


Applicant Selection: Screening In vs. Screening Out

Unless you plan to hire every person who applies to your organization, you will inevitably turn to some form of applicant screening. Though a number of options are available, the first question you should ask in the process is critical – should we engage in a screen-in or screen-out strategy?

Often, recruiters assume if a job's requirements are straightforward and easily trainable, such as the tasks for an entry-level plant worker or data entry clerk, the organization should employ a screen-out strategy to weed out unqualified applicants. As job descriptions increase in complexity, such as those for bank tellers, customer service representatives, and sales managers, so does the need for a screen-in strategy, which serves to retain only the most qualified candidates from the applicant pool. However, this assumes applicant pipelines will remain consistent and predictable over time and that the availability of qualified applicants decreases as jobs become more complex. Although these generalizations are true to an extent, they do not take the current unemployment rate, size of the available labor force, or unique industry characteristics into account.

In many cases, different geographies offer organizations different conveniences. For example, when screening call center applicants in Bangalore, Indian companies will often yield 150 applicants for every open position. The same job in Denver, Colorado might only draw seven applicants per position. Hospitality clients whose properties are not serviced by public transportation are often attractive employers based on wage, benefits, and opportunities for upward mobility. However, the location can often decrease the number of applicants, as it introduces a financial or logistical strain on the prospective employee.



Screen-In

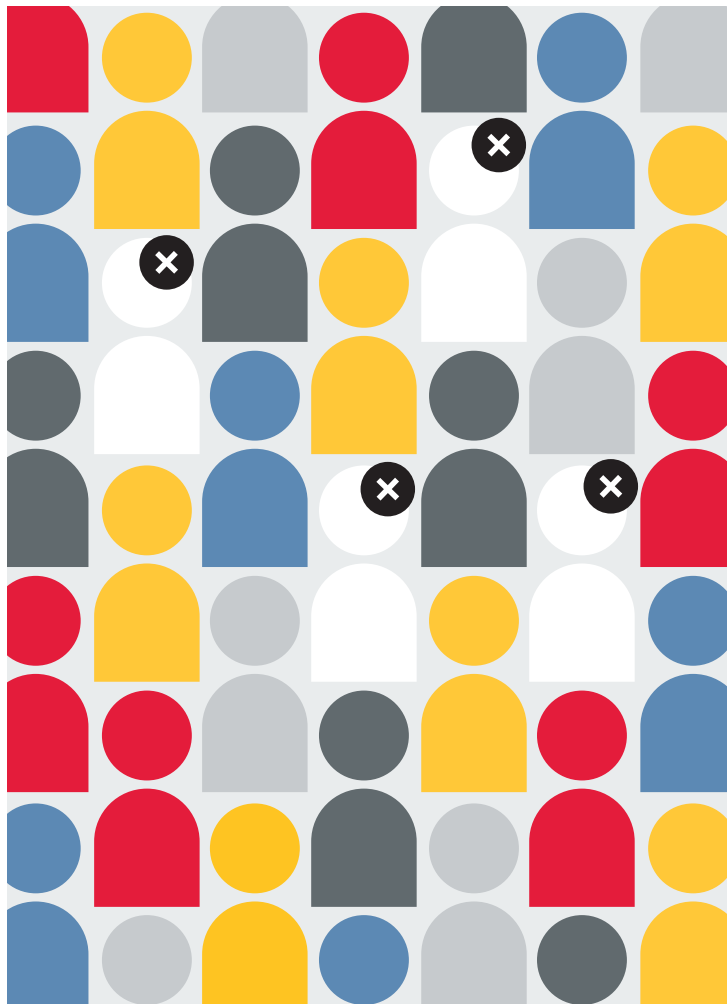
Organizations employing this strategy are interested in one thing – retaining only the top candidates.

Situations where we recommend a screen-in strategy include:

- **Limited applicants** – when hiring needs arise but perfect candidates are rare, organizations may need to settle for whomever boosts the current bench strength
- **Closer to final decision** – to add information about what is already known about the candidate
- **Integrated approach** – when multiple data sources are used to inform a decision rather than make one (e.g. personality assessments as part of an executive assessment center)

When used to screen in candidates, Hogan generally assists later in the process, such as between the first and second interview. Examples include using Hogan data to better understand an applicant's assessment center performance, enhance the interview, predict competency potential, or determine the capacity for future leadership.

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Screen-Out

In this case, organizations are interested in quickly categorizing candidates and then screening those who clearly don't fit.

Situations in which we recommend a screen-out strategy include:

- **High-volume selection** – when large candidate pools overwhelm traditional recruiting methods, use of successive pass/fail milestones in the process reduces the overall number of considerations at each stage
- **Lower-stakes jobs, low-resource demand** – performance is easy to measure and predict, and decisions can be automated through validated selection results (i.e. an applicant tracking system)
- **High-stakes testing** – to ensure only qualified individuals fill positions that come with direct consequences for failure

For these scenarios, we recommend using a Hogan report that provides a fit recommendation, such as Hogan's General Employability, Fit, or Express reports early in the selection process.

Furthermore, if a hotel operates in a country with a cultural stigma against young people working in the hospitality industry, as it is the case in China, students and recent graduates who would ordinarily ensure a robust talent pipeline become harder to find and talent retention remains an acute issue.

Instead of relying on a job's skill level, effective organizations must adapt their screening strategy based on available resources as well as supply and demand. For example, an intense and costly recruitment process might benefit from a screen-in strategy, while screening out can effectively reduce a large number of applicants at each stage of recruitment.

In summary, organizations must take into consideration the job, applicant flow, number of open positions, turnover rates, and other factors when deciding which selection strategy to use. The ultimate variable in choosing screen-in or screen-out comes down to what method will most benefit your bottom line.