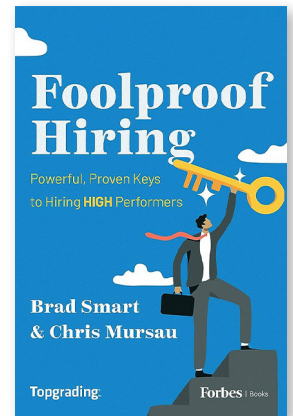


# Foolproof Hiring

Powerful, Proven Keys to Hiring High Performers

by **Brad Smart and Chris Mursau**



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## THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Great talent is the life force of every company. The equation here is simple: the right employees will help your company march towards success and the wrong ones will inevitably stunt its growth. Sadly, a lack of the right talent is one of the most pressing issues every management faces.

By addressing the most prominent flaws in hiring, the book *Foolproof Hiring: Powerful, Proven Keys to Hiring High Performers* transforms your hiring activities from a series of guessing games to a series of progressively deeper and far more accurate insights into candidates. It helps you correct the flaws in your recruitment processes, arms you with the right tools and skills to extract the right candidate candor and helps you deploy precise verification strategies to determine whether an employee is an A Player or not.

Authors Brad Smart and Chris Mursau decode why you may struggle with hiring top talent, how you can deploy Topgrading methodology to increase your A Player pool, and how you can tackle problems that may be plaguing your hiring processes. From the vantage point of hiring, this book can be your guiding light to set your organization up for success.

## IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- What an A Player is and how you can hire a bigger pool of them.
- Why Topgrading is the best way to hire A Players.
- The major mistakes in hiring and how to fix them.
- How to measure your hiring results.

## Introduction

Talent, or more accurately, a lack of talent consistently comes up as one of the top concerns of CEOs, human resources leaders, and talent acquisition managers. Training, development, and succession planning may have an impact on the level of talent in an organization. However, talent starts with hiring.

Typical hiring processes use flawed recruitment methods. They use ineffective applicant-screening tools and often fail to generate candidate candor. Shallow interview methods that are unrevealing can often stunt a company's ability to hire top performers. Furthermore, today's hiring methods fail to provide reliable verification and companies can never know if someone is a great hire or a poor performer.

Fortunately, there are several ways you can truly improve hiring results. This book shows you how to attract a lot of applicants, effectively screen in just the best candidates, ensure candidate transparency and honesty, and get an accurate verification of what candidates say.

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## Chapter 1: Your Hiring Experience Is Disappointing

Most companies work hard to get a lot of resumes to increase the probability of more A Players in the hiring funnel. Even if you do get many resumes, it still takes several hours to plow through all of them and figure out with whom you should actually talk. Most of the time, there is serious fiction in the resumes you receive. Unfortunately, this turns hiring into a guessing game where you try to figure out which resumes might fool you.

During a typical recruitment cycle, you use some common screening tools, require candidates to complete an intelligence test, and your ATS uses artificial to do a keyword match between the job ad and the resumes you received. In short, you deploy those zillion AI-assisted screening apps that promise to identify A Players. After going through countless processes, you finally hire two candidates, only to realize they were far from being A Players.

Such disappointing results occur not because you are deficient as a leader. But because your hiring method is failing you and your company. We wrote this book after sifting through decades of experience, hundreds of case studies, and thousands of testimonials. We then distilled our hiring books, podcasts, webinars, articles, and more to highlight the essentials you need to get started.

## Chapter 2: Set the Standard—Hire A Players in Every Job

A Players are high performers that managers would enthusiastically rehire. They are in the top 10 percent of talent, at a compensation level enough to achieve success. A Players meet all key competencies within a reasonable amount of time and fit your organizational culture well.

But if an A player doesn't have the potential to be promoted, they will likely not be a good fit for the position. For instance, an A Player sales rep who is not interested in, or likely any good at, leading others will only be an A Player sales rep, not an A-Player VP. But if you hire enough promotable A Players, you can promote them from within instead of hiring externally.

Most A Player executives have failed in a job and they learned from the failure. Therefore, when hiring A Players, it's important to consider those who have failed but knew how to learn. If your HR managers can improve the Quality of Hire, they are A Players. CEOs must not only hire A Player HR professionals but also empower them to uphold A Player standards.

For best results, it's important to hold people accountable to achieve these standards and let them know they cannot keep their jobs if they fail. Underperformers will usually quit rather than wait to be fired.

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## Chapter 3: Measure Your Hiring Results

When Topgrading is implemented, the only acceptable hires are A Players and A Potentials – people who are not yet A Players but who, with experience and training, are “getting there.” Everyone short of that is a mis-hire.

Start with measuring the cost of hiring mistakes. Think of a specific non-A Player you've worked with and estimate expenses in categories including hiring costs, compensation costs, cost of maintaining the person in the job, severance, and cost of mistakes and missed business opportunities.

Measure your hiring success rate. This success rate is defined by “filling an open position with an A Player.” Estimate how many A Players you have on your team. Theoretically, if you only hire A Players 50 percent of the time but keep firing non-A Players and hiring replacements, you could end up with mostly As on your team. Typical hiring results are 25 percent A Players, 50 percent Bs, and 25 percent C players

Topgrading case studies show improvement from 26 percent to 85 percent of high performers hired. Topgrading organizations initially strive for 75 percent of A Players hired but raise the goal after achieving it.

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### Chapter 4: Hiring Problem #1–Not Enough Applicants

If you have just half a handful of applicants, there is only a slim chance that this tiny pool contains an A Player. Hiring the least bad candidate out of this pool of candidates pretty much assures disappointment.

To resolve the issue of low application levels, make your job ads and “Careers” page exciting, enticing, and engaging. Start your hiring process by creating a job scorecard. The components of a good job scorecard include

- Requirements and technical skills (screening)
- Measurable accountabilities (what – results)
- Core values, key and important competencies (how – behaviors)

Work to get twenty-plus applicants per opening to have a good chance of hiring an A Player. Create SEO-friendly job posts, post the job on your website, encourage everyone to tap into their network and pay referral fees to employees who recruit A Players from their personal networks, use job boards, increase compensation, and always be recruiting. Finally, define recruiting metrics, set targets, and hold the team accountable for achieving results.

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### Chapter 5: Hiring Problem #2–You Are Fooled into Hiring Low Performers

The single biggest problem in hiring is: candidates can fool you because they assume they can get away with it when companies discourage managers from taking reference calls. In fact, more than 50 percent of applicants lie on their resumes and continue the fiction in interviews, tests, and reference checks with buddies.

To avoid these issues, you can use the Topgrading Truth Motivator. This helps let candidates know from the start that a final step in hiring is for them (not you) to arrange reference calls. These calls can take place with managers a candidate has reported to and with others they worked with

in the past. Reference calls are usually made once a job offer is on the table.

Remember, retained search firms get paid regardless of whether you hire someone or not. For each of the last editions of Topgrading, two hundred CEOs were asked, “What percent of the time, when you’ve used an executive search firm, have you been satisfied with the result?” Up to 80 percent of the time CEOs said they did not get their money’s worth using these firms. The reason is simple. Search consultants produce sugarcoated reports that do not include any of the candidates’ significantly weaker points. You can get far better results from recruiters by requiring them to explain the Truth Motivator to potential hires.

The Truth Motivator motivates candidates to either be forthcoming or simply drop up. The result is you reduce the screening time by 50 percent. When you save time, you also save money. The Truth Motivator also makes hiring, onboarding, and coaching more effective and Topgrading makes the entire process fairer and more ethical.

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### Chapter 6: Hiring Problem #3–Shallow, Unrevealing Interviews

Sure, competencies interviews do certain things well such as providing structure, addressing some competencies, and including the same questions for all. However, these interviews have some serious flaws. They can be too short, address too few competencies, and are easily faked. The result is a higher number of mis-hires.

This is where the need for Topgrading comes in. This process offers a chronological, in-depth, and structured way to help companies extract the most powerful, difficult, thorough, and revealing interviews.

Always follow the Topgrading interview guide for fairness, legal defensibility, thoroughness, and accuracy to hire better candidates. For professional individual jobs and managerial jobs alike, make sure you have two interviewers conduct the Topgrading interview. Both interviewers can take mental breaks and be confident that their partner can come in, ask questions, etc. If you don’t connect some dots, there is a good chance your partner will. Include a primary interviewer who would ask most questions and take some notes and a secondary interviewer, who will ask some 100 questions and take lots of notes.

Topgrading also makes way for fairer interviews. It enhanc-

es diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) because fairness has been embedded in the method since it was created.

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### Chapter 7: Hiring Problem #4– Worthless Reference Calls

You would love to verify what candidates have said because the most valuable information you can get about a candidate is an honest assessment of their prior performance with former managers. But companies are fearful of the perceived legal risk of managers taking reference calls and the manager or the company being sued by a former employee because of negative things said about their performance or character. So, naturally, most companies discourage managers from taking reference calls.

Conduct candidate-arranged reference calls with bosses and others when the candidate is willing. This, again, usually happens when a job offer is being discussed. You can expect candidates to arrange calls with 90 percent of the people with whom you want to talk.

If references balk at arranging calls, you can change the purpose to “personal,” not a “business call,” after of course asking the HR’s permission. You can talk to people who have left the company, or make the job offer contingent upon no surprises when the references call is made – this can hold even after you hire the person.

To make sure you and your organization remain protected throughout the process, stay in line with your state and local laws. Finally, in the future, don’t just permit but encourage managers to take reference calls, even if the former employee was a poor performer.

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### Chapter 8: Hiring Problem #5– Applicant-Screening Tools Don’t Work

There are many proven and effective ability, skill, knowledge, and interest tests. Some personality tests like Myers-Briggs, and MMPI are too often misused and others do more harm than good by eliminating many A Players as C Players.

We’ve said the personality tests can be faked, so the results are suspect. Ironically, because the PreScreen Snapshot has the Truth Motivator in the instructions, candidates filling out the PreScreen Snapshot form are probably honest, and you can probably trust their personality test results.

Generally speaking, AI-assisted screening tools have the potential to be:

- Fairer than conclusions by interviewers who might harbor biases
- Fairer than unstructured interviews that have a bias
- A great time-saver for recruiters
- Acceptable to candidates
- Inexpensive
- Effective like the best employment tests

Unfortunately, however, in recent years, there has been a flood of AI-assisted screening tools fraught with widespread problems. Although their marketing looks great and claims sound logical, AI-assisted screening tools are the most quoted cost-of-mishire form in the world.

When choosing an AI-assisted screen tool, it’s important to focus on its fairness and lack of bias. This is where the Pre-Screen Snapshot comes in. It is a two-job form that identifies the most honest and highest-performing applicants. It does not suffer from the many proven flaws of most testing tools and applicant-screening instruments.

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### Conclusion

The advice in this book can be summarized as the Topgrading Formula:

$R + PSSS + TTM + TTI + RC = \text{Career Success for Managers and Increased Company Profit}$

Here, R stands for recruiting the right way, PSS refers to the use of PreScreen Snapshot, TTM means using the Topgrading Truth Motivator, TTI is all about conducting tandem topgrading interviews, and RC refers to conducting candidate-arranged reference calls. By deploying these hiring strategies, you can foolproof your company’s success and increase the efficiency of your human resources team.



**Brad Smart** is frequently acknowledged as the world's foremost expert on hiring. Brad's firm, Topgrading, Inc., consults with many leading companies and hundreds of small and growth companies. Brad has interviewed over 6,500 candidates for hire and promotion to executive positions. President of Topgrading, Inc. since 2018, **Chris Mursau** has conducted over 3,500 in-depth assessments for internal and external candidates and helped a vast array of organizations pack their teams with A Players.



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