



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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Interviewing New Team Members

Your manager has asked you to assist in the interview process for a new employee. Now, some developers really enjoy the interview process – getting to meet new people, asking insightful questions, giving the Roman thumbs-up or thumbs-down when it is over. For others, interviews can range from being a little awkward to downright painful. Nevertheless, even though your heart may not be passionate, your head tells you that you need to be involved in the process. You want to see the candidates and have a chance to form an initial impression. You also want to make sure that the candidates are technically qualified and will get along with the other team members. You also realize that you need to help make a good choice since you may be working with them for a long time (or at least 18 months or so).

Interviewing Fundamentals We Often Forget

Here are a few simple rules to remember before your interview.

1. **Understand the job opening.** Sometimes, people interview a candidate and afterward wonder what position they were being interviewed for. You can best evaluate the candidate if you have a mental picture of what he or she will be doing. Remember, the new hire may not have the exact same responsibilities as another person who held the job previously.
2. **Understand your role.** Are you interviewing to see if the candidate would be a good personality fit? As a senior developer, should you be making sure he or she knows something about the development life cycle? Is it your responsibility to do a technical interview? In too many instances the feedback comes back that the candidate was a good person, but no one evaluated his or her development background or technical skills.
3. **Be prepared.** Make sure that you have reviewed the candidate's resume ahead of time. Jot down some questions that will allow you to gain insight into the person's background and ability. You may also have additional questions that your company requires you to ask as part of a standard review process.
4. **Clear your mind.** Do not go into an interview thinking about the program that will not execute, or the production abend you need to fix. While you are in the interview, focus on the discussion at hand.
5. **Ask and listen.** Have you been to an interview where the interviewer did all the talking? That is not what you are there for. Instead, ask questions and listen to the responses. Ask follow-up questions when possible to keep a dialog going. Wait until you have finished your questions before you turn the tables and ask the candidate if he or she has questions that you can answer.



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Group Interviews - Your Place or Mine?

It is good if multiple members of your team are part of the interview process. In this case, there are two main formats. The first is the “Revolving Door”. You get the candidate in a room and bring in the interviewers one at a time. This method gives everyone a chance to gain an independent opinion of the candidate from different perspectives and using different questions, but it does require a longer time commitment from the candidate.

The second format is the “Spanish Inquisition”. You get the interview team in one room with the candidate. This approach lets everyone hear the same story one time and is the most efficient use of the candidate’s time. One drawback is that it can be very intimidating. You need to go out of your way to maintain a friendly and casual atmosphere. Many people’s preference for a group interview is the Inquisition, since everyone hears the same story and it gives some indication of how well the candidate responds under some pressure.

Summary

Your company is relying on you to help ensure that qualified candidates are hired. This is an important job and should be taken seriously. These people will help build future value for your team and your company. Whether you interview one-on-one or in a group, make sure you ask thoughtful questions and listen carefully to the responses. Then, be prepared to provide honest feedback during the interview debriefing process. This increases the value you provide into the interview process and helps your company make good, long-term hires for the future.