

FREE GUIDE

HOW TO RECRUIT LIKE ME

The exact system I use to fill trades and management roles fast, without wasting money on hires that don't stick.

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The Real Cost Of A Bad Hire

Most MDs think a bad hire costs a wage. It doesn't. It costs a lot more than that.

I've worked on sites across the UK, Ireland, France, Germany, Holland and Australia. Over 15 years, hands-on. I've seen what a bad hire actually does to a job.

It's not just the wage you paid them. It's the delay. It's the redo work. It's the good tradesmen who get fed up covering for someone who can't do the job and start looking elsewhere themselves.

£4-6K

TYPICAL COST OF A BAD
TRADES HIRE (WAGE +
DELAY + REDO)

6-8 WK

AVERAGE TIME LOST
BEFORE MDs ADMIT IT'S NOT
WORKING

2X

COST OF HIRING AGAIN VS
GETTING IT RIGHT FIRST
TIME

Here's the bit most people miss. A bad hire doesn't just cost you once. It costs you twice. Once when you pay them, and again when you have to go find someone else and start the clock over.

THE POINT

You don't save money by hiring fast and cheap. You save money by hiring right the first time. Everything in this guide is built around that one idea.

Write A Brief Before You Write An Ad

A brief is the plan for the hire. Skip it, and everything after gets harder.

Most bad hires don't start in the interview. They start weeks earlier, when nobody sat down and worked out exactly what they needed. A vague idea in your head is not a brief. It's a guess, and guesses get you the wrong person.

A proper brief takes five minutes to write. It saves you hours later, because you're not chasing details halfway through the process or realising on day one that the person you hired isn't what the job needed.

- **The exact trade or role.** "General labourer" and "steel-fixer" are not the same job. Be specific.
- **The project and the site.** What's being built, where, and what stage it's at.
- **Pay, clearly stated.** Day rate or salary. Don't leave this to work itself out later.
- **Start date and contract length.** "As soon as possible" isn't a date. Give a real one.
- **Must-haves versus nice-to-haves.** A CSCS card might be a must. Five years' experience on a specific type of build might just be a bonus. Know the difference before you screen anyone.
- **For management roles, who they report to.** Candidates ask this early. Have the answer ready.

THE POINT

A five-minute brief up front saves five hours chasing details later. It also means whoever is screening candidates for you, even if that's you, knows exactly what a good fit looks like.

Find Candidates Before They Apply To You

The best tradesmen aren't sitting on job boards waiting. They're already working. You have to go find them.

Posting an ad and waiting is the slowest way to hire. Most good tradesmen are already on a site somewhere, not scrolling for their next job. If you only wait for applications, you're only seeing people unhappy enough, or free enough, to be job hunting right now. That's a small slice of everyone who could actually do the job well.

Sourcing means going out and finding people yourself, instead of waiting for them to find you. It sounds like extra work. It's actually faster once you know how, because you go straight to people who match what you need, instead of sorting through a pile of applications hoping one is right.

THE PLAN

The next four pages show you exactly how, step by step. Setting up Indeed properly, searching it like a pro, and using Boolean search on LinkedIn to find people who aren't even looking yet.

Set Up Indeed The Right Way

A half-finished employer account gets ignored. Fifteen minutes now saves you a lot of wasted posts later.

- **1. Create your account.** Go to indeed.com/employers and sign up with a proper work email. Indeed will usually ask you to confirm your business is real, either through your email domain or a few basic company details.
- **2. Fill in your company page properly.** Add a logo, a short description, and a photo or two if you have them. An empty company page makes a genuine job look like a scam.
- **3. Post your first job for free.** Clear title, real pay, real location. Add two or three screener questions, like "Do you hold a valid CSCS card?", so weak applicants get filtered out automatically before they land in your inbox.
- **4. Decide if you want to sponsor it.** Free posts cost nothing but drop down the list over time. Sponsoring uses a daily budget to keep you higher up for longer. Worth it on a role you need filled fast.
- **5. Find the sourcing tool.** Indeed's proactive search is called Smart Sourcing. Inside your dashboard it might still be labelled "Find Resumes" or "Resume Search." This is how you search Indeed's resume database directly, instead of waiting on applications.
- **6. Try the free trial first.** Indeed gives new users 14 days of search access and five contacts, free, so you can see if it's worth it before paying for anything.
- **7. Pick a plan if you keep using it.** Pricing is billed monthly based on how many candidates you can contact, and it varies by country and changes over time. Check the live price on your own account rather than trusting an old number.

THE POINT

Free job posts get you people actively looking today. Smart Sourcing gets you people who aren't looking yet, but would say yes to the right offer. That second group is often where the best tradesmen are hiding.

Get More Out Of Indeed's Resume Search

Typing one word into the search bar gets you thousands of results. Most of them wrong. Here's how to narrow it down fast.

Indeed's resume search understands Boolean logic, the same as LinkedIn. A few small words tell it exactly what you want instead of leaving it to guess.

- **Quotation marks " "** find an exact phrase. "Steel fixer" finds that exact job title, not just anyone in steel or in fixing.
- **AND** narrows results. "Steel fixer" AND "CSCS" finds people with both.
- **OR** widens results. ("Groundworker" OR "Groundsman") catches both versions of the same trade.
- **NOT** removes what you don't want. NOT "apprentice" filters out trainees.
- **Brackets ()** group terms together, so longer searches still make sense to Indeed.

BONUS TIP

Type anytitle:("Site Manager" OR "Site Supervisor") to search job titles only, not the whole resume. Handy when a normal search brings back too many people who just happen to mention the words somewhere.

Once you've searched, narrow it further with the filters down the side: location and distance, how recently the resume was updated, education, and specific skills. A resume updated eight months ago likely belongs to someone who's stopped looking. One updated last week belongs to someone active right now.

SAVE THE SEARCH

Save your search and turn on alerts. Indeed emails you when a new resume matches, so you're not running the same search by hand every week.

Search LinkedIn Like A Recruiter

Most people search LinkedIn like Google. That's why they miss the best candidates.

LinkedIn uses the same Boolean logic. Type your search straight into the main search bar at the top of the page. Remember one rule: the operators only work in capital letters, AND, OR, and NOT. Type them lowercase and LinkedIn just reads them as ordinary words, and your whole search falls apart.

- **"Quotation marks"** find an exact phrase. Search "steel fixer" and you get people with that exact title, not just anyone in construction.
- **AND** narrows the search. "Steel fixer" AND "CSCS" finds people who have both.
- **OR** widens the search. Trades often go by more than one name. ("Groundworker" OR "Groundsman") catches both.
- **AND NOT** removes what you don't want. AND NOT "apprentice" filters out trainees.
- **Brackets ()** group terms together, so longer searches still work the way you intended.

EXAMPLE

("steel fixer" OR "steelfixer") AND "CSCS" AND "Belfast"

Type this into LinkedIn's search bar, then use the location filter on the left to narrow it further.

HEADS UP

LinkedIn's free search caps how many profiles you can view each month once it decides you're using it for hiring. It's an unpublished limit, and it catches people out. The next page shows you a way round it.

Get Around LinkedIn's Search Limits

Free LinkedIn caps how much you can search. Google doesn't.

This trick is called X-ray search. Instead of searching inside LinkedIn, you search Google for LinkedIn profiles that are public. Google isn't capped the way LinkedIn's free search is, which makes it the better route if you don't have a paid LinkedIn account.

EXAMPLE — X-RAY SEARCH

site:linkedin.com/in "steel fixer" "CSCS" "Belfast"

Type this into Google, not LinkedIn. The site: part tells Google to only search LinkedIn's website. Everything after it works the same as a normal Boolean search.

A few things worth knowing before you start. LinkedIn doesn't support wildcards, so you can't type "Manage*" and expect it to catch Manager, Management, and Managing all at once. You have to spell out every version yourself using OR. It doesn't support square brackets or curly braces either, just quotation marks and round brackets.

- **Spell out every version of a word.** ("Joiner" OR "Carpenter"), not "Joine*". LinkedIn won't fill in the blanks for you.
- **Keep the search reasonably short.** Long searches with brackets inside brackets tend to break instead of narrowing things down.
- **Test on a small sample first.** Run it, check a handful of results actually match, then trust it for the real search.

LAST STEP

Once you find someone worth contacting, send a short, direct message, not a copy-paste template. Mention the actual job and why you thought of them. That's the difference between a reply and being ignored.

Write An Ad That Actually Gets Replies

Most job ads are written for a form, not a person. That's why good tradesmen scroll past them.

A steel-fixer or joiner with options doesn't want a wall of text about "the successful candidate." He wants to know three things in the first five seconds: what's the job, what's the pay, and is it sound.

- **Lead with the site and the work.** Not "exciting opportunity." Say what it actually is: "Formwork carpenter needed, 6-storey residential, Gold Coast."
- **Put the pay in the ad.** Hiding it just means good candidates skip past to the ad that shows it.
- **Say how long the job runs.** Tradesmen plan their year. A vague ad gets a vague reply, or none at all.
- **Cut the corporate lines.** "Must be a team player with a can-do attitude" tells a tradesman nothing and wastes his time reading it.
- **Make replying easy.** One line, one number, one way to get in touch. Every extra step loses you candidates.

WHY IT MATTERS

A better ad doesn't just get more replies. It gets the right replies. That's the whole game before you've even started interviewing.

The 5 Red Flags I Never Ignore

Screening isn't about catching liars. It's about spotting patterns before they cost you a project.

- **1. Can't explain a gap simply.** Everyone has gaps. Honest ones explain it in one sentence. Dishonest ones talk around it.
- **2. Every past job was someone else's fault.** One bad site, fair enough. Every site being the boss's fault is the flag, not the sites.
- **3. Vague on the actual work.** A real steel-fixer or joiner can describe the job in detail without you leading them. If they can't, they haven't done it.
- **4. No one to vouch for them.** Fifteen years on sites and not one foreman willing to take a call. That's not bad luck.
- **5. Rushes the money question.** Fine to ask about pay. Not fine to skip past everything else to get there first.

GUT CHECK

None of these on their own means no. But two or more together, and I'm digging deeper before I put them in front of a client or a site.

Questions That Reveal The Truth

Stop asking questions that let people perform. Ask questions that only someone who's actually done the work can answer.

Q1 "Walk me through the last job you were on, start to finish."

Q2 "Tell me about a time something went wrong on site. What did you do?"

Q3 "What's the worst foreman or MD you've worked for, and why?"

Q4 "What tools or kit do you bring yourself?"

Q5 "Why did you leave your last site?"

Notice what's missing. No "where do you see yourself in five years." No "what's your biggest weakness." Those questions get rehearsed answers. The ones above get real ones, because they need real experience to answer well.

HOW TO LISTEN

Don't just listen for the right answer. Listen for detail. A real tradesman gives you specifics without being asked twice. A weak one gives you generalities and waits to see if that's enough.

Reference Checks That Mean Something

Most reference checks are a box-tick. "Would you rehire them? Yes." Done. That tells you nothing.

A reference check should take ten minutes and feel like a real conversation, not a form. Here's what I actually ask.

- **"What was he like on his worst day, not his best?"** Everyone's good on a good day. This tells you what you're really getting.
- **"Would you put him in charge of a task with no one watching?"** Gets straight to trust, which is what you're actually hiring for.
- **"Did he ever need to be told the same thing twice?"** Reveals whether he learns or just nods along.
- **"What kind of site would he not be right for?"** A good referee will actually answer this. A weak one dodges it.

ONE RULE

If a candidate can't give you a foreman or site manager to call, and only offers a mate or a family member, that's your answer already.

Making An Offer That Doesn't Fall Through

Losing a good candidate at the offer stage is one of the most avoidable mistakes in hiring.

- **Move fast once you know.** Good tradesmen don't sit around. A two-week decision loses you the best ones to someone quicker.
- **Confirm the start date in writing.** A verbal "yeah, sound" isn't a start date. Get it down in a text or email so there's no confusion later.
- **Check the notice period upfront.** Don't find out four weeks in that he owes his last site another month.
- **Be straight about the pay and the job.** Any gap between what was promised and what's real shows up on day one, and that's when you lose them.

WHY IT MATTERS

Every day between "yes" and "start date confirmed" is a day a better offer can pull them away. Close it down quick.

Don't Get Caught Out By Notice

More start dates fall apart over notice periods than almost anything else. Ask early, not after you've made the offer.

Here's the simple version, not the legal version. Always check the real details for your own situation, because every contract is different.

■ **PAYE employees** usually owe at least one week's notice if they've worked under two years. Longer service or a written contract can mean more. Some management contracts run to a month or longer.

■ **CIS subcontractors** don't have the same statutory notice rules as employees. But a decent subbie still gives the current site a week or two out of respect, and you should expect the same when it's your turn.

■ **Bank holidays and site shutdowns** can push a start date without anyone meaning to. Always check the calendar, not just the calendar month.

THE FIX

Ask about notice in the first conversation, not after you've made the offer. Get the real start date confirmed in writing. A start date built on guesswork is a start date that moves.

Know Which One You Actually Need

Get this wrong and it's not just admin. It can cost you in fines. Here's the plain version.

- **PAYE** means the person is your employee. You deduct tax and National Insurance for them. They get holiday pay and sick pay. Good for a core team member you need long-term, who works your hours, using your tools and your site rules.
- **CIS** means the person is a subcontractor. They invoice you, you deduct tax at the standard or higher rate and pay the rest to HMRC. No holiday pay, no sick pay, more flexible for both sides. Good for project-based work with a clear start and end.
- **The real test** isn't what you call them. It's how they actually work. If they use your tools, work your hours, and can't send someone else to do the job instead, HMRC will likely see that as employment, whatever the paperwork says.

A WORD OF CAUTION

This is the plain-English version, not legal advice. If you're not sure which one a role should be, ask your accountant before you get it wrong. It's a lot cheaper to ask first.

The First 7-14 Days Decide Everything

You don't need three months to know if a hire's going to work. On a site, it shows in the first fortnight.

- **Someone meets them on day one.** Turning up to an empty yard with no one expecting you is a bad first impression, and it sticks.
- **PPE and kit sorted before they arrive.** Standing around on day one waiting for boots or a hi-vis tells them this site isn't organised.
- **Pair them with someone for the first week.** Even experienced tradesmen work faster and safer with a quick site orientation from someone who knows it.
- **Check in properly by day 10.** Not a passing "alright?" A real "how's it going, anything you need." Catches problems while there's still time to act.

THE POINT

Recruitment doesn't end when someone starts. It ends when you know, inside 7 to 14 days, whether they're right for the job. Wait any longer and you've already lost time you won't get back.

The Mistakes That Cost You The Best People

Same mistakes, different MD, every time. Here's the ones I see most often, and how to avoid them.

- **Taking two weeks to decide.** Good tradesmen have options. If you're slow, someone else hires them while you're still thinking.
- **Writing ads for the office, not the site.** Corporate language filters out the very people you're trying to reach.
- **Skipping references because the interview "felt right."** A good chat is not the same as a good worker. Check anyway.
- **No plan beyond a start time.** Turning up is not the same as being ready to work. Have day one sorted before they arrive.
- **Promising things at interview that aren't true on site.** Overselling the job gets you a start date. It doesn't get you someone who stays.

THE POINT

Good candidates aren't queuing up forever. Every mistake on this page gives them one more reason to say yes to somebody else instead.

What This Is Actually Costing You

You've read this far, which tells me some of this is already happening to you.

You know the role's been open too long. You know it's a problem. Here's what it's quietly costing you while it sits there.

- **Someone is covering the gap.** Probably you, or a good tradesman doing two jobs at once and getting sick of it. Either way, it's not free.
- **Every week open is a week of delay.** Delay pushes the whole programme back, not just one task. That cost lands on you, not the empty seat.
- **Your agency wants 15-20% of the first year's wage.** Whether the hire lasts a year or a fortnight, they've already been paid. Their risk ends the day the invoice does. Yours doesn't.
- **You've hired the wrong person before.** You know exactly what that costs, because in some cases you're still cleaning it up.

THE POINT

None of this is because you're bad at hiring. Nobody teaches MDs how to do this properly, you're expected to just know. That's exactly why I wrote this guide, and exactly why I built TradeFlowly the way I did.

The TradeFlowly Offer

If you'd rather hand this over than run it yourself, here's exactly what you get, and exactly what's guaranteed.

- **A dedicated search, built on your brief.** Not a database dump. Sourced, screened, and checked against everything in this guide.
- **15+ years on tools doing the screening.** I know what a real answer sounds like, because I've done the job myself, on real sites, in four countries.
- **Reference checks done properly.** The real questions from this guide, not a box-ticked "would you rehire them."
- **One fee, £199 to £499. No percentage games.** Priced on the complexity and time it takes to fill the role, not a slice of the wage. A straightforward labourer costs less to source than a hard-to-fill site manager, so the fee reflects that, not a guess.
- **A small deposit to start, nothing more until they're on site.** 20% when the brief's agreed. The balance isn't due until your hire actually starts.

GUARANTEE ONE — FILL BY YOUR DATE

If I haven't placed someone by the start date you told me you needed them, you get your deposit back. In full. No arguing about it.

GUARANTEE TWO — FREE REPLACEMENT

If it doesn't work out once they're on site, I replace them free of charge. 4 weeks on trades roles, 8 weeks on management. No small print.

Two ways forward from here. Use everything in this guide and run the process yourself. Or send me the brief, and let the guarantees above do the worrying for you.

READY WHEN YOU ARE

USE THIS GUIDE. OR **SKIP THE WORK** AND MESSAGE ME.

If you'd rather run this whole process yourself,
everything you need is above. If you'd rather I handle it
for £199 to £499, with a proper guarantee behind it, I'm
one message away.

SKIP THE AGENCY. MESSAGE ME DIRECT.

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