



LESSON 1

DETERMINING THE SKILLS YOU REALLY NEED

Introduction: Beyond the Job Description

Once you have a clear and compelling job description, the next step is to translate that into a concrete list of the skills you are looking for in a candidate. This is a critical step that will guide your sourcing, screening, and interviewing efforts. However, not all skills are created equal. It is essential to differentiate between essential skills, desirable skills, and transferable skills to ensure you are evaluating candidates effectively and not artificially limiting your talent pool.

The Three Categories of Skills

1. Essential Skills (The Must-Haves)

These are the non-negotiable skills that a candidate *must have* to be successful in the role. They are the foundational requirements, and a candidate who lacks these skills should not be considered for the position.

● **How to Identify Them:** Ask yourself, "Could a person do this job without this skill?" If the answer is no, then it is an essential skill.

● **Hotel Front Desk Example:**

- Excellent verbal communication skills and a professional demeanor.
- The ability to work a flexible schedule, including nights, weekends, and holidays.
- Basic computer proficiency.

● **Restaurant Server / Waiter Example:**

- The legal ability to serve alcohol.
- The physical ability to stand for long periods and carry heavy trays.
- A positive and customer-focused attitude.

2. Desirable Skills (The Nice-to-Haves)

These are the skills that would be beneficial for a candidate to have, but are not strictly necessary. A candidate who has these skills may be able to ramp up more quickly or bring additional value to the role, but a candidate who lacks them can still be successful.

- **How to Identify Them:** Ask yourself, "Would it be nice if the person had this skill, but could they learn it on the job?" If the answer is yes, then it is a desirable skill.
- **Hotel Front Desk Example:**
 - Previous experience with your specific property management software.
 - Fluency in a second language.
 - Experience in a similar hotel environment.
- **Restaurant Server Example:**
 - Extensive knowledge of wine and food pairings.
 - Experience with your specific point-of-sale (POS) system.
 - Previous experience in a fine-dining setting.

3. Transferable Skills (The Hidden Ge

These are the skills that a candidate has developed in a different context but that can be successfully applied to the current role. Identifying transferable skills is the key to finding hidden gems in your applicant pool and building a diverse and talented team.

- **How to Identify Them:** Look for candidates who may not have direct experience in your industry but who have demonstrated the underlying behavioral competencies you are looking for.
- **Hotel Front Desk Example:** A candidate with a background in high-end retail may not have hotel experience, but they likely have excellent customer service skills, experience handling difficult customers, and the ability to work in a fast-paced environment.
- **Restaurant Server Example:** A candidate who was a camp counselor may not have restaurant experience, but they likely have strong communication skills, the ability to multitask, and experience working with a diverse group of people.
- **The Key to Unlocking a Wider Talent Pool:** By focusing on transferable skills, you can look beyond the usual suspects and find great candidates in unexpected places. This is especially important in a tight labor market.

The Danger of "Must-Haves" Inflation

One of the biggest mistakes that hiring managers make is to create an impossibly long list of "must-have" skills. This "must-haves inflation" can severely limit your talent pool and cause you to overlook great candidates.

Before you label a skill as "essential," ask yourself these three questions:

① Is it truly impossible to do the job without this skill?

② Is it truly impossible to do the job without this skill?

③ Is it truly impossible to do the job without this skill?

By being disciplined and realistic about your essential skills, you will open yourself up to a much broader and more diverse pool of talent.

Activity: Skills Audit

Choose a job in your organization that you are currently hiring for or that you hire for frequently. Using the framework from this lesson, create a skills audit for that position.

List the essential skills, the desirable skills, and at least three examples of transferable skills from other industries that would be relevant to the role. Share your skills audit in the discussion forum.