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Hire Carefully and Fix Mistakes Fast

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Nest Co-Founder Matt Rogers discusses the difficulty of firing a highly qualified engineer he worked with at Apple who lacked the attitude needed in a small, startup environment. From that experience, Rogers says he learned the importance of "hiring well" and fixing mistakes as quickly as possible.

Transcript

to unwind. It was a hiring mistake actually. So when your team is small, literally every single person matters, every single person matters at 800 people, but actually every single person matters an order of magnitude more when you're five people. And one of our first 10 employees, I knew well at Apple, I had worked with him at Apple, and he was an amazing, amazing engineer at Apple. But was always kind of used to working at big company and was used to kind of all the resources of a big company behind us and didn't adapt well to a start-up environment. And it took me a very long time to realize that and a very long time to realize I had to get rid of him. And that was not an easy decision to make. It was kind of one of my first times letting someone go. But it was actually really hard to do. And it was not hard to do in that like I trusted him and he wasn't doing a great job, but it was hard to do in that like he was intertwined with the rest of the company and like how do you extract that out.

Like when you have this group of 15, 20 people who are basically family like, how do you send one of the brothers home? It's really hard to do. So when I say like biggest mistake and biggest learning opportunity is hire very well. And that's not just based on your gut, but based on your partners' guts, based on -- trust that kind of voice in your head. I actually had my own questions when we first hired him, like is this the right guy, is he going to be able to adapt and I'm like he is a great guy, he's going to be able to figure it out. And that's a good bet, and I was wrong. You can't always get it right. But I think the lesson learned here is not just hire well, but when you realize you done it wrong, fix it. And it's hard to do, but actually the sooner you do it the better.