THE ULTIMATE DEVELOPER HIRING KIT FOR STARTUPS

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Use these tools to develop a recruitment and hiring strategy that sets your young company up for success now, and well into the future.

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How to use this kit

We built this kit because we know you spend countless hours trying to grow your business. If you're just getting started, you're probably competing with other exciting young companies for the venture capital funding you need to get your company off the ground. Or you're trying to make a name for yourself in an industry that's dominated by some really heavy hitters. Or your product is suddenly the hottest thing on the market and you need to scale quickly to support your sudden growth.

No matter the growth stage your startup is currently in, there's one challenge that will always overlap: identifying and hiring great tech talent. Fortunately for you, this kit is full of best-practices to help startups at any stage do just that.

To help some of these best practices come to life, this kit is full of free recruiting tools that you can use right away, which touch on everything from building your employer brand to promoting your job listings in a way that will actually attract developers to your company.

We've also included our easy-to-use email template that will help you send better emails to developers. And we'll put our money where our mouths are by not only telling you why your presence online is important in attracting developers to your startup, but also how to do it.

Table of Contents

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Understand what kinds of developers you're looking for—and where to find them

This might sound like common sense, but it would be impossible to hire the right developers to support any increase in demand for your company's new product without understanding what you're looking for, as well as the exact challenges you're up against.

Before you look at any of the other materials in this kit, ask yourself the following questions.

01. What kinds of developers am I looking for?

02. How many developers do I need to hire?

03. How many developers with that skill set are in my area?

As an example, let's assume that you're based in Iowa and need to hire five mobile developers to optimize your company's iPhone and Android apps. That's a great start, but do you know how many mobile developers are actually located in Iowa? As important as the answers to the first two questions are, you should also understand the tech talent landscape in your area, especially if you're looking for a combination of skills that aren't common.

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Map of Developers Viewing Stack Overflow Q&A in Real Time

(Dots represent 1/3 of actual hits)

● Web Developer ● Data Scientists ● Database Administrator ● Mobile Developer ● Other Developers ● Systems Administrator

Why is this so important? For starters, developers don't spend a lot of time on LinkedIn or Facebook, so hiring great tech talent requires you to understand where they actually go to share ideas. And when you figure out where they spend their time (spoiler alert: most of them trust Stack Overflow to help them be more awesome), you need to understand if your locale will require you to either consider more attractive relocation packages, or if you have the capacity and infrastructure to support great candidates who work remotely.
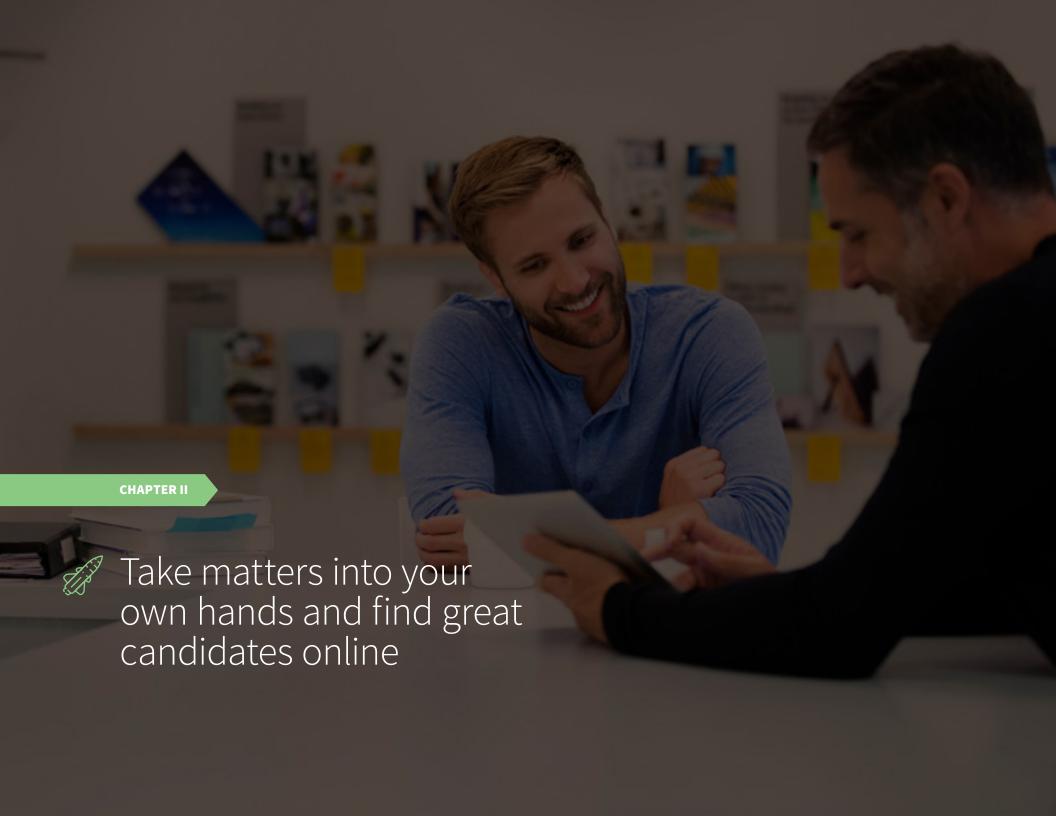
Lucky for you, the team here at Stack Overflow took advantage of the behavior intelligence we have about developers, as well as some fancy machine learning engines, to build a map that will show you how many developers are viewing the site in real time—which 50 million unique visitors each month trust to help them be more awesome at their jobs.

Want to learn more about the tech hiring landscape in your area? Schedule a demo with one of our developer hiring experts.

Take matters into your own hands and find great candidates online

Once you've taken the time to understand the developer hiring landscape, you might think you're ready to jump right into a high-volume candidate sourcing campaign. And to some degree, that's true. However, finding developers online doesn't begin and end with your keyword search query alone.

Before you do anything else, here are two hard truths you need to know about sourcing tech candidates:

01. 98% of developers are already employed and 90% of developers aren't actively looking.

02. Developers don't spend a lot of time on sites like LinkedIn, Indeed, and Facebook.

98%

of developers are already employed

You're probably thinking: "Where does that leave me?" The good news is that you can review actual developer profiles on Stack Overflow, where we'll only show you the users who have opted in to being contacted about job opportunities. But, before you do that, here's a little mandatory reading on how to review a Stack Overflow profile.

No matter where you source candidates though, keep the following guides handy whenever you're gearing up to look for tech talent in any candidate database.

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Three common mistakes recruiters make using boolean search

While you might be able to find a decent restaurant with a simple keyword search, finding great developers online takes a bit more finesse. Enter Boolean Search, which is a simple set of commands that you can use to tell a search engine exactly what you're looking for. Learning the basics of Boolean Search can really optimize the results you find on any candidate database. However, there are a few common mistakes recruiters tend to make. Here are three of the most common mistakes tech recruiters make using Boolean Search.

Missing Quotation Marks

Type **ios mobile developer objective-C** into a candidate search, then try **"iOS" "mobile developer" "Objective-C"**. You'll notice that the latter search string on its own will return candidates that are a better fit for your role.

Ignoring Parentheses

Let's say you really want to find a mobile developer who knows Objective-C, but would love to see candidates who also know C++ or C#. Without parentheses, that would look really confusing and might even confuse a candidate search tool. However, using parentheses to separate your must-haves from your nice-to-haves will make a huge difference. Try this Boolean Search string and see for yourself: **"mobile developer" AND "Objective-C" AND ("C++" OR "C#)**

Running Basic Searches

Again, if you were to simply throw all your must-haves and nice-to-haves into a search bar without any modifiers, you'd see a lot of candidates. However, you'd also see a lot of candidates who aren't a fit for what you're looking for.

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Three pre-built Boolean Search strings

Don't have time to learn Boolean Search right now? No problem. Here are three pre-built Boolean Search strings (with a sample list of must-have and nice-to-have languages) that you can use and modify to help you find some of the more sought-after types of developers.

But, before we go any further, here's a simple formula to help you build customized Boolean Search strings for any role you're hiring for:

("Must-Have" AND "Must-Have"...) AND ("Helpful-to-Have" OR "Helpful-to-Have"...)

Front-End Developer

Let's say you're looking for someone that must know (x)HTML, HTML5, CSS, and jQuery. And it would be helpful if they also knew git, subversion, mercurial. Enter the following string into your search.

Boolean Search String: ("xHTML" AND "HTML5" AND "CSS" AND "jQuery") AND ("git" OR "subversion" OR "mercurial")

Full-Stack Engineer

In this case, pretend you need someone who needs to know Javascript, PHP, SQL, and HTML. Bonus points go to candidates who also know Tomcat or Apache. Use the below search string in any database to find candidates who fit the role.

Boolean Search String: ("Javascript" AND "PHP" AND "SQL" AND "HTML") AND ("Tomcat" OR "Apache")

Mobile Developer

Finally, when you need a mobile developer who knows Objective-C, iOS, and Android, with bonus points for candidates who also know JSON, HTML5, Javascript, copy and paste the following keywords into your search.

Boolean Search String: ("ObjectiveC" AND "ios" AND "Android") AND ("JSON" OR "HTML5" OR "Javascript")

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A beginner's guide to employer branding

The harsh reality recruiters at early-stage startups face is that they simply don't have the same amount of brand equity that a larger company possesses. That doesn't mean you should simply throw in the towel and completely give up on employer branding. Not all developers are drawn to only companies with the biggest names. They're interested in the technologies they'll be working with, the teams they'll be working on, and the environment they'll be working in.

The good news for you is that you can showcase all of these things online with your careers page. Not sure where to start? Use the employer branding templates and guides we've included here to get things in motion.

A four-step checklist to get your employer brand off the ground

Build a library of company photos

If you have a cool workspace, developers want to see it. If you're currently in a shared workspace, or simply aren't proud of the offices you're currently in, highlight company-wide events you've hosted. If you don't have the budget for elaborate company events, capture moments of your teams while they're working.

Put your developers at the forefront

Your company logo is probably great, but developers are more interested in the types of teams they'll be working on. You can interview a handful of your developers, or simply highlight them in quick employee profiles. If you're currently looking to hire your first developer, take the opportunity to show candidates how large of an impact they'll have on your entire business.

Start blogging

Showing developers what it's like to work at your company is an important piece of your employer branding. Having employees write about their experiences adds a bit of personality and humanizes your brand.

But, Before You Do Anything—Develop a Clear Company Story

All your employer brand efforts will fall flat if you don't have a clear message and understanding of your company's mission and values. If you haven't done this yet, don't worry—we've included a few questions to ask yourself to get the conversation started.

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Five questions to ask yourself while you're developing your company's story

Some of the greatest stories ever written were born from a single thought on a piece of scrap paper—and a draft of your company's story can begin in similar fashion. However, even as you jot down your initial thoughts, use these questions to drive towards a clear and impactful story.

- ✓ **What kind of work culture do we currently have?**
- ✓ **What kind of work culture do we want to have?**
- ✓ **Why would a developer want to work here?**
- ✓ **What's do your current employees and candidates think your employer brand is?**
- ✓ **What values do you stand for? What's your company mission?**

As an added bonus, these questions can also be weaved into your interview process to gauge how candidates currently feel about the story your company tells. Here's some (required) reading to get a head start on determining what developers want to hear about when they're considering a new opportunity.

- ✓ **3 Things Small Companies Should Showcase to Attract Great Developers**
- ✓ **Why You Shouldn't Rely on a Third-Party Recruiter to Control Your Employer Brand**
- ✓ **Company Culture: It's More Than Beers With Your Co-Workers**
- ✓ **Why Tech and HR Should Both Own Your Employer Branding Strategy**
- ✓ **Hiring Developers: What Employer Branding Strategy Should You Take?**

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Who Should Be Helping You Answer These Questions?

You could spend countless hours asking and answering the questions above for yourself. However, in order to capture what your company really stands for, there are a few people you should be including in these conversations. Here are a few types of leaders that should be involved in developing your company story.

✓ **Engineering managers and team leads**

✓ **Recruiting managers and HR leadership***

✓ **CEO and senior management across the entire company**

We understand that smaller companies might not have people in these roles just yet. If this is the case for you, that's OK. Just make sure that anyone in a leadership role at your company has the opportunity to chime in on the story you tell developers.

A four-step visual guide for building an awesome careers page

You'll notice that on any platform you use to brand yourself, you'll actually be able to "go live" after entering a minimal amount of information. But just as you'd likely lean towards restaurants that have robust Yelp profiles, developers are quick to dismiss careers pages that lack important information that would motivate them to apply.

Before you worry about the visual aspects of any of your company pages…

01. Start with a Stack Overflow Company Page. With 50 million visitors each month, this is an easy and quick win to start attracting developers (and it's free!).

02. If you haven't locked down the story you tell developers about your company, hit the pause button on building any careers page and refer back to our guides on employer branding and developing your company's story.

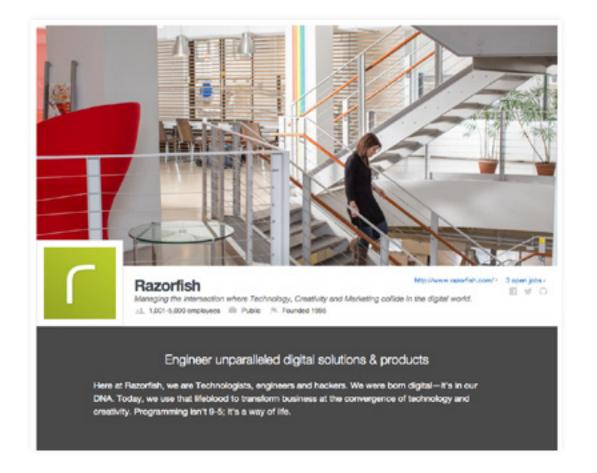# 40M
visitors each month
on Stack Overflow

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Now, need some creative inspiration? Use this visual guide to make sure you're addressing everything a candidate wants to know about your company.

✓ Show Off Your Company's Mission

Add a technical twist to your mission statement and show candidates how their work will impact the trajectory of your company's present and future progress.

Benefits and Perks

Developers have a lot of options. And even though you're an early-stage startup, you undoubtedly have a number of benefits and perks that are truly unique. Don't be bashful about highlighting them. Check out how Sprout Social makes this a priority by talking about their awesome perks near the top of their Company Page in a way that's impossible for a developer to miss.

Why do you want to work here?

- You'll be at an industry-leading company with an unrelenting focus on making the best product possible
- You'll no doubt challenge your coding skills while working with developers who are at the top of the game
- None of us are ever satisfied with good enough, we demand the best
- We'll always value your contributions to our collective success
- And check out those benefits

Give Developers a Firsthand Look Into Your Current Projects

Developers love shipping code. Show them just how often they'll get to do exactly that. LiveRamp cuts right to the chase and tells candidates who view their Stack Overflow Company page the exact tech stack they use to build their amazing products.

LiveRamp's Tech Stack

java   hadoop   cascading   mysql   mapreduce   ruby-on-rails   amazon-ec2   amazon-web-services   backbone.js
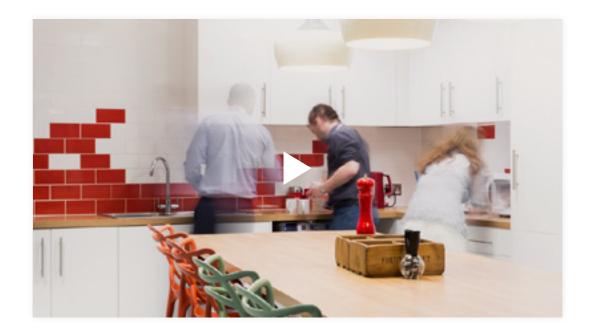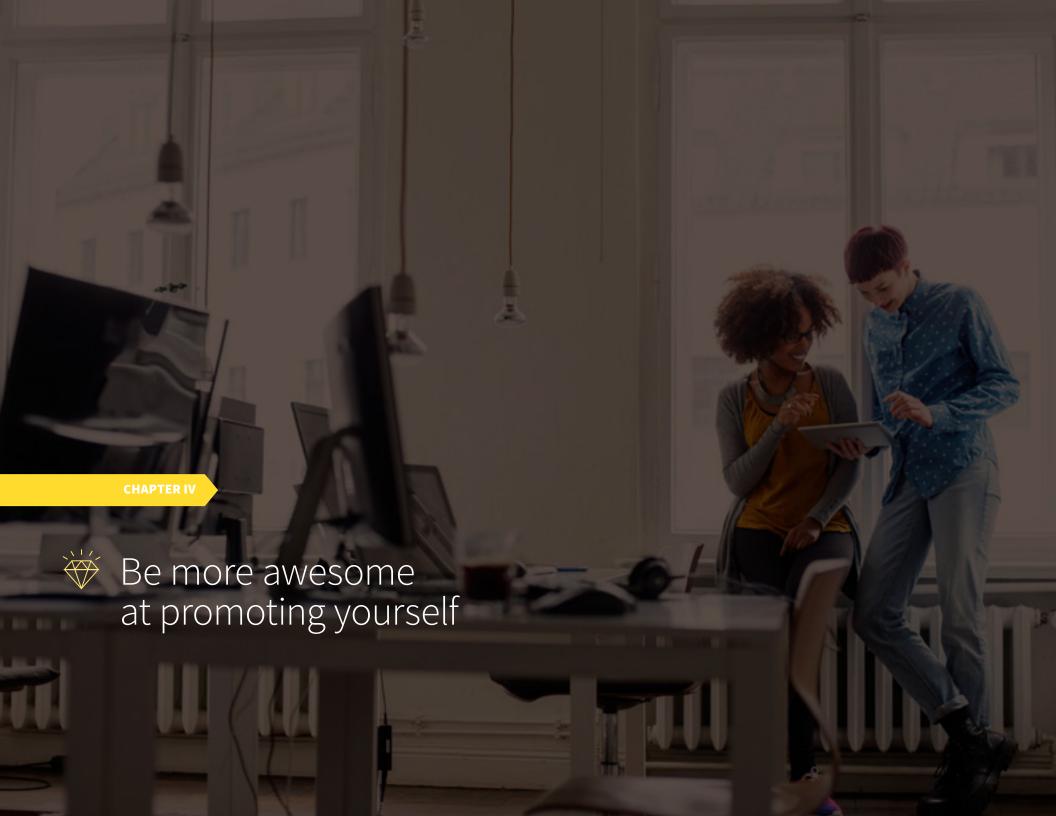
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Convey Your Culture Through Video

General videos about a typical day at your office are great, but you're trying to appeal to developers. Show developers what it's like to be part of your tech team, whether that means in-depth interviews with current team members or a tour of their (awesome) workspace.

JUST EAT does a great job of giving candidates a peek into the space where their developers work. They even manage to include interviews with members of their tech team. The best part is that the video is under three minutes long. Talk about telling a great story without taking up too much of a developer's time!

Be more awesome
at promoting yourself

Congratulations! You've built a strong employer brand that will resonate with developers! Now that you've done that, it's time to turn your attention to how you engage developers through job listings and recruitment emails.

You're probably thinking, *"What do you mean? I've known how to write job descriptions and emails for years!"*

Here's the thing: engaging developers takes a great deal of finesse. Most developers are employed, so a large portion of the talent pool isn't actively looking for a new job. To top it off, even the developers who are interested in changing jobs receive a lot of messages from recruiters. And they're pretty finicky about how things are written. If you don't know how developers respond to emails and job descriptions, you'll find that they won't respond to you nearly as often as you'd like.

Lucky for you, we've included templates to help you write job listings and recruitment emails that will make developers take notice of your startup. But before we let you go write some awesome content, here are a few tips on how to make the most of it.

Go Where Developers Actually Spend Their Time

Developers don't spend a lot of time on LinkedIn or Facebook. To learn more about their craft, 50 million visitors every month turn to Stack Overflow. There are also a number of online forums geared specifically towards certain tech languages. Take the time to understand the roles you're hiring for, then do some digging to see where that type of developer is actually spending his or her time online.

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No Matter What You Do, Be a Meaningful Participant

Since developers are in such high demand, it's easy to treat them as commodities rather than the smart, thoughtful human beings they are. Whether you're writing an email, a job listing, or meeting someone at an event, make sure you've done some research on what they're interested in.

Don't Use Buzzwords

Ever. You'll notice this will be a reoccurring theme throughout each of the templates we've included here, but for good reason. Developers think jargon is *really* annoying, so whenever in doubt, keep things simple when you're promoting your role.

A customizable technical job listing template

JOB TITLE: Be specific!

(Note: Think about what developers are searching for. (Example: if you're looking for a mobile developer, consider using "iOS Developer" or "Android Developer," depending on which platform you work on.)

BODY:

The bodies of most job descriptions are really, really boring. So, rather than simply listing off what you're hoping to find from a technical standpoint, tell a story. Give specific examples of the challenges your team is tackling and the tech stack you're using to get your work done. Developers love looking at the bigger picture of things, so make sure you show them how their work will make an impact here.

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Required Skills

- This section should include your non-negotiable skills.
- Make sure the most important skills come first.
- Developers hate looking at job descriptions that are bogged down by too many bullet points.
- So when in doubt… *Don't use more than 5 bullet points at a time.*

Preferred Skills

- These are skills that would be nice for a developer to have.
- But are also things you'd be comfortable letting a candidate learn on the job.
- And again… *Don't use more than 5 bullet points at a time.*

A few things to check for once you've written a first draft

Don't use buzzwords

Period. Developers don't want to be called "ninjas" or "rockstars," so don't include marketing buzzwords unless you want candidates to move on to the next job listing.

Don't be repetitive

Wordy job descriptions are also a great way to turn off developers.

Don't focus on a single niche technology

Understand your role, and know how the languages you're looking for relate to other skills.

Don't tell developers about what developers do

They already know what they do. But they don't know about the specific challenges your company faces, so tell candidates more about those instead.

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How to write a recruitment email that developers will actually read

Hi **[NAME]**,

I noticed you're working on some really cool projects over at **[current company or industry]**. Specifically, I thought your work on **[specific project]** was really interested. **[your company]** is looking to add someone who can **[specific skill set or responsibility]** and **[describe a specific impact the role has]**.

This person will work on **[name a few more details about what they'll be working on]**.

I'd love to set up some time for you to speak with our **[Hiring Manager/CTO/ Engineering Manager]** to discuss the role with you and answer any questions you have. Please let me know if you'd be open to having a quick chat with **[name]**.

Best,

[Your name]

[Your contact info]

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Stack Overflow is the largest, most trusted online developer community for developers to learn, share their knowledge, and build their careers. More than 50 million professional and aspiring programmers visit Stack Overflow each month to help solve coding problems, develop new skills, and find job opportunities.

Founded in 2008, Stack Overflow partners with businesses to help them understand, hire, engage, and enable the world's developers. To learn more about Stack Overflow's business solutions - technical recruiting, advertising, market research, and enterprise knowledge sharing visit stackoverflowbusiness.com.

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Need more help finding great tech talent for your growing company?
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