

The Security Hiring Scorecard

What to assess when you have stopped screening on certifications, and how to score it without kidding yourself.

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Certifications tell you someone can pass an exam and cared enough to sit it. Both are worth something and neither predicts whether they will be good here. Score against what the job actually requires. Use the same sheet for every candidate in a round, and write the evidence, not the impression.

The five things worth assessing

Dimension	What good looks like — and how to probe it	Evidence
Reasoning under uncertainty	Give an ambiguous scenario with missing information. Strong candidates ask what they don't know before answering. Weak ones produce a confident answer to a question you did not ask.	
Depth in something	Anything, even outside security. Ask them to teach you something they know well. Real depth survives three follow-up questions; recited depth does not.	
Judgement about people	"Tell me about a time you were technically right and it still went badly." The answer reveals whether they have learned that being right is not the job.	
How they handle being wrong	Push back on something they said. You are watching for whether they update, dig in, or fold. All three tell you something; only one is what you want.	
Whether the work interests them	Ask what they read, built or broke recently without being asked to. Curiosity is the thing that compounds. It cannot be trained in and it cannot be faked for long.	

Score

Dimension	1–5	Would I want them in an incident with me?
Reasoning under uncertainty		
Depth in something		
Judgement about people		
Handling being wrong		
Genuine interest		

What the certification actually tells you

Signal	Reasonable inference
Holds a well-known certification	Can pass an exam, invested own time, understands the vocabulary. Not evidence of judgement.
Holds several, recently	Motivated, or optimising for screening filters. Worth asking which one taught them something they use.
Holds none, ten years experience	Nothing at all. Many of the best practitioners never bothered.
Required by a client or regulator	A commercial fact, not a competence one. Treat it as a constraint on the role, not a filter on the person.

SCORE THE ROUND, NOT THE CANDIDATE

Fill this in immediately after each interview, before hearing anyone else's view. Comparing written evidence across a panel produces better decisions than a discussion in which the most confident voice sets the tone.

THE FILTER THAT COSTS YOU MOST

Screening out career-changers and non-traditional backgrounds because the CV shape is unfamiliar. The strongest hires I have made looked wrong on paper and were assessed on the five dimensions above. If your pipeline all looks the same, the filter is the problem, not the market.

Companion to: "I Stopped Hiring for Certifications. Here's What I Look For." at cybersecleader.com. Adapt freely inside your organisation with attribution retained. Not employment-law advice; check your own hiring obligations.