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JUST FOR YOU

TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR HARNESSING AI AND BIG DATA FOR HIRING

Successful hiring starts with a partnership between the hiring team and the candidate in which **both sides** can determine if there is a good fit. Artificial Intelligence and big data have much to contribute to transforming this state from pipe dream to standard operating procedure. As AI is more widely adopted for its ability to identify qualified candidates, how can you ensure your technology and your hiring practices maintain humanity and personalization in the hiring process?
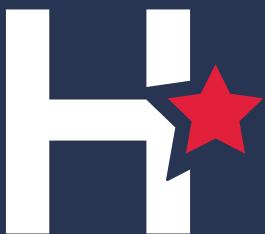
In the book Decoding Talent, author Eric Sydell puts it simply: only use data that candidates knowingly provide. But this single decree alone isn't enough to make sure your hiring technology is ethically harnessing AI and big data to the benefit of organizations, society and humankind.

To guide the proper use of AI and big data in your hiring process, here from the book are the Ten Commandments for Hiring with AI. Following these principles can help both your organization and your candidates achieve the best possible results.

1. YOUR SYSTEM MUST BE DESIGNED WITH PEOPLE IN MIND

Any AI and big data system for hiring must focus on humans, both inside and outside of the organization. If this isn't the emphasis throughout the design stage, the system will only benefit the organization. Hyper-efficiency is not great if it comes at the expense of humanity. A common scenario for companies that break this commandment is a system favoring rash decisions.

Here's an example. An assessment system may suggest a candidate based on their score on a test. In the interest of being highly efficient it may ignore candidates with less statistically obvious skillsets. Worshipping at the altar of efficiency results in good but not great hires. Putting wholeperson consideration first must flow through all areas of the business. Already, one major logistics company tracks workers through biometric feedback from wristbands, forcing them into the role of machines. Is this a positive future for your organization?

2. INCLUDE THE CANDIDATE AS PART OF THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Candidates have valuable insights into if they will be a good fit. This intelligence is so valuable because it isn't like you can put someone under a microscope to judge fitness at a cellular level (at least not yet).

So why not engage them to learn what they know? For a candidate to better develop these insights, they must have a better than superficial understanding of both

your organization and the position. When you grant them the access to develop this understanding you've engaged them in the process. The ultimate result is a much better hiring decision because candidates who know they are a poor fit self-select out of the process. Conversely, those that do believe they are a good fit will continue, meaning you can spend your time on a candidate who you can be confident actually wants the job.

Some HR practitioners stuck in the mentality of selling the job are deeply concerned at the thought of scaring off candidates with the real truth. But if we take the attitude that the prospect is a vital part of the decision-making process, the best thing we can do is give them a realistic and complete view of the job to determine compatibility.

A HireVue banking client shared with the story of a young woman who applied to a retail banking job and a call center job, withdrawing her interest in the latter after taking the interactive assessment. She told the recruiter the assessment helped her figure out what type of job environment suits her best. She was ultimately hired and is thriving in the retail banking division.

3. SHARE FINDINGS WITH THE RESEARCH COMMUNITY

We are just in the early stages of the AI and big data age. Collectively, we are only beginning to comprehend the massive benefits of this technology for companies, not to mention society in general. At this stage, we shouldn't hoard our findings. This doesn't mean organizations must give away their trade secrets. But there is so much work to be done and so many potential pitfalls, that the more we collaborate the better.

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Elon Musk applied his own spin to this commandment with Tesla. He jumpstarted electric vehicle production in the market by releasing his company's patents and sharing the knowledge his team developed. "We believe that applying the opensource philosophy to our patents will strengthen rather than diminish Tesla's position," Musk said. You may choose not to release your technical knowledge to this extent, but you stand to gain as much from the community as you share.

4. MAKE YOUR FINDINGS EXPLAINABLE

Technology often falls into the black box trap. This is the idea that AI and big data (or any other tech) can predict an outcome using a complex formula hidden from human understanding. In this scenario, we don't peer into the process or break down how the system is performing, we just trust it works. The reason this trap is so important to avoid in the AI world is because we cannot always trust the tech to use the right factors when making a decision. We need to know what it's doing and why. Otherwise, you end up with AIs making bizarre connections like associating a preference for curly fries with higher intelligence.

AI doesn't possess the context to understand spurious correlations. We must ensure we aren't hiring people for the wrong reasons because our data correlations are false. Making sure you know what causes something else to happen is core to good ethical practices. We must promote and hire those who achieve success for legitimate reasons to prevent tech from dehumanizing us.

5. AVOID MULTIPAGE LEGALESE

All of our messaging to candidates must be designed so they can understand it. Avoid legalese, which is not meant to explain anything, just provide legal gotchas. Think about the hundreds of times a year you scroll through terms and conditions without reading a single word. Ethical AI and big data implementation must not take this same path. Instead, simply explain to candidates in ordinary words how AI and big data are being used in the hiring process.

Candidates must also have the option to opt out of AI and big data scoring, especially given the level of controversy and misinformation surrounding this technology. Many candidates who might ordinarily opt out of such assessments are more likely to fully participate in the process if it's clearly explained to them how the technology is there to provide a fairer, more balanced process.

6. ONLY USE INFORMATION EXPRESSLY PROVIDED BY THE CANDIDATE

No generally accepted body of research exists that shows information not expressly provided by candidates is useful for predicting on-the-job success. An incomplete list of data without proven predictive value that could nevertheless be analyzed by AI includes:

- Scraped web pages
- Social media posts
- How a person looks
- Facial expressions

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We also want to make sure we are not including personal information like credit scores as they are not necessarily indicative of job performance and tend to be biased against minorities and those of a lower economic class.

Whether we are talking about AI and big data potentially determining someone's sexuality or political orientation, making inferences or predictions based on information the candidate doesn't willingly supply is unacceptable. Again, we must treat humans like humans. Tech should make our workplace more efficient but not at the cost of our humanity.

7. KEEP TABS ON AI AND BIG DATA, DON'T JUST SET AND FORGET

We must develop not only an understanding of what our tech is doing but also recognize how it's always evolving. We can't afford to let our systems become dated, a common business problem. AI can deliver on its promise to help our hiring process only if we keep it relevant and appropriate. This means continually monitoring its functioning to ensure hiring validity and fairness.

The world is changing—rapidly. AI and big data must grow to keep up with it. An AI system put in place in 2019 seems like recently deployed technology, but a lot can happen in a matter of months, let alone years (like a world-paralyzing pandemic).

8. CREATE CONTROLS TO HALT UNFAIR AND INAPPROPRIATE TECH IMPLEMENTATION

AI and big data are powerful tools without precedent. The best way to control them within your organization is to have people at multiple levels involved in ensuring this technology is ethically used. This practice shouldn't be limited to so-called technocrats, either. A plurality of perspectives from a diverse group of people is vital to this process. We can't afford to remain in an echo chamber with such a powerful technology.

9. AI AND BIG DATA SHOULD WORK IN CONJUNCTION WITH EXPERT HUMANS

Research shows the best hiring decisions are made using a structured behavioral interview conducted by a person along with a validated assessment. Trying to eliminate the human component of hiring will not be successful until well into the future, if ever. (Our money is on the latter.)

Consider the case of a call center job where a candidate scores highly on an assessment of problem-solving skills, computer knowledge, and writing aptitude. The AI predicts they will be successful in the given role. Yet in the interview, they have trouble communicating and are outright hostile. This candidate would not be successful for the role, but the technology doesn't know that. Like the spurious curly fry correlation this is but one more instance of how and why human and machine must work together going forward.

10. ENSURE AI IS HARNESSED FOR HUMAN BENEFIT

A grave danger looms for asymmetrical power exchanges favoring organizations over candidates already. It's certain to worsen as technology improves. With organizations paying for high tech services to make their hiring processes more efficient and effective, we must all guard against those processes becoming lopsided and dehumanizing for candidates. Organizations must recognize the long-term benefits of creating processes that help people find jobs they like, which may include better job fit, productivity, and retention, as well as brand loyalty and overall reputation.
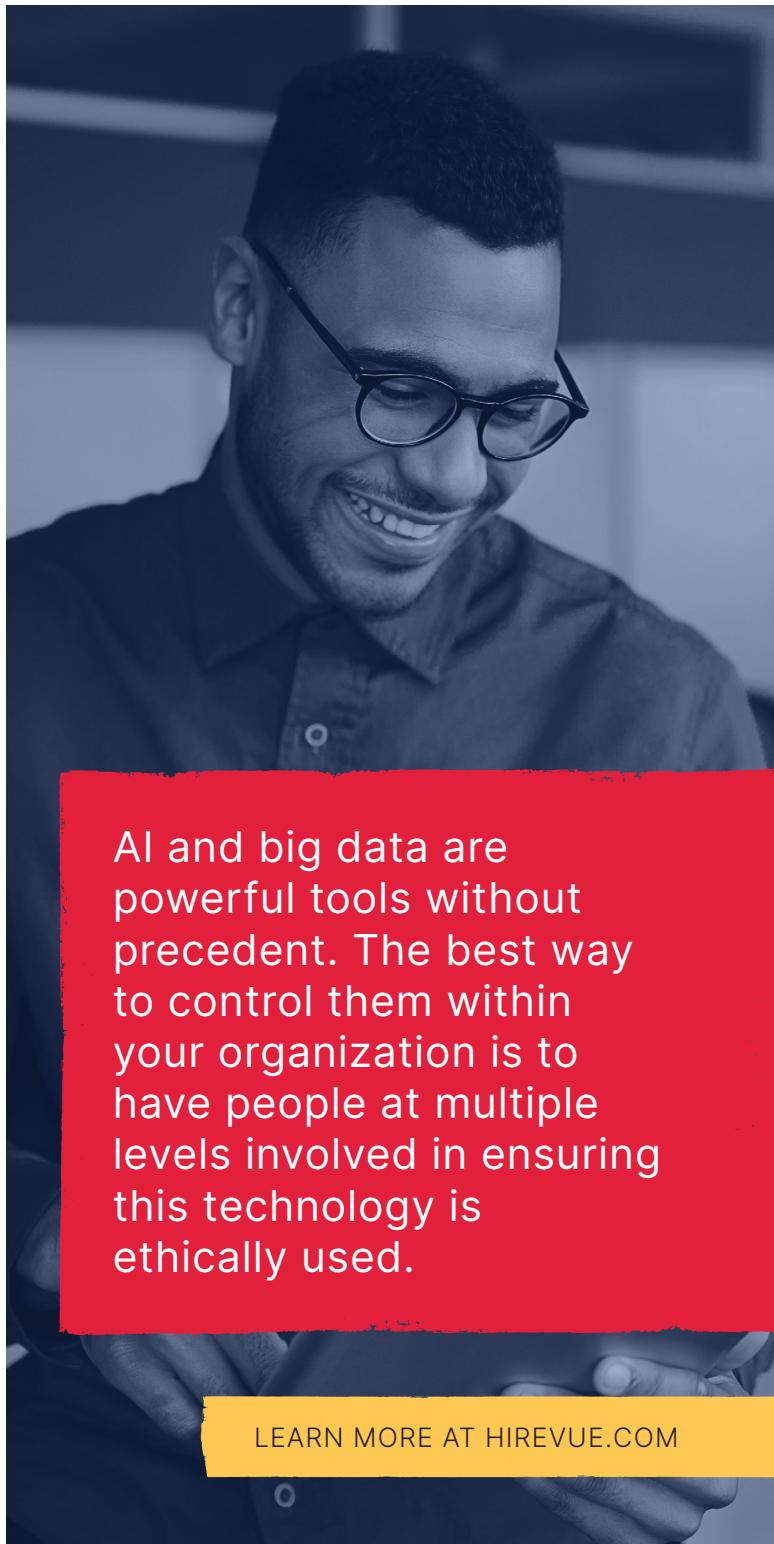
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THE CANDIDATE BILL OF RIGHTS

Although this list is meant for business decision makers, we are concerned about marginalizing candidates. We worry about technology that can hurt people. An essential companion to the Ten Commandments is the following Candidate Bill of Rights:

1. You are entitled to feedback on your application to understand an employer's decision, either way.

2. You should be able to approve all the data an employer uses to make their hiring decision.

3. You should never be forced to accept assessment conditions you don't feel comfortable with.

These rights are an application of data sovereignty, the idea that we should own our data. Granting candidates data sovereignty should not be deemed a negative nor a drain on organization resources. Consider the words of Joseph Hopkins, Founder and Senior Managing Partner of iPRESTIGE Emerge Fund, established to seek growth opportunities in the digital identity protection and security encryption markets to mitigate data privacy exploitation. Author Michael Ashley quoted him in an article for Forbes when Hopkins served as COO of Crown Sterling, an info-sec firm. "Data sovereignty needn't hurt enterprise corporations' bottom line. Instead, there are considerable profits to be made by forward-thinking

organizations who see the writing on the wall, who know their reputations have been hurt by exposing their customers' private information." According to Hopkins, companies stand to gain by restoring trust amongst their clientele. He is, of course, referring to his customers, but the same principle applies to your candidates.

MINIMIZING THE DEHUMANIZING EFFECT

Broadly speaking, both inside and outside of HR, AI and big data are already leading to dehumanization. In many organizations, employers track nearly everything their employees do. Call center reps are a prime example. Call time, time between calls, tone of voice, sales numbers, even bathroom breaks are analyzed as data points. Many of these metrics hold value for improving efficiency, but at what cost? How do we draw the line between enough useful data and too much? Is there even a line?

The potential for abusing technology is undeniable. But tomorrow's companies—what we might call "employers of choice"—must also commit to using the growing potential for AI and big data to enable a more human— and humane—era of talent acquisition and management. Our next and final chapter presents a vision as to what this exciting future might look like in practice.