

RECRUITMENT RED FLAGS

TO HELP YOU AVOID HIRING THE WRONG PERSON



Hiring the best talent can transform your organisation, but recruitment is far from simple.

The cost of making the wrong hiring decision can be significant.

Estimates of the cost of hiring the wrong person can be more than 50% of their salary.

This includes impact on productivity and performance, as well as the costs of recruiting and onboarding a new team member.



A strategically planned, robust recruitment process can help prevent your organisation from making the wrong hiring decision.

As a trusted partner, clients look to us to identify, attract and engage the best talent available. The next stage in the recruitment process is equally important: thoroughly assessing candidate suitability and fit to a role, organisation and the challenges they may face.

As part of our commitment to supporting you to attract and engage the best talent, Heart Talent is sharing our knowledge through a series of resources and tools for hiring managers.

Based on our experience interviewing hundreds of people each year, we've created this guide of 8 key red flags to look out for when you're hiring.

This guide is designed to assist you in ensuring your interview and selection process is robust and evidence-based while still maintaining the human element that allows all parties in a recruitment process to get to know each other.



There is absolutely a place for technology in recruitment, but the assessment of a person's skills and experience cannot be automated. An effective interview is key, as is some good old-fashioned due diligence.

- Cynthia Harris, Heart Talent



What red flags should you look out for when you're hiring?

Beyond the obvious things like typos and sloppy errors on a CV, turning up late to an interview, an unprofessional dress standard and poor eye contact, we've compiled a list of key warning signs. Being aware of these things will help you avoid making the wrong hire for your team.

The background is a solid pink color. In the top-left and bottom-right corners, there are clusters of small, semi-transparent white and yellow dots, creating a sparkling or confetti-like effect.

RECRUITMENT RED FLAGS

1

UNPROFESSIONAL OR INCONSISTENT ONLINE PRESENCE

Arriving on time (or early!) and well dressed for an interview is a given. Being professional is critical for anyone looking for a new job. But today, a professional online presence is equally important.

We all have a digital footprint: a record of our online activity across multiple social media channels.

According to Sprout Social, 78% of employers use social media sites to research candidates.

High-calibre talent who are serious about finding the right job will ensure their online presence is as professional as their in-person presence.

As the main social media platform for the global professional workforce, many employers consider LinkedIn profiles as equally or more important than CVs.

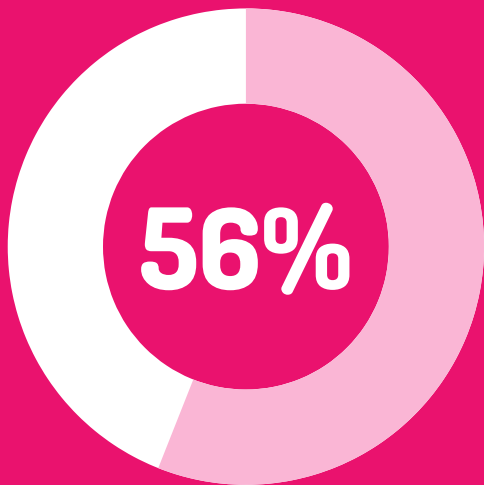
When you look at someone's LinkedIn profile, you should at least expect to see a profile photo and their career history,

including some detail about their previous employment and professional accomplishments. An incomplete or missing LinkedIn profile is a definite red flag.

Hiring managers and recruitment partners should be on the lookout for disparities in a candidate's story, such as inconsistencies between their CV, LinkedIn profile and what they talk about during the interview process.

Employer research shows that dishonest CVs aren't uncommon.

In fact, a 2020 study by ResumeLab found that 56% of job applicants have lied or stretched the truth in their resume documents.



While what makes a great LinkedIn profile is somewhat subjective, here are some things that might be cause for concern:

- an unprofessional profile photo
- career history that isn't consistent with the CV they've provided
- statements in the profile or activity that are deeply personal, discriminatory or controversial and could cause offence

Whether or not you look at a candidate's online presence beyond LinkedIn is ultimately up to you.

If you do use other social media channels as part of your recruitment plan, be on the lookout for compromising social media photos or content that might suggest that the candidate doesn't actively manage their online presence.

2

VAGUE ANSWERS AND LACK OF EVIDENCE

Beware of candidates who provide vague, flaky or non-specific responses during interviews. Similarly, keep an ear out for buzz words, cliches and name dropping.

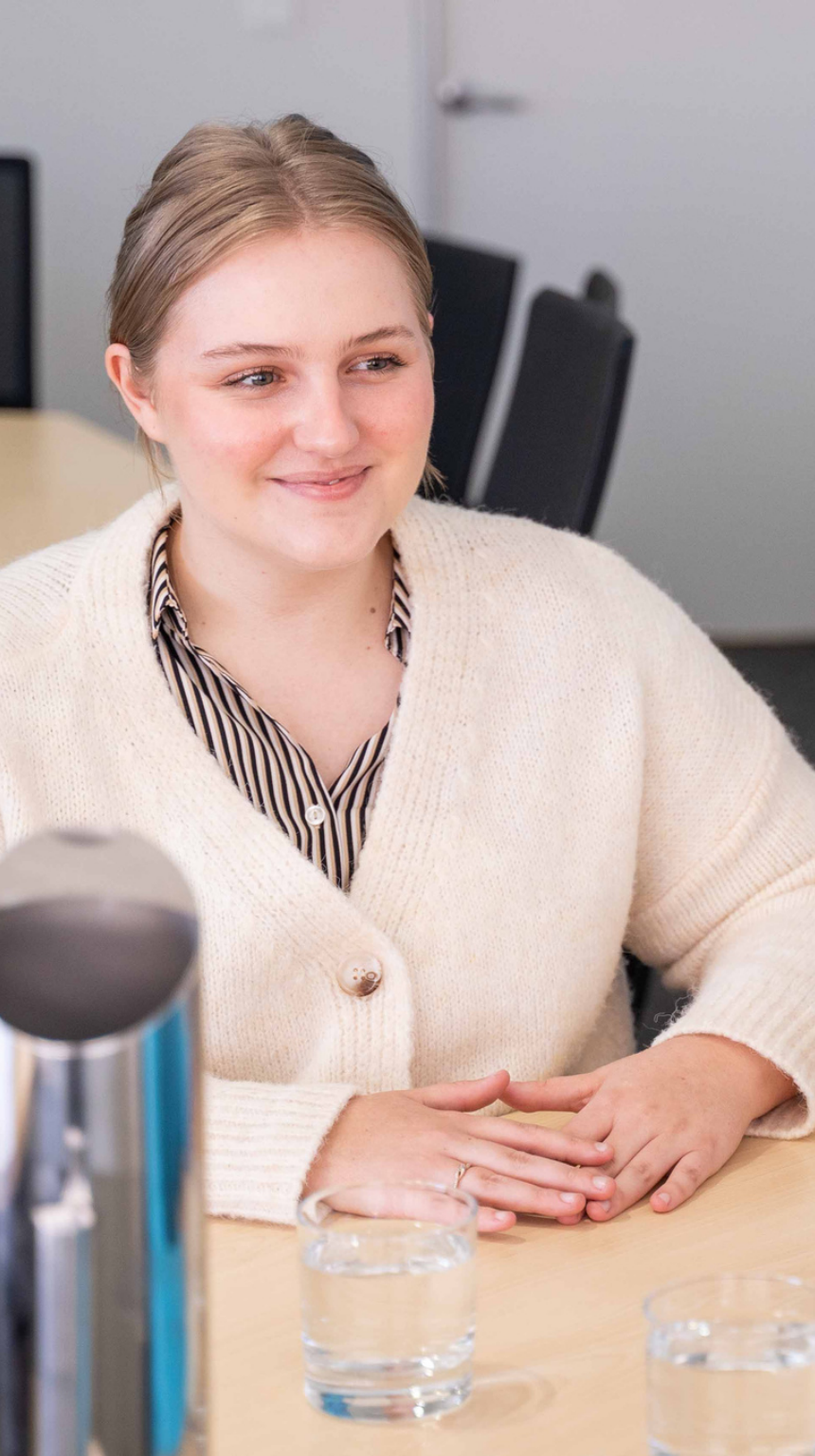
Vague or non-specific language suggests the candidate either doesn't have the experience you're asking about and is winging it, or perhaps, they are covering up something they don't want you to know.

A high-calibre, motivated candidate who is a good fit for the role will have plenty of evidence to back up what they say they can do.

When conducting an interview, you should expect examples of previous achievements, evidence of results and measurable improvements the candidate has made. For some roles, high-performing talent will be able to quote return on investment, improved efficiency and business performance.

When a candidate uses vague language in an interview, avoid the temptation to skim over their answer and move on. It's imperative that you dig deeper. For example, you might say:

"Thank you for that answer. Now let's look at this in more detail. Can you break it down and talk me through it at a more granular level? Let's start with the first step."



When seeking evidence of past experience and achievements, an interesting thing to listen for is the balance between communicating evidence and taking credit for everything. While you need to know what an individual is capable of, you're also looking for someone who is a team player and can work collaboratively with others.

If a candidate only talks about themselves for the whole interview with no mention of anyone else in their team or others they've worked with, they may not have the collaborative approach your organisation needs to succeed.

Use our guide to high-impact interview questions to help you design an interview that will draw on candidates' real-life examples of previous experiences, actions and behaviours.

3

VICTIM MENTALITY

One of the key attributes of high-performing talent is a growth mindset.

In our guide to high-impact interview questions, we recommend asking about setbacks and even failing to reach goals at work. How a candidate answers these questions can be very insightful.

Beware the candidate who can't give you at least one example of a setback, failure or mistake they've made.

High-calibre talent will take ownership of past failures. They will talk openly about mistakes and what they learned. Not taking ownership of missed goals or failures shows a victim mentality and a lack of initiative.

Similarly, when talking about why they left a previous role, high-calibre talent will be transparent and take ownership, not blame others.

When lack of development opportunities is a reason for

leaving a previous role, you might like to explore this further to understand if the candidate proactively sought opportunities to grow, regardless of job title or promotion.

For example, you could ask: "Tell me about a time when you volunteered to learn something new or add to your skillset at work."

Other red flags include using excuses and gossiping about previous colleagues.

4

LACK OF TRUE INTEREST

An interview is a two-way conversation.

Effective interviews don't have to follow a strict Q&A format. The hiring manager shouldn't be the only one asking questions.

Beware the candidate who has no questions to ask you. High-calibre talent will show true interest by asking well-considered questions.

The questions a candidate asks can be incredibly insightful.

A highly engaged, motivated candidate will demonstrate how much research they've done about you and the organisation and what matters to them through the questions they ask.

As a hiring manager, you need to be prepared with clear, comprehensive answers and practice active listening during your interviews.

Coupled with an open, inquisitive mindset, active listening can enable you to

learn so much more than simply a person's work history and technical skills. It will help you understand who a candidate can be as part of your team.



6

SHORT TENURE WORK HISTORY

There's no doubt employee turnover hurts.

Aside from the real costs of hiring and onboarding new employees, consistently high turnover impacts employee engagement and morale, which can have a negative impact on productivity and business performance.

Perceptions of what constitutes short tenure vary greatly. In 2022, turnover was around 20% of the Australian workforce.

Over time, we have definitely seen an increase in voluntary workforce mobility in Australia.

A job for life is certainly a thing of the past. In recent years, workforce trends show a more flexible employment market, an increase in contract and temporary work and more voluntary workforce mobility.

This makes for an empowered and confident workforce of people who are happy to leave a job and try something else.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, in 2022, 55% of Australian workers had been in their current job for less than 5 years, while 21% had been in their job for less than 1 year.

Depending on the size of your organisation, the nature of your business and future plans and scope for growth, many leaders will see team members leave employment and change jobs more often.

When looking at a candidate's tenure in previous roles, the most important thing to understand is why they changed jobs. This isn't something you can glean from a CV alone. You'll learn this during conversations with candidates, and it's important to really listen to how they talk about changing jobs.

Most hiring managers don't want to know a candidate's reason for leaving every role in their career history. A good approach is to ask about reasons for leaving when you see short tenure in one or more roles.



Short tenure explanations you might find acceptable include:

Temporary or contract employment
(increasingly common and often a lifestyle choice)

Redundancy (be sure to verify this via a reference check)

Relocation

Family or personal circumstances.



Short tenure explanations which might be cause for concern include:

An issue or disagreement with management and/or colleagues

Issue with organisational culture without substantiating evidence

Citing lack of challenge or progression opportunity in very short tenure

Any flaky or vague answer to the question "Why did you leave that job?"

The most important thing is to ask why and listen to the answer.

7

TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE

We all know unicorns don't exist. Here's the biggest truth of good recruitment: there is no perfect candidate. Nor is there a perfect role or organisation.

Be wary of candidates who are too polished and too prepared with all the right answers.

You want to meet the real person, which means an authentic conversation about mistakes, failures and what they've learned.

An important side note for hiring managers: if you want to meet the real person behind the CV, you have to show up in real mode too.

This means being authentic and transparent about the role, the organisation and the challenges that lie ahead.





A growth mindset and commitment to learning and development is one of the key attitudes that will be increasingly valuable in the workforce of the future.

Beware the candidate who can't describe what they learned or how they adapted to change and sought out opportunities to learn and grow in their previous roles.

People with a growth mindset will demonstrate evidence of

growth and learning, which may not be strictly related to a promotion or change in job title.

Ideally you're looking for someone with a clear career path.

If someone tells you their dream job is unrelated to the role you're interviewing them for, proceed with caution.

A strategically planned, robust recruitment process can help prevent your organisation from making the wrong hiring decisions. Knowing what red flags to look out for is key.

As part of our commitment to good recruitment, Heart is proudly committed to evolving and improving our knowledge and processes to ensure we deliver the best range of talent, every time.

We hope you find this guide to recruitment red flags useful. If you have any comments or feedback on this content, please get in touch with Cynthia Harris on 0432 044 527 or cynthia@hearttalent.com.au.





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