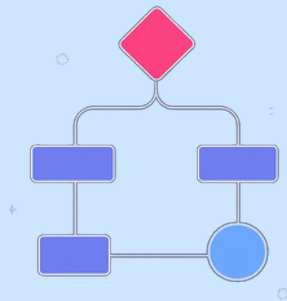




The Hire vs. Deploy Decision

A practical framework for choosing between building in-house and deploying an existing team.





Why Did We Write This Guide?

Most hiring comparisons start and end with salary. The real decision — whether to hire someone new or deploy an existing team — usually turns on three things salary alone doesn't capture: the true cost of a hire, how long it takes to become productive, and whether the real constraint is budget or access to a specific skill. This guide walks through each of those, with a simple framework to apply to your own situation.

The Real Cost of a Hire

Most internal hiring comparisons are built around one number: the salary on the offer letter. But that number is the start of the cost, not the total.

\$4,700–\$4,800

Average Cost-Per-Hire

Per SHRM's 2026 Human Capital Benchmarking Report — covering only direct recruiting spend.

1.25×–1.4×

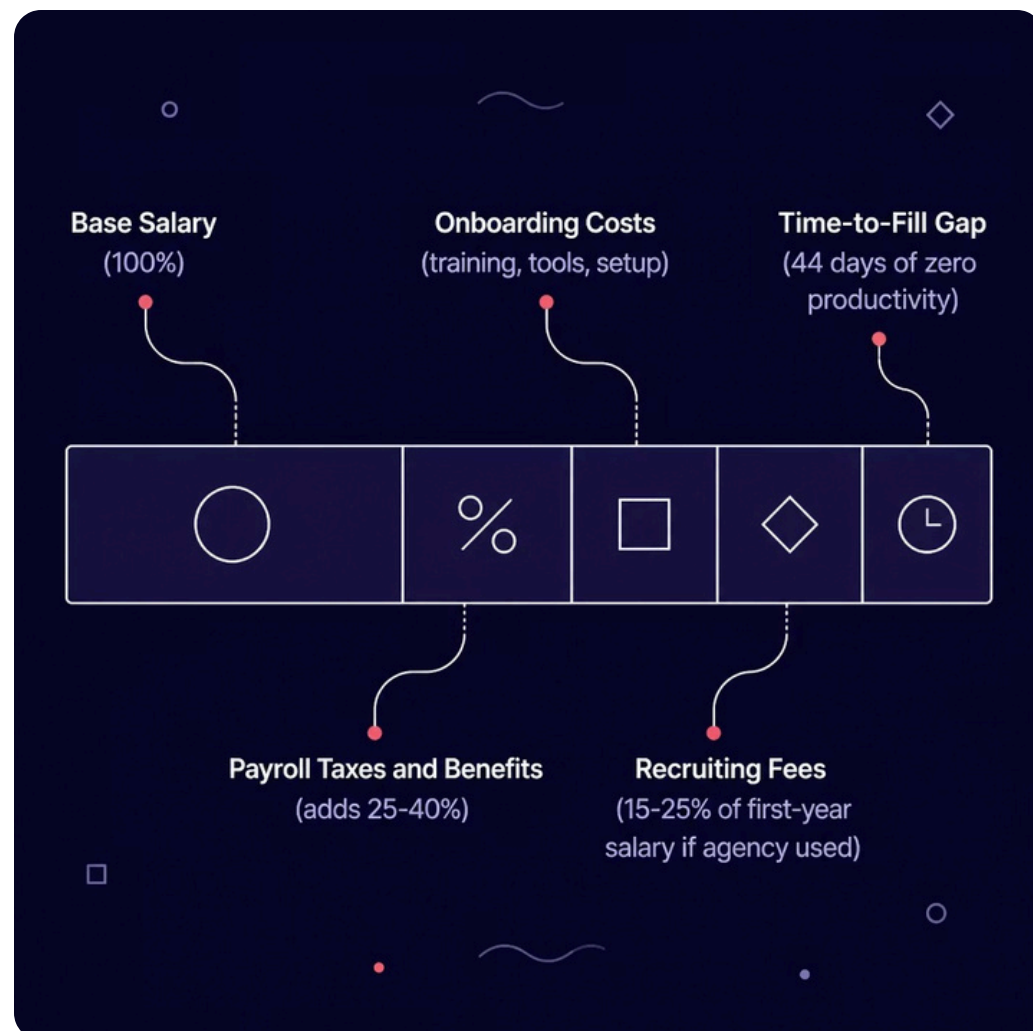
First-Year Employer Cost

Typical total cost relative to base salary once taxes, benefits, and onboarding are included.

44 days

Average Time-to-Fill

Over six weeks where the role sits open and unproductive before anyone even starts.



What the Full Picture Looks Like

- Total first-year employer cost typically runs 1.25× to 1.4× the base salary once taxes, benefits, and onboarding are included.
- External recruiting agency fees, when used, typically run 15% to 25% of a hire's first-year salary.
- The average time-to-fill a role is 44 days — over six weeks where the role sits open and unproductive before anyone even starts.

Sources: SHRM 2026 Human Capital Benchmarking Report; SHRM, "The Real Costs of Recruitment."

None of this means hiring is the wrong choice — it often isn't. It means the comparison only holds up if the full cost is on the table, not just the headline salary number.

The Hidden Timeline: Ramp-Up

Even after someone accepts an offer and starts, there's a second cost most comparisons miss entirely: the time between their start date and the point they're actually productive.



Typical Time-to-Full-Productivity

3–9 months for technical and senior roles, according to industry onboarding research — sometimes longer for highly specialized positions.

- Entry-level: 1 to 3 months to full productivity
- Mid-level: 3 to 6 months to full productivity
- Senior/Technical: 6 months to a year to full productivity

30%–200%

Cost of a bad hire as a percentage of annual salary, once replacement and disruption costs are included.

\$30,000+

Oxford Economics estimate for replacing a mid-level employee and waiting for full productivity.

Sources: Click Boarding onboarding research; SHRM; AllenComm, citing Oxford Economics.

Ramp-up time is the cost most hiring plans budget zero dollars for — and it's frequently the single largest line item once everything is added up.

When It's Actually a Skills Problem, Not a Cost Problem

Not every hiring decision is really about money. For a growing share of companies, the actual blocker is that the specific skill needed simply isn't available locally — at any price, on any reasonable timeline.

The Real Blocker

78% of executives now cite access to specialized skills — not cost savings — as a primary driver for using outside talent, according to recent industry survey data.

This shows up most clearly in technical hiring:

- More than half of companies report difficulty recruiting in-house developers with the specific skills they need, with searches often dragging on for months without a successful hire.
- Specialized skill sets — AI/ML, DevOps, advanced cybersecurity, niche legacy systems — frequently don't exist in a given local market at any price point a budget can realistically absorb.
- Even where cost reduction remains a factor for many companies, it is increasingly considered alongside, not instead of, the ability to access skills that aren't available locally.

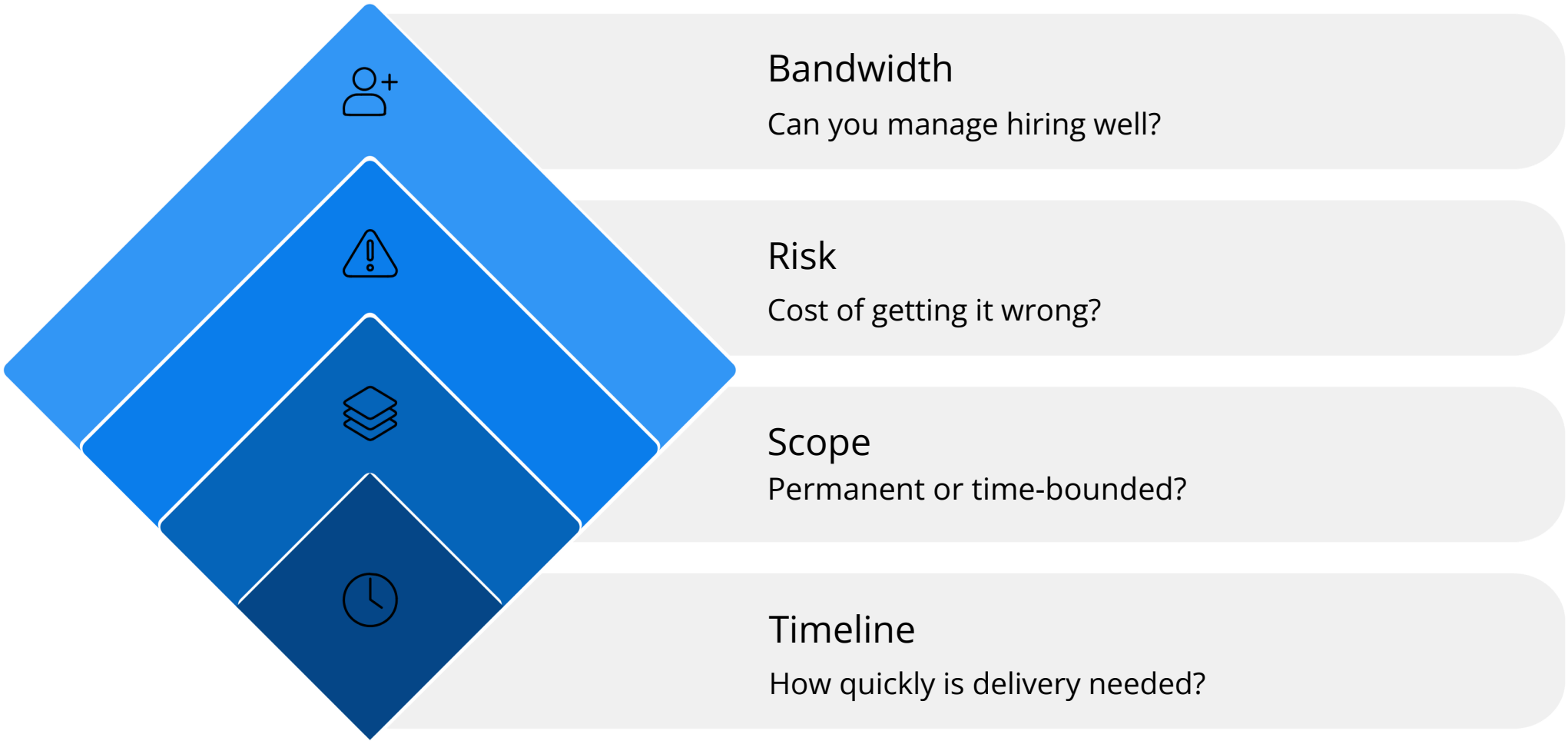
Sources: industry executive survey data, 2026; HatchWorks, "In-House vs Outsourcing Software Development."



- ❏ If the honest answer to "why haven't we filled this role" is "we can't find anyone," that's a different problem than "we can't afford anyone" — and it calls for a different solution.

4 Questions to Ask First

Before defaulting to either "hire" or "outsource," it's worth working through four questions. None of them have a universally correct answer — the right call depends on your specific situation.



Each question narrows the decision — together, they reveal whether hiring or deploying is the right path for your situation.

1

How quickly do you actually need this delivered?

If there's a launch date, board commitment, or competitive deadline driving the timeline, compare the realistic time-to-productivity for each path — not just time-to-hire. A role that takes 44 days to fill and 3–9 months to ramp is a very different timeline than a team that's already trained and available.

2

Is this a permanent need, or a specific, time- bounded one?

If the capability required is narrow, specialized, or tied to a defined project rather than an ongoing function, a dedicated or deployed team avoids the overhead of a permanent hire for what may turn out to be temporary work.

3

What's the cost of getting this decision wrong?

A bad permanent hire is expensive and slow to unwind — typically requiring a full restart of the search, plus the sunk cost already spent. An underperforming external engagement is usually easier to restructure or wind down without the same financial and legal complexity.

4

Do you have the management bandwidth to hire well right now?

Recruiting consumes significant senior leadership time — sourcing, interviewing, decision-making. If that bandwidth is already constrained elsewhere in the business, that's a real cost of the hiring path, even if it doesn't show up on an invoice.

When In-House Hiring Is Genuinely the Right Call

This framework isn't a case for outsourcing everything. There are real situations where building in-house is the better long-term decision:



Core Competitive Differentiation

The work is core to your competitive differentiation — the thing your business is genuinely hard to replicate, and will depend on for years.



Deep Domain Knowledge Required

The role requires deep, accumulated domain knowledge — regulated industries, complex financial systems, or highly specific technical verticals — that's slow to transfer and best retained internally.



Distinctive Team Culture

You're building a distinctive team culture or way of working that depends on close, daily, in-person collaboration.



Guaranteed Multi-Year Roadmap

You have a guaranteed, multi-year roadmap and the hiring bandwidth to do it properly, without compromising on quality to fill a seat quickly.

If most of these apply, the case for hiring directly is strong, and the four questions above will tend to point that way too.

Where CG-VAK Fits

CG-VAK has been delivering software and data engineering work for over 30 years, with 525+ professionals, 900+ clients served, and 2,500+ projects completed — built specifically around the kind of deployment-not-hiring model this guide describes.

30+

Years

900+

Clients
Served

525+

Bench
Strength

2500+

Projects
Delivered

That bench spans seven capability areas, so "deploy" isn't limited to one type of role:

Seven Capability Areas

- **AI, machine learning, and data** — including our Hyper Data Curation framework
- **Outsourced product development**, including our microGCC™ model
- **Custom software and ERP development**
- **Web and e-commerce development**
- **Mobile app development**
- **QA, test automation, and penetration testing**
- **Infrastructure management and nearshore support**



A Quick Self-Check

If two or more of the following are true, it's likely worth running the numbers on deployment rather than a new hire:

→ **Speed is critical**

The role needs to be filled faster than a realistic 44-day search plus a multi-month ramp-up allows.

→ **Skills are scarce locally**

The specific skill required is hard to find locally, regardless of budget.

→ **Work is well-scoped**

The work is well-scoped and time-bounded, rather than an open-ended permanent function.

→ **Bandwidth is limited**

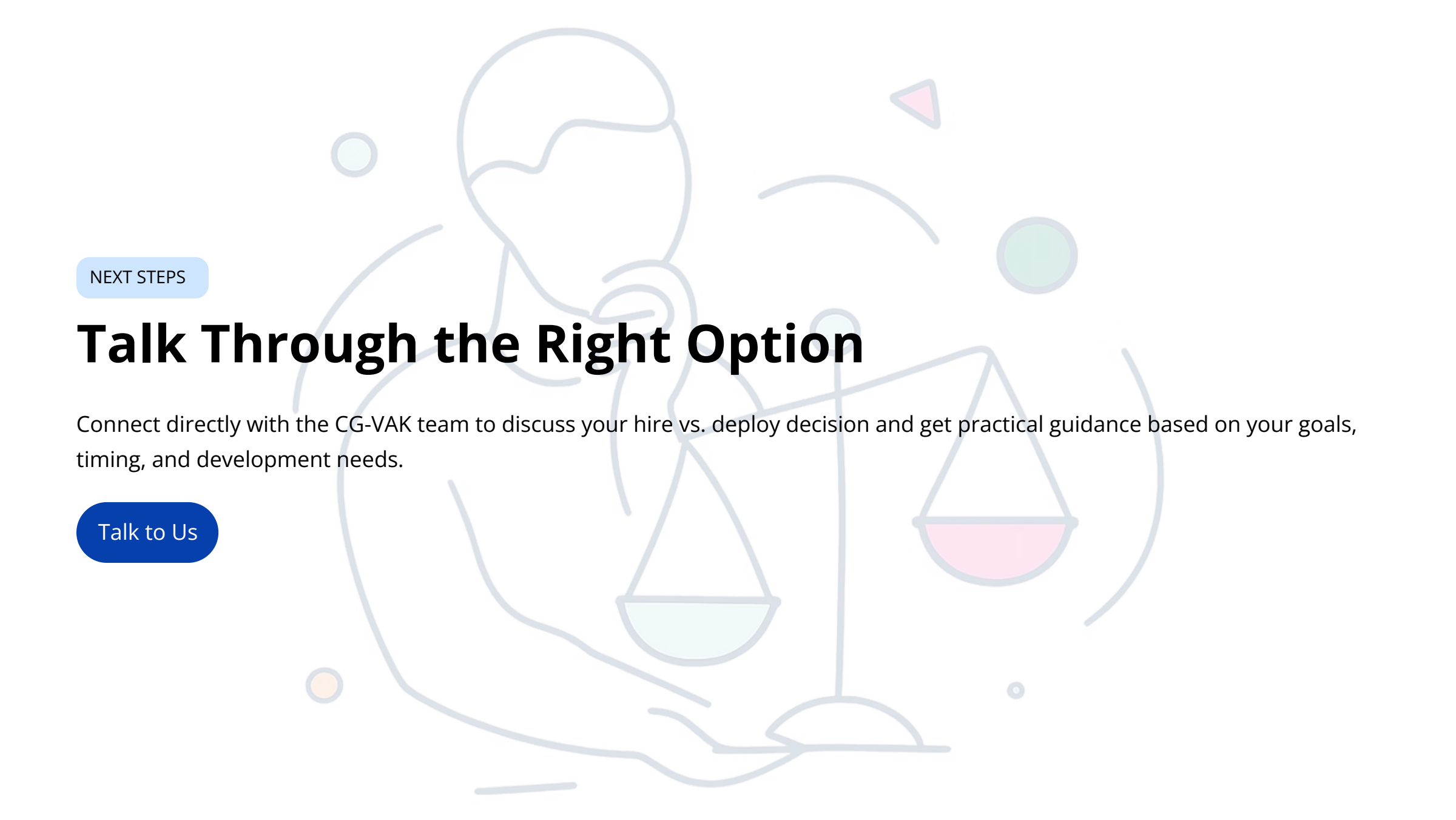
Leadership bandwidth for a full hiring cycle is limited right now.



See the numbers fast

Compare hiring vs. deployment in minutes. Use your inputs to see the cost difference — no call required.

[Go to Calculator](#)

A faint, stylized background illustration in light blue. It depicts a person's head in profile, facing right, with a hand resting on their chin in a thinking pose. Below the head is a balance scale. The left pan of the scale is filled with a light blue liquid, and the right pan is filled with a pink liquid. The scale is slightly tilted towards the right. Scattered around the central figure are several small, colorful geometric shapes: a light blue circle in the upper left, a pink triangle in the upper right, a green circle in the middle right, an orange circle in the lower left, and a small grey circle in the lower right. There are also some curved lines suggesting motion or thought.

NEXT STEPS

Talk Through the Right Option

Connect directly with the CG-VAK team to discuss your hire vs. deploy decision and get practical guidance based on your goals, timing, and development needs.

Talk to Us