

# SHOULD YOU HIRE TA OR OUTSOURCE?

## A Practical Playbook for Founders & HR Leaders

A decision framework for scaling companies in Singapore & Southeast Asia



# THE HIRING STRUCTURE DILEMMA: MOST COMPANIES GET THIS WRONG

## CRITICAL CHOICE WITHOUT GUIDANCE

Scaling companies face a critical decision point but lack clear guidance on which hiring structure works best for their stage and goals.

## HIGH COST OF BAD STRUCTURE

A poor hiring structure can cost 6-12 months of momentum and substantial capital investment before realising the mistake.

## REPLACE EXPENSIVE CONSULTING

This playbook replaces a \$15K consulting conversation, giving you the same framework without the premium price tag.

## THREE DECISION PATHWAYS

Choose between building Internal TA teams, outsourcing to specialised agencies, or crafting a strategic hybrid approach tailored to your needs.

# GETTING HIRING WRONG COSTS MORE THAN YOU THINK

## BAD HIRE COST

\$75K-150K per hire in Singapore with compounding effects

## TIME DELAY IMPACT

3-6 months added to revenue goals from extended hiring cycles

## TEAM BURNOUT

Founder burnout and HR team overwhelm from misaligned hiring

## OPPORTUNITY COST

Competitors hire your targets while you're stuck in hiring process

# THE DECISION SNAPSHOT: TA VS AGENCIES VS HYBRID AT A GLANCE

## INTERNAL TA

Best for 50+ hires/year, strategic roles, employer branding needs. Build sustainable recruiting capabilities in-house with long-term vision.

## AGENCY OUTSOURCING

Effective for <20 hires/year, specialised roles, speed-critical searches. Leverage external expertise and networks for rapid, niche talent acquisition.

## HYBRID MODEL

Optimal for 20-50 hires/year, mixed role types, cost control + quality balance. Blend internal capabilities with external support for flexibility and efficiency.

# DECISION SCORING FRAMEWORK: CALCULATE YOUR OPTIMAL PATH

	1	3	5
HIRING VOLUME	1-3/yr	4-7/yr	8-15+/yr
ROLE COMPLEXITY	Standard, repeatable roles	Mix of standard + specialist	Niche / leadership / hard-to-fill
URGENCY	Flexible timelines	Some urgency	Immediate / business critical
EMPLOYER BRAND	Unknown / no inbound	Some recognition	Strong pull / inbound applicants
INTERNAL CAPABILITY	No hiring structure	Some process, inconsistent	Strong hiring managers + process

Scoring Note: Add up your scores across all 5 categories. Total range: 5-25 points. Use only the values 1, 3, or 5 for each category (no in-between scores for clarity and simplicity).

# YOUR SCORE: WHAT IT MEANS

## 5-11 POINTS

### OUTSOURCE FULL HIRING

- Use recruitment agencies for all hiring
- Pay per placement (20-25% of first-year salary)
- Best for: Startups, irregular hiring, niche roles
- Internal HR keeps focus on retention & culture
- Cost: \$3K-25K per placement depending on role

## 12-18 POINTS

### HYBRID APPROACH

- Build small internal team (1 junior TA)
- Agencies handle senior/specialised roles
- Best for: Growing companies 20-50 hires/year
- Cost efficiency: 30-40% savings vs full outsource
- Balance between control & flexibility

## 19-25 POINTS

### BUILD INTERNAL TA TEAM

- Full-time recruitment staff (1-2+ recruiters)
- Agencies for overflow & specialised needs only
- Best for: Scaling teams 50+ hires/year
- Builds employer brand & proprietary pipelines
- Cost per hire drops below \$8K at scale

**Note: This is a guide, not a rigid prescription. Adjust based on your specific context and growth plans. Review your score annually as your company evolves.**

# WHEN INTERNAL TA MAKES STRATEGIC SENSE

## HIRING AT SCALE

You're hiring 50+ people annually with predictable demand

## EMPLOYER BRAND

Your employer brand needs dedicated nurturing and candidate experience

## TIGHT COMPETITION

You're competing for talent in tight markets (tech, finance, healthcare)

## COST EFFICIENCY

Cost per hire drops below \$8K with internal team at scale

## PROPRIETARY INTELLIGENCE

You need proprietary talent intelligence and pipeline ownership

# WHEN OUTSOURCING DELIVERS BETTER ROI

## HIRING VOLUME <20/YEAR

Limited recruitment frequency makes internal expertise difficult to justify

## NICHE EXPERTISE REQUIRED

C-suite, deep tech, and regional roles require specialised knowledge and extensive networks

## SPEED IS CRITICAL

When time-to-hire is critical, outsourcing delivers faster results than internal processes

## LIMITED HR BANDWIDTH

Outsourcing frees internal resources to focus on retention and employee development

## PRE-SERIES A BUDGET

Outsourcing eliminates fixed staffing costs while maintaining recruitment flexibility

# THE HYBRID MODEL: GETTING THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

## INTERNAL TA OWNS

High-volume roles,  
graduate programs,  
employer branding,  
ATS/process

## AGENCIES HANDLE

Senior hires,  
specialised skills,  
market mapping,  
overflow capacity

## COST SWEET SPOT

30-40% lower than  
full outsource, more  
flexible than pure  
internal

## KEY SUCCESS

Requires clear RACI  
and partner selection  
discipline



# COST CALCULATOR: SIMPLE MODEL FOR YOUR PLANNING

## INTERNAL TA ANNUAL COST

**\$145K-225K total | \$7K-15K per hire**

Build an in-house talent acquisition team with experienced recruiters, tools, and training. Fixed annual investment with lower per-hire cost at higher volumes.

## AGENCY COST MODEL

**20-25% of first-year salary per hire**

Work with external recruiters on a per-placement basis. Ideal for low-volume hiring without upfront investment or team overhead.

## BREAKEVEN ANALYSIS

**Internal cheaper at 15-20 hires/year**

At higher hiring volumes, internal TA teams deliver significant cost savings compared to agency fees. Scale matters.

# REAL COST COMPARISON: THE NUMBERS THAT MATTER

INTERNAL TA	AGENCY	HYBRID
\$135K-195K annual	Variable cost	\$150K-220K annual
\$8K-15K per hire	20-25% of first-year salary	\$6K-12K per hire depending on mix



# FIVE MISTAKES THAT WASTE TIME AND MONEY



## HIRING JUNIOR TA TOO EARLY

Bringing on junior talent acquisition staff before reaching 30+ hires per year threshold creates inefficiency and wasted overhead when recruitment volume doesn't justify the expense.



## USING 5+ AGENCIES WITHOUT COORDINATION

Managing multiple recruitment agencies without a centralised coordination system leads to candidate overlap, redundant outreach, scheduling conflicts, and inflated costs.



## BUILDING TA WITHOUT TECH STACK OR PROCESS

Establishing a talent acquisition function without foundational systems, tools, and documented workflows results in inefficiency, inconsistent hiring quality, and team frustration.



## EXPECTING AGENCIES TO BUILD EMPLOYER BRAND

Relying solely on external recruitment agencies to develop and communicate your company's employer brand dilutes brand messaging and shifts responsibility away from internal ownership.



## SWITCHING MODELS MID-YEAR WITHOUT PLANNING

Changing recruitment strategies, agency partnerships, or staffing models mid-year without proper transition planning creates gaps in hiring pipeline, candidate experience disruptions, and lost momentum.

# YOUR 30-DAY ACTION PLAN: WHAT TO DO NEXT

WEEK 1 Scoring & Forecast	WEEK 2 Audit & Pain Points	WEEK 3 Plan or RFP	WEEK 4 Pilot & Review
Complete decision framework and forecast 12-month hiring needs	Audit current costs and identify pain points with stakeholders	If building TA - draft role spec;  If outsourcing - RFP 3-5 agencies	Run pilot with chosen model and set 90-day review checkpoint

## MEASURABLE KPIS

Time-to-hire

Cost-per-hire

Quality-of-hire

Hiring manager satisfaction

# FINAL SUMMARY: MAKE THE RIGHT CALL FOR YOUR STAGE

## NO UNIVERSAL ANSWER

The right model matches your volume, budget, and growth stage

## USE THE SCORING FRAMEWORK

Remove guesswork and align leadership with data-driven insights

## HYBRID BY YEAR 2-3

Most companies benefit from hybrid approach by Year 2-3 of scaling

## EVERY STAGE SUPPORTED

Intuitive TA partners with you from pure strategy to full TA buildout

## NEXT STEP

Book a 30-minute diagnostic call to stress-test your decision  
Reach out to **Justine Bower** at [justine@intuitiverecruit.com](mailto:justine@intuitiverecruit.com)