RemoteHeR · Module 3 · Decision game

MODULE 3 DECISION GAME

# The shortlist you did not build



An AI tool returns a shortlist of five from a field of two hundred. You decide what to check, what to accept and what to say when the hiring manager pushes back.

**DRAFT – partner review**
Drafted from the curriculum. The build lead reviews it before release.

## Before you start

You are the HR officer at Tinted Glass Services. The company is hiring two Customer Support Specialists. Two hundred people applied. On Friday night, the new AI screening tool scored every application and produced a shortlist of five.

The requirement agreed with the hiring team is short: customer-facing experience, written communication, experience with digital support tools, and working with customers in English. Nothing else.

Lena, the Head of Customer Support, wants interviews booked by Wednesday.

There are no right answers scored here and nothing is graded. Every choice leads to a consequence and then to the next decision. Play it once making the choices you would actually make. Then play it again and take a different route: the second run is where most people learn something.

## Decision 1 · Monday, 08:40 — the shortlist arrives

The tool's email is tidy. Five names, five match scores between 91 and 96, and one line of explanation for each. "Strong fit due to relevant professional background."

Lena replies within four minutes: "Great. Send the invitations today."

What do you do first?

| Choice | What happens | Verdict |
|---|---|---|
| A. Put the five profiles next to the | It takes forty minutes. Four of the five clearly meet all four | good |

Co-funded by the European Union

Erasmus+ 2025-1-PT01-KA220-VET-000365831 · CC BY-SA 4.0

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| agreed requirement and check each one | requirements. The fifth has no evidence of written communication anywhere in her application. Her score of 93 seems to come from her previous employer, a well-known support centre.<br><br>You now know something the email did not tell you: a high score and a met requirement are not the same thing. | |
| B. Send the invitations, as Lena asked. The tool has already screened them | Five invitations go out at 09:15. Two days later, the interview panel finds that one candidate has never written to a customer in her working life. The panel asks who checked the list.<br><br>The answer is that nobody did. The tool recommended, and you sent. | bad |
| C. Ask the supplier to explain how the scores were calculated before doing anything | A reasonable question, and a slow one. The supplier's support desk replies on Wednesday with a link to a brochure.<br><br>Meanwhile Lena has asked twice why nothing has happened. You have learned nothing about these five candidates that you could have learned yourself in an hour. | mixed |

## Decision 2 · Monday, 10:30 — the pattern

Looking at the five again, you notice that four of them worked at large, well-known support centres. The requirement says nothing about the type or size of employer.

The supplier's brochure says the tool "learns from your best past hires".

What do you do with this?

| Choice | What happens | Verdict |
|---|---|---|
| A. Note it as a possible training-data pattern and check whether employer type is driving the scores | You write one line in your notes: "Employer type is not a requirement. Is the model rewarding it because past hires came from big centres?"<br><br>You cannot prove it yet. But you have named the question, and you know what evidence would answer it. | good |
| B. Accept it. Big support centres probably produce better staff | Probably is doing a lot of work in that sentence. The requirement was agreed precisely so that nobody had to | bad |

Co-funded by the European Union

Erasmus+ 2025-1-PT01-KA220-VET-000365831 · CC BY-SA 4.0

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | guess.<br><br>By accepting the pattern, you have quietly added a fifth requirement that the hiring team never chose, and that excludes everyone who learned the job somewhere smaller. | |
| C. Remove the four big-centre candidates to balance the list | You have replaced one unchosen criterion with another. The four candidates meet the requirement. Removing them for where they worked is no fairer than ranking them up for it.<br><br>The problem was never these four people. It is the criterion nobody agreed to. | bad |

## Decision 3 · Monday, 14:00 — the ones who were not chosen

You open a sample of twenty applications the tool scored below 50. Two stand out.

Jordan Lee has four years in hospitality: handling complaints, using a booking system, writing to international guests in English. Casey Brown ran customer questions and delivery problems for a small online shop. Neither application uses the phrase "customer support".

What now?

| Choice | What happens | Verdict |
|---|---|---|
| A. Read both against the four requirements and add them to the list if they meet them | Both meet all four requirements on the evidence in their applications. You add them, with a note of why.<br><br>You also write down the more uncomfortable question: if two of twenty sampled low scorers meet the requirement, how many more are in the other hundred and eighty? | good |
| B. Trust the scores. If they were good enough, the tool would have ranked them higher | That is the assumption the sample has just disproved. The tool did not find their experience because it was described in different words.<br><br>Missing evidence in a format a system recognises is not the same as missing skills. Jordan and Casey are not told why. They simply never hear back. | bad |
| C. Run the tool again with the same | It produces the same scores, which tells you the tool is | mixed |

Co-funded by the European Union

Erasmus+ 2025-1-PT01-KA220-VET-000365831 · CC BY-SA 4.0

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| settings, to see if the result changes | consistent. It does not tell you whether it is right.<br><br>A rule applied the same way twice is still the same rule. You have spent an hour confirming the problem rather than fixing it. | |

## Decision 4 · Tuesday, 09:15 — the numbers

You ask the supplier's dashboard for a breakdown. It shows screening results by whether the CV contains a gap of more than a year.

CVs with a gap: 60 applications, 3 passed the screening score. CVs without a gap: 140 applications, 37 passed.

What do you conclude?

| Choice | What happens | Verdict |
|---|---|---|
| A. Calculate the rates, record the gap, and investigate where and why it arises | 5 per cent against about 26 per cent. You write: "A large difference at the screening stage. It does not yet show why. Possible causes: employment gaps used as a scoring feature, continuity rules, or training data from past hires."<br><br>A difference is a signal to investigate, and you have treated it exactly as that. | good |
| B. Conclude that the tool discriminates against people with career breaks, and stop using it | You may turn out to be right. But you have not checked, and the evidence you have shows a difference, not its cause.<br><br>When Lena asks how you know, you cannot answer. The conversation becomes about your conclusion instead of about the data, and the data was strong enough on its own. | mixed |
| C. Ignore it. The same tool was applied to everyone, so it cannot be unfair | Applying the same rule to everyone is exactly how a neutral-looking process produces unequal outcomes. Equal treatment at the input does not guarantee equal outcomes at the output.<br><br>The people with gaps are disproportionately those who took time out to care for someone. You have just decided not to look. | bad |

Co-funded by the European Union

Erasmus+ 2025-1-PT01-KA220-VET-000365831 · CC BY-SA 4.0

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

## Decision 5 · Tuesday, 11:00 — Lena pushes back

Lena calls. "I've seen your note. Honestly, this is why we bought the tool, so that HR doesn't second-guess every list. It's objective. We paid for it. Just approve the five and let's get on."

What do you say?

| Choice | What happens | Verdict |
|---|---|---|
| A. "I'll book the four who meet the requirement today. I need two days on the rest, and here is why" | Lena is not pleased, but she has interviews this week and a reason she can repeat. You send her a five-line summary: the requirement, the one candidate who does not meet it, the two you added, the screening gap, and what you are checking.<br><br>She forwards it to her own manager with one word: "Fair." | good |
| B. "Fine. It's your vacancy, so it's your decision" | It is not only her decision. The process runs through HR, and the shortlist will go out with your name on the approval.<br><br>Handing the decision to the manager does not remove you from it. It just means nobody checked. | bad |
| C. "The tool is biased. I won't approve anything it produces" | Lena hears a refusal, not a finding. You have a real concern and some real evidence, but you have framed it as a verdict you cannot yet support.<br><br>She escalates. The question in the next meeting is about HR being difficult, not about the screening gap. | bad |

## Decision 6 · Wednesday, 16:20 — a candidate asks

An email arrives from Taylor, who was not shortlisted.

"Was my application rejected by a computer? I have two years of handling student enquiries in English by email, and I used an online case system every day. I would like to understand what happened."

How do you reply?

| Choice | What happens | Verdict |
|---|---|---|

Co-funded by the European Union

Erasmus+ 2025-1-PT01-KA220-VET-000365831 · CC BY-SA 4.0

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| A. Explain the tool's role, what it considered, and where a person reviewed it, and offer to look again | You write that an automated tool scored applications against defined criteria, that HR reviewed the shortlist and a sample of other applications, and that you will review hers personally against the four requirements.<br><br>You do, and she meets them. She is invited. You also note that your reply had to describe what actually happened, which is only possible because you checked. | good |
| B. "Thank you for your interest. We received many strong applications" | It answers nothing she asked. She asked what role a system played, and she is entitled to understandable information about that.<br><br>She writes again, more formally, and copies in someone you have not met. | bad |
| C. "Yes, the system decided. We do not have any more detail" | "The system decided" is not an explanation, and in this case it is not even true: a person approved the list.<br><br>You have told a candidate that nobody is responsible for the decision about her. That sentence is likely to be quoted back to you. | bad |

## Decision 7 · Friday — what goes on the record

Interviews are booked. Lena now wants the tool rolled out to every vacancy from next month. You are writing the note that closes this round.

What goes in it?

| Choice | What happens | Verdict |
|---|---|---|
| A. What the tool recommended, what you checked and changed, the screening gap, and who approved the final list | One page. It names the requirement, the recommendation, your changes and the reasons, the gap still being investigated, and your name as the person who approved the final shortlist.<br><br>It also says, plainly, what must be checked and who must be consulted before any wider roll-out. Anyone reading it next year can see how the decision was made. | good |
| B. "Shortlist produced by the AI tool and approved" | Seven words, and none of them say who decided or why. If a candidate challenges the process, this note suggests that | bad |

Co-funded by the European Union

Erasmus+ 2025-1-PT01-KA220-VET-000365831 · CC BY-SA 4.0

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | the tool made the decision and a person signed it.<br><br>That is exactly the arrangement in which accountability looks as if it has disappeared. It has not. It is still yours, now without the evidence. | |
| C. Nothing. The ATS already logs which candidates were moved where | The ATS logs clicks, not reasons. It shows that the list changed, not why, and not what you found about the screening gap.<br><br>The roll-out goes ahead on the strength of a dashboard that says hiring is fine. | bad |

## Ending · A shortlist you can defend

You used the tool and you did not defer to it. Every name on the final list can be explained against the requirement, the candidates the tool missed were found, the screening gap is being investigated, and the record shows who decided. The tool did some of the work. You kept the accountability, which is the only way it was ever going to work.

## Ending · A shortlist with gaps in it

Some of the right checks happened and some did not. The final list is better than the tool's, but parts of the decision rest on the tool's word rather than on evidence. If a candidate challenges it, some of your answers will be "we did not look". Play again and see which single decision would have closed the biggest gap.

## Ending · The shortlist you did not build

The tool built this shortlist, and your name is on it. Qualified people were excluded for how they described their experience and for gaps in their CVs, and nobody can now explain why. None of that was the tool's decision. A system recommended; a person approved. That person was you.

## Debrief

Export your decision log. If you used this game for your artefact's written account, quote the decision you would change and say why. Accountability for an automated decision does not transfer to the tool.

## My decision log

Co-funded by the European Union

Erasmus+ 2025-1-PT01-KA220-VET-000365831 · CC BY-SA 4.0

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

## What I chose on my first play, and what happened

## What I changed on a second play, and why

Co-funded by the European Union

Erasmus+ 2025-1-PT01-KA220-VET-000365831 · CC BY-SA 4.0

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.