

Our experience working with many startups has taught us that the best strategy is to start with the end in mind

Think first about the measurable definition of success – what outcomes do you want people to deliver to the business?

Then ensure that you have:

1. Sufficient people in your pipeline
2. A process to identify the best
3. The ability to close the deal

Outcomes are specific to each role, values are shared across your business

Outcomes are the measurable results you want

- e.g. “double sales in 18 months”
- Break this down, e.g. “build sales team”; “win blue chip clients”
- Look for candidates who can demonstrate that they can deliver

“Values” are behaviours that people in the company display

- These are the way that business outcomes are delivered
- Often related to how business makes decisions or takes action
- Testable in the recruitment process

Examples of values from Bulb Energy

- **Clear communication** – Are candidates able to communicate simply?
- **Significant impact** – Do candidates know the impact of actions they have taken?
- **“Data wins”** – Are they comfortable backing up recommendations with data?

Three steps to a robust recruitment process

1. Invest in your pipeline, especially your network

Understand what good profiles look like

- Ask your contacts “who are the most talented people you know?”
- Meet several prospective candidates each week

Think about “now” and “next”

- Consider talent needs for the years ahead. Start building those relationships now
- The bigger your pipeline, the more chance of including the best candidates

A network is invaluable when getting started

- Headhunters are expensive
- Advertising before you have built your employer brand may struggle to attract good candidates

2. Run a structured interview process

Organise assessments by outcomes & values

- e.g. “can this person build a sales team?”
- Assign responsibility for testing different outcomes & values to different people, split across different interviews
- More interviews does not mean more rigour – unstructured or repetitive interviews don’t help you make a better decision

Understand how you are going to make the decision

- Who gathers what information, who decides?
- Create a structured process for feeding information to decision-makers
- Neither autocratic (boss decides) nor democratic (everybody decides)

Train interviewers on how to probe candidates and avoid bias

- “Why, what, how, tell me more?”
- How to politely interrupt candidates to keep the interview moving
- Awareness of biases, including [Similarity bias](#), [Confirmation bias](#), and [Affiliation bias](#)

Interviews are only as good as the write-up

- Write-ups are sometimes cursory. These fail to support effective decision-making
- A good writeup breaks down observations, feelings & judgements. e.g. “candidate told me X which made me feel impressed and I concluded that they can achieve outcome Y”

3. Don’t fall at the last fence

Start on-boarding halfway through the interview process

- Think about candidate experience and what will make them join
- Don’t forget to sell

Conduct numerous reference interviews

- Don’t accept the candidate’s reference list at face value
- Listen to what referees say and how they say it
- Why did the candidate leave? Were they pushed?

Know the law

- Different countries have different laws
- Typically it is illegal to ask about protected characteristics such as marital status, religion and gender identity