

5 tips on applying for a job at a startup

The most important thing a founder does is hiring. A great early team can make or break a company. Early hires will set the culture and help to turn a vision into a revenue generating reality.

Since setting up *Lindus Health* in March 2021 I've spent a lot of time interviewing candidates and conducted over 150 interviews. Based on that experience here are my top 5 tips on applying to a startup.

Tip 1 – Be proactive

Applying to a startup begins before the interview. Unlike more established companies, startups don't have large HR departments or dedicated interviewers. This means startups leverage their network to identify job candidates. Some of our best hires at Lindus have been from introductions from friends (and even distant acquaintances).

Even if you don't have a connection, most people at a company will be up for a virtual coffee to tell you a bit about the company. The fact that you're interested is always going to be received well. Even if there isn't a relevant advertised role they'll have you in mind for when they're next hiring, or even create a role for you.

Tip 2 – Don't be shy to pitch yourself

In my time interviewing I've observed that there are two types of candidates and you can tell which type someone is within 5 minutes. They are: People who pitch themselves, and People who think it's the interviewer's job to prise out of them why they'd be a fit for the role. Don't be the latter!

This goes beyond being able to demonstrate that you're a good fit for a role and isn't just relevant to business development hires. Performing well in a startup environment where there might not be a huge amount of structure requires people who have high agency. How you pitch yourself in an interview is always going to be a heuristic for this.

Tip 3 – Ask questions

I've learned that you can tell a lot from the questions someone asks in an interview. It's obvious if they're knowledgeable about a sector, if they're passionate about a problem, or just whether they've done a bit of research about the company.

Asking more questions (so long as they're relevant and not solved via a quick google) is a no-brainer for improving your interview technique. It might even make interviews seem too easy because you can flip the interview on the interviewer, all while proving you'd be a good hire and learning if the company is right for you!

Tip 4 – Demonstrate your passion

I've touched on this in the tips above, but it's so important it bears repeating. However good at your job you are, you still need to demonstrate WHY you want to join a specific startup. Working in a small company environment can be intense, but the thing that drives the most successful startups is a passion for the mission (for us at Lindus that's the fact that clinical trials are screwed and we want to fix them).

This doesn't mean you need to say that since you were 4 years' old you've wanted to work for a tech company. In practice this means researching what the company does and why it does it and then explaining why this resonates with you.

Tip 5 – Avoid headhunters (most of the time)

Headhunters can be helpful but particularly with early stage startups going direct is definitely a better strategy as a job candidate. It shows you're really interested in the company and early stage companies often won't have the money for headhunter fees. Some good places to see jobs directly are Otta, AngelList and Seedcamp.

Good luck!

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