

Hiring Readiness Checklist

For Small Business Owners Scaling with Intention

Stage 1: Start-Up (0–2 Years)

Your Focus: Survival, Identity, and Time Management

Key Questions to Ask Yourself:

- Do I have clarity on the core mission and values of my business?
- Am I spending too much time on tasks that someone else could do better or faster?
- Can I afford to hire someone without jeopardizing operations?

Most Common First Hires:

- Administrative Assistant
- Bookkeeper / Accountant
- Social Media Coordinator or Customer Support

Readiness Markers:



Hiring Tip: Don't overhire early. Look for multi-hat players who share your values and can grow with the business.

Stage 2: Growth (2–5 Years)

Your Focus: Systems, Strategy, and Culture

Key Questions to Ask Yourself:

- Are my systems breaking down under increased demand?
- Am I still making every decision, or do I have trusted leads?
- Is my team beginning to reflect the values and culture I want long-term?

Most Common First Hires:

- Operations Manager or Coordinator
- Marketing Manager or Content Lead
- Sales/Business Development Representative

Readiness Markers:



Hiring Tip: Culture starts early. Hire people who not only perform but also model the environment you want to create.

Stage 3: Expansion (5+ Years)

Your Focus: Scaling People, Profits, and Processes


Key Questions to Ask Yourself:

- Is my team growing faster than my leadership structure?
- Are my customers being served consistently across locations or departments?
- Do I have future leaders or just doers?

Most Common First Hires:

- HR/People Operations Lead
- Financial Controller or Strategic Advisor
- Senior Department Heads (e.g., Sales, Operations, Product)

Readiness Markers:


 **Hiring Tip:** Build the team that can build the team. Invest in leaders who multiply others.

Inclusive Hiring Practices (Overlay for Every Stage)

Smart Moves that Expand Your Talent Pool

JFF Tools to Leverage:

- Fair Chance Hiring Guide
- Inclusive Sourcing Template
- Interview Equity Checklist

 **Reminder:** Hiring from overlooked talent pools (like second-chance or opportunity youth) isn't charity—it's smart business. Loyalty, resilience, and retention are often higher among these candidates.

Next Steps:

- Identify what stage your business is in
- Review the readiness markers honestly
- Use the A-Team Action Plan Template to outline your next hire

Are You Ready to Hire?

Use This Checklist to Find Out

Role Clarity

- ☐ I have a clear role description, not just a title.
- ☐ I know what success looks like in the first 90 days.
- ☐ I understand the difference between a "helper" and a "strategic hire."
- ☐ I've identified the must-have vs. trainable skills for this role.

Team + Culture Fit

- ☐ I know my company's values and how this hire should reflect them.
- ☐ I've defined the kind of person who would thrive here.
- ☐ I've thought about how this person will add to, not just fit into my culture.

Sourcing + Selection Strategy

- ☐ I know where I'll source candidates beyond just job boards.
- ☐ I'm open to fair chance, skills-first, or nontraditional talent pipelines.
- ☐ I've chosen interview questions that test for values, not just tasks.

Retention + Onboarding Readiness

- ☐ I've blocked time for onboarding or check-ins.
- ☐ I have a simple welcome plan or SOPs to set them up for success.
- ☐ I know how I'll reward or recognize them in their first 90 days.
- ☐ I've thought about how this hire might grow with the business.
- ☐ I have at least one retention strategy (bonus, mentorship, flexibility, etc.)

Scoring Guide for Worksheet

At the bottom of the worksheet, include:

Score	Readiness Level
12 - 15	You're Ready to Build Your A-Team
8 - 11	Almost Ready. Just a Few Gaps to Close
0 - 7	Let's Lay the Foundation First

Your Score _____

Scoring Definitions

You're Ready to Build Your A Team

Score Range: 12 - 15

Definition:

You've already built the foundation: your role is clearly defined, you know what values and skills you're looking for, and you're prepared to support the new hire with onboarding, retention, and growth. You're not just ready to hire, you're ready to hire intentionally.

Tool or Training Tie-In:

- **A-Team Action Plan Workbook:** Jump straight into mapping out your sourcing strategy and onboarding process.
- **Post-Session Toolkit:** Use the interview rubric, onboarding checklist, and SOP starter section to operationalize your plan.

Almost Ready. Just a Few Gaps to Close

Score Range: 8 - 11

Definition:

You have most of the pieces in place, but one or two areas (like onboarding, sourcing strategy, or defining values) may need attention before you hire. You're on the right track, small adjustments will help prevent turnover and hiring missteps.

Tool or Training Tie-In:

- **Hiring Readiness Checklist:** Revisit unchecked boxes to prioritize what's missing.
- **Skills & Values-Based Assessment (Workbook Page):** Clarify what success looks like beyond the resume.
- **Inclusive Sourcing Guide:** Strengthen your sourcing strategy by identifying new pipelines.

Let's Lay the Foundation First

Score Range: 0 - 7

Definition:

Hiring now may feel tempting, but doing so without a clear role, support structure, or value-aligned strategy can lead to frustration for you and the hire. This is your moment to build the base that will support the right people long term.

Tool or Training Tie-In:

- **Candidate Persona + Opportunity Blueprint:** Define who you need and why.
- **Fair Chance & Nontraditional Hiring Overview:** Learn how to tap into untapped talent when you're ready.
- **Live Coaching Moment:** Revisit the live session