

Practical Tips For Remote Technical Hiring

How the World's Leading Companies Make it Work

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Accelerating the World's Innovation

Introduction

In the face of COVID-19, the world is facing challenges that many of us have not experienced in our lifetimes. Companies have adopted new policies and procedures—like shelter-in-place and remote interviewing—that just a few months ago would have seemed unimaginable. This level of business uncertainty is unprecedented, and has both small and large firms scrambling to keep up as they alter their business plans for 2020 and beyond. Processes, systems, the way we communicate, work, and engage with one another is all going to change.

Many thought leaders are reflecting on all of the aspects of the world that will likely change. [Balaji Srinivasan](#), angel investor, entrepreneur, former CTO of Coinbase and now General Partner at Andreessen Horowitz, recently tweeted a list of everyday things that may be transformed by the digital world.

Remote working, online education and video streaming have scaled tremendously, while movie theaters, schools and traditional offices close their doors. Some will probably never reopen in a world where pretty much everything has shifted from real to virtual.



Balaji S. Srinivasan ✓
@balajis

The 20th century is ending.

- Offices → remote work
- NFL, NBA → esports
- Movie theaters → streaming
- TV news → YouTube stars
- College → ISAs, MOOCs
- K-12 → internet homeschooling
- Corporate journalism → citizen journalism
- EU/EEC → 27 sovereign states

2:27 PM · Apr 7, 2020 · [Twitter Web App](#)

1.5K Retweets 5.5K Likes

Digital transformation is no longer a buzzword or a long-term strategy; it's about near-term survival. Companies are being forced to accelerate innovations that might have otherwise taken decades. And companies that can't adapt quickly will likely be left behind by more tech-savvy competitors. And the maxim that every company today is being rechristened as a software company puts technology front and center.

Many companies will continue to hire technical talent

Our customer base is broadly spread across two categories of companies. The first category is experiencing a slowdown in hiring or has frozen hiring across small businesses and industries like travel, hospitality and restaurants. The second category are tech-forward companies, developer productivity tools and others who are still hiring per plan if not accelerating their hiring.

Bloomberg, Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley, Amazon, Apple, Facebook - are actually increasing the rate at which they're hiring technical talent. Something similar happened in the previous economic downturn in 2007-2008; the companies that actually survived and came through stronger were the ones that invested in R&D to better adapt to the changing market and improve their products to stay ahead of the competition.

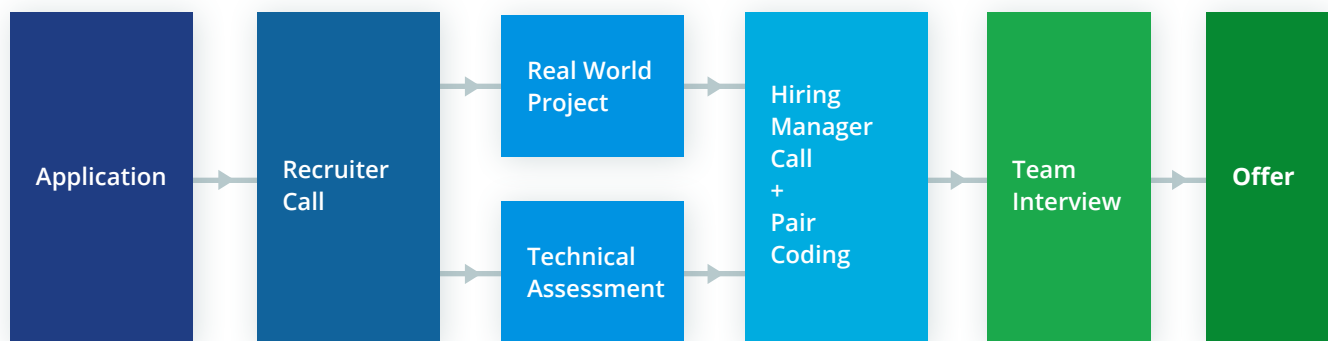
At HackerRank, we've been lucky to partner with some incredible forward thinking organizations who've been ahead of the curve. Recently, I sat down with two of our customers, Bloomberg and Atlassian, to talk about their world-class remote hiring processes. Both companies already have robust remote hiring practices and were able to offer great insights on each of the three steps: Pre Interview, During Interview and Post Interview.

01. Pre Interview: Defining the specifics of a Remote Hiring Process

The goal of an interview process should be to figure out how you can evaluate the best version of a candidate. Which is why having a highly structured and consistent hiring process is so important, both for your organization and for the candidate. Companies should strive to make the remote interviewing experience almost identical to what used to be an onsite, in-person interview.

Consistency during the candidate experience is key, we've heard that from a number of different customers and most recent from Atlassian. It's important to define and document your remote hiring process so that all stakeholders are aligned on the decision making workflow.

Typical Remote Hiring Process Workflow



Defining the Remote Hiring workflow prevents confusion and empowers interviewers to deliver a positive remote candidate experience. We have helped thousands of companies build a structured process that is right for their teams. This is an example of a workflow for hiring technical talent:

1. Start off by qualifying applicants through your regular recruitment process. Recruiters are your front line, they should be “selling” candidates first, then depending on the type of technical role they should assign a real world project or technical assessment to ensure you have the right cohort with the base skills that you’re looking for.
2. Once you’ve identified this talent pool, deliver a developer-friendly remote interview experience with a customizable IDE environment so they can demonstrate their skills to the hiring manager over a pair programming session.
3. Follow this up with a team interview. Once the hiring panel is aligned, you’ll be ready to make an offer.

“Make sure the interviewers know and are comfortable with the interview plan... and apply it to a remote setting.”

— Kristen Arena, Bloomberg —

Define and set expectations with both, Interviewers and Candidates

1. Once you've defined and documented your new remote hiring process, communicate it to your candidates and the interview panel.
2. Most candidates and interviewers have never gone through an entirely remote hiring process; it's your responsibility to set expectations and wherever needed, prepare candidates and your interview panel.
3. Provide information to candidates on your company, products, culture and links to your corporate social media channels to help candidates do research before their interview. In advance, make sure candidates have access to the tools that will be used with instructions and logistical details.

As an interviewer, you have as much responsibility as the candidate does to make the conversation a great experience. It is the interviewers responsibility to ensure candidates have a great candidate experience. Once you're aligned on the remote hiring process, clearly define the roles of each person on the interview panel so they know what skills you're looking for.

“It's all about consistency of experience. Make sure you have the infrastructure to support your process remotely.”

— Andy Mountney, Atlassian —

“From the interviewer's perspective, it's important to make sure that interviewers are set up to switch into that interview mindset—just as they would be in the workplace.”

To enable that, Atlassian likes to set aside an extra 10 minutes before the interview for both the interviewer and the candidate to get ready. During these 10 minutes, the interviewer and the candidates have the time to set up, calm any nerves, and get ready for their discussion.

"We block that time out in the interviewer's calendar so that they have that 10 minutes to get their brain into the right place to deliver the interview, get their laptops set up, and get their tools set up for the interview," Andy explains. "I think that really helps calm someone down and get them back into that right place to deliver." - Andy Mountney

The 5 Point Checklist to deliver a great remote interviewing experience:

- Adopt a 10 minute rule for interviewers and for candidates.
- Put the candidate at ease by starting off with some small talk and introductions. Once you've established your communication flow, you'll reduce awkward pauses during your conversation.
- Look into the camera - helps involve the candidate in the conversation with you.
- Leverage tools to ensure you're giving the candidate the ability to showcase their skills
- Evaluate purely on the skills a candidate possesses, not minor mishaps. A little bit of empathy for the candidate can go a long way, and can help you stay focused on what matters: their skills.

02. During the Interview: Evaluate skills and ensure candidates have a developer friendly experience

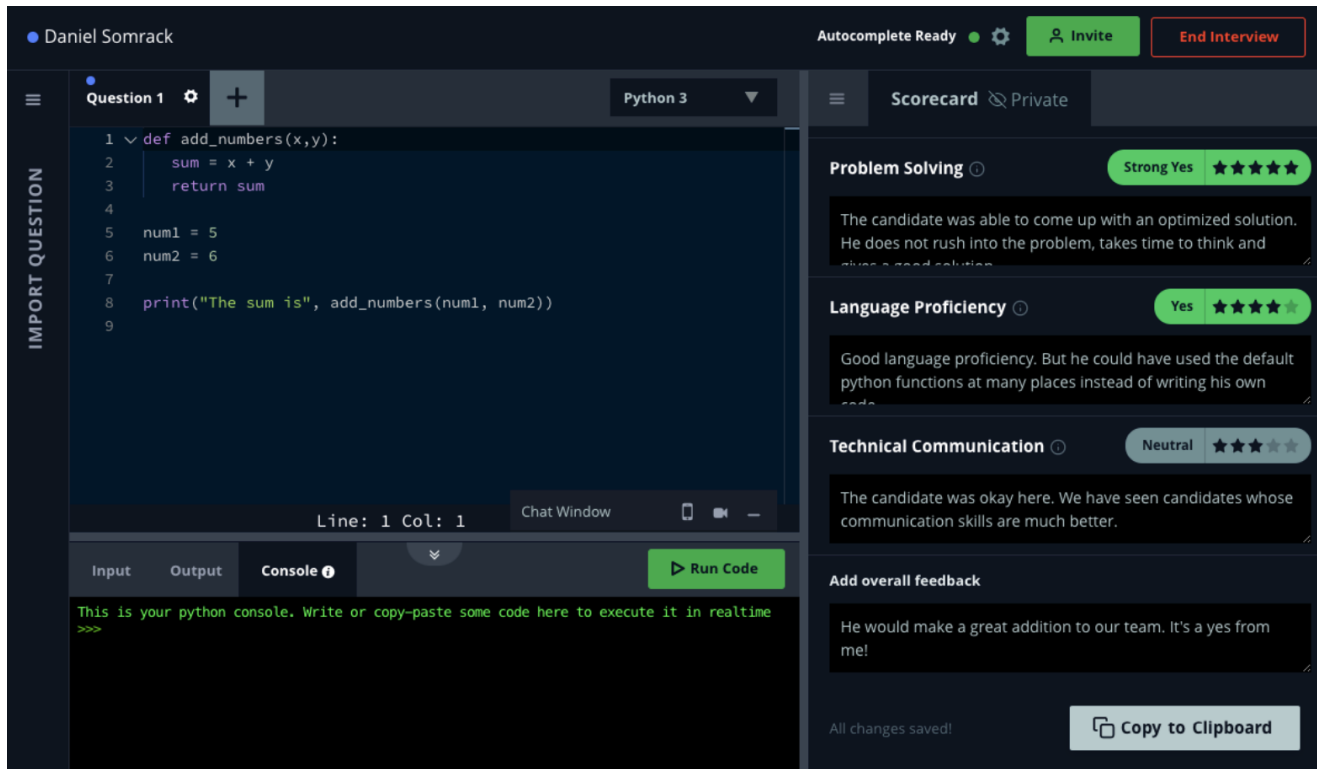
Once you've ironed out your remote hiring process, the next step is to align closely on the evaluation of skills. The intent should be to broadly focus on five key parameters:

- **Code Quality:** Can the candidate write code that's modular, maintainable, and follows industry standards? For instance, if you're interviewing a front end developer, you will want to assess the person on their knowledge of React. If you're interviewing a dev ops engineer, you'd want to assess the person's proficiency on EWS skills.
- **Problem Solving:** Does the candidate show proficiency in basic data structures (e.g. arrays or strings) and algorithms (e.g. sorting and searching)?
- **Language Proficiency:** Is the candidate able to understand and use different features of the language utilized in the interview?
- **Technical Communication & System Design:** Can the candidate clearly communicate technical concepts? Does the candidate have the ability for you to architect a system that can be reliable and scalable?
- **Culture fit:** At HackerRank, we have a set of questions that we ask our candidates to make sure that they are going to fit well within the company. These interviews are conducted by a small group of early employees who embody our company values and have been part of building the company's culture.

Enable candidates to showcase their skills

1. Make sure that you set the right expectations and the tools that you're going to be using during the interview process. Should a candidate be prepared with your own IDE? Are you going to use a collaborative pair programming session?
2. Ensure that you can toggle the interview process to make it language agnostic.
3. When a candidate gets stuck, don't just wait and watch. Try figuring out how you can help the candidate when they stumble, like you would if they were on your team.

We've found that when you do these three things, it creates a developer friendly candidate experience that both the interviewer and the candidate enjoy.



The above image gives you a peak into what HackerRank's CodePair looks like - a developer friendly IDE that helps interviewers evaluate candidates problem solving, systems design and communication skills with real-time pair programming

03. Post Interview: Ensure Confidence in Your Remote Hiring Process

It all starts with a structured process. All of the skills that you need to assess need to be clearly laid out throughout the process, each interviewer knows what skills they are assessing, and in the debrief all voices are heard.

“We make sure that everyone knows what topics they were covering ahead of time, and we include everyone in the debrief.”

— Kristen Arena, Bloomberg —

In this rapidly changing world, it's critical for companies to:

1. Develop and implement a world class end-to-end remote hiring process into place that ensures that the candidates have a developer friendly experience
2. Have a reliable remote hiring process they can trust
3. Ensure they're assessing advanced skills and are focusing on skills over pedigree.

Conclusion

Scaling remote hiring in this complex environment is never going to be easy. You're embracing massive change as a result of COVID-19, and your competitors are working as hard as you are to adapt to the rules of the game.

Remote hiring is a new discipline you'll have to put into practice that brings together the right candidates, interviewers, processes, frameworks and technologies into a well-oiled machine that's designed to enforce candidate delight throughout the process.

We hope that this guide has helped you get perspective on how to build a remote hiring process you can trust, the strategic importance of investing in one and its tactical implications. We also hope it's inspired you to make the leap from your current offline hiring process to a structured, developer friendly remote hiring process that focuses on advanced skills over pedigree.

If you'd like to get more details, understand how we can help, we're here for you. Over the last few years, we've helped more than 2000 companies transform their hiring processes and you can count on us to be your strategic partners.

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Accelerate the World's Innovation

HackerRank is a technology hiring platform that is the standard for assessing developer skills for over 2,000+ companies around the world. Our mission is to accelerate the world's innovation. By enabling tech recruiters and hiring managers to objectively evaluate talent at every stage of the recruiting process, HackerRank helps companies hire skilled developers and innovate faster.

Our remote hiring solution helps companies transform their remote hiring end-to-end and engage developers in an environment they love from anywhere.

We're backed by YCombinator, Khosla Ventures, Recruit Holdings and JMI Equity.

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