Roq™

FROM RECRUITING TO ONBOARDING

Roq shares its experiences and lessons learned for in-house talent teams on enhancing the candidate experience for better tech role employment results during the skills shortage.

Quality Engineering like no other

INTRODUCTION

In a time when the UK's digital skills gap is wider than ever and great candidates are gold dust, the challenge for recruiters - be they internal or agency - has never been harder. With Time to Fill (TTF) on technology roles sitting at an average of 61 days[1] (12 working weeks), it's essential for organisations to have a robust recruiting process to ensure that they get the best possible people into their business.

Candidate experience is crucial, in fact, it's make-or-break. According to LinkedIn, 65%[2] of candidates say that a bad interview experience makes them question whether they want the job at all. A positive hiring experience increases employee retention considerably, saving thousands per person in employee replacement costs. If a candidate has a great experience when applying, they are more likely to accept a position and turn down other offers that they may receive.

Of course, keeping employees once they're through the door is another story – one that we'll perhaps follow up on soon.

According to Hays, almost 95% of employers looking for tech talent have encountered a skills shortage over the past year. Reducing time-to-hire, bringing the right people in, and recruiting conversion rates are top priorities for Talent Teams and at Roq, we believe that consistency, transparency, and best practice are essential throughout the in-house recruiting process.

So, we'd like to share some of the knowledge we've learned through experience and hope it helps you with your organisation's efforts.

[1] https://icims.drift.click/2021WorkforceReport
[2] https://www.linkedin.com/business/talent/blog/talent-acquisition/candidates-share-what-will-make-interview-process-stand-out

1.
DEFINING THE REQUIREMENT

You've been asked to get involved in recruiting for a role. You've been told about the need, the reporting line and It's likely that you'll have been given a job description, so where do you instinctively go from there?

YOUR OUTPUT CAN ONLY BE AS GOOD AS YOUR INPUT ALLOWS IT TO BE.

Ensuring you have sufficient information to kick-start your search is essential to avoid wasting time. Given that an average of 250 candidates will apply for each role, getting to the most appropriate talent, faster and more efficiently will really streamline your process. That means you'll need to ask some key questions.

How has the role come about?

If someone has left, it can be helpful to understand why to avoid traits and skills deficits that can be problematic or to allay fears when you start having conversations with candidates. Perhaps the person in the role has progressed within the organisation – a great story to tell a candidate! If it's a new role, then that can be very attractive to potential candidates by demonstrating growth in your business for example.

What skill sets/experience are required?

Are there any niche skills that candidates need to have? Anything specific that's a must-have for potential candidates? Whether it's industry or role related, qualifying out can save a lot of time later on.

How long do you have to recruit for the role?

You have a lot of work to do, so get this information upfront so that you can prioritise your workload. It will also help you to gauge the appropriate recruitment approach you need to take, for example, if it's less than four weeks, you'll need to either shift other roles to the back burner and/or engage agencies. If it's 12 weeks, you can take time to properly headhunt and verify direct applications, etc.

What date do you need this person to start?

73%[3] of job candidates still feel that salary is the most important factor when considering a job offer, so it's essential that you are clear and understand your parameters. It's also worth bearing in mind that 78%[4] of candidates would be more likely to apply for a job if the advert mentioned the benefits on offer so consider these carefully.

What level of flexibility are you willing to accept on the job specification?

Knowing what you're willing to compromise on will reduce frustrations and wasted time but may also flag up other opportunities. No point in accepting C++ when only Python will do unless you're willing to invest the time in the right person – and if that's a compromise you're willing to accept, does that open a new opportunity to recruit/promote from within? Consider the nuances. Again, understanding this will also give you an idea of the appropriate recruiting approach to take - if you know it's a very niche skill set, it's highly likely that you'll have to headhunt and/or use the skills of an external agency.

[3] https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/how-to-answer-what-salary-seeking-job-interview
[4] https://www.pagepersonnel.co.uk/advice/management-advice/attracting-candidates/employee-benefits-battleground

2.
SOURCING CANDIDATES

Once you've defined your requirement, the candidate sourcing can begin. The resources available to you now are vast and wide-reaching, so identification and engagement of prospective talent can happen in many ways – it's a case of being in the right place at the right time, so a combination of channels is recommended.
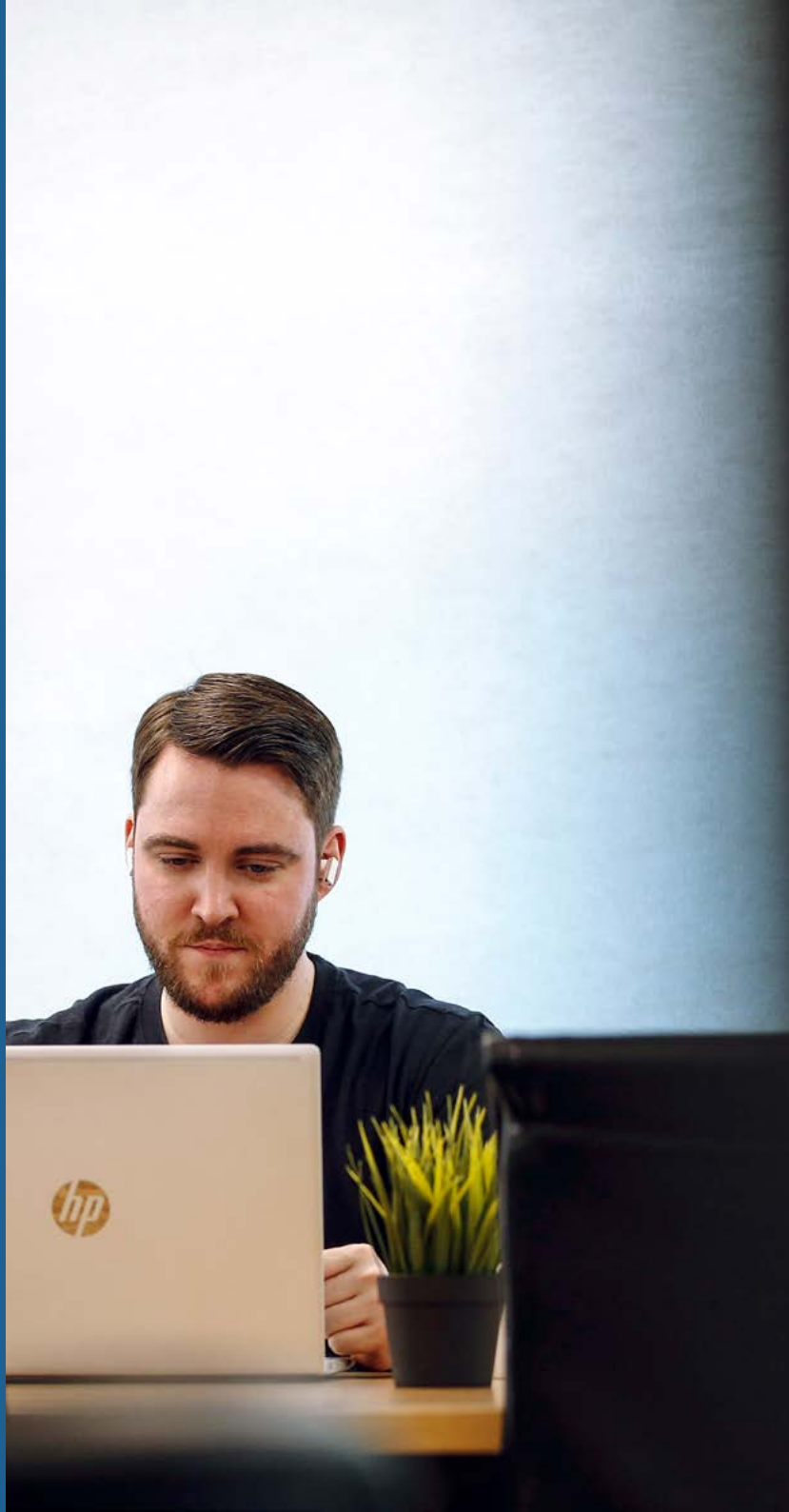
Roq's preferred sourcing routes include:

- Advertisements via job boards, careers pages, networking sites, etc.
- Social media engagement (LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok)
- Marketing campaigns and materials distributed via company and personal LinkedIn posts, videos, webinars and podcasts
- Events, careers fairs and community outreach
- Headhunting and direct sourcing via personal networks, LinkedIn, Networking Groups, etc.
- Referrals both internal and external
- Pre-existing candidate networks (previous applicants and our associate network)
- Direct applicants

MAKING YOUR BRAND IDENTITY WORK FOR YOU

It has never been more important to ensure that your brand is positioned as an Employer of Choice for candidates. According to LinkedIn, 75%[5] of candidates will research a company's reputation before applying for a role.

Of course, having a great employer brand keeps your existing employees motivated and engaged, but for recruiting purposes, it's what will help you to attract and retain the best people out there. 75%[6] of active job seekers are likely to apply to a job if the employer actively manages its employer brand, and that's a large pool of potential candidates that are using it as a deciding factor.

Criteria[7] report that the top priorities for candidates are:

1. Work-life balance
2. Opportunities for career advancement
3. Compensation
4. Good management and/or team
5. Positive work culture
6. Sense of purpose at work
7. Benefits

Making potential candidates aware that you're covering the non-financial bases as much as the financial ones will make them much more receptive to you as a business.

[5] https://business.linkedin.com/content/dam/business/talent-solutions/global/en_us/c/pdfs/ultimate-list-of-employer-brand-stats.pdf
[6] https://www.glassdoor.com/employers/resources/hr-and-recruiting-stats/
[7] https://www.criteriacorp.com/blog/what-candidates-really-want-from-employers

DO YOU KNOW ANYONE WHO...?

The case for employee referrals is very clear and proven. EBI reports that 48% of businesses say their top hires come from referrals. It's not just about the sourcing, but also about the success of the hire. Studies show that employees who have been referred by employees are more likely to remain loyal to a company and perform better than those who are hired through other ways.

- **High conversion rate**
  While only 7% of applicants come from referrals, those account for 40% of hires

- **Faster hires**
  Employees hired through referrals happen 55% faster than through careers sites

- **Longevity**
  45% of referral employees will stay with a company for three years or more compared with 14% via job boards.

(Source: Jobvite)

3.
QUALIFICATION

Getting this stage right is crucial. According to G2, 63%[8] of candidates will reject a job based on a bad candidate experience. When you're already fishing in a small pond, you simply cannot risk losing the perfect person based on the way your business handled them.

CV'S AND APPLICATION SIFTING

An often painful, but necessary process, this first level of qualification needs to be efficient. As previously mentioned, it's fairly normal to have around 250 applications to review and there are no guarantees that some of them will even be slightly related.

We find that a good process is the best way to get through this stage and give ourselves a one to five minute window per candidate to filter out a short list.

Checklist example

- ❑ Have they answered any posed questions appropriately?
- ❑ Do they have the right eligibility for the role?
  - • do they have Right to Work where you need them?
  - • Where are they based?
- ❑ Do they have commercial working experience in the UK?
- ❑ How many years of commercial experience, and at what level?
- ❑ What is the size and scope of the companies they've worked within?
- ❑ Do they have the right skill sets in what you need?
- ❑ Do they have the right methodology experience?
- ❑ Do they have the right technical experience?

PRE-SCREENING

Once a candidate's CV or application has been sifted and deemed appropriate for the role, then it's highly recommended to reach and arrange a pre-screening conversation. This is essentially a 30-60 minute phone call during which you can verify a whole host of information.

- ❑ Does the candidate's self-described experience and skills match what's contained in their CV?
- ❑ Are their soft-skills appropriate to your role and your company's values and brand/identity?
  - • How do they communicate?
  - • Are they articulate?
  - • Are they able to clearly define and explain their previous roles?
  - • Have they engaged closely with stakeholders in previous roles?
- ❑ How did they collaborate and contribute in the teams they've been a part of and how did they work within them?
- ❑ Clarification of technical ways of working and knowledge, for example project methodologies they've successfully worked within.
- ❑ Further explanation of their own deliverables, responsibilities and achievements, focusing on what they did as an individual
- ❑ Understanding of their key drivers:
  - • What makes them tick?
  - • Why are they leaving their current role?
  - • What are they looking for in their next role?
  - • Where do they want to be in 5 years?
  - • What's really important to them in a role/company?
- ❑ Understanding of key information
  - • Salary expectations
  - • Notice period
  - • Location
  - • Openness to travel, etc.

[8] https://www.g2.com/articles/recruitment-statistics

OPTIONS

TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT

For all skilled technical roles, it is highly advantageous for candidates to complete a technical assessment with a pre-agreed pass rate. It's recommended that these are done prior to a pre-screen so that you can dig a little deeper into the results.

One example, used by Roq, is a multiple-choice assessment where candidates need to answer 20 questions focused on technical topics related to the role for which the candidate is applying. We don't time-limit the assessment, but the time to complete is recorded to gain even more clarity on the candidate's knowledge.

PSYCHOMETRIC ASSESSMENT

If the role that you're recruiting for is more 'people' focused and at management level, it is highly beneficial to carry out a psychometric test through a specialist provider. When the test is completed, the provider will compile a psychological profile based on the results. Typically, this is done after a successful first stage interview to validate your choice to progress the candidate, whilst also helping you to tailor your questions at the next stage.

By way of example, our chosen test (which is a time-restricted test) consists of:

- An aptitude assessment (logic, numeracy, literacy, etc.)

- An assessment of the candidate's approach to scenarios, ethics, etc.

INTERVIEWS

As recommended by Acas, 'Ideally 2 or more people should be involved in choosing who to interview to reduce the risk of personal biases or unintended discrimination'. Taking the approach of having a two-stage interview

Roq's Talent Acquisition Manager, Sean Gray recommends a structured approach to interviews:

> *Roq interviews will always follow an interview template, with one half focused on the role and the other half on "Roq fit". The questions are comprised of competency-based and values-based open questions in order to qualify the candidates ability, experience and values. For management level final interviews, we also have a scenario-based exercise at the beginning. It gives a great insight into an individual's approach to work and problem-solving.*

According to a study by background screening and identity services firm, Sterling, 71% of job seekers revealed that they had either dropped out or considered dropping out of their most recent recruitment experience, so it's clear that maintaining interest levels of your candidates is given priority. Sean believes that supporting during the interview process can be priceless:

> *Leading up to each interview, I'll call the candidate to do interview preparation, run through any queries or reservations the candidate might have, reconfirm commitment, check if anything has changed since we last spoke, query if they have any other opportunities on the table and what stages they have progressed to.*

THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERVIEW FOLLOW-UP AND FEEDBACK

Whether a candidate has been successful or unsuccessful in their interview, it's good practice to contact them after each interview to discuss their thoughts and feelings, field any queries and if appropriate, reconfirm their commitment and expectations.

If a candidate is successful, this is the time to let them know, give them a progress update and to prepare them for the next step.

If a candidate has not been successful in either their first or final stage interview, collate feedback and interview notes and build a constructive feedback overview – for example, three or four positives, and an equal number of areas for development. Interviews can be a daunting and on occasion disappointing experience for candidates who have meticulously rehearsed, researched and planned for the time they spend talking with you. A verbal feedback loop is an opportunity for unsuccessful candidates to hear a candid assessment of how they convey themselves and to learn for their next attempt. According to LinkedIn's Talent Trends report, 94% of candidates want your feedback and not giving it can be damaging for your employer brand.
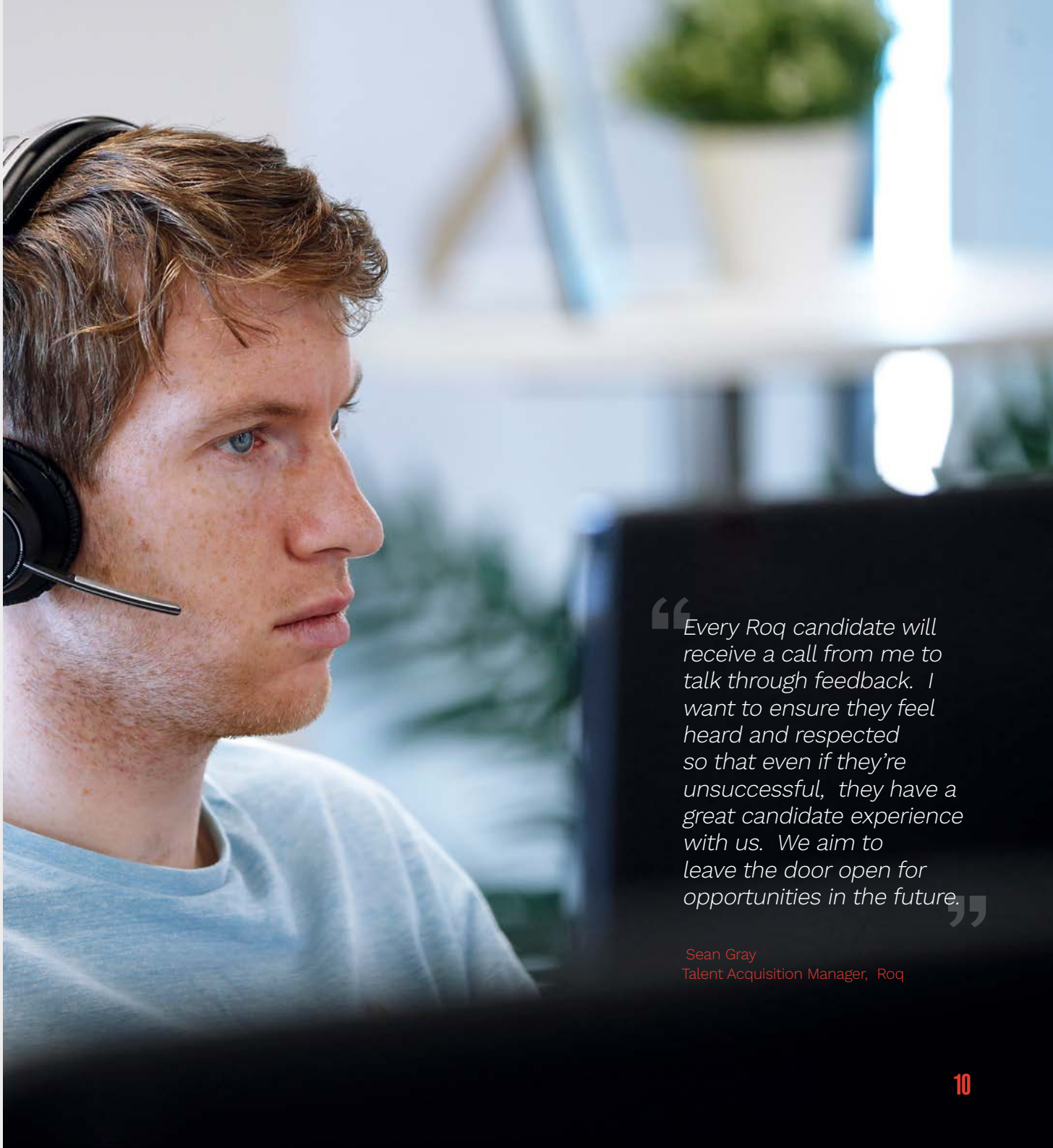
> "*Every Roq candidate will receive a call from me to talk through feedback. I want to ensure they feel heard and respected so that even if they're unsuccessful, they have a great candidate experience with us. We aim to leave the door open for opportunities in the future.*"

Sean Gray
Talent Acquisition Manager, Roq

Making the offer and onboarding is a critical time. As exciting as it can be for the candidate and the recruiting organisation, Gartner HR Research's June 2022 survey[9] found that for a variety of reasons, 44% of over 3,600 respondents had backed out after accepting an offer and that nearly half of surveyed candidates said they are still open to other offers.

Reportedly, over a quarter of employees (28%)[10] are willing to quit a new job in the first 90 days if they're not happy, with another report stating 69%[11] of employees who receive a well-structured, supportive onboarding programme are likely to stay at their jobs for up to three years.

MAKING THE OFFER

At Roq, we have a robust and established process that mitigates risk of rejected offers:

Post final interview

1. The established interview panel and Head of reporting line confirm an offer – salary, start date, process, etc.
2. The candidate receives a trial close to reconfirm salary expectations, reconfirm start-date availability and establish if other interviews, opportunities or considerations would need to review before accepting a job offer.

Closing

1. After a trial close is completed, the candidate is contacted with an official verbal offer
2. Acceptance is confirmed and followed up with an offer letter and employee information pack.

[9] https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/candidates-more-likely-to-back-out-of-job-offers/
[10] https://www.hrdive.com/news/why-do-28-of-employees-quit-in-their-first-90-days-poor-onboarding-practi/441139/
[11] https://www.shrm.org/foundation/ourwork/initiatives/resources-from-past-initiatives/Documents/Onboarding%20New%20Employees.pdf

ONBOARDING
CREATING THE RIGHT FIRST IMPRESSION

Nobody should underestimate the importance of the onboarding process. It is crucial for retention and reaching productivity levels faster, yet only 12%[12] of employees would strongly agree that their company does a great job of onboarding new employees.

"When a candidate returns their employee info pack, we begin the onboarding process. In the run-up to their start date, I will be checking in with the candidate every week to ensure they have everything they need, this helps ensure commitment from the candidate, and to be able to immediately address if they've had any issues, any counter-offers, competing offers or personal circumstances that may impact them joining.

On the Friday prior to their joining, I will have one last call to go through any last-minute queries, what to expect on their first day, who they'll be meeting, if they have everything they need, etc. Once they've joined, I'll check in with the candidate after their first week, first month, and then periodically from then on."

[12] Gallup's "Creating an Exceptional Onboarding Journey for New Employees" report
[13] https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/dont-underestimate-the-importance-of-effective-onboarding.aspx

COMPANIES EXPERIENCE 50% GREATER NEW-HIRE PRODUCTIVITY IF THEY HAVE AN ESTABLISHED, UNIFORM ONBOARDING PROCESS.[13]

INDUCTIONS

Starting at a new company can be a daunting experience and at Roq, we've had great success from investing time to make sure new employees feel involved and informed throughout the process - they know exactly what to expect on their first day when they arrive and have contact with various other Roq employees before they join.

By the time they join, everyone in the business will know that a new colleague will be joining and people will already be connecting on LinkedIn. On arrival on their first day, they'll have a warm welcome, introductions will be made to everyone in the office, they'll receive a welcome pack and the first day of a full induction programme lasting between three days and two weeks begins (depending on the role).

Formal inductions are of course a great opportunity for you to welcome your new recruit and ensure they have everything they need to perform their role for the business, but importantly, they inspire new starters to become comfortable, happy, productive team members.

...and the link between employee happiness and increased productivity (with some studies reporting a rise of up to 18%) is a return on investment not to be ignored.

THE CHALLENGES OF RECRUITING FOR TECH ROLES

There are many hurdles we all have to consider when recruiting someone for a technical role.

- Recruiting for tech roles means working within very short time scales to deliver multiple requirements. It's a dynamic environment with ever-changing requirements – be that the number of roles that need to be filled, the types of roles, skills needed or pressing start dates etc.

- We're all working in a heavily competitive and candidate-led market, where a single candidate could be engaging with 5-10 other companies at any one time.

- It's not just about securing people who fit the job description but to ensure the longevity of tenure, and employee happiness (of the candidate, clients, and the rest of the team), ensuring you're employing someone who is aligned with your organisation's brand, values and culture.

- Timing is everything. Recruitment is extremely time-intensive, so trying to manage the workload and schedule can be very challenging.

- Trying to secure skilled, niche, hard-to-find candidates in short time scales is difficult enough, but if you're being cost-conscious and are faced with doing this without utilising agencies, the challenge is exacerbated.

SUMMARY

NOT JUST A ROLE FOR THE TALENT TEAM

It's important to get your people involved in the recruiting process – make sure that they understand how they can contribute, why and what's in it for them. Your people can not only help you to get to where you need to be operationally (when you're under immense pressure), but also they are the best advocates that you have.

How hiring managers can help

- Get the right people to provide you with clear and detailed role requirements – i.e. definitive start date, clear information around skill sets and experience needed.

- Ensure that they fully understand the time pressures and get them to provide information as a priority – the sooner you know of upcoming requirements, the sooner you can begin developing networks and talent pool in these areas to hit the ground running when you need to recruit.

- Ask them to keep you appraised of any changes during the recruitment process – if you're recruiting for multiple roles at any one time, you'll need to effectively prioritise your time and focus.

How your colleagues can help

- Ask for referrals. Your people will have great networks of previous colleagues, people they've studied with and people they know from skills and interests networks.

- Share links to job posts and ask them to share them across their social media and business networks.

- Get your team to join you at job and careers fairs – their words will be exactly what potential employees want to hear.

At Roq, It's not just about turning up and doing the job for us. It's about being a part of something much bigger. We look for creativity, enthusiasm and independence in our people. We're a team that relishes new challenges and is ready to learn from others as well as share their own skills.

The UK's digital skills gap is a problem for everyone in our industry and we know that the knock-on effect will be something much more broadly seen if we don't do something about it. That's why we wanted to share our experiences with you and give another perspective on the approach to recruiting and onboarding.

If you'd like to talk about things more, or share experiences, reach out to us at

ask@roq.co.uk

ABOUT US

Roq is an independent, outcomes-focused Quality Engineering consultancy. We provide a truly independent view on all things quality to the world's largest organisations on their most important technology initiatives. We help them to realise the benefits of high-functioning, high-quality technology solutions, delivered at a pace that aligns with their business imperatives.

We continually help our clients improve the way they deliver business outcomes through technology, by removing inefficiencies, improving quality, reducing delivery costs, and mitigating the risk of brand damage.

With industry-leading, world-class Net Promoter Scores, we're trusted to get the job done and our clients appreciate it. We listen to what outcome our clients want, help them understand what they need to achieve it and work in partnership with them to deliver it.

We believe that technology should work properly and that exceptional Quality Engineering is at the heart of this.

Our independence, driven by our great people and strong values, delivers Quality Engineering like no other.

We support our firm belief that technology should work properly by providing world-class Quality Engineering services to clients who care about delivering high-quality software at pace.

By embedding a quality-first mindset with our clients, we ensure quality is engineered across the whole Software Development Lifecycle (SDLC), from inception right through to deploy and maintain.

Quality Engineering like no other

Find out more **roq.co.uk**