Brilliant

How Schnucks cut open roles by nearly 75% and built a smarter approach to hiring with Traitify.





Better hires, fewer open roles: the Schnucks story.

Three years ago, Schnucks had somewhere between 800 and 1,000 open positions at any given time across its stores, a number the grocery chain simply treated as normal. Today, that number sits around 300, and John Dennis, who manages Schnucks' talent acquisition team, rarely has a store with double-digit openings.

Schnucks didn't get there by hiring faster or casting a wider net. It just got smarter and more selective — store managers who once hired the first reasonable candidate through the door are now interviewing three or four people and choosing the strongest one, using a personality assessment built and refined specifically around what makes someone succeed at Schnucks.

Who is Schnucks

Schnucks is a family-owned grocery chain with 112 stores and about 11,000 teammates (employees). It's the kind of company where career paths tend to start at the register or in the deli and, for a striking number of people, end up in leadership roles in the stores and at the corporate level. Steve Zubert, who works alongside Dennis on Schnucks' Workday team, estimates that half or more of the corporate office started out as store-level teammates.

Dennis and Zubert both did exactly that.

That internal-mobility culture is the context for everything else in this story. Schnucks isn't just trying to fill roles, it’s trying to find people who will thrive and grow — and maybe even be with the company three decades later, like Dennis and many other leaders are.

The challenge.

The challenge.

Filling hundreds of roles with limited visibility into candidate quality.

Before working with Traitify (now part of Crosschq) Schnucks' hiring process ran on volume and speed. Open roles regularly sat in the 800-to-1,000 range, and the prevailing approach to hiring was straightforward: if a candidate seemed reasonable, hire them.

"Before, when a candidate came into the store, nine times out of 10 we're going to hire that person," said Dennis.

That approach wasn't sustainable at scale, and it didn't give hiring managers much to work with beyond gut instinct. Schnucks needed a way to give store leaders real signal on who was likely to stay and succeed, without slowing down a hiring process that already had to move fast to keep pace with turnover.







Discovery

Schnucks' path to the assessment wasn't immediate. When the company first implemented Paradox as its hiring platform, it wasn't yet using the personality assessment at all. That changed only a couple of months before go-live, when the team decided, late in the process, that it was worth the delay.

"It took me a while to get used to it," Dennis said. "But two or three months before we went live with Paradox, we were finally like, you know what, I think this makes sense."

Delaying the launch to add it turned out to be the right call. Since then, Schnucks has become one of the assessment's more tenured and hands-on clients, meeting with the team behind it roughly twice a year to review turnover data and adjust its hiring benchmarks accordingly.

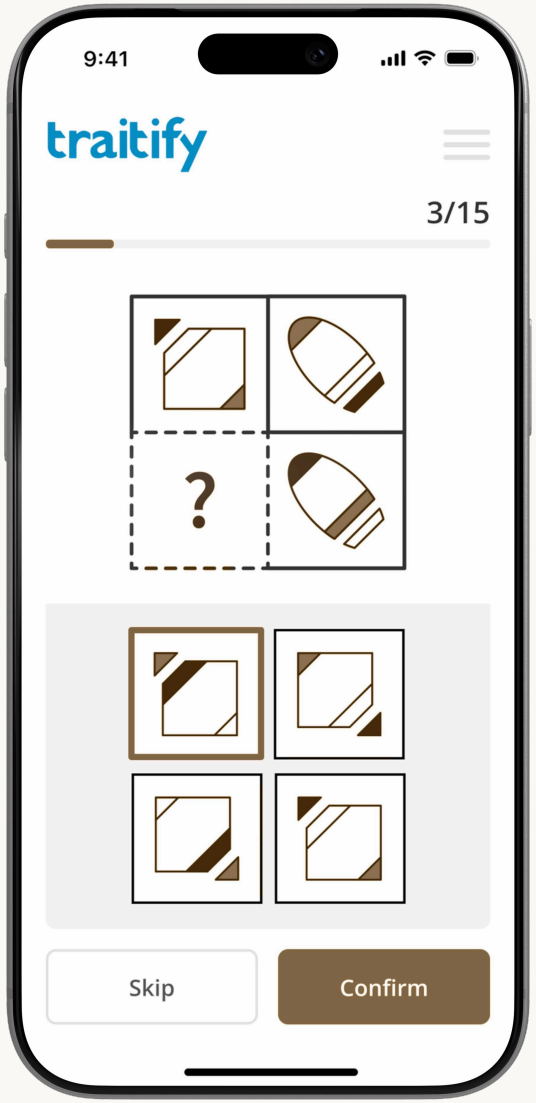
"Because of the assessment scores, our recruiters are sending a higher-caliber candidate to the stores. The stores are able to be a little more picky than they used to be."



John Dennis
Talent Acquisition Manager, Schnucks Markets

The solution.

The solution.



Traitify assessments identify who will truly thrive in a role.

The assessment applies to every store-level role at Schnucks, from entry-level clerks all the way up to store leaders and co-managers. What makes it work, according to Dennis, is that the benchmarks aren't identical across every role. Early on, Traitify's team of psychologists interviewed Schnucks teammates across different departments to figure out what a strong personality benchmark actually looked like for each one, then built role-specific scoring from there.

That customization hasn't been static. Schnucks reviews its turnover and hiring data with the assessment team every six months and adjusts the benchmarks when the data calls for it.

"Every time we've met with them, we've kind of tweaked them a little bit here and there, just depending on the role," said Zubert. “In one case, a role was generating so many green-scored candidates that the bar wasn't differentiating enough. We wanted to tighten it up a little bit so we were getting higher qualified candidates as opposed to just having a big swath of green candidates."

The system also isn't rigidly exclusionary. Schnucks still hires candidates who score yellow or red based on application flow or when a manager has a strong personal referral. Red-scored candidates are automatically routed to a recruiter for a closer look before moving forward, and if they do advance to an interview, the hiring manager is given a heads-up
about which specific traits scored low, along with example interview questions tied to those traits
so they can probe further in person.

"There's absolutely still a human element to it," Zubert said. "It's not like if you score low on the assessment you're automatically gone. Those candidates may get pushed forward to an interview and if they interview well, they're still going to get a shot."

Most recently, Schnucks and the assessment team built a standalone benchmark specifically for the deli department, historically the highest-turnover area in the store, splitting it out from the broader meat-and-seafood grouping it had previously shared.

"Deli is the most demanding department in the store," Dennis said. "You're doing customer service, you're working on a deli slicer, you're frying chicken, you're cleaning. It’s multi-faceted. So we put more of an emphasis there."



The results.

The results.



Open roles down over 70%. Terminations way down. And retention is up.

The clearest signal has shown up in open roles and hiring volume. Schnucks has gone from a historical baseline of 800 to 1,000 open positions to roughly 300 today. Annual hiring has followed a similar trajectory, from a historical average of about 5,000 hires a year to a projected 4,000 in 2026, with year-over-year first-quarter hires down from 1,586 to 1,113.

"Because of the assessment scores, our recruiters and the Paradox system are sending a higher-caliber candidate to the stores," Dennis said. "The stores are able to be a little more picky than they used to be."

The turnover data backs that up. Green- and yellow-scored hires consistently retain longer than red-scored hires, with the gap reaching as much as 5% in some roles, like front-end checker positions, though the difference was smaller in departments like deli.

Just as important to Dennis and Zubert is what hasn't been happening: repeat hires for the same open positions, and the no-call, no-show terminations that used to eat into the team's time.

"Our terminations are way down as well, from pre-Traitify days to where we are today," Zubert said. "That in itself is a huge win for us."

Schnucks hasn't yet formally tracked whether the assessment correlates with faster promotions or stronger in-role performance, something Dennis and his team say are the roadmap. What they can point to with confidence is fewer open roles, lower turnover, and hiring managers who trust the process enough to slow down and pick the strongest candidate rather than the first one.

~70%

Reduction in open roles

(800–1,000 → ~250)

~30%

Fewer hires needed in Q1

YoY (1,586 → 1,113)

5%+

Retention lift for Green/Yellow hires over Red

"Our terminations are way down as well, from pre-Traitify days to where we are today. That in itself is a huge win for us."



Steve Zubert
Sr. Workday Analyst, Schnucks Markets

70%

reduction in open roles.

The bottom line

A faster, smarter hiring process.

Much like the long-tenured careers of Dennis and Zubert, Schnucks' story didn't happen overnight — it was over two years of steady, deliberate tuning, adjusting benchmarks by role, building a dedicated benchmark for its toughest department, and giving hiring managers the confidence to actually be selective.

The result is a hiring funnel that needs roughly 75% fewer open requisitions filled at any given time than it used to, with fewer terminations and a measurable retention gap favoring the candidates the assessment identifies as strong fits.

For a company where a bakery hire can end up running center store operations a decade later, that patience has always been part of the culture. Now it's built into the hiring process itself.

Smarter hiring intelligence.

