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U.S. Hiring Readiness Checklist

Seventeen items that separate a clean first U.S. hire from an expensive one.

Your first U.S. hire sets the pattern for every hire after it. Companies that get these seventeen items right before the offer goes out build on solid ground from day one. Work through each section in order. The sequence matters.

1 Entity and Registration

Before anything else, the structure that employs the person has to exist.

- ☐ You have decided how you will employ in the U.S.: your own entity or an Employer of Record. The decision was made on strategy and cost over 24 months, not on speed alone.
- ☐ Your federal Employer Identification Number (EIN) is issued and active.
- ☐ You are registered as an employer in the state where your hire will work, with withholding and unemployment insurance accounts open.
- ☐ You have confirmed the workers compensation requirement for that state and know how you will meet it.

2 Classification Before the First Offer

The most expensive U.S. hiring mistakes happen here, before a single document is signed.

- ☐ You classified the role as employee (W-2) or contractor (1099) based on how the work actually operates, not on which option costs less.
- ☐ If the role is an employee, you determined exempt or non-exempt status under federal duties and salary tests, plus the rules of the hire's state.
- ☐ The pay meets or exceeds the minimum wage that applies to your hire: federal, state, or local, whichever is highest.
- ☐ The compensation is benchmarked to the U.S. market for that role and that state, not converted from your home-country pay scale.
- ☐ You checked whether the hire's state requires the pay range in the job posting. A growing number do.

3 The First-Hire Document Stack

A complete file on day one protects the relationship and the company for years.

- ☐ Your offer letter is written for U.S. at-will employment in the hire's state. Home-country contract templates do not transfer.
- ☐ Your I-9 verification process is ready, including a compliant plan for remote verification if the hire will not be in the same location.
- ☐ You identified every new-hire notice the state requires and built them into onboarding.
- ☐ You have a personnel file structure that keeps employment records complete, confidential, and separate from medical information.

4 First-Payroll Setup

Payroll done right the first time becomes infrastructure. Done wrong, it becomes cleanup.

- ☐ Your payroll provider or EOR is selected, connected to your tax accounts, and tested before the first pay date.
- ☐ Your pay schedule meets the state's pay frequency rules. States set minimums and they differ.
- ☐ New-hire reporting to the state is set up to run within the required window.
- ☐ Required workplace postings are in place, physical or electronic, matched to how your team actually works.

Every unchecked box is a decision waiting to be made.

Most take an hour to resolve with the right guidance and months to correct without it. If you want a second set of eyes before your first offer goes out, book a call. Thirty minutes, in English, Spanish, or Portuguese.

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