7 habits of highly successful hiring managers

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In the new world of work, modern managers must leverage on-demand experts to access top talent and reach their goals. And doing so effectively requires breaking business goals into discrete projects.

But successful projects don't just happen—they're built. Yes, it's about the right talent in the right role at the right time, but it's also about intentionally setting clear expectations and rules of engagement. Whether you're new to project-based work or continuously perfecting your client craft, **these are the definitive guidelines for repeatable project success.**

1 Shift from *team* to *Team*.

Nearly 50% of the US workforce is opting out of traditional employment. Half of today's 67M freelancers say that no amount of money would get them to take a traditional job, and 61% of freelancers do so by choice, not necessity.

Success in the new world of work requires a more holistic approach to talent and team building. **It starts by broadening your perspective from *team* to *Team*.**

A *team* consists solely of FTEs. It's static.

In contrast, a *Team* includes a dynamic collection of resources who help an organization reach its goals. There's no one-size-fits-all solution—a *Team* can be any combination of FTEs, consultants, freelancers, vendors, agencies, or contractors—whether strategic or tactical, long- or short-term, internal or external.

Modern managers maximize results with blended *Teams*. Doing so enables them to:

• Access the total talent population
• Leverage experts—only when they need them
• Free themselves (and their teams!) up to focus on what they do best

2 Be a client, not a manager.

When you're working with project-based experts, check your *manager* credentials at the door. You're a *client* now. What's the difference? Quite a bit.

With your full-time employees (FTEs), you're a *manager*.

As a manager, you're not just tasked with ensuring that the work gets done. You're also responsible for managing your people's performance and career and professional development. If there's an issue, it's on you to coach and resolve. If there's a teachable moment, that's on you, too. And those added responsibilities can consume a fair amount of time and energy.

With your outside experts—whether consultants, freelancers, or agencies—take the pressure off: You're a *client.*

As a client, you're freed up to focus on the results. That means defining the problem that needs to be solved and celebrating the win when the work is complete. And leaving the burden of people management and development to your client service partner.

Pro tip: Partner with a consultancy or agency, like Simplicity, with a support excellence model. Our number one goal is helping you achieve heroic success, and we'll ensure that you have the right expert and the necessary support to make it happen.

Bottom line: We manage the talent. You get results.

3 Define success first.

It might sound obvious, but it's near-impossible to have a successful project without clearly defining what success looks like—and then sharing that with everyone involved.

As you crystalize your vision of success, ask yourself:
- What results do I want to see in 30, 60, and 90 days?
- What does success look like? How do I define a successful project?
- What is the most important business outcome I need right now?
- What expertise do I have on my team to achieve this outcome?
- What expertise am I missing?
- What are some of the upcoming key deliverables and milestones that must be met?
- Are there clearly defined metrics that we can measuring (quantitative or qualitative)?
- How do these metrics align with client and/or team accountabilities?
- What challenges might arise when meeting those outcomes, and what is the best approach to overcoming them?

> **"Ask: What's the most important business outcome I need right now?"**

4 Get tactical to meet business objectives.

Define success: Check.

Once successful clients have identified their most important business objectives, they break down what they need to do to meet those goals. How?

Do:
- Determine your logistics needs: full-time or part-time? Off-site or on-site?
- Gain clarity on how to meet your business objectives and fill the talent gap on your team.
- Draft a compelling project description—and share it broadly.

Ask yourself:
- Do I have the appropriate budget approval to bring on a consultant?
- What are the hard and soft skills needed on my team?
- Do I need a strategist, tactician, or a combo of the two?

Project description pro tip: Frame as "what do I want this person to do and deliver?"

5 Set expectations up front.

We can't emphasize it enough: **How you start is how you finish.**

The key to a successful project is setting clear expectations at the outset—and sharing those expectations with everyone involved, including your client service partner.

Areas to consider:

- **Statement of work (SOW):** Have I drafted a SOW with all the deliverable details, timeline, and payment terms?
- **Points of integration:** Have I shared with my team why I'm bringing in an expert(s) and built an environment of inclusion and trust? Who will the consultant(s) be interacting with? Have I established communication channels between them?
- **Rhythm of communication:** What's my preferred communication method (email, text, IM, in person, etc) and style (direct/open, formal/informal, etc)? How often should we meet to track progress and success metrics?
- **Standard operating procedures:** Have I set expectations appropriately with the consultant(s) about our culture? About the work?

Pro tip: Schedule a project kick-off meeting during the first week of the project. Meet face-to-face, if possible.

Bonus: If you partner with a client service provider, like Simplicity, they'll drive your project kick-off to ensure your project starts—and ends—right.

6 Set your team up for success.

Even the most strategic, seasoned, and self-directed consultant needs a few basics to be successful.

Highly successful clients give their consultant the foundational information they need to hit the ground running, solve problems, and drive impact from day one. Doing so will empower your consultant in their role—and lead to increased autonomy down the road.

Here's how:

- **People:** Identify the key players that the consultant will be interacting with and what the consultant needs to know about them (roles, areas of expertise, communication preferences, etc). Introduce them all and give the green light to collaborate as needed.
- **Tools & resources:** Identify the tools (chat/collaboration tools, marketing automation software, CRM, CMS, etc) your consultant will need to access and the resources (core documents, web content, internal portals, guides, marketing plans, etc) they'll benefit from reviewing.
- **Process:** Consider if there's a specific process you'd like the consultant to follow in managing the project. Are there any tools or resources they need to do so effectively?

We'll say it again: Start strong to end strong.

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7 Evaluate & learn.

Success isn't ambiguous—it's mapped to clearly defined success metrics. If you want the project completed as agreed upon in the SOW, it's essential to not just set clear benchmarks: Create a process for evaluating and learning from them.

Metrics are key to understanding if your investment is yielding the intended ROI. They're also useful in flagging potential issues.

Define the:

- Approach to evaluating success
- Key project metrics (both qualitative and quantitative)
- Format and process you'll use to review those metrics
- Cadence for reviewing metrics

Upon review, ask:

- Are you achieving your intended metrics?
- Are your goals from the project start still a priority?
- What's working well? What could be improved?

Congrats! You've completed our expert-level course in client success. Now go do great work with your Team—heroic success is ahead!

Your trusted advisor in the new world of work

We're in this together. We can help you effectively fill gaps, do more with less, and reach your goals with the right on-demand expert.

Let's partner:

Contact **hello@simplicityci.com** to get started.

SPEED Playbook

For more actionable guidance on balancing the resources you have with the resources you need and leveraging on-demand talent to reach your goals, download our SPEED Playbook. This fast, flexible talent strategy provides managers with a framework for successfully engaging external experts.

Meet Simplicity

From strategy to execution, Simplicity Consulting is the on-demand marketing and business consultancy for the new world of work. We help companies accelerate growth, add a fresh perspective, and increase capacity—at the speed of business—with access to our curated community of marketing, communications, and business operations experts.

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