



IS TECH TALENT TRULY SECTOR AGNOSTIC?

HOW TO ATTRACT THE TECH TALENT YOU NEED IN LINE WITH YOUR DIGITISATION STRATEGY.

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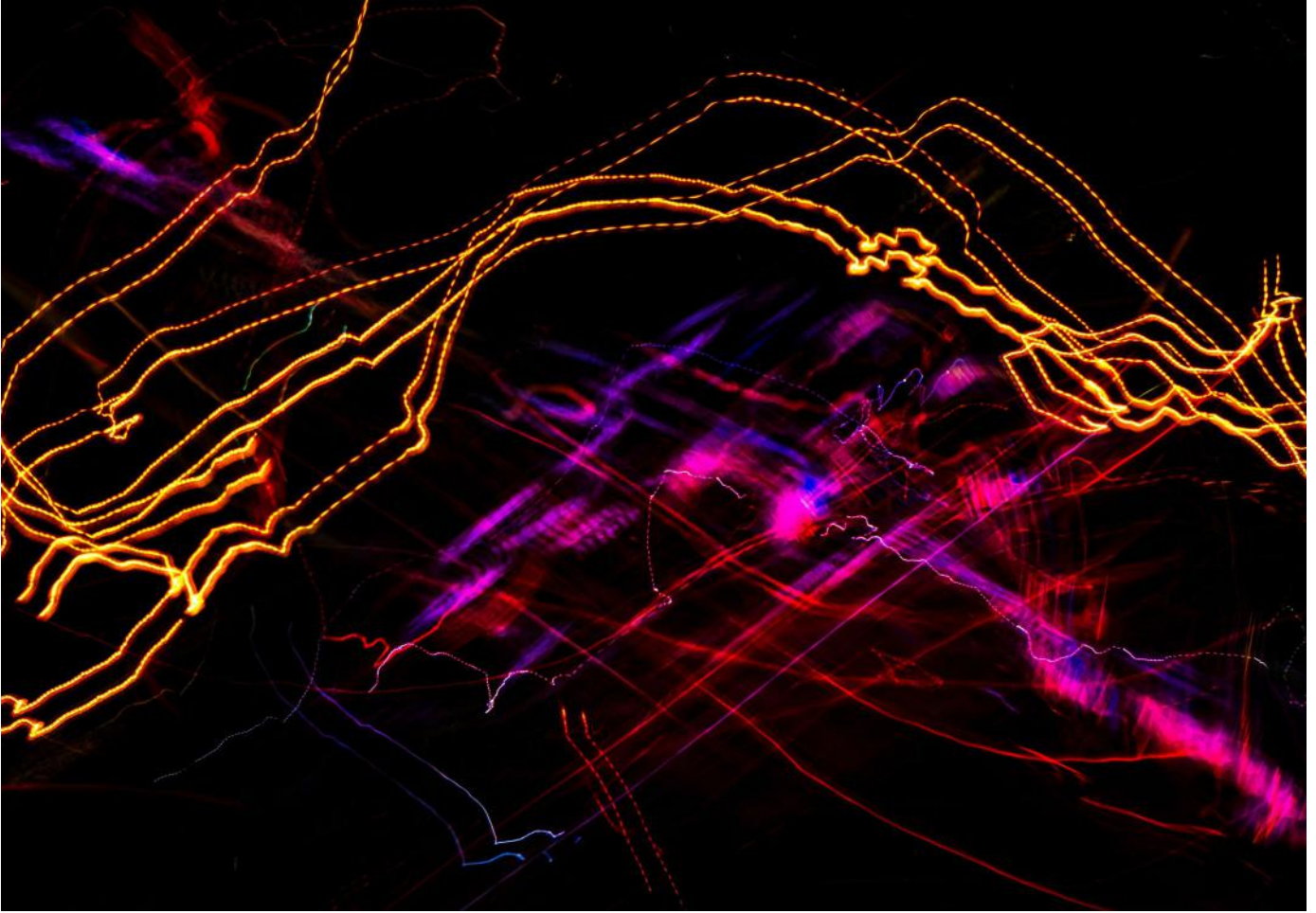
It may seem obvious that as companies look to increase the depth of their tech talent, they need to look outside their direct industry.

The industrial, retail and banking sectors are increasingly looking to proactively harness talent from “tech native” companies to accelerate their own digital transformation.

As a Programme Manager at Armstrong Craven, I have been involved in talent attraction for tech natives, industrial and pharmaceutical companies. I help these companies face the challenges of attracting and retain-

ing a completely new type of target candidate. At Armstrong Craven we have also conducted extensive qualitative research, talking to senior technology leaders about this subject.

Attracting talent from different sectors can be a significant challenge. It requires a change in mindset for talent acquisition teams and can be viewed as a complex task. Yet as in life, there is more that unites us than divides us and in understanding this, we can start to view tech talent as truly sector agnostic.



HERE ARE SOME KEY POINTS OUR RESEARCH HAS CONCLUDED ABOUT THE MODERN TECHNOLOGY CANDIDATE:

- **Tech talent are genuinely attracted to transformative organisations.** Those who use technology as a growth enabler, not merely as a service.
- **Sectors that have not seen technology** as a disrupter are often viewed as a blank page, and are therefore more attractive.
- **Technology professionals** say they have a strong desire to make an impact on business, people and the environment.
- **Almost all are passionate about the way that technology** can solve problems and reduce inefficiencies. Wherever they may exist.
- **They are attracted to organisations with inspirational managers** who are thought leaders and are able to share their vision and strategy both internally and externally.
- **Development and growth do not always mean moving up the corporate ladder.**

They are attracted to development opportunities including exposure to new technology and often value this over more traditional career development.

- **They are motivated by change** and how much their role will be part of this.
- **They value flexibility, remote working** and the use of technology as an enabler.
- **Finally, they are attracted to companies where technology** has access to the Executive team, and where the tech strategy is closely aligned to the overall business strategy.

As you can see, none of these are particularly sector-specific and certainly any industry can develop and promote these values. The great news is that more and more developers, architects and engineers want to solve “real-world problems”.

Often the tech companies innovate because they can, but tech professionals want to see their work really make a difference to people’s lives and the world we live in.

This is exactly what companies in pharmaceuticals, manufacturing, defence, and banking can offer!

But how do technology companies attract and retain the best talent? And what should you be focussing on?

1. ENSURE HIRING MANAGERS HAVE A STRONG EXTERNAL PRESENCE.

Your management team need to be thought leaders in their technical space and have a great LinkedIn profile.

You should support and encourage “talent magnets” all-around your business. They should be involved in forward-thinking professional groups. They should be speaking at conferences, and writing exciting stories on future tech development.

They are probably already doing this, however, you need to focus on how to use this to attract talent. It requires a shift in mindset to thinking about talent wanting to come to work with or for a specific person rather than your company.

Many tech leaders have become “household” names in their fields. They are much more visible and accessible than their peers in other functions.

2. INVOLVE YOUR HIRING MANAGERS IN THE TALENT ACQUISITION PROCESS.

If you look at engineering leader’s profiles at Facebook and Amazon, most will be promoting career opportunities in their teams.

Encourage hiring managers to not only promote open roles but to speak with potential candidates before you put them into a formal process, especially if your talent pool is passive.

We discovered that 90% of passive candidates that spoke to a hiring manager at the start of the process went on to apply for the role, and 70% of that group went on to be hired.

This is a direct route to candidates that may not apply online or as a result of a direct approach by a talent sourcer. It is also a particularly powerful tactic when trying to attract underrepresented talent.

An Engineering Director, at a medium-sized financial services company, recently told me that exposure of their brand for talent attraction was vital.

“Brand exposure in the talent market is everyone’s responsibility, not just HR or recruiters. We might not see the direct applications that come from this, but we know people are seeing it and the message is getting out there.”

3. SET OUT YOUR BRAND FOR THE TALENT YOU WANT TO ATTRACT.

Tech talent is attracted to innovative, transformative cultures with a fast pace of change. They want to join transparent, collaborative, authentic and accessible organisations.

I recently led a project with a leading global pharmaceutical company that assumed they would struggle to attract talent outside of their sector at VP level. They were surprised by our research which showed that the majority of the target cohort would be very attracted to the pharma industry.



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On the back of this research, the company was able to refine the messaging across their sourcing platforms to one that would appeal to their target candidates using some of the points contained in this article. And more importantly, the HR business partners, alongside the CIO, used this as evidence to hold the hiring managers to account for raising their external profiles.

“You have to have everything there to show you are a great tech company with information and learning at your fingertips. Environment and culture have to be visible for people looking in from the outside.” – An Engineering Director for a European software provider.

4. SHOUT ABOUT YOUR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY.... ...AND HOW TECHNOLOGY IS DRIVING THIS.

Technology can be at the heart of solving health, safety and environmental challenges. Technology professionals are interested in how they can use their skills and experience to achieve this.

In a recent project, I spoke to a Software Development Director whose company operations take place in some of the world's most extreme and vulnerable locations. Their digital transformation is focused on helping reduce environmental impact and improving the health and safety of people in their operations. It was with this messaging that they could attract the best talent from other sectors.

5. DO NOT ASSUME THAT DEVELOPMENT IS JUST AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PROMOTION.

Talented tech professions are interested in what and how they will learn and how they will gain constant exposure to new innovations and technology.

Many companies fail in attracting and retaining tech talent as they do not provide the right environment. They need to be challenged, develop and advance their capabilities.

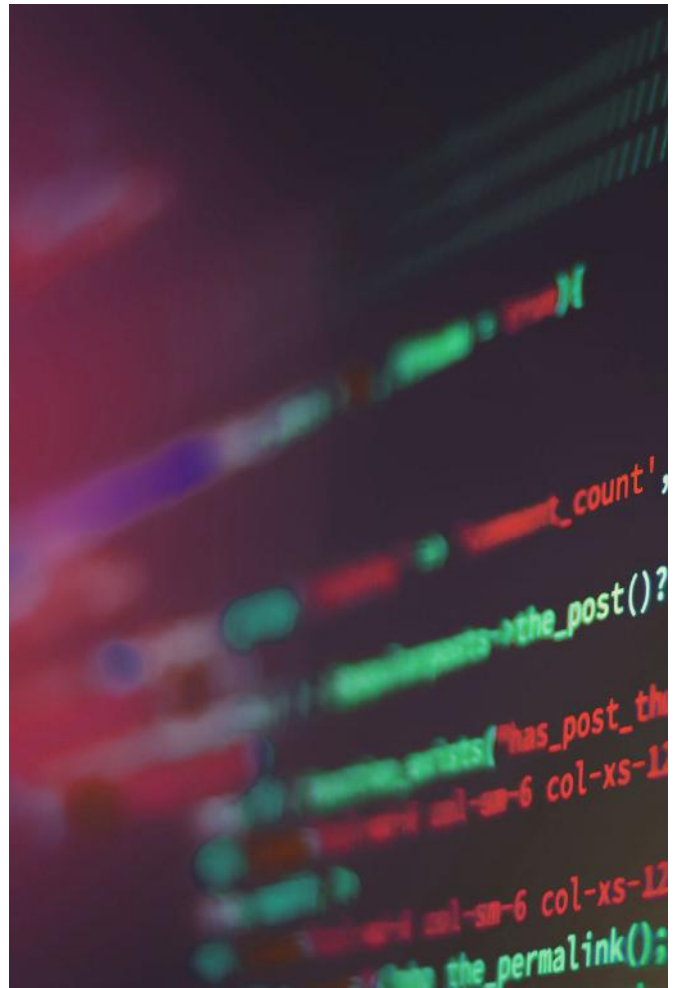
Just as importantly, many companies develop a strong message about their technology ambitions and development opportunities, but this does not convert into the working environment - opportunities to work with new technology or new business opportunities are limited.

Incongruence between how a company promotes itself to tech talent and the realities of working there often result in a high attrition rate.

Further things to consider when hiring top tech talent from outside of your sector:

Have a realistic strategy (or don't assume your overarching EVP is fit for purpose)

If your company manufactures high-end sports cars, you will be used to having a strong brand amongst your target talent market of automotive candidates that love your cars. However, when you want to recruit software developers you may find that your company isn't so



appealing. You may need to promote your value as an employer in a way that you have not had to before and you may also have to remind or even train your hiring managers to adapt to this fact.

I led a team for a very well-known automotive manufacturing company to hire 70 new Software Engineers in India, working with hiring managers that were used to the company brand being in the top five companies you would want to work for if you were in that industry.

When it came to hiring tech talent, we barely made it into the top 500 companies to work for. To improve this, we had to do more to inform the talent market about the exciting projects that we were working on, including changing and increasing our messaging across social media platforms to promote career opportunities and start changing the perception of the talent we needed to attract.

WHO DO YOU REALLY WANT TO RECRUIT?

Recruiting developers from the tech natives may not solve all your problems. You must think beyond attracting talent to how you will help them adapt to your unique business environment... and how you will retain them.

Regulation, product development lifecycles and more complex routes to market can create a very different pace of business when compared to tech and software companies.

A developer at Netflix may be used to seeing a product they have worked on be released every day. In an industrial company, however, products may not be released for a number of years or not at all and the same developer may struggle to be successful. Hiring from big tech companies may seem appealing... but success may be reliant on the company culture and processes just as much as the skill of the individual.

Armstrong Craven works with clients across sectors to not only identify and attract the talent our clients need to hire, but to understand talent trends and motivations. We inform retention, employer branding and business decisions; like workforce planning and location feasibility.



You have to have everything there to show you are a great tech company with information and learning at your fingertips. Environment and culture have to be visible for people looking in from the outside.

Engineering Director, at a medium-sized financial services company





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