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HOW TO RECRUIT

—

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO HIRING FOR TECH ROLES

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Preface

Hiring in tech has become something of a gamble: you do your best, but there's always the risk of not being able to find the ideal candidate. Even worse, you may lose them to your competitors.

So the next time you try to fill in a vacancy, where do you start? How do you proceed?

Not knowing where to start when it comes to recruitment is more common than you think. We've been asked several questions about recruitment, from how to identify a compatible candidate to where to advertise an opening. Realising this is a common problem was the point of conception for this ebook guide. We decided to translate our years of experience in tech recruiting into a simple and accessible ebook that people can open any time they have doubts.

We looked at what intimidated people about hiring, what they wished they knew sooner, what they realised was essential, and compiled a simple sequential blueprint.

Preface

We hope it can serve as a soft guide for anyone with questions about tech hiring. Even if you are sure you can manage just fine without any help, it can't hurt to have a general checklist to refer to occasionally to make sure you are on the right track.

People tend to think of hiring as a procedure or a series of processes that they get through to satisfy protocol. But, in reality, recruitment is a nuanced search for someone who will add to the company's value.

This book aims to shed light on the details of a well-thought-out recruitment strategy and how you can also utilise it to add value to your company.

Introduction

The demand for tech personnel in India is rising. The tech industry has grown tremendously over the past years, and with the push towards Digital India and Make in India campaigns, the demand for tech professionals is skyrocketing. However, identifying the right person for a job in such a competitive market is not easy.

A staggering **80%** of people in a popular survey claimed to find tech recruitment a challenging job.

In fact, even an entry-level position sees thousands of applicants, many of whom possess similar skillsets. As a result, it can be exhausting to find someone with the right combination of qualifications and soft skills in a sea of comparable job-seekers.

While there is no "one size fits all" approach to hiring, there are some general practices you can implement to streamline your hiring journey. It is pertinent to keep in mind that every job is different and comes with its own requirements.

Introduction

Recruitment is a long, hands-on process that consists of two distinct stages:

Pre Job Listing

Post Job Listing

These stages are general umbrellas that comprise their own set of phases.

Stage 1 usually consists of actions taken to understand the requirements of the job and plan how to approach the candidates.

Once you know what you are looking for, you can move on to Stage 2, during which you identify candidates who fit the bill.

Let's Get Started

Let's Get Started

Talking about identifying job requirements is easy, but how does one go about it practically?

Do you simply go out and post an ad on a popular job listing site? What should it say?

It can be daunting to start the hiring process and realise halfway through that you are not prepared enough. This book attempts to mitigate some of the anxiety that comes with tech recruiting by outlining helpful practices concerning each phase.

In-house preparation:

The biggest and easiest mistake to make during recruitment is not planning enough. It is easy to simply publish a job listing and reach thousands of people with a click. But quantity does not equal quality, and easy posting does not translate to easy hiring.

There is a lot to consider before even arriving at a job vacancy listing. The journey to employ the best candidate from a sea of applicants starts from within the company.

Let's Get Started

1. Create the right candidate persona

What is a candidate persona?

A candidate persona is a template that tells you what to look for in applicants. It represents the **ideal candidate** for the vacancy. It consists of qualities, required skills, and other information relevant to the job. It can be as simple as a text document that lists categories such as 'Location' and 'Experience' with corresponding values based on the needs of the job, like 'lives within 2 kilometres of the company' and 'has five years of experience minimum' respectively.

The key to nailing a candidate persona is **research**. It is imperative to know just what traits are "vital" for the job and the traits that are "good to have." For example, if the position has allowances for working from home, 'Location' becomes irrelevant. Similarly, if the vacancy requires knowledge of a specific programming language, that requirement is non-negotiable.

Let's Get Started

1. Create the right candidate persona

How do you create a candidate persona?

Start with the people that the new hire will interact with the most, i.e., their team. Ask the team members what they expect from a potential teammate. For example, find out not only what knowledge in programming languages and applications they expect but also what skills they think are crucial. The answers to these questions are filters of high importance, and anyone not meeting these requirements cannot be a suitable hire.

If you think that the team will be more forthcoming in an anonymous setting, you can use the many online form generators that allow for anonymous replies.

Here are some definers that you can include in a candidate persona. You can add to this list or subtract from it depending on your requirements.

Let's Get Started

1. Create the right candidate persona

General Definers:

Age		Current Position/Title
Salary		Location
Experience		Academic Background

Technical Definers:

Programming languages known		Specific Application Knowledge (AutoCAD, MS Office, etc.)
Number of projects in relevant domains		Activity on industry-related pages (Github, StackOverflow)

Let's Get Started

1. Create the right candidate persona

An Overlooked Criterion - Personality

It will be helpful to find out from your team what type of personality they find easy to work with. Of course, take the answers with a grain of salt. Different teams have different approaches to working; some prefer to work in absolute silence while others benefit from a conversational or interactive style.

People can be biased in their answers to personality questions when asked outright. To gain a moderately accurate representation of the team's personalities, you can ask them to take a personality test. There are several free tools online, or you can enlist the aid of an agency.

Let's Get Started

1. Create the right candidate persona

Once you know what the team is like, you can identify compatible personality types to add to the candidate persona. Sometimes this can be taken as a mere suggestion, and other times it can act as a deal-breaker. This attribute can be beneficial when taken into consideration after an initial round of screening.

Here are some questions that can help you get an idea of the kind of personalities on the team and how this translates to their work ethic:

• What made you want to work here?

• What part of your role do you enjoy?

• What were you not prepared for when you first started?

• What do you wish you knew when you first started here?

• What do you like the most about your team?

Let's Get Started

1. Create the right candidate persona

Bonus Tip: Talk to ex-employees

If it is not a new role you are trying to fill and someone previously held the position, talking to them for their perspective is a good idea. You can gain important insights into the challenges and perks of the job that you may not find otherwise. For instance, finding out why they quit their job can give you an idea of how to prevent that from happening again. If the previous employee didn't like working with specific indispensable tools, your ideal candidate should prefer working with those tools.

Once your research is complete, you will have a list of all the requirements. The task now is to **assign importance to the different requirements and rank them**. You can use a numerical ranking system and assign each determinant a number depending on how crucial it is to the job. The higher the value, the more critical it is. Sorting the list in descending order will give you the non-negotiable factors at the top.

Let's Get Started

If this method seems like too much work, you can simply mark the skills you think are necessary and compile them into a separate list. Don't get rid of the less essential qualities. They can come in handy when deciding between two very similar candidates in the final rounds of recruitment.

Create a representation of all the final attributes. It could be a simple text file, an Excel sheet or even a complete fictional resume. **This is your candidate persona**. And when you find someone who matches the persona completely, you don't have to look any further.

Let's Get Started

Now that you understand the team's expectations, you can look into what a candidate might want from the job. Businesses typically have a career ladder that defines career progression.

Job-seekers can be of two types: coming from careers on a similar rung as the vacancy or from a lower rung. Both cases are different in their expectations. For example, applicants on a similar rung usually look for higher salaries, while applicants from lower rungs look for higher designations.

Try to look at what a candidate can get from the position and how that might help them advance in their careers.

For example, applicants with years of experience working under a team leader might appreciate heading a team/project of their own.

Let's Get Started

2. Understand your candidates. (What they want/ expect/ motivations/ future expectations)

Some steps you can take to identify what candidates want:

• Identify possible reasons as to why someone might be interested in the position offered.

• Make a list of all the jobs that can naturally lead to the offered position. Then, identify which entries on the list are most likely to transition smoothly into the available role.

• Ask employees in similar positions to understand what benefits to offer, the average pay, and what kind of incentives they would like.

This information will equip you with the knowledge of what to offer a candidate to entice them to take the job.

Let's Get Started

3. Create job listings that stand out

Hiring in a competitive market means both the applicant and the employer have to fight for each other's attention. With several hundred job listings being posted on multiple sites every day, it is imperative that your job listing captures the job seeker's attention.

Good practices to implement when creating a job listing:

Pick a click-worthy title. Make sure the language of the title is simple and describes the position well. For example, "Senior Technical Writer for ABC Networking Solutions" is better than "Good, Fast Content Writers Only." Do not embellish; keep things as straightforward as possible.

Write a solid job description. Properly describing what the job entails will (to a great extent) help in preventing people without the relevant experience from applying.

Let's Get Started

Mention the skills you are looking for, and emphasise the non-negotiable ones. Point out (as much as you can) that only people with the relevant skills should apply. If you have the information needed to map out a typical day or week on the job, do it.

Create a list of responsibilities that the candidate will have to take on once they get the job. Make sure to include the monotonous, time-consuming, and less-liked parts of the job in the description as well. You can enlist the help of employees in similar roles for this purpose. Keep the language friendly without seeming informal.

Let's Get Started

Highlight the pay and rewards. Make sure the approximate pay range is included in the job description or highlighted in a separate section. In addition, include benefits and considerations such as work-from-home, part-time, etc.

Include tests & forms. The quickest way to evaluate a candidate's proficiency in a particular tool or language is to make them take a standardised test. You can also ask them to take a personality test when filling out the application. The results from these tests can cut down a significant number of applications.

What To Do Once Your Job Listings Go Public?

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What To Do Once Your Job Listings Go Public?

Use a spreadsheet.

Gone are the days of sorting through resumes manually. A computer program is the best option to process large volumes of applications in short timeframes.

A simple spreadsheet can effectively keep track of hundreds of applicants. Add the information from the proficiency and personality tests. When you apply filters that eliminate candidates who do not meet the basic requirements and then sort these records based on test proficiency scores, you will arrive at a list of suitable candidates.

You can increase the number of filters to represent the candidate persona better, thereby eliminating unsuitable candidates.

Hence, you will end up with a significantly shorter and more accurate list of potential hires.

What To Do Once Your Job Listings Go Public?

1. Improve processes to qualify resumes quickly

Candidate Database - An optional but a convenient tool

Adopt a database management solution or better, a Candidate Response Management (CRM) tool to store details of the job-seekers.

Build a database of standout resumes.

It is good to keep a record of all the candidates with excellent qualifications even if they don't necessarily fit the available role. For example, you can categorise the resumes by domain or position and update the database whenever you find an exceptional candidate.

Over time you will have a list of possible candidates you can refer to for vacancies before beginning the recruitment process. Since they have already shown interest in your company, chances that they will want to join your company in the future are higher.

What To Do Once Your Job Listings Go Public?

2. Give your candidates a peek into the company culture

After all the processing & filtering, it is time to invite the shortlisted candidates to the company. A peek at the physical workplace and how people interact can help the candidate get an idea of the work culture. You could also arrange for the team to meet the shortlisted candidates.

A qualified candidate on paper does not translate to a perfect fit for the position.

The teammates might not feel comfortable with the applicant or might prefer some other applicant irrespective of qualifications. If a handful of candidates are deemed equally suitable for a vacancy, they can engage in a probation period, during which they can work with the team hands-on. Probation provides insight into both the candidate's compatibility with the team and their expertise in the field.

What To Do Once Your Job Listings Go Public?

Every company has its own culture. For example, some have a strict 9-5 schedule; others follow a flexible schedule as long as overall deadlines are met, some have a more formal atmosphere while others like to keep it casual. Understand what policies are important to your company and pick out candidates from the final list that fit those policies. The personality tests, situational questions, and their grievances in the context of their previous company can help with this.

What To Do Once Your Job Listings Go Public?

3. Identify employees that fit into the culture

Bonus Tip: Start an Employee Referral Program

Existing employees know the company the best. They understand the work culture and what to expect from the job. They also might know people who fit the job profile but are not actively looking for jobs. Employee referrals are the only way of reaching out to these candidates. Hence, it might be a good idea to forward the job description internally to employees who work in the same domain.

Applicants who make it to the final round should be interviewed by the managerial staff as well as potential teammates. At the end of these interviews, hire the most compatible candidate.

How can you better position your brand to hire good talent?

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How can you better position your brand to hire good talent?

Understand/stay updated with the required tech jargon to converse with the candidates.

Staying on top of the latest trends and technologies in your domain is always a good practice. This is even more important when hiring tech talent. Tech jargon is constantly evolving, and if you can't keep up, you might lose out on very valuable candidates.

Tech magazines are an excellent place to start. In addition, Wired.com, CNET, and other tech news pages provide insightful information about the changes in the industry. Even if you don't buy a subscription, these websites usually have several articles you can read for free every day.

How can you better position your brand to hire good talent?

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For simpler reads that delve into what candidates are looking for, check out our blog where we have a large repository of tech recruitment tips and strategies that we keep updating regularly.

But if reading isn't your thing, you can look up tech podcasts or tech news channels on YouTube. Be it text, audio, or video, find a way to incorporate tech news into your daily routine to stay updated.

Knowledge of tech concepts and language can come in handy when forming situational questions to analyse the applicant's behaviour and knowledge. Using the appropriate jargon can also establish a connection with them and can help them open up more.

How can you better position your brand to hire good talent?

Understand/stay updated with the required tech jargon to converse with the candidates.

Go the extra mile.

Most people consider the recruitment process complete once a candidate has been hired, but it takes a while to identify if the hire was successful or not. Even perfectly compatible candidates might quit or ask for a transfer a few months into the job.

If the recruitment was successful, ensure they receive a smooth onboarding experience. Also, going back to the employee after a while and getting their feedback can give you insight into your recruitment process and what you should look to improve the next time.

People are more likely to open up about how they felt during the process and what they liked and didn't like once they settle into the job. You can also understand what they think of the job and the specifics they would have liked to know earlier. You can keep this information in mind when you plan your next hiring process.

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That was...

How To Recruit: A Comprehensive Guide to Hiring for Tech Roles