LinkedIn Talent Solutions

FINDING THE PERFECT MATCH

A 4-step guide for zeroing in on your dream candidate

Candidate match

100%

90%

80%

Industries
+ Candidate industries

Skills
+ Skills and expertise or boolean

Product launches   100%

Data analysis   78%

Javascript   93%

Digital marketing   68%

Growth mindset   Culture add

6-8 years experience

Data-driven

Get proactive about finding your dream candidate

As the race for top talent heats up, more and more talent pros, HR teams, and business leaders are discovering that traditional recruiting practices just aren't cutting it anymore.

Enter candidate personas. Candidate personas are research-based profiles that help you understand and find *exactly* who you're looking to hire for a specific role. They're proactive recruiting at its best, and are similar to buyer personas, which have been used by marketing teams for decades. But instead of zeroing in on a company's ideal customer, like buyer personas, candidate personas help you find the perfect hire, whether you're hiring one person, or hiring multiples of the same role.

The benefits of candidate personas

When asked to describe an ideal candidate, a common answer for many talent professionals is *"I'll know them when I see them."* But to find top candidates in a talent-driven economy, you need an understanding of what those candidates are looking for, and that understanding comes from creating personas.

By doing so, you'll know how to reach them and what message will resonate with them, while also improving the following processes:

- ✓ Reducing hiring
- ✓ Reducing time to hire
- ✓ Increasing employee retention
- ✓ Strengthening your employer brand

How to create a candidate persona that will zero in on your perfect match

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100% candidate match

From searching to found

Your candidate persona in **4 steps**

1 – Get aligned with your team
2 – Interview your top performers
3 – Roll up your sleeves
4 – Share the final persona

Step 1: Get aligned with your team
Talk to your team and reach a consensus about what skills, technical knowledge, and cultural values are needed for the role, and have them identify several top performers in a similar position.

Step 2: Interview your top performers
Conduct informational interviews with the employees your team identified to find out more about what sets top performers apart from the pack.

Step 3: Roll up your sleeves
Go through all of your data and interview learnings and begin crafting your personas. Remember to make them as detailed and realistic as possible.

Step 4: Share the final persona
Once your personas are complete, circle back with your team to make sure they sign off on the final product.

✓ **Make continuous improvements**
Check in with new hires after 30 and 90 days to make sure you're hiring the right types of employees. Adjust your personas if necessary.

Get aligned with your team

Without alignment from your hiring team, even the most detailed personas will never provide much value. That's why a good first step in creating powerful personas is to loop in key stakeholders and find out what their ideal candidate would look like.

This is where structuring your request is key. Start by setting up a meeting with your team members or sending them an email asking for their input. Additionally, ask them to identify top performers who are currently in the same role you're hiring for
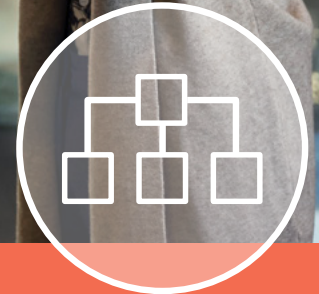
Here are a few important questions to help you get started.

Soft

What soft skills does a candidate need to thrive in this role?

How would we screen for these soft skills during different stages of the interview process?

Technical knowledge

What technical knowledge and/or qualifications are needed for the role?

How would we screen for these areas in different stages of the interview process?

Culture and values

From a culture perspective, what are the necessary soft skills/values needed for this role?

Are there any traits/attributes that are specific to this role?

Top performers

Who at our company is a high achiever in the same role?

Interview your top performers

No one knows more about the role you're hiring for than the people who are already doing it. So once your team has identified top performers in the same role you're hiring for, it's time to interview those employees and get their unique perspective.

Before you get started, look at the list of top performers your team provided and dig into their recent performance reviews to get a better idea of why they were identified.

From there, schedule one-on-ones to ask what makes them so successful. Remember, the goal of these interviews is to find out what motivates these people, what keeps them up at night, and why they applied to your company in the first place. This information will play an integral role as you craft your personas.

Here are a few example questions to ask your top employees:

✓ **Performance:** What are their professional strengths and weaknesses?

✓ **Goals:** How motivated are they to take that next step in their career?

✓ **Qualifications:** What are the must-have skills/degrees/certifications they need for their job?

✓ **Red flags:** What aspects of your company's brand, culture, or hiring process would cause them to not want to work for you?

Roll up your sleeves

The next step is to craft your actual candidate persona. Here's where you want to really dig into your interview data to see what trends emerge.

How did top performers find your company? Were they employee referrals? Did they come from a major city? These are the key findings that need to find their way into your finished persona. Pull out the trends and let those serve as the basis for your finished product.

As you document your personas, don't be afraid to get creative. Adding a fictitious name can help keep that specific persona top of mind with the rest of your team, and also help make it seem more realistic and three-dimensional.

Before continuing to the next section of this guide, make sure that your candidate persona can help you answer the following questions:

- What is the ideal candidate looking for in their work environment?

- Where does the ideal candidate search for jobs?

- How does the ideal candidate handle stressful situations or pressure?

- What skills does the ideal candidate absolutely need to have?

- Do top candidates like working independently or as part of a team?

- What qualifications or technical knowledge would our ideal candidate have?

Share the final persona

Now that you've crafted your persona, it's time to share the results with the team you originally consulted when you kicked off the process.

Don't be alarmed if some of those stakeholders initially push back when they see your finished persona. If they do, remind them that your candidate persona is backed by real-life data.

As you build more candidate personas for the different roles you hire for, you'll establish a library of personas to choose from. This will help streamline your process and inform each aspect of how you recruit – from the wording of your job descriptions to interview questions.

Here's a quick checklist to use prior to officially putting your plan into action:

- ✓ Do you have organizational buy-in from your entire talent acquisition team?

- ✓ What channels are you using for recruiting?

- ✓ Do those recruitment channels align with your candidate persona(s) and give you the best chance of finding top candidates?

- ✓ Does your recruiting message ladder up to your organization's values?

- ✓ Does your recruiting message incorporate learnings from your persona?

- ✓ Do your job descriptions reflect your persona?

How LinkedIn can help

With your candidate persona already created, it's time to find candidates who fit your persona amongst LinkedIn's 590+ million members. Here are some of our most popular products to help get you started.

Finding
your perfect match

LinkedIn Recruiter

This powerful tool is the industry's go-to platform for finding, connecting with, and managing candidates. By plugging in details from your persona into the search filters, you can narrow your search for the perfect candidate and prioritize people who are most open to hearing from you.

Request demo

Attracting
your perfect match

Pipeline Builder

Once you've identified candidates the right candidates to fill your high-priority, high-volume, or hard-to-fill roles, Pipeline Builder helps you each them automatically when they visit LinkedIn with personalized Sponsored Updates and Recruitment Ads

Request demo

Retaining
your perfect match

LinkedIn Learning

Show you're committed to your employees' long-term growth by offering over 10,000 courses led by instructors with real-world experience. Subject matter areas include HR, recruiting, sourcing, and hundreds more.

Learn more

100% candidate match

Candidate persona examples

Here are two candidate personas for different types of roles, as well as a template you can use for crafting your own.

Keep in mind that these examples are representations of the ideal candidate you're trying to recruit based on your research and data collection.

Sophia

Position
Software engineer

Location
Within 20 miles of our office

Current occupation
Mid-level engineer at small startup

Professional experience
6–8 years

Education
BS in computer science
Master's from a prestigious university

Competitors worked for
Adobe

CULTURE

Core values
- Wants to work for a company contributing to social good
- Eco-friendly

Outside hobbies/interests
- Ideally would be sports/activities that require strategic thinking

Work style
- Thrives in a fast-paced environment

Team player
- Works well as part of a big team

WHERE

Preferred social networks
- Regular Twitter user
- Pinterest

Most frequented sites
- NY Times
- Quora

Trusted sources for industry info
- TechCrunch
- Recode
- Wired

WHY

What they love about your company
- Strong tech
- Work/life balance
- Getting to build products used by millions of people

OBJECTIONS

Do they need to relocate?
Ideally, no, but negotiable for the right candidate

What's our strategy if they're not actively looking?
Set up an informal coffee meeting to learn more about what they want in their next opportunity

Is our hiring process too long?
No, our average time to hire is below the industry standard at 19 business days

Salary requirements?
Between $100,000 and $118,000

WHAT

Key skills for the role
- C++, JavaScript
- Debugging and testing

Relevant professional traits
- Coding standards, code reviews, source control management, build processes, testing, and operations
- Able to resolve production breakages or emergencies while maintaining a cool head

Professional goals
- Next one to two years: be promoted to senior software engineer
- Deliver at least five projects of medium size or above during the year
- Write code that meets the quality objectives as measured by static analysis tools

Mila

Position
Marketing manager

Location
Within 20 miles of our office

Current occupation
Marketing manager at a global e-commerce company

Professional experience
2–4 years

Education
• BS or BA in marketing or advertising
• Master's degree would be nice to have, but not a deal-breaker

Competitors worked for
Amazon

CULTURE

Core values
• Passionate about bringing brand stories to life
• Is tired of working at a big company and wants to play a larger role on a smaller team
• Bonus points if they are eco-friendly

Outside hobbies/interests
• Hiking, road trips, dance

Work style
• Collaborative and data-driven

Team player
• Enjoys large teams but is craving a smaller, scrappier company

WHAT

Key skills for the role
• Salesforce
• Managing a $1M budget

Relevant professional traits
• Has agency and creative production experience
• Deep insights on media landscape and developing local media strategies
• Adaptable and can wear many hats

WHERE

Preferred social networks
• Instagram

Most frequented sites
• Huffington Post

Trusted sources for industry info
• Optimizely
• Marketing Land

Professional goals
• Next one to two years: gain valuable experience at a fast-moving startup
• Get recognized for their contributions at work

WHY

What they love about your company
• Small team
• Working cross-functionally
• Getting in at the ground floor of a growing company

OBJECTIONS

Do they need to relocate?
Relocation not available for this role

What's our strategy if they're not actively looking?
Find out if they want to be part of a fast-growing, venture-backed team

Is our hiring process too long?
Slightly above industry average at 29 days

Salary requirements?
Between $80,000 and $92,000

Position

Current occupation

Education

Location

Professional experience

Competitors worked for

CULTURE

Core values

Work style

Outside hobbies/interests

Team player

WHERE

Preferred social networks

Most frequented sites

Trusted sources for industry info

WHY

What they love about your company

OBJECTIONS

Do they need to relocate?

What's our strategy if they're not actively looking?

Is our hiring process too long?

Salary requirements?

WHAT

Key skills for the role

Professional goals

Relevant professional traits

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See LinkedIn in action

Now that you know how to create candidate personas, check out some other ways LinkedIn can help with the entire process of finding, attracting, and retaining dynamic employees.

Founded in 2003, LinkedIn connects the world's professionals to make them more productive and successful. With 590+ million members worldwide, including 75% of the US workforce, LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network.

LinkedIn Talent Solutions offers a full range of hiring and recruiting solutions for every step in the process. We'll help you find and engage the right candidates, build your brand, and make even smarter talent decisions with LinkedIn's data and insights.

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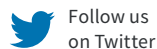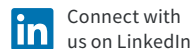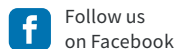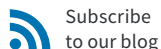
Learn more about LinkedIn's hiring and recruiting products.

Plan
Use data to inform difficult hiring and recruiting decisions.
Talent Insights »

Find
Search, connect with, and manage your top candidates in one place.
LinkedIn Recruiter »
LinkedIn Scheduler »

Post
Post jobs to reach candidates you won't find anywhere else.
LinkedIn Jobs »
Job Slots »

Attract
Showcase your company culture and spotlight jobs with targeted ads.
Career Pages »
Recruitment Ads »
Pipeline Builder »