

This document represents two blog posts ghostwritten for a blogger to publish on her blog. It's an example of targeting the same topic to two different audiences. The first post, **Beyond Culture Fit: The Culture-Add Hiring Checklist**, targets HR professionals. The second post, **Job-seekers: Position Yourself as a Culture Contributor**, targets job-seekers.

Beyond Culture Fit: The Culture-Add Hiring Checklist

The recent death at age 46 of retired Zappos founder Tony Hsieh, whose reputation for building an outstanding company culture at Zappos, has reminded us of the value of a healthy organizational culture and hiring to enhance that culture. In 2014, Zappos initiated the practice of hiring 50 percent on hard skills and 50 percent on cultural fit; today, however, the "hire for culture fit" approach is under scrutiny.

Hiring for fit came into vogue around the 1980s, but as we've entered the third decade of the new millennium, organizational experts have come to question and disdain this practice of pursuing culture fit in new hires – to the point where some organizations, such as Facebook, have banned the practice. Hiring for culture fit, say many experts, exposes a bias toward homogeneity and can result in a lack of diversity and even discrimination.

Instead, the new watchword is hiring for culture add, which [Lauren Shufran defines](#) as "the likelihood that someone will not only reflect the company's values and professional ethics, but also bring diverse opinions, experiences, and specialized skills that enhance not just the team, but the overall company culture." [Will Otto adds](#) that "the notion behind culture add is that diverse, self-aware teams are more powerful than homogenous ones."

Given the newness of the hiring-for-culture-add concept, information on the HOW of hiring for culture add is on the light side. Hence, this article provides a checklist of considerations for culture-add hiring.

Be sure your organizational culture is well defined and understood by all stakeholders. Back in 2013, before hiring for culture fit began to be questioned, a [study by Cubiks](#) revealed that while 82 percent of hiring managers believed measuring cultural fit was an important part of the recruitment process, only 54 percent said their organization had a clearly defined culture. Be clear on your mission, vision, and especially values; even those who don't support hiring for culture fit believe new hires should generally share organizational values. Ask stakeholders how they characterize the culture of the organization; ensure the characterization aligns with what is intended. Consider what culture in the future should look like; is it a culture of belonging?

Clearly define the role of culture within your hiring criteria. What percentage of a hiring decision will relate to cultural considerations, and how much will focus on other criteria, such as skills and experience? Consider limiting the influence of culture on hiring decisions.

Commit to a diverse hiring team. A hiring team in which members have diverse backgrounds and hold a variety of perspectives will clearly contribute to hiring diverse candidates rather than those who fit a cultural mold. The team should also strive to avoid groupthink.

Convert the mindset of those in hiring power so they are no longer looking for deficiencies in how candidates fit the culture but instead seeking out what the candidate can contribute to the culture. The mindset also needs to switch "from gatekeeping to inclusive thinking," [notes Eli Montgomery](#). Be open to recognizing cultural blindspots and perspectives that may be missing in the current culture. Shufran suggests asking: "Where might we need our thinking and our processes challenged, and what kind of person would challenge them?" while blogger [PJ Canterbury advises](#) the query: "What type of individual will help us create the culture we are seeking for the future?"

Establish a standardized hiring process in which all candidates are treated equally. Structured interviews should be used in which the same interview questions, in the same order, should be asked of all candidates.

Favor behavioral interview questions that uncover what the candidate can contribute to the culture.

LinkedIn Talent Solutions suggests these three questions, which are provided as a [PDF document](#) with additional commentary about what the question assesses and what to listen for:

- How do your colleagues benefit from working with you specifically, as opposed to one of your coworkers?
- Tell me about a time when understanding someone else's perspective helped you accomplish a task or resolve an issue.
- What is your impression of our company's culture, values, and mission? How do you think we could improve?

It's also reasonable to ask the straightforward question: "How do you believe you will contribute to our organizational culture?"

Consider pre-employment assessments. The use of pre-employment assessments early in the hiring process can be key to uncovering what blogger [Michelle Silverstein](#) calls "'hidden gem' candidates who don't necessarily fit into the cookie-cutter mold." Using these assessments is another way to level the playing field by treating all candidates the same way.

Consider including the candidate's future teammates in the hiring process: One of the best ways to expose a candidate to the organization's culture is to allow the candidate to meet with the people he or she will be working with. "Candidates need to be able to talk to someone they will be spending time working with," [notes the writer of the blog at Anvil Media](#), "and that can show rather than tell what the organizational cultural experience will be." This kind of connection also enables the team members to observe what the candidate might be able to contribute to the culture.

Monitor your hiring impulses for possible bias. "Gut feelings" are often related to a tendency to favor candidates who are "just like us" and exclude candidates who aren't "one of us."

Consider how you will nurture the candidate's culture contribution after hire. The [writer of the blog at Inclusion Boston](#) prescribes "fostering an inclusive workplace where employees are recognized for the unique perspectives and skills they bring to the work."

Job-seekers: Position Yourself as a Culture Contributor

You've probably received the job-search advice that you should strive to demonstrate in your job-search communications with employers that you fit in with the culture of the organization at which you seek a job. You've likely heard that hiring managers are looking for "a good fit."

What you may not know is that the idea of hiring for culture fit has come under scrutiny in recent years because it is said to expose a bias toward homogeneity and can result in a lack of diversity and even discrimination. Some companies, notably Facebook, have banned the practice of hiring for "culture fit." Instead, increasingly employers are being encouraged to hire for "culture add" – what you as a candidate can add or contribute to the organization's culture.

Preparation to win a job based, in part, on what you can add to the culture is a subtle strategy. After all, you won't know going into your search whether a given employer is still part of the "hire for culture fit" camp or has moved on to the "hire for culture add" stance. Thus the important aspect of this strategy is to be thoroughly familiar with a targeted employer's organizational culture and be able to envision your role within that culture.

Here are some tips for positioning yourself as a culture contributor no matter which approach to culture the employer is using:

Thoroughly familiarize yourself with the manifestations of the organization's culture. These manifestations are typically in the form of the company's mission, vision, and especially core values. These can often be found in the About section of an organization's website. If they aren't readily apparent, conduct a search on the site or a general search on a search engine, using a term such as "[name of company] core values." While on the company site, look for other clues to the organization's culture. What can you learn about the culture from photos and videos on this site?

Know your own core values. Even companies who no longer seek "just-like-us" candidates are reluctant to hire people who don't share their core values. You may well be asked about your values in an interview, so be sure you have an handle not only on yours, but also on how your values dovetail with the organization's values. You can find a free Personal Values Assessment [here](#) and a free Career Values Assessment [here](#). Sometimes it's helpful in identifying values to simply look at a list of values, which you can find [here](#), along with examples.

Learn as much as you can about the organization's culture. One of the most effective ways to soak up corporate culture is to talk with company insiders. Consider focusing on culture as you talk informally with folks who work at your targeted company, conduct informational interviews, or participate in job shadowing. Learn enough about the culture that you could answer an interview question like, "What is your impression of our company's culture, values, and mission? How do you think we could improve?"

Polish your behavioral-interviewing skills. Behavioral interviews, in which the premise is that past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior, are suggested to employers as the best way to explore your place in the company culture; thus, interviews concerned with culture fit and culture add will likely feature at least some behavioral questions. These are questions that begin with phrases like "Tell me about a time..." or "Describe a situation..." Behavioral interviews are difficult to prepare for because it's hard to predict what will be asked. The best bet is make educated guesses as to what behaviors may be asked about based on what's in the job posting and your research on what's important to the company. Build a databank of stories that describe accomplishments related to what might be asked; you'll find that even a small arsenal of stories can be adapted to various behavioral questions.

Brainstorm your potential culture contribution for each targeted job. Be able to answer a question like:
“What do you believe you can contribute to our organizational culture?”