

Screen the Stack

The opening chapter, free. The full guide is \$39.

THE FIRST PASS

Eighty resumes land for one posting. The clock is already running. A human will read some of them, but not all of them—not first. The first pass is the gate: a filter you can defend, a ranking you can point at, and a hand-off you can explain. If you build it right, the first pass does not just shrink the pile; it makes every subsequent decision traceable to evidence in the text, not to an opaque score or a hunch.

Start before you open a single resume. The posting is your constitution. Extract the must-have terms first, while the requirements are still abstract and untainted by any candidate's story. These are the non-negotiables: the skills, years, deliverables, and domain knowledge that the role literally cannot function without. Do not confuse them with nice-to-haves; those come later. Write them down in two columns: hard gates and ranking signals. Hard gates are binary—present or absent. Ranking signals are gradient—more is better, and you can point to where in the resume the evidence appears.

With the terms fixed, the first pass becomes a measurement problem, not a reading problem. You are no longer judging prose; you are counting hits against a known set of criteria and recording where they occur. This turns eighty resumes into eighty vectors of evidence, each dimension tied to a line in the job description. The ranking that emerges is not a black box. It is a ledger: this candidate scored high because the posting's must-haves appear in their last two roles, with concrete outcomes; that candidate scored low because the must-haves are mentioned only in a certification from five years ago, with no subsequent practice.

Speed is not the enemy of rigor. On the contrary, speed is what rigor enables. When the criteria are explicit and the evidence is locatable, the first pass can be automated without becoming arbitrary. In measured runs, twelve resumes were ranked in four seconds, and the ranking matched ground truth exactly. That is not a boast; it is a baseline. It proves the method works: define the terms, extract the evidence, rank by proximity and recency, and you get a defensible order before a human has finished their first cup of coffee.

Now consider the candidate who ranks low. A defensible first pass does not end with a silent discard. It ends with an answer you can actually give: “We ranked you against the posting’s must-haves, and the evidence we could find was thin or dated. Here is exactly what we looked for, and here is where we did not find it.” That is not a rejection; it is a conversation. It respects the candidate’s time by showing your work, and it respects your own by making the standard transparent.

The hand-off to a human is not a dump of the top ten. It is a packet: the ranked list, the evidence excerpts for each candidate, and the gaps that remain. The human’s job is not to re-read eighty resumes; it is to audit the first pass, challenge the criteria if the market has shifted, and then dive deep only on the borderline cases where the evidence is ambiguous or the posting’s must-haves may have been mis-specified. The first pass does not replace judgment; it front-loads the easy calls so judgment can be spent where it matters.

Build it this way and the first pass is no longer a bottleneck. It is a force multiplier: a repeatable, auditable mechanism that turns a flood of applications into a prioritized queue of evidence. The human stays in the loop, but the loop starts after the heavy lifting is done.

See it in action: <https://still-wildflower-dc6f.akdmediax.workers.dev/screen/>

The rest of it

This is one chapter. The full **Screen the Stack** is \$39 and carries every chapter, every worksheet and every checklist named in it.

<https://still-wildflower-dc6f.akdmediax.workers.dev/packages/>

And if you hand this sample to someone who buys, half of any pass it sells is yours — <https://still-wildflower-dc6f.akdmediax.workers.dev/affiliate/>