TALENT ENGINEERING ACADEMY

Write a Better Search Brief

PRACTICE WORKBOOK

Turn business outcomes into defensible requirements, evidence criteria and a search plan that can change with market feedback.

PATHWAY	Talent Engineering Practitioner
LEVEL	Practitioner
EDITION	2026.09
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Free learning. Practical work. Better recruitment.

An education initiative by Vitae.

WORKBOOK GUIDE

Build something useful as you learn.

This workbook turns the course into a practical piece of work you can review, refine and adapt. Print it, annotate it digitally, or use the prompts in your preferred notes tool.

YOUR COURSE DELIVERABLE

An agreed search brief and requirement-to-evidence matrix.

How to use this workbook

01 Work through the course lessons in order, then complete the matching workbook prompts.

02 Use fictional or properly authorised information. Do not add candidate or client confidential data.

03 Compare your decisions with the self-review guidance. Revise assumptions, gaps and unclear ownership.

04 Keep the finished workbook as evidence of your learning and as a starting point for real work.

BEFORE YOU START

Talent Engineering Fundamentals, or equivalent recruitment experience.

Course page: https://talentengineering.org/courses/better-search-briefs

PART 1

Plan your course deliverable.

Use these planning pages to define what you are producing before you work through the lesson exercises. Return to them as your thinking develops.

WORKSHEET 01

Role outcomes at six and twelve months

Capture the evidence, decisions, assumptions, owners and next actions that make this section usable.

YOUR WORKING NOTES

WORKSHEET 02

Essential criteria and job-related justification

Capture the evidence, decisions, assumptions, owners and next actions that make this section usable.

YOUR WORKING NOTES

WORKSHEET 03

Acceptable evidence and transferable routes

Capture the evidence, decisions, assumptions, owners and next actions that make this section usable.

YOUR WORKING NOTES

WORKSHEET 04

Reward, location, working arrangements and constraints

Capture the evidence, decisions, assumptions, owners and next actions that make this section usable.

YOUR WORKING NOTES

WORKSHEET 05

Search hypotheses and excluded assumptions

Capture the evidence, decisions, assumptions, owners and next actions that make this section usable.

YOUR WORKING NOTES

WORKSHEET 06

Decision owners, assessment stages and change log

Capture the evidence, decisions, assumptions, owners and next actions that make this section usable.

YOUR WORKING NOTES

PART 2

Apply each lesson.

Each exercise is designed to turn the lesson into evidence of practice. Complete the task, then use the guidance to challenge your first answer.

LESSON 01 / 05

From job description to search plan

YOUR PRACTICE TASK

Create a brief for a fictional Head of Quality. Include three outcomes, three essential criteria with evidence questions, two preferences and three points to clarify with the client.

YOUR RESPONSE

LESSON 02 / 05

Investigate the work behind the vacancy

YOUR PRACTICE TASK

Rewrite a fictional replacement request as three outcomes with evidence of success.

YOUR RESPONSE

FICTIONAL WORKED EXAMPLE

A manager requests a senior analyst because the previous employee had that title. Discovery finds the urgent outcome is reliable weekly forecasting and coaching two junior staff. The brief separates analytical delivery from management expectations and confirms the available support.

SELF-REVIEW GUIDANCE

Each outcome should name a result, context and review horizon. Avoid personality labels such as dynamic or rockstar. Identify which responsibilities are essential from day one and which can develop with support.

LESSON 03 / 05

Challenge requirements and define acceptable evidence

YOUR PRACTICE TASK

Create a matrix for four requirements with justification, evidence and an alternative route.

YOUR RESPONSE

FICTIONAL WORKED EXAMPLE

A brief initially requires ten years in aerospace. Discussion reveals the relevant task is managing traceability and corrective action in a regulated production setting. The search includes adjacent regulated industries and tests the actual capability.

SELF-REVIEW GUIDANCE

A good matrix replaces unsupported proxies with observable capability. It may retain a required licence where genuinely necessary, while allowing equivalent experience for a preference. Each criterion has an assessment method rather than a subjective label.

LESSON 04 / 05

Translate the brief into a search hypothesis

YOUR PRACTICE TASK

Write three search lanes and the evidence that would support or disconfirm each.

YOUR RESPONSE

FICTIONAL WORKED EXAMPLE

For a quality leader, the first market map includes medical devices, food production and industrial manufacturing because all may provide evidence of regulated process leadership. Research then checks whether the operating context transfers to the actual role.

SELF-REVIEW GUIDANCE

Each lane has a reason tied to role outcomes, a sample to inspect and a review date. A rejected lane records evidence, such as missing production responsibility, rather than a blanket judgement about an industry.

LESSON 05 / 05

Agree decision rights and manage brief changes

YOUR PRACTICE TASK

Create a change log entry and candidate communication plan for a new location requirement.

YOUR RESPONSE

FICTIONAL WORKED EXAMPLE

After ten conversations, the hiring manager adds frequent travel. The recruiter updates the brief, asks why travel is necessary, confirms the actual pattern and informs affected candidates. Earlier interest is not treated as agreement to the new condition.

SELF-REVIEW GUIDANCE

Record who requested and approved the change, its job-related reason, effective date and affected candidates. Reconfirm interest and assess whether the search needs to reopen. Do not silently discard earlier applicants.

FINAL REVIEW

Strengthen the work before you use it.

Review the completed workbook as one connected piece of work. The strongest deliverables are internally consistent, explicit about limitations and clear about who decides what happens next.

- [ ] The work distinguishes facts, evidence, assumptions and open questions.
- [ ] Decisions have named owners, dates and review points.
- [ ] Measures connect to the outcome rather than activity alone.
- [ ] Risks, accessibility needs, privacy considerations and limitations are visible.
- [ ] The next action is specific enough for another person to follow.
- [ ] The finished deliverable can be explained in plain language.

FINAL CHANGES AND NEXT ACTIONS

FURTHER READING

Continue with trusted sources.

These sources support further study. A reference does not imply endorsement. Check the current official rules and obtain appropriate professional advice for real legal, financial or regulated decisions.

CIPD: Recruitment

Professional context for the recruitment lifecycle.

https://www.cipd.org/uk/knowledge/factsheets/recruitment-factsheet/

ABOUT THIS WORKBOOK

Original educational scenarios. Practical work is self-directed and is not independently assessed. Adapt any method to your context with appropriate review.

Talent Engineering Academy is an education initiative by Vitae.