

Modern *Tech Recruiting* Playbook.

How to sell your company
with stories and connections



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Introduction.

There have been significant shifts in tech recruitment within the last six months. Most worrisome? Many tech companies have been conducting layoffs and rescinding job offers. However, despite the headlines, tech hiring is still strong. For every company laying off a technologist, another is hiring that many more. And this is proven by the extremely low tech unemployment rate. Whereas the total unemployment rate in the United States is around 3.5 percent, the tech unemployment rate is essentially at 0 percent for many positions, with it overall being at a record low of 1.5 percent.

There are roughly two jobs for every tech professional in the market, which means there are numerous open jobs without enough candidates available to fill them. In the tech world, there are now three million more STEM jobs available in the US than there are skilled workers. Network architects, database administrators, and security professionals, including data, cloud, network, information and systems, are the roles with the lowest unemployment rates, highlighting just some of the tech positions in high demand.

The demand for tech professionals continues to increase as the supply decreases. The decrease in supply is in part due to employees choosing early retirement or moving on to passion projects outside of tech. The result is a market very much driven by the candidate, leaving employers racing to fill positions. Employers are dealing with the challenges of overworked staff doing the jobs of more than one person or the challenge of work simply not getting done due to a lack of resources and expertise.

Introduction

In reality, the problem isn't going away anytime soon. Globally, more than 54 percent of companies are experiencing a candidate shortage, with the United States being one of the top countries impacted. Tech companies will continually have more demand than people available, and it's likely to get worse before it gets better.

This problem is forcing tech recruitment to shift again — and these changes are set to last. Talent acquisitions teams must adapt quickly to overcome the fierce talent market. This playbook shares how to reshape tech recruitment strategies to successfully hire sought-after candidates and predicts the trends your talent acquisition team should have top of mind.



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SECTION 1

7 Ways to Combat Recruiting Challenges Today.

Current market trends mean increased pressure on tech recruiters to go beyond the norm. Each candidate they target could easily have multiple companies pursuing them. Identifying candidates that match a position's skill sets and requirements used to be the norm — that's no longer the case. Now, it's about finding trainable talent while trying to sell the company to candidates, not the other way around.

However, that's only part of the story. Let's look some of the most important things recruiters should be aware of today and how they can hone their strategies based on them.

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Today's intensely competitive market means companies and recruiters must adapt, and one such way is thinking like a marketer. Tech recruiters are now marketing and selling as much as they are sourcing and recruiting. They also need to get hiring managers on board regarding the possibility of reskilling and training candidates when they don't perfectly fit the mold.

Here are some steps your talent acquisition team can take achieve these goals:



Identify a dedicated senior talent acquisition leader as a go-to resource



Focus on speed to ensure an expeditious recruiting process



Consider possible candidate questions and scenarios ahead of time



Customize the Employee Value Proposition and develop sharp messaging that is targeted for each open position



Assess the candidate's needs immediately and address them up front



Get hiring managers on board

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Now, let's dive a little deeper into some more nuanced ways of honing your recruitment playbook.

1. Create a Tech Recruitment Center of Excellence.

You need the right talent to help you secure the right talent. As such, companies should consider identifying a senior talent acquisition leader that understands the tech recruiting space and current market trends. They should be able to identify what trends are meaningful to their organization specifically and how these trends should change their approach to tech recruitment. Internal champions responsible for surfacing these changes will help companies more quickly adapt to the ever-changing needs of in-demand talent.

The senior talent acquisition leader should have the access and ability to operate and move quickly to answer questions and meet the needs of the candidates. They also need to be able to project and plan for the long-term while moving fast in the now.

2. Focus on Speed.

In 2021, 40 percent of employers indicated that identifying quality candidates quickly was one of the top three anticipated challenges for the year, which proved to be true and has only become more challenging. And once a quality candidate is identified, the speed of the recruitment process must then be emphasized.

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Talent acquisition has always had to move fast, and in a market where there are more positions than individuals to fill them, speed is more important than ever. You can easily lose a valuable candidate within 24 hours if you don't move quickly. Therefore, decisions need to be made in the moment with everyone involved from the recruiter to the hiring manager and all the way up to executives working in tandem.

As much as speed is essential for an organization to secure a candidate, it can't come at the cost of not providing an overall positive experience for the candidate. Findings show 60 percent of candidates who have a great hiring experience will refer others to apply to the company, however, if they have a bad experience 25 percent would deter other professionals from applying.

3. Consider Possible Candidate Questions and Scenarios Ahead of Time.

If you have to seek out possibilities regarding the negotiation of a job offer or the answer to a question for a candidate from someone else on your team, it's too late. Therefore, it's wise to be proactive by considering a number of possible scenarios for high-priority roles, like what the candidates might request and what the company is willing to do for those requests.

The recruiter should have the answer the moment the candidate raises the question. If the recruiter has to get approval for something, you risk losing the candidate.

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4. Focus on Sharing Your Story.

It's easy in this market to get stuck on the transactional aspect of recruiting and focus merely on the bottom of the funnel to identify hires. However, recruiting needs to focus more on sharing your company's story to sell the company and secure the best talent.

Professionals want to know who you are and what your story is, and they want to be shown vs. told. Research suggests that when employers actively manage their employer brand by doing things like responding to reviews, updating their profiles and sharing updates on the culture and work environment, 75 percent of active job seekers are likely to apply for a job with that company. Additional research shows that company culture is a leading consideration for 44 percent of developers when applying to an employer, so they need to be shown what your culture is like.

To tell your story, your employer brand is most important. You must be able to tell your story succinctly for each offer presented, including what's in it for each individual candidate. You should be able to answer questions like:

- **What does the position have to offer?**
- **What does your company have to offer?**
- **What sets your company apart from competitors?**
- **What are the key milestones in your employee lifecycle that the candidate has to look forward to?**

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Companies that share their focus on diversity and inclusion as part of their story will be meeting the expectations of today's candidates, as well. Seventy-seven percent of talent professionals suggest that diversity will be very important to the future of recruiting. When company posts included the topic of diversity, engagement increased by 84 percent.

It's also vital to bear in mind that there are a lot of different types of roles in high demand, and the candidates that fill them are uniquely different. For example, tech professionals have different employee value propositions than account executives, which are also in demand. Don't apply a one-size-fits-all approach. Instead, you need to pitch the opportunity based on the specific person you're talking to for each position.



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Below are some questions to think through when identifying the stories you want to tell:



Who are the inspiring leaders within your organization that have a great story to share?



Which projects have teams recently worked on or are working on that will have a deep and meaningful impact?



Do you have employees with unique stories to share? Maybe they had an idea come out of a stretch project that majorly impacted the business or took a sabbatical leave that changed their outlook.

There are many ways to uncover these stories, you can:



Ask your employees



Keep up with conversations happening across Slack or other internal communication channels



Leverage employees with high employee satisfaction scores for ideas



Interview new employees to discover opportunities



Ask hiring managers discovery questions to identify possibilities



Speak with tenured employees on why they've stayed at the company

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5. Customize the Employee Value Proposition for Each Position.

The employee value proposition (EVP) needs to be customized to meet the current demands of the market and the needs of each candidate individually. The work on the customized EVP should occur before the position goes live, so all are clear on what it is and can proactively communicate it with candidates. The EVP should clearly highlight the total rewards package your organization has to offer too.

As part of your EVP, it's imperative to understand the desires of candidates beyond the role and compensation. Perks and benefits are a driving factor for candidates, with many willing to take a pay cut for better benefits. Two out of three people (66 percent) decide whether to leave their employer after assessing their company's new benefits offerings.

Our recent survey of 1,099 tech employees identified insurance, 401(k) matching and remote work as some of the most sought-after benefits from employers today. If you offer perks and benefits that meet the candidate's requests, point that out up front as part of the EVP.

It's a common misstep to post the position before evaluating the EVP and customizing the job description to really attract a candidate. But there is a huge benefit to taking a bit of time to ensure the EVP has been customized during the intake meeting for the open role, with a goal to sell it in every step of the recruiting process. It's essential that the entire hiring team be involved in establishing the EVP for the position.

2022 Total Rewards: The Most Wanted Benefits

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6. Assess the Candidate's Needs Immediately.

The needs assessment should consistently be established in the very first call with the candidate, especially when considering passive candidates who are satisfied with their current positions. Developers, for example, tend to be overall satisfied with their jobs, with almost 65 percent reporting that they are either slightly or very satisfied, so getting them to leave their employer to join your company will take some work and hard selling.

Finding out what the biggest factors are to get passive candidates to leave their current employer and how it can be weaved into every interview moving forward to sell them on it needs to be addressed. This is where being clear on the EVP at the time of posting the position is helpful. As soon as you know the candidate's needs, you can immediately get down to the details and begin to sell and communicate the aspects of the EVP that meet those needs, quickly clarifying what's in it for the candidate.

Bear in mind that most qualified candidates are likely to entertain more than one employer in today's world. This equates to the candidates evaluating the company more than the company is evaluating the candidates, so there is no longer just evaluation coming from the hiring team. Instead, the hiring team conversation needs to be a 50/50 split of selling and evaluation.

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7. Get Your Hiring Managers On Board.

Hiring managers need to get on board with this new hiring process in order to be successful in the job climate we're in. So many have been trained to exclude people and look for why they're not a good fit vs. considering that there are numerous opportunities to train candidates, especially when they'd be a great fit culturally and have had valuable experiences that can serve the organization.

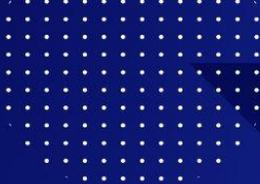
A 2021 developer survey showed that one in three developers were self-taught, and nearly 80 percent of HR professionals had recruited developers with non-academic backgrounds in the past, with 24 percent doing so on a regular basis. This is just one aspect that highlights why the old mindset of waiting to find the perfect candidate and not being open to opportunities to train and develop sharp candidates that might not have the exact skill set or educational background needs to shift.

Hiring managers also need to sell the company and position while evaluating the candidates simultaneously. No time can be wasted. Responses need to be expeditious from the hiring manager to the recruiter – no more excuses for taking days or weeks to provide feedback about a candidate.

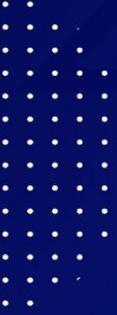


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Developers are
self-taught



SECTION 2



The Future of Recruiting — 9 Trends.

Let's dive into nine key areas that recruiters can focus on now to get ahead of the game.



SECTION 2

Trend #1: Technological Innovation.

Artificial Intelligence and robotics are the future of work. Companies making the transition for more innovative approaches to be technology-based are the ones thriving and moving forward with less pain than those that are not. Companies are implementing innovation through automated, data-driven, technical and digital transitions to provide improved experiences for candidates, employees and consumers.

Trend #2: Authentic, Bidirectional and Human-Centric Communication.

The world of recruiting is becoming less about screening and more about connecting. The time for resumes might soon be behind us. Many recruiters today bypass the resume and go directly to reviewing LinkedIn profiles because they are interested in what the candidate's job title is and what their career progression looks like. A LinkedIn profile can tell a lot about a candidate's story and the potential challenges they might face in an organization's open position, and LinkedIn allows for quick and easy connection and dialogue.

Pro Tip

For bidirectional recruiting to be successful, companies need to understand the process and dialogue flow. Mapping out the various possible journeys is key. "If they say this, we'll ask this," or "If they request this, we'll share this," and so on. Having maps will guide the conversation in real-time and help to expedite the recruiting and hiring process.

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Through connection, conversational recruiting is the future, with authentic communication being at the heart of it. The standard of putting slogans on the wall stating this is who we are and what we believe will be a thing of the past. Instead, communication is becoming bidirectional. The company is asking the candidate, “What are you looking for?” and the candidate responds. And the company then shares, “This is what we’re looking for,” and the conversation goes back and forth. It’s a more human approach where automated tracking system (ATS) responses are a thing of the past.

Nurturing candidates must be continual. Candidates are getting three to five offers at a time, and they need to move quickly because they have to provide responses as well. Through human connection, it is possible to keep the dialogue open with these candidates, as well as when someone isn’t a good fit at this time but might be for a future role. It’s possible to continually keep someone warm with authentic and bidirectional communication.

Pro Tip

Consider implementing a 90-day-touchpoint to reach out to candidates that you liked or that turned down your offer to ask them if they’re still happy. Nurture them, so you have the potential for boomerang candidates.

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Trend #3: Extensive Investment in Training for Recruiting Teams.

To keep up with the changing market trends and demands, there needs to be an extensive investment in training recruiting teams moving forward. [Insights from LinkedIn](#) indicate the fastest-growing skills for recruiters are adaptability, personal development, diversity and inclusion, talent pipelining, decision making and HR strategy. These speak to the skills required to meet the challenges of a fast-paced, candidate-driven market where competition between employers is steep and recruiting is becoming more involved in business strategy as a whole.

In many companies, there isn't a lot of existing, valuable training, so there is room for companies to grow in this area and package training for recruiters to advance skills similar to how a sales trainer comes in to train sales teams. The better the training to meet the current demands, the better the results in actually meeting those demands.

Trend #4: Advancement in Recruiting Analytics.

As the challenges in tech recruiting continue, we can expect to see advancements around analytics. Many HR tools are subpar and don't provide a comprehensive and efficient means to support recruiting. Talent acquisition, data management, process flow and reporting software support have much room to improve. The need to move so quickly in today's market means HR systems must provide a streamlined overview of what your pipeline looks like, similar to the highly advanced technology sales teams use.

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We also need different and better data that goes beyond the status of the candidate and new hires. We need deeper insights regarding both, along with how the brand is tracking and the level of engagement.

Trend #5: Video Communications.

A lot more effort is being put into video communications, providing a unique ability to customize communications similar to how dating apps are being utilized. We're likely to hear and see more about this new trend in the near future, and it will be a positive for the candidate recruiting experience.

Trend #6: Adjustments to HR and Talent Acquisition Budgets.

The way HR and talent acquisition budgeting have historically been developed needs to be completely revamped. **Moving forward:**

-  There needs to be an investment in training for recruiters similar to how much is invested in training in a sales department.
-  There needs to be a budget for marketing and the employer branding aspect of recruiting. 64 percent of talent professionals anticipate their employment branding budget to either remain the same or increase.
-  There needs to be a budget dedicated to the recruiting and hiring data and analytics piece, which includes a robust ATS.

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The challenge with getting support for talent acquisition budgets compared to sales and marketing is that sales and marketing can align with revenue, whereas it is harder to do that with hiring. The latter makes it difficult to convince the C-suite to get the necessary budgets approved, especially if you're trying to get your CFO or head of finance to give you more money for a department that traditionally has the lowest budget in the company.

Pro Tip

Making a budget pitch for tech as it relates to how it will replace a potential headcount can be beneficial to support buy-in. For example, you can maybe get away with implementing two analytic tools for recruiting that are \$10K to \$20K per year because you can communicate with finance that you won't need a recruiting ops person.

Trend #7: Recruiter to Open Req Ratio Shift.

Traditionally, there used to be one recruiter to 20-30 open requisitions. In today's market, that ratio would make it impossible to move fast enough. The recruiter to open req ratio needs to be rethought in organizations.

The source of leads will drive recruiting stats and efforts, as well, whether you're dealing with inbound leads, external sourcing and recruiting, or recruiting passive candidates. It is also necessary for organizations to plan for backfills in the recruiting process, not just new fills.

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Trend #8: More Frequent Evaluation of Benefits Plan and Compensation Structures.

It's important to evaluate benefits and compensation more frequently than before. Traditionally, you'd reevaluate benefits during open enrollment and look at the total package at that time. Now, talent acquisition leaders need to review benefits and make updates more often. There needs to be constant reevaluation to ensure trends are staying current with what candidates need and want.

Pro Tip

Hiring managers can help with the re-recruiting concept within their teams to help retain employees. Encourage hiring managers to reiterate valuable information to employees, like why the employee is there, the value in the work they're doing, the company's goals and so on. Retaining top talent also allows for reskilling to fill needed gaps.

“What are new offerings that we might want to add?” is a question that should be asked regularly, along with “What are other employers offering?” Numerous organizations are considering benefits like sabbaticals and mental health benefits, and you want to ensure your organization is staying on trend based on your target market's desires.

Similarly, the old way of doing compensation reviews was to conduct an annual compensation analysis, where you reviewed the market data and made necessary updates.

Now, companies are assessing and reassessing numbers quarterly to keep up with market trends and ensure they meet the expectations of their employees and the candidates they are attempting to hire.

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Trend #9: Expansion and Strengthening of College Recruiting Efforts.

Another area where employers can capitalize on securing talent is on campus. Companies should be implementing a dedicated university recruiting team to fill open positions. So many companies overlook new grads because you have an upfront investment in training and mentoring them. However, there is an opportunity to train and develop campus hires to fill positions for a long-term fit within your organization.

Campus hires begin looking for employment at least six months prior to graduation. In fact, many employers begin recruiting students by the end of their sophomore year going into their junior year. The goal is to bring them in for an internship as an opportunity to test potential fit for both the candidate and the organization. If there is a clear fit, it's vital the organization extends an offer as soon as possible with the hopes of securing the candidate before another organization attempts to poach them. Highly sought-after campus hires will have a job waiting for them by the time they graduate.



Conclusion.

Though there doesn't seem to be an end in sight for the shortage of tech professionals, organizations can improve their recruiting efforts to help them fill their open positions. A clear understanding of your current state of affairs and your recruiting priorities is key. Then, developing strategies as a team will support you in taking the right step toward separating yourself from the competition and hiring the candidates you need. Speed, expertise, stakeholder buy-in and innovation are critical components to keep up in a fierce talent market.





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