THE LEADERSHIFT PROJECT
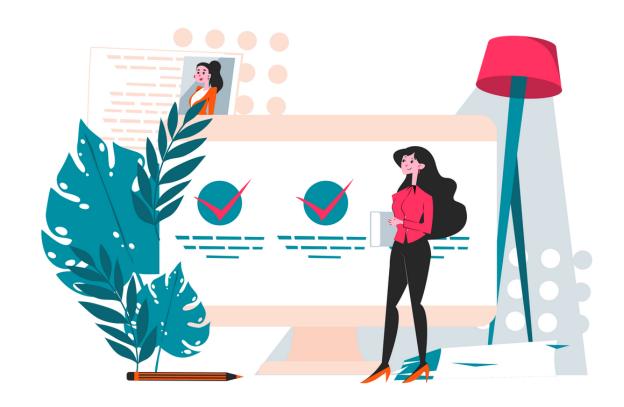## P R O J E C T
with Shani

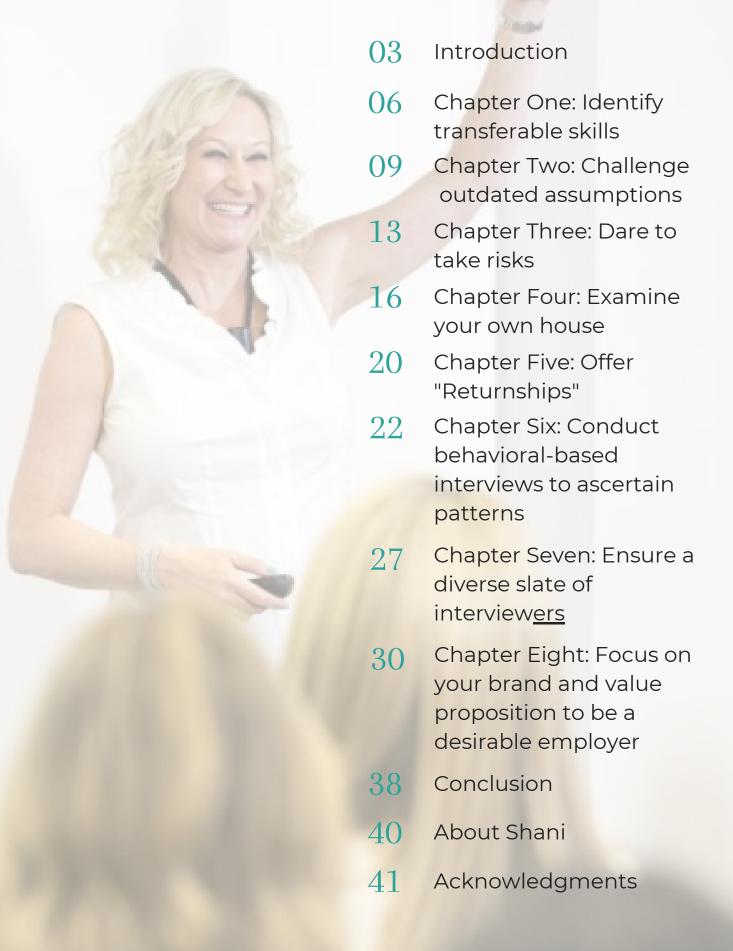# EIGHT CREATIVE SOLUTIONS TO OVERCOME POST-COVID HIRING CHALLENGES

(really, for any hiring challenge!)

BY SHANI MAGOSKY
FOUNDER OF THE LEADERSHIFT PROJECT

"Recruiting and retaining the right candidate is not like baseball; nobody is satisfied with a batting average of .250!

Shani Magosky

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Introduction

Of no surprise to anyone with a pulse, the most common refrain I heard from clients in 2021 was some version of "We continue to be very short staffed and it's nearly impossible to find good talent right now." From Fortune 500s to startups to hospitals (of course!) to restaurants and cruise ships, the Great Resignation and inability to fill open positions is nothing short of frustrating for HR and hiring managers. Not to mention the resultant burnout for staff at all levels.

Whenever we hire, it goes without saying that we want the best talent we can find. The typical process involves drafting job descriptions, iterating communication with HR, and announcing the open roles on websites, job boards, and social media. After screening and narrowing down resumes, we compare viable candidates against each other as if evaluating a horse race. Oftentimes, top contenders meet preconceived, cookie-cutter criteria and/or happen to be masterful at writing resumes, cover letters, and glowing self-narratives but often turn out to be more show than go.

Of course, some of those people may work out well. But hiring based on these traditional and rigid parameters alone often means selecting from a small pool of candidates who may be overqualified for the job (and thus highly likely to leave for the next better opportunity) or prove to be disappointing when it comes to actual performance. **Recruiting and retaining the right talent is not like baseball; nobody is satisfied with a batting average of .250!** For non-sports fans, that is the average percentage of hits to at-bats in Major League Baseball, with the highest ever being .296 in 1930.

I spent many years in finance services before shifting

my career to the broadcasting industry because a decision-maker decided I was "good clay," a phrase I coined years ago to describe high potential yet less obvious talent (I'll elaborate in a minute). I'm grateful he saw my potential, but many capable candidates today are still getting rejected due to "lack of relevant industry experience," unusual or no college degree, and/or not meeting virtually every single job criteria. The sad truth is that most people involved in hiring decisions want to cover their a$$ by selecting a "safe" candidate. Thus, many talented jobseekers are not even getting past the application process. In addition, the pendulum has swung too far in using AI to screen candidates. **Bots are rigid black boxes, and they certainly don't have vision and imagination.**

The way we hire for jobs today is broken. We've outsourced too much of our most important function - hiring the best talent - to machines. **So I'm calling on recruiters and hiring managers to trade some of that artificial intelligence for old-fashioned human intelligence and willingness to color outside the lines!**

"But Shani," you might ask, "how do I find new ways to source great talent with such headwinds as The Great Resignation, explosion of the gig economy, and historically tight labor market?"

I'll start you off with this – look for that "good clay" I alluded to above. These are people who have values aligned with those of your organization, grit, common sense, and passion for your products and services... someone who can be easily "shaped" to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in the role.

I mean, really, the "right" skills are fluid in this VUCA day and

age, changing all the time and necessitating constant updates. A whopping eighty-five percent of the jobs that today's college students will do in 2030 don't exist yet, predicted [the Institute for the Future.](#)

To identify good clay, keep your antennas up for qualities such as:

- ✅ Personal values that sync with those of your team and organization

- ✅ High EQ

- ✅ Creativity and innovation throughout their lives and career

- ✅ Thirst for continuous learning and ability to gain wisdom through "failing forward"

- ✅ Sincere motivation for changing industry or role and eagerness to prove their worth after being given a chance

- ✅ Proven track records of success

- ✅ Diversity of expertise and unique perspective

- ✅ Positivity and growth mindset

- ✅ Reliable references

> " The COVID-19 job market is not like 2008, nor really like anything anyone has observed since the birth of modern capitalism.
>
> *Harvard Business Review, October 2020*

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Identify transferable skills

Transferable skills are those that have value in almost any industry, functional area, or role. In addition to the myriad qualitative criteria outlined in the Introduction for recognizing good clay, look for skills such as:

- Presence and excellent written and oral communications skills
- Strong work ethic and grit
- Critical thinking and analytical capabilities
- Project management experience
- Teamwork and ability to work cross-functionally
- Flexibility and resilience in adapting to change
- Effective time management and prioritization skills
- Business acumen
- Relationship-building prowess and customer orientation
- Leadership potential

Ginny Clarke, former Director of Leadership Staffing and Diversity and Mobility Lead at Google;

former Partner at Spencer Stuart; currently CEO of advisory firm Ginny Clarke LLC

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At the core of what I have always been espousing is competencies. Competencies, to me, are those things that are portable; they're those things that allowed me to transition across industries five different times, and across roles and functions six or seven different times. What I was able to do instinctively was to build a narrative for people and help them connect the dots to see, "Okay, I don't necessarily have experience doing this thing, but I do have a set of competencies that I have developed by virtue of some of the experiences, and some of which are innate for me."

Those are the things that I'm looking for in people, and those are the things that I talked about in [my book](#), relevant to an individual looking for a job and as they're managing their career. To me, that is the most integral ingredient for assessing talent. It's got to be that; it can't be just based on where you've worked and who you know, and what schools you went to. I've met some brilliant people who went to [a State School], and I've met some serious duds who went to Harvard, so we can't use that as a predictor of success.

Competencies are about behaviors. I'm looking for things that are less tangible so we can really think of them as deconstructed elements of things you have done. For example, one of the leadership competencies we talk about is operating in ambiguity, an aspect of problem-solving. We want to know how people think. "What would you do in this situation?" There are hypothetical scenarios that we would offer during an interview, or "Give me an example of a time when you had to confront X Y Z," not just, "Did you do it."

Consider an example from my own career:

When I left Wall Street and moved to Vail, Colorado, I sought management roles among the limited options in a resort ski town – hospitality, spas, slope side, and real estate. The standard response I got was, "You have an impressive resume, but you don't have any experience in our industry." I was so frustrated and disillusioned by the lack of creativity, and quite frankly, the laziness of such reactions. That is until I secured an interview for a position as the general manager of a local startup television station.

After speaking with me, the company's president concluded that it would be easier to teach me the television biz than to teach a traditional producer-type how to run a business, create and manage to a budget, do business development and community relations, set HR policies, and lead people. I had plenty of leadership cred from my Goldman Sachs days but no experience whatsoever in the television industry, save for the fifteen minutes of fame I had at the University of Miami as a contestant on a short-lived game show called College Madhouse (which incidentally gave actor Greg Kinnear his start!).

Alas, my first mountain job was actually a good fit for my transferable skills, and I had a blast navigating growing pains of a new business, creating content, producing a daily morning show, mentoring the younger staffers, and helping the station become a force in the Vail Valley community.

I'm grateful that the executive made the link between my background and how it could benefit his team. Connecting these dots is

My amazing Plum TV crew on the patio of our offices in West Vail.

the key to identifying hidden talents and unexpected value in job candidates. **Universally applicable skills, in most cases, trump textbook career paths as predictors of success.** Obvious exceptions exist for careers in which precise training is mandatory; for example, we wouldn't want a surgeon to operate on us or an engineer to design our bridges without highly specialized education and experience.

This was a sample of Alelie Hall's portfolio.

To read the rest of this ebook, click this link.

Challenge outdated assumptions

It has been a cruel market out there with employees resigning in droves. People now expect more than amusing Silicon Valley-type perks and generous PTO. It's not enough to keep doing the same old things. We all know Einstein's definition of insanity: Doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. In order to become an employer of choice, it's time to challenge outdated assumptions about recruiting, hiring, training, and career development.