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# WHITEPAPER

## 8 Steps to Great Contact Center Hiring

Following these 8 steps can help your contact center achieve better hiring results like lower turnover and improved new hire job performance


## Introduction

The contact center industry consistently faces challenges hiring the right people to work as front line representatives and team leaders. Based on FurstPerson's 2008 Call Center Hiring and Compensation survey, the average cost of turnover is \$5,466. As a contact center operator and leader, how do you make sure that you are hiring the right people into your centers?


Eight steps can help your organization achieve a result driven contact center hiring process. The model below highlights six of these basic steps which are then supported by validating the model and proving the financial case.



1. Understand and define the desired business outcomes
2. Understand which performance metrics relate agent performance to achieving the desired business outcomes.
3. Understand and define the job families
4. Create a proactive recruiting and sourcing strategy
5. Link the right predictive assessments for job candidate evaluation
6. Validate the relationship between the hiring process and the business outcomes
7. Use the same process for Team Leader hiring
8. Rinse, repeat, and quantify for results improvement and financial payback



To achieve great hiring results, hiring managers need to understand how the business drives revenue, margin, and profit.



## **Understand and define the desired business outcomes**

To achieve great hiring results, hiring managers need to understand how the business drives revenue, margin, and profit. The goal of the hiring process is to hire employees who will perform their jobs in a manner that helps the business grow revenue, improve margin, and improve profit. Ultimately, financial improvement in the business determines whether the hiring process works or not. Being able to understand the business outcomes that leadership is driving and relate that back to the hiring process is a critical first step. Examples of business outcomes include:

- Does the business want to drive top line revenue?
- Does the business want to reduce operating costs?
- Does the business want to do both?

## **Understand which performance metrics relate employee performance to achieving the desired business outcomes**

Next, hiring managers need to understand what performance metrics provide the insight into whether the employee is meeting the desired business outcomes or not. The key is to make sure that alignment between the business outcomes and performance metrics exists. The performance metrics link the contact center representative's performance against the business outcomes. For example:

- If the business outcome is to drive additional top line revenue, then a sales yield performance metric might be critical to measure and track.
- If the business outcome is to reduce customer churn to protect existing revenue, then performance metrics like customer satisfaction (CSAT), issue resolution, or first call resolution are important to measure and track.
- If the business outcome is to reduce operating costs, then managing average handle time is an important business metric to measure and track.

The contact center has two huge advantages in this area. First, contact centers track a number of metrics related to agent performance. Second, contact centers typically have large groups of people doing the same work which improves the sample size for modeling purposes. However, often hiring managers will not spend the time focusing on the critical performance metrics that drive the desired business outcomes. A side benefit of going through this discussion is that it forces Operations, HR, and Training to be in agreement. Gaining alignment between these three functional groups reduces barriers to achieving great hiring results.

The job analysis should define the abilities and behaviors that drive job success. By defining the job, the hiring organization lays the foundation for the recruiting and hiring process because the job criteria are linked to organizational success.

## Understand and define the job families (call or contact types)

Are all contact center jobs the same? No. They are not. The third step to achieving great hiring results is to define and understand the job families. Unfortunately, this process is often overlooked by contact center hiring managers. For an organization seeking to improve new hire retention, the critical starting point is a job analysis for each major call type. The job analysis should define the abilities and behaviors that drive job success. By defining the job, the hiring organization lays the foundation for the recruiting and hiring process because the job criteria are linked to organizational success. Typically this process involves meeting with job family subject matter experts to have them describe the job tasks. From there, the job tasks can be summarized into competency groups.



The chart to the left highlights FurstPerson's 4 Quadrant model. In a simple way, the hiring process should measure what each candidate "did do", what can they do, and what will they do related to job performance and fit for your contact center. Sample competencies are listed in each quadrant.

The chart on the right highlights the result of a job analysis process for an insurance organization. Two job families (call types) exist for this organization – Customer Care and Sales.

Customer Care Agent		Sales Agent	
Rank	Competency	Rank	Competency
1	Industry Knowledge	1	Listening Skills
2	Customer Focus	2	Oral Communication
3	Following Procedures	3	Multi-tasking
4	Problem-Solving	4	Personal Reliability
5	General Learning	5	Problem-Solving
6	Decision Making	6	Following Procedures
7	Listening Ability	7	Computer / Technical
8	Works Under Pressure	8	Attention to Detail
9	Personal Reliability	9	Customer Focus
10	Oral Communication	10	Decision Making

The result of the job analysis demonstrates that key competencies are weighted differently between the two job families. In this case, customer focus is highly ranked for customer care (#2) but not as important in sales (#9). The hiring process should be able to distinguish competency models between job families in order to drive business outcomes.

### Create a proactive recruiting and sourcing strategy

A robust recruiting and sourcing strategy is another Best Practice utilized by organizations with lower attrition.

Unfortunately, many contact center organizations get caught in the turnover spiral. This means that high attrition forces constant hiring. Each week requires another new training class. Because the organization cannot recruit enough candidates into the top of the funnel, they reduce standards in the hiring process so they can deliver enough new hires into production. The relaxed standards result in the hiring of people with lower potential for success, which contributes further to the cycle of attrition.

Alternatively, organizations that utilize best practice recruiting and sourcing strategies typically exhibit the following characteristics:

- Generate more candidates from person-to-person and internet sources than from job fairs and newspaper ads.
- Research shows that candidates from those sources tend to have better retention.
- Hire people quickly – top candidates are off the market within 5 to 10 business days.


- The recruiting process measures key milestones at each phase in the process.
- Data comparing recruiting source and retention results are tracked and analyzed.
- Execution of the recruiting plan is more critical than recruiting strategy.

## Link the right predictive assessments for job candidate evaluation

In step 2, understanding what the job looks like is a critical step to achieving great hiring results. Once these competencies are understood, the hiring team can then determine which assessments are the right matches for the job families.

For example, if multi-tasking is an important competency, a simulation will offer a better candidate evaluation than a structured interview. A personality assessment will provide a better match for job fit than a simulation product.

In general, using a combination of assessments creates a more balanced evaluation of the job candidate resulting in a more predictive solution.



If a job analysis is the foundation on which a pre-hire process will be constructed, the validation study is the framework that determines whether assessments will be used properly and deliver value.

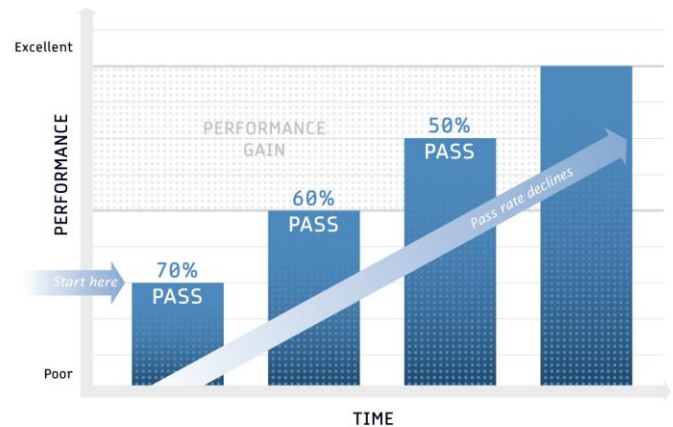


## Validate the relationship between the hiring process and the business outcomes

The use of assessments should always be accompanied by another Best Practice – validation models that provide statistical evidence of the link between a candidate’s assessment performance and his/her on-the-job performance and tenure. This allows hiring managers to make quality decisions about job candidates by ensuring they meet or exceed a validated cut-off point on the pre-hire assessments. The use of objective assessments, calibrated against retention and job performance is a critical Best Practice for any firm attempting to reduce early stage attrition and improve early stage new hire performance.

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If a job analysis is the foundation on which a pre-hire process will be constructed, the validation study is the framework that will determine whether assessments will be used properly and delivers value. FurstPerson believes that best-practice validation research is designed specifically for each organization based on factors in the business environment and job types. Although there are occasions when circumstances dictate using a content and/or construct validation strategy, a criterion-related validation studies should be used whenever possible. The rationale for conducting a quantitative validation study is very simple: it is the surest way to accurately align the assessments and indices of job performance in a customer's operating environment.



Best Practice organizations evaluate candidates for Team Leader positions just like they do for front-line agents.

## Follow these same steps for hiring Team Leaders

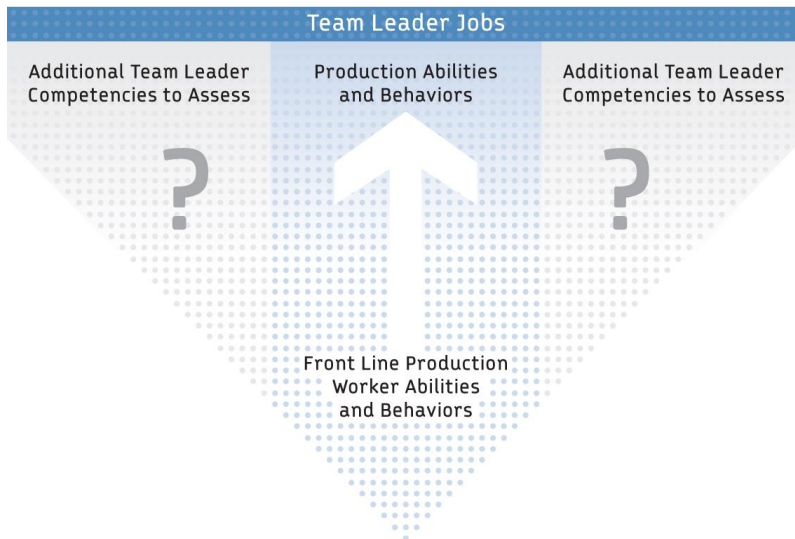
Best Practice organizations understand that the Supervisor or Team Leader position is potentially the most critical position on a contact center production floor. Organizations cannot assume that a good frontline agent means a good Team Leader.

Contact center agent attrition in the first two to twelve months is significantly influenced by the ability and behavior of the Team Leader.

Best Practice organizations evaluate candidates for Team Leader positions just like they do for front-line agents.

- Understand the business outcomes and performance metrics for Team Leader job performance
- Use a job analysis process to define the competencies that drive job success
- Validate the assessments to make sure they drive successful job performance

### Team Leader Selection Model



## Rinse, repeat, and quantify for results improvement and to determine the financial payback

Best Practice organizations that have achieved low early stage turnover continue to rinse and repeat the processes outlined in this paper. These organizations use an Employment Lifecycle approach that revisits the hiring process via systematic data analysis on a regularly scheduled basis (e.g., every 12 to 18 months). The job analysis is revisited for updated requirements or changes. The validation study is re-run, taking advantage of all the data collected to fine-tune the scoring. The result is a data-driven process that allows HR to demonstrate and quantify improvements and progress within the hiring process. This leads to strong returns for investing in the hiring process. Organizations can see returns ranging from \$3 to \$20 for each \$1 invested in Best Practice hiring processes.

## About FurstPerson

### What we do:

- Develop and operate web-based pre-hire, employee selection assessments that help contact centre organisations hire and develop the right employees.

### Our experience:

- Thirteen years of research and implementation experience working with all major call types including customer care, sales, collections, win back, and technical support.
- Implemented our solutions in over 250 labor markets in the United States, Canada, UK, the Philippines, and Latin America.
- Significant industry experience in telecommunications, insurance, outsourcing, financial services, retail, travel, and business services industries.
- Home agent hiring since 2002.
- Average client is a multi-site, multi-call type organization with complex hiring workflow models and job profiles.
- Developed award-winning assessments featuring interactive simulations.

### Differentiators:

- Predictive assessments with demonstrated bottom line results ranging from:
  - Improved new hire performance (up to 40%)
  - Reduced turnover (up to 70%)
  - ROI – \$1 invested yields \$10 to \$20 in return
  - Lower recruiting expense
- Hiring solutions based on empirical research supported by ongoing job and validation analysis.
- Customized solutions leveraging our extensive contact centre hiring expertise and industry leading assessment solutions.

To learn more about FurstPerson, please visit our website at [www.furstperson.com](http://www.furstperson.com) or email us at [info@furstperson.com](mailto:info@furstperson.com) or call us at 888-626-3412.

