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Hiring Technical Talent:

Finding the Right People for Your Developer Team

You're working toward creating a culture that's compelling for a technical audience. But how exactly do you find and hire the right prospects? Developing a pipeline of high-quality candidates that turn into new hires and, eventually, productive members of the team requires a process focused on building personal relationships and trust.

Turning up the volume on your technical team pipeline

In a highly competitive job market, simply posting on general job boards (or on your own Careers page) doesn't cut it. You'll either end up with a flood of candidates to sift through — each of whom may or may not be a great fit — or a lack of applicants as your listing competes with thousands of others like it.

Want to shake up your candidate pipeline? It's time to make some changes to attract the best candidates.

Increase transparency to create interest

You've worked hard to establish a developer-centric culture, invest in high-impact methodologies, and leverage interesting technologies. Don't keep it a secret! Building a public reputation as a great place to work will help bring great candidates to you rather than forcing you

to seek them out. Encourage your devs to talk about their work and their teams, whether that means writing technical articles and blog posts, giving talks at industry events, or sharing their experiences with the community.

</> Hone your job descriptions and hiring team

According to seasoned HR executives, one of the biggest turnoffs for developers is feeling like HR and recruiting teams don't respect them or understand their skillset. Your recruiting team might not be technical themselves ("Is that a programming language or a Pokemon?"). Even so, you need to make sure that there's clear alignment on the requirements for the role and that your recruiters understand how to pitch the team to developers — from what your tech stack includes to what your developer culture is like.

Incentivize employee referrals

Who better to help you find your next great hire than the folks you've already brought onto the team? The developers who are already part of your organization are an excellent re-

source for finding new technical team members. After all, they know better than anyone what it takes to be successful within the organization, and they have a vested interest in hiring great colleagues. An employee referral program can provide the nudge they might need to proactively source candidates on your organization's behalf.

😎 Connect with people who are in your community

From the end users of your product to the developers using the same technologies you do and beyond, your community might be an underutilized resource for finding the next member of your developer team. These folks are more likely to know your product, your tech stack, and even share cultural values with your team, making them "warmer" candidates than the average applicant. If your organization is involved in the open source community, you're in luck: Your contributors can be a great source of talent that's already invested in the success of your product.

Keep in mind that community engagement is an ongoing process — not something you can turn on and off when you need to hire. Get involved in (or host) industry events and conferences, create spaces for your community to interact with your brand and each other online, and keep the conversation going.

🌎 Expand your candidate pool

Do your minimum requirements include formal technical education? With the proliferation of bootcamps and other technical training programs, there's a huge pool of candidates with technical chops coming from non-traditional education backgrounds. In 2021, 43 percent of hiring managers stated that it is likely that they will fill a IT support or help desk position with someone who doesn't have a four-year-degree.

Teams that have gone remote also have a hiring advantage, as they can tap into a global pool of candidates rather than sticking to local job markets that might be oversaturated and highly competitive.

What makes a good technical hire?

There's no one checklist for the perfect technical hire. Your tech stack, culture, existing team, and development needs are all factors you need to consider when evaluating candidates. But the soft skills that are sometimes overlooked during technical candidate vetting can be highly impactful in the long-term success and happiness of your technical team.

Communication and collaboration skills. Does their collaboration style fit with the way your team works together? If your team is remote, are they great at written communication and asynchronous work?

Value alignment. Do their values and professional ethics map to the values of your organization?

Versatility and adaptability. Are they able to learn new technologies and processes as your needs grow and change?

Motivation and ambition. Are they excited to do their best work, learn, and grow alongside the rest of the team?

Creating an interview process that captures interest and retains momentum

You've identified some amazing candidates who are curious about joining your organization. That's a great start. But how do you nurture that interest and curiosity into excitement and commitment? Simple: You treat the folks you're hiring like you value their time and expertise — because you certainly should if you want to hire them!

Every organization's hiring process is a little different, but here are a few tips on creating an interview process that transforms candidates into new hires.

Key traits of a technical interview process

☑ **Keep everything moving.** Be realistic with your expectations. While it would be great to have every candidate meet every person on the team and spend plenty of time vetting them, candidates don't have time to commit hours and weeks of time to your hiring process. Aim for 3–5 hours of interviewing and make sure those hours are well-spent.

☑ **Keep conversations engaging.** Whiteboard demos and tests can feel tedious and performative for developers. Instead, focus on conversations and projects that help the candidate show off their skills and experience and give them a better understanding of the team, the role, and the organization.

☑ **Communicate the process.** No one likes to be ghosted. Be clear about timelines and expectations at every stage of the process — especially if something is slowing things down.

☑ **Consider compensation.** Pay interviewees for their time especially if you're asking for work from them as part of the process.

An interviewing case study: What does a great interview look like?

So, what does a great technical interview process look like in practice? Here's a brief case study of what a developer's interview process might look like to help put those key traits in context.
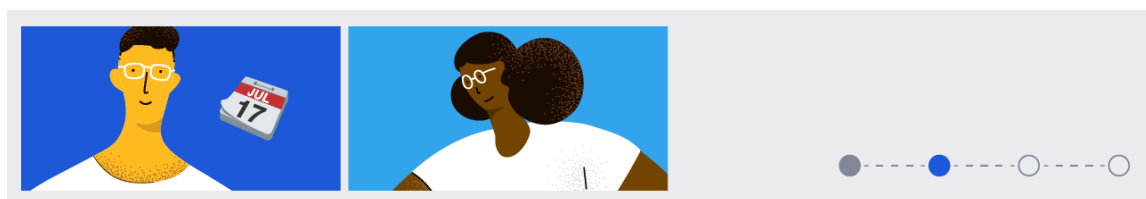
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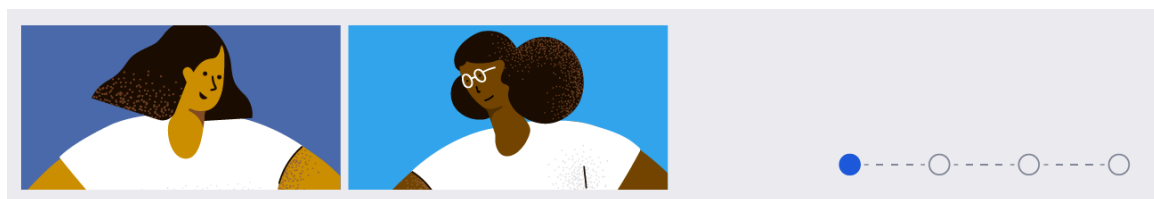
It's a dark and stormy…Tuesday morning, and Sarah is interviewing for a front-end develop-

er role. She hops on a Zoom call with her recruiter, who is the main point of contact for the interview process.

The recruiter has already discussed the role with the hiring manager and understands exactly what the team is looking for. She can answer Sarah's initial questions about the role and the team, and jots down a few notes to pass along to the hiring manager for the questions she doesn't know the answer to. The recruiter also lets Sarah know what to expect from the interviewing experience — from who she'll be speaking with to a general timeline for the process.

After syncing with the hiring manager, the recruiter promptly sets up the next round of interviews with Sarah.

Hiring manager, technical, and team interviews

Sarah meets with the hiring manager and a few other members of the team. She and the recruiter have worked together to carve out times that work for both parties and try to keep the interviews close together so this stage doesn't take too long.

The hiring manager and the other members of the team that Sarah is meeting with have had time to review both the job description and Sarah's resume before their conversations, and each team member is tasked with evaluating specific areas of expertise. She speaks with her hiring manager, two developers, and a product manager — all of whom she would work with closely if she joins the team.

Oops! One of the developers on the interview panel had to cancel due to a conflict. The recruiter steps in to let Sarah know, and they reschedule so Sarah isn't left hanging out on a Zoom call by herself.

The hiring manager makes sure that Sarah's questions are answered, any concerns she has

about the role or the team are addressed, and that they understand what she is looking for in her next job. They make themselves available for follow-up conversations if Sarah requests them.

Pair programming interview
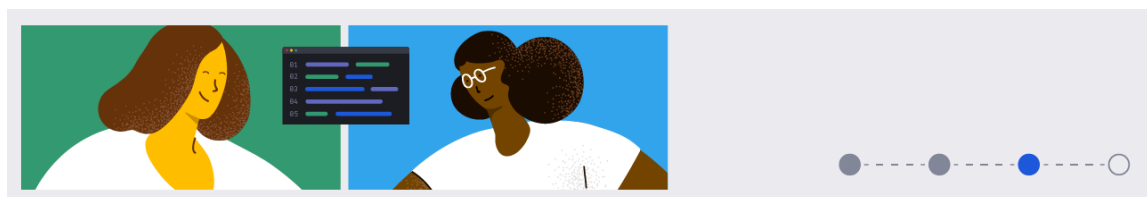
The team loved their conversations with Sarah, and she's ready to move onto the next stage. The recruiter sets her up with another developer on the team for a pair programming interview, where she and the developer work together to solve a problem. The interview gives Sarah the opportunity to show off her skills in action and get a sense of what it would be like to collaborate with a developer from the team.

Pair programming is a great alternative to a take-home project or presentation because it's closer to the actual daily workflow for Sarah's role. At the same time, it also helps keep the time commitment for the interview from ballooning out of control.

Making the final decision
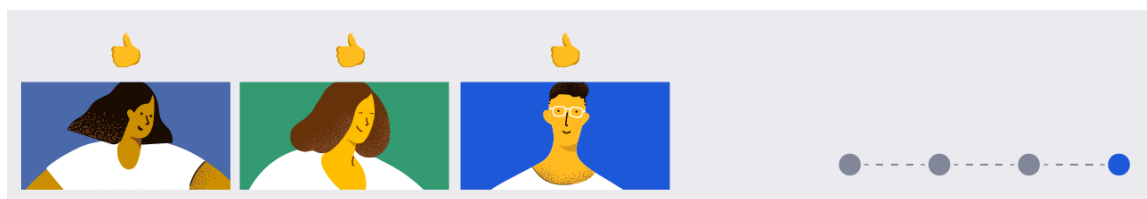
Sarah's interviews are done! The team syncs up to discuss her performance, raise any concerns they have, and make a final decision. No matter what their ultimate choice is, the hiring manager or recruiter keeps Sarah looped in on what's going on. One of the interviewers needs an extra day to fill out their feedback? No problem. But the recruiter makes sure to reach out to Sarah and let her know that they haven't forgotten about her.

Attracting technical talent is about building connections

Navigating the process of finding and closing new technical talent can be challenging. But a thoughtful process can make all the difference — for both your existing team and any candidates they engage with.

While the ultimate goal of any hiring process is to fill an open position, the best recruiting and interviewing workflows are focused on checking boxes. They're designed to create a dialogue with potential team members that gives both sides a chance to make informed decisions about their next big move.

Build a network. Forge relationships with the people who might someday be candidates before you're actively looking for them.

Aim for transparency. Document and communicate processes to keep prospects and candidates informed from day one through the final offer.

Respect everyone's time. Keep interview processes as streamlined as possible and focus on creating positive experiences.

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Learn more about building your technical team

Want to learn more about building and retaining a high-performing technical team? Signing your latest hire is only the start of the journey. Check out the next installment in our series of team-building resources: **Onboarding Technical Talent: Setting Up New Hires for Long-term Success.**

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