

# *Job Interview in the AI-Era*

## *Coding, Systems, Agents*

**Strategies for Navigating the AI-Era Job Market**

**Speaker:**

Prateek Chennuri (Ph.D. Candidate, Purdue University)











College of Engineering

# Recent Interview Experience

Internships  
& Collaborations

**SAMSUNG**  Dolby  Meta

Companies  
Interviewed

  Dolby  Meta   **otonexus**  
MEDICAL TECHNOLOGIES  
 **Topaz Labs™**  **Qualcomm**  **ByteDance** 



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These experiences gave me a clearer view of how hiring decisions are made.  
That's what I'll focus on today.

# Agenda: Cracking the code of Hiring

## Mechanics

### Recruitment Pipelines

- **Generalist vs. Specialist** hiring models
- **Journey** from recruiter screen to final offer



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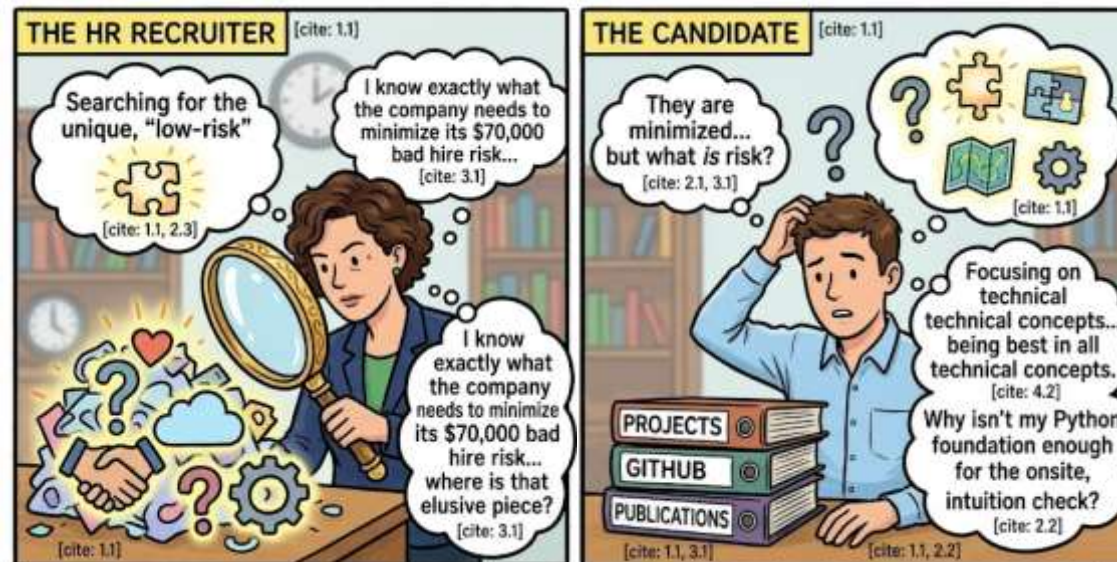
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- The **Bad-Hire** Problem
- Why **Virtual Floor & Onsite Ceiling**



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## Strategy The Inverted Triangle

- Application to **Inbound Leads**
- **Show, Don't Tell**  
LinkedIn, X, and Personal Portfolios



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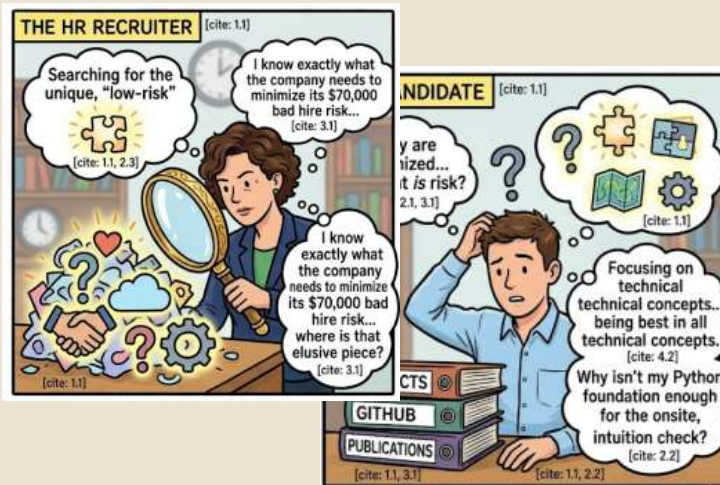
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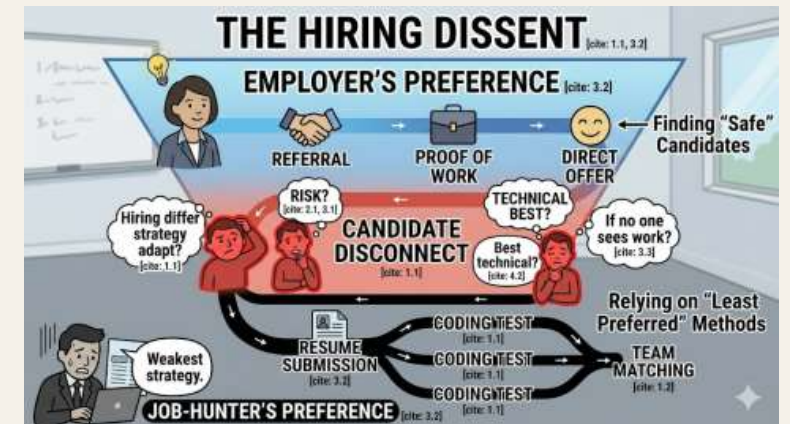
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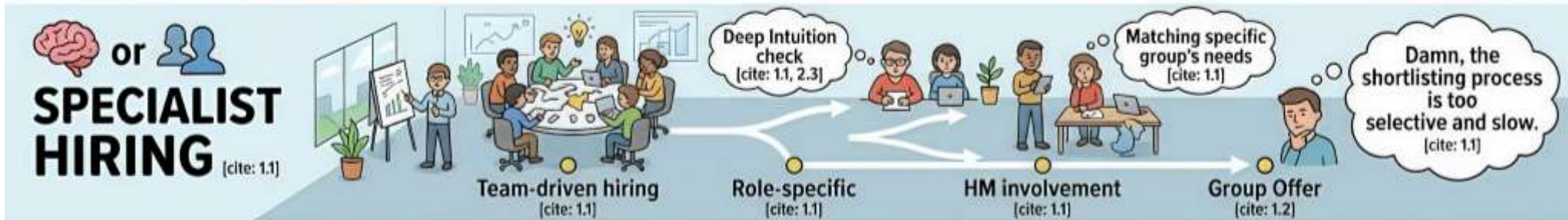
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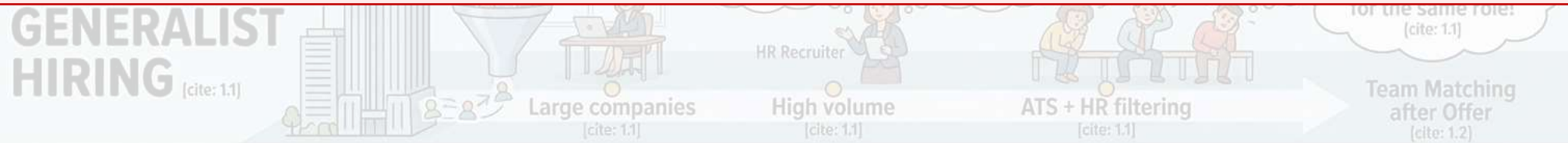
# Hiring Process



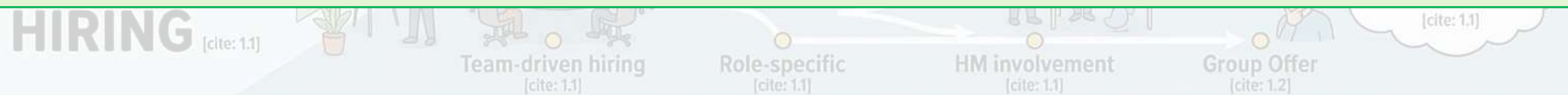
# Hiring Process



**Most candidates use one strategy everywhere. That's the mistake.**



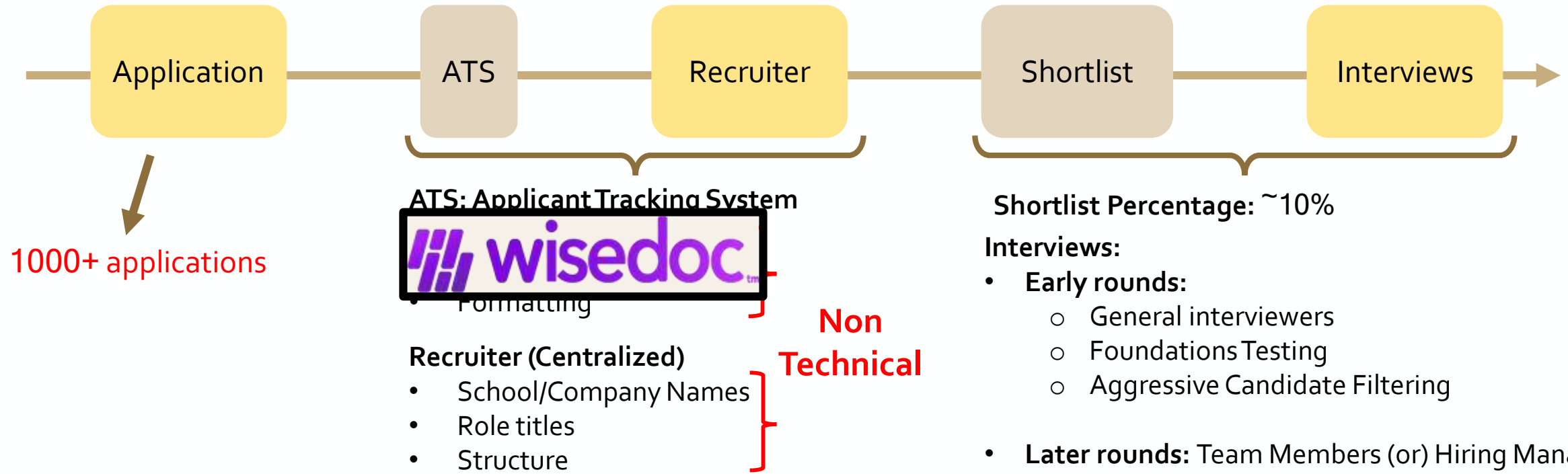
**Your strategy must depend on the system.**



# General Hiring: Centralized Systems

Filtering is non-technical at scale

Example Role: Machine Learning Engineer @ MAANG



1000+ applications

**Non  
Technical**

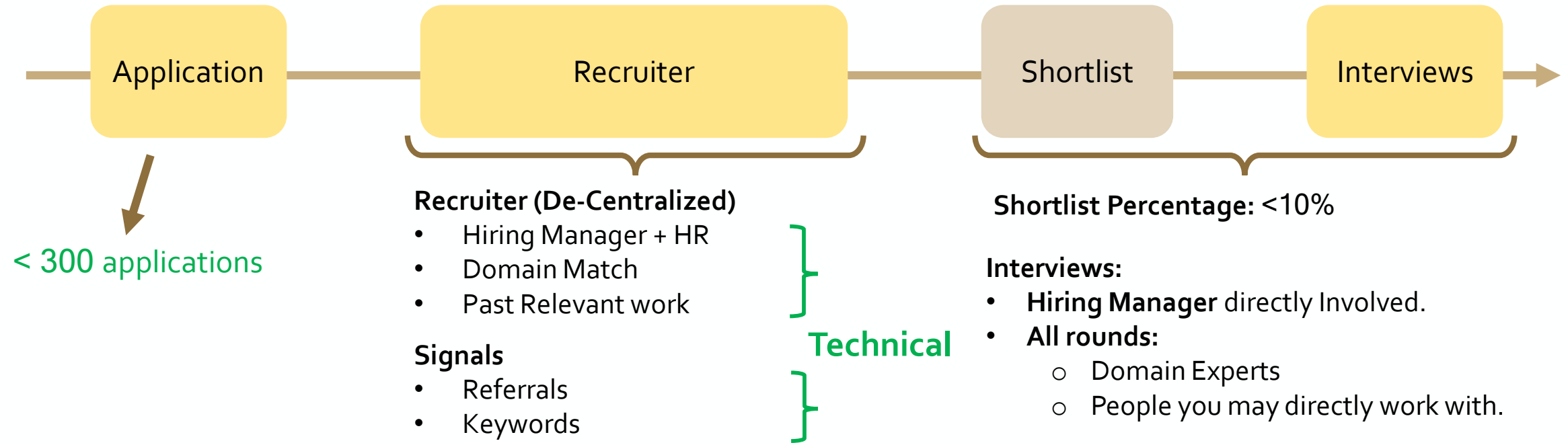
**How to avoid ATS?** Answer: **Referrals**

Interview probability: **Low–Medium**  
Final hire rate: **<10% (often much lower)**

# Specialist Hiring: De-Centralized Systems

Optimizes relevance and fit.

Example Role: Camera Architect @ MAANG



**What if I don't have a Referral?**

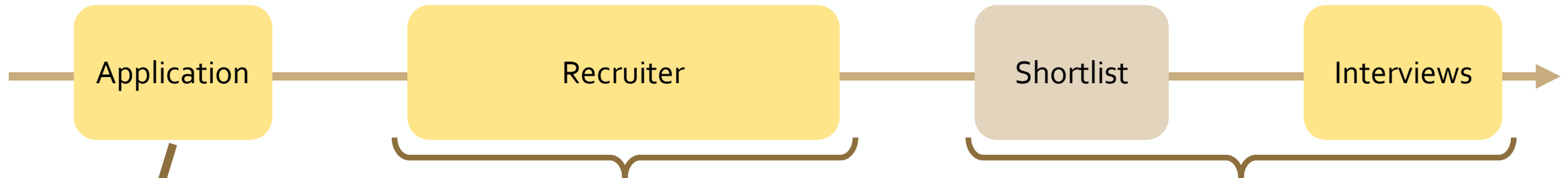
Answer: **Show (vs) Claim.**

Interview probability: **Very Low**  
Final hire rate: **High (if aligned)**

# Early-Stage / Seed-Stage Hiring

prioritizes execution over credentials.

Example Role: Founding Software Engineer



- Just applying isn't enough:
  - Direct Outreach
  - Collaboration

## Recruiter (De-Centralized)

- Founders / small core team
- No ATS, no formal pipeline

## Signals

- Referrals
- Visible work

**Shortlist Percentage:** High (if you reach out)

## Interviews:

- Founders and Future Teammates
  - Real Problem Discussions
  - Hands-on Tasks, Short Projects

**What if I don't have a Referral?**

Answer: **Show (vs) Claim.**

Interview probability: **High**  
Final hire rate: **Low (Execution based)**

# Generalized (vs) Specialized (vs) Unstructured

Aspect	General (Centralized)	Specialist (Decentralized)	Early-Stage
Applicants	Very High	Moderate	Low
Screening	HR + ATS	HM + HR	Founder/Team
Technical Filtering (Early Rounds)	Low	High	High
Time to Response	Medium	Slow	Fast
Interview Chance	Low–Medium	High (if aligned)	High (if reached)
Best Strategy (Tailored)	Visibility (Presentation)	Relevance (Domain Alignment)	Direct outreach
Best Strategy (Common)	Referrals	Referrals	Referrals

Most people fail not because they're weak, but because they're using the wrong strategy for the system.

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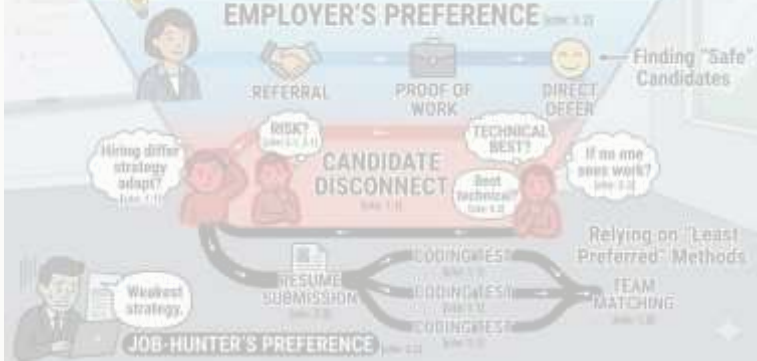
So far, we focused on how to get into the interview pipeline.



## Strategy

### The Inverted Triangle

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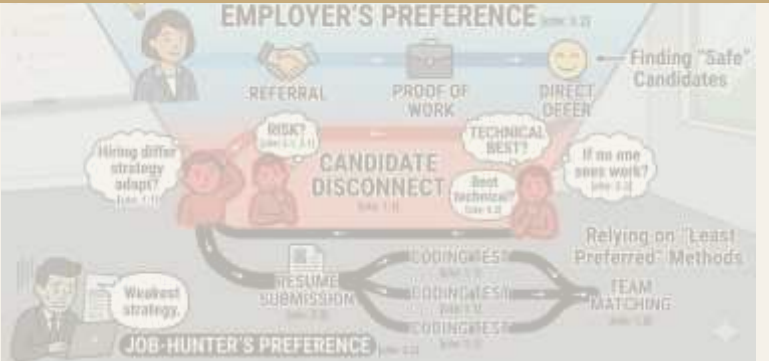


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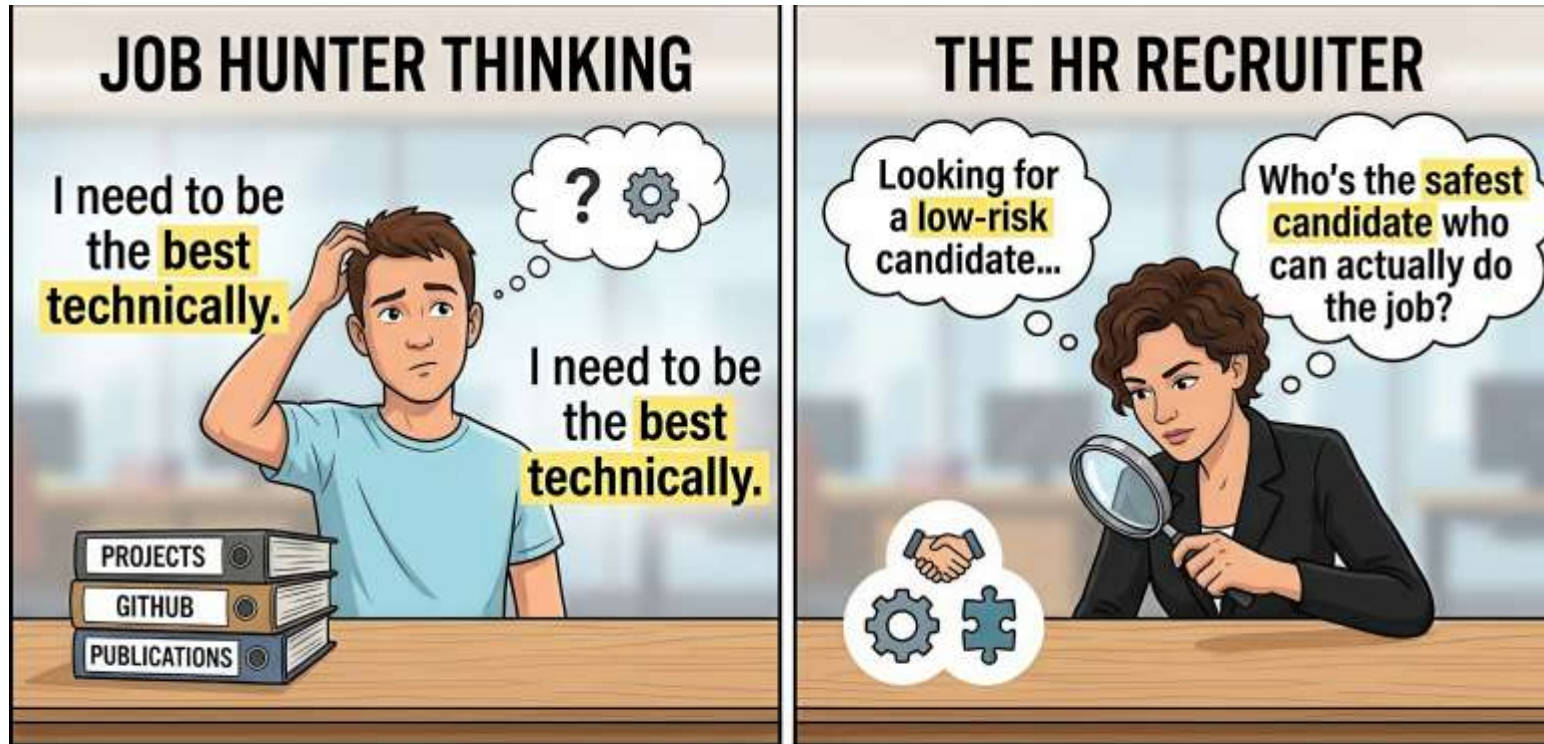
### The Inverted Triangle

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Let's understand how interviews evaluate you.



# Why Interview Exist



**'HIRING IS A RISK DECISION, NOT A TALENT SEARCH.'**

Wrong hire = time, money, team impact

# Best Candidate ≠ Selected Candidate

Companies hire the candidate who minimizes "Risk."

**But What is Risk?**

"Best" Candidate	"Reliable" Candidate
Occasional brilliance	Consistent performance
Risky signals	Predictable behaviour
Hard to evaluate	Easy to trust
High upside	Low downside

**Reliability beats brilliance in hiring decisions.**

# Why Multiple Rounds Exist

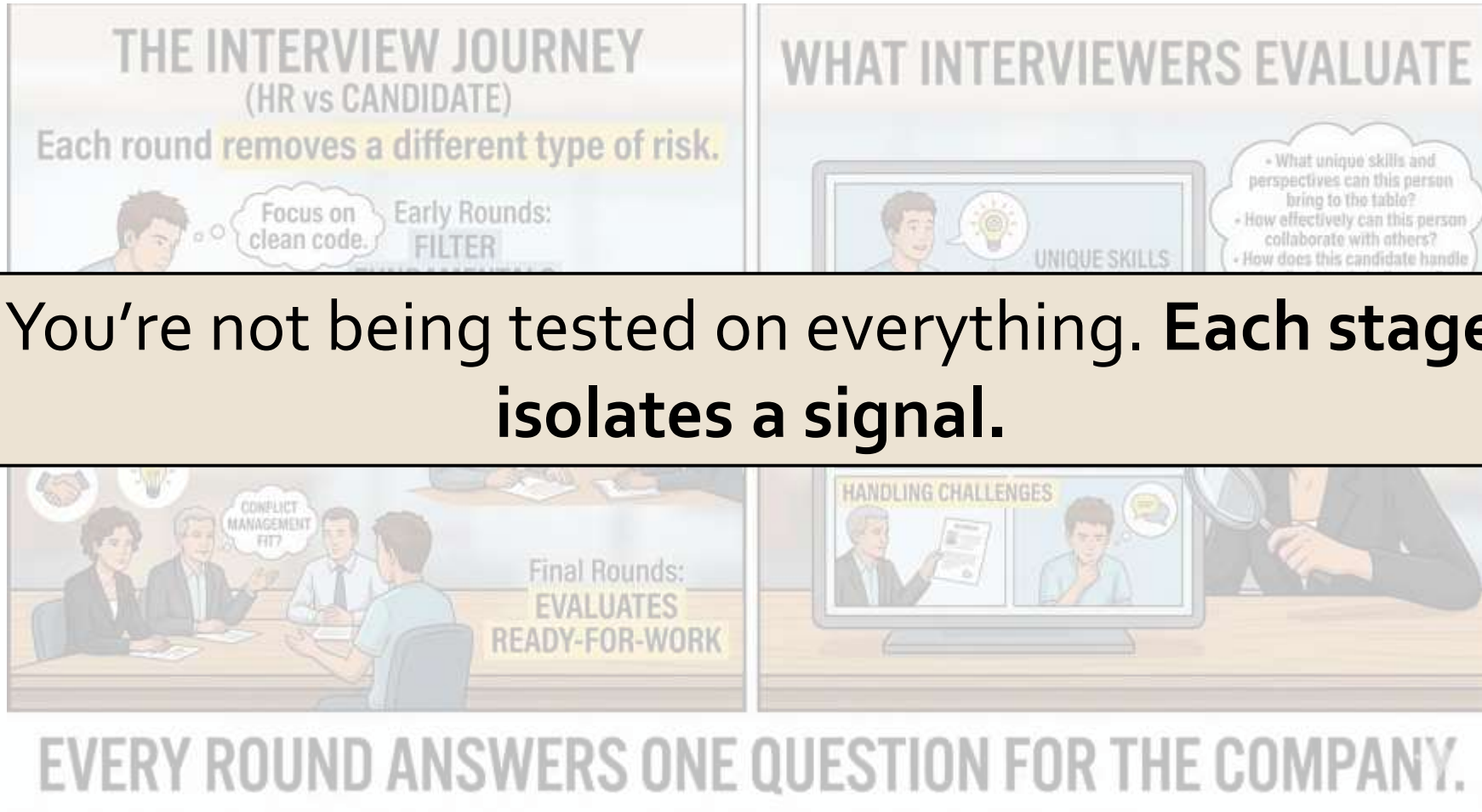
Each round evaluates a different type of risk.



**EVERY ROUND ANSWERS ONE QUESTION FOR THE COMPANY.**

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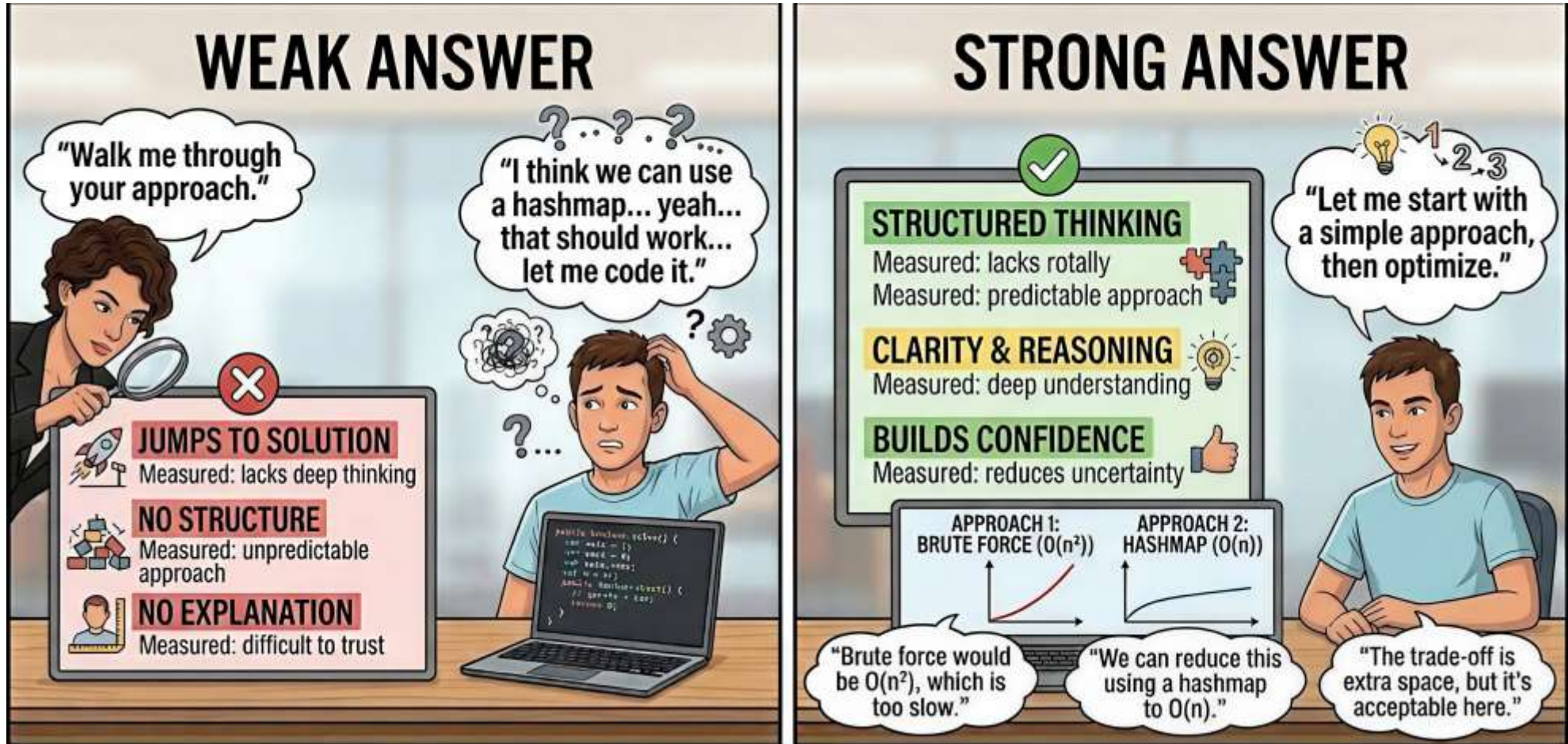


# What Actually Gets You Hired

Interviewers question:

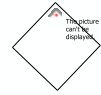
How smart are you?

Can I Trust You?



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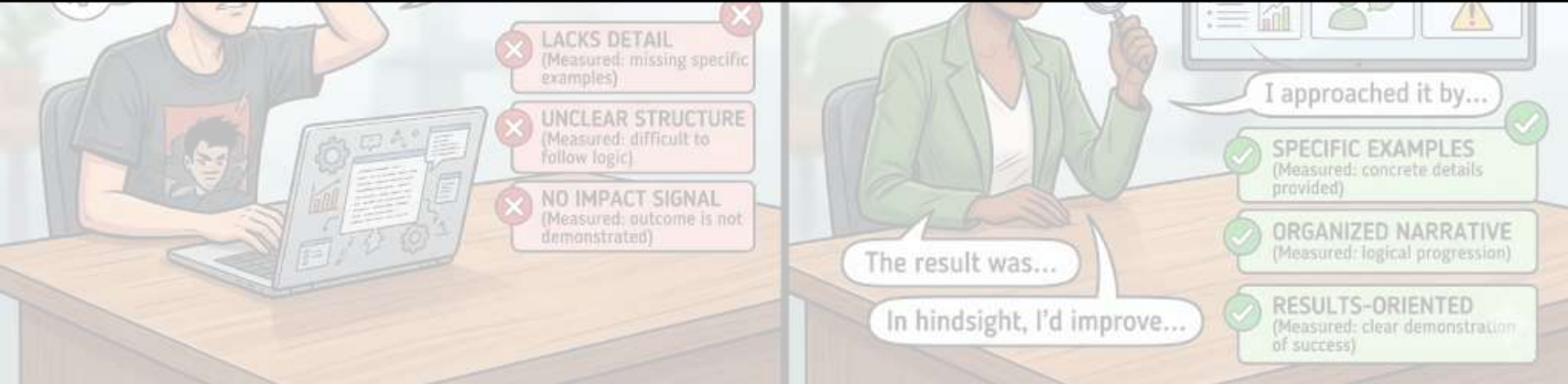
**How smart are you?**



**Can I Trust You?**



Good candidates give answers.  
**Strong candidates explain their thinking.**





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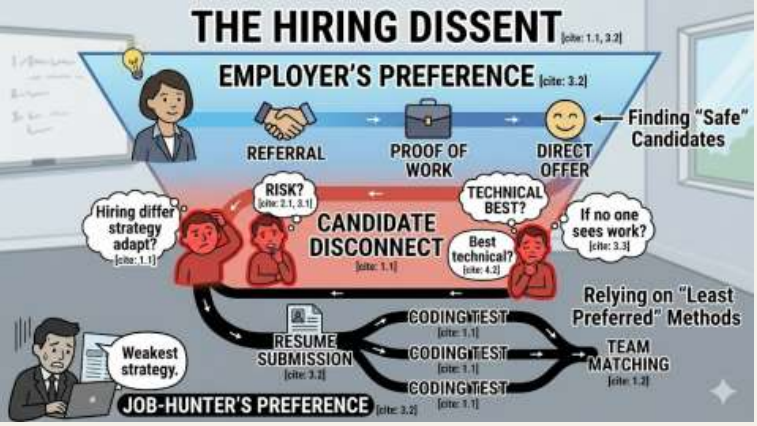
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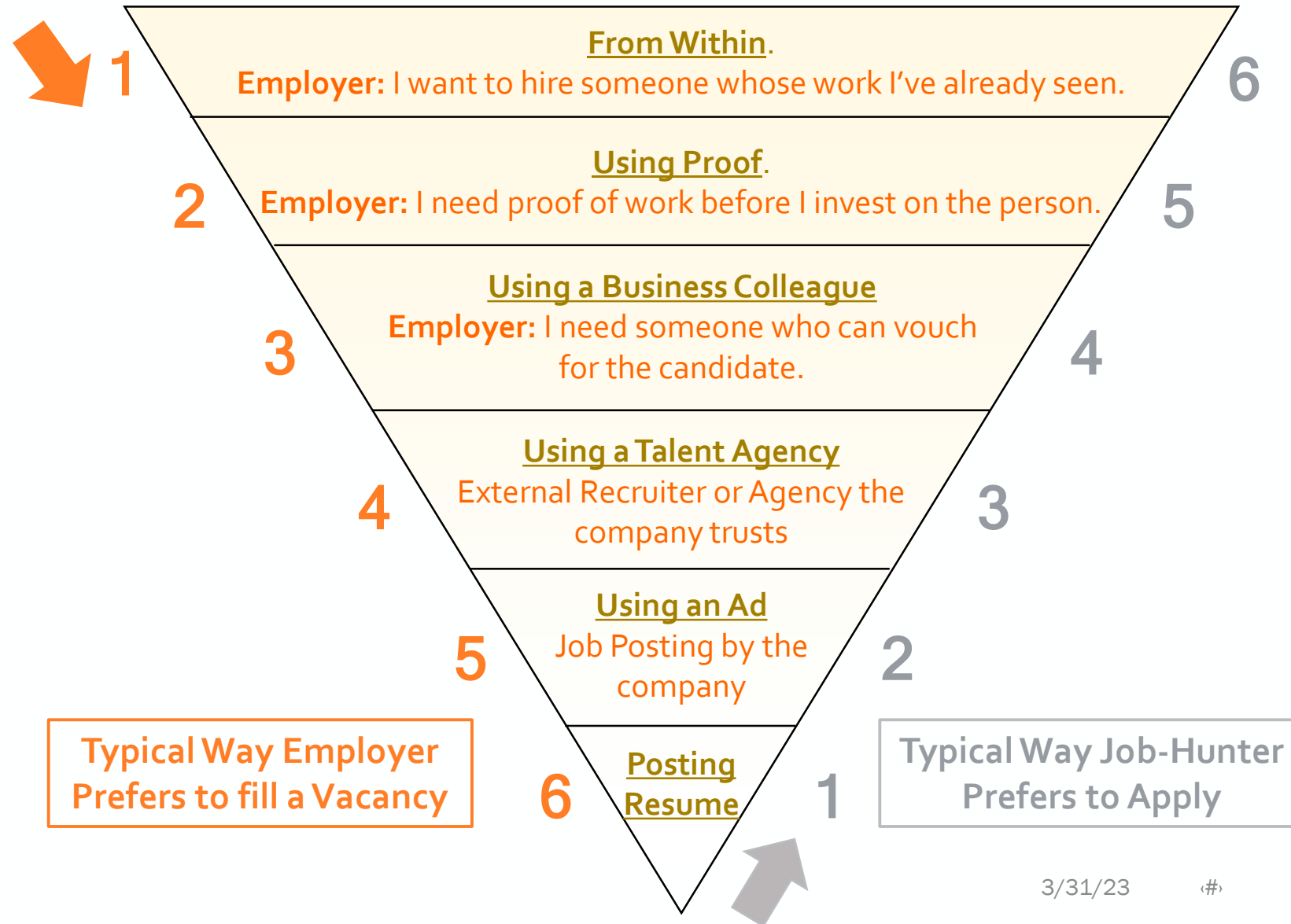
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So how do you make companies see you as a low-risk candidate in the first place?



# How Employers Hire vs How Candidates Apply

## The Inverted Triangle

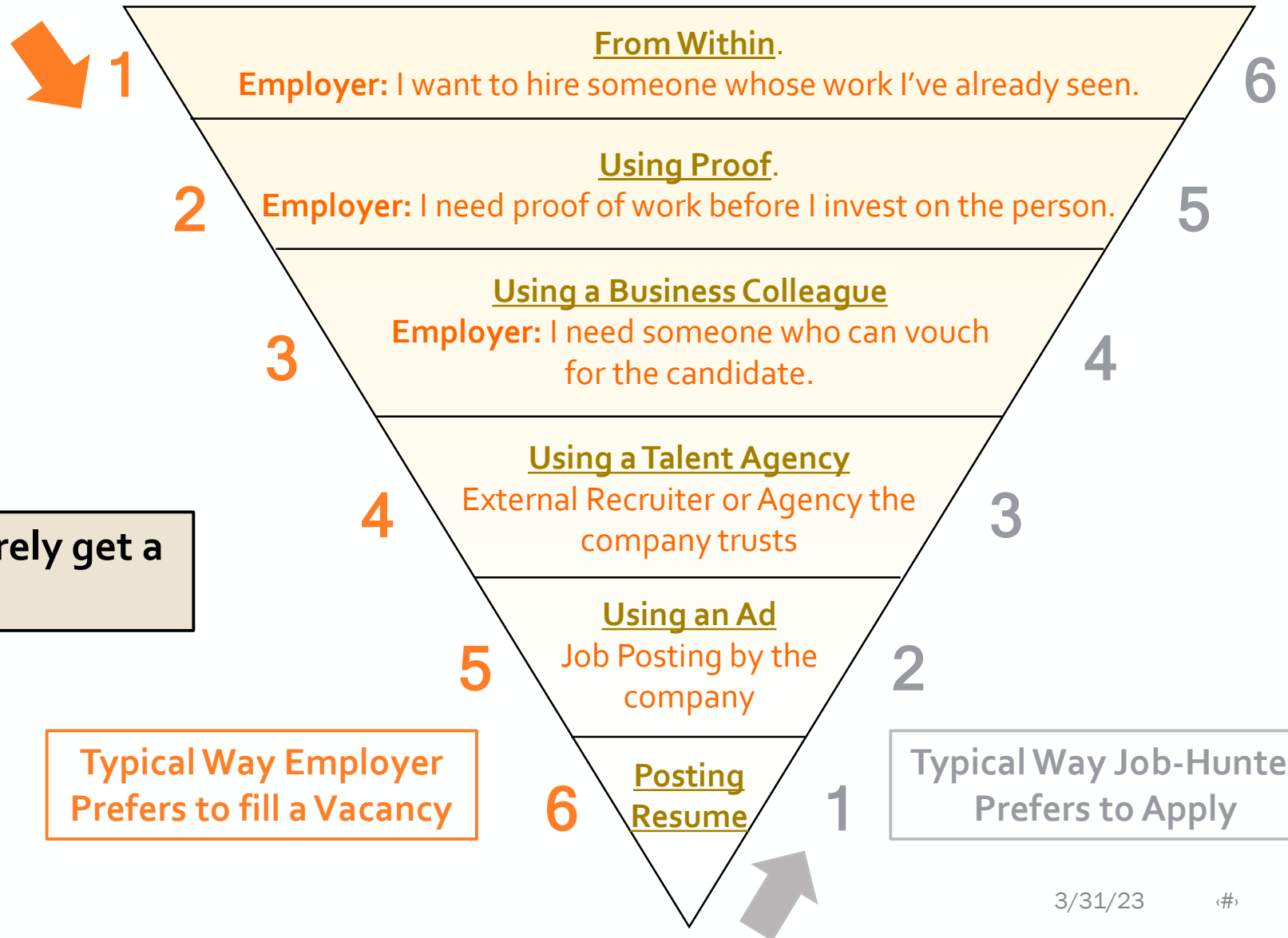


# How Employers Hire vs How Candidates Apply

## Why does such Mismatch Exist?

- Employers → Minimize Risk
- Candidates → Maximize Reach

This is why most applications rarely get a response.

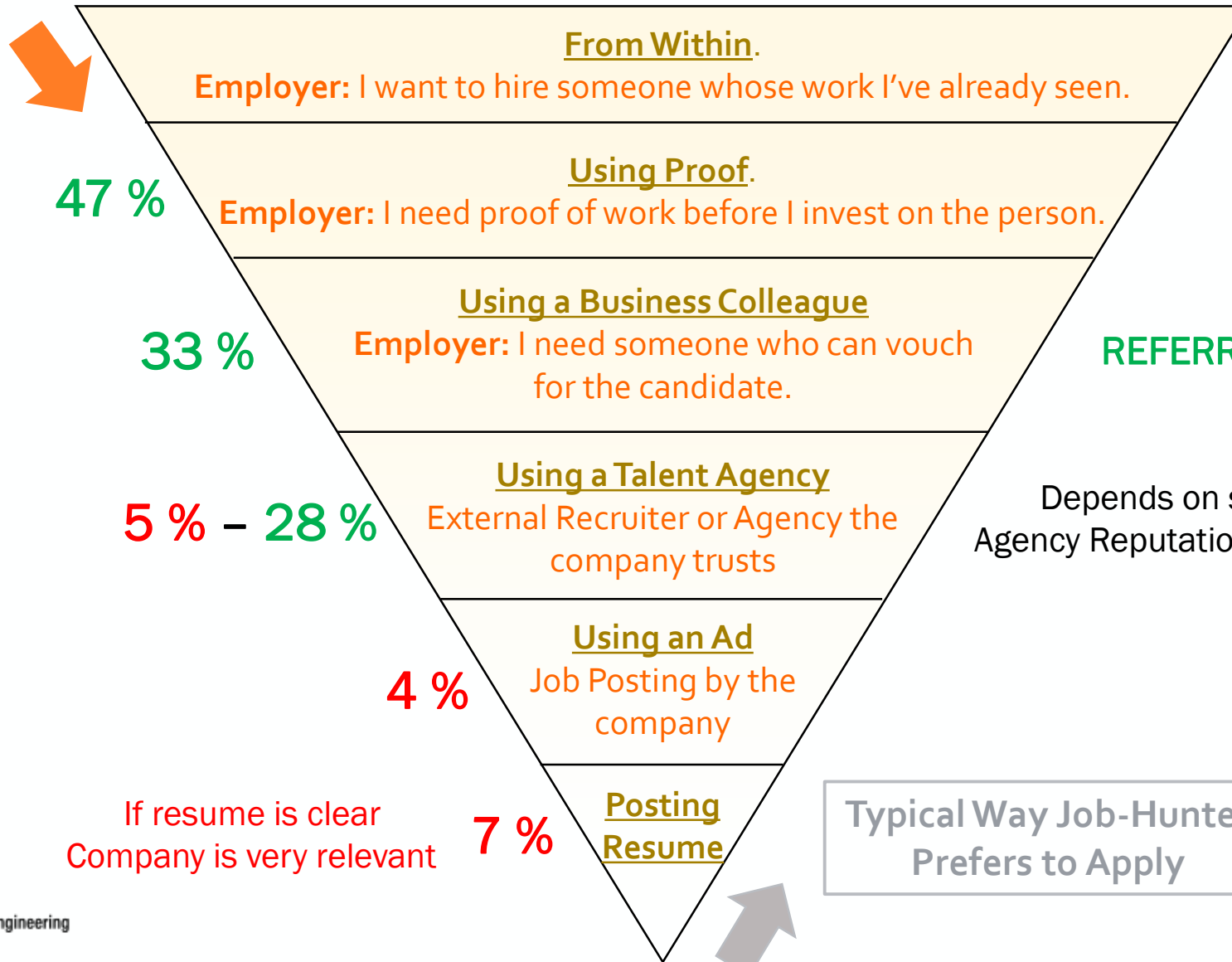


Typical Way Employer Prefers to fill a Vacancy

Typical Way Job-Hunter Prefers to Apply

# Chances of Getting an Interview

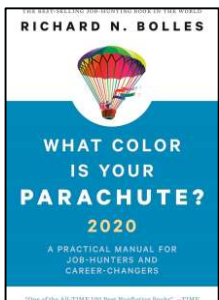
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REFERRALS 🔥

Depends on several Factors  
Agency Reputation, Your skillset, etc.

Typical Way Job-Hunter Prefers to Apply



# What If You Don't Have a Referral?

**Then you need to create PROOF.**

What do I mean by Proof ?

# Show (vs) Claim

Recruiters don't trust claims. They trust evidence.

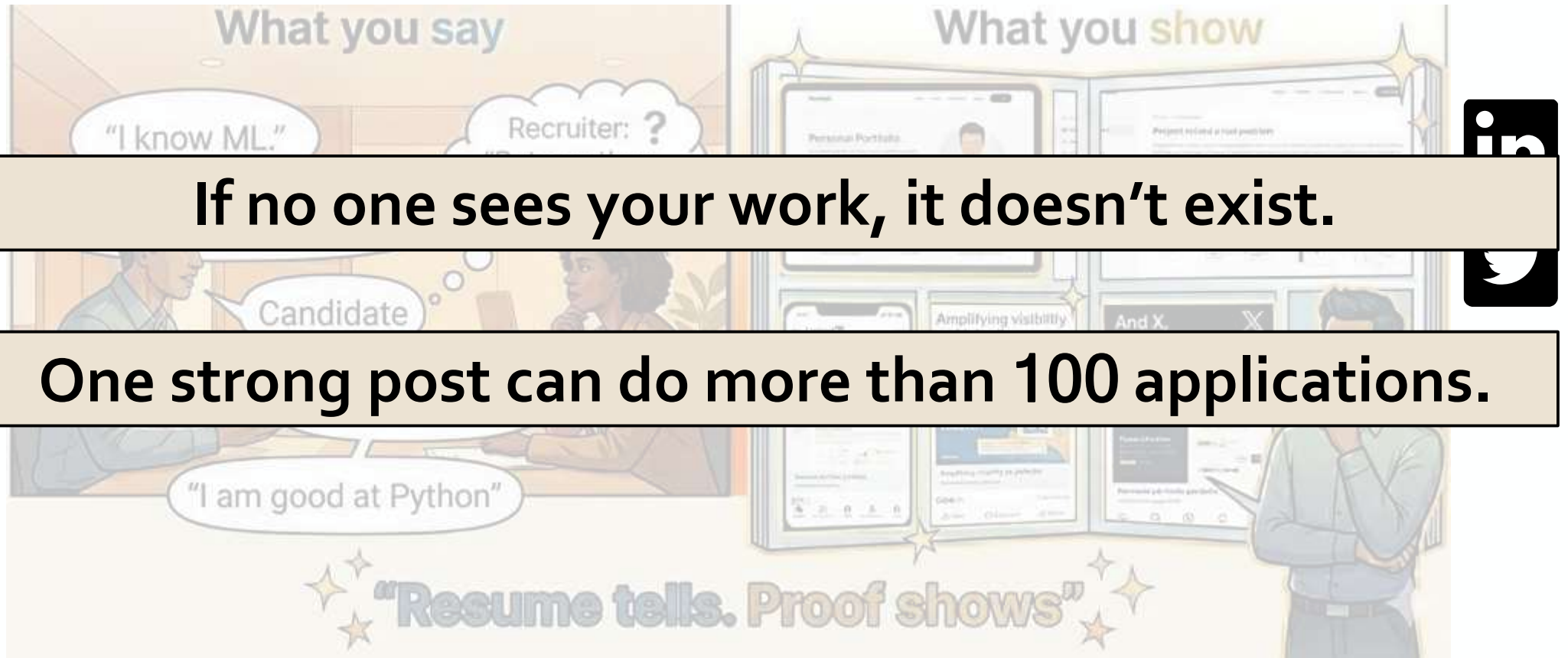
If you show your work, you reduce uncertainty.



# Show (vs) Claim

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If you show your work, you reduce uncertainty.



# How to Increase Your Chances

Hiring = Risk Minimization

Visibility > Applications

Proof > Claims

**Don't just apply. Position yourself.**



LinkedIn

# *Thank You*

For any questions feel free to reach out to me on  
LinkedIn



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