

Hiring Without Harm

10 Simple Shifts Toward Trauma-Informed Hiring



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Why **This Matters**

Hiring can hurt.

Ghosting, vague timelines, and power dynamics retraumatize candidates—especially those navigating layoffs, toxic workplaces, or systemic inequities.

A trauma-informed approach brings care, clarity, and humanity to hiring.



What Is Trauma-Informed Hiring?

It means designing every step of your process with the understanding that candidates may carry past harm.

It centers clear expectations, timely communication, and mutual respect so candidates feel supported regardless of the outcome.



Ask yourself:

- How might candidates feel more empowered and seen?
- What would it look like to leave every applicant better off?





1. Post salary ranges

Lead with transparency.

Sharing pay up front shows respect and builds trust—saving time and emotional energy on both sides.

📍 Jurisdictions in 16 states now require pay transparency. Be ahead of the curve.



2. Automate thoughtfully—and communicate like a human

- ✓ Acknowledge every application
- ✓ Write messages that sound human
- ✓ Communicate delays clearly

Example

One nonprofit notified applicants of a delay, offered a new timeline, included a real contact—and asked candidates to let them know if the new timing didn't work. That's trauma-informed.



3. Be clear about the **process**

Set expectations early.

Share how many interviews to expect, who's involved, and your timeline.

 Clarity helps candidates plan their lives—travel, childcare, housing, other offers—with less stress.



4. Acknowledge the emotional weight

Recognize what job searching demands. Add supportive touches like:

💬 “Come as you’re comfortable—business casual is welcome but not required.”

This affirms people over performance and eases anxiety.



5. **Respect** candidates' time—at **each stage**

- Request only what's needed for each phase.
- Delay reference checks until finalist stage
- Offer feedback or compensation for time-intensive exercises
- Design a process proportionate to the role's scope

Thoughtfulness shows care and earns trust.



6. Help candidates feel **ready**—and truly **seen**

Empower candidates to show up with confidence.

-  Share who they'll meet in advance
-  Offer prep calls or check-ins
-  Reflect back what you're hearing to show they're understood

When people feel seen,
they can shine.



7. Be **transparent** about role realities

Tell the truth about the job.

If things are fast-paced, evolving, or in transition—say so.

 Clear communication helps candidates self-select and ensures alignment from the start.



8. Be **clear** about where they stand

Keep candidates informed.

- ✓ Let them know if they're not moving forward
- ✓ Offer personalized feedback when possible
- ✓ Especially for finalists—close the loop with care

✨ Clarity is kind—and avoids second-guessing.

💬 “I'll never let you turn down a job offer waiting for something you're not a top candidate for.” —Recruiter



9. Support their **growth**—whether or not you hire them

Leave people stronger than when they applied.



Share job boards or recruiters



Offer tools for interview prep or career development



Example: Ingram Content Group gives non-selected candidates 6 months of career platform access.



10. **Pay it forward** with strong candidates

Help great candidates find their “yes”—
even if it’s not with you.

- ✓ Make warm referrals
- ✓ Flag them in your database
- ✓ Keep them in mind for future roles

Ripple effects of care can lead to new
doors opening.



You Don't Need a Full Overhaul

Even **small shifts make a difference.**

Bring care.

Bring clarity.

Bring consistency.

 Ask yourself:

What's one change I can make to leave candidates better off—whether or not they're hired?



About the Authors



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