

Staying Human in the Age of AI Hiring

A practical playbook for HR leaders navigating AI-assisted recruiting

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Featuring insights from Mandi Simeone, CEO and Founder of HR 2 People

01 The AI Hiring Reality Check

Here's what most HR teams don't realize: you're already using AI. It's baked into your ATS, LinkedIn, Indeed, scheduling tools, and video interview platforms. The question is no longer whether to use AI. It's whether you understand where it's already making decisions.

THE SHIFT

Hiring is no longer human-to-human. It's AI-assisted on both sides. Candidates are using AI to write resumes, tailor applications, practice answers and in some cases, get real-time coaching during interviews. If your evaluation process hasn't changed to account for that, you're making decisions based on something you can't fully see.

Where AI Is Already Embedded in Your Process

Use this checklist to surface what's already happening before you optimize anything.

- Applicant Tracking System (ATS) — ranking, scoring, filtering, and auto-rejecting candidates
- Resume screening tools — pattern-matching to job descriptions, not actual capability assessment
- Job description generators — suggesting skills and language that may narrow your talent pool
- Sourcing platforms (LinkedIn, Indeed) — algorithm-curated talent pools, not the full picture
- Interview scheduling tools — sequencing and prioritizing candidates behind the scenes
- Video interview platforms — some analyze tone, pace, and facial expressions
- Interview note summarization tools — generating AI interpretations of candidate responses
- Background check and assessment tools — flagging patterns and scoring without transparency
- Analytics dashboards — predicting fit and flight risk based on historical data models

What Candidates Are Using Right Now

When you see a strong resume or hear a polished interview answer, ask yourself: was this written, or was it engineered?

TOOL CATEGORY	EXAMPLES
Resume & Application	ChatGPT, Claude, Teal, Rezi — optimize for ATS filters, remove gaps, tailor to job descriptions
Mass Application Tools	LazyApply, Simplify Jobs, Sonara, Job Copilot — auto-apply to hundreds of roles without candidate review
Job Matching & Search	LinkedIn AI recommendations, Indeed suggestions, Hiring Cafe, Torre
Interview Coaching	Final Round AI, Google Interview Warmup, ChatGPT — real-time answer coaching during interviews

Note & Response Tools

Otter AI, Fireflies, Notion AI — transcribing, summarizing, polishing responses on the fly

KEY INSIGHT

The challenge for HR is no longer 'How do we find qualified candidates?' It's 'How do we accurately evaluate candidates when AI is helping them at every step?' Strong presentation no longer equals strong capability.

02 Interview Questions That Cut Through AI

If your questions are predictable, AI will always keep up. The goal is to ask questions that require real thought, real experience, and most importantly the candidate's actual voice.

MANDY'S RULE

Don't accept the first answer. The first answer is usually the polished one. The insight comes from the second and third layer. Strong candidates can go deeper, not just wider.

Questions That Disrupt Scripted Answers

These questions surface authentic thinking because they require reflection on specific, personal experience.

1

Tell me about a day at work you'll never forget.

Follow up: What made it memorable? What did you take away from it?

2

What's a mistake you had to fix, and how did you handle the fallout?

Follow up: Walk me through the steps you actually took. What would you do differently?

3

What's one challenge you've solved in the past year, and how did you approach it?

Follow up: Be specific — what was the obstacle, what did you try first, what actually worked?

4

What kind of work environment brings out your best?

Follow up: Can you give me an example of a team or manager situation where you felt that?

5

What's a project you were proud to finish?

Follow up: What was your specific role? What almost didn't work?

Real-Time Thinking Questions (Can't Be Rehearsed)

These put the candidate in a situation. Watch how they think, not what they've memorized.

6

You're three weeks into this role and your manager asks for a status update on a project you've hit a wall on. What do you say?

Follow up: What's your instinct — do you ask for help or figure it out first? Why?

7

Walk me through how you would handle a disagreement with a coworker about how to approach a task.

Follow up: Has that actually happened to you? What did you do?

8

What's one lesson a former manager or boss taught you that has stuck with you?

Follow up: How has that changed how you work?

For Skilled, Hourly & Frontline Roles

Simple, human questions that reveal reliability and teamwork — and resist optimization.

9

What's something you've helped a new coworker figure out?

Follow up: What did they struggle with? How did you explain it?

10

What's a task that you always double-check before clocking out?

Follow up: Why that one specifically?

11

What's your favorite part of hands-on work?

Follow up: What does a really good day on the job look like for you?

The AI Transparency Question

You're allowed to ask this — and it often opens an honest, productive conversation.

ASK DIRECTLY

"Are you using AI to help you with this interview today? That's fine if you are — I just want to have a real human conversation. Let's take it from the top."

Application Screening — Short Answer Prompt

Add one short-answer question to your application. Keep it casual, 100–200 characters, and phrase it so AI struggles to generate a meaningful response.

SAMPLE PROMPT

"In one sentence, tell us about a challenge you solved at work recently. Answer this yourself — we want your voice, not AI's."

Pro tip: Use the STAR method (Situation, Task, Action, Result) as a follow-up framework. If a candidate can't fill in all four parts after giving a polished answer, that's your signal to go deeper.

03 AI Vendor Audit Questionnaire

Vendor risk is still your risk. If a tool filters out the wrong candidate, introduces bias, or can't explain how a decision was made — that liability does not stay with the vendor. It comes back to your organization.

REMEMBER

Using AI doesn't transfer responsibility. It adds another layer to manage. If you can't explain how a hiring decision was made, you can't defend it.

Ask Every AI Vendor These Questions

Bring these to every vendor review, contract renewal, or onboarding conversation. Document the answers.

1

How does your AI make candidate ranking or screening decisions? What data inputs does it use?

Why it matters: You must understand what your system is optimizing for — and whether those signals reflect actual job performance.

2

What criteria cause a candidate to be excluded or deprioritized? Can we configure those criteria?

Why it matters: Auto-rejections based on opaque criteria expose you to disparate impact claims. Know the rules your system is applying.

3

How do you define 'equivalent experience' for roles that don't require a degree? How is that evaluated?

Why it matters: Many vendors can't clearly answer this — but your candidates can be excluded on this basis. You need to know.

4

Has your tool been audited for bias? If so, who conducted the audit and what were the findings?

Why it matters: Audits should be third-party, regular, and specific to the populations you're hiring from.

5

What state-specific compliance requirements does your tool support? How do you handle multi-state hiring?

Why it matters: State laws on AI in hiring vary significantly. Maryland, Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, and others have active legislation. Verify coverage.

6

If your tool is analyzing video interviews — are you analyzing tone, pace, or facial expressions? Is candidate consent obtained?

Why it matters: Several states require explicit disclosure and consent for biometric/behavioral analysis. Non-compliance is your exposure, not the vendor's.

7

What documentation does your tool produce when a candidate is rejected or deprioritized? Can we access those records?

Why it matters: You need an audit trail. If a decision is challenged, the documentation is what protects you.

8

What is your process for ongoing bias monitoring? How frequently is the model retrained, and on what data?

Why it matters: AI models drift. Last year's bias audit doesn't cover today's model. Ask about the cadence.

9

If a candidate asks why they were rejected, what can we tell them? What information can we provide?

Why it matters: Candidates are increasingly asking this — and in some jurisdictions, may have the right to know. Know your answer before they ask.

10

Are our candidate data and decision records stored, shared, or used to train your models?

Why it matters: Understand your data exposure and what rights you've signed away in the contract.

If a Vendor Can't Answer These Questions

Treat that as a red flag — not just a gap. Consider these steps:

- ▶ Escalate to their compliance or legal team in writing
 - ▶ Add specific audit rights and bias testing requirements to your contract
 - ▶ Request a written response you can document and retain
 - ▶ Consult employment counsel before expanding use of that tool
 - ▶ Consider whether the tool's decision-making opacity creates unacceptable risk for your organization
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04 Recruiting Process Audit

Most organizations have a visibility problem, not a future problem. AI is already influencing who you see, who you don't see, how candidates are evaluated, and how decisions are justified. The audit below helps you map it, identify the risk, and decide what to change.

START HERE

"Where is AI already making decisions before I ever look at a candidate?" That's the question this audit is designed to answer.

STEP 1 MAP YOUR AI TOUCHPOINTS

- List every tool in your recruiting stack (ATS, sourcing, scheduling, video, assessments, analytics)
- For each tool, note: Does it use AI? What decisions does it influence?
- Identify where AI affects who enters the pipeline vs. who moves through it
- Note where human review occurs — and where it doesn't
- Flag any tools where you don't know how the AI works

STEP 2 EVALUATE YOUR CANDIDATE SCREENING

- Review your ATS keyword weighting — are you optimizing for match, or capability?
- Check whether 'equivalent experience' is handled consistently and fairly
- Assess whether your job descriptions are narrowing your candidate pool unnecessarily
- Identify whether bot-assisted applications are flooding your pipeline (timing patterns, identical formatting)
- Consider removing Easy Apply for roles where quality matters most

STEP 3 AUDIT YOUR INTERVIEW PROCESS

- Review your standard interview questions — can they be answered with AI prep in under 5 minutes?
- Assess whether hiring managers are trained to recognize AI-assisted responses
- Confirm your video interview platform's disclosure and consent practices
- Evaluate whether your evaluation criteria reward polish over capability
- Add at least one question per interview that requires real-time, authentic thinking

STEP 4 REVIEW COMPLIANCE & DOCUMENTATION

- Confirm which states your candidates are located in — and which AI hiring laws apply

- Default to the strictest standard when hiring across multiple states
- Ensure every AI-assisted decision has a human review checkpoint
- Verify that rejected candidates can receive a meaningful explanation of the decision
- Confirm your vendor contracts include audit rights, bias testing requirements, and data ownership terms

STEP 5 ASSESS CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

- Review your rejection communications — are they human, clear, and respectful?
- Evaluate whether candidates understand how AI is used in your process
- Check whether application timelines are communicated and followed
- Assess whether any part of your process might feel unfair or dehumanizing to candidates
- Search your company name + 'interview experience' on Reddit and Glassdoor — what are candidates saying?

After the Audit: Prioritize Your Fixes

DO THIS WEEK	DO THIS QUARTER
Add one human interview question Add disclosure language to job postings List every tool in your recruiting stack Train at least one hiring manager on AI detection signals	Complete vendor audit questionnaires Redesign application with short-answer question Map all AI touchpoints in your process Review multi-state compliance requirements

05 Governance & Compliance Checklist

AI governance in hiring does not sit in IT. It does not sit with your vendors. It sits with HR. Governance is not just awareness — it's structure. It must be proactive and repeatable, not something you figure out after there's a problem.

THE BOTTOM LINE

"If you can't explain how a hiring decision was made, you can't defend it." — Mandy Simeoni, CHRO & CEO, HR2People

The Four Pillars of AI Hiring Governance

TRANSPARENCY Candidates understand how AI is used in your process	DOCUMENTATION Decisions are explained — what was decided, how, and why	ACCOUNTABILITY Someone owns each outcome — internally and with vendors	TRAINING Hiring managers understand this environment and its risks
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Governance Action Checklist

Use this as your standing governance framework — review quarterly.

Transparency

1. Add simple disclosure language to job postings: 'We use AI tools in parts of our hiring process, including resume screening and scheduling.'
2. Tell candidates at the start of interviews if the session is recorded or analyzed
3. Ensure candidates can request information about how a decision was made

Documentation

1. Document which AI tools are used at each stage of hiring and what role they play
2. Ensure every AI-assisted rejection or deprioritization has a human review step documented
3. Retain candidate decision records with notes on how AI output was interpreted and acted upon
4. Create and maintain an audit trail: what the tool flagged, what the human decided, and why

Accountability

1. Assign a named HR owner to each AI tool in your stack — who is responsible for monitoring it?
2. Hold vendors accountable: schedule annual or biannual reviews against the vendor audit questionnaire
3. Confirm that your vendor contracts include audit rights, bias disclosure, and compliance obligations
4. Verify that third-party headhunters and recruiting partners are held to the same standards — your liability doesn't transfer to them

Training

1. Train all hiring managers on how to recognize AI-assisted applications and interview responses
2. Train interviewers to use the STAR/SMART method consistently to maintain evaluation fairness
3. Brief leadership on multi-state AI hiring compliance requirements that apply to your organization
4. Conduct an annual process review: walk your hiring process end-to-end and ask, 'What would we change if we had to defend this tomorrow?'

CLOSING THOUGHT FROM MANDY

"AI is not replacing HR. It is redefining it. The organizations that succeed will not be the ones that use AI the most — they will be the ones that use it most intentionally. Because at the end of the day, people still hire people, and candidates still feel the difference."