How to Find the Right Programmers: A Brief Guideline for Startup Founders

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Expanding a startup team has always been hard. Startup founders have to take into account many factors before letting new people into their team at early stages. This is only made worse by pressure from investors expecting fast results.

The current situation only makes hiring even more challenging.

The pandemic and the shortage of immigrant workers in many sectors, including IT, broke established market rules.

Now, on top of the usual startup-related difficulties, founders have to transform their business and switch to the virtual realm — specifically, by hiring remotely.

Here's how the classic hiring methods have changed and what the new options are.

The myth of talent shortage

Recently, the recruiters in my community have been saying that their market is literally boiling over — too many new offers and not enough professionals to respond to them. Whilst on my platform, I receive hundreds of new applications from

developers weekly.

What I see is a skills shortage. Maybe the lockdowns kept people from going to courses, getting some practice or they just got used to the perpetual vacation. Everyone expects to get a salary over $200k, but rarely do their experience and skills match their expectations.

I suggest non-technical founders get an advisor who is a senior developer who can interview the candidates. They will give the right tasks, check the performance and figure out the candidates' real knowledge of infrastructure and coding languages. This is necessary for two reasons: Founders will prepare the right offer and will have appropriate expectations regarding the coders' work.

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Job description

If you don't want to get lost in this hiring melting pot, make sure your job description really describes what you're looking for. It should not be too general, nor combine 2-3 positions in one unless specified as a temporarily 2-in-1 role.

If you need a visionary leader, as opposed to a worker that will only follow set tasks, distinguish the two roles.

Hire a professional recruiter to consult you on writing a comprehensive job description. Otherwise, delegate it to outstaffing agencies that will do end-to-end hiring for you.

Levels of proficiency

Now that you know what you can offer and what you should expect from the candidate, place the job description on various platforms. Divide them into two segments – first the

junior developers' profiles, then the more experienced software engineers.

Junior programmers are good for startups led by full-stack developers, where the CTO can teach, correct and navigate fresh hires until they become mature coders. Although, experience shows that juniors often learn everything they need and move to another company within 8-9 months.

Middle to senior developers are harder to find. Retaining them is an even harsher game. They will bring extensive experience and can be good advisers for your product development, but at the same time, they will bring biases and culture from previous jobs.

You could ask for advice from recruiting agencies or serial entrepreneurs about how to set up the company culture, especially for remote or hybrid teams with a dozen of newly hired employees.

Related: After 17 Years, I Quit My Job as a Computer Programmer to Follow My Passion. It Paid Off.

Where to find the programmers

Sourcing developers is a combination of art and science.

Buy recruitment software to manage the job applications. Check if it also contains a feature that would help you coordinate job postings on all the platforms you've chosen.

If you don't set up the optimal process for hiring at the beginning, it will become very time-consuming. Along with that, make one wrong step and your employer brand reputation will suffer, scaring all cool programmers away from your startup.

You probably know the traditional job posting platforms by now. So here are a couple of new platforms I'd like to

highlight:

- **Startup job websites** like f6s, angel.co, GitHub, etc.
- **Outstaffing companies:** These companies cover everything from a legal and financial perspective. You only make interviews with shortlisted developers and sign an agreement with the company that controls all the deliverables.
- **Online schools** offer young but very talented coders that graduated from boot camps.
- **Organize a meetup for developers** that are free of charge and engaging. Conferences, hackathons and marathons will work fine. In my opinion, the top hiring event ever made was a Neuralink demo held in August 2020.

Look for specialists that are already used to the remote lifestyle. Digital nomads and engineers who have worked in autonomous environments are your primary target.

How to keep good programmers

Think about what they need or wish to have, things like:

- working with interesting projects
- a clear vision for their career growth
- a flexible schedule
- high-quality equipment
- a development infrastructure in place, connected with a product manager, designer, customer support, sales and legal support.

Forget about team building and group retreats. Listen to the real needs of your employees, give them choices and flexibility.

Sharing a mission, the same culture and work attitudes should be key to finding your developers. Employee perks, flexible schedules and engaging tasks will make them happy.

If you see that you cannot cover all these aspects at your current stage, don’t hesitate to delegate it to HR and outstaffing companies, or hire professional recruiters.

Related: Hiring the Modern Programmer: Does That Smart New Software

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