Stanford eCorner

Hiring For a Startup

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Armen Berjikly, Founder and CEO of Experience Project, discusses how to build a start-up team, a task that he argues is critical for success. Berjikly suggests building a team of people with complementary skills by reaching out through personal networks and in some cases recruiters. On the other hand, he suggests that entrepreneurs avoid hiring from sites such as Craigslist or other sources where it is difficult to verify someone's skills.

Transcript

Yeah. So hiring obviously is a huge and important thing for a start up. You're really marrying the people that you hire. And it's really the way it looks like. You spend way more time with them than anyone else. You stare at their face for 20 hours a day. And you expect them to be able to jump in and fill in the gaps, right? So, Neil and I ended up building a lot of furniture together in the early days: finding an office, setting up the health plan like there's a lot of stuff that goes into building a site and a company. You respect or you don't know actually your product. So going with friends in the very beginning can be a very powerful thing because you can trust them, you can open up to them. You can say, "You know this is actually really hard what I'm going through." You don't have to put on a happy face.

Not everyone has that privilege. So I think when you're building out particularly an internet type site, finding the person that has the combination of both computer skills as well as marketing skills. So that BSCS, MS MS&Edegree is actually incredibly valuable because there's someone who can actually help build something and they'll actually see the big picture. While their building it, it doesn't need hand holding. There's no time for hand holding in a start up. So sort of who you look for and then how you find them, your investors will not help you find these people. Our investors are really, really good at finding VP's and CXO's but they're not going to help you find a great developer. So you end up just talking to as many networks as you can. Developers are in high demand. And so, your networks, I'm at...

Again, do the mentors. We know people young, up and coming people. Tina, Tom precedes some of the best and the brightest. Those are people to talk to as well. Do not use craigslist. You'd end up finding the weirdoes of the world which we did. So, yeah. And really it's going to be through your networks initially because you do have to have that full faith. There are recruiters. It just says in the site if you are looking for developers that are definitely recruiters that find PHP developers or beyond Rails developers.

And I was surprised to find, I thought that the quitters were really exclusively for executive class. But it is so hard to find good developers who can actually go through critter and it's much better than Monster or craigslist or posting through the On My List.