FUTURE OF WORK INSIDER · A FIELD GUIDE

The AI Recruiter

Hiring is turning into software that interviews software. How to stay human on both sides of the screen.

For executives and senior candidates meeting automated screens, and for founders and companies redesigning how they hire.

By Lisa Gibbons · Companion to the four-part series · November 2026

futureofworkinsider.com/series/the-ai-recruiter/

THE ARGUMENT

The first interviewer is now often a machine. Nobody on either side is sure what it's listening for.

Employers are using automated screeners to cope with floods of applications. Many of those applications were written with AI in the first place. The result is a loop: software writing for software, with people squeezed into the gap between the two.

The series argues three things. The candidate gets no human feedback, so a pause or a joke can count against them. Screening sold as neutral is trained on past hiring, so it carries that hiring's prejudices. And as candidates learn to game the scorers, vendors add more surveillance, and the interview stops being a conversation at all.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Two tracks, one problem

TRACK A · PAGE 4

If you're being screened

Executives, senior managers and C-suite candidates who find an automated interview or assessment in their process. How to get through it, and what to ask.

TRACK B · PAGE 5

If you're redesigning hiring

Founders hiring a first team, and companies reorganising how they recruit. Where automation helps, where it does harm, and what to ask a vendor.

> **Why both tracks are in one guide.** The senior candidate and the founder are often the same person in different years. Whoever designs the screen today may have to pass one tomorrow. Read the other track too.

THE SERIES

Four parts, read in order

00

PROLOGUE · 7 OCT 2026

Surviving the rise of the AI recruiter

A first-person bot interview: no nods, no laughter, no verdict. Why candidates now write for the parser rather than the person, and a four-step way to prepare.

01

PART I · 9 OCT 2026

The two-minute void where silence is fatal

Talent teams answer floods of automated applications with automated screeners. What is lost when the first interviewer can't nod, wait or admit it misheard.

02

PART II · 13 OCT 2026

Bias by design

Screening is sold as neutral but learns from past hiring. Gaze tracking, speech recognition and phrasing scores fall hardest on people who differ from the norm.

03

PART III · 28 OCT 2026

The tactical playbook

Candidates learn to game the scorers, vendors answer with more surveillance, and the interview becomes one machine assessing another.

Read the full essays free at futureofworkinsider.com/series/the-ai-recruiter/

TRACK A · IF YOU'RE BEING SCREENED

Senior hiring was built on conversation. Prepare for a screen that can't hold one.

Executive hiring has long run on relationships, search firms and long conversations. If an automated interview or assessment turns up in your process, the skills that got you this far, such as reading the room, building rapport and taking your time, count for less. The series' advice still applies, with a few changes for someone with a long record.

Before the screen

- **Ask what you're meeting.** Who or what runs this stage, what it assesses, and whether a person reviews every result. A senior candidate can ask this plainly.
- **Ask for an alternative if you need one.** If a camera, gaze tracking or speech recognition would put you at a disadvantage, ask for an adjustment or another format before the screen, not after a rejection.
- **Read the posting as the brief.** The series argues that scorers compare your answers with the job description's wording. Use its terms for your own experience.

During the screen

- **Don't leave long silences.** A voice agent may take a pause as the end of your answer. Use a bridging phrase while you think.
- **Compress the story.** A short setup, then what you did in the first person, then the result. Boards and investors want the same structure anyway.
- **Only use numbers you'd defend in the boardroom.** Part III shows that a scorer may reward the shape of a claim over its truth. The humans in the next round will check, and your reputation travels.
- **Look at the lens and keep your hands still.** Proctoring tools can read looking away to think as a warning sign.

After the screen

- **Treat the process as evidence about the company.** How a company hires shows how it will treat you and your team. Ask in a later round how they use automation in hiring and who is accountable for it.
- **Know you can ask for human review.** In the EU and UK, data protection law gives people the right to ask for a person to review significant decisions made solely by automated means. This is general information, not legal advice.

TRACK B · IF YOU'RE REDESIGNING HIRING

Your hiring process is the first product a candidate uses. Design it like one.

Automation can sort volume. It can't tell you who you need. Founders hiring a first team and companies reorganising their recruitment face the same choice: what to hand to software, and what to keep for people. The series suggests six design principles.

1. Start with what you're screening for.
Write down the three things that predict success in the role before choosing any tool. If a screen can't measure them, it shouldn't decide.

2. Test the screen on your best people.
Run your current top performers through it. If any of them would fail, the screen is measuring something other than the job.

3. Keep a person at every rejection.
Let software sort and summarise. Make sure a named person owns every decision to reject, and can explain it.

4. Build in a way round.
Offer another format to anyone the camera, microphone or timer would disadvantage, and say so in the invitation.

5. Tell candidates what they're meeting.
Say when AI is used, what it assesses and who reviews it. Your strongest candidates have choices and will notice.

6. Measure who drops out.
Track who abandons or fails each stage, and look for patterns by background, accent or disability. That is where bias shows first.

> THE RULES ARE COMING
>
> Under the EU AI Act, AI used for recruitment, candidate selection and evaluation is classed as high-risk. The Digital Omnibus on AI (Regulation (EU) 2026/1744), in force since 27 July 2026, moved the high-risk obligations for these systems from 2 August 2026 to 2 December 2027. The obligations were delayed, not removed. The work to meet them takes time, so start before your vendor does.
>
> General information, not legal advice. Check with an adviser for your situation.

Ten questions for a screening vendor

Ask these before you sign. A vendor who can't answer them in writing is asking you to carry risks it won't name.

01	What exactly does the system score, and on what data was it trained?
02	Can you show us bias testing results, and who ran them?
03	How does it handle accents, stammers and non-native speakers?
04	Does it track gaze, facial movement or voice tone? Can we switch those off?
05	Can a candidate ask for a person instead, and how?
06	Can we see and explain the reason for any individual result?
07	Who carries liability if the system screens people out unfairly?
08	What candidate data do you keep, where, and for how long?
09	How will you meet the EU AI Act's high-risk requirements, and by when?
10	Can we run our own people through it before we buy?

QUESTIONS TO TAKE AWAY

Three questions, whichever side you're on

IF YOU'RE BUILDING

Would your best early hire get past a screen scored against your own job description?

IF YOU'RE BACKING

When a screening tool filters people out unfairly, who carries the cost: the vendor, the employer or the candidate?

IF YOU'RE BEING HIRED

What does this company's first interview tell you about how it will treat your team?

WORK WITH LISA

Can a candidate explain, in one sentence, why they'd want to work for you?

Candidates judge you the way customers do. Lisa Gibbons helps start-ups and SMBs work out what their customers and candidates actually hear, and tell a clearer story. A customer insight sprint takes two to four weeks.

Book a 30-minute conversation

SOURCES

- The AI Recruiter series, Future of Work Insider, October 2026: futureofworkinsider.com/series/the-ai-recruiter/
- Regulation (EU) 2026/1744 (Digital Omnibus on AI): summary at bratby.law/digital-omnibus-ai-high-risk-delay/
- EU AI Act high-risk timeline for employment AI: Ogletree, ogletree.com (EU nears approval of agreement to delay rules for AI use in employment decisions)
- Employment AI remains high-risk after the delay: DLA Piper, The Digital AI Omnibus (June 2026)

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