



# WHAT MAKES A WINNING TALENT ACQUISITION STRATEGY?

The World Economic Forum predicts that 23% of jobs will change by 2027, with 69 million new jobs created and a whopping 83 million eliminated. [1]



**A strong talent acquisition strategy is vital for survival in this rapidly evolving landscape. From identifying priorities for hiring to navigating emerging talent acquisition trends, employers need a fine-tuned approach to hit the ground running.**

**But when so much is changing in the labor market, where do you get started with talent acquisition strategies?**

**In this e-book, we cover the benefits of innovative talent acquisition strategies and walk you through 25 that you can easily integrate at your company.**

**But first: *What is a talent acquisition strategy? And why does your organization need one?***



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# 01 WHAT IS A TALENT ACQUISITION STRATEGY?

It's not just about reactive recruitment, filling a role in response to a drop in performance or an employee resignation.

Instead, talent acquisition is about proactively managing your HR function to reach specific big-picture business goals, even before the need for recruitment arises. That means:

1. Projecting an image of your organization that makes top candidates want to work for you
2. Exposing these candidates to opportunities at your company
3. Motivating talented people to apply to your open roles and ensuring their application experience is positive
4. Securing them as employees and retaining them

Many organizations will even have a dedicated talent acquisition team within their HR department, including roles like:

- Talent acquisition specialists, who have a hands-on role in hiring
- Talent acquisition managers, who oversee the planning and development of talent acquisition strategies
- A head of talent acquisition, who runs the department and sets priorities



## 01.1 Talent acquisition vs. recruitment: What's the difference?

Talent acquisition and recruitment are **distinct but overlapping concepts**.

Talent acquisition strategy is a long-term, big-picture endeavor. It includes many tasks, some of which relate to recruitment, all of which work to attract talent to meet the business's needs. Recruitment, on the other hand, is usually short-term, targeting a particular role. When thinking about the differences between [talent acquisition and recruitment](#), it helps to consider the different tasks involved in each process:

### TASKS INVOLVED IN TALENT ACQUISITION

- Hiring planning
- Developing a recruitment strategy
- Recruitment marketing
- Employer branding
- Using talent assessment tools and recruitment tools
- Performing talent analytics
- Onboarding
- Succession planning

### TASKS INVOLVED IN RECRUITMENT

- Sourcing candidates
- Screening applicants
- Screening resumes
- Interviewing
- Conducting talent assessments
- Selecting candidates
- Hiring

## 02 WHY ARE TALENT ACQUISITION STRATEGIES IMPORTANT?

Talent acquisition strategies require that businesses first define what their overall objectives are and identify the skills necessary to deliver on those objectives.

This helps you with talent planning and particularly with succession planning: Your organization's plan for replacing key leaders if and when they leave.

Recommended reading:

- [Talent planning: Strategies and best practices for success](#)
- [10 succession planning best practices](#)

# 03 25 TALENT ACQUISITION STRATEGIES FOR FINDING AND HIRING THE RIGHT EMPLOYEES

To get out in front of the changes coming for the global workplace, you need the best talent acquisition strategies. We've assembled our top 25 into a comprehensive plan to help you attract the best talent and keep your organization on the cutting edge.

## 03.1 Define your corporate identity

To build a strong talent acquisition strategy you must first [define your corporate identity](#).

That means how your business presents itself externally, including its:

- **Visual identity** – for instance, its logo and color scheme
- **Corporate behavior** – how it interacts with customers and clients
- **Company culture** – the values that form its foundation
- **Communication** – for instance, its tone on social media
- **Corporate purpose** – what good the organization does in the world

Almost 40% of workers say their job or career is important to their identity, and yet more than half of workers don't believe that a company's corporate purpose drives their business decision-making. [2,3] If you prove that your business is guided by purpose, you attract candidates who share these values, and they are likely to prioritize you over competitors.

Patagonia is a strong example. The company's owner recently announced that all profits would go to fighting climate change, a powerful statement of its corporate purpose. [4] No wonder, then, that it ranks in the top 100 most attractive employers in the US. [5]

## 03.2 Use employee input to guide company culture

With your corporate identity outlined, you can begin to craft a [good company culture](#) based on your mission and values.

[Read more about company culture here](#)

Bigger companies will already have their culture established. In this case, work with your teams to identify the traits that they think make your organization different, and work to strengthen the link between your culture and your values. This will provide the cornerstone of your appeal for employees: **86% of job-seekers** say company culture is important to them when deciding on a role. [6]

## 03.3 Align your CSR strategy with your company mission

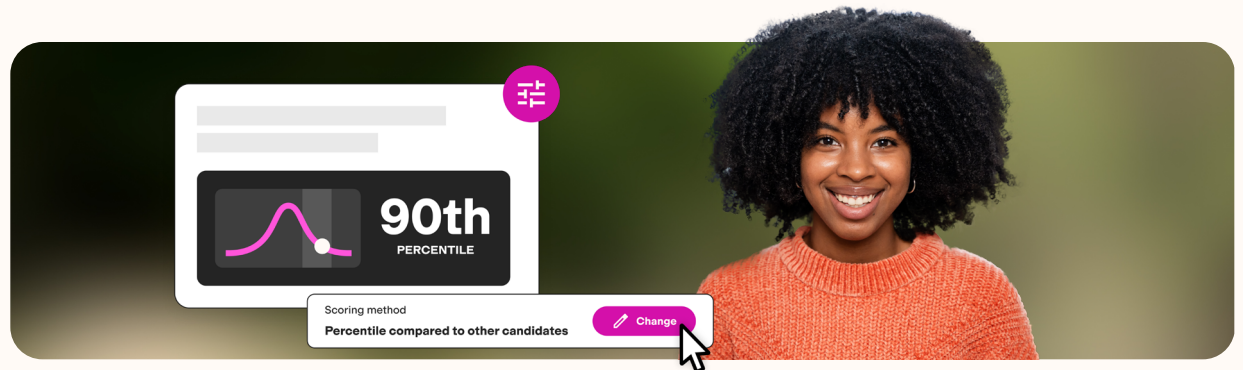
So far, we've helped you identify:

1. Your corporate identity, or the “personality” your company is trying to convey
2. Your company culture, or the set of norms and values that govern how your employees work

To broadcast these messages about your values and mobilize your workforce for the greater good, align your [corporate social responsibility \(CSR\)](#) strategy with your corporate identity.

Research shows that having a positive perception of an organization's CSR policies makes that company more attractive to candidates.

One real-world example of a business aligning its corporate identity with corporate social justice is Salesforce. Salesforce's 1:1:1 policy pledges 1% of its product, 1% of its equity, and 1% of employees' time to communities and work in the nonprofit sector. [7]



## 03.4 Stand out from competitors with strong learning and development initiatives

Providing upskilling and reskilling opportunities may sound like a policy that primarily benefits existing employees. However, a lack of learning and development initiatives is **the number one reason** people leave their jobs. [8]

Offering development programs to your employees helps you stand out from the crowd.

In addition to attracting candidates, learning and development strategies maximize the value of your hires in a changing skills landscape. Nearly 60% of the workforce already need new skills to do their jobs effectively; offering training opportunities ensures that new hires can adapt even if their roles shift. [9]

[Read our guide to learning and development](#)

It also allows you to take on workers with incomplete or adjacent skill sets if you're hiring during a skills shortage. This avoids the cost of hiring in-demand experts because you can use training to fill in the gaps.

## 03.5 Broadcast your company culture with strong employer branding

Now that you've strengthened employees' connection to each other and to your organization's mission and values, it's time to build this into your employer brand. This plays a pivotal role in attracting new talent.

The key to strong employer branding is to foreground **the EVP, or employee value proposition**. In other words: What are the benefits of working for your organization? At some organizations, such as startups, you could base your EVP on the autonomy and creativity you offer employees. At others, the EVP might be the chance to work from anywhere in the world on a remote contract. Although the concepts of an EVP and employer brand are closely related, the two have distinct differences.

[Check out this blog on EVP vs. employer brand to learn more](#)

Although the concepts of an EVP and employer brand are closely related, the two have distinct differences.

Google is a good example of a company with a strong employer brand. Known for innovation and flexibility, Google has several high-profile policies that project this image, for example, their office perks, like "nap rooms." The EVP for Google is that employees contribute to a creative work environment for a globally recognized brand, with autonomy over their workflow.

## 03.6 Engage in strategic workforce planning

Much of the work we've done so far is preparation for active recruitment. This is where strategic workforce planning comes in. Strategic workforce planning is all about getting:

- The right candidates
- Into the right roles
- At the right time for the organization

To do this, you need to first assess the skills of your existing employees. You might do a general skills audit, or focus on teams that have been struggling to meet their targets. None in not only on core skills, but also on transferable and soft or power skills that facilitate collaboration and problem-solving.

Once this is done, conduct a skills gap analysis using the data you've collected and identify the holes in your workforce you need to fill. Then, draw up a timeline for recruitment.

[Learn how to conduct a skills audit](#)

[Learn how to conduct a skills gap analysis](#)

## 03.7 Develop a capability-building framework

Once you have data on the skills you're missing in your organization, you can develop an action plan to bridge those gaps. One way to do this is through capability building, or identifying and propagating the skills needed for the business to succeed.

McKinsey suggests this should be done [in four key areas](#), teaching employees how:

1. The business makes money
2. The organization is managed
3. They can add value
4. They can develop personally

This effort to strengthen your existing workforce involves learning and development initiatives like the ones mentioned above. It may also include identifying key skills that can't be nurtured in-house and must be brought in through external recruitment.

## 03.8 Choose the best talent acquisition technology

To acquire the best talent, it helps to use the best talent acquisition technology. The most recommended recruitment tools for human resources on the market include software like:

- **Applicant tracking systems (ATS)**, which help you keep track of current and past applicants
- **Internal talent marketplaces**, which show the skills available within your organization
- **Testing software**, like TestGorilla and other assessment tools

The latter can be integrated with other recruitment tools to spread the benefit of skills test data across your hiring function.

## 03.9 Use talent acquisition analytics to hone your processes

Talent acquisition analytics refers to any data about your employees and processes that helps guide your hiring strategy. You might draw your talent acquisition analytics data from your ATS, skills testing software, or recruitment marketing platforms.

There are many innovative ways to use data when developing a talent acquisition strategy, for example:

- Recognizing that candidates sourced from one recruiting partner have a low success rate and reallocating your recruitment funds to more effective talent sources
- Noticing that candidates tend to fall off after the first phone interview, so scrutinizing that process to improve it
- Identifying diversity gaps in the workplace and deploying additional outreach to diverse candidates when hiring in these areas

## 03.10 Build a talent pool to get an overview of your talent pipeline

Your talent pipeline is best thought of as the journey candidates take toward employment at your business. It starts when they first hear of you – for example, on social media – and ends in employment at your company.

On their way, employees pass through your talent pool: a list of potential candidates in active consideration for open positions at your company. To expand your talent pool and tap into the right talent when filling vacancies, you first need to get an overview of the candidates in your orbit. To do this, create a database including information for:

- Any current applicants for positions at your company
- Promising past applicants who have consented to staying in your system
- Current employees eligible for internal promotion
- Past employees you would be glad to see return to the organization

You might keep track of these in an applicant tracking system or an internal talent marketplace software. This gives you a better view of your talent pipeline because it helps you keep track of potential candidates for upcoming roles and where they come from.

Depending on the recruitment tools you use, it can also help you stay in touch with potential candidates to stop them from falling off your radar.

## 03.11 Embrace inclusive hiring practices

Now that you've honed your acquisition strategy to attract talent, you should employ inclusive hiring methods to hire as diversely as possible. Pay particular attention to diversity and inclusion if your company or industry is dominated by one group.

One way to make your diversity and inclusion talent management more inclusive is by removing degree requirements. This is a widespread trend known as the degree reset. It is driven by increasing awareness that STARs, or workers skilled through alternative routes, have valuable skills but are often kept out of the workforce because they don't have degrees. Opening your workforce to STARs diversifies your pipeline significantly because **60%** of American workers aged 25 or older [do not hold a four-year degree](#).

Increased diversity in your hiring brings benefits to your business outcomes. Research shows that each 10% increase in intersectional gender equity achieves a 1%-2% boost in revenue for organizations; indeed, McKinsey analysis shows this relationship has only strengthened over time. [\[10,11\]](#)

[Read about diversity and inclusion for hiring teams](#)

## 03.12 Use campus recruitment to find candidates for early-career or research roles

Don't worry: Doing away with degree requirements doesn't mean ignoring graduates. They just won't have an unfair advantage over STARs anymore. Of course, some roles do still require degrees, and even if they're not necessary, the skills candidates gain from university can be an asset.

With this in mind, campus recruitment is a great option when you're hiring for research or technical roles, or looking for a highly targeted age demographic. After all, Gen Z make up **more than a quarter of the workforce** – you need to connect with them early. [12]

The secret to successful campus recruitment is tailoring your approach. Be sure to foreground stability and salary when you pitch job descriptions to Gen Z because these are priorities for emerging graduates. [13]

## 03.13 Enlist your team members for virtual job fairs

Particularly if you belong to a remote or hybrid workplace, hosting a virtual job fair is a great way to meet and evaluate potential talent and expand your global talent acquisition strategy.

There are many ways to approach this form of virtual recruitment. For instance, you might set up one-to-one meetings between candidates and hiring managers as a pre-screening process. You can also ask department heads to deliver short lectures on key projects.

The benefit of meeting candidates in this forum is that both parties get a better idea of **their fit with your organization**. For best results, ask the teams you're hiring for to participate and interact with candidates. Get their impressions of the available applicants and let this guide the recruitment process.

## 03.14 Train up new talent by creating an internship program

Internships get a bad rap sometimes. If the main appeal of hiring interns is to have someone to go on your morning coffee run and take meeting notes, it's not the talent acquisition strategy for you. However, if you're willing to trust and train young recruits, creating an internship program brings fresh insight into your processes and extends your pipeline into a younger generation.

Asana has had great success with its internship program. At Asana, all interns are “technical interns,” and are considered to be core members of the team. Instead of working on low-risk projects alone, they contribute directly to product teams as a means of hands-on training. [14]

[Learn how to create an internship program](#)

## 03.15 Organize a hackathon to unearth “hidden gem” candidates

A hackathon, sometimes referred to as a “codefest,” is an event where computer programmers from different backgrounds collaborate to solve problems or complete complex projects.

It is usually a company or educational body that organizes a hackathon to solve business challenges and promote innovation.

As well as providing value to your business, hackathons are also a great way to spot potential talent and programming skills that might have gone unnoticed due to recruitment barriers like degree requirements.

Learn how to organize a hackathon



## 03.16 Try passive recruiting by creating thought leadership content

We know that passive recruiting sounds like a dream come true. That’s when you just sit back, and the best candidates come to you, right?

Not quite. Passive recruiting is when hiring managers proactively reach out to passive candidates **who are not currently engaged in the job search**.

One way to identify these candidates is to establish yourself or one of your senior executives as a thought leader in your industry. You could do this through a podcast, like the Social Minds podcast by Social Chain Agency, where senior leaders at the company discuss pressing topics in social media marketing. [15]

This approach has the dual benefit of not only attracting potential clients, but also professionals working in the same area. You can then use these leads to reach out to promising candidates who already associate you with innovative ideas.

## 03.17 Activate your existing network with an employee referral program

One of the most effective talent acquisition strategies out there is the good old employee referral program. **Employee referral programs deliver more than 30% of all hires.** [16]

For roles that are particularly difficult to fill, create added incentives for employees to refer qualified candidates. For example, you might offer gift cards for every referred candidate who makes it to the interview stage, regardless of whether they are eventually hired.

This encourages employees to think more creatively about who to recommend for job postings, while still ensuring candidates are qualified. It even bolsters your current employee engagement by involving them in the recruitment process.

[Learn how to set up a referral program](#)

## 03.18 Use employee-generated content for social media recruiting

When you picture social media recruiting, you probably imagine the more in-your-face examples – brash messages from recruiters on LinkedIn, or punchy job ads on Facebook.

But your social media recruiting efforts can also be more subtle, using **content generated by your current employees.**

This could be a “Day in the life” video like the “life at Google” videos Googlers post on TikTok, or it could be as simple as asking employees to share their wins on LinkedIn under a company hashtag.

This brings some of the benefits of the employee referral strategies we discussed above, in addition to humanizing your organization to outsiders. It also adds authenticity to the claims you make about your culture. It’s one thing to tell people that you have “generous family leave policies”; it’s another for a working parent to post about how your company is helping them raise their children.

This type of employee-led content helps candidates picture themselves at your organization, which makes you stand out on the job market.

[Read best practices for social media recruiting](#)

## 03.19 Use talent assessments

Traditional hiring tools like resumes are a minefield of bias. Replacing resumes with talent assessments takes human error like this out of hiring by giving hiring managers hard metrics to back up their hiring decisions.

Instead of looking at inaccurate indicators for new employees like university degrees or making snap decisions based on unconscious bias, talent assessments help hiring teams to understand their candidates' performance in key skill areas. In 2024, [90% of employers](#) using skills-based hiring reduced mis-hires.



## 03.20 Assess applicants for culture add to find diverse candidates

Talent assessments don't only test hard skills, but also more intangible qualities like a candidate's suitability for your all-important company culture.

**At TestGorilla, we do this with our Culture Add test**

Whereas the traditional concept of “culture fit” relies on reproducing the existing characteristics of your team, our Culture Add test identifies candidates who share your organization's values while also bringing something new to the makeup of your team.

This might be their unique combination of soft skills or their attitude to working.

Whatever diversity they bring, it has benefits for creativity on your teams: Deloitte research shows that diversity of thought increases innovation by about 20%. [\[17\]](#)

The Culture Add test is a huge asset when hiring diverse candidates. It ensures that even when your employees come from diverse backgrounds and ways of working, they are united behind a common vision, reducing conflict while maximizing innovation.

## 03.21 Build structured interviews into your hiring plans

If you're following all, or even some, of the strategies set out above, you already have the workings of a **strong hiring plan**.

The next step is bringing this data-driven approach to the interview process. Provide support to hiring managers during interviews by standardizing the interview process as much as possible using **the structured interview approach**.

Unlike traditional unstructured interviews, structured interviews require that interviewers ask all candidates:

- The same questions
- In the same order
- Judged by the same criteria

This ensures that all candidates are evaluated on the core skills for the role and with minimal personal bias affecting the result.

Carve out time in your hiring plan to discuss questions with stakeholders and outline what a good answer looks like for your interviewers. You should also consider implementing a basic scoring system for panel interviewers to make it easier to compare candidates.

Although this may take more time prior to interviews, it shortens the decision-making process considerably post-interview, ultimately cutting your time-to-hire.

## 03.22 Continue candidate relationship management, even after rejections

Thanks to sites like Glassdoor, news travels fast when candidates have a bad experience during hiring. Research by the Human Capital Institute found that **72% of applicants** share negative candidate experiences online. [18] This means that candidate relationship management is more important than ever for preserving your employer brand.

Our top tips for candidate relationship management are to:

1. Use a dedicated candidate relationship management system
2. Stay in respectful contact with candidates throughout the hiring process
3. Be proactive about candidate communication – even, or perhaps especially, when it's a rejection

The same Human Capital Institute research found that three-quarters of job-seekers **never hear back from employers** after applying for a role, so even an automated email goes a long way to set you apart from competitors.

### 03.23 Make compensation and benefits for every role publicly available

It's pretty obvious that the best incentive for top talent to work with you is to offer compensation and benefits above the average for your industry – and, crucially, to state salaries in your job ads.

If your compensation and benefits packages are truly competitive, we also suggest making the salary for all roles available online. This levels the playing field for diverse candidates, particularly those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds who might not have been prepared to negotiate for a competitive salary.

It also sends a signal of respect to candidates, reassuring top talent that they are not being short-changed when you offer them a role.

[Read our guide to competitive compensation](#)

### 03.24 Follow onboarding best practices to reduce ghosting

Alas, ghosting doesn't only happen in the dating world. Sometimes, you might be ghosted after interviews have taken place, or even after exchanging contracts, maybe even by a candidate you thought was a perfect fit.

One way to avoid this is to adhere to onboarding best practices by onboarding proactively from the moment you offer a role to a candidate.

Kick off your onboarding process by sending future employees a personalized video from their team welcoming them to the company. This creates an unwritten social contract, discouraging ghosting and creating familiarity with your new hire before they even start.

### 03.25 Choose the best candidate screening methods

Candidate screening is one of the most important parts of the hiring process, and it's a shame that most companies boil it down to "scan resumes."

Effective methods for screening candidates determine your candidate quality, impacting your recruitment budget and reducing mis-hires. The best screening methods also reduce your time to hire, which further affects your budget.

We recommend **skills-based screening methods**, such as using talent assessments, structured interviews, and job trials.

[Read our guide to candidate screening](#)

These methods show you the candidate's real skills – and they do it quickly, streamlining your process with automation and data-driven decisions. A quick example screening process would be evaluating candidates with talent assessments, taking the best to structured interviews, and then issuing job trials to your finalists.

# 04 NOT SURE WHERE TO START? TAKE A SKILLS-BASED APPROACH TO YOUR TALENT ACQUISITION STRATEGY

The name of the game when developing a talent acquisition strategy is to be as proactive as possible. Don't wait for a role to open up in your team to set yourself apart from competitors.

With that said, we know that Rome wasn't built in a day – we don't expect you to have all 25 talent acquisition strategies in place tomorrow. If you have to start somewhere, you can start by **rolling out talent assessments across your hiring process** as soon as possible.

Strengthening your familiarity with skills-based hiring helps you when building a talent acquisition strategy more broadly. Employers who take a skills-based approach to talent acquisition see results. Of employers who switch to a skills-based approach, **91%** improve retention, **90%** reduce mis-hires, and **78%** reduce hiring costs. You can read more about this in [The State of Skills-Based Hiring](#).

Good luck, and thanks for reading!

To get an idea of what to expect over the coming years, check out our piece on the latest [talent acquisition trends](#).

To find out how to avoid active recruitment and reduce turnover, read our blog post about [talent retention](#).



## 05 ABOUT TESTGORILLA

TestGorilla is a talent discovery platform that is shaping the future of work through skills-based hiring. The company's library of scientifically validated, skills-based tests offers a scalable way for companies to hire faster, better, and without bias. Meanwhile, candidates use TestGorilla to demonstrate their skills and potential, ensuring talent finds a match for dream roles. Founded in 2019, TestGorilla's global team provides over 10,000 customers and millions of candidates with skills-based testing and talent discovery solutions. The company is ranked number 1 on G2 for talent assessment software, with over 1,000 customer reviews contributing to its success. TestGorilla has been recognized globally for its growth and impact, being named in Sifted's B2B SaaS Rising 100 and annually topping G2's list for fastest-growing software.

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