THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO A STRATEGIC INTAKE MEETING

The 8 crucial conversations every recruiter should have with their hiring managers

Coordination and alignment with your hiring teams make up the secret sauce in great recruiting. Before even thinking about sourcing candidates for a position, it's vital to make sure everyone is on the same page about the specific qualities that you're seeking in desirable candidates.

This guide provides step-by-step guidance on the crucial questions to ask your hiring teams and the important conversations to have to make sure that everyone has a shared vision about what a good new hire should look like. Putting this work in on the front end leads to great results on the back end – you'll hire higher quality candidates faster.

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1 Outline Responsibilities

ASK

How does this role contribute to the company's mission?

What impact does this role have on the products/services provided to the company's clients?

Is it a new role or a back fill of an existing position?

Who are the key stakeholders?

Top responsibilities for this role?

Which teams will the candidate work with?

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Why should candidates be excited about this position and your company? It's important for you and your hiring managers to have a shared understanding of your employment brand, which encompasses everything about what it's like to work at your company and how others view its mission. To read more about what Employment Branding is and why it's important, see Dice's Definitive Guide to Employment Branding.

What's your Employer Value Proposition (EVP)? An EVP includes tangible offerings, like compensation, but also softer qualities, like organizational culture. Reputation is also a key ingredient in a company's EVP — and can have a direct impact on a firm's ability to attract and retain in-demand talent. Find out more about how you can define and communicate your EVP with Dice's eBook 5 Strategies to Attract Top Talent When You're Not the Cool Kid on the Block.

2 | Identify Skill Requirements

ASK

Which skills are must-haves?

What projects demonstrate mastery of these skills?

Which skills are preferred but not required?

What additional technologies and trends matter?
(For example, Mobile, AI, Cloud, Social, Design, etc.)

What non-technical skills are needed?
(For example, Project Management, Budgeting, Communications, Writing, Team Management, etc.)

CONSIDER

Take the time to discuss in detail with your hiring teams what an ideal candidate looks like. Use tools such as focus groups with top performers to specifically define the 6-8 core competencies that represent "must have" technical and soft skills. Clearly define these attributes on the front end and get agreement from hiring stakeholders to keep expectations aligned. To learn more about alignment, see Dice's article on How to Decide What 'Good' Looks Like.

Are your hiring teams discussing certain new languages or skills that you're not familiar with? To help get yourself oriented, access Dice's Skill Center, which offers information on hundreds of skills, from Apache Kafka to Chef. Each page includes a visualization of a skill's popularity over time, related skills, and available Dice content that discusses the skill.

3 Discuss Experience

ASK

Are we requiring a specific number of years of experience in certain areas of expertise?

Should the candidate be contributing to tech sites like GitHub and Dribbble?

Is industry experience critical for this role?

Any prior managerial experience required?

If we are unable to find a candidate with these specific requirements, are we willing to look at someone with transferable skills or with fewer years of experience that could be trained up?

CONSIDER

How much does a candidate's years of experience tell us about seniority? Should you continue to use traditional "years of experience" to decide if one is senior or more capable than another? According to John Vlastelica, "years of experience" is a dated concept, and not a strong indicator of capability. A better way to talk about this is to focus on achievement: What has a candidate built, scaled and delivered, and what was his or her role in those activities? For more, see Raising the Bar on Tech Talent.

4 Define Level/Nature of Education

ASK

Are specific certifications needed for this role?

Bachelor's degree required? If so, in what field?

Graduate degree required? If yes, which one?

CONSIDER

Pedigree vs. Experience—It's tempting to assume that, because a candidate went to a top-ranked school or worked at a hot company, they will automatically be a great performer. But studies have shown that pedigree doesn't predict success. And regardless of your personal position on this issue, it's important to make sure that you're in agreement with your hiring teams about whether you will collectively place more weight on pedigree or experience.

5 Explore Cultural Fit

ASK

What is the ideal personality for someone in this role?

What should candidates be excited about in terms of our mission?

What is the current culture on the team?

Any target companies we should source from?

What is your departmental goal for diverse hires? And is the expected time-to-hire realistic to meet this goal?

CONSIDER

Have 4-6 cultural attributes defined and well-understood by interviewers, but also discuss if you want a culture "fit" or a culture "add." Thinking about culture in terms of what candidates bring to your tech teams, instead of just fitting a certain culture profile, can help your company make big strides in hiring top talent from different backgrounds. Be clear with your teams about the value you place on certain personality types and how those will affect the overall team.

Ask your hiring manager about current employees at their company and how they would hypothetically fare in the role. Use this to gain an understanding of a client's managerial style and preferred personality types.

Hiring managers should also leverage their personal experience with current, high-performing employees to create a model of the ideal hire and to help identify candidates who will likely succeed in the role. Star employees often share key qualities like grit, rigor, impact, teamwork, ownership, curiosity and polish. Refer to these characteristics in your conversation with candidates to tease out which ones will contribute the most to your team and mission.

6 Determine Compensation

ASK

What is the budget for salary?

Any additional bonuses?

Any non-monetary perks to mention?

CONSIDER

Salary is the biggest, but by no means the only component of your overall compensation package. To gain a good understanding of both national trends as well as what other local companies are actually offering for certain positions, use Dice's Tech Salary Survey and Dice's new interactive Tech Salary Calculator to discover accurate salary estimates based on skills, job titles, years of experience and location.

Look beyond salary to compete for talent. More and more tech pros report their employers offering incentives to retain talent, including increased compensation, flexible work location and hours, more challenging assignments, paid training and vacation.

7 Confirm Location

ASK

Where will this position be located?

Are we open to this position being located elsewhere?

Could this be a remote position?

Can we pay for relocation?

CONSIDER

Can your hiring teams consider remote working for the position? It's a perk that's on the rise. According to Dice's 2018 Tech Salary Survey, the desire for flexibility in work location has grown steadily. In fact, 60% of tech pros would like to work remotely half of the time or more, but only 22% currently do. And, about two-thirds of pros (63%) said they would take a pay cut to telecommute at least half of the time.

Silicon Valley has held the "tech hub" crown for years, with periodic threats from Austin, Boston and Seattle. But there are a few challengers stepping up these days, with several metro areas blooming into serious tech centers and creating strong markets of their own. The strongest contenders? "Silicon Slopes" (Salt Lake City area), Charlotte and Atlanta. Take a moment to learn more about the fastest-growing tech hubs outside of Silicon Valley and why they are hot spots to source talent now.

8 Align Expectations

ASK

When do you expect to see a first slate of candidate resumes?

What is your ideal timeline for completing the hire?

When are critical milestones for getting this role filled?

What trade-offs are you willing to make?

CONSIDER

Rarely does a candidate possess every single quality that you're looking for, and trade-offs are inevitable. Seriously discuss which scenario your team prefers: Taking a chance on someone who is not perfect, and then having to fire them, or not taking chances, and losing out on potentially great talent. Getting clarity on principles, risks and trade-offs is a big part of leading in talent acquisition. To learn more about establishing hiring principles and agreeing on acceptable trade-offs, read Dice's eBook Raising the Bar on Tech Talent.

We know that some tech skills are hotter than others, and the time it takes to recruit for these skills can vary considerably. To create realistic expectations for hiring timeframes, share Dice's visualization tool that breaks down supply and demand for various tech roles. Over 1,400 skills are included, and you can pinpoint specific categories of skills such as programming languages. We've also introduced an alternative chart type that allows you to quickly discover the hottest and coldest skills.

Congrats!

You've made it through this important pre-interview meeting with your hiring manager. You now have a shared vision and alignment on exactly the type of candidate you're looking for and the principles you'll use to make hiring decisions.

So, what's next? Be sure to support your hiring managers by providing them with interview training and mentoring. Here are some tips to help you get started.

About Dice

Dice is a leading tech career hub connecting employers with skilled technology professionals and providing tech professionals with career opportunities, data, insights and advice. Dice began as one of the first career sites and today provides a comprehensive suite of recruiting solutions, empowering companies and recruiters to make informed hiring decisions.

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