codility

The Anatomy of Great Tech Hiring

Recruiting Strategies
for **Tech Hiring Managers**

01

Introduction

Goal: To effectively interview and hire top technical talent, and create a "wow" experience that gets candidates excited about your team and potentially joining your organization.

Approach: Design a rigorous technical interview process that dives deep through technical assessments and behavior-based interview questions, but also remains focused on creating a great candidate experience.

The most talented people in the industry are in high demand and are selective about where they spend their time and energy. When you're hiring and growing a team, it's important to attract those talented technical people and **encourage them to form a relationship with you and your organization**. The interview process is an opportunity to draw in stellar candidates, while diving into their technical abilities and experiences.

Codility works with **over 1,000 businesses,** and we've sent over five million tests on behalf of our clients. Over the years we've learned how to quickly assess programmer expertise and relative suitability for every open position our clients are looking to fill. Codility created the tech assessment movement and **we've tested 3x more candidates** than newer entrants in the space. The insights we've gained through this experience form the content of this ebook.

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7 Steps to create great tech hiring anatomy

The Core Principles   1. Keep candidates at the heart of the process

2. Design effective skills-based measures

The Process   3. Kick things off with great phone screens

4. Implement insightful technical challenges

5. Craft the perfect face-to-face interview

6. Make a holistic decision using evidence

The Results   7. Measure outcomes and reap the rewards

1. Keep candidates at the heart of the process

Your entire interview process is a golden opportunity to impress candidates and sell them on your team and company, so it pays to make the interview experience as rewarding, engaging, and thorough as you can. This all starts by putting the candidate at the center of the interview experience. Candidates remember how you make them feel—creating an interview process that leaves candidates with fond memories should be a top priority.

The Goal of an Interview

When you boil it down, an interview is a meeting designed to give both you and the candidate enough information to make a decision about whether to proceed with the process. Make sure to provide candidates with the information they need upfront to ensure you're aligned on expectations.

Scalable, Repeatable, Consistent

Every candidate who goes through your process should experience the same (high) level of attention, care, and engagement.

Revolve Around the Candidate

Every company will have a different approach and style of interview, but by putting the candidate at the very center of your approach, there is a greater chance of creating a process that leaves a lasting impression.

At every step, ask yourself "Will this improve the experience for the candidate?" This will help guide decisions around improvements and ensure candidates feel considered, cared for, and appreciated when interviewing with you.

2. Design effective skills-based measures

Recruiting methods often rely heavily on subjective insights, which help build a "gut feeling" about candidates. These indicators can be useful, but they don't paint the full picture of a candidate's qualifications and fit for the job, and they allow unconscious bias to enter the conversation.
When searching for programmers, check for experience, personality, and cultural fit, but be sure to heavily weigh coding expertise and problem-solving skills too.

Coding Ability

An essential part of any skills-based interview for technical talent is working out whether the candidate can write code that meets your expectations. Measures around correctness, style, accuracy, cleanliness, extensibility, and testability can be helpful in understanding a candidate's suitability for the role.

Code Review

A code review is a crucial aspect of software development, so having an objective way to assess the candidate's ability to review code is important. Measures related to issues found, patterns around issue type, alternative code suggestions, and efficiency of review can be effective skills-based measures.

Behavior-Based Questions

It's important to touch on behavior-based interview questions to discover what a candidate has done and can do, and how they do it. You want to see how candidates react to situations that may arise on the job and how they collaborate (or don't) with others on the team.

3. Kick things off with great phone screens

The phone conversation is a high touch but low investment session that allows the hiring team to find out more about the candidate before investing in a higher cost face-to-face interview.

Convenience

A call can be organized at a time convenient to the candidate and requires only a small initial investment for a candidate to find out more about the role and company. The candidate doesn't have to travel or clear their calendar for a phone conversation either, so it's relatively easy to get a 30 minute phone conversation organized.

Engaging

Phone conversations tend to work well when conducted by a hiring manager and someone from the development team. It can make the interview less daunting and more engaging for the candidate as it isn't solely management on the call, and they can also ask a wider range of questions about the role, culture, and business goals.

It also enables the development team to participate in hiring and ensures they have an early say in who ends up joining their team.

An Effective Format

The hiring manager should start the call with a brief introduction to the role and company to set the scene and provide the context about the role for further discussions. Candidates can then ask any initial questions they have before being asked the standard experience and behavior-based interview questions.

Excitement

During the phone conversation it's important for the hiring team to exude high energy and enthusiasm to get the candidate excited about the opportunity. The candidate should leave the phone conversation keen to progress to next steps in your process.

4. Implement insightful technical challenges

Technical challenges are an effective way for candidates to show off their technical skills and for the hiring team to assess candidates' skills and validate their experience. They allow the hiring team to see how candidates actually code and perform on-the-job responsibilities. Because candidates you eventually hire will contribute to the company's code base, it's important to be certain that the code they write meets your expectations.

Fun Versus Effective

If the challenge is not fun and engaging, there will be less enthusiasm and engagement from candidates. If it's not challenging or effective, you won't get the insights you need to make an informed decision about their candidacy.

Relevant

The technical challenge should also be relevant to the role and the skill of the candidate. For example, there is little value in setting an advanced challenge for a junior candidate. Likewise, there is little value in setting a challenge around web technology if the candidate won't be working on web technology in the role.

Technical challenges should be used for any role that requires significant coding—it's important to note that some of these roles might be outside of traditional development roles.

Time Bound

The technical challenge should be set for the candidate to complete on their own time with a suitable deadline for completion. By setting a deadline, you set a clear delivery expectation and keep the overall interview process moving along smoothly.

Review & Feedback

Once the candidate has submitted their technical solution, someone from the development team should review it for accuracy and style. Give the candidate feedback on their performance and whether their code met the team's expectations.

5. Craft the perfect face-to-face interview

The face-to-face interview is a formal opportunity for the hiring team to discover more about the candidate's skills, abilities, and work attitude. It's an opportunity for the candidate to meet people from the team, find out more about the way the product works, and gain a deeper understanding about the role.

Consolidation

A good face-to-face interview can last anywhere between three to four hours and should be completed in a single interview. Candidates won't want to take multiple days away from work for interviews for you, especially since other hiring companies are able to complete an interview in a single session.

Interview Breaks

Ensure breaks are available during the interview, preferably between each step of the onsite interview. The hiring team has time to swap notes and suggest areas to focus the next stages of the interview and candidates can catch their breath.

Tour

At the end of the interview offer the candidate a tour so they can see the office and more of their potential future colleagues, and get a feel for what it would be like working in the company. And even though it's at the end of the interview, the tour can be a good time to chat about skills and experiences more informally.

Face-to-Face Interview Breakdown

Part 1
Team Fit and Experience
Length: 1.5 hours

Use behavioral questions to see how candidates handle situations and gauge whether the company values, mission, and goals resonate with them.

Part 2
Real-Time Technical Challenge
Length: 1.5 hours

Pair candidates with dev team members to collaborate around and improve the original coding solution submitted during the technical challenge.

Part 3
HR and Management
Length: 30 minutes

Have HR and management conduct a conversation around career progression, performance measures, and training expectations.

6. Make a holistic decision using evidence

The decision-making meeting is a meeting held after the interview where the hiring team members decide whether to extend an offer. You or HR should facilitate the meeting, and the goal is to obtain a consensus based on the feedback from each interview step.

Observations and Evidence

Everyone involved in the interview process should be in the meeting to share their observations and evidence. The coding solutions and code review results should form part of the evidence for the discussion, alongside the candidate's answers to the interview questions.

The discussion should center around evidence and objective observations to root out biases, opinions, and empty statements.

Consensus to Hire

If there isn't 100% agreement for who to hire, then the hiring team will need to enter further discussions. The facilitator ensures this process isn't too lengthy and that everyone has an equal say.

People may change their minds after the group digs deeper—this is not a problem as long as the discussion is based on evidence from the technical challenge and the interview questions.

Rapid Communication

Once a decision has been made, be sure to communicate the decision to the candidate as quickly as possible because top talent doesn't stay in the market for long. Letting candidates know the outcome a day after an interview has a very positive effect on how they feel about the business, even if they didn't receive an offer.

7. Measure outcomes and reap rewards

It may take several iterations to design an interview process that both achieves your goals and keeps the candidate at the center of every step. Measuring, iterating, and improving the process will be on-going activities. Take a look below at how to make the evolution more effective and productive, and to see the outcomes you can achieve.

Use appropriate measures

Always consider the candidate's perspective when setting up measures around the interview and hiring process. But also look at overall hiring costs such as agency fees and referral costs, and long-term measures such as longevity of employment and performance. These tell you whether you're hiring the right people and how long they remain in the business.

Gather feedback

An effective way to iterate and improve the process is to gather feedback about the process from both the hiring team and candidates. Hold debrief meetings internally with your hiring teams and try candidate surveys or follow-up calls with candidates.

Great Tech Hiring Outcomes:

Interdepartmental Relationships

If you partner with the recruiting team throughout the process, you will form a stronger relationship and have better information flow.

Referrals

Employees who had great experiences as candidates will want to refer friends and promote how good the company is, taking a load off your sourcing efforts.

Churn Rate

Talented people will want to work with other talented people. You might see a reduction in employee attrition because they love their current team.

Time-to-hire

Some companies take weeks to respond to an application. When you invest in tech hiring improvements, you may may be able to completely interview and hire someone in that same time frame.