



## CYBERSECURITY: THE ULTIMATE HIRING GUIDE



## Contents

### Hiring guide

<u>Foreword</u> .....	3
<u>Why use a specialized agency?</u> .....	4
<u>What to expect in this guide</u> .....	4
<u>Budgeting</u> .....	5

### Writing job descriptions

<u>Top tips</u> .....	6
<u>Your checklist</u> .....	7
<u>Cloud Security Engineer - Job Description Example</u> .....	8
<u>Detection &amp; Response - Job Description Example</u> .....	9
<u>Application Security Engineer - Job Description Example</u> .....	10

### The interview process

<u>Effective interviewing</u> .....	11
<u>Non-technical question examples</u> .....	12
<u>Efficient process examples</u> .....	13
<u>Inefficient process examples</u> .....	13
<u>The timeline</u> .....	14

### Navigating the offer stage

<u>Soft offers</u> .....	15
<u>Formal offers</u> .....	16
<u>Counteroffers</u> .....	16
<u>The onboarding period</u> .....	17
<u>Conclusion</u> .....	17

<u>See what our customer say</u> .....	18
<u>About us</u> .....	19
<u>Contact us</u> .....	20



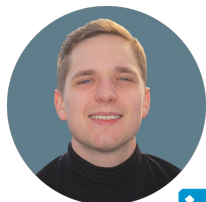
## Foreword

Stanton House is an award-winning specialist recruitment consultancy. Our deep expertise in Cybersecurity recruitment, across North America, is unsurpassed.

Our focus on building long-term relationships with security professionals, from Analysts through to C-Suite Executives, means that we are in a strong position to offer hiring advice to the employers that hire them.

This guide is intended to help talent partners and hiring managers build effective Cybersecurity teams. This guide covers everything, from budgeting and job specification, through to interview and offer.

We hope you find this guide informative and look forward to discussing how we can support you.



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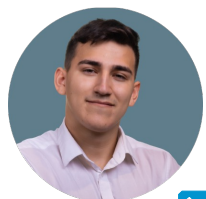
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## Why use a specialized agency?

Many employers have established internal Talent Acquisition teams to work on the recruitment of professionals across their entire organization. We appreciate, however, that these teams can find it extremely difficult to recruit Cybersecurity talent.

The knowledge needed to find, vet and onboard the right individuals, depending on the open role, requires a deep understanding of the current security market and a thorough awareness of the skill sets needed to match the company's needs.

What's more, demand for security talent shows no signs of abating and competition for the very best talent is fierce as talent shortages, for specific skillsets, remain prevalent across the US.

We have spent years building our network of Cybersecurity talent and pride ourselves on the rigorous and thorough assessment of all of our candidates. Because of this, we can guide you through every step of the recruitment process, ensuring a perfect match for you, your team and your organization.

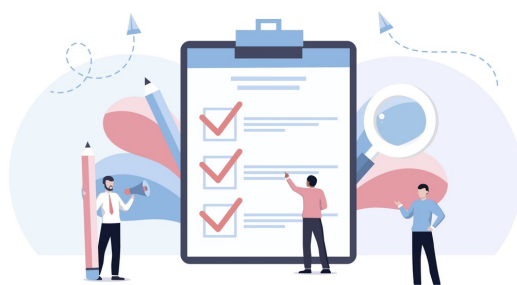
### Working with us, we are able to:

- ✓ Craft job descriptions, for each role, based on your goals
- ✓ Advise on salary and total compensation, to attract and secure the talent you need
- ✓ Promote your organization as an 'employer of choice'
- ✓ Source and screen each candidate reducing your 'time to hire'
- ✓ Plan and manage the entirety of the interview and feedback process
- ✓ Maintain deep relationships with candidates through the onboarding phase to ensure they have the best possible start and 'land' perfectly into your organization

## What to expect in this guide

We will guide you through the budgets necessary to ensure your roles (and associated compensation packages) remain competitive in the current climate. We will also provide guidance on writing effective job descriptions, interviewing, along with navigating the offer stage and onboarding period.

Notice something is missing or have a comment? Please email us at [cybersecurity@stantonhouse.com](mailto:cybersecurity@stantonhouse.com)



## Budgeting

Budget is undoubtedly one of the most important aspects of the job process, both for employers and jobseekers. Salary remains the most important factor for professionals considering a career move, and is one of the first questions asked, due to rapid inflation and the increased cost of living.

So, what are we saying? You'll need to be realistic! To stand any chance of attracting the Cybersecurity talent you need - you will have to benchmark the role and total compensation offered appropriately. Furthermore, professionals are approaching the market cautiously and want to know that you've gained headcount approval *before* entering any conversation.

### So, what's your first step?

A realistic salary range will give your role legitimacy and will therefore be taken seriously by the professionals you wish to attract. While solidifying budgets are usually the result of many internal discussions within an organization, there are a few key details you'll want to have settled before engaging a recruitment partner or advertising your role.

Most hiring teams begin by gathering information from the current market. This will help nail down the market rate and help kickstart the conversation that will lead to a realistic budget being approved. Looking at similar roles and their advertised salaries through job boards and networking sites will offer insight into what similar companies are offering for the same type of role. You will also need take into account how the variation in skills set affects the budget for a given role. A few common examples where you will need to up your budget include:

- ✓ Engineers with special certifications (OSCE, OSCP, AWS Security Specialty, etc.)
- ✓ Analysts that have been trained across multiple facets of Risk Management
- ✓ Architects that have experience in successfully leading multiple projects

Although platforms such as LinkedIn, Glassdoor and Indeed can be helpful, nothing beats talking to a specialist recruiter like Stanton House! We have first-hand experience on what candidates expect and are being offered across different industry sectors and size of company.

Download your copy of our latest [US Cybersecurity Salary Guide](#), to find expected salary ranges, for different security roles, alongside expense multipliers.



## Writing job descriptions

Crating enticing job descriptions that are succinct and clear, in terms of role responsibilities and required skillsets, can be challenging. However, the process of writing a well thought out job description, is often the surest way to gain the budget and headcount approval you need.

The best place to start, is understanding the initial need for the position and how this translates to the overall responsibilities and day-to-day duties of the job. Define what the individual would need to do, in the short and long-term, to be successful. What, if any, are the niche, or extra responsibilities that are outside the typical description for this type of role? Be sure to outline where this person would fit into the hierarchy of the existing team.

A great way to structure your job description is to lay the responsibilities out first and then equate these to the required experience (often indicative of seniority) and skills / certifications needed.



### Top tips

- ✓ Include the most important and relevant job responsibilities at the top
- ✓ Avoid job responsibilities that are not aligned with an experience or skill requirement
- ✓ Include 'desired / flexible' requirements in a separate section titled 'preferred experience / requirements / qualifications'
- ✓ Avoid lengthy sentences / sections - use bullet points and separated sections
- ✓ Trim unnecessary 'fluff' - applicants prefer to read short job descriptions that include only key information
- ✓ Don't leave key information out! If it is a 'must have' or 'desired' skill or experience and it is likely to come up in the interview process, make sure it is articulated in the final job description
- ✓ Include a link to 'meet the team' sharing leadership and team LinkedIn profiles. Do they represent a diverse and welcoming team from a variety of backgrounds and career paths?



## Additional considerations

After salary, company culture is usually the second most important factor cited by candidates when considering a new opportunity. So, can you articulate why someone should join your organization over another?

Be sure to convey your company's purpose, any flexible working policies / practices, and how you would ensure the inclusion and wellbeing of all team members.

Finally, don't forget to include benefits such as 401K match, PTO policy, healthcare, volunteer days etc.

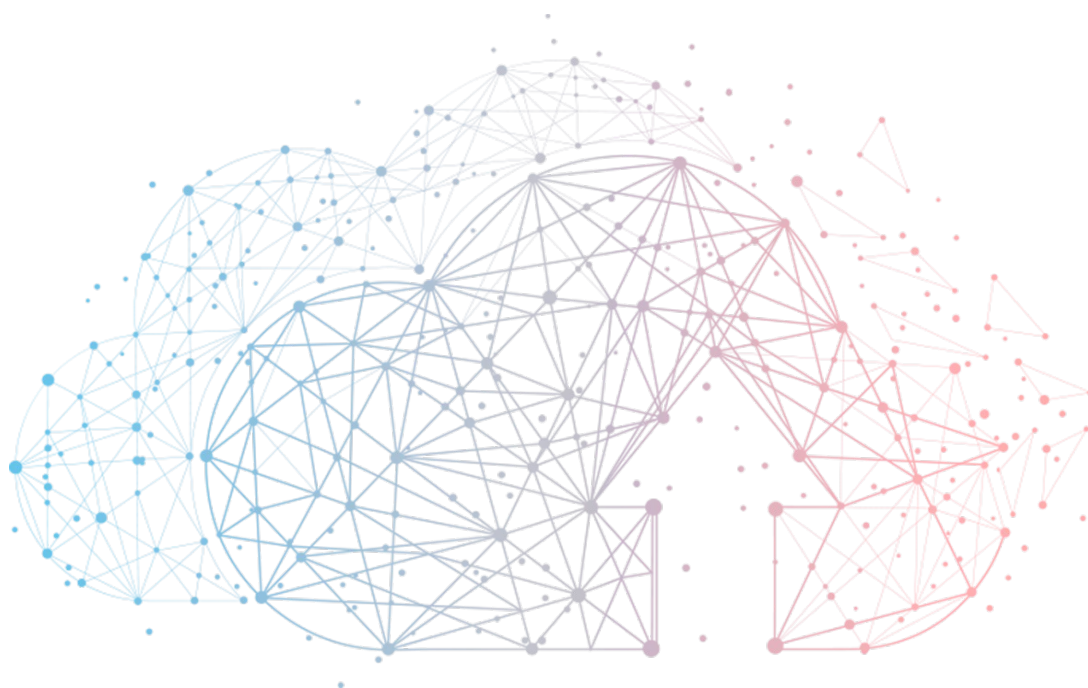
## Your checklist

- ✓ **Introduce the business** - set the scene in terms of mission and context
- ✓ **Share your top priorities** - what must be achieved in the first month / quarter / year?
- ✓ **Explain what success looks like** - for the individual and organization over the short and long-term
- ✓ **State exactly what you are you looking for** - what are the top five skills / experience needed?
- ✓ **Focus on desired behaviors** - define the mindset that would underpin success and be aware of your own biases / the temptation to describe a person in your image
- ✓ **Justify why they should join** - articulate the reasons why one of the world's finest talents should choose to join your team.

On the following pages, we share example job descriptions for some of the most 'in-demand' Cybersecurity roles:

1. [Cloud Security Engineers](#)
2. [Application Security Engineers](#)
3. [Detection & Response Analysts](#)





## Cloud Security Engineer - Job Description Example

### Responsibilities

- Understand relevant and evolving cloud security compliance and standards
- Help translate applicable frameworks into cloud security controls
- Help architecture teams design secure cloud infrastructure
- Work with engineers and developers into design integrated security solutions
- Work with engineers and developers to configure cloud specific security tooling
- Collaborate with security team to document cloud security processes and best practice

### Qualifications

- A good grasp with cloud computing principles (AWS/Azure/GCP)
- A good grasp on security principles within cloud computing
- Either knowledge of, or a strong desire to gain knowledge of Cloud Security Compliance Frameworks (ISO27001, SOC I/II, etc.)
- Cloud native security tooling (GuardDuty, etc.)
- Writing infrastructure as code (CloudFormation, Terraform, etc.)





## Detection & Response - Job Description Example

### Responsibilities

- Participate in forensic and incident response investigations, and present a comprehensive and professional report of findings from investigations
- Configure and troubleshoot security controls (e.g., AWS SGs, FIM, SIEM, etc.)
- Create and develop SOC processes and procedures at all levels
- Serve as an escalation resource and mentor for other analysts
- Ability to design and implement new approaches for detecting attacks and effective containment techniques including scripting, analytics and automation
- Stay current with new threats and exploits and assist in adjusting the company's security posture accordingly

### Qualifications

- Humility, drive, and creativity
- At least 3-4 years of experience as a Security Analyst doing hands-on incident detection and response
- Strong competency with SIEM, EDR, and threat hunting
- Strong knowledge of system and security controls within different OS (Windows, MacOS, Linux/Unix)
- Strong knowledge of and experience in SIEM platforms and EDR tools
- Experience conducting incident response in a cloud environment



## Application Security Engineer - Job Description Example

### Responsibilities

- Provide technical leadership to help shape and research intelligent solutions for our application security program
- Research and select optimum tools from vendor partners to serve our needs
- Promote, design, and evaluate application security in all phases of the application life cycle
- Perform SAST, DAST, Secure Code Review of applications in all phases of the development lifecycle
- Help drive the approach to application security, authentication, and secure development practices across a wide variety of distributed services
- Provide reporting to executive leadership on current program/project status
- Identify risks and gaps within our current state platform and drive future state enhancements
- Grow into architectural responsibilities as your knowledge of application security grows
- Grow into cloud and container application security as your knowledge of the technologies grows

### Qualifications

- Humility, drive, and creativity
- At least 4-5 years of experience in a combination of software development and application security
- Strong competency at SAST, DAST and secure code review
- Strong knowledge of OWASP attack TTP
- Strong knowledge of and experience in implementing SDLC best practices
- Experience managing projects with numerous stakeholders and deadlines
- Experience in evaluating and selecting vendor tools

## Effective interviewing

Effective interviewing is all about using your time in a focused, efficient and decisive manner. In this climate, the latter is imperative as so many of the candidates you interview, will inevitably have multiple offers on the table. The fact remains, whoever has an offer out first will have the upper hand. The sooner you offer, the more time you will have to negotiate with the candidate and build a sense of desirability for the role.

There's no doubt that it absolutely pays to do whatever you can to reduce the time spent from the point of application to the final offer.

Style, length, and speed of interview process varies greatly from company to company. However, it is important to define the stages, stakeholders and assessment criteria *before* you embark on the hiring process. It is also important to stick to your communicated process. Sudden changes and / or last-minute additional stages will only instill feelings of confusion and negativity with interviewees.

The shortest interview processes we have supported on has been two rounds, where the candidate met with two different people and was offered within the same week. On the flip side, we've seen a few organizations insist on 10+ rounds over many weeks. No matter the number of stages you decide upon, it is always important to be *intentional* with each interview; understanding the soft and technical skills you are assessing each time.

When deciding *who* from the organization a candidate should meet with, it is important you understand *why* that conversation is a vital step before bringing them on board. When this isn't clear, it can often be viewed as disorganization or inefficiency and breed a sense of distrust towards the prospective employer in the eyes of the candidate.

Asking yourself 'why' is also of value when considering the interview questions you want to ask. Understanding the desired response to specific questions will make it far easier for the interviewer to provide feedback and have a solid opinion on the candidate. This applies to all types of interview questions, including technical.





## Non-technical question examples:

### What makes you a good communicator?

This allows the candidate to display their communication style through real-world impacts and examples, rather than just sharing how they depict their communication style in general terms.

### Tell me about a time you made a mistake?

This gives the candidate the opportunity to display self-awareness, resilience and a growth mind-set. Only if they can share what they learned and have since changed as a result of the experience of course!

### What do you consider yourself an expert at?

The candidate will likely open up and become more confident when talking about something they're really passionate about. This question invites conversation and will likely give the interviewer more insight into communication style outside of an interview setting as well as the chance to probe deeper with follow up questions.



## Efficient interview process examples:

### Scenario 1

- 30-minute introductory conversation with the hiring manager
- 2-hour back-to-back panel

### Scenario 2

- 1 hour 2 people working directly with (IC or Leader) technical
- 30 minutes with a lead engineer for specifics in technical capabilities
- 30 minutes with the hiring manager to wrap up

### Scenario 3

- 1-hour introductory conversation with the hiring manager
- 1-hour with more senior team members
- 30-minutes with the CEO to wrap up

### Scenario 4

- 30-minute introductory conversation with the hiring manager
- 2.5-hour panel - 45 minutes each with three people, peers or leaders

### Scenario 5

- 30-minute introductory conversation with the hiring manager
- 1 hour with technical members of wider business

## Inefficient interview process examples:

- ✓ Going more than 48 hours without providing candidate feedback after an interview
- ✓ Lengthening the process by including interviews with people in roles with little relevance to the open position
- ✓ Interviewers not being prepared for each conversation





## The final interview wraps & the feedback loop begins!

The period between the final interview and decision can be emotionally charged. Emotions, on both sides of the table, are heightened as individuals have invested a lot of time and effort into the process. It can feel that there's a lot to lose if things go wrong at this stage.

As the hiring manager, you've found the best possible match, both technically and culturally, now you need to get the candidate to sign on the dotted line!

So, is there a 'right way' to go about this? What steps can you take to ensure the highest likelihood of securing your preferred candidate?

Acting with a sense of urgency and purpose is always best! Be prepared that your preferred candidate may be entertaining other offers in the background - even if you were successful in expediting the interview process.

A decisive, firm and enticing offer speaks volumes in terms of how much you value their skills and experience, however, you may need a little time to formalize an offer.

Just be sure to keep all candidates informed on decisions / timings and update them as soon as possible if they are not successful. Be sure to provide full and thorough feedback to each candidate, regardless of outcome, and answer any questions they have.



## The timeline

Map out your actions and timeline following the final interview:



## Navigating the offer stage

### Soft offers

With a final candidate in mind, you need to ensure that you at least meet, or exceed, their salary expectations. In this competitive market, it will not pay to try to 'low ball' them - where you offer below their previously communicated minimum salary expectations.

Before a formal, written offer is made and a contract is signed - it is quite likely that you will want to make a 'soft' (verbal) offer to your preferred candidate. This allows you to 'test the waters' on their commitment to the role, ensuring complete buy in from the individual and the opportunity to negotiate on salary / benefits if necessary.

#### There are two ways you can do this:

1. The hiring manager can reach out directly and make a verbal offer to the candidate themselves. This allows for a close relationship to form straight away, even without the finalized offer letter. It will undoubtedly mean a lot to a candidate to hear the words directly from their (hopefully) soon to be boss.
2. The HR/TA/Recruiter can soft offer. The recruiter has built a solid foundation/rapport with the candidate and is able to expertly deliver the offer



## Formal offers

With a soft offer out, the candidate may have accepted, though they may wait to review the final offer letter before making any *actual* decision.

Upon delivering the offer letter, make sure that communication is kept very consistent. This is a time when questions can surface! Keeping the candidate engaged and feeling valued will only strengthen your chances of securing them.

If a candidate's expectations are met, they will hopefully officially accept!

Congratulations! Months of hard work has finally come to an end... or has it?!

## Counteroffers

Companies are doing what they can to hold on to their security talent, so counteroffers are becoming increasingly common. This typically occurs when the candidate approaches their manager to hand in their notice.

Employers typically try to match or indeed exceed an offered salary - if they really want to hold on to their employee. This can of course tempt candidates who are already familiar with their employer and believe this to be the 'safer option'.

**If this happens, here are a few things to ask / discuss with your candidate, in an open and honest conversation:**

1. What were their initial motivators to move?
2. If they want another pay bump or promotion, would they have to go out and get another offer for their current employer to move on this?
3. At which company - do they think – they will gain more personal and professional growth?
4. Are they considering staying with their existing employer just because it is familiar?

Your recruitment partner will of course be able to have these open conversations, especially as the possibility of a counteroffer should have been discussed at the very beginning of the process, to help minimize drop out.

If after these discussions your candidate decides to decline the counteroffer, thus starts the onboarding period. Hooray!



## The onboarding period

Making the move to a new organization and role can be equally exciting as it is terrifying! It is, after all, a major life-changing decision that can either negatively or positively impact our day-to-day lives.

Because of this, the transition / notice period can start to cause second thoughts, especially if communication from the prospective employer is below par.

It is vitally important that talent teams and hiring managers keep in constant communication with their new starter right up to their first day. Regularly scheduled check-ins, team lunches or socials *before* they start and even a congratulatory gift will make the move feel more 'real' to a candidate.

## Conclusion

After analyzing dozens of job processes, and picking out what makes one successful over another, we feel that this guide captures the absolute 'must dos' within the hiring process. We hope you've found this guide informative and feel better prepared for the complex undertaking that is expanding your team!

Please connect with the whole of the Cybersecurity team here at Stanton House and do not hesitate to reach out for further advice and support.



## See what our customers say...

*"I've had the pleasure of working with Alek during some recent resourcing needs. Alek was very responsive, brought the highest level of candidates, and made sure that my team and I, as well as the candidates, were treated as though we were the only group he was working with. He was proactive, thoughtful and considerate. I will gladly work with him during future resourcing needs!"*

**Senior Manager, Threat & Response Analysis**

*"I absolutely love working with Sam and the team - what a powerhouse team! We hired 100% of what my team was looking for, then added one more candidate because the quality has been so high. I could not have built my core AppSec team so quickly without your help."*

**Senior Director, Application & Product Security**

*"I recently worked with Maddison in the search for a new job. I've had many different experiences when searching for a job some good, some bad. I can easily say though working with Maddison was a great experience. I was kept in the loop every step of the way, given prep tools and help interfacing with the company. Completely smooth experience! And to top it off - I got the job! Thanks Maddison!"*

**Senior Application Security Engineer**

*"Working with Christina the last few months has been a blessing. She made everything feel smooth and simple from assisting with my resume, setting up the interviews, and finalizing everything I was looking for in a role. I can't thank her enough for helping me land a fantastic Cybersecurity position with a great company. Christina has an elegant true human touch and makes you feel comfortable. I am extremely happy to work with her and Stanton House. Cheers to Christina and the whole Stanton House team."*

**Cloud Security, Consultant**



## About us

Stanton House is an award-winning provider of specialist recruitment solutions. Recent accolades include the American Best in Business Awards Winner 2022 and Inspiring Workplace Awards Winner 2022.

Since launching in 2010, we have grown to over 80 employees and established offices in the US and the UK, having developed a customer-focused proposition that has laid the foundations for consistent success.

From our established office in Chicago, we help organizations across North America find exceptional Permanent and Contract talent, within the highly specialized areas of:

- ✓ Cybersecurity
- ✓ Sales, Marketing & Customer Success
- ✓ Product & Engineering

Our customers range from the most exciting start-ups at the beginning of their growth to the world's largest organizations, and we take great pride in having an opinion on the topics that will shape the future of Cybersecurity.

Our unique set of values truly differentiates us from the competition and our purpose of creating exceptional customer experiences is central to all that we do.

We are creative in how we add value to our customers, and we build trusting, long-term relationships with clients and candidates alike. This enables us to fully understand motivations and objectives and to deliver exceptional outcomes.



## CONTACT & CONNECT WITH US

*The more of our team you connect with or follow on LinkedIn, the greater your chance of seeing our full breadth of opportunities and the exceptional cybersecurity talent that we represent!*



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