

Section 2. Economics and management

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BUILDING A RECRUITMENT SYSTEM FROM SCRATCH IN A STARTUP: RAPID SCALING STRATEGIES

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Abstract

This article examines the process of creating an effective recruitment system from scratch in the context of high-speed startup growth. It focuses on strategies that make it possible to quickly attract and select talented professionals in conditions of limited resources and tight deadlines. The article analyzes the key stages of recruiting function formation, including identifying personnel needs, selecting optimal recruitment channels, establishing an effective selection process, and introducing technologies for automation and scalability. The importance of evaluating candidates' skills, the significance of a strong employer brand, and the role of corporate culture in attracting top talent are also discussed. The goal of this article is to provide practical guidance for startup founders and HR professionals on building a flexible and scalable recruitment system that can support aggressive business growth.

Keywords: *recruitment strategies, talent acquisition, HR strategy, employer brand, recruitment automation, recruitment, startup*

Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving job market and intense competition for skilled professionals, effective recruitment is becoming a crucial success factor for any organization, especially startups. For a young company in the midst of active growth, the ability to swiftly and efficiently attract the right talent is not merely desirable, but essential. The absence of well-defined hiring procedures can lead to personnel shortages, slow product development, decreased competitiveness, and

ultimately, business failure. Many startups face a conundrum: they require new talented employees to expand, yet the lack of a structured recruitment system hinders their ability to attract them, creating a self-perpetuating cycle.

Traditional approaches to recruitment, which are typical for large and long-established companies, often prove to be ineffective or entirely unworkable in a fast-paced startup environment. With a limited budget, a lack of a well-known employer brand, and

the need for adaptable specialists who can handle frequent changes, it's necessary to adopt a fundamentally different approach, one that is more flexible and innovative.

This task is further complicated by the fact that, at the early stages of a startup, there typically are not dedicated HR professionals, and recruitment falls on the shoulders of founders or active team members who may not have specialized expertise in this area.

A startup faces the unique challenge of building a recruitment process from the ground up. This involves not just hiring individuals, but creating a comprehensive and scalable system that can grow with the company. The goal is to attract the best talent and ensure that the recruitment process is both effective and economically feasible.

The system should be integrated into the broader business strategy and take into account the specific needs of a startup. This includes the need for quick decisions, flexibility, and a focus on cultural fit. In this paper, we will explore the key aspects of creating such a system and discuss strategies to ensure the sustainable and dynamic growth of a startup through the formation of a strong team.

Discussion

The history of implementing a recruitment system in a startup is not a linear and unified process, but rather an evolutionary journey that reflects changes in technology, methodology, and understanding of the importance of human capital (Rebrikova N. V., 2021).

At the beginning of the startup movement, especially in Silicon Valley in the 1970s and 1980s, the concept of a “garage” business was just starting to gain popularity. The hiring process was very informal, as startup founders, driven by enthusiasm and limited resources, relied mostly on their personal networks and recommendations from friends and colleagues. Finding someone with a similar vision was a priority, and candidates were evaluated based on their enthusiasm, loyalty to the idea, and ability to work in a high-uncertainty environment. There was no formal system in place – it was more of a chaotic process where personal connections and intuition played a major role.

With the development of the internet and the advent of job boards in the late 1990s

and early 2000s, the search for talent expanded. Startups started to use these platforms to advertise vacancies, allowing them to reach a wider audience. However, this led to an increase in the number of irrelevant applications, requiring primary screening.

At this time, there was a realization of the need for structure in the process, including writing clearer job descriptions and conducting standardized interviews. Despite this, many startups continued to operate without dedicated HR professionals, with recruiting often being handled by technical managers or founders, who spent a significant amount of time reviewing applications and conducting interviews. The first solutions appeared in the form of spreadsheets to track candidates and template emails.

The era of Web 2.0 and the rise of social media in the mid-2000s marked a significant milestone. LinkedIn, Twitter, and other platforms became powerful tools for recruiting in the “future”. Startups began to actively use these platforms for direct candidate search, building an employer brand, and interacting with potential applicants.

The concept of a “passive candidate” has become relevant, and recruitment methods have changed. Now, it is not enough to simply wait for feedback; instead, companies must actively “hunt” for talent. During this time, many fast-growing startups realized the need for hiring the first human resources (HR) specialists to systematize the recruitment process. As a result, low-cost applicant tracking systems (ATS), programs that automate routine tasks and centralize information, have emerged (Pisarevskaya, A. I., 2015; Rozanova, V. A., 2016).

From the 2010s until today, the recruitment process in startups has seen significant changes, shifting from a reactive approach to a proactive, strategic one. In the face of the increasing “war for talent”, startups have begun to compete not only on salary and benefits, but also on culture, mission, and opportunities for development.

The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) technologies has led to the development of more advanced applicant tracking systems (ATS), predictive analytics tools, and chatbots for initial screening, as well as virtual assistants. A great deal of

attention is also paid to the candidate experience, so that even when a candidate is reject-

ed, they do not leave with a negative impression (Table 1).

Table 1. *Artificial intelligence in recruiting (Stoilkovska A., Ilieva J., Jakowski S., 2015)*

No.	Indicator	Characteristic
1.	The use of AI in recruiting	Automated resume selection: AI can analyze a large number of resumes and identify the most suitable candidates based on specified criteria. Chatbots: These are used for initial communication with candidates, answering questions, and scheduling interviews. Data analysis: Using algorithms, we can evaluate a candidate's skills and predict their performance based on historical data.
2.	Advantages of using AI	Speed and efficiency: A significant reduction in the time required to select candidates Reducing bias: Algorithms can help minimize the impact of human bias, if they are configured correctly Improving hiring quality: It allows you to more accurately find candidates who fit the company's culture and job requirements
3.	Problems and challenges	Ethical concerns: Potential biases in algorithms based on data. The lack of personal interaction: The risk of oversimplifying the process and losing the human element in recruitment. Reliance on technology: Challenges with the reliability of technology and its impact on decision-making.
4.	The future of AI in recruiting	Further development of technologies like machine learning and neural networks is expected, which will enable even more accurate candidate analysis. The integration of AI with other HR technologies will create a unified talent management ecosystem.

A modern startup that is building a recruitment system from the ground up does not start completely from scratch. Instead, it builds upon decades of accumulated experience, best practices, and technological solutions.

The process now includes not only creating job descriptions and conducting interviews, but also establishing a strong employer brand from the early stages, strategically planning personnel needs, utilizing analytics to optimize the recruitment process, implementing a range of sourcing tools (from referral programs to participating in hackathons), and deeply assessing not only professional skills but also compliance with the startup's cultural values.

Throughout history, each new wave of technological and societal development has presented startups with new tools and approaches, compelling them to continually adapt and innovate their unique methods for attracting and retaining talent amidst constant uncertainty and rapid growth.

Results

It should be noted that the modern construction of a recruiting system from scratch in a startup is not just a hiring process, but a strategic process that begins long before the first vacancy appears. Let's imagine a hypothetical startup developing an innovative technology in the field of quantum computing.

The company starts by defining its DNA and EVP (employee value proposition). The founders formulate the mission, values, and unique culture they want to build. These are not just words, but the foundation that will be broadcast in all recruiting materials. The EVP will include not only a competitive salary and options, but also the opportunity to work on breakthrough technology, flexible schedules, a culture of openness and collaboration, and the ability to grow quickly and influence the product from the start. These aspects are packaged into a convincing "employer branding" that will attract not just candidates, but like-minded people.

Next, the startup begins analyzing the needs and strategically planning for hiring. Unlike in the past, when we would often resort to firefighting, we must now determine in advance which critical roles will be needed to launch a prototype and scale. This includes not only technical roles such as quantum engineers, backend developers, and DevOps specialists, but also roles related to product, such as Product Manager, design, UI/UX designer, marketing, growth marketing specialist, and even an early HR specialist or talent acquisition lead who will help build the team.

After identifying the needs, the startup begins working with channels of attraction. Given the limited budget, the focus is on channels with high conversion rates and low acquisition costs.

1. Referral Programs: Some of the early employees (often founders or their trusted representatives) are actively using their professional networks. A referral program is created (even with rewards for successful recruitment) to encourage referrals.
2. Professional Communities: Active participation in online and offline communities (such as GitHub, Stack Overflow, quantum technology-specific Telegram channels, and specialized conferences and meetups) is encouraged. The founders and key employees act as experts, sharing knowledge and increasing awareness of the startup, while attracting talent. Content about the company's technology and culture is created.
3. LinkedIn and other social networks: Instead of simply posting job vacancies, the recruiter or the founder actively engages in "outsourcing", searching for and contacting potential candidates who match the requirements. Personalized messages and personalization are given attention.
4. Specialized platforms for startups: The use of platforms like AngelList, Habr Career, and regional startup hubs where applicants actively seek work in startups is encouraged.
5. Collaboration with universities and student programs: Given the innovative nature of the field, cooperation

with universities is possible, offering internships and diploma projects for talented students to form a strategic talent pool.

This is followed by the development of an effective selection process. The process includes the following stages:

1. Resume screening. Primary screening for compliance with key requirements and cultural values. Automated tools (such as small ATS or customized tables with automatic ranking) are often used to speed up the process, but the final decision rests with the person reviewing the resume.
2. Initial interview (screening call). Conducted by a recruiter or one of the founders, this stage aims to evaluate motivation, compliance with the EVP, basic skills, and experience.
3. Technical interview/test assignment. Tasks are developed that closely resemble the real challenges the candidate will face in the role. For quantum engineers, this might involve solving a complex problem or designing an architecture.
4. Cultural interview. Assessment of alignment with company values, ability to work in a team, self-learning, and adaptability. In startups, this often involves multiple team members conducting the interview.
5. Final Interview with the Founders. This is an opportunity for the candidate to ask questions of senior management and for the founders to evaluate the candidate's potential and commitment.

The implementation of basic technologies and analytics is crucial. At the beginning, companies can utilize:

- Free or low-cost ATS (applicant tracking systems) such as Workable (with a free plan), Zoho Recruit, or a customized CRM system for managing candidates. These tools help to centralize information, monitor the status of applicants, and automate communication;
- Interviewing tools like Zoom and Google Meet with recording capabilities (if agreed upon);

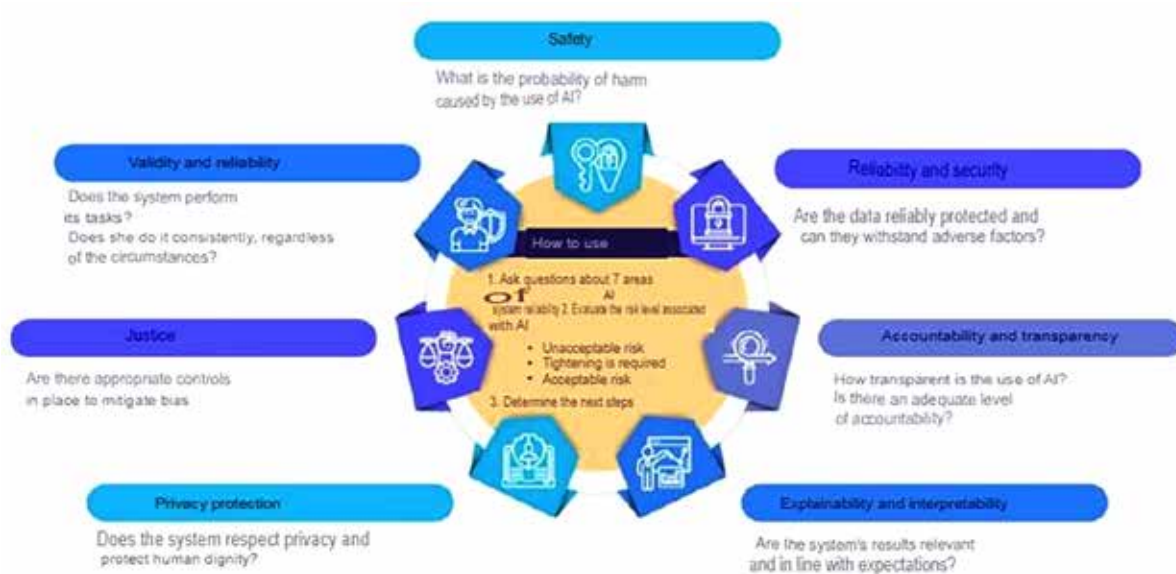
- Task management systems like Jira and Trello to organize recruitment stages;
- Basic HR analytics to track metrics such as time to fill a position, hiring sources, and conversions by stage. This helps identify “bottlenecks” and optimize processes.

Feedback and candidate experience become a top priority for companies. They should strive to provide prompt and constructive feedback to all candidates, including those who were not selected, in order to maintain a positive reputation. This includes

emails thanking candidates for their participation and messages about the status of their application. These actions help to build the startup’s reputation.

As the startup grows, this system may evolve. A dedicated HR department, more sophisticated applicant tracking systems (ATS), AI tools for recruitment and analytics, and employee development programs may be introduced. But it all starts with understanding who the startup wants to attract and why. It’s essential to create a focused, effective, and ethical recruitment process to achieve these goals (Fig. 1).

Figure 1. *AI tools for sourcing and analytics*



Conclusions

Thus, building a recruitment system from the ground up in a startup, especially with the goal of rapid scaling, is not just about using tactics, but about a strategic process that is essential to the survival and success of the company. The ability of a startup to execute its ideas, overtake competitors, and adapt to changing market conditions depends directly on the quality and speed of its hiring.

From all of the above, we can conclude that effective recruiting in a startup starts not with searching for candidates, but with understanding your own identity (mission, values, and EVP). This foundation allows you to not only attract the right people, but also filter out those who don’t fit the company culture, which can be crucial in the early stages of a startup.

To scale quickly, a recruitment system needs to be flexible, analytical, and technologically advanced. This allows for quick adaptation to changing personnel needs and the dynamic labor market in technological areas.

Analyticity involves constant monitoring of key metrics, such as the rate of job openings, sources of hiring, and conversion at different stages. This helps identify “bottlenecks” and optimizes the recruitment process.

Using modern technologies like ATS (Applicant Tracking Systems), sourcing tools and automation of communications in the early stages, helps minimize routine tasks and focus on more important aspects, such as building relationships with candidates and creating a strong employer brand.

Special attention should be paid to the employer’s brand and the candidate’s experience.

rience. When it comes to competing for talent, especially in innovative fields, a startup may not be able to compete with large corporations when it comes to salary. However, they can offer a unique work environment, impactful product, rapid growth opportunities, and the chance to work on groundbreaking technologies.

Creating a positive experience for candidates, even if they are not selected, builds

brand loyalty and can lead to future benefits through referrals and repeat business.

Lastly, the most crucial aspect is the active involvement of the entire team, particularly the founders, in the recruitment process. In the early stages, the founders are the primary “salespeople” for the startup’s idea and culture. Their involvement in interviews, networking, and personal examples significantly increases the chances of attracting top talent.

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