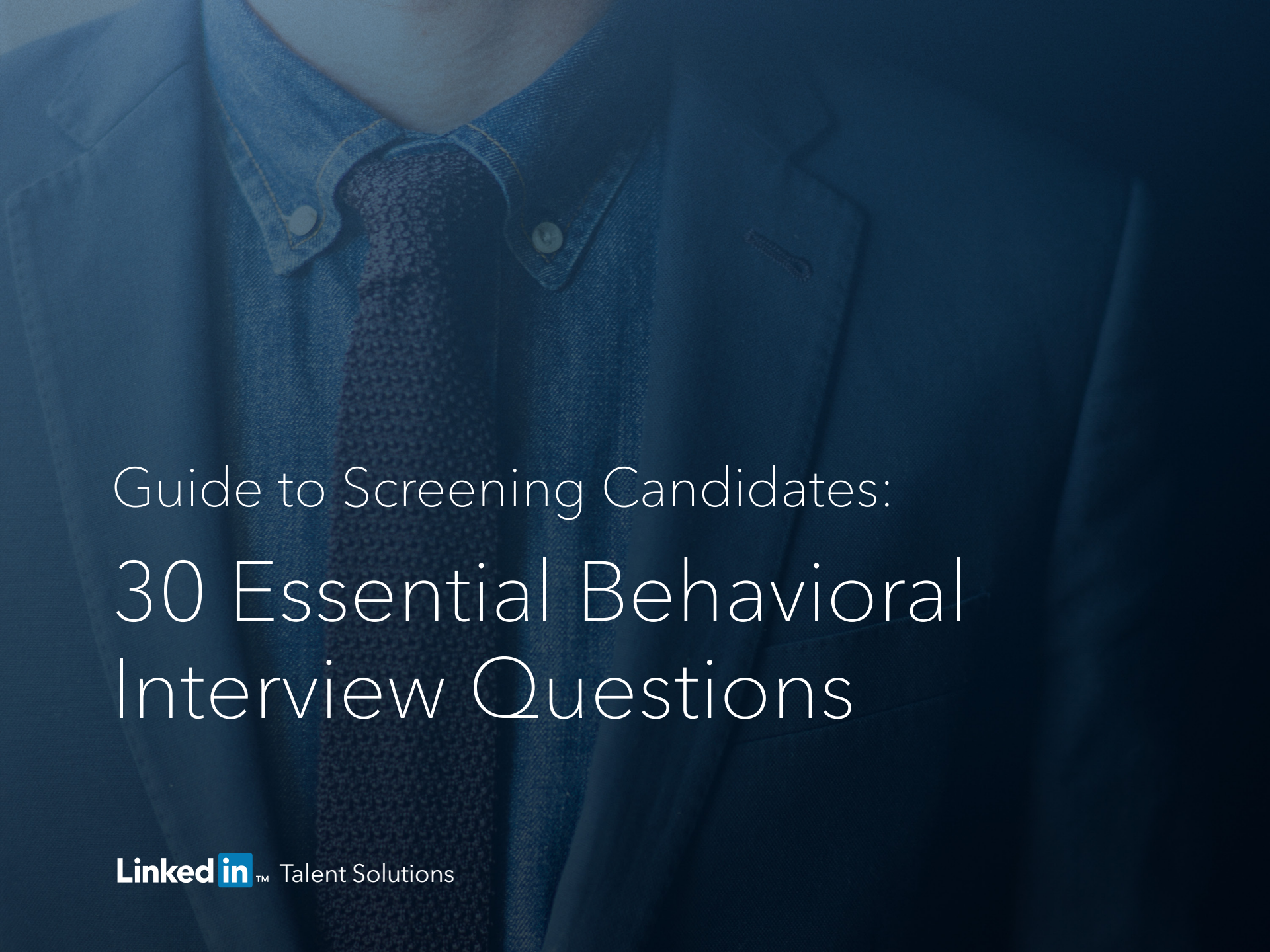

Guide to Screening Candidates:

30 Essential Behavioral Interview Questions

LinkedIn™ Talent Solutions

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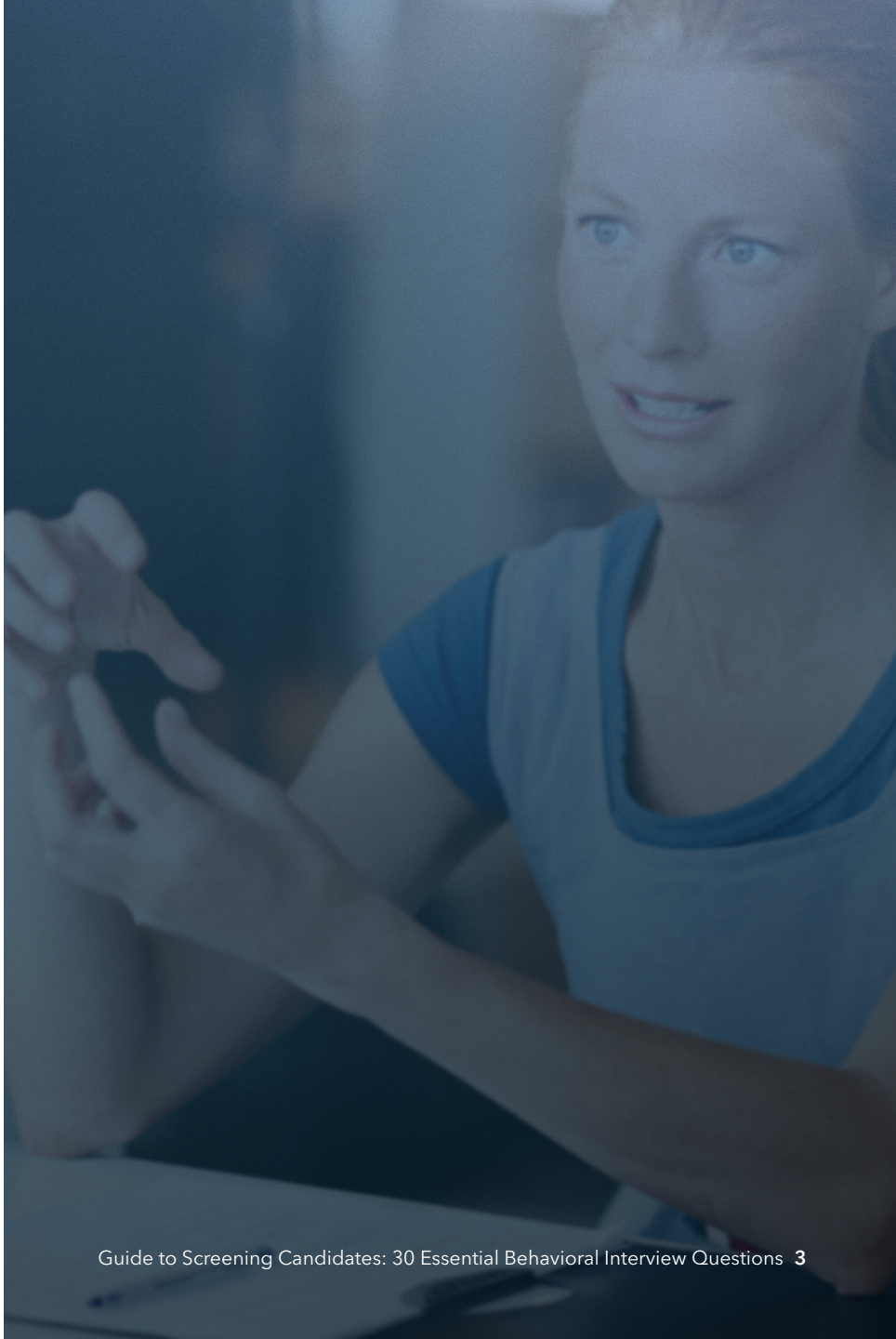
Why behavioral interview questions matter

Screening candidates for soft skills is often the toughest part of an interview. You have less than an hour to figure out if the person has the qualities you are looking for in your next hire.

The good news is that behavioral interview questions are a proven way to reveal a person's ability to collaborate, adapt, and more. By looking at their past behavior, you can more easily determine what someone will be like to work with.

To find out what are the best behavioral interview questions, we surveyed nearly 1,300 hiring managers. This eBook will walk you through their answers and give you tips on how to ask these questions.

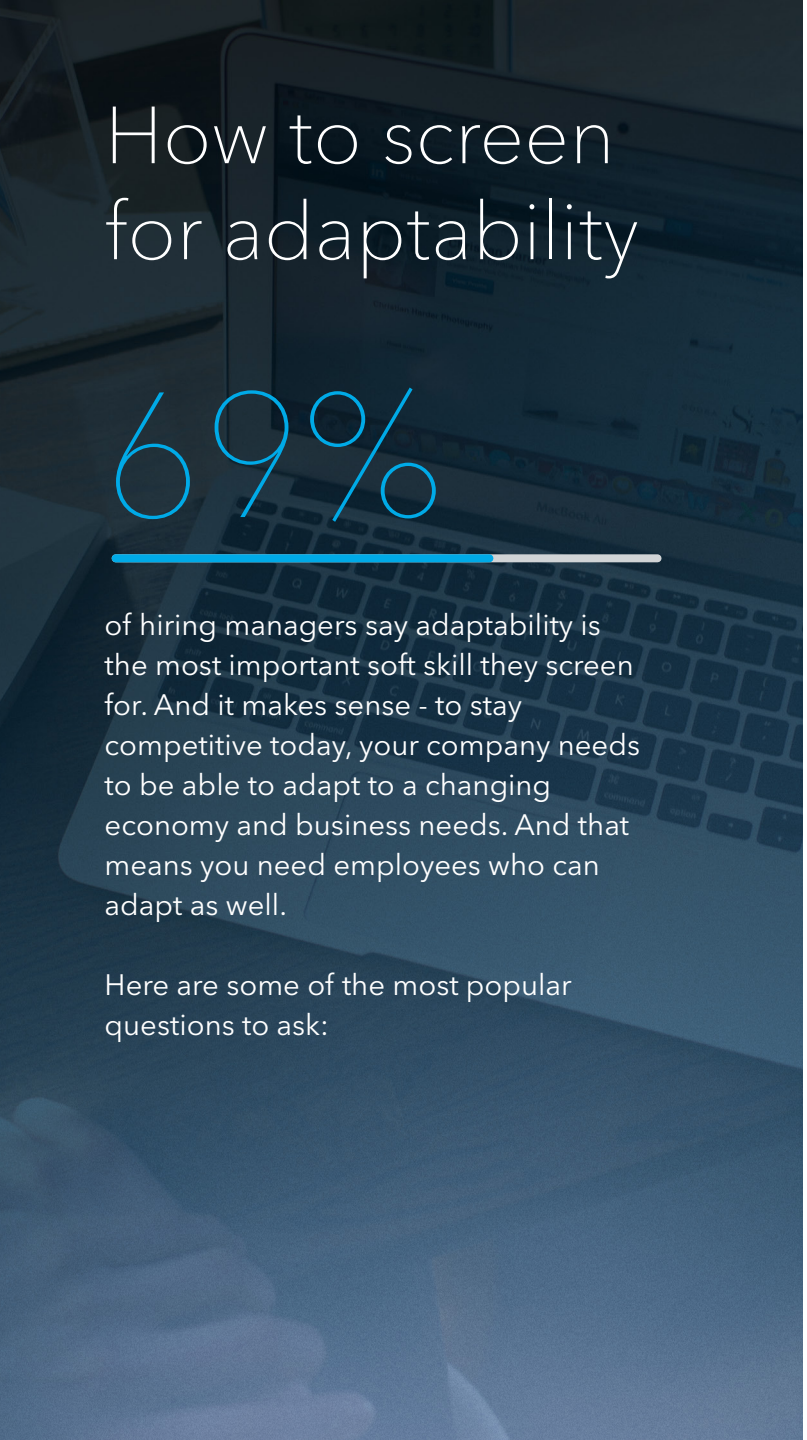


The 6 essential soft skills to screen for

Over 60% of hiring managers said that screening for soft skills is difficult. When asked to prioritize some of the most important soft skills they look for during interviews, here's how they ranked the following six in order of importance:

Adaptability

How to screen for adaptability



69%

of hiring managers say adaptability is the most important soft skill they screen for. And it makes sense - to stay competitive today, your company needs to be able to adapt to a changing economy and business needs. And that means you need employees who can adapt as well.

Here are some of the most popular questions to ask:

1 MOST POPULAR

Tell me about a time when you were asked to do something you had never done before. How did you react? What did you learn?

2

Describe a situation in which you embraced a new system, process, technology, or idea at work that was a major departure from the old way of doing things.

3

Recall a time when you were assigned a task outside of your job description. How did you handle the situation? What was the outcome?

4

Tell me about the biggest change that you have had to deal with. How did you adapt to that change?

5

Tell me about a time when you had to adjust to a colleague's working style in order to complete a project or achieve your objectives.

Culture fit

How to screen for culture fit

89%

of hiring failures are due to poor culture fit, so screening for this quality is key.* Research shows that employees who are a good culture fit had greater job satisfaction, superior job performance, and were more likely to stay with the company.

Here are some of the most popular questions to ask:

1 MOST POPULAR What are the three things that are most important to you in a job?

2 Tell me about a time in the last week when you've been satisfied, energized, and productive at work. What were you doing?

3 What's the most interesting thing about you that's not on your resume?

4 What would make you chose our company over others?

5 What's the biggest misconception your coworkers have about you and why do they think that?

* The Most Important Reason People Fail in a New Job

Collaboration

How to screen for collaboration

97%

of employees and executives believe that a lack of team alignment directly impacts the outcome of a task or project.* Clearly, hiring people who are able to work well with others is essential to having a productive – not to mention happy - team.

Here are some of the most popular questions to ask:

1 MOST POPULAR Give an example of when you had to work with someone who was difficult to get along with. How did you handle interactions with that person?

2 Tell me about a time when you were communicating with someone and they did not understand you. What did you do?

3 Tell me about one of your favorite experiences working with a team and your contribution.

4 Describe the best partner or supervisor with whom you've worked. What part of their managing style appealed to you?

5 Can you share an experience where a project dramatically shifted directions at the last minute? What did you do?

* Is Poor Collaboration Killing Your Company? [Infographic]

Leadership

How to screen for leadership

Research shows that organizations with high quality leaders are

13x

more likely to outperform their competition.* So, finding people who will be able to inspire, motivate, and influence others will be essential to your company's success.

Here are some of the most popular questions to ask:

1. MOST POPULAR — Tell me about the last time something significant didn't go according to plan at work. What was your role? What was the outcome?
2. Describe a situation where you needed to persuade someone to see things your way. What steps did you take? What were the results?
3. Give me an example of a time when you felt you led by example. What did you do and how did others react?
4. Tell me about the toughest decision you had to make in the last six months.
5. Have you ever had to "sell" an idea to your coworkers or group? How did you do it? What were the results?

* 10 Ways to Grow Leaders in Your Business

Growth potential

How to screen for growth potential

If an employee leaves, it costs your company

1.5x

that employee's salary to replace her.* That means that hiring people who have the potential to grow with your company not only saves you the pain of replacing them, but also saves you money.

Here are some of the most popular questions to ask:

1 MOST POPULAR Recall a time when your manager was unavailable when a problem arose. How did you handle the situation? With whom did you consult?

2 Describe a time when you volunteered to expand your knowledge at work, as opposed to being directed to do so.

3 What would motivate you to make a move from your current role?

4 When was the last occasion you asked for direct feedback from a superior? Why?

5 What's the biggest career goal you've ever achieved?

* Why More Employees Are Considering Leaving Their Companies

K
Prioritization

How to screen for prioritization

When juggling multiple tasks, we have to be able to decide which ones need to be tackled immediately, and which ones can wait. Hiring someone who can't get this right means that key due dates and project timelines can fall through the cracks, ultimately hurting your business.

Here are some of the most popular questions to ask:

1 MOST POPULAR Tell me about a time when you had to juggle several projects at the same time. How did you organize your time? What was the result?

2 Tell me about a project that you planned. How did you organize and schedule the tasks?

3 Describe a time when you felt stressed or overwhelmed. How did you handle it?

4 Give an example of a time when you delegated an important task successfully.

5 How do you determine what amount of time is reasonable for a task?

Outside the box

Outside the box: Creative questions top leaders ask

To spice things up, we collected unconventional questions that top leaders tend to ask. Try sprinkling one of these in during your interview. The answer can reveal a lot about the candidate's personality and the way they think.

1

"How would you describe yourself in one word?"

Dara Richardson-Heron
CEO at YWCA

2

"Tell me about when you were a kid. Who did you want to be?"

Barbara Byrne
Vice Chairman at Barclays

3

"What didn't you get a chance to include on your resume?"

Richard Branson
Founder of Virgin Group

4

"What is the last thing you've learned on the job?"

Andrew Filev
CEO at Wrike

5

"On a scale of 1 to 10, how weird are you?"

Tony Hsieh
CEO at Zappos

How to get the answers you need

We hope that this eBook has armed you with the behavioral questions you need to select the best candidates. However, asking the right questions doesn't guarantee great answers. Push candidates to give you better information by doing the following:

1. **Use the S.T.A.R. system:** As the candidate answers each question, make sure they describe the Situation, Task, Action, and Result.
2. **Don't except situational responses:** When you ask for specific examples, make sure candidates don't give you situational (hypothetical) information.
3. **Give them time:** Often good answers come after a moment of reflection, so don't rush candidates or write them off if they don't answer quickly.
4. **Follow up:** Hone in on a specific piece of missing information in their response to dig deeper into the situation.

Bonus: Questions you should be ready to answer

77%

of talent says that the interview experience is a major factor in whether or not they join your company. And, 49% say that getting their business questions answered is what matters most.* So, if you want to win over the candidate, you also have to shine during the interview and make sure you can answer the following questions:

1. Why did you join this company, and what keeps you here?
2. What does success look like in this position?
3. What was the biggest challenge affecting the last person in this job?
4. Why do people say _____ about your company?
5. How does the company measure success?
6. What would you expect from me when I start, after three months, and after a year?
7. Can you describe what my career path could look like?

* Talent Trends 2015

Want more? The LinkedIn Talent Blog has it

The LinkedIn Talent Blog is one of the industry's hottest publications for a reason – it covers everything you need to know to be great at your job.

Here are some of our most popular articles on interviewing:

Ask These 4 Interview Questions to Screen for Emotional Intelligence

Recruiters Nominate Their Favorite Phone Interview Questions

How to Assess a Resume (in Less Than 6 Seconds)

4 Interview Questions You Should Stop Asking (and the Ones You Should Ask Instead)

5 Red Flags to Watch Out for When Interviewing a Candidate

Methodology

In May 2016, LinkedIn surveyed 1,297 Hiring Managers in the US, Canada, UK, Netherlands, Australia and India. Hiring Managers are defined as those who currently manage people and either recently hired, are currently trying to hire or are planning to hire new people for their team (based on survey responses). Members were selected at random to take our survey and are representative of the LinkedIn sample.

The LinkedIn sample (and our analysis) is influenced by how members choose to use the site, which can vary based on professional, social, and regional culture, as well as overall site availability and accessibility. These variances were not accounted for in the analysis.

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About LinkedIn Talent Solutions

LinkedIn Talent Solutions offers a full range of recruiting solutions to help organizations of all sizes find, attract, and engage the best talent.

Founded in 2003, LinkedIn connects the world's professionals to make them more productive and successful. With over 433 million members worldwide, LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network.

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