

URL: <https://ecorner.stanford.edu/clips/mission-driven-hiring/>

Maria Barrera, founder and CEO of Clayful, notes the challenge of building a startup focused on mental health when startup culture doesn't always encourage work-life balance. She shares tips for finding employees who care not only about the mission, but also about building a successful and effective company.



Transcript

- One of the, I think, hardest lessons 00:00:04,320 that we've learned over the last couple years is we're in this very worthy cause.. We have an incredible mission.. We are working and doing some incredible work, as you all just saw and it is really important for us to build a team of people who care, not just about the mission, but in building a company that can make the mission come true and those are not always the same, especially when you think about mental health.. I joke that being a startup in mental health can be a little bit of an oxymoron, where startups required a lot of hard work and a lot of tenacity and not a lot of work life balance.. And, we now, I feel like as a society, especially post covid, we have a very different point of view on like what healthy work life balance means and it's not working 80 hours at a startup.. And so how do we find the people that are really excited about the mission, that are willing to work really hard for it, because it fuels them and because it gives to their mental health? Because at the end of the day when I see this really sad things on the platform that happen, or like the deep feelings that students are feeling, the thing that gives me fuel is that we're doing something about it and that we're working hard to change that.. So yeah, building a team, I think has been one of the most challenging pieces.. - And can we get into that more? 00:01:27,750 'Cuase I think you guys are 12 full-time, you're 12 employees in about 140 contractors, right now and I do think that's a really interesting nuanced insight that we haven't heard before, of the difficulty of hiring for somebody who's not just aligned with your mission, but can actually execute with what the business needs to build, especially when you're doing something so aspirational.. So can we get tactical? Are there any tactical insights or tips that you have discovered that you wish you knew earlier and when it came to hiring that could have accelerated your, either saving time or money or accelerated your development? - Yeah, I mean, initially we were very excited 00:02:03,660 about people who are excited about our mission.. When you have a baby and they're like, you have a cute baby! everyone's like, great, cool, come take care of it..

Come hang out with us! So the fact that people were excited about this mission that we were on was really exciting for us and like, great, let's do this together.. And I don't think we were having the hard conversations up front about what does it mean to be at a startup and what does this require of you? So now in our interview process, we always have that conversation, if not in the very first conversation, definitely throughout the process.. So, hey, what does it mean to work at a startup? Like, this isn't your typical nine to five job.. This isn't a.... It's probably not what you think it is unless you've been at a 10 person company before, so here's what it actually means, like, here's the amount of time you're gonna work here, like,

here are the challenges that we're working through and what we've been doing lately is actually having people go through a project that's like a problem solving challenge with our team.. So they're not just meeting in an interview and saying like, okay, here's where I worked, here's my experience, blah, blah, blah.. But really using those 30, 45 minutes to get to know our team member while at the same time working through a project together, so they can actually see what the work is like.. - And is that a 30 to 40 minute project 00:03:27,214 that you're working on? Or do you give them actually, like a two week experience of a project before you make a decision? - More of like a week and a half, yeah, 00:03:34,626 a week and a half-ish.. So they'll meet with two or three people on our team, ask questions around the project, and then present it to us in a whole group meeting.. So that provides a pretty, I would say, authentic experience, into, okay, these are the real challenges that we're working through and these are the real people that you'd be working with and these are the real questions we would ask..

And of course, like you don't have all the context, so we're not gonna judge you on is this the perfect solution to this problem? But we will judge you on your process and how effectively you use the time with our team members...