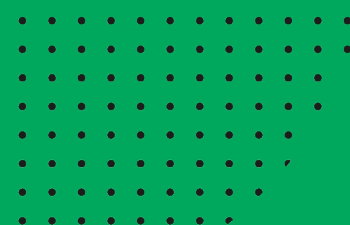




The SocialTalent Guide to...

Interviewing for cultural ~~fit~~ add



A company's culture refers to the shared set of values, goals, attitudes, behaviour and practices that make up the organisation. It is the ethos, the way people feel about the work they are doing and the morals they believe in. It permeates all, from C-level execs to front line staff and is a defining blueprint for everything a business does.

According to [Dave Cummings](#), co-founder of Pardot, 'company culture is the only sustainable competitive advantage that is completely within the control of the entrepreneur.' It is imperative that a strong culture is fostered – [Forbes](#) even notes that doing so could see a four-fold increase in revenue.

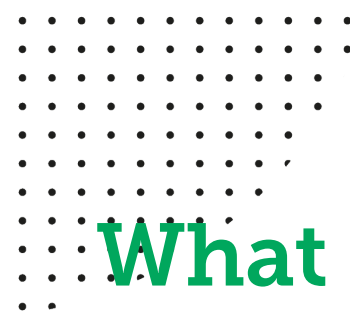
So when recruiting candidates, it only makes sense that you do so through the lens of a culture fit, right? As [Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie](#) so eloquently puts it: 'Culture does not make people. People make culture.' Finding potential employees who can easily integrate and adopt the core values of a company helps to drive long-term growth, eases integration and even improves retention rates. As much as [50% of new hires](#) fail within the first 18 months because of bad fit, so it is important to find people who understand the company and team DNA.

However, hiring for a culture fit can be a tricky business. It stands on a knife-edge of being statistically successful on one side, but when abused, it can be a dangerous shorthand for discrimination. While the benefit of sourcing people to suit a culture is clear, it is also important to ensure this doesn't come at the cost of diversity. Biases need to be effectively and consciously separated. You want to target the right candidates for a position, those who fit into the culture of your company, but not if they exacerbate an issue of homogeneity.

“Culture does not make people. People make culture.”

And this brings us to the concept of culture add. Emerging from the murky shadows and notoriety that grew out of hiring for culture fit, culture add instead looks to source people who not only align with the company's standards and values, but also bring different elements that positively contribute to an organisation. And not in a box-ticking-exercise sort of way either. As [The Enterprisers Project](#) puts it: 'culture add is as much about how a candidate looks at the world as how the world looks at them.'

Our guide will show you exactly how to reap the rewards of sourcing, interviewing and hiring with culture in mind, while avoiding the pitfalls that can so easily be associated with it.



What are the difficulties and dangers of hiring with culture in mind?

It is important to understand that hiring with culture in mind doesn't mean sourcing people who are all the same. As a tool, it should just focus on how well the candidate's values match up with the company's, and not how personal factors align with the current workforce. But it doesn't always work out like this...

“What most people mean by culture fit is hiring people they'd like to have a beer with.”

Patty McCord

former chief talent officer, Netflix

Dangers can certainly arise if culture fit is used as a smokescreen for discrimination, whether this is conscious or unconscious. As stated in an [SHRM](#) article: 'hiring bias is hiding beneath a cloak of company culture.' And what can potentially get sacrificed from this is diversity within the business. Recruiters can easily fall under a 'similar-to-me' effect when simply thinking of culture fit rather than culture add. They favour candidates who they gain a rapport with rather than those who best align to the company's values and could offer other valuable elements. Going down this path can definitely hinder an organisation and lead to a homogeneous workforce that lacks diversity and an innovative spark.

However, as [Silicone Republic](#) says: 'the key to successfully hiring for culture is to have a definition of culture fit that includes diversity.' Adopt a strict description. Acknowledge and objectify the culture and make it measurable to specific skills, abilities and values. This will allow you to reap the benefits of culture while still bringing in diverse perspectives. As [HBR](#) sums it up: 'people can think differently while still maintaining the organisation's overall values.'

With the proper definition and objective tools, hiring to add to your culture can almost certainly enrich rather than undermine diversity, but it requires rigour and vigilance.

Why culture is important for the long term success of a candidate

When a company purports a strong culture it leads to a cohesive environment that allows a candidate who also shares these values to flourish. There are a number of different long-term benefits that hiring with culture in mind can offer:

Job satisfaction

This is perhaps the most instant factor. A happy employee who feels connected can immediately function well in the organisation's workplace. Even if the job suits a person's skill set on paper, an incongruent environment can lead to dissatisfaction. For example, [BuiltIn](#) notes that employees are 26% more likely to leave if they feel there is a lack of respect between colleagues.

Performance

Employees who actively embrace a company's culture become increasingly invested in every aspect of their work. They tend to be more confident and will endeavour to work harder and achieve.

Reduced attrition

Hiring for a culture add means hiring for long-term. When employee and employer beliefs and behaviours align, there is considerably less motivation to leave. Decreasing turnover also reduces recruiting expenses and cuts training costs. According to the [Harvard Business Review](#), losing an employee due to a poor culture fit can cost an organisation between 50-60% of the person's annual salary.

Commitment to company

In [companies](#) that foster strong cultures, 90% of employees report to feel confident in their leadership team. Sourcing candidates who consistently demonstrate behaviours that blend well are intrinsically motivated to help the company reach its goals.



Know your culture

If your company does not have a clear doctrine on culture, this undoubtedly has to be the first port of call. You have to be able to define and articulate the organisation's culture at a granular level – it's values, goals and practices – and then weave this into the hiring process. Lee-Anne Edwards, author of "Culture Driven Recruiting", refers to this as taking a temperature check on your culture. Ensure everyone in the hiring process understands the critical components that mesh well with your culture.

Let's say collaboration is a key merit for your company – it is a way of working that you value and you know leads to success. So candidates who also embody this mindset and thrive in collaborative environments will tend to have a better chance of integrating and flourishing. Of course, there has to be some level of give-and-take with this, but understanding your specific company culture will also make it easier to find areas that can be improved upon or added to. Knowing your culture allows you to be more proactive in the hiring process.

So once these values are established, the aim is to search for people that not only reflect your core mantras, but can also expand on and ameliorate them. The Enterprise Project refers to this as 'positive deviance,' or, essentially, candidates that will push your organisation and bring something beneficial and new to the table. So we know why hiring for a culture add is important, let's discuss the how next.





Attracting and assessing candidates that fit your culture

According to a [BuiltIn](#) report, employees who don't like their organisation's culture are 24% more likely to quit. And this doesn't necessarily mean the culture is bad, only it may not have suited the way a perfectly skilled employee operates and works. So, how do you go about ensuring that you attract the right candidates for your particular company culture?

Visibility

Okay, so YOU may have a tight grasp on what your company culture is, but does everyone else? It's important that you are actively living by and promoting the values your organisation has set out. It can't be static content floating around a website. Create a dedicated page, link back to it on your career's section or in corporate blogs, use it in advertising and make it the foundation. Even film

testimonials from current staff where they explain the culture and what it means to them. Ensure your prospective candidates can find the information easily.

Employer brand

If you have a stellar employer brand it will not only improve your recruitment odds, it will also attract those who share a similar mindset to culture. According to [TalentLyft](#), businesses with strong employer brands see 50% more qualified applicants. People want to work in companies they can be proud of, companies that live by the positive messaging they extol and are transparent. If you are plagued by a bad standing, attracting and retaining the right talent becomes increasingly difficult. Preemptively address this: be crystal clear in your mission, be authentic in your values and show pride in your employees. Become a destination company that not only talks the talk!

Job descriptions

The job description is your first opportunity to pique the interest of your prospective audience. Of course the vital information is always paramount but you can go further than this. If you craft an advertisement that presents what you're looking for in a new hire and fully details the culture of your company, you stand a much better chance of hooking the talent that also embraces these values. As [Sourceon](#) puts it, while a standard listing may attract the attention of those simply looking for a job, it may not draw the talent you actually desire.



Recommended questions for interviews

The interview process is where you'll do the most Nancy Drew-ing to find out if a candidate is indeed the right fit for both the position and the company. So, we've compiled a list of questions that will help you dig a little deeper to find that star talent. It is important to note, however, that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to this. Every culture is different and while these questions work for values we embody, they may not suit the kind of employees you are looking for. Adapt and adopt!



First, ask **yourself** some questions:


- What makes someone successful in your company? Note those traits.
- What makes someone unsuccessful in your company? Red flags are important so note those traits too.
- Write a brief on what reflects your company's environment, working style and values.
- Finally, create some scenario-based and behavioural questions that can measure for those desired attributes.

Now you're forearmed, let's dive straight in:



“Describe a work environment which you thrive in?”

A straightforward question but one that allows you to comb the answer for indications that the candidate will be productive and suit your working culture. It also affords them an opportunity to expand on why the particular environment allows them to flourish.




“Do you prefer working alone or as part of a team? Why?”

This is a multifaceted question that will allow your candidate to focus on how they operate. While a CV may give the impression that someone previously thrived in a siloed environment, it may not actually be the case.




“What values are important to you as a person?”

Perfect for finding out what kind of person your candidate is, especially if asked after a few more informal questions about their likes, dislikes, hobbies etc. It's a world-building kind of question, giving direct responses that can also be compared and contrasted to what the company values.




“What's one thing you like about your current (or past) position that you'd want to see here as well?”

A question like this gives the candidate an opportunity to wax lyrical about an aspect of work that they enjoy or are particularly attuned to. Would they be able to implement these best practices in your company?



“How would you describe our culture based on what you've seen?”

Be upfront and see what they know. A candidate who misses the mark here can almost certainly be struck off the list. Homework is mandatory and potential employees who haven't researched what your company culture is could find it difficult to fit in.



“If you felt there was a better approach to an issue, how would you go about voicing this?”

This question will give you an insight into how the candidate deals with institutional attitudes. If your company culture is rigid, for example, a disruptive answer may not tie in with your values.

The final word

According to Deloitte, 94% of executives and 88% of employees believe a distinct workplace culture is important for business success. It provides direction and cohesiveness for staff, and a shared understanding of the values that the company upholds. So when recruiting candidates, hiring those who either embody or enhance an effective culture

can lead to greater job satisfaction, increased performance, lower turnover and reduced costs. But due diligence must be observed. Always make sure your culture is well defined and measurable, don't let biases creep in and contaminate your recruitment process. Culture add is not shorthand for discrimination – the values and attributes that make up an organisation's culture can and should be reflected in a richly diverse workforce.

SocialTalent is always here to help, so if you want more information about hiring with culture in mind, why not check out our wealth of recruitment training options right [here](#). Or, if you're looking for more insight on the skills vs. culture fit debate, this [blog post](#) has you covered.

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