



## Novo Group® Blog

### IT Talent: Are you Interviewing or Interrogating? Three Common Mistakes in Tech Recruiting and How to Avoid Them

**Warning:** I am not pulling any punches with this one. If you are unwilling to consider that you might be making some costly IT recruiting blunders, stop reading now. This article is not for you.

With IT **unemployment averaging 2-4% depending on the role**, finding and hiring IT professionals is a tricky, high-speed business. Strong candidates have multiple offers, little patience for lengthy recruiting processes and high expectations for potential employers. Despite the tough hiring odds employers face, many businesses are making fundamental recruiting mistakes that costs them the chance to hire strong tech candidates.

Is your business missing out on much-needed tech talent due to internal recruiting missteps or oversights? Here's your chance to take a good, **hard look at whether your recruiting approach is hurting your IT hiring potential**. Consider these common IT recruiting mistakes and whether it's time to adapt your approach in order to engage the IT innovators, architects, engineers and experts who are critical to succeeding in our digitally driven world.

#### Costly Mistake 1: Interrogation versus Consideration

It takes a lot of skill and smarts to succeed in technology today. However, interviewing skills are rarely taught and learned in an IT environments. Nevertheless, many hiring managers leverage IT pros across their organizations to interview and assess employees and this can be problematic. "Why?" you might wonder. "What's the problem with skilled professionals who have done the work and know the environment conducting interviews?"

It's a problem because **tech interviews are infamous for gamesmanship**. It's not usual for an untrained IT interviewer to want to stump the interviewee with complex technical questions, ask for answers to convoluted riddles or spend time sounding off on their own technical expertise. It becomes a test-the-tech hazing session rather than a path to identifying and hiring the right employee. If the interviewer's goal is to trick rather than engage or to crow rather than converse, few interviews will have a chance at succeeding. .

**How to Fix It:** First be selective in who conducts interviews. Don't ask managers and team members to conduct interviews without training them on how to interview. Secondly, take time to assess their interviewing competence after they have been trained. No right-minded CIO would have a rookie tester run final validation checks before launching a new application or product. Don't insert untrained interviewers into the hiring process. After all, the people you hire to architect, develop and manage products, apps and other digital tools are of **critical value to your business today and tomorrow**.

#### Costly Mistake 2: Emphasizing Tech Skills over Skill Balance

Too often businesses zero in on ensuring a candidate has all the right tech skills and put business skills on the "nice to have" list. That is a mistake. From communication and **collaboration to problem solving** and management proficiency, today's IT workers need skills that push beyond their technical knowhow. While it is challenging to find candidates with the perfect blend of technical and business skills, it is possible to identify candidates with a better balance and tech and business acumen. The fact is technology skills are often easier to teach than the interpersonal, management and communication skills that allow workers to partner across business organizations and deliver far-reaching business solutions.

**How to Fix It:** Introduce interview scorecards that identify and rank both the technical and the business skills of candidates. This is a way to help interviewers to more effectively identify candidates who have balance of skills even if they don't meet all the criteria in the tech or business category. If organizations prioritize candidates who achieve more balanced scorecards versus those that are heavily weighted towards tech, it will help interviewers identify potential hires with a blend of skills and strong potential.

In addition, interviewers should be armed with questions that can help identify candidates with strong business skills. One way to do is to use questions that ask in the interviewee to provide real-world examples and share stories from their experience, such as:

- Describe a work challenge you encountered in the past and how you worked with others (team or business groups) to overcome it?
- What are the most effective tools and approaches you have used to communicate with your team members and with colleagues from other business groups? Why?
- How would you describe your management style? How do you think your colleagues and friends would describe your management style?
- What are the keys to an effective meeting? Why?

In addition to expanding the kinds of questions asked, it is also useful to invite managers from other areas of the business to participate in the interview and screening process. If, for example, the new hire would be working with marketing or finance teams, it might be valuable to have a manager from that group provide questions or join an interview. The key is to look at the candidate as a business contributor and not merely a set of sought-after skills.

### **Costly Mistake 3. Forgetting the Importance of Location, Location, Location**

Many businesses outside of urban centers are having a hard time recruiting digital innovators to their suburban, and sometimes rural, locations. It's the reason many businesses are building tech hubs in urban locations. In a 2016 Crain's Chicago Business article, John Pletz chronicled Allstate's creation of a 45,000-square-foot innovation center in downtown Chicago. It was one of Allstate's effort to gain access to gifted digital workers who "who don't want to commute at all and certainly not for hours a day." Numerous companies are doing the same as they work to recruit IT talent from the more populated, diverse urban centers. But what's a business to do if opening up a talent-drawing innovation hub in Silicon Valley, Chicago, New York, Boston, Austin or the like is not an option?

**How to Fix It:** If building a tech hub is not an option, a business needs to find other ways to mitigate location challenges that keep them from recruiting from larger talent pools. For example, many businesses offer work-from-home options that allow employees to stay where they live and come in for key meetings either weekly or monthly. Many businesses also allow workers to access co-working spaces or work in a satellite location so they can benefit from connecting with people and the world around them without having to commute for hours to a corporate office or suburban location. The key is to widen your recruiting net by giving candidates who are further afield options outside of an unhappy commute.

If your business offers a balanced and comprehensive interview approach and happens to be located in an enclave abundant in tech talent, today's IT recruiting environment presents fewer challenges for you. For the rest of us, now is the time to optimize recruiting processes, cut back on recruiting mistakes and look for ways to cast a wider technology recruiting net.

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