WHY YOUR TOP CANDIDATES Aren’T CALLING YOU BACK
INTRODUCTION
We have all been there. You have an important role on your team that must be filled in order for you to meet your goals this quarter. You wrote a job description, put it on your website and the applications just are not pouring in as you hoped. Or perhaps you are getting a high volume of applications, but the quality just isn’t there.

It leaves you feeling frustrated, confused and hopeless. You feel like building a great team should not be this hard.

Fortunately, there is hope. Perhaps you just only need to make a few tweaks to your hiring process to attract those prized candidates that can take your team to the next level.
LAYING THE FOUNDATION
Having a strong employment brand is critical to attracting great candidates. People need a great reason to apply or pick up the phone when you call. Even if your company has a great culture with special perks, those will not mean anything if potential hires do not know about them.

Here are some helpful steps to improving your employment brand:

- **Gauging Your Work Setting**
- **Social Media**
- **Bee up Your Tech Stack**
- **Create a Brand Story**
- **Company Reviews**
STEP ONE
GAUGING YOUR WORK SETTINGS

There is a lot of debate around open offices. Some say they drive teamwork and others feel they create distractions. Depending on the role, this can make a huge difference to the candidate.

Here are some things to consider:

Are you seating Developers next to the Sales team? While you hope for better teamwork, gong rips and constant phone calls would really slow output.

Are you in an all-concrete office? Urban loft offices might look cool on your website pictures, but they create a lot of background noise. Sound travels easily when there is nothing to absorb it, which could be distracting to those who need to focus the most.

Do you have a bean grinder in your kitchen? Everyone loves a good latte, but grinding beans will quickly grind the gears of your team members (and future candidates).

Action Step: Survey your current team members to see how they feel about office productivity. Be sure to make it anonymous so you can get unbiased feedback.
STEP TWO

BEEF UP YOUR TECH STACK

The best candidates want to work with the latest technologies. If your tech stack is out of date, you might miss out on the most talented hires. Changing up your tools might take a lot of effort, but it is well worth it. An added bonus is your team members will be more efficient.

Action step: Assess your current tech stack. If your technology is outdated, come up with a plan to upgrade your tools.
Switching jobs is a major life decision. The candidate faces a lot of risk and uncertainty. The hiring process takes up a lot of time in addition to their current job duties. They want to be sure engaging with you is worth their time and there is a high return on the investment on the time spent.

Glassdoor is the go-to place when a potential hire wants to know what it is like to work in your company. Start by asking your current team members to review your company. Be mindful of not asking them to leave you a “good review” and simply ask for a review.

You will likely receive some constructive feedback, but remember the goal to help the candidate envision what life is like in your company.

Candidates will believe a 4.2 rating over a 5 rating because balance ratings are more authentic. They know that no company is perfect and having all 5-star ratings could lead them to believe you are hiding something from them.

**Action Step:** Plan an internal campaign to increase the number of your company’s Glassdoor reviews.
Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn are powerful tools for building your employment brand. They offer a window into the walls of your office.

**Here are some ideas to showcase your company culture:**

- Day in the life employee blogs
- Live video tour of your office
- Quick snippet video interviews with current employees
- Photos from company celebrations

Drift, a fast-growing conversational marketing software company, executes this beautifully. They have social media profiles on Twitter and Instagram called “Inside Drift”, where you can get an inside view of what it looks like to work at their company. They are ramping up quickly, so having a strong employment brand is vital to growing their company.

Their social media profiles showcase community events, reward trips for top performers, and even office elevator selfies. When you view their careers page, there are videos featuring real team members sharing what it looks like to work in their respective departments.

**Action Step:** Audit your company’s social media profiles to see how well you are currently displaying your company culture through video and imagery.
STEP FIVE

CREATING A STORY BRAND

StoryBrand is a concept by Donald Miller. It focuses on external marketing that applies in a variety of use cases. The idea of StoryBrand is that your team members are the heroes and you are their guide.

There are seven steps to the StoryBrand framework and you can fill them all out an interactive board at mystorybrand.com. Walking through this exercise will help you identify what really matters to your candidates and how you can position your company as a guide to help them get to where they want to go. You can even build out sub-StoryBrand boards for each department. For example, developers may care about different elements than marketers or salespeople.

Once you have mapped out your candidate StoryBrand, you can then edit your website and create marketing materials to attract the best candidates.

Action Step: Buy the book “Building a Story Brand” and build out your first StoryBrand storyboard.
ATTRACTING A CANDIDATE
YOUR JOB DESCRIPTION

The best practice is to keep it simple. One common mistake our clients make is having a job description that is a laundry list of hopes.

While you might intend to eliminate unqualified candidates by having a full and complete job description, the reality is you might miss out on some great candidates by narrowing it too much.

Impostor syndrome, where a skilled candidate doubts their ability to do the job, is widespread in the tech industry. If a talented developer who has impostor syndrome reads your highly detailed job description and feels they can not meet all the requirements, they might not even apply. If they do apply, they will continue to doubt their abilities afterward and probably not take your call for an interview.

One great part about implementing a StoryBrand for your candidates is you will also strive for clarity on your job descriptions. You should avoid using any broad or unclear language that might be confusing to candidates. One way to check for this is to use a Flesh-Kincaid score to check for clarity.

Action Step: Run one of your job descriptions through a Readability Analyzer and edit down to an elementary school grade level.
MANAGE YOUR EXPECTATIONS

Does a blockchain developer really need 10 years and a Ph.D. to do your job? Probably not and your chances of finding that profile are likely slim to none. Technology roles are rapidly changing so you will want to be sure your expectations are in line with the market.

One way you can learn more about the experience profile for a given role is to run a simple LinkedIn search. We did this for a blockchain developer and found that most had one to two years of experience in the field. A flawed job description could have dismissed quality candidates in an already tight labor market.

You also need to manage your salary expectations. The old adage “you get what you pay for” applies here.

Unemployment is at an all-time low, so salary matters more than ever. Monster offers a great tool where you can find the average salary along with open jobs for a given role. You can plug in the type of job you’re looking for and benchmark your budgeted salary. If you find you are on the low end, consider raising it to attract a higher caliber candidate.

Action Step: Run your current roles through Monster’s Salary Calculator to see how you compare to the competition.
BE FLEXIBLE

Your best candidate might not be located close to your office. Maybe they are in another town or state. If the job allows, consider offering remote work for the role. This is an attractive benefit for skilled candidates that a long commute would otherwise deter.

Some companies like Zapier, Buffer, and Automattic (the company behind Wordpress.com) have fully embraced this principle by building 100% remote companies. They believe the best workers are located all over the world and have structured their companies to take advantage of the global candidate pool.

You will also want to assess your internal tools to ensure your team members have what they need to work from wherever they are. Three critical areas are document sharing, video conferencing and chat.

**Document sharing** is important because there will not be a whiteboard to collaborate. You will want to have a tool to review and comment on files. GSuite and Microsoft OneDrive are great options.

**Video conferencing** is critical to ensure you can still have face-to-face discussions even if team members are not physically in the office. One of the main debates against remote work is the belief that collaboration only occurs when people are located in one space. Video helps bridge the gap so people can still work together.

**Chat** helps for quick notes across your company and saves email and meeting loads. This applies whether you’re in the office or not, but improves connection when you have remote team members.

**Action Step:** Evaluate your productivity technology stack to see if it meets the needs of both in-office and remote workers.
INTERVIEWING
YOUR PROCESS IS TOO COMPLEX

In a tight labor market, candidates will take the best role with the path of least resistance. If you are losing candidates after the first interview, perhaps you made it too difficult for them on the first meeting and they did not feel like it was worth their time to connect again.

Ouch! We know that probably lands on a sore spot, but it is a truth we hear from our candidates on a daily basis.

Some questions to ask yourself:

- Is everyone involved in the hiring process making the candidate experience better?
- Is there a standard set of questions that we ask each candidate?
- Are there any biases that plague the candidate before they even walk in the door?
- Are we interviewing at times when we can give the candidate our undivided attention?
- Are we taking laptops in the room that distract us when a pen and paper would do the job and allow us to be fully present?
- Is our HR team properly preparing the candidate for the interview process (steps, what to wear, what each interviewer might want to know)?
- Are we making the candidate comfortable (temperature in the interview room, refreshments, proper greeting)?
- Do you seem excited to see them and talk with them?
- Do you follow up afterward to thank them for their time?

Action Step: Objectively work through our checklist and determine action steps for areas that need improvement.
YOU AREN’T FLEXIBLE

Your best candidates are usually already employed, which means you need to be more flexible with them. Interviewing with companies is a full-time job in addition to their current workload.

You want that candidate to leave on good terms with their current company, which means they will need to stay on top of current work duties while engaging with your about a new job.

Leaving in the middle of the day to come interview for a few hours is not an option for the best people you seek to hire. You will need to adapt your meeting times to accommodate the candidate’s booked schedules.

Passive candidates are less likely to adjust to your schedule. It will be up to you to work on their terms by scheduling breakfast meetings or after hours interviews so they can come to you before or after work.

A word of caution here... be mindful of including a happy hour in the hiring process. You do not know if your candidate drinks alcohol and putting them in a situation where they feel forced to do so might turn them off. Also, judging a candidate on how “fun” they are to hang out with is not the best indicator of their ability to do the job at hand.

**Action Step:** Evaluate your current interview times to see if you can create more flexibility to attract candidates.
THERE IS A CLEAR BIAS IN YOUR PROCESS

This one will not only turn away high potential candidates but could also land you in legal trouble.

Here are a few things to consider:

Do you look for degrees from certain colleges? Perhaps your best candidate did not have the money to attend one of those schools but has worked hard to obtain the skills necessary to do your job. You might not only be turning away talented candidates and also limiting the diversity of your candidate pool.

Do your leadership team and board members represent diversity? CEB found in a recent survey that 74% of leaders reported their recent hire had a personality similar to their own. This bias hampers your efforts to create a diverse team and could turn off a potential candidate.

Do you have a referral program? Referrals from current team members are great, but often you end up with a team that walks, talks and thinks alike. This makes attracting a diverse pool of candidates difficult unless you are intentional about hiring a diverse team from the beginning and those people have a diverse pool of friends.

Action Step: Implement a candidate survey with questions related to bias to gather feedback from everyone who interviews with you.