



Stanford eCorner

A Tactical Approach to Hiring

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Everyone says not to compromise when it comes to hiring, but what does that tactically mean when you need to ship product, asks entrepreneur Sukhinder Singh Cassidy. Here the JOYUS co-founder talks about the need to fairly evaluate employee skill and value sets, while still preserving enough space to make changes to your team as the needs of a company alter over time.



Transcript

In the world of hiring, I think the most important thing is okay, you've got progress to be made, and you've got the standards and people you want to work with. So what do you do? What do you do if you can't find the person to get you started? Well, one of the first things I always say to people is if you can't hire the person you want, you hire the number two to the person you want, and you wait and see if they can do the job. Don't compromise on the quality and the values of the people you want to hire. Everybody talks about that, don't compromise, don't compromise, don't compromise. But in a world where you need to make progress, what does that actually, tactically mean? When I went out to launch Google Brazil, we needed to get it launched in three or four months. We had - we were on a plan to launch, six, seven, eight countries a year. And we had to go. I could sit there and say 'okay I didn't find the right person', just going to sit back, but it was a pressing opportunity. So we found a guy that we loved, we just didn't think he was our number one, and I was not willing to compromise on that job. So we hired him, I said 'you're a Director of Sales, that job is there if you want it.

Show me you can do it.' And I think the most important thing in the world of making progress is you will get a lot of pressure on a person who wants to be your cofounder or your CEO, or all of these things. But the most important thing you can do is to assess their fit, their skill set, their value set. And most importantly, give yourself the space to be wrong. Because what we all know about startups, for good or for bad, is the game changes every six months. You have no idea what the skill set is that you're going to need six months from now. You have a thesis. And a lot of time there's this person who looks amazing on paper. But you won't know until you get there, and it's about constructing what I think of as optionality. That doesn't mean you never make a high risk hire. It doesn't mean if you find a person that matches with, you don't go there, but it's about how do you get enough of a data set particularly on your highest risk hires? What are the other things to watch for? I think the other things to watch for when you hire: the biggest ego in the room.

I mean I have hired a lot of people who quite frankly could have been my boss. Every job I've ever had I've been completely unqualified for, including AsiaPac and LatAm for Google. Luckily enough, I got the opportunity, and I got to continue to hire people who could have had that job. I'm always a fan of - like really smart and talented people often have big egos. That's okay. However, what you want to watch for is, how much is their ego driving the conversation? particularly as they start to get down to the short strokes of negotiating with someone, you start to see how much of the command of the conversation is about what's important to them versus what's important to the company. And so big egos require a lot of management. So big ego: completely capable, fantastic awesome. Big ego spends all your time thinking about what needs to be in it for them: red flag. And usually those red flags show up in the final stages of your interview process, or your negotiation process.

So one of the things I would say to watch for is, the more senior the hire, the more expensive they are, watch how they conduct themselves in those final conversations, because therein are the signals, you hope, of - yes you want somebody who's

thoughtful and understands their worth and all of that, but you also see the signals about how they weigh their own agenda versus the agenda what's important to the company.