8-Dimension Mandate Scorecard

How to use it

Rate each candidate from 1 to 5 on every dimension. Use the probe and anchors. Compare weighted totals only after individual scoring.

The eight dimensions

1. Problem fit

Evidence that the candidate has solved an equivalent problem at an equivalent stage, and can explain what to prioritise and what to stop doing at that stage.

What great looks like: Has solved an equivalent company-stage or business problem before, not just held an equivalent title. Can tell you what they would prioritise, stop and do differently the second time.

1: They describe a similar title but cannot show the problem, stage or trade-offs they personally handled. **3:** They describe a comparable problem and some trade-offs, but the link to the stage and what they stopped doing is partial. **5:** They show a comparable problem at a comparable stage, explain what they prioritised and stopped, and show the result of those choices.

Probe: Candidates will usually name a familiar problem and a familiar framework. Ask what they prioritised first at that stage, what they explicitly stopped doing, and what changed because of that choice. A vague answer tells you the title was similar but the operating problem was not.

2. Commercial ownership

Whether the candidate can connect product choices to a commercial measure and explain the numbers they personally moved. In PE, they can place their work on the EBITDA bridge in the value creation plan.

What great looks like: Talks in unit economics without prompting. For mid-market B2B SaaS, rough guides include NRR above 110%, CAC payback under 12 months, and LTV:CAC above 3:1. These vary by segment and business model. Marketplace, consumer, fintech and services businesses need different commercial measures. In PE, can place their work on the EBITDA bridge in the value creation plan.

1: They talk about shipping and activity but cannot name a commercial number they owned or changed, or place the work on the value creation plan. **3:** They name a commercial number and describe their involvement, but the baseline, action or personal contribution is incomplete. **5:**

They name the starting and ending number, explain the product decision they made, show how their action moved the commercial result, and can place it on the EBITDA bridge where relevant.

Probe: Candidates will recite NRR and CAC payback benchmarks. Ask what the number was when they started, what it was when they left, what they personally changed, and where the work sat in the value creation plan. A vague answer means the commercial result may have belonged to the wider business, not to them.

3. Technical fluency

Whether the candidate can work credibly with engineering on architecture, build versus buy and technical debt without pretending to be the CTO.

What great looks like: Can challenge and partner with engineering on architecture, build versus buy and technical debt without pretending to be the CTO.

1: They defer every technical decision to engineering and cannot explain the trade-off behind a product choice. **3:** They can describe a technical trade-off and how they worked with engineering, but the decision process is not fully clear. **5:** They explain the technical constraint, the options considered, the decision made and how they balanced delivery, risk and customer value.

Probe: Candidates will say they are technically curious and collaborative. Ask them to explain one build versus buy decision, the constraint that mattered and what they would do differently. A vague answer means they may have attended the discussion without shaping it.

4. Customer depth

Whether the candidate turns customer evidence into product decisions rather than treating discovery as a periodic research exercise.

What great looks like: Runs discovery as a standing cadence. Decisions trace back to evidence, not the loudest executive or the last sales request.

1: They rely on sales requests, escalations or internal opinions and cannot name customer evidence that changed a decision. **3:** They describe customer conversations and one useful insight, but the link from evidence to a decision is incomplete. **5:** They name the customer insight, the decision it changed, what they chose not to build and how they checked the result.

Probe: Candidates will say they are customer-led. Ask for the last customer insight that changed their roadmap and the feature they chose not to build because of it. A vague answer means customer language is being used as validation, not as evidence.

5. AI credibility

Whether the candidate can judge AI work in production, including evals, quality, cost, latency and when not to use it.

What great looks like: Has shipped AI features to real customers and can talk about production, evals, token cost against margin, latency trade-offs, and when they chose RAG, fine-tuning or neither.

1: They talk about prompts and models but cannot show a production outcome, evaluation method or cost decision. **3:** They describe an AI feature and some evaluation work, but the quality bar, cost or decision to use AI is only partly clear. **5:** They show what shipped, what the eval caught, how quality and cost were measured, and when they chose not to use AI.

Probe: Candidates will name RAG, agents and model providers. Ask what their eval caught that users would otherwise have seen, what it cost per request and when they decided not to use AI. A vague answer means the work may have been a demo rather than a product capability.

6. Leadership fit

Observable evidence of the team they led, how they hired and developed people, and how they influenced the CEO and board.

What great looks like: Shows the team scale they led, how they hired and developed leaders, and how they influenced the CEO and board when the evidence or recommendation was uncomfortable.

1: They managed tasks or a small team but cannot show how they hired, developed people or influenced senior stakeholders. **3:** They have led a meaningful team and can describe some development work, but their influence with the CEO or board is mostly asserted. **5:** They show the scale they ran, the people they hired and developed, and a specific example where they changed a CEO or board decision.

Stage note: For smaller teams, score on the quality of hiring, development and influence at the scale they have run, not the headcount.

Probe: Candidates will say they are low-ego and strong communicators. Ask how they hired and developed people, then ask for a decision where the CEO or board initially disagreed. A vague answer means the leadership claim has not been tested at the required level.

7. Operating fit

Scored only on tolerance for ambiguity and, for PE, the ability to work to a hold-period clock and board reporting cadence. Logistics are checked separately, not scored.

What great looks like: Can make progress with incomplete information, create operating clarity, and in PE work to a hold-period clock and board reporting cadence. Logistics are checked, not scored.

1: They need a settled structure and complete information before acting, and cannot describe how they worked to a time-bound operating plan. **3:** They have worked through ambiguity and deadlines, but the way they created clarity or handled board cadence is only partly evidenced. **5:**

They show how they created clarity from ambiguity, made decisions at pace and delivered against a hold-period or board reporting cadence where relevant.

Probe: Candidates will say they thrive in ambiguity. Ask what was unclear, what they decided without waiting, and how they kept the organisation aligned. For PE, ask how they reported progress against the hold-period clock. A vague answer means they may be comfortable with uncertainty only when someone else creates the structure.

8. Mandate fit

Whether the candidate has the authority, scope and appetite for this specific role as scoped.

What great looks like: Has the authority and appetite for the actual role being offered, not only the advertised title. The candidate understands what they will own and where their decisions stop.

1: They want a broader or different role and cannot name the decisions, scope or constraints they would accept here. **3:** They can work within the stated scope, but the authority, appetite or boundaries of the role still need clarification. **5:** They name the decisions they want to own, the constraints they accept and why this specific mandate fits their appetite now.

Probe: Candidates will say the role sounds interesting and that they are flexible. Ask which decisions they expect to own, which constraints they accept and what would make them leave. A vague answer means the candidate may be agreeing to a title rather than this mandate.

Mandate weights

Every table totals 100%. The minimum permitted dimension weight is 5%.

Dimension	Builder	Scaler	Turnaround	Commercial product executive	Not sure
Problem fit	20%	15%	15%	10%	12.5%
Commercial ownership	10%	20%	20%	25%	12.5%
Technical fluency	15%	10%	10%	5%	12.5%
Customer depth	15%	10%	15%	10%	12.5%
AI credibility	10%	5%	5%	5%	12.5%
Leadership fit	10%	20%	15%	15%	12.5%
Operating fit	10%	10%	10%	10%	12.5%
Mandate fit	10%	10%	10%	20%	12.5%

AI role adjustments

A feature adds 5% to AI credibility from Customer depth. A margin lever adds 5% to Commercial ownership from Operating fit. The product adds 10% to AI credibility, taking up to 5% from Operating fit, then Customer depth for the remainder. If a donor is at the floor, the fallback order is Leadership fit, then Technical fluency.

The product caps the Operating fit contribution at 5 points. For the Not sure mandate and The product AI role, Operating fit is 7.5%, Customer depth is 7.5%, and AI credibility is 22.5%.

Per-candidate logistics

- Location works: Not checked, Pass or Fail
- Hybrid model works: Not checked, Pass or Fail
- Pace works: Not checked, Pass or Fail

Only Fail shows a flag in Compare. Not checked is neutral. Logistics are not scored.

Pre-search checklist

1. What must be true about the product in 12 months? In PE, which line of the value creation plan does this hire own?
2. What decisions will this hire actually own, and what stays with the founder, CEO or CTO? Name three the CEO will stop making.
3. Is the role primarily a builder, a scaler, a turnaround leader, or a commercial product executive?
4. What team and product exist today, honestly?
5. Where does AI sit in the next 18 months: a feature, a margin lever, or the product? The answer changes who you hire.
6. What would make this hire fail even if they are genuinely talented?
7. Flexibility check: if an exceptional candidate needs a 15% stretch above budget, do you have board alignment to execute?

Booking

Book a 30-Minute Spec Sanity Check: https://calendar.app.google/npMxcX9LGuU1RtkF9