



Build your on-demand team

SPEED Playbook

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Introduction

By 2020, 40% of US workers won't want to be full-time employees.¹ As I discuss in my book, *Navigating the Talent Shift*, there is a massive shift underway in how companies are getting work done and how professionals are choosing to work. Companies increasingly need to move with speed and agility to experiment and innovate and stay ahead of the curve.

So, how can you achieve your goals while balancing the resources you have with the resources you need in this dynamic, changing workforce?

The solution is SPEED, a fast and flexible talent strategy that enables innovative managers to build on-demand teams to access a broader talent pool.

SPEED encompasses the best practices I've learned from leading my company, Simplicity Consulting, for the past 10 years and observing thousands of managers grapple with increased workloads and finding the right talent to achieve their ever changing business goals. This isn't theory. This is a very practical and intentionally simple methodology for you to integrate into your business today. It's the strategy you need to access the 65+ million people that make up the on-demand, specialized talent pool. It's all about accessing the right talent at the right time doing the right work and these variables are constantly changing.

Integrate these proven steps into your hiring strategy and find success! Let's get started building your on-demand team!



1. Adriana Lopez, Coworking is it Just a Fad or the Future of Business, Forbes Online, April 25, 2013.



Success

Take time to identify the most important outcome.

You likely have many needs and goals, but by focusing on one main project you gain the clarity that will help to fast-track the process. You are much better off when you're clear about what expertise and experience is needed.

Determine what results you want to see in 30, 60, and 90 days. You may have a lightbulb moment, as many of our clients do, once you have a good idea of what success looks like.

Look at your team's expertise and decide if there is a talent gap that needs filling to make the project a success. Look beyond the name and title of each person already in your organization to determine whether their strengths and skills are a proper match for the project at hand. Optimizing for the expertise and skills needed for the project goals will help you achieve your objectives faster.



Success: Reflection questions

Get started by asking yourself the following questions:

What is the most important business outcome I need right now?

What expertise do I have on my team currently to achieve this outcome?

What expertise do I need to add to achieve this outcome?



Plan

Gain clarity on how to meet your business objectives and fill the talent gap on your team

Project description

To begin the planning process, you will first need to craft a project description that specifies what the consultant will do. It is essential to do this before talking to candidates because you want them to be able to hit the ground running and add value from day one.

Considerations for drafting a project description:

Frame everything from the perspective of “what do I want this person to do and deliver?”

- Do you need a strategist, a tactician, or a combination?
- Determine desired schedule: full-time or part-time?
- Will the work be completed off-site or on-site?

Know your budget. Don't waste precious time on interviewing candidates until you know your exact budget and are sure that the funding is available for you to access.

Fair rates for consultants can fluctuate depending on the market and the skills required for the project. Get a sense of the range of market value by asking your colleagues what they are paying for similar expertise and by searching sites like [payscale.com](https://www.payscale.com) and [salary.com](https://www.salary.com) for local rates.



Accessing & interviewing talent

Sources for finding on-demand talent:

- Word of mouth referrals – The old adage “it’s all about your Rolodex”... Is true!
- LinkedIn – Search for talent using the Advanced Search feature (in the keyword field you can type in “consultant” or even more specifically, “digital marketing consultant”).
- Job posting sites – Finding consultants can be more difficult on job posting sites, but having a well-defined project description will attract the best candidates.
- Freelance marketplaces and platforms – These platforms connect businesses with freelancers worldwide and offer an efficient way to post projects and search for skills.
- Specialized talent agencies – Leverage the knowledge and access of an agency to find the best consultant for your project. The benefit of working with an agency is that it is faster than going through the steps of finding consultants on your own. BEWARE: Not all talent agencies are created equal. Be sure to select an agency with an already diverse and proven community of expert talent.

You are probably a pro at hiring FTEs, but what about when it comes to hiring a consultant? There are three specific things to focus on during an interview with a potential consultant:

1. Ask about specifics – An interview with a potential consultant should never start with the generic “tell me about yourself” statement that you may pose to an FTE. Instead, ask them to share specifics about their contributions and accomplishments on past projects.



2. Understand more than hard skills – Anyone can put their hard skills, experience, and accreditations on a resume. Treat the interview as a dry run for how the candidate will approach the project. For instance, put the consultant on a whiteboard with a problem to solve. Don't expect a perfect answer - they don't know your business yet - but this will provide a great snapshot of how well they think on their feet.

3. ABCs – When searching, screening, and interviewing for a great consultant, we recommend that you look for the ABC's: great Attitude, ability to Build trust, and effective Communication skills. These seemingly small skills appear obvious but are the differentiating attributes between good and great consultants.

Attitude

- Brings positive energy, enthusiasm, and excitement
- Shows adaptability to your changing business requirements

Build trust

- Understands your goals and visions
- Anticipates your needs

Communication

- Provides regular, high impact status reports with progress
- Effectively interacts and represents you as the client when working with multiple teams



Plan: Reflection questions

Do I have the appropriate budget approval to bring on a consultant? If yes, great! If not, describe what is needed to achieve approval.

Draft a compelling project description.

What are the hard and soft skills needed on my team?



Execute

The key to successful project execution is setting and meeting expectations.

Now that you have selected your consultant, set the project up for successful execution by documenting the project deliverables in a Statement of Work (SOW), onboarding the consultant, and integrating them into your team.

Statement of Work

The Statement of Work (SOW) is a high level, living document of deliverables. It's common for needs to shift so keep the SOW up to date along the way. This will minimize future misunderstandings on priorities and deliverables.

Onboarding

The project kickoff meeting is one of the most valuable steps in the SPEED process. The purpose of this meeting is to establish a shared and trusted working relationship between you and the consultant from day one. The meeting will also serve to identify metrics and communicate clear expectations to set both parties up for success.



Week 1 – Project Kickoff

- Ensure access to people and resources.
- Make introductions to key players the consultant will work with.
- Determine rhythm of communication.
- Decide preferred schedule, location, etc.

Week 2 – Engagement and Access

- Set recurring meetings with your consultant.
- Confirm network and tool access.

Week 3 – Fine Tuning

- Discuss current status of deliverables and potential obstacles.

Week 4 – Progress to Date

- Ensure you are working in unison with the consultant.
- Get ahead of the small issues and re-evaluate priorities as needed.



Execute: Reflection questions

Do I have a SOW drafted with all the details of deliverables, the timeline, and payment terms? If yes, way to be ahead of the game! If not, when do you plan to complete it?

Have I communicated to my team the reason I am bringing in an expert and established an environment of inclusion and trust?

Have I set expectations appropriately with the consultant about our culture and the work?



Evaluate

This is a critical phase to make sure the work is getting done as agreed upon in the SOW.

Creating metrics is key to understanding if your investment is generating the intended ROI. It is also an early warning system to get ahead of possible issues...

Once the consultant is on board, the evaluation process begins. It's common to start off a project with clear metrics, but then things evolve over time. Constant evaluation of metrics ensures goals are being met and both parties have the same understanding.

Determine what data is critical to track and in what cadence. We have observed that fewer metrics are more impactful than many, but this depends on the project. Ask your consultant to provide and manage a scorecard, that highlights the metrics, to measure progress and spot trends in your business.

Remember, as business needs change so will the goals and metrics. Continuously evaluate the KPI's - eliminate those that are no longer meaningful and add in the new ones that are relevant.



Evaluate: Reflection questions

What are the key project metrics?

What format will I use to review these metrics? (i.e. scorecard or dashboard)

How often will I review the key metrics?



Decide

Once goals are achieved, decide if there are new or continuing project needs.

When you achieve project goals, you feel empowered to tackle the next project in a faster and more efficient way. But first, you must decide whether the current project remains a priority. If it is, continue the work and bring on additional resources as needed. If not, decide if the consultant has the skillset needed to help with the next project.

Things to consider once the initial goals have been met:

- Review the metrics and trends – are you achieving your intended metrics?
- Evaluate your goals – are the goals still the priority?
- Decide on alternatives – are there alternative paths to pursue in achieving the business goal?

These informed decisions are important, so take time to reflect on the next course of action. Decision-making is arguably the most challenging and exhausting part of a manager's job. As business cycles accelerate, making thoughtful decisions are crucial.



Decide: Reflection questions

Are the project results still relevant to the business?

Do we need to evolve the project goals to better align with any business changes?

Have the business needs changed and this project is not needed anymore? If yes, then what is the transition plan?

Cross the finish line

You now have the secret sauce to finding and utilizing on-demand talent for success on your next project. If you want to attract the best and brightest talent, then implementing SPEED is a requirement.

SPEED means thinking about your team in a much broader sense than simply placing names on an organizational chart. It's about asking what your business needs and goals are, both now and in the future, and focusing on securing the right talent, regardless of the form it takes.

Given the increasing number of experienced, highly talented corporate professionals opting to work on a project basis, and the reality that businesses frequently have to do more with less, companies large and small are seeing the critical need for project-based, on-demand teams.

The workforce has evolved, and now is the time to embrace the talent shift!

Client testimonials

"It's so fast. I can usually have someone start work within 10 days easily or faster... It's one-tenth of the time it would take to hire someone full-time."

- Amanda F, technology company manager

"Insightful! SPEED is a very actionable framework to help you drive towards a new operating model and to succeed at it."

- Roberto F, Product, Strategy, & Operations Executive

"Many consulting companies advertise their abundance of experts, but few employ methods that match experts to the client's culture. A misfit expert is worse than not having the expertise. Lisa's SPEED strategy helped my teams find culturally compatible experts who on-board quickly and achieve immediate results. Important read for today's leaders."

- Rick W, Former Technology Company VP

Need help building your on-demand team? We can help.

Contact hello@simplicityci.com