

THE 2026 EDITION · GOHIRE PRESS

The Recruiting AI Adoption Playbook

A step-by-step how-to for TA leaders building real adoption — not just buying tools. Field-tested by 15 GoHire Talks guests and grounded in the AI COEE framework.

AUTHOR	EDITION	LENGTH	FEATURED GUESTS
Jonathan Duarte Founder & CEO, GoHire	2026 · v2.0	13 chapters · ~75 min read	15 from GoHire Talks

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Why I Wrote This Playbook

After two decades building enterprise conversational AI — and a year of recording GoHire Talks with the practitioners actually doing this work — the same pattern keeps surfacing: the technology is the easy part.

I've been building the technology behind recruiting for 28 years. Job posting engines. Search. SEO. Conversational AI. Text recruiting. Automated interview scheduling. The stack has changed a dozen times. But the gap between deploying a tool and actually adopting it has never narrowed.

In enterprise settings, I led conversational AI implementations at Wells Fargo and Kaiser Permanente — two of the largest, most regulated, most operationally complex organizations in the United States. Those projects taught me something the vendor pitch deck never shows you: the technology delivers maybe 20% of the outcome. The other 80% is people, process, policy, and patience. The wins came when we treated conversational AI as a change management program that happened to involve software — not the other way around.

FROM JONATHAN'S PLAYBOOK

What the enterprise rollouts taught me

At both Wells Fargo and Kaiser, the projects that scaled were the ones where IT, Compliance, the business unit, and the frontline operator were aligned *before* the first user ever touched the system. The projects that stalled were the ones where someone bought a tool first and tried to retrofit the org around it. That's the lesson that became the AI COEE in this playbook.

Why a playbook, not a research report

The first edition of this playbook was a research synthesis. It compiled what Gallup, McKinsey, SHRM, Deloitte, and HBR had to say about AI adoption. It was thorough. It was correct. It was also, honestly, too dense to be useful at 9 AM on a Monday when a Director of TA is trying to figure out what to do this week.

So I rewrote it. This edition is a **how-to**. Every chapter answers a question you can act on inside of 72 hours. Every framework is grounded in someone who has actually done the work — most of them guests of GoHire Talks, the podcast I host. You'll meet Kristina Tsys, who led AI adoption across 10 brands at Fortive. Brian Fink, who's redesigning the entire HR tech stack. Keirsten Greggs, on the bias problem nobody wants to talk about. Bob Pulver, on governance. Jeff Pole, on vendor due diligence. Patrick Lindsley, on the day-to-day workflows. Twelve more.

Their quotes appear throughout — not as decoration, but as *evidence*. The patterns are remarkably consistent. The teams that succeed do the same handful of things in the same order. The teams that stall skip steps. This playbook lays out that order.

What you'll find in here

The book is structured as a phased roadmap with the **AI COEE** — the Center of Excellence *and* Execution — as the backbone. The AI COEE is the construct I've developed to solve the problem I kept watching every enterprise hit: AI governance gets buried in IT, training gets dumped on HR, vendor management lives somewhere in procurement, and nobody owns the outcome. The AI COEE consolidates all of that under one cross-functional team reporting directly to the CEO. I'll walk you through exactly what it is, who staffs it, and what it produces in Chapter 3.

From there, eight phases. Assess. Charter the AI COEE. Get executive buy-in. Pilot. Deploy. Train. Govern. Scale. Each one with the tactical detail of someone who's done it, the pull-quote from the guest who lived it, and the pitfalls I watched derail enterprise programs.

This is not a vendor pitch. GoHire is mentioned where it's directly relevant — text recruiting is one of the most mature AI-augmented workflows in TA, and we built our platform for it — but the framework is platform-agnostic. Whether you're standardizing on Microsoft Copilot like Fortive, or going stackless with Claude like Brian Fink, or running a high-volume retail program on SMS, the same eight phases apply.

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

You can start anywhere — but I'd start here

If you're new to AI in recruiting, read straight through. If you're already deploying, skim Chapter 2, jump to Chapter 3 for the AI COEE construct, then go to whichever phase reflects where you're stuck. The Guest Directory in Chapter 12 is the index — every guest, every episode, every link, in one place.

I wrote this for the TA leader who's tired of demos and ready to deploy. Whether you read it cover-to-cover or use it as a reference, my hope is the same: that you finish with a plan you can hand to your CEO on Monday, and a list of three things you'll have shipped by Friday.

Let's get to work.

— *Jonathan Duarte*

Founder & CEO, GoHire · Host, GoHire Talks · 2026

The State of AI in Recruiting — 2026

Individual recruiters are getting faster. Organizations are not getting better. That gap — between deploying AI and adopting it — is the entire challenge.

Three statistics tell the whole story.

First: 65% of workers in organizations that have deployed AI report a positive personal productivity impact. Real time savings. Real workflow improvements. Real enthusiasm at the individual contributor level.

Second: 89% of business leaders report *no measurable organizational impact* on productivity from those same AI investments. Cost-per-hire is up. Time-to-fill is up. The metrics aren't moving — even as the tools proliferate.

Third: only 1% of C-suite executives describe their AI rollouts as "mature." Eight percent are nascent. Thirty-nine percent are emerging. Most of the industry is still figuring this out.

That's the productivity paradox. And it's not a technology problem.

The trust gap is the recruiting crisis

SHRM's 2026 data lays it bare: 87% of C-suite executives use AI at work. Only 27% of employees do. Mandatory AI tracking is damaging trust between managers and employees more than any recent workplace change. Recruiters are caught in the middle — handed AI tools by leadership while being asked to evaluate candidates who are also using AI to flood the funnel.

“ If your AI was trained on your last ten years of hires, and those hires weren't diverse, congratulations — you've automated your bias.

Keirsten Greggs · Founder, Trap Recruiter

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Patrick Lindsley described the candidate side of this arms race in plain numbers: one of his recent reqs drew 700 applicants. After AI-assisted triage, 4 were a real fit. The volume is up. The signal is the same. The trust gap widens with every cycle.

The manager problem is your recruiting problem

Gallup's most under-discussed finding from 2026: manager engagement has dropped 9 points since 2022. Managers are now only as engaged as the people they lead — after historically being more engaged. And managers are the single most important lever for AI adoption.

Fewer than one-third of U.S. employees report receiving active managerial support for AI use. Yet employees who do have manager support are **98.7 times more likely** to say AI has transformed their work. That's not a typo. Manager support is the variable that makes everything else possible.

FROM JONATHAN'S PLAYBOOK

Why this maps directly to enterprise conversational AI

When we rolled out IVR and conversational systems at Wells Fargo and Kaiser, the deployments that succeeded had a manager-of-managers as the named owner. Not a project manager. A leader whose performance review included adoption metrics. The deployments that stalled were the ones where the project sponsor was a VP who got reassigned three months in. The pattern in TA is identical. Pick the manager who owns this *before* you pick the tool.

The volume problem won't solve itself

Resume volume is up because applicants now have CRM-like AI tools that auto-tailor and auto-submit. Recruiters get more applications and fewer fits per application. The recruiter response — using AI to screen at scale — accelerates the same problem. SHRM calls it an arms race. Nobody wins.

“ We're not really getting to a point where we've sacrificed quality over quantity. Look at the funnel — how many of those are really qualified? And by the way, how many of those are essentially the same resume?

Keirsten Greggs · Founder, Trap Recruiter

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What's actually working

The good news: there *is* a pattern of success. Across every conversation I've had on GoHire Talks, the teams that are getting real ROI from AI share four characteristics:

- **They treat adoption as change management**, not software installation. They survey sentiment, identify champions, and meet people where they are.
- **They build governance before they buy tools**. An AI policy, a bias audit cadence, a vendor due diligence framework — set up before, not after.
- **They deploy in sequence**: AI-Assisted (drafting, summarizing) before AI-Augmented (scoring, ranking) before AI-Powered (multi-agent workflows). Skip a stage and trust collapses.
- **They tie AI initiatives to business outcomes** — time-to-fill, candidate experience, cost-per-hire — not vanity metrics like "tool adoption rate."

That four-part pattern is what the next eleven chapters operationalize. Starting with the construct that makes all four possible: the AI COEE.

Introducing the AI COEE

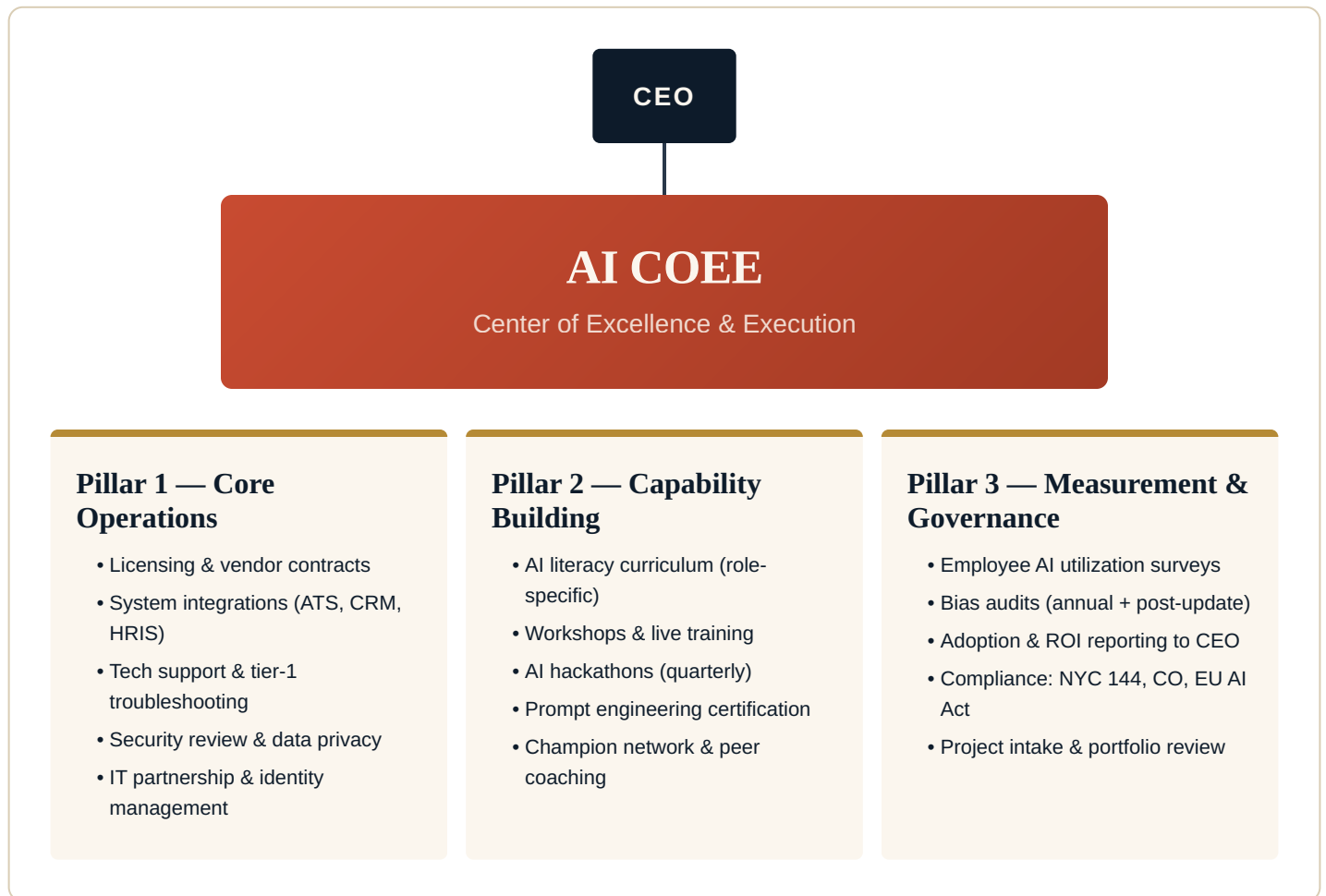
Center of Excellence *and* Execution. The construct that consolidates governance, capability-building, and measurement under one cross-functional team — reporting directly to the CEO.

The AI Center of Excellence is a familiar concept. Most large enterprises have one, or are building one. The problem is that traditional Centers of Excellence are advisory: they publish guidance, they review proposals, they get cc'd on rollouts. They don't actually *execute*.

The AI COEE — Center of Excellence *and* Execution — is the construct I've been developing to fix that gap. It's not just a policy body. It's the operating unit that holds the AI program together end-to-end: governance, training, vendor management, integration, measurement, and continuous improvement. It reports to the CEO, not buried two levels deep in HR or IT, because AI cuts across both — and because the consequences of getting it wrong (compliance exposure, candidate experience damage, productivity loss) sit at the CEO level.

This chapter explains what the AI COEE is, who staffs it, and what it produces. The rest of the playbook is the playbook the AI COEE actually runs.

What the AI COEE is



Who staffs the AI COEE

The AI COEE is a small, senior, cross-functional team. Not a department of 30. A working group of 5–9 people with executive-level authority and dedicated capacity. The composition I recommend:

- **AI COEE Lead** — full-time, reports to CEO. The single accountable owner. Typically someone with enterprise tech program experience.
- **VP/Director, IT or CTO designee** — owns integrations, security, licensing.
- **VP/Director, HR or CHRO designee** — owns employee-facing policy and change management.
- **Head of Recruiting or VP TA** — owns the TA use cases, KPIs, and rollout sequence.
- **Legal / Compliance** — owns vendor due diligence, candidate disclosures, AI Act readiness.
- **Frontline operator** — a recruiter or HR business partner who actually uses the tools. Rotates every 12 months.

- **Data / Analytics partner** — owns the measurement framework.
- **Communications partner** — owns the narrative, internal change comms, and CEO updates.

FROM JONATHAN'S PLAYBOOK

Why the frontline seat matters

In every enterprise rollout I've led, the single most useful person in the room was the line operator. At Kaiser, it was a nurse triage manager. At Wells Fargo, it was a contact center supervisor. They could veto a workflow change in 30 seconds that would have taken Legal three weeks to identify. Build the seat in. Make it rotate so it stays close to the work.

What the AI COEE produces

The AI COEE is judged on outputs, not meetings. The core deliverables on a 12-month cycle:

Quarterly

- CEO-level adoption & ROI dashboard (one page, five metrics)
- Vendor portfolio review (active contracts, renewals, retirements)
- One AI hackathon (cross-functional, problem-led)
- Risk & incident report (anything candidate-facing or compliance-relevant)

Semi-annually

- Employee AI utilization survey (org-wide, anonymous)
- AI literacy curriculum refresh
- Bias audit on all candidate-facing screening tools

Annually

- AI policy refresh (principle-based, not tool-specific)
- Workshop / training calendar for the next year
- Compliance posture review (NYC, CO, EU, applicable state laws)
- Board-level state-of-AI presentation

Why "and Execution" matters

The most common failure mode of a traditional Center of Excellence is that it becomes a governance bottleneck without owning execution. Teams either route around it (shadow IT) or get stuck waiting for approvals. The AI COEE solves this by holding the budget, the licenses, and the integration partnerships itself. When a recruiting team needs a new AI sourcing tool, they don't write a memo and wait — they bring the use case to the AI COEE intake, and the AI COEE either ships it or runs the pilot inside its own portfolio.

That changes the dynamic. The AI COEE becomes the place teams want to go, not the place they avoid. And because it has CEO-level air cover, it can make decisions at speed.

“

A great AI recruiting tool in a disconnected stack is like a race car engine bolted to a station wagon.

Jim Griffin · HR Tech Integration Strategist, Partner Science

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The AI COEE is what gets the rest of the chassis underneath the engine. Without it, even the best individual AI deployments will hit a ceiling. With it, you have the scaffolding to scale.

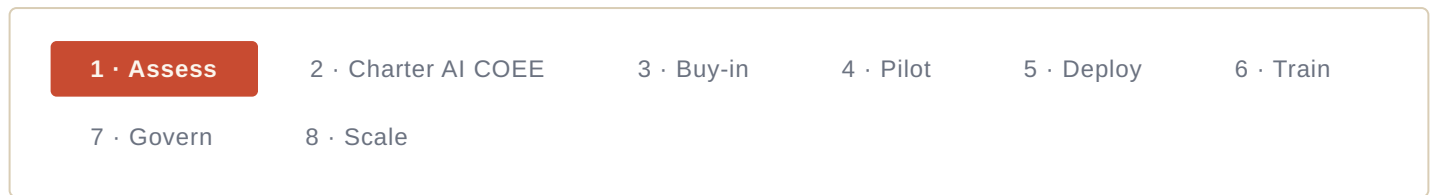
How the AI COEE shows up in the rest of this book

Every phase from here forward names the AI COEE explicitly. Phase 1 (Assess) is the AI COEE's first deliverable. Phase 2 is the AI COEE charter itself. Phases 3 through 8 are the AI COEE's operating cadence. Think of this book as the AI COEE's first-year operating plan, told in eight chapters.

Let's start with what the AI COEE does on Day 1.

Assess — Sentiment, Baseline, Stack Audit

Before you deploy anything, find out where your team actually is. Most AI rollouts fail because they skip the assessment phase and dump a tool on a team that wasn't ready for it.



Kristina Tsys leads AI implementation across a 15-person talent acquisition team at Fortive, hiring for 10 different companies. She had every reason to move fast. Instead, she stopped and surveyed her team.

“ This has actually turned out to be the whole change management process — because some people are familiar with AI, they use AI for a number of years. But some people they just start exploring, and it can be some resistance.

Kristina Tsys · Technical & Engineering Recruiter, Fortive

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What she found was wildly uneven adoption. Some recruiters used AI daily. Some had only used ChatGPT for personal tasks. A few hadn't touched it. That data — not a vendor demo — became the starting point for everything that followed.

What Phase 1 produces

By the end of Phase 1, the AI COEE should have three artifacts in hand. Each one is a deliverable, not a deck.

1. The AI Sentiment & Usage Survey

Anonymous, org-wide, takes 5 minutes to complete. Run it before any tool decision. The survey has to capture four things:

- **Current usage** — what AI tools (personal and work) does each person already use, and how often?
- **Comfort level** — on a 1–5 scale, how comfortable are they with AI-assisted tasks in their specific role?
- **Concerns** — open text. What worries them about AI in their job? About being evaluated by AI? About what AI might do to their career?
- **Use case priorities** — which of their current tasks would they *most* like AI to help with? This is gold — it tells you where adoption will be easiest.

Map results against McKinsey's four archetypes — Zoomers, Bloomers, Gloomers, Doomers — and you have your adoption strategy by population segment.

2. The Workflow Map

Matt Neylon put this principle in a single sentence: *"You can't automate what you can't write down."* Before you evaluate any tool, map the actual workflow you're trying to improve. Sticky notes. Whiteboard. Whatever. But document the steps, the handoffs, the decisions, and the friction points.

“ Document what's burning out your team — then automate that. Before you automate anything, understand the process well enough to know if it's worth automating. Automating a broken process just breaks things faster.

Matthew Neylon · HR Leader, The Mount Vernon School

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Recruiting workflows worth mapping for AI candidates in Phase 1:

- Intake meeting → job description finalization
- Sourcing → outreach → reply triage
- Application review → screening → shortlist
- Interview scheduling → coordination → follow-up
- Offer → onboarding handoff

For each workflow, document: who owns each step, how long it takes, where the friction is, and what's already partially automated. The friction points are your candidate AI use cases.

3. The Stack Audit

Most TA orgs already have AI capabilities buried in tools they're underutilizing. Before you buy anything new, audit what you have. Most ATSes shipped AI features in the last 18 months. Most CRMs have AI scoring. Most calendar tools have AI scheduling. The AI COEE's first procurement decision is often: *turn on what's already paid for*.

Inventory in two columns: *AI capability available in current stack*, and *actual usage rate today*. Anything in the first column that's at zero or near-zero usage is your fastest win.

PRO TIP

Capture the baseline metrics before anything else

You cannot prove ROI without a starting point. Lock in your time-to-fill, time-to-slate, cost-per-hire, recruiter-hours-per-hire, and offer acceptance rate at the start of Phase 1. If you start measuring after a tool is deployed, you've lost the comparison.

The two-week Phase 1 sprint

This phase shouldn't take more than two weeks. The AI COEE moves quickly here because the entire program depends on the data this phase produces.

- **Day 1–2:** AI COEE Lead drafts the sentiment survey. CHRO partner reviews and approves.
- **Day 3–5:** Survey opens. Communicate the why. Hit a 60%+ response rate.
- **Day 6–9:** Workflow mapping sessions with 2–3 recruiting teams (different segments — high-volume, exec, technical, etc.).
- **Day 8–10:** IT-owned stack audit. Pull seat utilization data from every license holder.
- **Day 11–14:** AI COEE synthesizes. Outputs a one-page "State of Adoption" report to the CEO. This is the artifact you'll measure against at the 6-month and 12-month marks.

Common Phase 1 mistakes

DO

- Survey anonymously — you want honest data, not safe data
- Include hiring managers, not just recruiters
- Capture baseline metrics in the same document as the sentiment results
- Share the survey results with the org before the next phase begins

DON'T

- Skip the survey because "we already know what people think"
- Audit only one tool category — audit everything
- Treat Phase 1 as a milestone you complete and forget — re-run the survey every 6 months
- Let Phase 1 stretch past 3 weeks — momentum matters

Once you have the data, the AI COEE has its mandate. Phase 2 is where you formalize the team and its operating model.

Charter the AI COEE

Phase 1 told you where you are. Phase 2 builds the team that will get you where you need to go — and the operating model that keeps governance and execution under one roof.

1 · Assess

2 · Charter AI COEE

3 · Buy-in

4 · Pilot

5 · Deploy

6 · Train

7 · Govern

8 · Scale

The charter is the document that gives the AI COEE its authority. It names the team, defines the scope, sets the cadence, and most importantly, establishes the reporting line to the CEO. Without that final piece, the AI COEE is just another committee.

The charter has six sections

1. Mandate

One paragraph. What does the AI COEE exist to do, and what does it explicitly not do? Mine looks like this:

"The AI Center of Excellence and Execution is the cross-functional team accountable for the responsible adoption, governance, and measurable outcomes of artificial intelligence across [Company]. The AI COEE owns AI policy, vendor selection, integration architecture, workforce training, and adoption measurement. It does not replace functional ownership of specific AI use cases — those remain with the business units. It serves as the central authority, the central capability builder, and the central reporting line for AI."

2. Composition & roles

Name the seats. (See Chapter 3.) For each seat, define: full-time vs. part-time, decision rights, and time commitment. The AI COEE Lead is full-time. Everyone else is typically 20–40% of capacity. Total commitment across the team is usually 2–3 FTEs, not 8.

3. Decision rights

This is where most COE charters fail — they don't say who can decide what. Be explicit:

- **AI COEE decides:** AI policy, vendor approval, tool selection above \$25K, integration architecture, training curriculum, audit cadence.
- **Functional teams decide:** Which approved tools to deploy in their workflow, day-to-day usage, configuration.
- **CEO approves:** Annual budget, policy changes that affect candidates or employees, public disclosures.

4. Cadence

Weekly working sessions for the AI COEE Lead and core staff. Bi-weekly full AI COEE meetings. Monthly readouts to executive leadership. Quarterly board-level reports. Annual policy refresh. This is the rhythm. It should be on every member's calendar before Phase 2 ends.

5. Budget & portfolio authority

The AI COEE holds budget for: AI tooling above the per-seat license threshold, training, vendor due diligence, third-party audits, and external consulting. This is what separates the AI COEE from an advisory body. When the recruiting team needs a new sourcing tool, the AI COEE writes the check.

6. Success metrics

The AI COEE itself is measured. Set targets for Year 1 in five categories:

- **Adoption** — % of recruiters actively using approved AI tools (target: 80%+ within 12 months)
- **Productivity** — measurable hours saved per recruiter per week (target: 5+)
- **Quality** — time-to-fill and offer acceptance rate vs. baseline
- **Risk** — zero compliance incidents; 100% of candidate-facing tools bias-audited annually
- **Capability** — % of recruiters who complete AI literacy certification (target: 100% within 6 months)

FROM JONATHAN'S PLAYBOOK

The CEO reporting line is non-negotiable

In every enterprise rollout I've watched succeed, the AI program leader had a direct line to the CEO. In every one I watched stall, the program leader reported up through a function head whose own priorities competed with the AI program. At Wells Fargo and Kaiser, the equivalent programs lived inside business technology — and even then, the successful ones had a steering committee with C-level air cover. Don't compromise on this. If your CEO won't sponsor the AI COEE, you're not ready to scale AI.

The IT partnership is half the AI COEE

One of the most common failure modes is treating AI as an "HR thing" or a "recruiting thing." It isn't. AI cuts across identity management, data security, licensing, integration architecture, and incident response — all of which sit in IT. The AI COEE charter has to name IT as a co-owner from Day 1.

What the IT seat owns inside the AI COEE:

- Single-sign-on and identity for all AI tools
- Data residency and privacy posture (especially for tools that touch candidate data)
- Integration architecture — how AI tools connect to ATS, CRM, HRIS, calendar, email
- License consolidation and seat utilization audits
- Tier-1 tech support for end users
- Vendor security review

“

I don't know if CTOs are listening to this conversation, but they need to be aware of it — because in many instances, technology is being purchased that the CTO is left out of the conversation, and it's driven by the heads of recruiting.

Brian Fink · Managing Partner, The Rework Group

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The first deliverable: a one-page operating model

Before the AI COEE moves on to Phase 3, it should publish a one-page document — for the org, not just the executive team. The page answers six questions:

- Who is on the AI COEE? (Names, photos, faces — make it real.)
- What does the AI COEE do?
- How do I submit an AI use case for AI COEE review?
- How do I get trained?
- How do I report a concern or an incident?
- Where do I find the current list of approved AI tools?

Publish it on the intranet. Pin it in Slack or Teams. Print it. The visibility is the message: this team is real, it has authority, and it's the place to go.

WATCH OUT

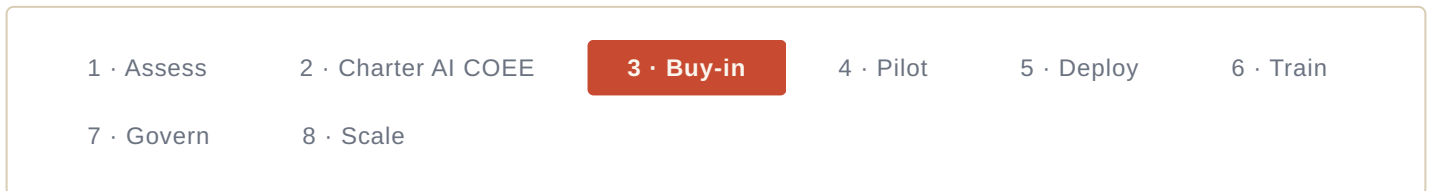
If you build the AI COEE without authority, it dies inside 90 days

The first time someone bypasses the AI COEE with no consequences, the program is over. The CEO has to back the AI COEE publicly the first time someone tries to deploy a tool outside the process. That moment is the test. Plan for it.

Phase 2 is short — usually 2–3 weeks. The charter is approved, the team is named, the operating model is published. Now the AI COEE goes to the executive team to lock in the business case.

Executive Buy-In & Business Case

The CEO doesn't need to be sold on AI. They need to be sold on your specific plan. Frame it as outcomes — time, money, risk, talent — not features.



Kristina Tsys didn't ask Fortive leadership for a tool. She asked them for outcomes. Time saved. Efficiency improved. Better hiring decisions. The tool came after.

“ My point was not just to bring the tool and to tell you we will do this and this — but also about the benefits we'll get from this, how much time we'll save and how much the efficiency will go up. Maybe we'll need to dedicate some time to learn about AI tools, but then down the road it'll save us so much time, it'll make us more strategic, and the outcome will be better hiring decisions.

Kristina Tsys · Technical & Engineering Recruiter, Fortive

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This is the universal frame. You bring a hypothesis. You define the problems. You quantify the potential impact. You don't need perfect data — you need a compelling case that better is possible. Then you ask for the runway to prove it.

The four-slide business case

Keep it short. CEOs don't read 40-slide decks anymore — and shouldn't have to. Four slides that the AI COEE can present in 20 minutes.

Slide 1 — The cost of the status quo

Pull from your Phase 1 baseline. What is the current cost-per-hire? Current time-to-fill? Hours per requisition? Recruiter capacity? Compare to industry benchmarks (SHRM's data is the standard reference). Make the gap visible. If your cost-per-hire is \$4,700 and the industry median is \$3,500, the delta is the budget for the AI COEE.

Slide 2 — The opportunity, quantified

Three numbers: hours saved per recruiter per week (from comparable case studies — Patrick Lindsley's data is a useful benchmark — 2–3 hours up to 10), cost-per-hire reduction (15–25% is realistic at maturity), and risk avoidance (the EU AI Act penalties are 4x GDPR, which is itself a real line item for global employers).

“ I just took you from \$800,000 in spend to \$40,000 in spend.

Brian Fink · Managing Partner, The Rework Group

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Brian Fink's stackless framing is a useful provocation for any CEO conversation. You don't have to commit to ripping out your entire HR tech stack — but the question "what could we consolidate?" almost always surfaces six-figure savings. That number lives on Slide 2.

Slide 3 — The plan (one image)

The eight-phase roadmap on one slide. With the AI COEE at the center. You're not asking for a blank check — you're asking for sponsorship of a structured program with measurable milestones.

Slide 4 — The ask

Be specific. Three things:

- **Budget** — Year 1 budget broken down across tooling, training, compliance, and one-time costs. A realistic Year 1 number for a 200–500 recruiter org is in the \$200K–\$600K range, with \$50K–\$150K of that as one-time implementation.
- **Headcount** — the AI COEE Lead seat. (And confirm the part-time commitments from CHRO, CTO, Head of TA, Legal.)
- **Air cover** — public CEO sponsorship of the AI COEE, written into the annual operating plan, with the CEO referencing it in all-hands communications.

The objections you'll hear

Three objections show up in every executive review. Have answers ready.

"Aren't we already doing this?"

Probably not. Your Phase 1 audit will show that AI tools are being adopted ad-hoc, that bias audits aren't happening systematically, and that governance is split across three or four functions. Bring the data. The objection collapses.

"This sounds expensive — what's the ROI?"

The simplest answer: cost-per-hire reduction alone usually covers the AI COEE budget. For a 1,000-hire-per-year org, a 15% reduction in cost-per-hire from \$4,500 baseline is \$675K — more than the AI COEE Year 1 cost in most cases. Compliance risk avoidance is a separate line. And recruiter capacity unlocked is the third.

"Why a new team — can't HR or IT just own this?"

Because both have tried, and the data says it didn't work. AI rollouts owned by HR alone tend to lack technical depth and integration discipline. AI rollouts owned by IT alone tend to deploy tools that frontline users won't adopt. The AI COEE is the construct that holds both accountable to a single outcome.

FROM JONATHAN'S PLAYBOOK

How I framed it at the enterprise scale

When I was building conversational AI for major financial services and healthcare environments, the most powerful frame I found was risk-adjusted ROI. Yes, there are productivity gains. Yes, there are cost takedowns. But there's also regulatory exposure — and the cost of *not* deploying AI governance is now greater than the cost of deploying it. CFOs and General Counsels respond to that frame. Use it.

What "yes" looks like

A successful Phase 3 ends with three things in writing:

- An approved budget and headcount

- The AI COEE charter signed by the CEO
- A scheduled all-hands or company-wide communication where the CEO publicly launches the program

That last item matters more than the first two. The all-hands message — even a 2-minute mention in a regular CEO update — converts the AI COEE from an internal initiative into an organizational priority. Make it part of the ask.

With executive sponsorship locked in, the AI COEE moves from planning to action. Phase 4 is where the first deployment happens — and where you learn whether the framework holds up under contact with reality.

Pilot the Seed Problem

Don't try to transform your entire workflow on day one. Find one personal pain point. Build one agent. Let the first success compound into the next.

1 · Assess

2 · Charter AI COEE

3 · Buy-in

4 · Pilot

5 · Deploy

6 · Train

7 · Govern

8 · Scale

This is the most important chapter for getting momentum right. When I asked Kristina Tsys how she got Fortive's AI program moving, she didn't describe a roadmap. She described a problem.

“ I started with my own challenge — I'm hiring across 10 different companies. Each company, different product, different solutions, different onboarding process, different background check. Every time I have a hire and I need to finalize it... previously, I had to go through multiple documents and pull out information while I'm on the phone. So my first agent was the onboarding agent.

Kristina Tsys · Technical & Engineering Recruiter, Fortive

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One agent. One personal frustration. One concrete time savings. Then the next agent came easier. And the next. The model Kristina described — and the one I've watched work over and over in enterprise rollouts — is the **seed problem**. Find the seed. Plant it. Watch it grow.

What makes a good seed problem

Not every workflow is a good first candidate. The best seed problems share five characteristics:

- **It's personal.** The pilot owner experiences the pain daily. Their motivation is real, not theoretical.
- **It's bounded.** The workflow is narrow enough that an MVP can ship in 2–4 weeks.

- **It's measurable.** Time saved per use, frequency per week, accuracy improvement — you can quantify it.
- **It's low-risk.** No candidate-facing decisions. No compliance exposure. If the agent gets it wrong, the cost is a few minutes of re-work, not a discrimination lawsuit.
- **It's repeatable.** Other team members face the same friction, so once it works, it spreads.

The seed problem menu

From every TA team I've talked to, these are the highest-yielding seed problems — the ones that almost always work as a first pilot:

Intake notes agent

Captures and structures notes from hiring manager intake conversations and candidate screens. Lets the recruiter stay present in the conversation. Kristina's team built this early. It's a near-universal win.

Onboarding info agent

An indexed assistant that holds every onboarding document, policy, and benefits doc and answers questions while the recruiter is on the phone. Especially valuable for multi-entity orgs.

Daily inbox / calendar agent

Summarizes inbox activity at the start of the day. Surfaces what's urgent vs. what can wait. Outlines the day's calendar with context. Kristina described this as "getting your personal assistant that is available 24/7."

JD drafting agent

Takes raw role information, prior-version JDs, and the hiring manager's intake notes and produces a structured, skills-based job description. Recruiter edits, manager approves. From 90 minutes to 15.

Sourcing brief agent

Given a JD and a market, produces a sourcing brief: target companies, search strings, market context, salary benchmarks. Patrick Lindsley moved from 2–3 hours of quality sourcing per week to nearly 10 with a workflow like this.



The recruiters winning with AI are using it to move faster so their judgment gets applied to decisions that actually matter.

Patrick Lindsley · Recruiting Operations Director

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The 4-week pilot protocol

Tight timeline. Tight scope. Tight measurement.

Week 1 — Define

- Pick the seed problem and the pilot owner
- Document the current workflow (Matt Neylon's rule — "you can't automate what you can't write down")
- Baseline the time, frequency, and accuracy
- Identify the tool — for most orgs, this is the AI you already have a license for (Copilot, ChatGPT Enterprise, Claude for Work)

Week 2 — Build

- Construct the agent or workflow inside the chosen tool
- Test against 5–10 real cases
- Iterate prompts and instructions until the output is consistently usable

Week 3 — Use

- Pilot owner uses the agent for every applicable case for a full week
- Log time saved, errors caught, friction encountered
- One mid-week check-in with the AI COEE to surface blockers

Week 4 — Share

- Pilot owner presents to the broader team — live demo, real data, real lessons
- AI COEE captures the agent design as a reusable template
- Decision: graduate to broader deployment (Phase 5), iterate, or kill

PRO TIP

Pick the pilot owner carefully

The first pilot should run with someone who is genuinely curious and has credibility with peers. Not the loudest skeptic. Not the most senior. The person whose endorsement will move others. Brian Fink's "curious, empathetic, tenacious, mischievous" recruiter profile is the archetype.

Common pilot failures

DO

- Start with one workflow, one tool, one person
- Measure baseline before, measure outcome after
- Document the prompt or agent design as a template
- Demo live to the team — don't email a deck

DON'T

- Pick a candidate-facing workflow as your first pilot
- Try to pilot 5 things at once
- Skip the baseline so you can't prove the improvement
- Let the pilot drag past 5 weeks

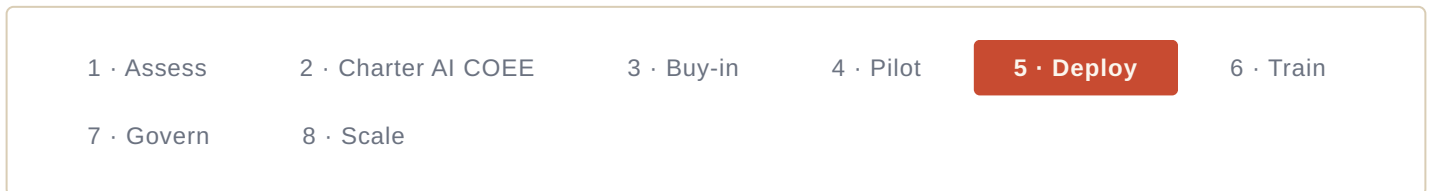
The compounding effect

The reason the seed-problem approach works isn't just psychological — though confidence does compound. It's structural. Each agent built creates a template. Templates accelerate the next build. Patterns emerge that the AI COEE can document and share. By the time you have three working pilots in three different recruiting roles, you've also built the institutional knowledge to deploy a fourth in days, not weeks.

That's how you go from one agent to a portfolio. And that's where Phase 5 takes us — the structured deployment from AI-Assisted to AI-Augmented to AI-Powered workflows.

Deploy in Three Stages

AI-Assisted, then AI-Augmented, then AI-Powered. The order is not arbitrary — it's the trust sequence. Skip a stage and the deployment collapses.



Deloitte's three-stage TA model — AI-Assisted, AI-Augmented, AI-Powered — is the right framing for deployment sequencing. The mistake most teams make is treating the stages as a menu instead of a sequence. They jump from Assisted directly to Powered (autonomous, multi-agent workflows) and watch trust evaporate.

The trust sequence is the rule: *Stage 3 tools require Stage 1 trust to be built first.* Here's what each stage means and what to deploy at each level.

Stage 1 — AI-Assisted

Tools that help a human do their existing work faster. The human stays in the driver's seat. AI is a co-pilot, never an autopilot. This is where every team should start, regardless of how mature their AI program eventually becomes.

What to deploy in Stage 1:

- **Job description drafting** (from intake notes, prior versions, skills frameworks)
- **Candidate outreach copy** (personalized InMail, email sequences, SMS templates)
- **Interview question generation** (role-specific, structured, behavioral)
- **Intake meeting and screen note-taking**
- **Resume summarization** (with the human reviewing every output)
- **Candidate FAQ chatbots** for status, role, and process questions

- **Calendar / scheduling automation**

Low risk. High acceptance. Immediate time savings. This is where you build trust and skills.

“ Automation should handle the transactional so that HR can handle the transformational. That's the trade-off worth making.

Andrew Loomis · HR Technology & Talent Strategy Leader

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Stage 2 — AI-Augmented

AI now influences decisions but doesn't make them. The recruiter sees AI-generated rankings, sentiments, and recommendations and acts on them with full discretion. Move here only after Stage 1 has been live for at least 90 days and your team has demonstrated competence and trust in the AI outputs.

What to deploy in Stage 2:

- **AI-scored candidate ranking and shortlisting** — with mandatory human review
- **Sentiment analysis on candidate communications**
- **AI-generated talent insights and sourcing recommendations**
- **SMS / conversational AI for candidate engagement at scale** (apply-by-text, pre-screen Q&A, self-schedule)
- **Skills-based matching against the broader talent pool** (Jim Griffin's "repatriation at scale" use case for internal mobility)

Risk increases here. Bias monitoring becomes essential. Candidate transparency becomes a hard requirement. Every Stage 2 deployment goes through Phase 7 governance review (Chapter 10) before launch.

SMS conversational AI is where Stage 2 actually pays off

In high-volume environments — retail, hospitality, healthcare, manufacturing — the bottleneck isn't sourcing. It's response speed. Paul Norman put it bluntly: in high-volume recruiting, your biggest competition isn't other employers — it's friction. SMS-based apply, pre-screen, and self-scheduling workflows remove the friction. This is where GoHire's text recruiting platform was built, and it's a textbook Stage 2 deployment: AI handles scale, the recruiter handles judgment.

Stage 3 — AI-Powered

Multi-agent workflows that can execute multi-step processes with limited human intervention. Source → engage → screen → schedule → score, with the recruiter intervening only on exceptions and final decisions. This is where the industry is heading. It is not where most teams should be in 2026.

The reason is governance, not technology. The technology exists. The regulatory environment does not yet support fully autonomous candidate decisioning. The EU AI Act classifies recruitment as high-risk. Human-in-the-loop is a legal requirement, not a stylistic preference.

“

If a vendor pitches an autonomous AI recruiter — walk away. Nobody in HR is ready to entrust end-to-end hiring decisions to an AI agent.

Jeff Pole · Co-Founder & CEO, Warden AI

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Where Stage 3 *is* appropriate today: internal-facing workflows (operations, scheduling orchestration, content generation, market intelligence) and low-stakes candidate touchpoints where human review is built in as the next step.

The deployment sequence inside each stage

Within each stage, the AI COEE follows a four-step deployment loop for every new tool or workflow:

- **Approve** — vendor due diligence, security review, bias audit (Chapter 10's full framework)
- **Configure** — IT-led integration, identity, data flow, audit logging

- **Train** — role-specific enablement before any user touches the tool (Phase 6)
- **Measure** — pre-defined KPIs, baseline comparison, weekly tracking for the first 90 days

What "good" looks like at each stage

Stage	Recruiter time savings	Candidate exposure	Governance load
1 • Assisted	3–6 hrs/week	Indirect (drafted by AI, sent by human)	Low
2 • Augmented	8–15 hrs/week	Direct (AI sends, AI scores)	Medium-high
3 • Powered	Restructures the role itself	High (multi-step autonomy)	Very high (board-level)

FROM JONATHAN'S PLAYBOOK

The deployment sequencing lesson from regulated industries

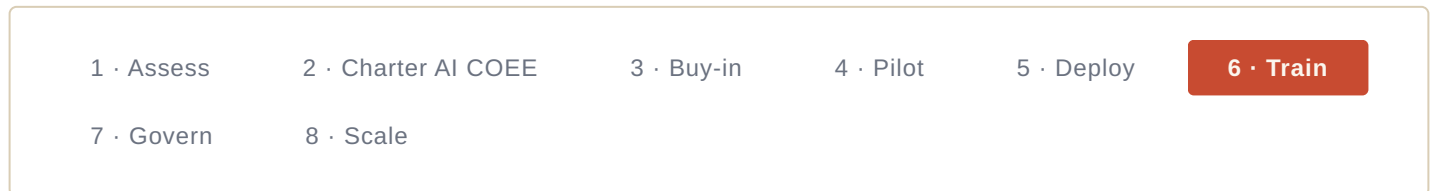
In financial services and healthcare, we never let an autonomous agent touch a customer-facing decision until the assisted and augmented versions had a 12+ month track record. That patience is what kept the projects out of the headlines — and what made the eventual Stage 3 rollouts approveable by Risk and Compliance. The same patience applies in TA. The regulatory environment for AI in hiring is converging on the same posture financial services has had for years.

Stage 1 and Stage 2 are where 95% of TA orgs will live for the next 18–24 months. That's not a limitation — that's where the ROI is. The teams that win at Stage 3 will be the ones who mastered Stages 1 and 2 first.

And the thing that makes mastery possible is the next phase: training.

Train — Workshops, Hackathons, Prompts

The AI COEE's most undervalued mandate. The thing that separates the orgs where AI actually changes behavior from the ones where it just changes the toolbar.



McKinsey's data is direct: nearly half of employees say their #1 request for AI is *formal training*. More than a fifth report receiving minimal to no support. The training gap is the adoption gap.

Kristina Tsys ran four foundational Copilot workshops with her team before they built a single agent. That was a deliberate slow-down. She understood that without baseline literacy, the agents wouldn't get used.

“

It's not enough just to bring AI tool to the team. Adoption and utilization, when the team actually knows how to use it, not afraid of it — yeah, this is what makes a difference.

Kristina Tsys · Technical & Engineering Recruiter, Fortive

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The three-layer training curriculum

The AI COEE designs and runs training in three layers, each with a distinct purpose. Treat them as a stack — you can't skip Layer 1 and expect Layer 3 to land.

Layer 1 — AI Literacy (for everyone)

What is AI, what is generative AI, what is an LLM, what are the limitations, what are the risks. Two hours, delivered live (not async video). Every employee — not just recruiting — completes this in their first 90 days.

The goal isn't technical depth. The goal is shared vocabulary and shared risk awareness. Jordann Savage's framing is right:

“ You don't need to understand how ChatGPT works under the hood — just learn to talk to it like a capable assistant who needs clear instructions.

Jordann Savage · HR Practitioner & AI Educator

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Layer 2 — Role-Specific Application (for recruiters & hiring managers)

Half-day, hands-on. Built around the actual tools the team will use and the actual workflows they own. For a recruiter, that means: JD drafting, candidate outreach, intake notes, sourcing briefs. For a hiring manager, that means: skills definition, structured interview design, AI-summarized candidate review.

Patrick Lindsley emphasized one principle that should anchor every Layer 2 session: *prompt engineering is the hidden skill that changes everything*. Teach how to ask, not just what tools exist. Teach how to assign a persona to the AI. Teach how to iterate — and teach the magic question Melissa Entzminger surfaced:

“ My favorite question to ask ChatGPT is: 'What am I missing?' That's where the gold is.

Melissa Entzminger · Communications Strategist, Taking Your Stage

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Layer 3 — AI Hackathons (for everyone willing)

Quarterly. Cross-functional. Problem-led. A hackathon is the AI COEE's most powerful capability-building tool — and the most underused. The format is simple:

- The org submits real workflow frustrations in advance
- The AI COEE picks 6–10 problems and forms cross-functional teams
- Teams have 1 day (or 2 half-days) to build a working AI solution
- Each team demos to a panel — including the CEO if you can get them
- The best solutions get AI COEE budget and a path to production

The hackathon model is what Kristina Tsys' team built into their ongoing cadence — bring your roadblocks, brainstorm together, ship something usable in a single day. It builds skills, it surfaces problems the AI COEE didn't know about, and it produces the agents the org actually needs.

FROM JONATHAN'S PLAYBOOK

Why hackathons work where mandatory training doesn't

In enterprise environments, the people who learned conversational AI fastest were the ones who built something. Watching a video doesn't change behavior. Building a working agent — even a janky one — does. The hackathon converts curious skeptics into champions in a single afternoon. Make it a quarterly fixture.

The Manager Activation track

Within Phase 6, the AI COEE runs a parallel track focused specifically on managers. Gallup's data is unambiguous: employees with managers who actively support AI are 98.7x more likely to say AI has transformed their work. The manager is the lever.

The Manager Activation Program has four components:

- **AI tool certification.** Every hiring manager and recruiting team lead completes structured proficiency before their teams are expected to use AI tools.
- **Role-specific playbooks.** Not generic AI training — specific guidance on how AI changes the workflow for that manager's recruiting context (high-volume, executive, technical, hospitality, etc.).
- **Team-level adoption check-ins.** Managers hold regular, structured conversations with their teams about AI usage, questions, and concerns. Not surveillance — support.
- **The AI champions network.** The most engaged managers across the org get connected for peer learning. The AI COEE facilitates monthly champion calls.

What to put on the training calendar

A realistic Year 1 cadence for a 200–500 person TA org:

- **Monthly** — open office hours with the AI COEE (45 minutes, drop-in, anyone can ask anything)
- **Every 6 weeks** — Layer 1 literacy session for new hires
- **Quarterly** — AI hackathon
- **Quarterly** — role-specific Layer 2 deep dive (rotating: sourcing, screening, candidate experience, hiring manager partnership)

- **Annually** — Manager Activation Program refresh and recertification

PRO TIP

Don't outsource the workshops — at least not the first round

Kristina Tsys partnered directly with Microsoft for her foundational sessions, but she co-led them. That's the right model. External experts bring depth and credibility. Internal facilitators bring context. The combination is what makes the training land. Vendor-only training tends to be generic. Vendor-plus-AI COEE training tends to stick.

Training is the AI COEE's most renewable mandate — and the one that has the largest compounding effect on every other phase. When training works, governance gets easier (people don't bypass tools), scaling gets faster (champions emerge organically), and the next round of pilots gets sharper (the org is asking better questions).

Speaking of governance — that's where Phase 7 takes us.

Govern — Bias, Compliance, Vendor Risk

The governance work is what makes the rest of the program sustainable. Skip it and the next compliance incident — or the next regulator inquiry — ends the whole program.

1 · Assess

2 · Charter AI COEE

3 · Buy-in

4 · Pilot

5 · Deploy

6 · Train

7 · Govern

8 · Scale

Bob Pulver delivered the line that should be on the wall of every AI COEE conference room:

“

If you can't explain to a candidate exactly how AI was used in their hiring decision, you're not ready to use AI in hiring decisions.

Bob Pulver · Founder, Elevate Your AIQ

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Governance is not a phase you complete. It's a discipline you sustain. Phase 7 establishes the operating cadence — vendor vetting, bias audits, policy maintenance, candidate transparency, regulatory monitoring — that the AI COEE will run continuously from here forward.

The AI policy — principle-based, not tool-specific

Maren Hogan and Bob Pulver both make the same point: the policy must be principle-based. Tool-specific rules go obsolete every quarter. Principles survive the next vendor cycle.

A workable AI policy covers six areas:

- **Data privacy & residency.** What candidate data can be processed by AI, where, by which vendors, and under what data processing agreements.
- **Bias monitoring.** The audit cadence, the disparate impact thresholds, the remediation protocol.

- **Candidate transparency.** What candidates are told about AI use in their process — and when. (Disclosure language belongs in the application flow, not buried in the privacy policy.)
- **Explainability.** Which decisions require explainable outputs vs. probabilistic scoring with human review.
- **Human review thresholds.** Which AI outputs require human review before action. (Almost all consequential ones.)
- **Incident response.** What happens when something goes wrong — who's notified, what's paused, how candidates are made whole.

Vendor due diligence — Jeff Pole's four-question framework

Jeff Pole runs Warden AI, which audits AI hiring systems for fairness and compliance. His four-question framework is the cleanest vendor evaluation I've found:

- **1. Effectiveness & usefulness.** Does the tool actually improve outcomes over your existing process? Get the data. Run a pilot on real cases.
- **2. Data privacy & security.** How is candidate data stored, encrypted, retained, and deleted? What's the data processing agreement?
- **3. Compliance with civil rights & AI laws.** Third-party bias audits? NYC Local Law 144 compliance? Colorado AI Act? EU AI Act high-risk classification readiness?
- **4. Bias mitigation protocols.** Does the tool de-identify before scoring? Are statistical fairness reports published? What's the remediation process when bias is detected?

Bob Pulver's three vendor questions are the companion set — ask them in every initial call:

- What AI model are you using? (And which version?)
- Are you training on my data? (If yes, walk away.)
- Have you been audited for bias? (And can you share the report?)

WATCH OUT

"If it's free, it probably means your data is the product."

Bob Pulver's warning applies to most free or freemium AI tools. Public ChatGPT, free Claude, free Gemini — if you're not paying, your inputs may be training data. Check the privacy settings. Turn off model training. For HR work touching PII or HIPAA-adjacent data, use only enterprise licenses with explicit data processing agreements.

The bias audit cadence

Every AI tool that touches candidate decisions gets audited. Annually at minimum. After every model update from the vendor. After every material change in the candidate pool or job requirements. The audit is performed by a third party where the regulatory environment requires it (NYC Local Law 144 mandates this) and by the AI COEE's analytics partner for everything else.

The data Keirsten Greggs surfaced applies to every screening tool you'll evaluate:

“

Imagine what someone who is neurodivergent, or has a thick accent, experiences when a bot is analyzing their speech and providing feedback that you're going to use to decide whether to move them forward. It's based on what the system has normalized.

Keirsten Greggs · Founder, Trap Recruiter

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Keirsten's bottom line is the AI COEE's bottom line: *"I'm not against AI. I'm against using it to make human decisions."* AI collects information. Humans make consequential decisions about candidates. That's the line. Every governance decision flows from it.

The regulatory map

Three jurisdictions matter most for U.S.-based recruiting orgs in 2026:

- **NYC Local Law 144.** Bias audit requirement for any AEDT (automated employment decision tool) used on NYC candidates. Public summary required.

- **Colorado AI Act.** First U.S. state-level comprehensive AI hiring law. Notice, impact assessment, and risk management requirements.
- **EU AI Act.** Recruitment is high-risk. Conformity assessment, technical documentation, human oversight, and post-market monitoring requirements. Penalties up to 4x GDPR.

Even if your hiring is U.S.-only, the global trend matters: jurisdictions are converging on the same posture. Bias audits, candidate disclosure, human-in-the-loop. Build for that posture now — retrofitting is more expensive than building it in.

“ EU AI regulations are four times more punitive than GDPR. Once again, that's the first shot in this space. There's a lot more to come. So it's going to be very interesting because now you're going to have to be very well informed before you make any buying decision on how well aligned it is to global regs.

Jim Griffin · HR Tech Integration Strategist, Partner Science

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The candidate transparency standard

Maren Hogan's framing is the right standard: candidates are not data points. The disclosure they deserve goes into the application flow — visible, plain-language, and specific. A workable template:

"As part of our hiring process, we use AI-based tools to [specific use cases — for example, summarize your application, suggest interview times, and assist our recruiters in reviewing your skills against the role]. A human always reviews every candidate decision. You can request more information about our AI use, or opt out of specific AI-assisted steps, by contacting [contact]."

The quarterly governance review

Every quarter, the AI COEE produces a one-page governance report for the CEO:

- Bias audit status for every candidate-facing AI tool
- Any incidents (errors, candidate complaints, vendor outages)
- Regulatory updates affecting the program

- Vendor portfolio changes (added, removed, under review)
- Policy changes recommended for the next cycle

FROM JONATHAN'S PLAYBOOK

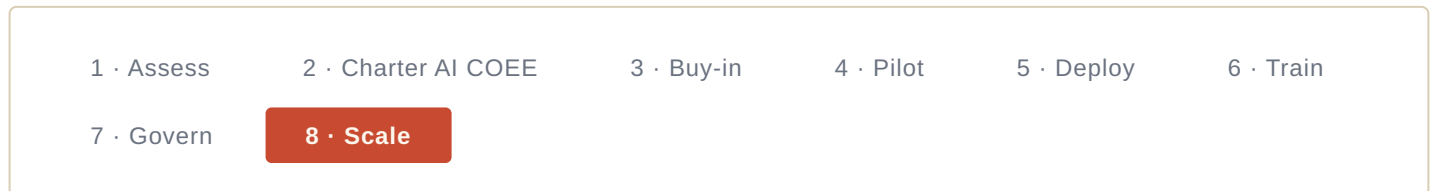
Why I bake governance into the rollout, not after

The enterprise rollouts that survived audits and regulatory scrutiny were the ones where governance ran in parallel with deployment — not after. We weren't bolting on bias monitoring six months in. We were architecting around it from Week 1. That posture is now the standard for any AI program touching consumers or employees. Build the governance loop into Phase 1, and every subsequent phase is easier.

With governance running on a sustainable cadence, the program is durable. Now the AI COEE can focus on what scaling actually looks like.

Scale — Integrations, KPIs, Re-Survey

The final phase isn't an end-state. It's the operating rhythm that turns Year 1 wins into a durable, compounding advantage.



By the time you reach Phase 8, the org has working pilots, a governance cadence, and a trained workforce. The question is no longer "can we do this?" — it's "how do we sustain and compound the gains?" Three answers: integrate, measure, re-survey.

Integrate — the stack matters more than any single tool

Jim Griffin's race-car-engine metaphor captures it perfectly: a great AI recruiting tool in a disconnected stack is like a race car engine bolted to a station wagon. The performance ceiling is set by the slowest connection.

The integration priorities the AI COEE should drive in Year 2:

- **ATS as system of record.** Every AI-driven action — sourcing, outreach, screening, scheduling — writes back to the ATS. No shadow data.
- **Identity and SSO.** Every AI tool is gated by corporate identity. When someone leaves, access is revoked in a single workflow.
- **Skills taxonomy.** A unified skills framework that flows between JDs, candidate profiles, and internal mobility tools. This is what enables Jim Griffin's "AI-driven repatriation" — moving from 22% to 49% internal placement during reorgs.

- **Conversational layer.** Candidate-facing SMS and chat unified across roles and locations. This is where GoHire was built for high-volume, multi-location employers — SMS-first apply, screen, and self-schedule, integrated into the ATS.
- **Analytics backbone.** One source of truth for adoption metrics, time-to-fill, cost-per-hire, and bias audit outputs. The AI COEE's quarterly report should come from this layer.

Measure — the KPIs the AI COEE actually owns

In Year 2, the AI COEE moves from "are we adopting?" to "what is adoption delivering?" Five KPIs are non-negotiable:

1. Adoption rate by tool and role

What percentage of recruiters are using each approved tool for what percentage of applicable tasks? Pull from system logs, not surveys. Target: 80% active usage within 12 months of deployment.

2. Time savings per recruiter per week

Self-reported plus system-measured where possible. Patrick Lindsley's data point — moving from 2–3 hours of quality sourcing to 10 — is a useful benchmark. Aim for 5+ hours saved per recruiter per week by month 12.

3. Time-to-fill and time-to-slate vs. baseline

This is the hard ROI metric. Compare against the Phase 1 baseline. Realistic 12-month improvement: 15–25%. The AI COEE reports this monthly to the executive team.

4. Bias audit pass rates

Every candidate-facing AI tool gets a pass/fail every cycle. The metric the CEO sees: "X of Y tools passed most recent audit. Y of Y are within remediation windows for issues found."

5. Recruiter AI Sentiment Score

The quarterly re-survey. This is the metric most COEEs forget — and it's the leading indicator for every other metric. If sentiment is dropping, adoption will drop next quarter. Track it the way customer success teams track NPS.

Re-survey — the loop that closes the program

Every 6 months, the AI COEE re-runs the AI Sentiment & Usage Survey from Phase 1. Same questions. Same anonymous methodology. Same response-rate target. The comparison over time tells the story your dashboard can't:

- Is comfort going up?
- Are usage rates climbing in the segments that started low?
- Are concerns shifting from "I don't know how" to "I want more advanced training"?
- Are the same workflows showing up in "most painful" or are new ones emerging?

The re-survey is what tells you when the program is healthy and when it's drifting. Run it religiously.

“ Automation works best when it does the things recruiters forget to do — not when it replaces the things recruiters are actually good at.

Evan Herman · Recruiting Operations & Automation Leader

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The compounding metric — the recruiter who replaces the recruiter who doesn't use AI

The single most quoted line from GoHire Talks is Kristina Tsys': *"AI won't replace recruiters, but recruiters who use AI will replace recruiters who don't."* In Year 2 of a mature program, that begins to show up in the data — not as a layoff event, but as a capability gradient.

Brian Fink's framing is the longer arc:

“ The recruiter that is going to succeed six months, 12 months, 18 months, two decades from now is going to have to embody those four things — curious, empathetic, tenacious, mischievous. And those things will not be replaced by AI. They will only be augmented by AI.

Brian Fink · Managing Partner, The Rework Group

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The role itself is changing. Disher Talent's 2026 research shows that 73% of TA leaders now rank critical thinking and problem-solving as the #1 skill they need in recruiters. AI skills show up several spots lower. The logic is direct: most people can learn to use AI tools. Far fewer can rigorously evaluate AI output. The AI COEE's training calendar should reflect that hierarchy.

FROM JONATHAN'S PLAYBOOK

The lesson I keep applying from enterprise conversational AI

The deployments I led in financial services and healthcare delivered real ROI in Year 1. But the compounding only started in Year 2 — once the org had internalized the operating model, the integration layer was stable, and the measurement cadence was running on autopilot. AI in recruiting is on the same curve. Don't judge the program at month 6. Judge it at month 18, when the AI COEE is on its second annual policy refresh and the org is shipping its own agents without asking for permission.

What "mature" looks like

You'll know the program is mature when five things are true:

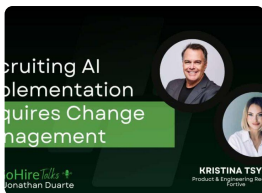
- The AI COEE has graduated from approving every tool to setting the patterns teams follow themselves
- Training is largely peer-led, with the AI COEE facilitating
- Bias audits, vendor reviews, and policy refreshes run on calendar, not by special project
- The annual sentiment survey shows steadily improving comfort and adoption across all segments
- The CEO references the AI COEE in external communications as part of how the company operates

That's the destination. The eight phases are the path. The AI COEE is the vehicle. The 15 GoHire Talks guests profiled throughout this playbook are the proof that this isn't theoretical — it's already happening, in every kind of org, at every scale.

The next chapter is where you meet all of them.

The 15 GoHire Talks Guests Behind This Playbook

Every framework, every pull-quote, every bit of tactical detail in this book is grounded in a real conversation with a practitioner who's done the work. Browse the full directory — each card links to the complete episode, transcript, and video.

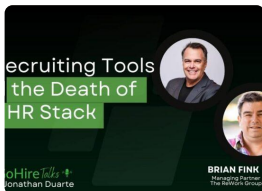


Kristina Tsys

TECHNICAL & ENGINEERING RECRUITER, FORTIVE

Recruiting AI Implementation Requires Change Management · May 2026 · Featured throughout this playbook for her end-to-end Fortive case study.

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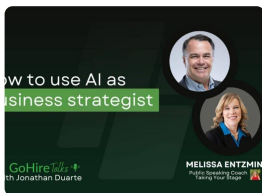


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Work With Jonathan

If this playbook is your starting point, here's how I can help you move faster — whether you need a thought partner on the AI COEE charter, an experienced operator on deployment sequencing, or someone who's done this at enterprise scale before.

About Jonathan Duarte

I'm the Founder and CEO of GoHire, and the host of the GoHire Talks podcast. Over the last 28 years I've built the technology behind some of the most-used parts of modern recruiting: job posting engines, recruiting marketing, SEO, job search, text recruiting, conversational AI, recruiting automation, and automated interview scheduling.

Before founding GoHire, I led conversational AI implementations in enterprise settings — including at Wells Fargo and Kaiser Permanente. Those programs taught me how change management, governance, integration architecture, and frontline adoption have to move together for AI to deliver real value at scale. Every framework in this playbook traces back to lessons from those rollouts.

I'm also the originator of the **AI COEE construct** — Center of Excellence *and* Execution — that anchors this playbook. It's the operating model I wish I'd had earlier in my career, and it's the framework I now use with the TA leaders I advise.

Book a 30-Minute AI COEE Discovery Call

If you're thinking about chartering an AI COEE, restructuring an existing AI program, or just want to pressure-test your roadmap with someone who's done this before — let's talk.

[Schedule a discovery call →](#)

hrsms.co/JDSchedule

Where I help most

The TA leaders and CHROs I work with typically engage me on one of four problems:

1. Standing up the AI COEE from scratch

You've read this playbook and you want to actually do it. I help you draft the charter, name the seats, build the executive presentation, run the first sentiment survey, and design the first 90 days. Typically a 6–10 week engagement.

2. Restructuring an existing AI program

You already have an AI committee, an AI working group, or a half-built CoE. It's not delivering. I help you diagnose what's stuck, restructure the governance, and re-launch with executive air cover. Typically a 4–6 week engagement.

3. Vendor and stack strategy

You're evaluating recruiting AI vendors, replacing parts of your HR tech stack, or trying to make sense of what to keep and what to retire. I bring the operator perspective — what actually integrates, what actually gets adopted, and what's vendor marketing dressed up as innovation.

4. High-volume conversational AI deployments

If you're hiring at scale — retail, hospitality, manufacturing, healthcare, multi-location — I can help you architect the SMS-first, text-led candidate experience that delivers 24–48 hour time-to-fill instead of 7–14 days. GoHire's platform was built for exactly this, and I work with customers on the full deployment program.

What I bring

- **Enterprise track record.** Conversational AI deployments in two of the largest U.S. organizations — financial services and healthcare — with all the governance, compliance, and integration discipline those environments require.
- **The AI COEE framework.** The construct that consolidates governance and execution under one CEO-reporting team.
- **The GoHire Talks network.** 15+ practitioner interviews per year. I bring the patterns that work and the warnings that should slow you down.
- **Operator empathy.** I run a company. I know what it's like to balance ambition with the budget, the calendar, and the org chart you actually have.

Three other ways to start

See GoHire in action

If your team is exploring text recruiting, conversational AI, or apply-by-text for high-volume hiring

GoHire's platform handles SMS apply, AI-powered pre-screen, self-schedule interviews, and ATS integration — the operational backbone for any team running Stage 2 deployments at scale.

Customers fill roles in 24–48 hours instead of 7–14 days.

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For ongoing conversations with the practitioners shaping AI in recruiting

New episodes monthly. Past guests include every name in this playbook plus dozens more TA leaders, CHROs, and HR tech operators.

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Connect on LinkedIn

For the day-to-day commentary and live conversation

I share the patterns I'm seeing across the GoHire Talks network, the deployments I'm advising on, and the questions I'm still wrestling with. If this playbook resonated, follow along.

[CONNECT ON LINKEDIN →](#)

One last thing

Every framework in this playbook is built to be used. If a chapter helped, tell me which one. If a section didn't land, tell me that too. The next edition will be better because of the conversations this one starts. Email me directly at jd@gohire.com, or book the discovery call above.

Thanks for reading. Let's go build something.

— *Jonathan Duarte*

Founder & CEO, GoHire · Host, GoHire Talks · 2026