

4 things NOT to do when hiring marketers for an early-stage startup

Recruiting marketing specialists has always been challenging for early-stage companies. How can a founder, especially one without a business background, ensure that a newly hired marketer will achieve business targets?

Will a performance marketer waste lots of the budget on inefficient social media channels? What is the probability that a content manager will post something detrimental to a company's reputation, causing a PR nightmare? Does a company need a glorious CMO from a large corporation, or can it get help from external consultants?

To reduce the level of uncertainty, founders need to have a clear sense of their marketing strategy first, then define what kind of a marketing team they need, and only after that should they start to hire. Identifying the required specialisation, finding candidates with the relevant industry experience, skills, and abilities may cause a number of headaches for founders during the recruiting process. In addition, less experienced entrepreneurs can make a lot of missteps from the very beginning.

While there is no foolproof method of navigating the hiring process because every startup has unique marketing needs and professional skills requirements, here are four things you should NOT do when building a marketing team.

DON'T Rush to hire without setting clear goals

When an early-stage startup gets funded, I've seen some entrepreneurs start to hire as many marketers as they can afford. For example, after closing a seed round, one direct-to-consumer startup posted ten full-time marketing positions and filled all of them. And what happened?

Two months later, it downsized its marketing team to four people. It turned out this was the optimal number of full-time employees because most of the marketing activities were successfully managed by external business partners.

As a founder, I recommend you assess what exactly you believe needs to be done by marketing professionals and map out the necessary skills a candidate should have.

Don't hurry to hire a well-rounded marketing executive or multiple niche specialists. Instead, analyse which projects are ideal for outsourcing, consider the best options in hiring a marketer full-time or signing a contract with freelancers, and identify which of the candidate's skills and work experiences align with the purposes of the business.

Once you recognise which marketing functionality you need, clearly articulate the goals that you expect marketers to achieve and state how you are going to measure them.

By doing this, you will better understand which marketer is a good fit for your company and have meaningful metrics to help you evaluate their performance afterwards.

DON'T Forget about other team

members

As marketers work in diverse teams, which include IT developers, product managers, designers, and other specialists, founders need to take into consideration how marketing hires fit into a company's culture.

Early-stage startups usually represent small teams, so finding common ground and effectively working together becomes crucial. Ideally, founders should oversee the hiring process and participate in the recruiting interviews at least during the early days of their startup, building team dynamics from the ground up.

In a job interview, try to decide whether your employees can collaborate with this marketer. This evaluation can help prevent potential misunderstandings in the future and identify the right person for your company.

Read also

[When do startups need a T-shaped marketer?](#)

DON'T get caught up in formal credentials

While a founder should not underestimate such formal variables as education and work experience, it is essential to look at a candidate's personality.

As I mentioned above, early-stage startups usually form a tight-knit team with similar values and goals. Sometimes, it is better to hire a less experienced marketer with growth potential and similar values than a senior-level prospect with a completely different mindset.

A founder can prevent possible mistakes that a junior marketer might make by consulting with an external expert. As a result, a company cannot only outweigh the gains of having a more knowledgeable employee with a misfit skillset; it can also grow and nurture young talents.

DON'T Make the recruiting process unnecessarily tough

I hear from a lot of marketers that they think the hiring process has become more complex in recent years. Some startups turn hiring into a multi-step quest with a few job interview rounds, tests, and sample projects.

Although these assessment milestones might be helpful to identify suitable candidates, I believe they might turn some strong candidates away.

Ask yourself, does your recruiting process need to include all these steps? Maybe you can simplify hiring by limiting the number of job interviews and onboarding a new marketer as soon as you meet someone relevant, without spending lots of time and effort on discovering the ideal one. In some cases, while looking for the exceptional marketer, you could have lost valuable time since a good one could add value to the company over time.

The majority of early-stage startups want to scale quickly, so having a time-consuming recruiting process might not be the right choice. Optimise job interviews by conducting only necessary meetings, eliminate redundant recruitment steps, and stay focused on your objectives.

The fast-paced nature of an early-stage startup adds to the challenge of attracting bright candidates. With tight deadlines for recruiting, founders not only have to find talented marketers but also compete for them against other startups and brand-name mature corporations. Done well, a hiring process will equip the startup with a powerful marketing engine capable of driving its rapid growth.

This article was originally published on ParlayMe

Svetlana Stotskaya a marketing consultant with deep expertise in strategic marketing and brand management.

Article by SVETLANA STOTSKAYA