one, then hold that line rather than adding rounds as you go. Set a timeframe that's genuinely efficient, not just whatever fits around everyone's existing calendar, and tell candidates what that timeline looks like early, so they know what they've signed up for and aren't left guessing between rounds.

#### WATCH FOR

"Realistic" usually gets set by internal calendar availability rather than by how fast a strong candidate's other options are moving. A four-week process loses people a two-week process would have kept, and it's rarely because thoroughness stopped mattering. It's because every extra week is another week spent fielding other conversations, including one their current employer may have already started having with them.

## STEP 03

### Market the Opportunity, Not Just the Role

**What this means in practice.** Write the ad to speak to the outcome the hire owns, the culture they're joining and the impact they'll have, not a list of duties. Share it deliberately across the platforms and networks that actually reach the kind of person you want, rather than posting once and waiting. Treat writing and placing it as a piece of marketing with an audience in mind, not an administrative box to tick.

#### WATCH FOR

The strongest candidates for a senior role are rarely reading job boards at all. They're busy, employed, and not looking, which is a very different thing from not being open to the right conversation landing at the right time. A search strategy that starts and ends with the ad only ever reaches the slice of the market that's actively unhappy right now, which is usually not the strongest slice.

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## STEP 04

### Communicate Like a Pro

**What this means in practice.** Acknowledge every application, even the ones you'll say no to. Keep every candidate still in process genuinely informed at each stage, including when there's a delay, rather than letting days pass with nothing said. Be timely, be human, and be specific rather than templated, especially in the messages that end in a no. How you communicate with someone you don't hire is often what they remember and repeat.

#### WATCH FOR

Candidates dropping out mid-process - a few days of silence between an interview and the next step gets read as a rejection whether one was given or not, and a strong candidate with other live options won't wait around to find out which it was. Speed and communication solve different problems here: a fast process that goes quiet still loses people, and the fix is a quick, honest update at every stage, not a longer one.

## STEP 05

### Interview with Purpose

**What this means in practice.** Build a structured set of questions tied directly to the two or three things that actually determine success in the role, and use the same core questions with every candidate so you're comparing like with like. Brief the panel beforehand on what you're each assessing, so the conversation doesn't drift into whoever the interviewer personally warmed to.

#### WATCH FOR

A longer panel process built mostly on instinct usually tells you less than a short one built on the role. Extra rounds often get added to make a process feel more thorough, when what actually improves the decision is asking sharper, more targeted questions of fewer people, not the same generic questions of more of them.

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## STEP 06

### Decide Quickly, Onboard Intentionally

**What this means in practice.** Once the decision is made, don't sit on it. Communicate the outcome clearly and make the offer with genuine confidence rather than hedging it. Start onboarding before day one arrives: a welcome pack, introductions to the team, and a clear plan for the first few weeks, so the person's first impression is that they made the right call.

#### WATCH FOR

The real competition for a great hire is usually not the other company advertising the same role. It's the counteroffer their current employer hasn't made yet. By the time you're deciding, that conversation may already be quietly starting on the other side, which is exactly why the gap between deciding and actually extending the offer needs to be measured in hours, not days.

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None of this is about process for its own sake. It's about knowing where a good hire is actually won or lost, which tends to be easier to see from outside a lot of searches than from inside just one.

How Coach charges is built on the same idea: we back the outcome of the hire, not just the placement. [See how it works.](#)

This guide comes from Mark Abbott at Coach Recruitment, who recruits senior specialist and leadership talent across marketing, creative, digital and beyond for founder-led and growth businesses. Happy to talk through anything in this guide, or take a look at a specific hiring or retention challenge you're working through right now. No charge, no pitch, just a second opinion if it's useful.

[Book a hiring call](#) - a conversation, not a pitch.