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# ULTIMATE SMB GUIDE FOR

*Hiring Top Technical Talent*

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**Hiring effective technical people is important for any company. But it's especially critical for a small or medium sized business (SMB), where every employee's contribution makes a real difference to the bottom line.**

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In a market with such high demand for their skills, technical professionals have the luxury of being choosy when it comes to finding the right job. According to a Glassdoor survey, 25 percent of engineers begin looking for new opportunities just three months into their new position. So the steps you take to attract these talented gems are valuable in helping you keep them, too.

To help, we've polled our most experienced tech-talent whisperers and compiled these best practices for SOURCING, SCREENING, and SELECTING top technical talent. We hope these tips will help you hire well and prosper.

# Sourcing Technical Talent

## Write a Compelling Job Ad

Most people don't realize that the most effective job posting is a job advertisement, not a job description. The purpose of your job ad is convince your target candidates to apply. That's it.

[In our experience](#), (and if you're one for the hard research, take a look [here](#)) you can expect to get 3x as many qualified applicants from a job ad that is focused on what the candidates are looking for, versus a typical job description posting, which is focused on what the company wants.

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### A job ad that technical talent will generally find compelling includes:

- ✓ The Impact of their work
- ✓ What they'll learn
- ✓ What tools they'll be using
- ✓ Their level of autonomy
- ✓ The culture of the team
- ✓ The compensation range
- ✓ Benefits, perks, office location, etc.

As you can see, these are qualities about your specific job and company—not a generic job description. Because this is a job advertisement, the tone and style of the writing also matters, so if writing isn't your forte, it's worthwhile to have it written by an experienced copywriter. We just so happen to be great at this sort of thing, and we're here to help—

[Connect with a Fitzii Hiring Advisor to get your job ads on point.](#)

## Get in the Right Pay Range

Money matters when you're in-demand, so make sure you get your numbers right. Do the research on similar job postings and online salary surveys before settling on a range, and be sure to include the range in the ad. Why? Studies have found you get 30% more applicants by including compensation.

## Fishing for Passive Candidates

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With such a tight labour market, the majority of top technical talent are not on the job boards. The most cost-effective way to reach these passive candidates is through word-of-mouth referrals and from the social networks of your employees and customers. Treat your search like a marketing campaign and arm your networks with shareable blurbs about the job and provide trackable application links. Employee referral incentives can also be an effective motivator (and reminder).

Seeding your jobs where technical people congregate is also a good idea. Ask yourself: what online groups, resources, associations etc. would your ideal candidates be in? Or, what events, meetups, or other in-person gatherings could you attend to meet these people?

If you're going to reach out to passive candidates directly, or via a recruiter, make sure to lead with the role and your company's value proposition. Keep in mind that top talent gets recruited all the time, so your offer will have to stand out. At this point it's NOT about who you're looking for - it's all about what THEY are looking for.

## Why Go Fishing?

According to LinkedIn research, 60 percent of the total candidate pool for any given position are passive candidates who aren't looking for a new job, but are open to offers.



## Promote your SMB Advantages

Every top candidate that walks through your door is interviewing you too. Your job is to convince them to work with you. And the strongest arguments just may be the under-recognized benefits of working in a small or medium-sized business.

According to a Dale Carnegie study, people at smaller companies are more engaged in their jobs than those who work for bigger companies. What accounts for this difference?

The study points to a few SMB advantages that top technical talent will care about:

- Greater ability to make a difference
- Access to executives and open communication
- More varied, broad, and interesting work
- Greater flexibility and growth potential
- Feeling trusted and autonomous
- More purpose-driven as a company

If any of these things are true for your company, then make sure to mention it in the job ad and promote it in all your interactions with candidates.

# Screening & Selecting Technical Talent

## Create an Effective Screening Process

It's essential that you take the time to craft a well-designed screening process that is both comprehensive and predictive, while also providing a good experience for the candidates. Not only will engineers appreciate a well thought-through screening process, but these efforts can increase your hiring effectiveness ten-fold.

To begin, you'll need to know exactly what you're screening for. [A 2016 study by Harvard Business School](#) showed that computer-based assessments make better hiring decisions than managers. That's because people often get swayed by factors that don't correlate with on-the-job performance. To avoid this, first think deeply about the skills, experience, and education that your most successful people have in common – which factors do you believe truly drive performance? Then determine how you will screen each application for these factors, and only these factors.

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## Have Them Work it Out

In our experience it's critical to verify a candidate's technical skills, and not just take their word for it. You can ask them to work through a technical problem, complete an online test, or produce a work sample.

## Phone Screen Like A Recruiter

Just like how a winning job ad is more about what the candidate is looking for, than what you're looking for, the same can be said for phone screening. Recruiting agencies know this all too well, since they have regularly experienced a big let down when a primo candidate decides to stay in their job, or take another offer. It's critical to know why each candidate would want (or not want) the job, so you can discuss things with them accordingly.

To increase your chances of landing your ideal candidates, you should phone screen like a good recruiter would do it, balancing the conversation between the candidate's needs, and yours. One of our most experienced technical recruiters does this by asking:

Question:	→	Tells You:
What is your dream job? What are your career goals?		What they want out of their next job.
What are you really good at?		What you can expect them to excel at.
What are you not so good at?		Their weaknesses. Or that they're not self-aware or honest enough.
Why are you open to leaving and/or interested in this job?		If this is a fit & the key things to highlight with them.



## Use Behavioral Interviewing to Spot High Performers

What company doesn't want to hire a star employee? Someone who is not only capable, reliable, and enterprising, but who regularly gets results that exceed expectations. These type of people are hard to find, so it pays to practice spotting them.

Structured behavioural interviewing is the most popular and credible method used by experienced recruiters because it's the only type of interviewing that actually works. It's been [proven to be nine times as effective](#) in predicting employee success compared to typical unstructured, non-behavioural interviews.

In behavioural interviewing, instead of asking how a candidate would act in a hypothetical situation, the interviewer asks how they have behaved in previous relevant situations.

### The Achiever Pattern:

To spot a high performing star, you should focus your behavioural questions on past achievements. Recruiting expert Lou Adler calls this the "Achiever Pattern." If a candidate has examples in six or more of these areas, you may be looking at your next high performer:

- They've been assigned difficult challenges ahead of their peers
- They volunteer for or are assigned to projects that are 'over their heads'
- They're put on important cross-functional teams and projects
- They regularly get a chance to demonstrate their abilities to more senior executives
- The reason they change jobs is long-term career focused
- They get promoted rapidly
- They've set and achieved major goals
- They've been re-hired by a former manager
- They've re-hired their former subordinates
- They're clearly the 'go to' person in their department
- They've received formal recognition outside of their department
- They were mentored and/or mentored others



## Treat Your Candidates Well

Just as you keep your candidate's needs in mind when drafting the job ad, it's essential to keep them at the forefront throughout the rest of the hiring process. That means ensuring the entire candidate experience is one that ultimately convinces candidates to accept your offer.

One common mistake is asking too much of candidates in the early stages, before they know they have a good chance at getting the job. This often leads good candidates to drop out of the process rather than waste their time on a long-shot.

You should always ask about and try to accommodate your candidate's scheduling needs, and limit any redundancy in the interview process so they feel their time and efforts are being respected. A long and drawn out hiring process can allow candidates to get snapped up by another company, so keep things moving and always discuss next steps and timelines at the end of each conversation.

Finally, providing candidates with feedback on how they're doing, and asking them what they think of the opportunity and others they're considering will solidify your relationship, and minimize surprises.

Overall, you want to be generous, empathetic, and thoughtful. If you treat them just as you would like to be treated throughout the hiring process, you'll be successful. If you don't, be ready to lose top talent to another opportunity. Always remember: the best people have options.

# Need help hiring the best technical talent for your business?



Hiring engineering and technical staff can be a time-consuming process if you choose to do it all on your own. According to TechCrunch, it takes 990 hours for tech startups to hire 12 software engineers – that's more than 80 hours of recruiting work per person hired!

As opposed to large companies who can invest in a talent acquisition team and the latest and greatest tools, SMBs must rely on limited in-house resources OR an expensive recruiter to hire technical talent. It's no surprise that the average SMB spends twice as much per hire as large companies and take twice as long to fill positions.

That's where an experienced all-in-one hiring partner like Fitzii can help. Aside from providing a dedicated Hiring Advisor to be your go-to, Fitzii offers a flexible combination of services, software, and expert tools so that you can compete with (and beat) the big guys in the war for technical talent.

To learn more about Fitzii and book a call with one of our Hiring Advisors, visit: [www.fitzii.com](http://www.fitzii.com)

