

7 Cracks in Talent Acquisition <> Engineering Manager Relationships and How to Fix Them



Introduction

There are no two ways about it. To build strong and successful engineering teams, you need strong and successful **talent acquisition (TA) <-> engineering manager** relationships.

Unfortunately miscommunication, misalignment and misunderstandings can put a strain on these relationships.

With the help of our customers, we've identified **7 common frustrations** that push TA and engineering managers apart. In this ebook, we explore how to address each one of them, providing **advice, expert insights and useful resources**.



ENGINEERING MANAGER



TALENT ACQUISITION

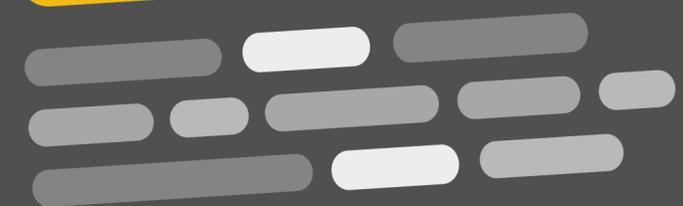


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01

“TA are sending over irrelevant candidates,
it’s frustrating and a waste of everybody’s time.”

What's the problem?



There's frustration and resent in the air. Hiring managers are unhappy with the candidates TA are putting forward.

Generally, this is a result of misalignment, miscommunication and/or misunderstanding.

WHAT CAN HIRING MANAGERS DO?



As hiring manager, you need to be crystal clear about what it is you're looking for.

Your TA team needs to know what skills, technologies, and experience are relevant to the role. You need to get knee deep in the specifics of what good, great and bad look like. What are the non-negotiables? Where is there wiggle room? What does a "day in the life" look like for this role? If TA provide you with a template, use it! You'll save time in the long run.

WHAT CAN TA DO?



Use an internal job description template

You need to make sure you truly understand the role you're hiring for. One way to do this is to build and share an internal job description template. Essentially, you need information on "The Why" (job description) and "The Who" (ideal candidate profile).

Your template could look something like this:

The why ?

1. Why are you hiring?
2. Main responsibilities
3. What do you want them to achieve in their first 30/60/90 days?
4. Are there specific numbers they will own or metrics by which they'll be measured?
5. Impact areas
6. Growth path
7. Obstacles they may face

The who ?

1. Who are you hiring?
2. Hard skills
3. Experience, education, certifications
4. Soft skills
5. Trade-offs
6. Deal breakers

When first introducing this kind of template, it's a good idea to walk hiring managers through it, providing examples for each section.

Once a hiring manager fills this in, you can either ask any follow-up questions asynchronously, or you can organize a kick-off meeting to review it together. Don't walk away (or start sourcing candidates) until you are 100% confident that you understand the open role.

That said, it's still a good idea to organize regular check-ins so that you can recalibrate and make any necessary adjustments to your internal job description.

Walk in their shoes

If you want to further improve your understanding of the tech roles you're hiring for, make a conscious effort to talk to your tech team. Understand their goals and challenges. Chat about the ups and downs of their jobs. You could even ask to listen in on occasional workshops or meetings.



“Becoming knowledgeable is the first step to building trust between Talent and Engineering teams.

I think it's important to think of yourself as part of the org. that you hire for. I think any learning that can happen is going to be super useful.

What I've done is try to understand the technologies they work with, maybe take classes on it [...], shadow stand ups or planning meetings, [...] join slack channels, go to events with those teams, etc.

Even if you have no idea what people are talking about, you're still learning. It makes those conversations with engineers, both internally and externally, so much easier.”



Sara Ali

Engineering Recruiting at Hightouch

Use tech-friendly screening tools

A sure way to improve the quality and relevance of the candidates you're sending on to engineering, is to leverage a screening tool.

You no longer have to rely solely on CVs, portfolios, and your own technical knowledge. Tools like CoderPad Screen empower TA to evaluate developers' hard skills and coding logic.

While it's a good idea to involve your engineering team in the creation of technical tests, you can also choose to lean on a tool that does it for you. CoderPad Screen, for example, will generate a well-balanced coding test based on your selection criteria (technologies, skill level, etc.).

You can automatically assess, benchmark and shortlist developers, before confidently submitting them to your hiring manager counterpart.

The cherry on top? For each candidate your hiring manager wishes to pursue further, you can provide an invaluable basis for in-depth technical discussion (including a code playback and detailed question-by-question report).

The screenshot displays the CoderPad interface. At the top, there are playback controls for two candidates: Adam (yellow dot) and Sofia (cyan dot). Below this, the CoderPad logo is visible. The main area shows a list of technologies with progress bars: C+, JS, CSS, Php, and Git. To the right, there is a code editor with the following SQL code:

```
1 -- SQL request(s) below
2 SELECT PRODUCT_ID, NAME, PRICE
3 FROM product
4 WHERE PRICE > 100
5 ORDER BY price DESC
```

At the bottom, there are three scorecards for Sofia Reyes: JS (90 / 100pts), Python (80 / 100pts), and PHP (85 / 100pts). On the right side, there is a profile card for Sofia Reyes, a Full Stack developer, with a circular profile picture.

02

“Hiring managers have unrealistic timeline expectations for finding and hiring talent.”

What's the problem?

Hiring managers want a quick turnaround. They're feeling the weight of that open position, that missing resource that's holding them back.

TA also want to get someone in fast. However, they only have so much time and resources themselves. They most likely have multiple pots on the stove. Plus, they're facing the changing realities of the job market.

WHAT CAN HIRING MANAGERS DO?

The law of good, fast and cheap

Have you heard of the law of good, fast and cheap?

It applies to a whole bunch of things: software development, project management, product design... and it applies to recruitment too.

Sure, there are nuances. But simply put, you can't have it all:

You can have it good and fast, but it won't be cheap. You can have it good and cheap, but it won't be fast.

You can have it cheap and fast, but it won't be good.

You need to be realistic and honest with your TA team when crafting a job description. You need to be clear on what you can afford, how much training and support you can provide, and what level of experience and knowledge is absolutely necessary to the role.

You also need to listen to your talent team's feedback and prioritize collaboratively.

Hiring forecast

Another thing that you can do to save time and streamline hiring, is to forecast future hiring needs. TA can help you with this, but you are in the best position to predict how your team will/needs to evolve over the next 12 months.

While your plan will never be 100% accurate, drafting a hiring plan will allow you and your TA team to:

1. Start filling your talent pipeline with the right candidates
2. Plan your actions and budget accordingly (less scrambling!)

Where should you start? A few words of advice:

1. Document the engineering team's organogram (and keep it up to date)
2. Spot likely promotions (and add any anticipated gaps to your hiring plan)
3. Identify likely turnover (individual warning signs and/or statistical estimations)
4. Plan project resources
5. Analyze skill gaps

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WHAT CAN TA DO?



It's oh-so-important to align on expectations from the get-go.

Recruitment is your jam, you're the expert. You simply need to equip yourself to confidently (and caringly) educate your hiring manager counterparts.

Ideally, you lean on communication, experience and data.

Communication

Set up regular check-ins to 1. Reassure hiring managers that you haven't forgotten them 2. Make sure that you're getting the information and feedback that you need to move things forward 3. Keep the relationship alive!

Experience

Whether you've got a little or a lot of experience, you know what your hiring process and timeline currently looks like. Make sure it's clearly documented and communicated to hiring managers. Lean on both industry standards and past hiring examples to prove your point.

Data

Communication and experience is great... but data is better.

You should be reporting on a number of metrics that will help you to manage expectations.

You've been tracking time-to-hire? Great, share the average time-to-hire for comparable roles. Want to get into more detail? Share data on application completion rates or interviews per hire. Put the numbers into perspective in relation to your hiring timeline.

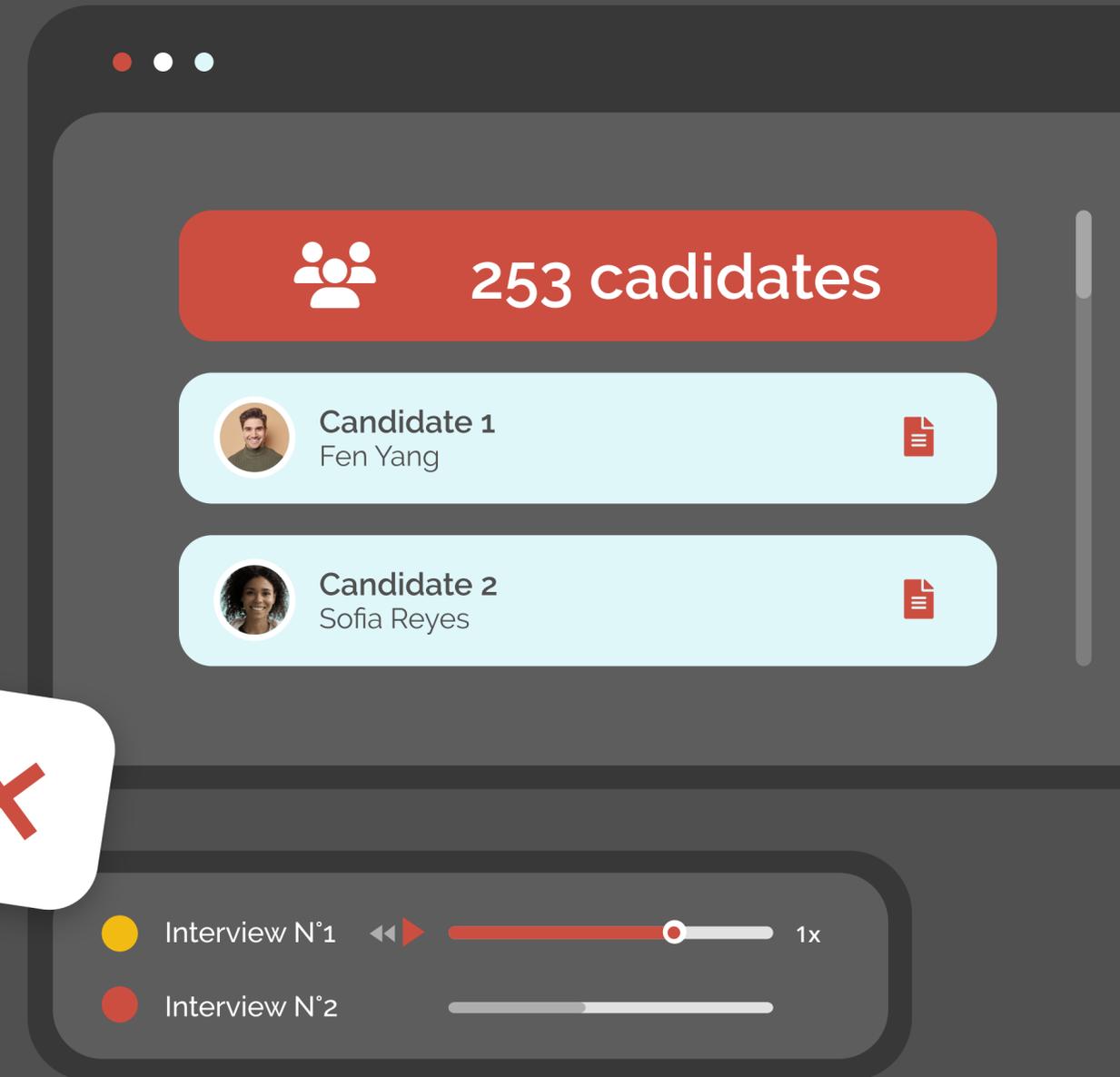
03

“There are too many steps, tools and systems to the hiring process. It’s confusing and inefficient. I want to hire someone, I don’t want to jump through hoops.”

What's the problem?



Hiring managers feel that the hiring process lacks efficiency and consistency—and maybe they're right!



WHAT CAN HIRING MANAGERS DO?



“Some hiring processes are just ridiculously grueling, you know, ‘18 stages of madness!’”



Nathan Sutter

Global VP of Engineering at CoderPad

Yes; hiring processes can be rather long. Some could do with adjustments, while others are pretty much the best they can be (given the hiring context).

In any case, the hiring process is (or should be) collaborative. So, if you have feedback, by all means, share that feedback with your TA team—so long as it's constructive.

If you feel that the process is too long, try to pinpoint exactly what it is that worries you. Be specific and transparent.

Do you worry that candidate experience is suffering? Do you feel like you're losing time with candidates that aren't relevant to the role (see [“TA are sending over irrelevant candidates, it's frustrating and a waste of everybody's time”](#))? Are you uncomfortable or unfamiliar with the tools being used?

Generally, your talent team will meet your feedback with clarifications or suggestions for change.

Keep in mind that your talent team has the same goal as you do: to fill your open position with the right candidate. Go forward with a positive attitude and appreciation for their work.

WHAT CAN TA DO?



An efficient, consistent, collaborative process will benefit everyone involved—especially your candidates.

In the same way that your candidates should know what to expect from your hiring process (Generally Intelligent, for example, do a great job of presenting their technical hiring process to candidates), so should internal contributors.

Aim to document and standardize your process. Strive to clearly communicate each step—and its value.

For each step of your internal hiring process, from the job description to the initial screen to the technical interview and beyond, address the following questions:

- What does this step entail?
- Who is involved and what is expected from them?
- What do we hope to learn?
- Why is this important to us?
- (Bonus) How does this benefit the candidate experience?

Plus, bear in mind that consistency doesn't mean refusal to evolve or improve. Sure, hiring manager satisfaction isn't the only thing you're tracking. But, you should always be willing to adjust and optimize your process, whenever justified.

“There are often things you can do to make the process shorter, less redundant. Stay on the lookout for gaps in your process, don't be afraid of reprocessing (the 'big enemy' of TA!), there are always opportunities for talent acquisition to grow and improve.”



Gerardo Tobar

Senior Team Leader, Talent Acquisition
at Telus International



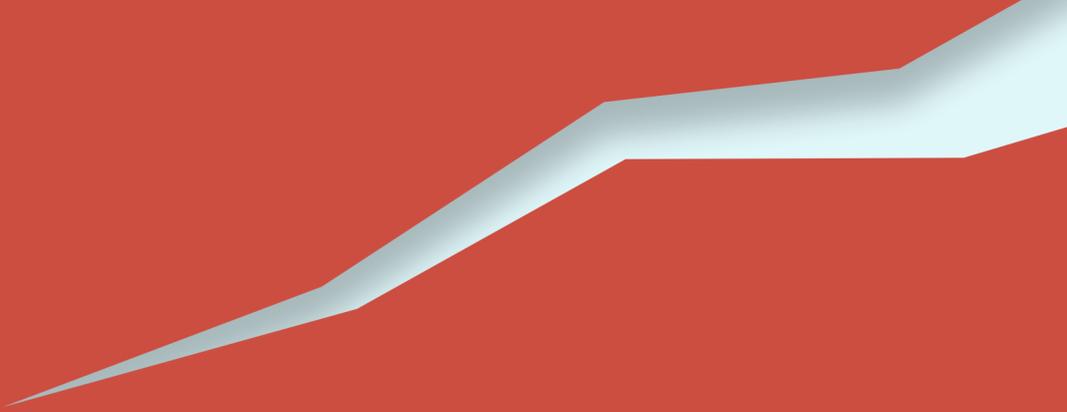
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04

“I want to build a strong relationship with my hiring manager colleagues, but they’re just not interested.”

What's the problem?



Often, the TA <> hiring manager relationship can feel a little lopsided.

Maybe TA feel like they're investing time and effort in the relationship and getting nothing back. Maybe they feel deprioritized or underappreciated. If this is the case, ultimately, the hiring process will drag and quality of hire will decline.

WHAT CAN HIRING MANAGERS DO?



As hiring manager, you need to be clear about your priorities and expectations.

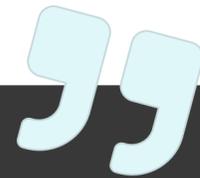
You need to understand and appreciate the role that your TA team plays in building your tech team. You're in this together, and you have the same end-game.

If a role is deprioritized, be transparent about where you're at, rather than just letting things rot. If the hiring need is unclear, talk to your TA team about it, they can help you get to the bottom of things.

WHAT CAN TA DO?



If you feel like you're talking to a brick wall, maybe you need to rethink the way you communicate with hiring managers. Do they prefer to check in asynchronously? Do they prefer a quick phone or video call? Are they a Slack person or an email person...? Talk their language.



A recruiter's best strength is 'we know people!'. We are in a people business [...] Building a good relationship is crucial. It builds trust. If you communicate well, they trust you. If they trust you, they respect you. If they respect you, you have an effective relationship [...] Get personal. Some hiring managers want to talk to you for 10 minutes, others want 2. Know your audience, be a chameleon.



Brianna Rooney

The Millionaire Recruiter

Don't be afraid to level with them. Explain why a solid, collaborative relationship is important for you, for them, and for your candidates. Be clear on what you think a successful partnership looks like.

Seek feedback from your hiring managers. Try to identify ways you could make the collaboration smoother.

If, as opposed to seeming uninterested, hiring managers are outright unresponsive. Maybe it's time to address the elephant in the room and move on to other projects.

“There have been times where I've had to have a frank conversation with a hiring manager and say: I'm not getting feedback on this, so what I'm hearing is that this is not a priority. I have 15 other requisitions that I'm supporting in addition to the 5 for your particular line of business, so if this is not where you really feel I need to spend my time right now, then I can reallocate that time to the other requisitions.”



Junius Currier

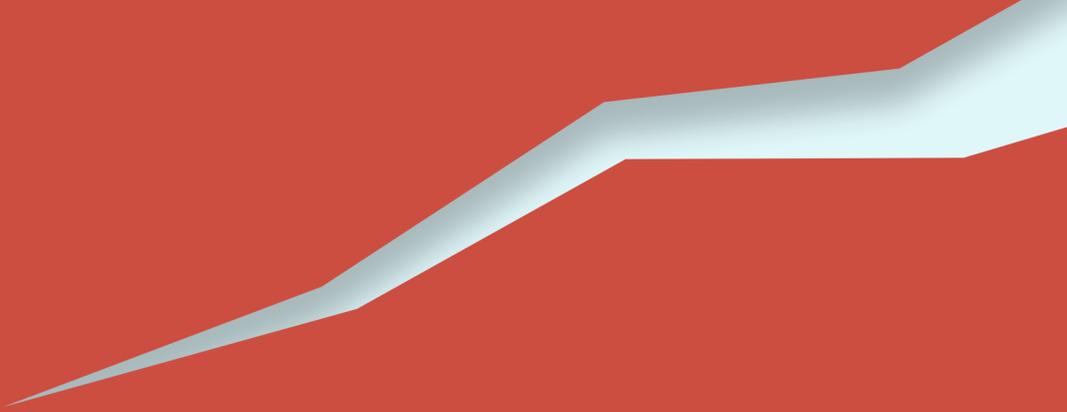
Director of Talent Acquisition & Technical Recruitment at Maximus

Finally, don't take things too personally. What you need is an effective, collaborative, and constructive relationship with your hiring managers. If some relationships are less natural than others, that's ok. You don't need to be best friends. You do, however, need to work together to achieve your goals.

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How To Build And Maintain Professional Relationships

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05

“It’s difficult to meet my hiring goals when hiring managers aren’t clear or change their minds often.”

What's the problem?



It's not easy to define a recruitment need. It's not easy to sort through what you want, what you need and what you can afford. It's not easy to get everyone on the hiring panel on the same page.

If job descriptions shift slightly during the hiring process, that's ok. It's not the end of the world. However, if u-turns, disagreements and surprises are coming up repeatedly—you have a problem.

WHAT CAN HIRING MANAGERS DO?



The precise definition of your hiring need, at the beginning of the process, is essential.

You may be tempted to hand your talent acquisition team a written job description. That's nice of you, but you might want to consider including TA *before* the job description instead.

Part of your collaboration with TA is aligning on your recruitment needs. Discussing your “problem” before offering a “solution” is likely to improve your chances of alignment. Recruiters will be able to challenge your ideas and put them into perspective. They'll have suggestions too.

Indeed, you know your tech team and your context. Your TA team likely has a more strategic, global view of hiring across the organization—as well as market knowledge.

Putting your heads together at the outset, will hopefully avoid major misalignment down the road (think damaged trust, a rocky candidate experience, a bash to your company's reputation...).



“I think the worst thing that can happen to me as a recruiter is to have to say to a candidate, in the last stages of the process, 'sorry, we're no longer hiring for this role' or 'we've decided to change the perimeter'. If a candidate drops out of the process, that's fine, that's just how it is. But if **we** drop out of the process because of internal misalignment, that's not ok.”



Cédric Ricard

People Ops Manager at CoderPad

WHAT CAN TA DO?



First things first: help your hiring managers help you.

Before you start sourcing candidates, you need to get to the bottom of what the hiring need is. What does the tech team look like today? What's missing from the puzzle? What is the expected outcome?

Not only should you be harvesting insider knowledge, you should be challenging their ideas and asking questions. Make sure to share any market information relevant to the hiring need.

After this first discussion, we'd suggest using a template (see ["TA are sending over irrelevant candidates, it's frustrating and a waste of everybody's time"](#)) to really pin down the job description.

Moreover, we'd recommend seeking the buy-in of other key players (besides your hiring manager). Who will be impacted by this hire? Who will be involved in the process? Ultimately, who is likely to question this role during the process?

It's better to spend time getting everyone on the same page now, then to risk a whole bunch of disagreements and changes down the road.



 Hiring Manager



 Talent Acquisition



 Hiring Manager



 Talent Acquisition

06

“Hiring managers aren’t interested in becoming better interviewers.”

What's the problem?



Interviews are at the heart of the tech recruitment process. They need to be done, and they need to be done well. If not, you could miss out on talented candidates—and that's not what you want.

WHAT CAN HIRING MANAGERS DO?



Interviews are important. But we know that they can also be intimidating, time-consuming, frustrating... even boring!

Maybe fewer candidates should be getting through to the interview stage (see [“TA are sending over irrelevant candidates, it's frustrating and a waste of everybody's time”](#)). Still, as hiring manager, you need to put effort into conducting good tech interviews.

Why?

Because bad interviews not only damage candidate engagement and employer brand, they result in costly mis-hires.

Your TA team is there to help. If they're offering advice or training, you should take it.

If they're not, that doesn't mean you can't be proactive and invest time in becoming a better interviewer. Work on your questions and your communication skills. Put candidate experience first!

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WHAT CAN TA DO?



We understand how infuriating it can be to source and screen developer candidates only to see them drop off at the interview stage. Although you're probably not the one conducting technical interviews, there are things you can do to try and engage and empower your hiring managers.

Leverage quantitative and qualitative data

How can you highlight the importance of interviews? A smart approach is to leverage quantitative and qualitative data.

Dive into your analytics and take a look at each interviewer's statistics. Where are you losing candidates? Which candidates are dropping out? Are there any trends? Is there an interviewer with particularly bad results? Present those numbers to the team and suggest areas for improvement.

"You need to know their interview stats [...] You need to dissect the whole process, before you can even hop in on a call with this hiring manager [...] This is your time, but data rules all worlds. You can say: 'Oh I think this, I think that, I've seen this trend...' No! Here's the data right in front of you. Share screen, be prepared, show them!"



Brianna Rooney

The Millionaire Recruiter

In addition, grab any opportunity you can to gather qualitative feedback from candidates—whether that's direct feedback (a company survey or a phone call) or indirect feedback (on social media or review sites such as Glassdoor).

Identify recurring issues (or praise!) and support engineering managers in making relevant adjustments.

Give actionable advice

Sure, provide theoretical advice and training (legal training, for example, is rather necessary—make sure your interviewers know what questions they can and cannot ask).

But make sure you provide actionable feedback too. Can you sit in on interviews, or watch replays? Can you pinpoint areas for improvement and provide real-life examples?

Try and get creative in the way you provide support: how about a checklist, a Loom walkthrough of best practices, a role-play exercise? If you're getting pushback, ask your hiring managers what they feel would be most helpful.

Note

Remember to brief interviewers on how to react if candidates ask non-technical questions. Discuss how interviewers might talk about company culture, team values, internal processes or compensation. Invite them to transfer relevant questions to you.

Identify advocates

Okay, so not all hiring managers are passionate about recruitment and candidate experience—but some are!



“Whoever is responsible for filling a role on the recruiting side and the hiring manager are really partners in a sale. The hardest part of landing really great candidates is being really great at the pitch for the company and the team. I really don't think that's talked about enough. Candidate experience is something I feel very strongly about. Yes, you need to assess skills and assess fit, but you also really need to actively sell the experience in the company. I want to put that in bold and put that into everybody's head.”



Nathan Sutter

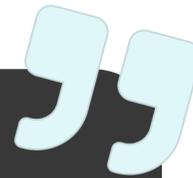
Global VP of Engineering at CoderPad

Identify those great interviewers. Work with them to find new ways to elevate the whole team's interviewing skills. Your hiring managers are likely to pay attention to their peers.

Align on shared goals

We've said it before and we'll say it again: TA and hiring managers have the same end-game. Your goal isn't to criticize or nitpick. Your goal is to hire the best developer for the job.

Remind your engineering counterparts of this. Reassure them that you have done your research, that you understand what's at stake, and that you're committed to doing the best job possible. In turn, you expect them to do their best too!



"I try to make sure that there's buy-in on both sides. [An understanding] that recruiting is going to help the business, and we're not just annoying people who are asking for tons of time, we are really thinking through this thoughtfully, because we've invested time into learning what you do day to day. Knowing that there's a commitment on both sides is really helpful."



Sara Ali

Engineering Recruiting at Hightouch

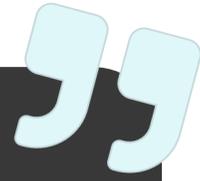
Set candidates up for success

Hiring managers aren't the only ones you can set up for success in interviewing. It's also your job to support candidates.

Help candidates prepare for their interview by providing useful information:

- Date and time
- Meeting link or location and instructions
- Who will be on the interview panel: their name, position, background
- Topics of discussion
- Interview format
- Duration of interview

You can also include a few friendly words of advice and encouragement—simply be aware of any bias you may introduce. All candidates should go into their interview with the same information.



“It’s really all about communication and getting to know your hiring managers, so that you can say ‘Hey, Vanessa is going to interview you for this position. She’s looking for this and this [...], she does this, she went to this university, if you have a conversation about this, you can lead in this way’. Knowing your engineering team is a game changer. Knowing who they are, what tools they use, etc. will really help you drive an interview and prepare candidates. It brings a human side to a very technical process.”



Gerardo Tobar

Senior Team Leader, Talent Acquisition
at Telus International

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How to Document Interview
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07

“Recruiters keep losing perfect-match candidates.”

What's the problem?



Finding a seemingly perfect candidate after months of searching and screening, only to lose them... urgh!

WHAT CAN HIRING MANAGERS DO?



You've finally met a candidate who ticks all the boxes. Then, poof! They're gone.

You pick yourself up and dust yourself off. You meet a new, even better candidate! But... poof! They slip through your fingers, again.

We know, it's maddening. If this is a recurring issue, we suggest you:

1. Ask yourself if there's anything you could do differently

Are you providing timely feedback? Are your interview skills up to par? Is the job description realistic? Do you know how to sell the job/company in an interview?

2. Talk to TA to see if there's anything they could do differently

A collaborative brainstorm may prove most effective here. At what step of the hiring process are candidates disappearing? Is there any way to make the process shorter? Is our compensation package competitive? How can we improve candidate experience?

3. Avoid blame culture and have faith

It's frustrating to lose candidates, but no good will come from blaming others. We're ready to bet that your TA team is just as frustrated as you are. Constructive collaboration is the way forward. Plus, bear in mind that losing candidates is a normal part of the tech recruitment process. Developers are in high demand, they're most likely interviewing for several roles at the same time. You'll find the right candidate soon!

WHAT CAN TA DO?



You know the drill: you win some, you lose some. Sure, but no one likes to lose! Here's our advice on how to maximize candidate engagement and acceptance rates:

Be a project manager

Hopefully, your process is fully documented and each participant knows what is expected of them (see ["There are too many steps, tools and systems to the hiring process. It's confusing and inefficient. I want to hire someone, I don't want to jump through hoops"](#)). All the same, you need to keep your eye on the ball.

Take ownership and urge accountability. Make sure everyone stays on track. A fast and efficient process leaves less room for rejection or ghosting.

Perfect your offer

It may feel like a formality, but extending an offer requires the utmost attention. Don't just "post and pray". Get personal, call the candidate, address any doubts they may have, and show genuine enthusiasm for the opportunity.

Streamline your process

60% of applicants quit the application process if it's too long or complex*. Is there any way you could speed up your process? Could you introduce efficiencies like templates or automations? Try to identify organizational roadblocks and face them head on.

Analyze your data

Data will help you identify at what stage you're losing the most candidates and where to concentrate your efforts. Data also serves as a great basis for suggesting change. Own your metrics!

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