



Conducting a Successful Hiring Process: Competency-Based Hiring

May 20, 2026



A tropical beach scene featuring several palm trees leaning over a sandy shore. The ocean is visible in the background with gentle waves. The sky is a clear, vibrant blue. The foreground shows the texture of the sand and some dark rocks along the water's edge.

Welcome

Nice to meet you!



Susie Kendis

Strategy | Organizational Design | Program & Project Management | Facilitation
Communications & Engagement | Leadership Development

Who is in the room?

- Are you currently hiring?
- What is your role in your synagogue?
- What are you seeking to learn today?



Goals for today

- Gain tips and tricks related to the hiring process
- Understand what competency-based hiring is and how it can benefit your synagogue
- Acquire additional reference materials related to hiring

What is a competency?

Demonstrable proficiencies and abilities that individuals use to achieve a goal or complete a task

Includes skills, behaviors, abilities and values

Categories include: core/foundational, technical, and leadership

Sample Competencies:

- Ability to influence
- Adaptability
- Applied learning
- Attention to detail
- Building a high performing team
- Building partnerships
- Building trust
- Communications skills
- Continuous learning
- Congregant focus
- Decision making
- Delegation
- Embraces change
- Innovation
- Interpersonal skills
- Job knowledge
- Managing conflict
- Negotiation
- Persuasiveness
- Planning and organizing
- Problem solving
- Resource allocation
- Strategic thinking
- Teamwork and collaboration
- Valuing diversity

Source: Harvard Competency Dictionary

Examples of competencies within roles



Cantor

Skills:

singing
teaching trope
monitoring and introducing new tunes

Additional Competencies:

collaboration
empathy
continuous improvement
relationship building



Facilities Management

Skills:

contract management
organization
budgeting

Additional Competencies:

partnering
leadership
strategic thinking
innovating

What is competency-based hiring?

Features	Traditional Hiring	Competency-Based Hiring
Focus	Degree(s) and experience	Skills, abilities, behaviors, values
Assessment Methods	Resume and interview about past roles	Resume and interview about scenarios and theoreticals
Candidate Experience	Passive & one-way	Interactive & engaging
Impact on Organizational Culture	None	Enables synagogue to fully define the role, way of work, and reporting lines
Impact on Performance Management	None	Defines expectations to be utilized during goal-setting and reviews

Benefits and challenges

Benefits	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Better predictor of performance• Improved ability of new hire to understand expectations and perform well• Greater chance for innovation and continuous improvement because their skills and abilities are understood• Better alignment to synagogue goals• Confirmation of synagogue culture• Can lead to better employee engagement and retention• Less about “who you know” and “where you’ve worked”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More up-front work• May require changing how you conduct hiring >> change resistance• Might highlight certain competencies over skills (e.g., people skills)• Less about “who you know” and “where you’ve worked”

Beyond the hiring process, competencies are also strategic performance management, training, and development tools for the potential employee over the career life. – [WAVE’s Competency-Based Selection Toolkit](#)

The hiring lifecycle



Source: Indeed.com

Define the hiring process

- Understand governance
- Establish search committee:
 - Define scope and reporting requirements
 - Include cross-cutting group of stakeholders
- Identify staff liaison/coordinator
- Create timeline
- Understand risks and options

Collect input into the key responsibilities of the role

Establish buy-in, which can help ease onboarding.

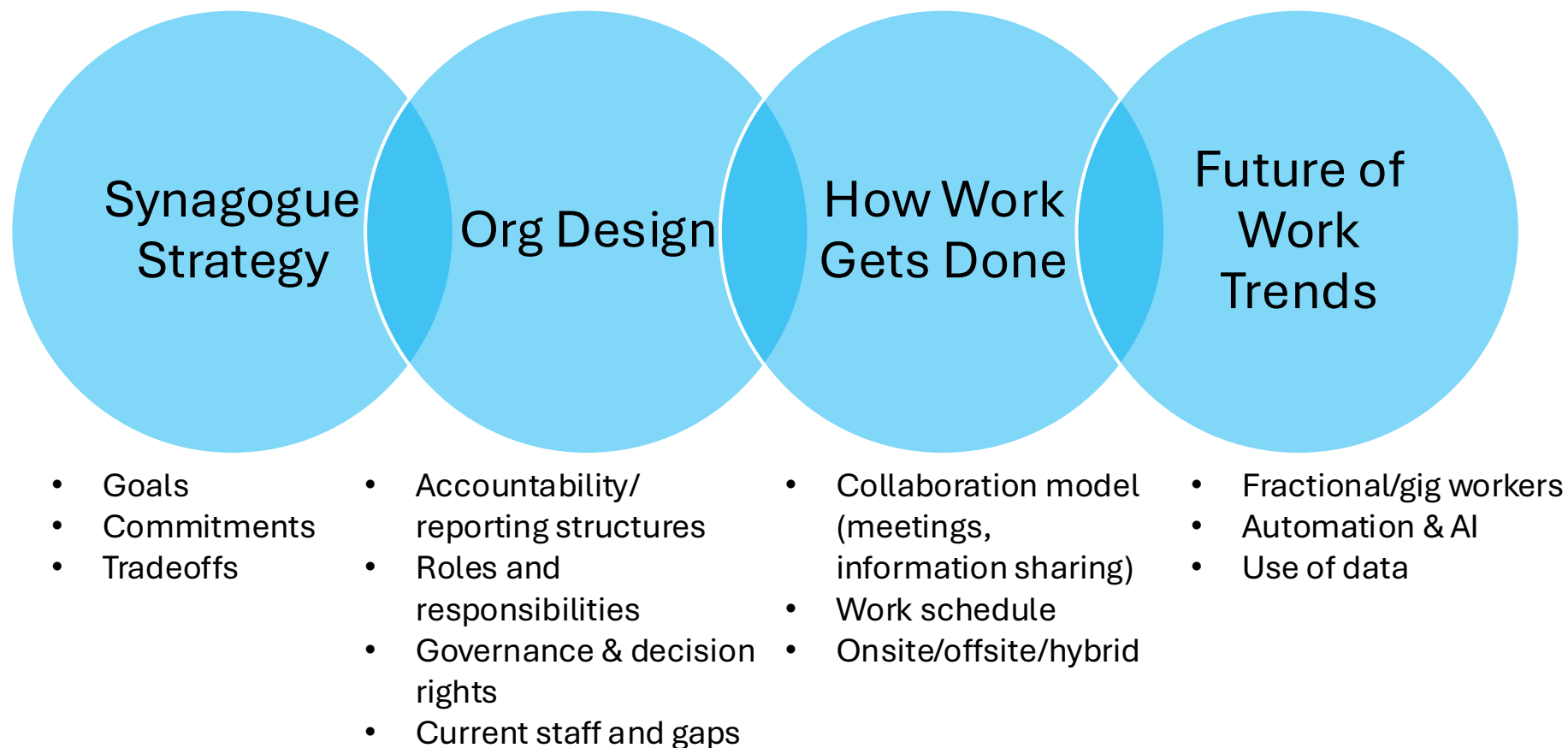
Ask a wide group of stakeholders for their input

- Leadership and staff
- Board of Directors
- Lay leaders/volunteers
- Congregants
- Vendors

Use various modes to collect input

- Survey
- 1:1 conversations/ Interviews
- Focus groups
- Online polls & message boards

Define the role vis-à-vis the rest of your organization



Define what someone needs in order to succeed in the role

- What is needed? (position-specific competencies)
 - Education/training
 - Professional experience
 - Skills: hard and “people” skills
- Cultural fit (organizational competencies)
 - What traits are generally successful or not successful in the organization?
 - What traits are generally successful or not successful in this type of role?

Competency	Essential/Desired	How it shows up in the role
<i>Ex: Strategic thinking</i>	<i>Essential</i>	<i>Responsible for aligning operations to strategic plan & reporting on status</i>

Write the job description

- Overview of the organization: history, mission, key programs
- Overview of the position within the organization
- List of key roles and responsibilities, grouped
 - Identify level of seniority
- Competencies: essential and desired
- Compensation and benefits
- Legalese and paperwork (equal opportunity employer, how to apply, etc.)

Source candidates depending on job level and budget

- Internal distribution (staff conversation)
- Distribution to congregants
- Traditional sources, sectarian and non-sectarian
- Nontraditional sources

Choose your competency-based screening techniques

Resume Screening

1:1 Interview

Video Introduction

Group Interview

Case Studies

Open-Source Solving of Real Problems

Job Simulation

Interaction with Current Staff

Use behavioral interviewing questions

Tell me about a time when...

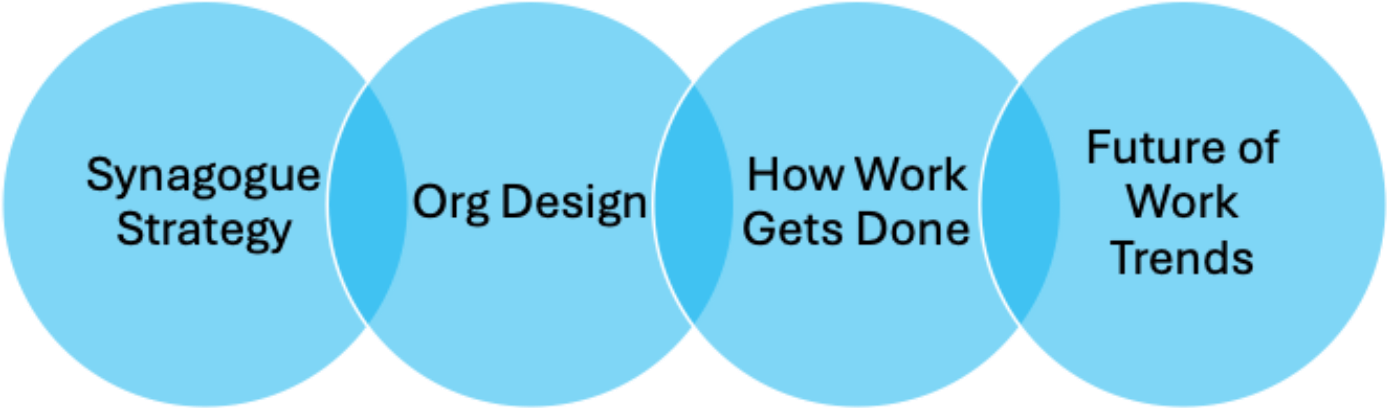
What would you do in [x] scenario?

What's an effective strategy you've use to...

Describe a situation where you had to...

- Tell me about a time when you faced [x] challenge and had to resolve it
- Give me an example of when you made a mistake at work and how you fixed it
- Tell me about how you maintain and meet deadlines
- Tell me about your management style when faced with [x]
- Tell me about a time when you had to make a difficult choice in the workplace. How did you decide and what was the outcome?
- What's an example of when you had to convince others to see a situation from your perspective?
- Tell me about how you've innovated in the workplace. What did you do and what was the outcome?

Exercise: Bring it all together



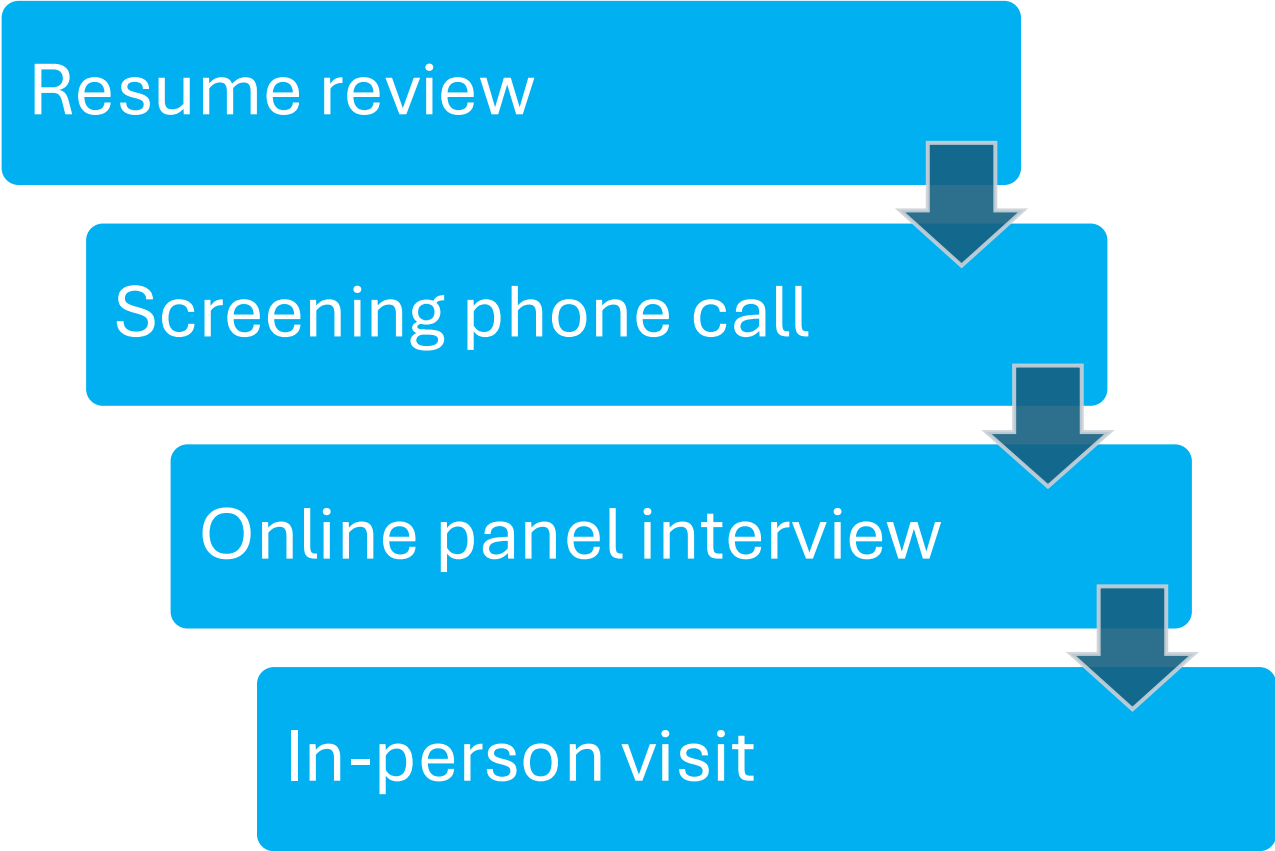
- Goals
- Commitments
- Tradeoffs

- Accountability/ reporting structures
- Roles and responsibilities
- Governance & decision rights
- Current staff and gaps

- Collaboration model (meetings, information sharing)
- Work schedule
- Onsite/offsite/hybrid

- Fractional/gig workers
- Automation & AI
- Use of data

Structure your interview process



Select and hire

- Compare against ranked competencies
- Avoid biases – recognize new perspectives while respecting culture
- Trust your organizational intuition



YOU'RE HIRED!

Onboarding

- Carve out time for meetings and set expectations
- Create a briefing book
- Frame the role within the organizational design conducted during Planning phase
- Be transparent about competencies for the role, as well as gaps
- Guide, with 30-, 60-, 90-day plans; check-in and course correct
- Focus on people, process and technology
- Set up technology and anything else in advance
- Assign an onboarding buddy
- Establish clear goals the first year

Benefits throughout the first year and beyond

Competency-based hiring can:

Provide an expectations framework to guide performance management (goal setting and reviews)

Help identify areas for professional development

Introduce expertise and capacity to benefit the synagogue through continuous improvement

Enhance employee engagement and retention

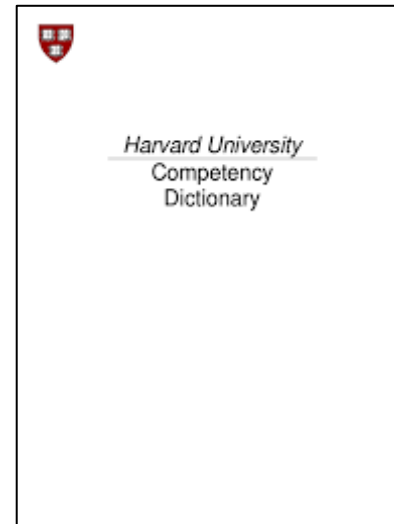
Q&A



Use available resources



<https://www.onetonline.org>
US Department of Labor



<https://hms.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/assets/Sites/HR/files/Harvard%20University%20Competency%20Dictionary%20FY14%20-%20final.pdf>
Harvard Human Resources

Thank you!

Susie Kendis

THE
KENDIS
GROUP

Aligning your synagogue's talent strategy

susiekendis@gmail.com

[linkedin.com/in/susiekendis](https://www.linkedin.com/in/susiekendis)