11 HIRING TACTICS THAT GET TECH COMPANIES THE BEST TALENT

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INTRODUCTION

Talent acquisition is more dynamic than people expect. Think back to fifteen years ago. Intuitive smartphones weren't available to check and apply for jobs over lunch. LinkedIn was yet to reach 700 million professional users, altering the sourcing process. Video interviewing was still comically unreliable.

Fast forward to the current environment and those innovations have diminished the time candidates remain on the market and reshaped the hiring process. Think you're having difficulty attracting top technical professionals in today's market? Imagine what another five to ten years of evolution will bring.

Steady adjustment to new hiring strategies have kept most companies afloat with fresh employees. Yet it is businesses willing to disrupt their old hiring habits that continually hire exceptional talent. Rather than blindly adopting bandwagon strategies, they cultivate techniques that align with their vision. They explore the science of what keeps employees engaged. They streamline the process to prevent falloffs. And by evaluating their successes and failures, your business can remain competitive too.

That is why TransTech has put together "11 Hiring Tactics That Get Tech Companies the Best Talent." Our eBook examines the hiring strategies of big name companies in the hopes of providing insight into what helps their brand to identify top talent and retain them through the hiring process.

We know that each company has their own distinct process and that not every strategy will work for every business. But by presenting an array of different tactics, we hope to broaden your hiring repertoire as the war for talent escalates and evolves.

We hope that the stories and insights included inside provide you with a greater understanding of your own hiring process as you strive to grow alongside your fellow innovators.

GOOGLE

In the words of founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin, "Google is not a conventional company. We do not intend to become one." That motto and way of thinking allowed Google to transcend from a search engine to a multifaceted techno-conglomerate dabbling in everything from cell phones to driverless cars. Now, that belief has directly affected the way in which they screen and hire candidates.

Unlike many companies, Google never has to worry about a shortage of eager candidates knocking at their door. Advertising Google on a resume provides name brand recognition for future employers. People apply at Google just for the reputation boost. That leaves the tech giant with the burden of screening all those candidates for people who work hard, perform at the level they expect, and have the right mentality.

Lazlo Bock, Sr. VP of People Operations at Google, acts as chief gatekeeper and sets the tone at the tech giant. His experience and extensive research have helped to shape the way the company has hired over the years.

From his experience, "Most interviews are a waste of time because 99.4 percent of the time is spent trying to confirm whatever impression the interviewer formed in the first ten seconds.[1]" He cites the confirmation bias, the interpretation of new evidence in ways that confirm preexisting beliefs, as consistently sabotaging the interview process.

Though the methods Google has employed are not always perfect, their combined hiring wins and losses offer guidance for companies looking to improve their strategies.

#1 ELIMINATE BAD PRACTICES

Google interviews were once a haven for the silly brain teasers that bedeviled IT professionals for years. "How many golf balls can fit in a school bus?" "How many piano tuners are in the entire world?" "How many haircuts happen in America every year?[2]" Convoluted questions like these were meant to test how a candidate analyzes a big problem. But they didn't provide any benefit.

Lazlo Bock says that they fail to predict performance. "[Case questions and brain teasers] are tests of finite skill rather than flexible intelligence, which is what you want to hire for. [1]" Rather than repeating the same insanity, they changed their interview process and banned brain teasers from the official interview process.

#2 FOLLOW THE DATA

Data is almost sacred to Google, so it's no surprise that they look at statistical findings to improve their hiring strategies. Specifically, Lazlo Bock refers to a study run by Frank Schmidt and John Hunter that incorporated 85 years of data about 19 different assessment techniques to determine which actually predicted performance.

The most effective performance predictor is a work sample test, which accounts for 29% of an employee's performance[1]. In Google's hiring process, engineering or product management team members are asked to solve engineering problems during the interview. They acknowledge that even that practice only tests an employee in the vacuum without evaluating their collaboration skills and adaptability to the unknown. That is why they incorporate cognitive tests (which predict 26% of employee performance) and structured interview questions (which predict another 26%)[1].

Which assessment techniques are the most effective at predicting how someone will perform once hired? Here are a few sample techniques indicating what percentage of a candidate's performance they can predict:

Work Sample Test 29%

Cognitive Tests 26%

Structured Interview Questions 26%

Unstructured Interviews 14%

Reference Checks 7%

Years of Experience 3%

#3   FOCUS ON STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Many of the traditional interview questions fail to glean any impactful information from candidates. "What is your greatest weakness?" and "What is your greatest strength?" are worthless in the mind of Lazlo Bock. Instead, certain structured interview questions are the key to finding insightful answers about whether a candidate should be hired in the first place.

Most companies are using structured interview questions, which are broken down to behavioral or situational questions, in their existing routine. The difference here is not reinventing the wheel but reinforcing what is already being done.

Behavioral interview questions review past achievements and decisions by matching them with what the current job requires. Questions like "Talk about a time when you had to work with a person with different work habits from your own" or "Explain a time when you had to work with a difficult client and how you handled the situation" are more effective at determining a common thread of actions.

Situational interview questions explore hypothetical situations and do a much better job of gauging problem solving steps and future actions than case questions ever would. Questions like "How would you react if a critical project was running behind schedule? or "Explain what you would do if a team member was not contributing at the full level expected" do a strong job of outlining how someone will perform on the job (if the questions are tailored appropriately).

FACEBOOK

Though thought of as being ingrained in their primary platform, Facebook is no less dynamic than Google. Under Mark Zuckerberg's guidance, they have acquired companies like Instagram and Oculus Rift to diversify their holdings. And with their war with Twitter to be the dominant force in social media still in full swing, Facebook needs to use insightful hiring strategies as they push themselves to be malleable and dynamic in their future.

Sheryl Sandberg has been the single most influential person on the Facebook executive team when it comes to hiring. As the Chief Operating Officer, she has spent thousands of hours working on building an exceptional talent funnel for the social media giant. Her insights into the workforce come from that experience, her tireless research, and an openness to integrating game-changing strategies into her repertoire.

#4   HIRE PEOPLE YOU CAN CROSS-TRAIN

Sandberg puts emphasis on a classic hiring tradition that has unfortunately fallen into disuse. She says, "We believe our journey at Facebook is only 1% done, so we want people who can help us build technology, products and our business into the future. We don't look for a specific background or skill-set when we make hiring decisions. [3]"

Rather than putting an inordinate emphasis on niche skills, Sandberg advocates hiring IT professionals with great technical skills and aptitudes with the intent to train them in new skills when you need to make agile shifts in focus later[3]. She and Instagram COO Marne Levine think of this as hiring athletes and cross training them later.

Cross-training employees definitely fills a need. At least 63% of employers are concerned with the skills gap and on-the-job cross-training helps to fill the gap[4]. The benefit of cross-trained employees offers companies flexible, efficient, and team-focused people who are agile enough to change with the times. Spotting these candidates in the interview process means that technical skills are shifted to the passenger seat while adaptability, on-the-job learning, and interpersonal skills take the driver's seat.

The skills gap appears to be front of mind for many businesses:

63%
are concerned with the skills gap

43%
are experiencing lower productivity

25%
are losing revenue
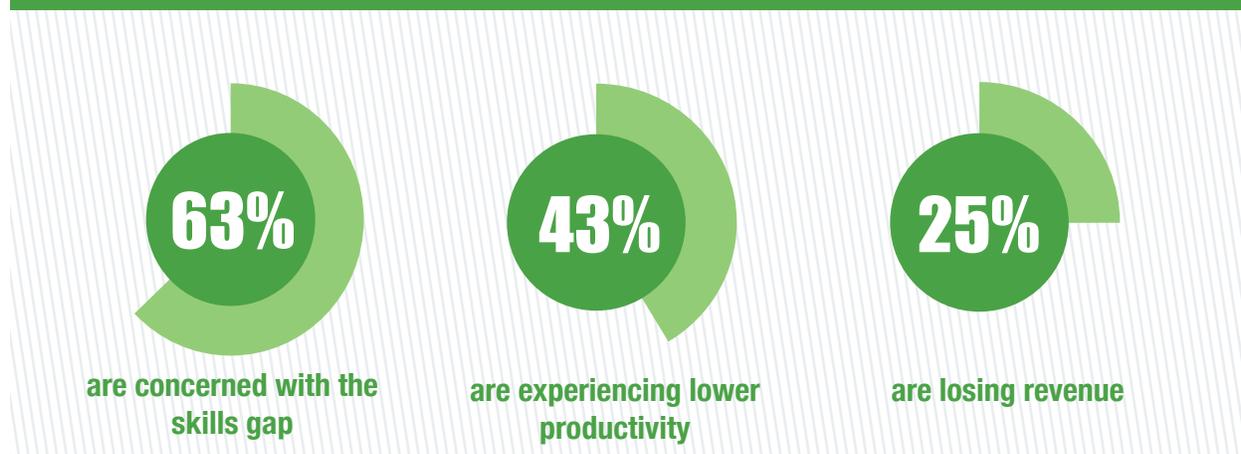
#5   AVOID COSTLY HIRING MISSES

Imagine you passed on several candidates in the past, only to acquire their business for $19 billion a few years down the road. More than likely, you'd be kicking yourself for not having made the hire in the first place. That is the exact position Facebook faced when they acquired instant-messaging firm WhatsApp in 2014[5]. Founders Jan Koum and Brian Acton were rejected by the social media giant, struck out on their own, and made an app that forced Facebook to hire them. And it all was avoidable if they followed the right strategies.

First, there is a level of awareness that is necessary. Are missed hires happening because the existing processes are too slow or because of a deficiency in the screening process? Obstacles to change always exist, so it is important to present the tangible costs of missed hires while delineating the shortcomings of the hiring process.

In the instance of rejected employees, thorough ATS record keeping can identify the exact point in which a candidate was eliminated. Data analytics tools are helpful in reviewing the data gleaned from this occurrence to spot trends in hiring oversights. Additionally, some companies can track the trajectory of employees they missed to improve their ability to spot and acquire innovators.

#6   HIRE SOMEONE YOU WOULD WORK FOR

Mark Zuckerberg has his own perspective on the hiring process. When he looks at a candidate, he always asks himself one simple question: would I work for that person[6]? If the answer is yes, he extends an offer. Zuckerberg said, "Maybe you could compromise on quality today and get a little more work done over the next six months. [6]" Ultimately, he feels that hiring people who do not fit his criteria would be a compromise down the road.

Once again, this style of thinking prioritizes the character and intangible skills of a candidate rather than his or her concrete technical skills. Businesses that use this method look at a candidate's leadership skills, ability to work on a team, adaptability, innovation, and vision for the future. Everything else can be trained.

ZAPPOS

Who would have thought that an online shoe retailer would be such a game-changer? Zappos has risen to prominence for their wide selection, exceptional customer service, and model of winning company culture. Zappos CEO Tony Hsieh has helped cultivate a company culture that goes beyond the ordinary with a set of 10 core values that encapsulate who Zappos employees are[7].

Just as those core values influence every aspect of their daily work, they also have molded the way Zappos considers potential prospects, for better or for worse.

#7   USE YOUR TEAM FOR THE INTERVIEW

Zappos wants to get to know the person behind a candidate's interview veneer. Especially because Zappos offers $2,000 to any new hires that feel the company is not the right fit and decides to quit[8]. Though this opt out is actually meant to prevent the prolonged impact of bad hires, there will still be some candidates that attempt to game the system. So, the online retailer works hard to screen candidates early. Which is why Zappos consistently involves diverse members of the team in the interview process.

The one thing that members of Zappos know as much as customer service is the Zappos core values. Due to that rote familiarity, they are great at spotting who will fit and who would be better working elsewhere.

The covert evaluation begins as early as the ride over. Any candidate coming in from out of town is picked up by a Zappos driver who makes nuanced observations of the candidate. Does he or she treat the driver with respect? Are there hints of the 10 core values in their interaction? Is the overall ride pleasant? When the candidate goes on the official tour, recruiters check with the driver to gain these general impressions.

Every member of the company is encouraged to provide their feedback on a candidate, identifying when Zappos values are apparent and when they are sorely missing. Companies that share Zappos' strategy are wise to seek out the feedback of engaged employees. Their commitment to your brand and awareness of what it takes to fit in the culture helps to eliminate incompatible candidates long before they have a chance to modify your internal chemistry for the worse.

#8   AVOID TOO MUCH UNIFORMITY

Though the tight-knit nature of a Zappos style culture creates strong bonds, it also risks the development of an echo chamber where only the same ideas bounce back. Having a unified company culture is good to a point, but the problem is that everyone usually has the same biases and blind spots.

Imagine if everyone on a given team was just hired for creativity. They all might have Burning Man levels of originality, but lack the value of a more practical-minded employee. Would someone like current Google CEO Sundar Pichai, who tends to be more of a level-headed pragmatist, be hired within the organization? Or would revolutionary talent be missed because he or she doesn't fit the mold?

This is a very unostentatious problem. Most of the time, it slips by without being noticed until the business begins to suffer from a deficiency in a particular trait. And there are serious ramifications for that deficiency. Research from McKinsey & Company found that gender-diverse teams and ethnically diverse teams outperform more homogenous teams by 15% and 35% respectively[9].

The hiring lesson here? Do not disqualify candidates because they do not seamlessly fit the mold in their resume or interview. Sometimes, their incongruities with the rest of the team can provide unforeseeable insight into how to keep your team agile.

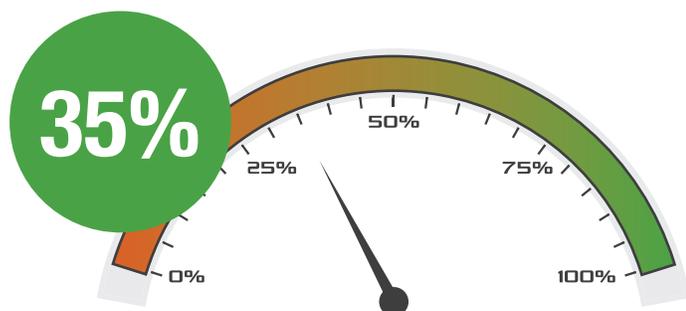### Research from McKinsey & Company found differences in performance:

Gender-diverse teams outperform more uniform teams by **15%**

Ethnically diverse teams outperform more uniform teams by **35%**

TRANSTECH: WHAT WE DO DIFFERENT

As a staffing and recruiting firm, learning about the latest hiring strategies is one of our greatest passions. Recruiters at TransTech strive to stay in touch with approaches and techniques that influence-makers are using to keep their companies competitive. Whether hiring our own employees or for our candidates, we combine the right strategies in the moment to handle the challenges at hand.

And we find that our flexible strategy gets results. This year, we were named one of Chicago's Best and Brightest Companies to Work For ®. Here are just a few of the hiring lessons we have learned over the years.

#9   USE SETBACKS AS LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

That misguided hiring strategy that you followed for too long? It is an opportunity to learn what is truly important when screening candidates. Adopting a positive mentality about setbacks improves the chances that the mistake will go unrepeated.

Additionally, giving serious consideration to what actually went wrong helps companies bounce back from the mistake faster. For example, if Google would have just discontinued their brain teasers without looking at an alternative, their overall tactics might have remained just as ineffective. But by realizing the problem and seeking out a replacement, they were able to boost their talent acquisition results.

#10   LEARN WHAT WORKS FOR YOUR COMPANY

Not every hiring strategy is universal. What works for Google, Facebook, or Zappos might not gel with your own company. However, it is important to consider certain outside-the-box tactics before you outright disqualify them.

Part of the reasons why these companies succeed is because they boldly explore new ideas. Sure, some do not produce the originally anticipated results, but others help to speed up the hiring process and acquire a higher caliber candidate.

#11   WORK WITH A STAFFING PARTNER YOU CAN TRUST

The people of TransTech are concerned with effective hiring strategies. We have built a strategic procurement model that helps us quickly find exceptional IT professionals for our various clients. Each candidate search is tailored to the specific client and the core values that guide their decisions.

Additionally, we keep in touch with candidates throughout the process to decrease falloff and ensure that the best fit is being made for both parties.

Contact us today to make your next hire simple without all the hassle.

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