



Fixing a Hiring Mistake

A Practical Guide for Small Teams Without HR

HIRING **STEPS**



**Most companies talk about how to
hire the right person.**

**Few talk about what to do when
you didn't.**



Mis-Hire (noun)

A mis-hire occurs when a new employee consumes more organizational capacity than they create, due to gaps in skill, behavioral fit, pace, clarity, or expectations.

In small teams, mis-hires are felt quickly because there is little excess capacity to absorb the impact.



Why It Matters

When a hire isn't working out, the effect isn't theoretical — it's operational.

Mis-hires increase:

- Supervision load
- Rework
- Scheduling friction
- Deadline risk
- Team stress
- Client exposure
- Burnout accelerants

Small teams feel the pain first because they cannot hide inefficiencies behind headcount.



The Real Constraint: Capacity

Large organizations have buffers:
HR, training, onboarding, performance
processes, and slack capacity.

Small organizations don't.



When a hire becomes negative capacity, the entire system slows down.

This is why mis-hire recovery is a leadership function, not an HR function.

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So how do you fix
a mis-hire?



Step 1: Diagnose the Gap

Mis-hires generally fall into three categories:

1. Skill mismatch — cannot perform the work at the required level
2. Behavioral mismatch — the “how” conflicts with team pace or norms
3. Expectation mismatch — role success criteria were unclear or misaligned

Different causes require different recovery paths.



Step 2: Reset Expectations

Before deciding to coach or exit, reset clarity around:

- Outcomes and deliverables
- Priorities and sequencing
- Pace and responsiveness
- Communication expectations
- Reporting structure
- Quality thresholds

Ambiguity in → ambiguity out.

You cannot evaluate what you haven't defined.



Step 3: Assess Coachability

Not all gaps are coachable... Skill can be trained. Behavior is mostly hired.

Coachable gaps:

- Tools & systems
- Technical onboarding
- Domain knowledge
- Communication format
- Context & expectations

Non-coachable gaps:

- Work style
- Pace
- Ownership
- Adaptability
- Collaboration
- Accountability



Step 4:

Use a Short Window

Extended coaching leads to drift, not resolution.

- Use a time-bound improvement window (2–6 weeks) with:
- Clear improvement targets
- Support & resources
- Check-ins
- Documented feedback
- Objective success criteria

This reduces ambiguity for both leader and employee





Step 5: Protect the Team

Mis-hires rarely operate in isolation. They create second-order consequences:

- High performers compensate
- Managers re-enter the work
- Deadlines slip quietly
- Clients feel the wobble
- Morale shifts

The key question:

Are we working around this role or with it?

If the answer is “around,” the team is already paying the cost.



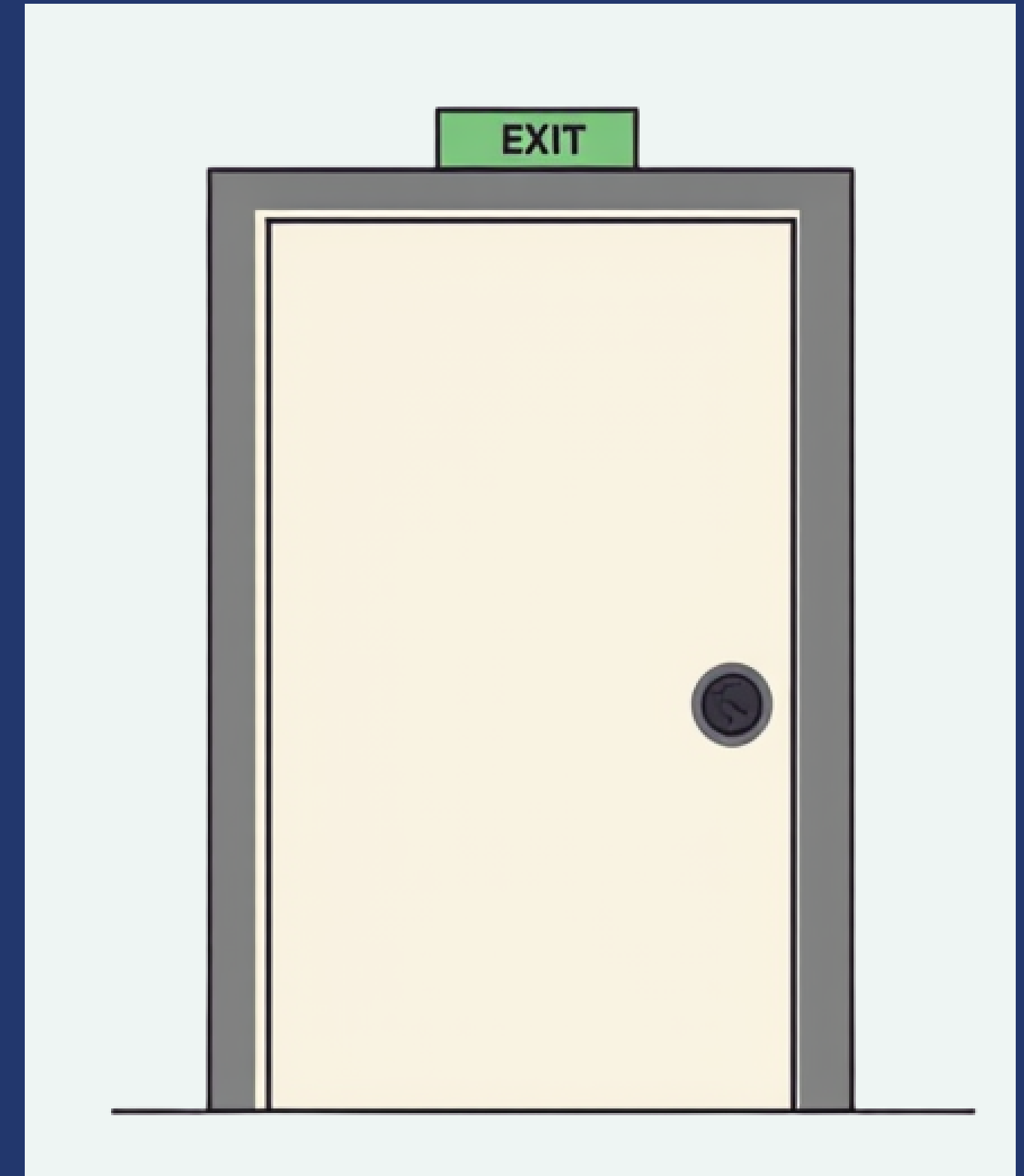
Step 6: Exit Early and Respectfully

Exiting late often creates more damage than exiting early.

A respectful, timely exit:

- Protects culture
- Protects clients
- Protects morale
- Prevents resentment
- Creates clarity

Exits are not failures — they are course corrections.





Step 7: Capture the Lessons

Mis-hires reveal valuable lessons:

- Was the role defined clearly?
- Did the job description match reality?
- Was behavioral fit assessed?
- Were interviews structured?
- Was onboarding intentional?
- Were expectations explicit?

Most mis-hire lessons can be fixed upstream.



Step 8: Fix the Process

Small teams don't need an HR department — they need structure.
High-leverage upgrades include:

- ✓ Outcome-based job descriptions
- ✓ Behavioral benchmarking (DISC)
- ✓ One-way video screening
- ✓ Consistent scoring & notes
- ✓ Centralized evaluations
- ✓ Onboarding clarity

These prevent “best available” hires and support “best fit” hires.



Every experienced leader has made a bad hire.

The taboo is pretending it doesn't happen.

The difference between repeating the pattern and breaking it is structure.

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