TALENT ENGINEERING ACADEMY

# Choosing and Validating a Recruitment Specialism

## PRACTICE WORKBOOK

Find a defensible niche by testing demand, talent access, commercial viability and your ability to deliver.

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| PATHWAY | Recruitment Commercial and Independent Practice |
| LEVEL | Practitioner |
| EDITION | 2026.09 |
| UPDATED | 2026-09-24 |

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

**A specialism thesis with validation evidence and a decision gate.**

## 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/recruitment-specialism

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

## Buyer, role family and geography

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

YOUR WORKING NOTES

WORKSHEET 02

# Recurring problem and demand evidence

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

YOUR WORKING NOTES

WORKSHEET 03

# Talent market and access routes

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

YOUR WORKING NOTES

WORKSHEET 04

# Competition and alternatives

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

YOUR WORKING NOTES

WORKSHEET 05

# Delivery economics and capability

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

YOUR WORKING NOTES

WORKSHEET 06

# Validation conversations and decision

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 / 04

# Define a niche around a useful problem

YOUR PRACTICE TASK

**Write three possible niche definitions and compare how clearly each identifies buyer and problem.**

YOUR RESPONSE

FICTIONAL WORKED EXAMPLE

A fictional recruiter moves from all technology roles to maintenance leadership for regional process manufacturers. The thesis identifies recurring succession and reliability needs, then tests whether those buyers use external search support.

SELF-REVIEW GUIDANCE

Avoid choosing solely because a market sounds fashionable. State what you already know, what is assumed and which evidence could disconfirm the thesis.

LESSON 02 / 04

# Validate demand and delivery supply together

YOUR PRACTICE TASK

**Create a validation plan with five buyer questions and three talent-market checks.**

YOUR RESPONSE

FICTIONAL WORKED EXAMPLE

Several firms advertise a role, but interviews reveal they fill it internally or through an existing retained provider. The recruiter revises the entry proposition instead of counting every advert as available agency revenue.

SELF-REVIEW GUIDANCE

Include alternatives, buying process and delivery feasibility. Record negative evidence. A useful plan can conclude that a niche should be narrowed, changed or rejected.

LESSON 03 / 04

# Test the economics and capacity

YOUR PRACTICE TASK

**Build base and downside scenarios using explicitly fictional assumptions.**

YOUR RESPONSE

FICTIONAL WORKED EXAMPLE

A fictional £12,000 placement fee looks attractive, but the model includes two unsuccessful searches, software, research time and a payment delay. The base and downside cases produce very different cash positions.

SELF-REVIEW GUIDANCE

Show gross fees, relevant costs, capacity and cash timing separately. Do not present the model as a forecast until assumptions have been validated through real evidence.

LESSON 04 / 04

# Choose a thesis and a review gate

YOUR PRACTICE TASK

**Write a one-page niche decision with evidence, risks and a ninety-day validation gate.**

YOUR RESPONSE

FICTIONAL WORKED EXAMPLE

After six weeks, the recruiter finds strong demand but weak credibility in executive search. The decision is to begin with a bounded mapping service and build delivery evidence before promising full retained search.

SELF-REVIEW GUIDANCE

Include one condition that would make you stop and one capability you must build. Distinguish a promising hypothesis from a proven business model.

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/

### GOV.UK: Set up a business

UK starting point. Business structure and obligations depend on the circumstances.

https://www.gov.uk/set-up-business

**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.