GREGORY SPOSATO

DON'T HIRE ME

Why Hiring is Flawed and How to Fix It

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This book is dedicated to the **entire Sposato family**. Without your love and support, I would not be where I am today.

Don't Hire Me

Why hiring is flawed and how to fix it
By Gregory Sposato

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BEST JOB SEARCH

Find a Job. Plant a Tree. Change the World.

Need a New Job?

When you search with **us**,
you're searching **everywhere**.

See the difference.

Help us plant a tree today.

Preface

My name is Gregory Sposato. I'm a Web Developer who has worked with over 200 clients, including big brands and household names. I have built hundreds of websites, of all shapes and sizes, from small landing pages to large enterprise-level web applications. My expertise is both in the craft itself and managing different sized teams to do the same. My intense focus and genuine care for others make me a key contact for many businesses.

I've conducted many job interviews, as you've probably guessed. However, I've sat in on even more. I remember one job interview was for something I wasn't even qualified for. I knew this, but the hiring manager did not. I told him flatly, **"Don't Hire Me."** He laughed and hired me anyway.

I tell this story as a warning. You will likely get someone who is charming, says all the right things, and can even pass your little programming test. But, like me in that interview, they will NOT be a good fit.

You see, hiring is flawed. If you've already hired a few bad eggs before, you'll know this is true. So let's fix it, together.

Why Hiring is Flawed

It started when I was promoted to a more managerial position. I was in charge of hiring for my department. We needed to grow the team so that we could meet more ambitious goals.

I thought this would be easy. All I had to do was create a job posting, collect resumes, conduct interviews, and make a decision, right?

Of course not. The first few people I hired did not know how to do the job, so they had to be fired. The second batch of hires left as quickly as they came in. Something was wrong.

My boss was worried. Was I really cut out to hire a team of developers to build our next product? Even I wasn't sure anymore.

With our deadline closing in for the next product launch, we really had to get creative to solve this problem.

I kept wondering what it was I was doing wrong. **It wasn't until I realized that hiring, by itself, is its own skill**. The abilities I had acquired as a programmer did not help me much when it came to hiring. That's when things started to change for me.

I began a journey that would span several years. But before I could go any further into the future, I had to look to my past.

Early on in my career, I started as a software developer for a small recruiting firm located in Tell City, Indiana. At that firm I met a man who would forever change my life.

He taught me many fundamentals of hiring I'll be sharing with you in this book. Going over an old notebook I still had while on the job, I realized my own approach to recruiting was all wrong. There were multiple steps in the hiring process I was skipping over! Now having seen the results of my own failures, I began to understand why he did things *differently*.

Did anyone at your company teach *you* how to hire? If so, how are their techniques working?

I'm not here to criticize anyone's pet process for excellent hires. What I will mention is that, *without data*, any great methodology for hiring is merely opinion.

The Things We Have Already Tried

- **Looking at a Resume**
- Conducting an Interview
- Performing a Background Check

Jason Fried and David Heinemeier Hansson started **Basecamp**, a project management solution that grew into a five million dollar company by the time their book **Rework** came to print. Needless to say, they have a few words about resumes:

"Don't Bother."

Instead, the dynamic duo present a much different approach to hiring: try doing the work *yourself* first. If you don't know how to do the job you're hiring for, how will you know what a job well done looks like? How will you know when to criticize and when to support? How will you know if you really need someone full time or someone part time?

A resume is a cleverly crafted piece of marketing material that can make any claim. How can you validate any of it? If I wrote a little bit of javascript once 5 years ago, do I now have 5 years of experience writing javascript? These are **murky waters**.

- Looking at a Resume
- **Conducting an Interview**
- Performing a Background Check

Okay, so if screening a resume is flawed, I can just screen during the interview, right? Well, according to Zeljko Svedic, the founder of **Test Dome**, screening out any candidate without some data metric always leads to a biased decision. **A biased decision can come back in the form of a discrimination lawsuit.**

Now, I'm not saying *you're* racist, sexist, or have any hate in your heart for any particular group of people. I will say that, over the course of our evolution, we *biologically* learned to *like people* who are *like us*. This one trait that helped our species survive in the prehistoric days has now become our *worst enemy* today.

This isn't just a problem with the racial majority, either. Sure, if you're a white male, you will have a natural bias to other white males. However, if you are a black female, you also have a slight bias to other black females! I've experienced this first hand at companies I've interviewed for.

If you're going to turn someone down, you best have some data to back up your decision, otherwise you made a biased decision. Biased decisions lead to bad hires.

- Looking at a Resume
- Conducting an Interview
- **Performing a Background Check**

Now if you are likely to encounter false signals on an interview, what will a background check do?

In most cases, a background check just confirms our initial biased decision. It gives us the proper ammunition to say, "My gut was telling me this was off, and now I know I'm right."

A background check is the final nail in the coffin. What is located in a background check? Criminal history, credit scores, marriage records, divorce records, identity changes, and address changes. So what does that information tell you about the candidate's ability to do work? In most cases, *nothing*.

Some people believe that a credit check can determine a candidate's level of responsibility. Others believe that someone with a criminal record are likely to commit a crime again, and could be a threat to office safety. A frequent change of address could be the sign of a con artist. **These are all biased assumptions, though.** Let me explain one candidate who had three of these working against them:

Jackie was born in rural Connecticut. Her credit check was very low, she defaulted on 3 credit cards. She has had six different physical addresses. She was caught stealing. However, Jackie is actually an excellent candidate. Here's why:

Her *mother* used her identity to open several credit cards when she was a baby. You see, her mother was addicted to gambling. It was also why she moved so many times. When she was growing up, her mother would find a new apartment to avoid paying rent. Finally, her mother asked her to steal some food from a store one day, resulting in her getting caught, and now has a criminal record.

The interesting thing about Jackie's story is, you wondered why *she* would be a good candidate. Everything on her background check was a result of her mother doing a poor job raising her, it had nothing to do with the candidate themselves.

Jackie is happily employed today. She had to use a friend's signature to purchase her first car, but she's making regular payments and getting her "record" cleaned up. Too bad you missed out on her, since all you had to go on was a resume, an interview, and a background check.

The **Default** Choice

Dan Ariely gave a TED talk in 2009, promoting his book called "**Predictably Irrational**." Below is a very popular optical illusion:
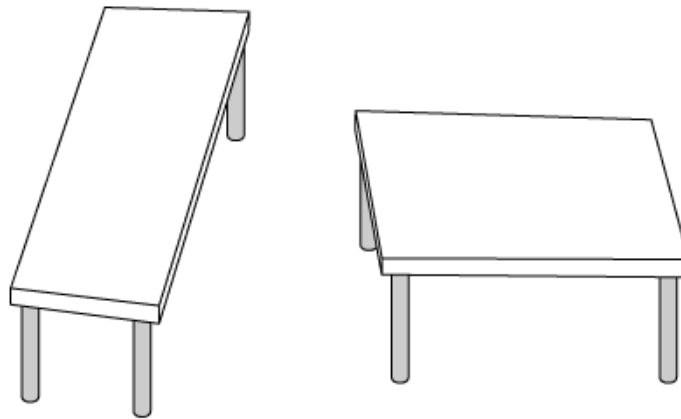
Which table is longer?

Dan presents the picture in his famous TED talk and asks, "Which table is longer?" Then, using fancy computer graphics, shows us they are the same size. He does this with a few other popular visual illusions. He then introduces an important concept:

"Our intuition is fooling us in a repeatable, predictable, consistent way, and there is nothing we can do about it until we take out a ruler and start to measure."

He uses vision as a **metaphor**. If vision is our strongest skill as humans, and it can be fooled this easily, what are the chances that *other* cognitive processes can be fooled?

Dan suggests, based on his research, that when a decision is difficult to make, we tend to lean toward a **default choice.** What the default choice is will vary from decision to decision, but we will know what it is and lean in that direction.

But How does this effect your ability to hire? We're getting to that...

Dan found a magazine subscription he was interested in that offered three options:

- **Economist.com Subscription** – US $59.00
  One-year subscription to economist.com. Includes online access to all articles from *The Economist* since 1997

- **Print Subscription** – US $125.00
  One-year subscription to the print edition of *The Economist*

- **Print & Web Subscription** – US $125.00
   One-year subscription to the print edition of *The Economist* and access to all articles from *The Economist* since 1997

Note the last option: You can get *both* print and online for the same price as *just* the print subscription. Dan used this as a template for his research, and after asking a sample size of MIT students what they would pick, this was the result:

■ **Economist.com Subscription** – **16%**
One-year subscription to economist.com. Includes online access to all articles from *The Economist* since 1997

■ **Print Subscription** – **0%**
One-year subscription to the print edition of *The Economist*

■ **Print & Web Subscription** – **84%**
 One-year subscription to the print edition of *The Economist* and access to all articles from *The Economist* since 1997

So, Dan eliminated the option that nobody wanted and ran the test a second time, with another random group of students of the same size:

■ **Economist.com Subscription** – **16% → 68%**
One-year subscription to economist.com. Includes online access to all articles from *The Economist* since 1997

■ **Print & Web Subscription** – **84% → 32%**
 One-year subscription to the print edition of *The Economist* and access to all articles from *The Economist* since 199

So, the *most* popular option became the *least* popular option.

Dan suggests, based on solid research, that we don't know our preferences that well. If we don't know our preferences that well, we are susceptible to outside influences. Let's use three resumes as an example. I'm going to highlight the **skills** section of each:

SKILLS
Linux, Apache, MySQL, PHP, Javascript, HTML, CSS

SKILLS
Microsoft Office, Git, Mecurial, Javascript

SKILLS
Linux, Apache, MySQL, PHP, Javascript, HTML, CSS, Git, Mercurial, and Microsoft Office

Now, given these three resumes, if you were hiring a web developer, wouldn't the last resume be the best? Of course it would. But our mind has tricked us again! The other two candidates had the same skill sets, they just forgot to put it on their resume!

So be wary when making decisions not grounded in solid data. Your bias will show up in ways you may not expect.

Start Asking *Why*

In *another* Ted Talk, speaker and author **Simon Sinek** demonstrates what he calls "The World's Simplest Idea."
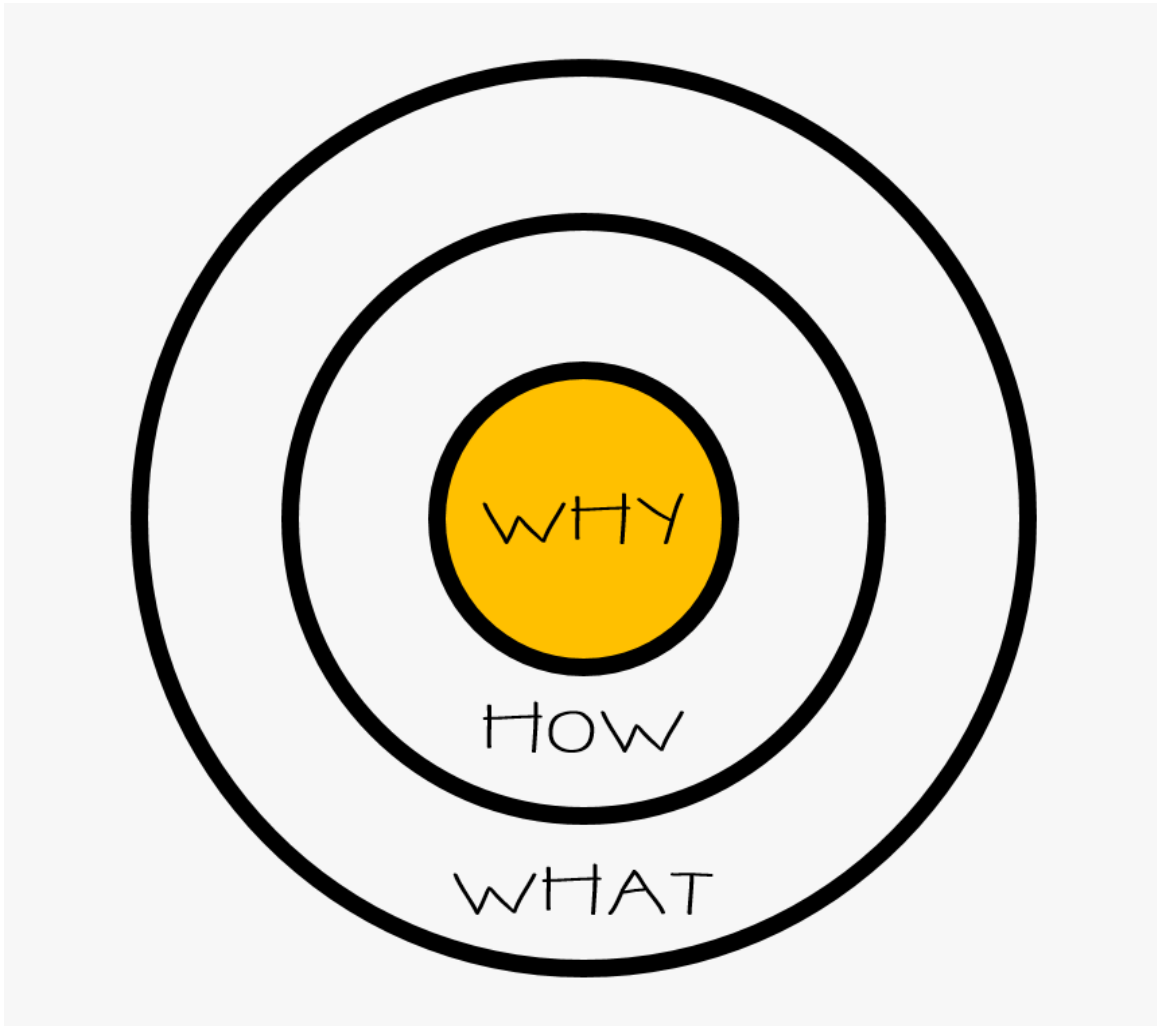
As Simon puts it, every organization knows **What they do.** Like selling computers. Some know **How they do it.** This could be a trade secret or differentiator. But very few know *Why they do* what they do. A "Why", as defined by Simon, is

a purpose or a cause. He says, "Making money is not a purpose. It's a result." In his talk, he uses Apple as an example because they're famous and everyone "gets it." If Apple were like any other company, this is what an advertisement from them might look like:

We make great computers. They are beautifully designed, simple to use, and user friendly. Want to buy one?

Meh. But here's what Apple *actually* sounds like:

Everything we do we believe in challenging the status quo, and in thinking differently. We just happen to make great computers. They are beautifully designed, simple to use, and user friendly.

Just that little nudge at the beginning completely shifts the conversation. Now you're ready to buy a computer! Simon says that organizations that are deeply rooted in a tangible belief are more likely to succeed. The best part? None of this is his opinion. His research is grounded in ***biology****,* not psychology. If you look at a brain from the top down, you'll see Simon's Golden Circle. Any brain surgeon can confirm.

So, what does any of this have to do with *your* hiring? At *your* company? Simple. Find your company's *Why*, and broadcast it. Make sure people have a reason *why* they want to work for you. They should share your company's beliefs.

If you hire people who can do what you need, they'll work for your money. But if you hire people who believe what you believe, they'll work with blood, sweat, and tears. Because your company serves as a **symbol** of who *they* are.

I'll give you one more example. Whole Foods is a chain of grocery stores that refuses to carry any products with artificial ingredients. This is why you can't buy a coke or a snickers there. Because of this, their products typically cost more. But so what? All of Whole Food's customers love what they do, refusing to shop at other grocers who just *started* offering healthier groceries. Employees who work there believe what Whole Foods believes, too, and turnover is less than other competing grocery chains.

People don't buy what you do they buy why you do it. Recite that every night before you go to sleep. It will solve more than just your *hiring* problems, I promise.

In Simon's book, "Start With Why", he presents case studies of companies that *don't* have a purpose, alongside companies that *do*. The contrast is noteworthy.

A New Approach

I hope, by now, you understand that making "gut" decisions just won't cut it anymore. Organizations that have a solid purpose tend to attract like-minded individuals *naturally*. After that, you need to use *data* to properly screen everyone who is left. Without data, your decisions will be **biased**. Biased decisions can turn into discrimination lawsuits later.

So you need a new approach. An approach that takes a **data-first** mindset to hiring. So, what does that look like?

- **The Job Listing**
- The Resume
- Basic Skills Test
- Magnetic Score^{TM}
- Creative Assignment
- Interview
- Background Check

We're going to start with the Job Listing, since it doesn't get enough attention. The purpose of your job listing is to inspire people to *want* to work for you. This is crucial if you are not as big of a company as Apple. The easiest way to inspire more people is to **Start With Why**. Why does your company even exist? Why do you get out of bed in the morning?

These need to be included in your job posting to stand out from all other, "We are just another software consultancy" job ads. I'm already yawning. I cannot tell you what your *Why* is. It is deeply personal and profound. You and your company might have to get together on a camping trip to discover it. Or just have the owner tell you why they started the company and workshop from there. So what does a job ad with purpose look like? Don't overthink it:

Part Time Recruiter (No Experience Needed)

We hate climate change deniers!

Our purpose is to create a cleaner, greener planet with more people who love what they do.

Best Job Search is a tiny talent agency with a powerful job search engine. We combine job listings from all the top job sites into one web page, so our candidates can make the best career move. For every job seeker who registers on our platform, we plant one new tree in their name.

As a recruiter, you will introduce companies to job seekers, and ensure the relationship is a good fit.

Requirements:

- You can introduce yourself to strangers
- You can work unsupervised in a home office setting
- You can provide your own laptop/desktop computer with a stable internet connection
- You can use social media to promote a job opening for a company
- You can make phone calls with your own cell phone
- You can speak English (our customers are US based)
- You live or are authorized to work in the US (we cannot provide visa sponsorship)

No Experience Required, we offer training on the job.

Please apply below and follow instructions.

This was an *actual* job ad I ran when starting my own talent agency, and I got a lot of enthusiastic applicants who were just as green-crazy as me! They came from all walks of life.

Don't Hire Me – Why hiring is flawed and how to fix it

- The Job Listing
- **The Resume**
- Basic Skills Test
- Magnetic Score™
- Creative Assignment
- Interview
- Background Check

I don't want to spend too much time talking about a resume, since I barely spend any time looking at one. The only thing I check on a resume is the work experience section. Even recent college grads have an internship or club role to talk about. I'm never impressed with how they talk themselves up on paper. I simply use the work experience provided on the resume to outline their interview later in the hiring process. Having a standardized interview process keeps me focused on the candidate instead of focusing on what question I'll ask next.

Resumes in general are a joke. They are loaded with claims that cannot be validated yet. So don't be impressed by them either. I highly suggest you spend as little time reading a resume as possible. Make sure the resume exists, and at least has a list of places the candidate has worked at. If you have any education requirements, make sure they are listed in the resume as well. That's it.

- The Job Listing
- The Resume
- **Basic Skills Test**
- Magnetic Score™
- Creative Assignment
- Interview
- Background Check

The Basic Skills Test is where we sort the lions from the liars. It's easy to *say* you know how to write javascript. It's completely different when you have to *prove* it. That's what a basic skills test does. You can try and create these yourself if you want. But then what? You save them for the interview? Nonsense. You've already wasted too much time, both yours and *theirs*.

Your Basic Skill Tests need to be automated, to be effective. It needs to be something the candidate can do on their own without your supervision. Then you need to know what they scored and if they cheated. There are some services that offer this, but it can get expensive and difficult to manage.

Unless you have a Basic Skills Test integrated into your hiring pipeline, you'll just be creating more work for yourself. The **default** option is to just skip this, which is why most people do.

- The Job Listing
- The Resume
- Basic Skills Test
- **Magnetic Score™**
- Creative Assignment
- Interview
- Background Check

A **Magnetic Score™** is a proprietary formula I use to measure how good of a fit a candidate will be at a company. It asks both the Hiring manager and the candidate a series of questions that are independent of age, race, religion, culture, sexual orientation, and gender. Each candidate gets a numeric Magnetic Score™ based on how good of a fit they will be. The higher the number, the better the fit.

Companies without a strong "Why" *need* this formula to be successful when hiring. Companies who have a solid purpose still benefit from it's ability to fine tune a good match with a specific department.

While I cannot disclose all the details (this is my secret sauce, after all) I can say it was developed by a veteran recruiter with over 30 years of executive recruiting experience.

- The Job Listing
- The Resume
- Basic Skills Test
- Magnetic Score™
- **Creative Assignment**
- Interview
- Background Check

A Creative Assignment can determine who is serious about your job offer, and who is simply "window shopping." A creative assignment is only as effective as the person in charge of judging it. So if you're hiring your company's first programmer, you cannot be certain if their work well, *works*.

This is why it can be important to involve a recruiter in the process. You'd want a recruiter who is familiar with programming and can create a Creative Assignment for applicants to complete. That recruiter would also have skills to review each assignment and grade them accordingly.

This way, you can avoid any bias based on age, race, religion, culture, sexual orientation, and gender. You will be judging candidates solely on the work they present to your recruiter, who can accurately deduce if the work is quality material or not.

- The Job Listing
- The Resume
- Basic Skills Test
- Magnetic Score™
- Creative Assignment
- **Interview**
- Background Check

The Interview is the first time you have any human interaction with the candidate. In most cases, your recruiter would do this for you. An Interview should be a structured review of a candidate's previous work history. The interview should also be recorded.

Recording every interview helps safeguard you against possible discrimination lawsuits. If you've followed other steps in the process I outlined, you'll also have data from a Basic Skills Test, a Magnetic Score™, and a Creative Assignment to point to and defend your decision with.

When asking a candidate about their work history, just listen. If on a telephone interview, mute your phone so you do not interrupt the candidate while they are speaking. Wait for an awkward pause, just be sure the candidate is done talking about a particular subject. Don't make any decisions during the interview. Always end an interview with a follow up time, "We'll have our decision this time next week."

- The Job Listing
- The Resume
- Basic Skills Test
- Magnetic Score^{TM}
- Creative Assignment
- Interview
- **Background Check**

Background Checks are just a small piece in the larger puzzle. They do not, by themselves, disqualify any candidates. But together, with all the other data points we collected about an individual candidate, we can determine the best one.

The exact services you use to perform a background check should either be cheap, or free. Because you'll be doing them periodically as your company needs to hire more people.

If you pay a recruiter or talent agency, they absorb this cost for you.

- - -

So, does this process work? YES! It was developed by a veteran recruiter with over 30 years of executive recruiting experience! It has endured the test of time. As new job positions emerge, however, it will have to continually be tested and tweaked.

Final Thoughts

Before I close the book, I want to discuss what it would take to implement this hiring process on your own.

First, you would need to direct your applicants to a place that can collect resumes and administer a basic skills test. Ideally, this tool would automatically reject candidates who score too low. This test would also be able to sniff out cheaters and fakers.

Second, you would need your own version of a Magnetic Score^{TM}, which has taken 30 years to develop and distill into something simple for both companies and candidates. Ideally, this part would somehow be integrated into the same tool that performed the basic skills test.

Third, you would need an expert to administer and review creative assignments. If you've done the job you're hiring for, this is easy, but still time consuming. Otherwise you may have to *hire* a third party to do this. With creative assignments coming in sporadically, this could get messy.

Finally, you'll need to conduct interviews and perform background checks on the top candidates. With all of the other information you've collected, it becomes difficult to stay organized.

So, can you do this on your own? Yes, but, it may not be worth the hassle. Let's look at why:

- **You Don't Have the Time**
  Do you *really* have the time to figure all this stuff out? If you're not building a system yourself, you will be drowning in research to find companies that patch this process together for you. <u>The result will be a mess!</u> Unless you pick *one* system that implements all steps *together*, data will be lost! We know that data is our most valuable asset when hiring.

- **You Don't Have the Resources**
  You have the blueprint of a successful hiring process. Maybe you can roll up your sleeves and build something yourself? If that's the case, let me be honest: It took an entire year of doing nothing but chugging coffee and coding to get this system running. I'm still making improvements on it daily. Unless you have your entire career to hire your next candidate, I would advise against this. You could hire a team of off-shore developers to build this. But without the passion for recruiting that I have, they'll probably miss the mark.

- **You Don't Want the Liability**
  Even if your boss gave you an unlimited amount of time and money to build your own super hiring machine, there is a third reason to outsource this entirely: Liability. When you outsource your hiring process to a third party,

they take on all the liability risks associated with it. The biggest risk today is a **Discrimination Lawsuit**. By using a talent agency who is *very* familiar on how to operate within the bounds of the law, you can reduce your risk to *nothing.*

- **You Don't Have the Network**
Often overlooked or forgotten, Hiring managers don't realize the value of a recruiter's social network. You see, when you place a job ad, only candidates who are *looking* for work at that moment apply for your job. Often times these candidates are unqualified. A recruiter can tap into their network of *passive* candidates. These are candidates that are currently employed, but could be swayed to work for you if there is a value alignment (Remember when we talked about your *Why*?)

So, if building this hiring process yourself is too much to take on right now, why not rent someone else's? It will be a fraction of the cost and you'll get your results immediately.

At **Best Job Search**, we built this *exact* hiring funnel right into the job search engine candidates already love. This way, when they apply for your job, they aren't pushed around to other complex systems. Everything is done in one place. It's simple. [Take a closer look for yourself](#).

Did you find this book useful? If so, I have created an online course that expands upon each of the topics discussed in this book.

My online course also includes step by step instructions on how to implement the exact hiring process outlined this book!

In the final section of the course, I go into detail on how to transform your new recruits into a trusting team that works well together.

The best part? My online class is priced much lower than competing courses!

I didn't publish this book for my own ego. I really do want to make positive changes in the world we live in today. That starts with people being able to trust each other again.

If you are able to hire effectively but still see a large turnover in your department, I *urge* you to take my course. It's true that most of us do not get the proper training we need when we're promoted at our company.

[Click here to view my course, Hire Like a Pro](#).

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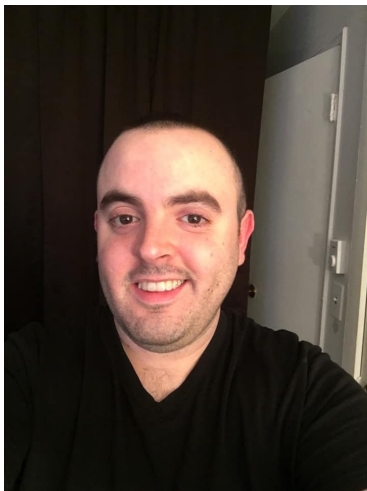
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gregory Sposato is a Web Developer who has worked with over 200 clients, including big brands and household names. He has built hundreds of websites, of all shapes and sizes, from small landing pages to large enterprise-level web applications. His expertise is both in the craft itself and managing different sized teams to do the same. His intense focus and genuine care for others make him a key contact for many executives. He is a member of both the International Web Association and the Recruiters Association.

Don't Hire Me – Why hiring is flawed and how to fix it

There was a lot of time, energy, and research that went into writing this book, even though it is small. It took years of experimenting, growing my career, and living my own life to distill the ideas I presented in this book into simple concepts.

The only thing more difficult than writing a book is promoting it. I'm happy you were able to find this book but don't assume others will find it just as easily.

If you truly did find the concepts to be a breathe of fresh air then you owe it to your friends and colleagues to share this book with them.

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