



THE STACK FRAMEWORK

How small businesses hire.

Every hiring problem you face lives in one of five places.
This guide is the map. Find yours, and fix it.

S **Source**
ATTRACT

T **Tempo**
ENGAGE

A **Assess**
VET

C **Close**
OFFER

K **Keep**
RETAIN

Here's the playbook.

STACK is the playbook we use to find where hiring breaks down and unblock it, and we're handing you the whole thing. Every hiring problem a small business has lives in one of these five places.

Read it straight through, or jump to the stage where you're losing people.

"The secret of my success is that we have gone to exceptional lengths to hire the best people in the world."

STEVE JOBS

03	S	Source · <i>Attract</i>	Pg 03
05	T	Tempo · <i>Engage</i>	Pg 05
06	A	Assess · <i>Vet</i>	Pg 06
08	C	Close · <i>Offer</i>	Pg 08
09	K	Keep · <i>Retain</i>	Pg 09
10	.	So, where are you losing them?	Pg 10



Source

ATTRACT

DIAGNOSTIC

01

Does the job title match what candidates actually search for?

02

Does your ad lead with why someone should work for you?

03

Are you hunting talent, or waiting for it to find you?

Make sure your best people can find you.

*When the right candidates **can't find your job**, or won't apply when they do.*

Most small businesses get one of three things: silence, a flood of unqualified applicants, or the same recycled names. And for the roles that matter most, the best person is already employed somewhere else and won't see a job ad at all.

* QUICK FIX

Search your own title.

Look the role up on LinkedIn or Indeed the way a candidate would. If it doesn't surface in autocomplete, rename it. The fix costs nothing and can move applicant volume overnight.

SOURCE, CONTINUED

Different roles live in different places.

Strong sourcing pulls three levers at once. No single lever does the job alone, and the right mix is a prescription you write for each role, not a setting you leave running.

THE THREE LEVERS

- 01

Well-run ads

A clear title and compelling copy, posted where your candidates actually look.
- 02

Internal referrals

Your team already knows people like them. Make referring easy and worth their while.
- 03

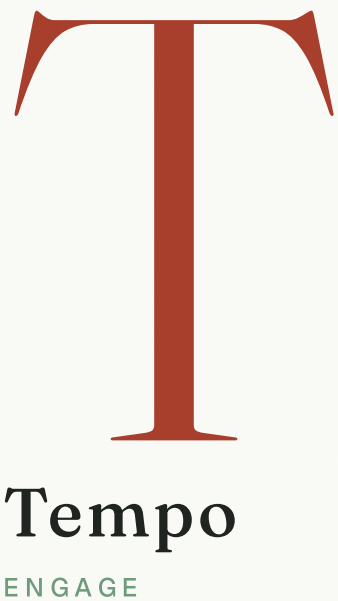
Proactive outreach

For the roles that matter most, go find the person who isn't looking yet.

MATCH THE CHANNEL TO THE ROLE

Accounting, sales, corporate	LinkedIn
Skilled trades, production	Indeed, Meta
Hourly and local	Indeed, local boards
Senior or niche	Outreach, referrals

Starting points, not rules. A welder and an accountant should never be sourced the same way.



DIAGNOSTIC

Move fast. Stay human.

*The right candidate applied. **Then ghosted.***

In 2026, the human touch wins. Your candidates are talking to several companies at once, and the good ones go to employers who can move through the process efficiently. Speed and warmth from a real person is your edge, a small-business superpower the big players can't match at scale.

01

How long does it take you to respond to a candidate?

02

Does first contact feel like an opportunity, or an interrogation?

03

Are there gaps of 48+ hours between process steps?

*** QUICK FIX**

Build a same-day reply.

Send it to every applicant within hours. It doesn't have to say much: *"We saw you. You'll hear from us by [date]."*



Assess

VET

DIAGNOSTIC

Great hires need more than a good vibe.

When you keep hiring the wrong person, despite the perfect resume and brilliant interview.

A gut feel or a trusted referral has its place. But getting clear on what the role actually requires saves you months of a bad fit quietly draining time and revenue. *The next page covers the four questions behind every hire.*

01

Do you know the non-negotiable traits this role needs?

02

Will more than one person interview the candidate?

03

Will you gather a reference or work sample, anything beyond the interview?

* QUICK FIX

Build a 3-question scorecard.

Pick the behaviors that predict success in this role. Write down what a strong, middling, and weak answer sounds like, *before* you interview. Then score against it.

BEHIND EVERY HIRE

There are only four answers that **matter**.

Nearly every interview question is really asking one of these four. Master them and you cut hiring mistakes immediately.

01 **Can they?**
Skills, experience, and education.

02 **Will they?**
Pay, tenure, and commitment.

03 **Are they a fit?**
Company size, culture, and environment.

04 **Locus of control.**
Does this person believe they shape their outcomes, or that outcomes happen to them? Internal locus of control is one of the strongest predictors of performance we have.



Close

OFFER

DIAGNOSTIC

An offer they can't refuse.

*You made the offer. **They said no.***

When offers get rejected, counter-offers win, and your top choice walks at the eleventh hour, you're burning time. The question underneath all of it: do you actually know what this person wants?

01

Do you know the candidate's #1 motivation: money, flexibility, growth, something else?

02

Have you benchmarked your full comp package against the 2026 market?

03

Are you selling the opportunity, or just presenting a number?

*** QUICK FIX**

Ask one question first.

Before your next offer: *"What would make this a clear yes for you?"* Then build the offer around the answer.

K

Keep

RETAIN

DIAGNOSTIC

01

What does day one look like: a plan, or a clean desk and "figure it out"?

02

Do you run structured "stay" interviews, or only "exit" interviews?

Now keep them.

*When new hires quit in 90 days, in a year, in two, **and you start the whole search over again.***

The offer was just the beginning. The best companies don't just onboard. They re-recruit their people every single day.

"Take care of your employees and they'll take care of your business."

RICHARD BRANSON

* THE PRACTICE

Re-recruit.

The ongoing work of reminding your best people why they chose you, *before* someone else reminds them they have options.

RUN THE CHECK

So, where are you losing them?

TURN THE CHECK INTO A FIX

- 01

Score each stage: yes, not sure, or no. Be honest.
- 02

Find your weakest link. One blocked stage stalls the whole hire.
- 03

Run that page's Quick Fix, or call to troubleshoot it with us.

S	Source	Are the right people finding you?
T	Tempo	Are you engaging candidates fast enough?
A	Assess	Are you hiring on merit and locus?
C	Close	Are your offers being accepted?
K	Keep	Are you re-recruiting effectively?

THE BOTTLENECK RULE

"A hire is only as strong as your weakest stage. Fix that one, and everything downstream gets easier."



FRACTIONAL RECRUITING FOR SMALL BUSINESS

Let's talk.

Everything in this guide, you can run yourself. If you'd rather not, that's where we come in: we run this playbook for you as your internal talent team, with **no per-hire fees**, so you can focus on growing your business. How would it feel to have the same kind of hiring support that Big Corporate, Inc. enjoys?

*Handle it yourself using our playbook,
or give me a call to see if we're a good fit.*

www.metcalfsearch.com



Jay Metcalf

MANAGING PARTNER

PHONE **614-892-5050**

EMAIL jay@emetcalf.com

WEB metcalfsearch.com