

# Hiring API Checklist

Bonus Material from *Team as Code*

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## Hiring API Checklist

Chapter 9 of *Team as Code* reframes hiring as API design — the interface between the outside world and your internal system. A well-designed API has clear documentation, predictable inputs and outputs, and no surprises. Your hiring process should work the same way.

This checklist breaks the interview process into distinct roles, gives you templates for each stage, and calls out the anti-patterns that lead to bad hires.

### Start From the Gap, Not the Title

**From the book:** “You don’t start with a job title. You start with a gap. Look at your role definitions — your functional map of who does what. Where are the gaps?”

Before you write a job ad:

- Identify the specific function(s) that are underperformed or missing
- Pull the role definition(s) for those functions (use the Role Definition Template)
- Decide which roles to bundle into a single hire
- Then* pick the market title that attracts the right candidates

### The Interview Roles

The hiring process itself has distinct functions. Don’t assume one person does everything.

#### Role 1: The Seller (Vision & Culture)

**Who:** Founder, team lead, or someone genuinely excited about the company.

**Purpose:** Make the candidate want to work here. Two-way evaluation — the candidate is interviewing you too.

Element	Details
<b>What to cover</b>	Company mission, team culture, growth trajectory, what makes this role exciting
<b>What to assess</b>	Candidate's motivation, alignment with company direction, questions they ask
<b>Format</b>	30-minute conversation, ideally early in the process
<b>Red flag</b>	Candidate asks zero questions about the company or team

### Role 2: The Tester (Technical / Functional Skills)

**Who:** The most skilled person in the relevant domain. Not necessarily a manager.

**Purpose:** Verify the candidate can actually do the work described in the role definition.

Element	Details
<b>What to cover</b>	Core skills from the role definition. Real scenarios, not trivia.
<b>What to assess</b>	Problem-solving approach, depth of knowledge, ability to explain reasoning
<b>Format</b>	45–60 minutes. Practical exercise or case study preferred over Q&A.
<b>Red flag</b>	Candidate can describe concepts but can't apply them to a scenario

### Role 3: The Assessor (Culture & Collaboration Fit)

**Who:** A peer — someone who would work alongside this person daily.

**Purpose:** Determine whether this person will thrive in the team's actual working environment.

Element	Details
<b>What to cover</b>	Communication style, how they handle disagreement, collaboration preferences
<b>What to assess</b>	Genuine fit with team dynamics (not "would I have a beer with them")
<b>Format</b>	30-minute informal conversation or pair exercise

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Element	Details
<b>Red flag</b>	Candidate is dismissive of collaboration or has no examples of working through conflict

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## Interview Stage Template

Use this for each stage of your process:

Field	Your Plan
<b>Stage name</b>	
<b>Interviewer (role)</b>	
<b>What we're testing</b>	
<b>How we're testing it</b>	
<b>Scoring criteria (1–5)</b>	
<b>Must-pass threshold</b>	
<b>Duration</b>	

## Scoring Criteria Template

For each skill or attribute you're testing:

Score	Meaning
1	Significant gap. Cannot perform the function as described.
2	Below expectations. Would need extensive support / training.
3	Meets minimum bar. Can perform with normal onboarding.
4	Strong. Exceeds expectations in this area.
5	Exceptional. Would raise the team's capability in this area.

**Tip:** Define your "must-pass" threshold before the interview, not after. If the bar for technical skills is 3 and the candidate scores 2, that's a clear no — regardless of how charming they were in the culture round.

## Track Your Funnel

From Chapter 9's conversion funnel — measure each stage:

Stage	Conversion Rate
CVs → Interviews	_____%
Interviews → Offers	_____%
Offers → Hires	_____%
Hires → Successful Probations	_____%
<b>Overall (multiply all)</b>	_____%

If you need 2 successful hires and your overall rate is 10%, you need ~20 good CVs. Plan accordingly.

## Anti-Patterns to Avoid

**“Good Vibes” Hiring.** No scoring criteria, no structured questions. The team “just knows” when someone is right. Result: you hire people who are likable in interviews but can’t do the job. Or worse, you systematically hire people who look and think like you — and miss the diversity that drives better decisions.

**The Wish-List Job Description.** A role that requires “10 years of experience in React, Python, Kubernetes, machine learning, and leadership” is not a role — it’s a fantasy. If the role bundles too many disparate functions, candidates strong in one area will be weak in another, and you reject them all.

**The Surprise Scope.** The candidate discovers at offer stage that the “UX Designer” role also includes designing business cards, posters, and digital ads. They walk. The role definition should match reality — no hidden responsibilities.

**Ignoring Failed Probations.** A failed probation is a *system* failure, not a people failure. From the book: “Treat a failed probation like a plane crash in aviation: investigate thoroughly, identify root causes, and update your system so it doesn’t recur.”

**One-Sided Interviews.** The interview is two-way. If your process only tests the candidate without selling the opportunity, your best candidates will go elsewhere. The Seller role exists for a reason.

## Post-Hire Checklist

- Update the role definition with the new person’s specific name, contacts, and communication channels
- Share the complete role manual on day one
- After the first month, ask: “What did you have to figure out that should have been documented?”
- Add their answer to the role manual
- After successful probation, review what the hiring process predicted correctly — and what it missed

**The hybrid angle from Chapter 9:** “If your roles are codified well enough for clean onboarding, they’re codified well enough for AI augmentation. The same role manual that onboards a new hire can brief an AI agent on what to do.”