

# Job Scorecards: How to Create a Roadmap for Hiring Success

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Job descriptions should be retired as a hiring tool. In our blog post [\*\*Your Job Descriptions Suck—Job Scorecards Are A Way to Fix Them\*\*](#), we talked about why applicants dislike job descriptions and why scorecards serve as a better guide for what to expect from a specific role. Job scorecards map the outcomes a successful hire will achieve in 3 months, 6 months, and even the first year. Scorecards clarify the reasons for hiring and paint a very clear picture of what work needs to be accomplished. Since hiring is a matching process for both the job seeker and the organization, scorecards are both a role clarifying and self-assessment tool.

Modern-day roles are constantly evolving. They bring together different fields of knowledge and, when done well, get everyone closer to the outcomes they want. For the employee, it is a great job they love. For the employer, it is a happy, committed employee who fulfills the need.

Scorecards describe both the skills and the outcomes expected from a new hire. They are a roadmap for a successful hire—a way to evaluate what success will look like for the new hire. In general, they cover job role desired outcomes the organization wants to see completed from the first 30 days to the first year—it is indeed a roadmap from hire to success.

Many [\*\*organizations today are moving from a process-oriented focus to an outcome-oriented one\*\*](#). This [\*\*Forbes article about Full Frame Marketing\*\*](#) calls out investing in a results-driven culture creates:

- Higher retention rates (Full Frame Marketing's is over 95%)
- Increased employee productivity
- Improved teamwork and collaboration on projects
- A more positive workplace environment
- Enhanced communication between managers and employees
- Better aligned metrics
- Transparency between departments
- Award-winning culture

Leveraging a scorecard from the hiring process to feedback sessions during the first year is a key component of this transition—moving from process to outcomes.

## How to build a job scorecard

Start by making a list of the skills and the outcomes you are looking for in filling a role. An effective scorecard will have at least 4 to 6 key skills required to successfully do the job based on expectations for the next 6 to 12 months. After thinking about the expectations, think about the outcomes that could be achieved with the new hire and write them down:

- What problems will they solve?
- In what ways will they contribute to their team and to the business?
- Where can the new hire skill up, or what should they learn?
- How can you help them accelerate their personal growth to become more effective for your organization?

As we mentioned in [Your Job Descriptions Suck—Job Scorecards Are A Way to Fix Them](#), we find that the best way to identify outcomes is to do so backwards. Write down what you want this person to be accomplishing a year out, and then you can work back to 6 months, 3 months, or even 1-2 months, depending on how early you want to check in.

We've written out some examples from our experience to get you thinking, but if you pull these examples unthinkingly, it's possible you'll hire the right person for our company, not yours. Your company's context is different, and what you need from a person is likely at least subtly different from others. After all, if the job were the same in every place, people would have less to learn and less incentive to move.

**Here are some examples for various types of jobs:**

Role	Key Skills	Ideal Outcome
<b>Marketer</b>	- Writing and editing high-quality copy with the ability to adapt to varying personas and content formats (blog posts, landing pages, newsletters, social media posts, etc.)	<p>- <b>In 1 year:</b> Is proactive in creating and recommending content for different audiences. Can explain the differences between the different buyer personas and uses that information to help people in Marketing and around the organization make better decisions. Writes compelling copy.</p> <p>- <b>In 6 months:</b> Is regularly creating shareable content appropriate to specific stakeholders, prospects, and customers, which brings attention to our brand and supports marketing goals.</p> <p>- <b>In 2 months:</b> Understands our product or service, how it fits in the market, our vision for key messaging, and how we differentiate from competitors. Has shipped ~2 pieces of impactful content.</p>

<p><b>Software Engineering Manager</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strengths within at least 2 of the 4 key managements (people, product, project, and technical)</li> <li>- Shores up weaknesses by working with the team</li> <li>- Strong understanding of the team's area of responsibility in terms of technology and product</li> <li>- Removes blockers, drives priorities, and encourages good tradeoffs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>In 1 year:</b> Is motivating and encouraging the team to both deliver and grow. Maintains strong relationships with all team members, as evidenced through skip-level 1:1s. Has a strong pulse of what is needed to deliver and actively removes blockers. The team is delivering, managing technical debt backlog, and improving the codebase.</li> <li>- <b>In 6 months:</b> They have knowledge of the strengths and areas of growth for the engineering team and designed and recommended a development plan for each person. Regularly monitors the product development plan and reports when on or off track. Reprioritizes engineering staff if necessary. Recommends solutions.</li> <li>- <b>In 2 months:</b> Have built good relationships with key team members. Is learning about key areas of the technology, including technical debt and architectural decisions. Understands the product roadmap and prioritization process and can contribute. Understands team process and has begun to contribute to it and identify opportunities to improve.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Customer Service</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maintaining all requests and expressed needs in an organized fashion, with full written detail</li> <li>- Builds relationships with customers and understands their contexts and difficulties so that we can better serve them and our suggestions and products actually solve their problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>In 1 year:</b> They are making product or service recommendations based on conversations they have with customers. They represent the company with enthusiasm as well as expertise. Their follow-up with customer issues is considered exemplary. They drive documentation and repeatability.</li> <li>- <b>In 6 months:</b> They have a solid handle on the core capabilities of the products we offer and the solutions they enable. They understand the documentation systems and are making use of them when answering questions from customers. They have ideas for how to improve customer relations and product usage and are speaking up about them.</li> <li>- <b>In 2 months:</b> Understands the core product or service offered by the company, is able to answer basic questions, and is responsive both in written and verbal communication to customers.</li> </ul>

For a more comprehensive example, see this [Marketing Manager Scorecard](#).

## A scorecard makes the interviewing process easier

Once you have a scorecard and have agreed on it with the key stakeholders, you can write a job ad—or, if HR requires it, a job description—and post it. What's next? The next step is the interviewing process. Here you can see the magic of a scorecard.

The scorecard is now an interview guide. Interview committees can review the scorecard, decide who is focused on interviewing for which parts of it, and ensure that interviews are designed to investigate if a candidate not only can achieve the outcomes listed but wants to do the work. Interviewers can stay focused with key questions from the scorecard and, of course, go down a path with their own questions to dig a bit deeper. Each interviewer knows they'll need to rate the applicant on these specific outcomes: whether the candidate will be likely to meet them.

Interviewers come from different backgrounds and are likely to pick up on different things in the challenging environment that an interview is. Each interviewer will bring their unique perspective to scoring the same set of key questions, which provides real depth in the evaluation. I say the person is a "6" on the 1-10 scale. You say "9." You share what you picked up during the final review. The end result is a serious decision with the input of everyone involved. By the time you have the feedback of 3-5 interviewers on a similar outcome you hope the candidate can achieve, there is confidence in the choice. And the interviewers learn more about how to interview by discussing candidates and seeing them from sides they hadn't considered before.

Instead of considering candidates based on whether or not the interviewer liked them, scorecards can ensure that interviewers are connecting the interview directly to the outcomes. Disagreement among interviewers is an opportunity to learn more about the candidate and the interview process. Agreement among the interviewers about weaknesses is fodder for managers to decide whether the particular weaknesses of a candidate are something that can be managed or should disqualify them.

In his new book [\*Talking to Strangers\*](#), Malcolm Gladwell suggests that many of us have an inflated opinion of our ability to size up people. Research suggests that we are not as objective as we would like to believe and are therefore prone to misinterpret comments, intonations, facial expressions, and gestures. Hiring is a compressed experience of an unfamiliar person, so it's really easy to catch a brief glimpse of something great or terrible and not understand what you're looking at. Having multiple people compare notes provides them a chance to put together the jigsaw pieces of what they saw into a clearer picture. But they can't really compare those interviews if they don't understand what they're looking for.

It's certainly easier to determine if someone has five years of experience or if they talk like someone from your social background, but those things don't successfully tell you whether they'll succeed at delivering in the role. As that's what you care most about, it's what you should interview for. Great interviewing is a curious inquiry, a chance to learn how applicants think and communicate what's relevant.

Scorecards systematize that curiosity to ensure that the interview team is aligned and working together effectively. Interviewers can go into an interview knowing what they're looking for and asking questions designed to get at the heart of accomplishing the outcomes the organization needs. Here is an example of a [Software Developer Scorecard](#). If you grade each criteria, you will find questions for the interview are easy.

Designing an interview plan from that scorecard, the first thing to notice is that it can be broken into three parts. The technical ability, the communication abilities, and the behavioral characteristics. Technical competencies can also be addressed with the scorecard.

Communication abilities are driven by how comfortable the applicant feels in the interview. This isn't a test or a moment to put pressure on them. It is a time to give them a realistic picture of the culture and work environment the job entails. So give applicants the opportunity to tell a story—this is likely to reduce the stress of the moment. Ask them about what problems they've solved. If you are a good interviewer, they are more likely to feel safe and share more authentically.

And finally, [behavioral characteristics matter](#). These are more difficult to figure out—however, a clue is how they answer questions. Do they describe their experiences more neutrally or more judgmentally? Are they egocentric ("I did this, this, and that") or collaborative ("my team accomplished this")? And does the applicant own the outcome, good or bad, or give credit/blame others? These are all critical work behaviors that matter both for short-term and long-term success.

The more information you gather in the scorecards, the easier it will be to create an accurate picture of the candidates, confirm their strengths and skills, and make the best hiring decision.

After you hire the ideal person, [the scorecards become a document you can refine both as an onboarding plan](#) and as the basis for the 30, 60, and 90-day view.

***Need support for building and leveraging scorecards in your organization? Reach out to [travis@humanfirstworks.com](mailto:travis@humanfirstworks.com) or [rebecca@humanfirstworks.com](mailto:rebecca@humanfirstworks.com).***