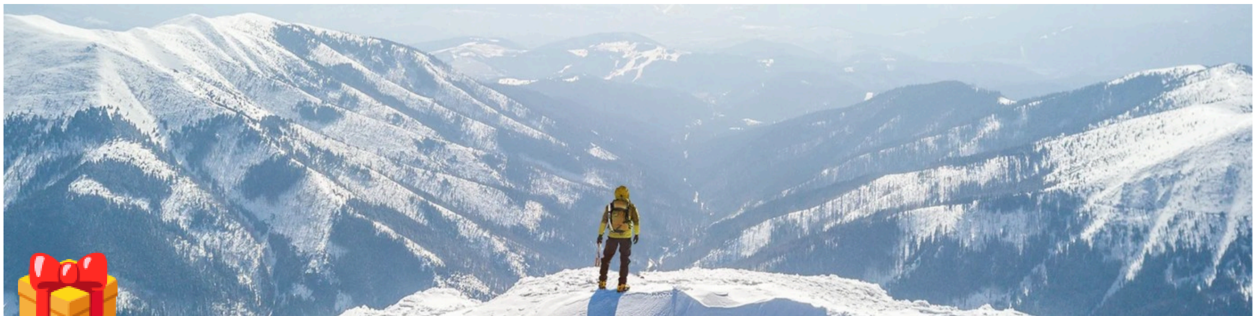

The Complete Hiring Framework: What I Learned Scaling to 130 Employees.

After conducting 500+ interviews, making 130+ hires (and several bad ones), I learned these lessons the expensive way. Here's everything I wish I'd known.

About me

Over the past decade, I’ve built two AI startups.

The first, e-bot7, scaled to 130 employees across five European offices and was acquired by LivePerson Inc. (NASDAQ) for $60M. It was an incredible ride but also the one that led to my first burnout.

After taking time to recover, I jumped into my next venture: Vidlab7, an AI avatar company backed by EQT Ventures. It grew fast, but by the end of 2024, I had to step away again. This time, to protect my health.

I spent four months in South Africa, working on social projects, helping local families, and rediscovering what really matters.

That’s where The Honest Founder was born.

A desire to help ambitious people build the life they always wanted without losing themselves in the process (I learned that the hard way).

Add me on my channels for exclusive content and updates:

- Linkedin
- Website
- Substack Newsletter (One actionable article every Tuesday on startups, mindset and growth)

Enjoy the framework!

Xaver Lehmann

Why This Matters

Hiring is the highest-leverage activity a founder does.

Get it right: Your company compounds.
Get it wrong: Everything stalls.

At e-bot7, we went from 0 to 130 employees in 5 years. Along the way, I made every hiring mistake possible. This framework is what I learned.

Part 1: The True Cost of Bad Hiring

Most founders underestimate this by 10x.

The Math Everyone Ignores

Timeline of a bad hire:

- **Month 1-2:** Onboarding (you can't evaluate yet)
- **Month 3:** Something feels off, but you give them time
- **Month 4-5:** Performance isn't improving, but "maybe next quarter"
- **Month 6:** You finally admit it's not working
- **Month 7:** Notice period, transition

- **Month 8-10:** Recruiting replacement
- **Month 11-12:** New hire starts, onboarding begins

Total time lost: 12-18 months

The Real Costs

Direct costs:

- Salary: €60K-120K+ (depending on role)
- Recruiting fees: €15K-30K (per hire × 2)
- Onboarding time: 40-80 hours of senior team time

Hidden costs:

- Lost momentum on strategic initiatives
- Team morale damage (everyone knows before you admit it)
- Customer relationships affected
- Other team members compensating for underperformance
- Opportunity cost (what you could have built instead)

Total real cost: €200K-500K per bad senior hire

But here's what really hurts: **You can't buy back the time.**

That 18 months at a startup? That could have been the difference between market leadership and playing catch-up.

Part 2: The Mindset Shift

From "We need someone" to "We need the right someone"

Bad founders hire when desperate.
Good founders hire when ready.

The 10-Candidate Rule

Never hire until you've interviewed at least 10 qualified candidates for the role.

Why?

Because candidate #3 always looks amazing compared to candidates #1 and #2.

But candidate #3 might be mediocre compared to candidates #8 and #9.

You need comparison data.

The "Top 5%" Standard

Our goal was always: Hire the top 5% for every role.

But here's what that actually means:

NOT:

- Top 5% in university grades
- Top 5% in years of experience
- Top 5% in previous company prestige

YES:

- Top 5% in drive and execution speed
- Top 5% in ownership mentality
- Top 5% in growth mindset

The person who was average at Google but has the hunger to prove themselves at a startup? That's often better than the star performer who wants to coast.

Part 3: The 7 Deadly Hiring Mistakes

Mistake #1: Hiring Because They're "Nice and Cool"

This was my most frequent mistake.

"They'd be fun to grab a beer with" is not a hiring criterion.

Cultural fit matters. But "nice and cool" is table stakes, not the decision factor.

The fix:
Ask yourself: "If this person was difficult to work with but delivered exceptional results, would I still want them?"

If the answer is yes, you're evaluating on the right criteria.
If the answer is no, you might be optimizing for friendship over performance.

Mistake #2: Hiring from Big Corporations

This was an almost-always-wrong pattern for us.

Someone who spent 5 years at Siemens, SAP, or BMW rarely worked out.

Why?

They're conditioned for a different environment:

- Clear processes vs. figuring it out
- Specialized roles vs. wearing multiple hats
- 9-to-5 culture vs. "whatever it takes"
- Low-risk decisions vs. high-risk/high-reward

The exceptions:

- They left the corporate within 2 years (still had startup mindset)
- They were frustrated by corporate slowness (actively seeking chaos)
- They had side projects that showed entrepreneurial drive

Mistake #3: Hiring Under Urgency

"We need someone NOW" is how you make bad decisions.

The pressure scenarios:

- Key person just quit
- Customer needs escalating
- Investor asking about org chart
- Product launch deadline looming

The bad decision:
You hire the first acceptable candidate instead of the best available candidate.

The fix:
Build a talent pipeline BEFORE you need it.

Always be talking to great people, even when you're not hiring. When a role opens up, you have 5 people you can call immediately.

Mistake #4: Skipping Reference Checks

Early on, I'd skip this if I "felt good" about the candidate.

Bad idea.

Why reference checks matter:

1. **Verification:** Is what they said actually true?
2. **Pattern detection:** Do multiple references say the same things?
3. **Red flags:** What are they NOT saying?

How to do them right:

Don't just call the references they provided. Those are obviously curated.

Ask: "Who else should I talk to who worked closely with [candidate]?"

Then call those people.

Ask specific questions:

- "How would you rate their performance 1-10? Why not higher?"
- "What was their biggest weakness?"
- "Would you hire them again?"
- "What type of environment do they thrive in?"

The reference who pauses before answering "Would you hire them again?" is telling you everything.

Mistake #5: Not Testing the Skillset

Never hire based on resume and conversation alone.

Always include a work simulation.

For different roles:

Engineers:

- Take-home project (4-6 hours, paid)
- Code review session
- Architecture discussion

Salespeople:

- Mock pitch to your team
- Discovery call role-play
- Deal analysis exercise

Marketers:

- Campaign strategy presentation
- Content creation sample
- Channel analysis

Designers:

- Design critique session
- Product improvement exercise
- Portfolio deep-dive

The work sample reveals what 5 interviews never will.

Mistake #6: Hiring Without Multiple Opinions

I made solo hiring decisions exactly twice.

Both were disasters.

The multi-stage process:

Round 1 - Screening (30 min):
Hiring manager checks basics

Round 2 - Deep dive (60-90 min):
Hiring manager evaluates skills, experience, fit

Round 3 - Work sample:
Real work simulation

Round 4 - Team fit (45 min):
2-3 team members evaluate collaboration style

Round 5 - Values/culture (30 min):
Founder or senior leader evaluates alignment

Critical: Different interviewers ask different questions. No redundancy.

Split the evaluation:

- Person A: Technical skills and experience
- Person B: Problem-solving and learning ability
- Person C: Communication and collaboration
- Person D: Values and motivation

After each round: Independent written feedback before discussing.

This prevents groupthink.

Mistake #7: Hiring When You Have Doubts

This is the most expensive mistake.

If you have ANY doubt after the process, the answer is no.

The rationalizations I used:

- "Maybe they'll grow into it"
- "We can coach them up"
- "They're 80% there, close enough"
- "We need someone now"
- "They might be great despite the concern"

The reality:

The doubt you have in the interview gets bigger, not smaller, after they start.

The rule:

If you're not actively excited about hiring this person, don't hire them.

"Maybe" means no.

Part 4: What to Actually Look For

After 130 hires, here's what separated the exceptional from the average:

The 3 Non-Negotiable Traits

1. Extreme Ownership

They don't just complete tasks. They own outcomes.

How to test it:

Ask: "Tell me about a project that failed. What happened?"

Bad answer:
"The marketing team didn't deliver the leads we needed."

Good answer:
"We missed our Q2 target. I was relying on marketing for leads but didn't communicate early enough that we weren't getting the volume we needed. I should have raised the flag in Month 1, not Month 3. Here's what I did differently next quarter..."

The difference? Ownership vs. blame.

2. Low Ego

They care more about being right than looking right.

How to test it:

Ask: "Tell me about a time someone junior to you had a better idea. What happened?"

Bad answer:
Long pause... vague story... they still kind of take credit.

Good answer:
Immediate example. Specific person. Gave them credit. Implemented their idea. Celebrated the outcome.

Low ego people light up talking about others' ideas.

High ego people struggle to name times they were wrong.

3. Bias to Action

They ship fast, learn, iterate.

They don't wait for perfect.

How to test it:

Ask: "Walk me through your process for [relevant task]."

Bad answer:
Long planning phase. Lots of analysis. Multiple review cycles. Eventually ships.

Good answer:
Quick research. Rough draft. Get feedback. Iterate. Ship imperfect version. Learn from users. Improve.

The best hires ship in days what average hires spend weeks planning.

The Warning Signs (Automatic No)

After enough bad hires, you develop pattern recognition.

These red flags meant automatic rejection:

1. They speak negatively about previous employers

Especially early in the conversation.

One critical comment? Fine.
Multiple unprompted complaints? Red flag.

Why it matters:
How they talk about their last company is how they'll talk about you after they leave.

2. They can't name what they learned from failures

Everyone has failures.

Great people mine them for lessons.
Average people gloss over them.

Ask: "What's the biggest mistake you made at your last job?"

If they struggle to think of one, or only share something superficial, that's a problem.

3. They're desperate for the job

Counter-intuitive, but desperation is a red flag.

Great people have options.

They're evaluating you as much as you're evaluating them.

If they're too eager, too accommodating, too willing to accept any terms... why?

4. They don't ask hard questions

By the end of the process, I wanted candidates asking tough questions:

- "What's the biggest risk to the business right now?"
- "Why did the last person in this role leave?"
- "What does success look like in month 6?"
- "How do you handle disagreements on strategy?"

No questions = no critical thinking.

5. Job hopping (less than 1 year at multiple companies)

One short stint? Okay, bad fit happens.

Multiple 6-12 month stints? Pattern.

They either:

- Quit when things get hard
- Get fired frequently
- Can't commit

None of those are good.

6. They bad-mouth their previous co-founders/colleagues

This is different from constructive criticism.

"My co-founder and I had different visions, so we decided to part ways" = fine

"My co-founder was incompetent and impossible to work with" = red flag

Part 5: The Interview Framework

Here's the actual structure we used:

Round 1: Phone Screen (30 minutes)

Goal: Basic filter

What to evaluate:

- Communication skills

- Basic qualification
- Mutual interest

Key questions:

1. "Walk me through your background" (can they tell a coherent story?)
2. "What interests you about this role?" (do they care about us specifically?)
3. "What are you looking for in your next role?" (alignment check)

Pass criteria:

- Clear communication
- Relevant experience
- Genuine interest
- No obvious red flags

Move 30% to next round.

Round 2: Deep Dive (90 minutes)

Goal: Evaluate skills, experience, and thinking

Structure:

- 10 min: Detailed background walk-through
- 40 min: Role-specific technical/skill evaluation
- 20 min: Problem-solving scenarios
- 10 min: Values/motivation questions
- 10 min: Their questions

The questions that mattered most:

On ownership:
"Tell me about a time you had to make a difficult decision without enough information. What happened?"

Listen for:

- Did they take ownership or defer?

- How did they handle uncertainty?
- Did they learn from the outcome?

On learning:
"What's a skill you've taught yourself in the last year? How did you do it?"

Listen for:

- Active learning vs. passive
- Self-directed vs. requiring hand-holding
- Growth mindset vs. fixed mindset

On culture fit:
"Describe your ideal work environment."

Listen for:

- Fast-paced vs. structured
- Autonomous vs. managed
- Feedback-rich vs. independent

If their ideal doesn't match your reality, don't hire.

On failure:
"Tell me about the biggest professional failure you've had. What did you learn?"

Listen for:

- Do they actually take responsibility?
- Did they learn specific lessons?
- Have they applied those lessons?

The question that reveals everything:

"If you never had to worry about money, how would you spend your life?"

This tells you what they actually care about.

If their answer has nothing to do with work or building things, they're probably not startup material.

Move 20% to next round.

Round 3: Work Simulation (varies)

Goal: See them actually do the work

Examples:

For engineers:
Take-home project (4-6 hours, always paid)

- 1 hour pair programming session
- 30 min architecture discussion

For sales:
Give them a mock customer scenario
Have them prepare and deliver a pitch
Debrief: "What would you do differently?"

For product managers:
"Here's a product problem. Come back with a solution."
1-hour presentation + Q&A
Focus on thinking, not polish

For designers:
Portfolio review + live critique session
"Walk me through your design process for [specific project]"
Quick redesign exercise with feedback

The work sample reveals:

- Actual skill level (not just what they say)
- How they handle feedback
- Attention to detail
- Communication style

Move 50% to next round.

Round 4: Team Fit (45 minutes)

Goal: Will they work well with the team?

Structure:

- 2-3 team members they'd work with
- Casual conversation format
- Collaborate on a problem together

What team evaluates:

- Communication style
- Collaboration approach
- Technical depth (if relevant)
- Would we want to work with this person?

Critical question for team:
"Would you be excited if this person joined tomorrow?"

If anyone says no, dig deeper.

Round 5: Values & Vision (30 minutes)

Goal: Final alignment check

Interviewer: Founder or senior leader

Focus:

- Why do you want to work here specifically?
- What are you optimizing for in your career?
- How do you think about risk/reward?
- What kind of company do you want to help build?

The gut check:

By the end of this conversation, you should know:

1. Are they aligned with our mission?
2. Are they motivated by the right things?
3. Would I be excited to work with them?

If any answer is "maybe," it's a no.

Part 6: The Evaluation Framework

After each round, interviewers independently score:

Technical Skills (1-5)

Can they do the job?

Learning Speed (1-5)

How fast do they adapt and grow?

Ownership (1-5)

Do they own outcomes or just tasks?

Communication (1-5)

Can they articulate ideas clearly?

Culture Fit (1-5)

Do they match our values and pace?

Excitement (1-5)

Am I actively excited to hire this person?

Scoring guide:

5 = Exceptional
Top 5%. Would immediately hire.

4 = Strong
Top 20%. Would hire if no better options.

3 = Adequate
Top 50%. Probably not right for us.

2 = Below bar
Bottom 50%. Definite no.

1 = Poor
Should not have passed screening.

Hiring threshold:

We only hired candidates with:

- Zero scores below 3
- At least two scores of 5
- Average score of 4.0+

This seems strict.

It is.

But we still made bad hires. If we'd been less strict, we'd have made more.

Part 7: The Offer Process

You've found the right person. Now close them.

The Compensation Framework

Our philosophy:

Pay top of market for top performers.

Don't try to "get a deal."

The math:

The difference between a good and great hire isn't 20% in salary.

It's 10x in output.

Optimize for getting the best person, not saving €10K.

How to structure offers:

For early employees (1-20):

- Market salary (top 75th percentile)
- Meaningful equity (0.25%-2% depending on role/stage)
- Clear growth path

For later hires (20-100):

- Market salary (50-75th percentile)
- Standard equity (0.1%-0.5%)

- Bonus tied to performance

For senior hires:

- Above market if necessary to close
- Equity with meaningful upside
- Clear scope and impact

The Sell

Great candidates have options.

You need to sell them on:

1. The mission
Why does this company matter?

2. The opportunity
What will they learn/build/become here?

3. The team
Who will they work with?

4. The timing
Why now is the right moment?

5. The trajectory
Where is this going?

What NOT to sell:

Don't oversell. Don't promise what you can't deliver.

The fastest way to lose a great hire is to bait-and-switch.

If the role is hard, say it's hard.
If you're not sure about product-market fit, say that.
If compensation is below market, explain why and what the upside is.

Great people want truth, not marketing.

The Decision Timeline

Once you extend an offer:

- Give them 3-5 days to decide (not 2 weeks)

- Stay engaged during that time
- Answer questions
- Intro them to team members
- Let them see the real environment

If they're taking longer, something's wrong. Find out what.

Part 8: Onboarding (The Make-or-Break Period)

Hiring doesn't end when they sign.

The first 30 days determine if they'll succeed.

Week 1: Immersion

Goal: Understand the business

- Customer calls (listen to 10+)
- Product deep-dive
- Meet entire team
- Read company docs
- Shadow sales/support

No actual work yet. Just learning.

Week 2-3: First Project

Goal: Quick win

Give them something they can ship in 2 weeks.

Not huge. Not critical path.

But something real that creates value.

Why?

New hires need to feel useful fast.

Nothing kills motivation like 2 months of "onboarding" before doing real work.

Week 4: First 1:1

The critical questions:

1. "What's surprised you most?"
2. "What's not what you expected?"
3. "What's unclear?"
4. "What would you change?"

Listen carefully.

New hires see problems you're blind to.

Month 2-3: Ramp to Full Speed

By end of Month 3, they should be:

- Fully autonomous
- Delivering at expected level
- Integrated with team

If they're not, have the hard conversation early.

Part 9: When to Fire Fast (And When to Invest)

This is the hardest part of hiring.

The 30-Day Check

At 30 days, ask yourself:

"If this person interviewed today, would I hire them knowing what I know now?"

If no, start the conversation.

The 60-Day Decision

At 60 days, one of three things is true:

1. They're exceeding expectations
Great. Give them more scope.

2. They're meeting expectations
Good. Keep investing.

3. They're below expectations
Decision time.

Ask:

- Is this a skills problem or a fit problem?
- Can coaching fix this?
- Would a different person succeed in this role?

If skills problem + coachable: Invest 30 more days with clear expectations.

If fit problem or uncoachable: Part ways now.

The Firing Framework

When to fire fast:

1. **Values misalignment**
   Fire immediately. No coaching fixes this.
   - They cut corners
   - They blame others
   - They're toxic to culture
2. **Can't do the job**
   Fire within 90 days.
   - Skills gap is too large
   - Not learning fast enough
   - Fundamental capability issue
3. **Not trying**
   One warning. Then fire.
   - Low effort
   - Missing deadlines
   - Not taking feedback

When to invest (not fire):

1. **High potential, wrong role**
    - Capable person, wrong fit
    - Move them to better role
    - Worth the investment
2. **Growing pains**
   Set clear 30-day improvement plan.
    - Company scaling faster than them
    - They're trying hard
    - Coaching might work
3. **Rough patch**
   Give them space and support.
    - Personal issues
    - Temporary performance dip
    - Track record is strong

The Firing Conversation

When you've decided, move fast.

The script:

"I've made the decision that this role isn't the right fit. Your last day will be [date]. Here's the severance package."

Don't:

- Give false hope
- Drag it out
- Make it their decision

Do:

- Be clear and direct

- Be generous with severance
- Help them land somewhere better

Severance framework:

- 0-3 months: 1 month
- 3-6 months: 2 months
- 6-12 months: 3 months
- 12+ months: case by case

Be generous if you can afford it.

Good reputation matters.

Part 10: The Traits That Actually Matter

After 130 hires, I learned to spot three things:

1. The "Get It" Factor

Some people just get it.

They understand the business faster.
They see around corners.
They connect dots others miss.

You can't teach this.

How to spot it:

In interviews, explain a problem you're facing.

Average candidates: Ask clarifying questions, give generic advice.

"Get it" candidates: Immediately see the core issue, ask 2-3 sharp questions, propose a non-obvious solution.

2. The Determination to Win

Some people just won't accept losing.

Not in an ego way.
In a "I'll do whatever it takes" way.

How to spot it:

Ask: "Tell me about a time you were behind on a goal. What happened?"

Average answer: "We didn't hit the number, but we learned a lot."

Winning answer: "We were down 40% with 2 weeks left. I called 100 customers personally, found a pattern, adjusted our pitch, and we hit 95% of target."

Winners find a way.

3. The Growth Mindset

Carol Dweck's research is real.

Fixed mindset: "I'm good at X, bad at Y"
Growth mindset: "I haven't learned Y yet"

How to spot it:

Ask: "What's something you're bad at?"

Fixed mindset answer: "I'm not a numbers person" or "I'm not creative"

Growth mindset answer: "I'm still developing my [skill]. Here's what I'm doing to improve it."

The language reveals the mindset.

Part 11: Building Your Hiring Machine

Once you've hired 20+ people, you need systems.

The Talent Pipeline

Always be building it.

How:

1. **Networking events:** Meet people constantly
2. **Referrals:** Ask everyone for intros
3. **Outbound:** Reach out cold to great people
4. **Content:** Share your journey (attracts talent)

When a role opens, you should have 10 people you can call.

The Interview Team

Train your interviewers.

Bad interviewers = bad hires.

What to train:

- How to evaluate objectively
- What questions reveal what
- How to avoid bias
- How to sell the company

Run monthly calibrations:
Everyone interviews the same person, compares notes, discusses differences.

This aligns evaluation standards.

The Metrics to Track

Top of funnel:

- Applications received
- Pass rate (screen → interview)
- Time to first interview

Middle of funnel:

- Pass rate (interview → offer)
- Offer acceptance rate
- Time to hire

Quality metrics:

- 90-day retention
- Performance ratings (6 months)
- Hiring manager satisfaction

The most important metric:

% of hires who are "hell yes" after 6 months.

Target: 80%+

If you're below 70%, your bar is too low.

Part 12: The Special Cases

Some roles need different approaches.

Hiring Your First Executive

This is the highest-stakes hire you'll make.

The mistake:

Hiring someone from a big company who's "done it before."

The reality:

Executives from big companies often can't operate without resources.

They're used to having:

- A team of 10
- Unlimited budget
- Clear playbooks
- Established brand

At a startup they get:

- 2 people
- Limited budget
- Figure it out
- Nobody knows you

Who actually works:

Someone who's been at a startup in the 20-100 employee phase.

They've built the function from scratch.

They know how to do + manage simultaneously.

Hiring When You Have No Brand

Early stage, nobody knows you.

How to compete:

1. **Sell the mission:** Paint the future
2. **Sell the learning:** "You'll grow faster here"
3. **Sell the equity:** Show the upside math
4. **Sell the team:** Introduce them to everyone

But mostly: Find people who WANT the early-stage chaos.

Don't try to convince risk-averse people to join.

Hiring International Talent

We had 30+ nationalities.

What worked:

- Relocation support
- Visa sponsorship
- Cultural onboarding
- Language flexibility

What didn't:

- Assuming everyone works the same way
- Ignoring cultural differences
- Not adapting management styles

The best teams are diverse.

But diversity requires intentional inclusion.

Part 13: The Final Lessons

After everything I learned:

1. Hire Slow, Fire Fast Is Wrong

The saying should be:

"Hire deliberately, fire decisively."

Don't rush.
But don't drag it out either.

Take the time to find the right person.
Move quickly when you know it's wrong.

2. Culture Fit Is Not "Like Me"

Early on, I hired people similar to me.

Bad idea.

You need:

- Different backgrounds
- Different perspectives
- Different strengths

Culture fit means:

- Shared values
- Compatible working style
- Aligned on mission

Not:

- Same personality
- Same interests
- Same background

3. The Best Hires Come from Referrals

70% of our best hires came from referrals.

The system:

After every great hire, ask them:
"Who are the 3 best people you've ever worked with?"

Then reach out to those people.

Great people know great people.

4. Compensation Matters (But Not How You Think)

We never had someone leave purely for money.

They left because:

- Lack of growth
- Unclear direction
- Poor management
- Wrong role fit

Pay people fairly.
Then focus on everything else.

5. Interviewing Is a Skill

Your first 20 interviews will be bad.

That's okay.

Study it. Practice it. Get feedback.

The best founders I know are exceptional interviewers.

Because interviewing is pattern recognition.

And pattern recognition takes reps.

6. Your Early Hires Make or Break You

Employees 1-10 set your entire culture.

If they're mediocre, that becomes your standard.
If they're exceptional, that becomes your bar.

Be ridiculously picky early.

It's worth the extra months to find the right people.

7. Every Hire Is a Bet on Potential

You're not hiring for who they are today.

You're hiring for who they'll become in 2 years.

Can this person 10x their impact as the company scales?

If no, they're the wrong hire.

Even if they're great today.

The Framework Summary

Before You Hire:

✅ Define the role clearly
✅ Know what "great" looks like
✅ Have 10+ candidates in pipeline
✅ Set evaluation criteria upfront

During The Process:

✅ Multi-stage evaluation (4-5 rounds)
✅ Include work simulation
✅ Get multiple opinions
✅ Check references thoroughly
✅ Test for ownership, learning, and culture fit

Making The Decision:

✅ Score independently
✅ Require 4.0+ average, zero red flags
✅ If you have doubts, it's a no
✅ Move fast once you decide

After They Join:

✅ Immersive first week
✅ Quick win in first 2 weeks
✅ 30-day check-in
✅ 60-day decision point
✅ Fire fast if it's not working

The One-Page Checklist

Before posting the role:

- [ ] Have I defined success metrics?
- [ ] Do I know my deal-breakers?
- [ ] Is my comp package competitive?

During screening:

- [ ] Have I seen 10+ candidates?
- [ ] Have I checked references?
- [ ] Have I included a work sample?

Before making an offer:

- [ ] Does everyone on the interview team say "hell yes"?
- [ ] Have I checked my gut feeling?
- [ ] Would I be excited to work with this person?

After they start:

- [ ] Have I set clear 30-day expectations?
- [ ] Am I checking in weekly?
- [ ] Am I being honest about performance?

If any box is unchecked, slow down.

Conclusion

Hiring is hard.

You'll make mistakes.

I made dozens.

But every mistake taught me something.

The framework above is what I wish I'd known at employee #1.

It would have saved me:

- 12-18 months of wasted time
- €500K+ in bad hiring costs
- Countless hours of stress

But more importantly, it would have helped us build a better company faster.

Because at the end of the day:

Your company is the people you hire.

Everything else is just details.

Hire well, and everything else gets easier.

Hire poorly, and nothing else matters.

One final thought:

The best hire I ever made didn't have the perfect resume.

They had:

- Hunger to prove themselves
- Willingness to do whatever it takes
- Growth mindset
- Low ego

Those four traits beat experience every time.

Look for those.

The rest you can teach.

Whenever you're ready, there are 3 more ways I can help you:

1. 1:1 Coaching

I've helped 200+ founders navigate growth, fundraising, and tough decisions. Book a quick call on hubble or apply for strategic coaching here.

2. Fundraising Course & Frameworks

Learn the exact strategies I used to raise capital and scale successfully to $60m. Proven frameworks that work. Check them out here.

3. Sponsor this Newsletter

Want your brand in front of 30,000+ engaged founders, CEOs and builders? Apply to sponsor a future issue here.