

Jumpstart: the recruitment startup flipping the job hunt on its head

At Maddyness, we have recently launched our job board to connect the right people with the right roles. To shed some light on what these roles mean, we're talking to professionals at the coalface. This week, we did something a bit different and talked to Matthew Sarre, founder of Jumpstart, who 'flip the job hunt on its head by getting the best startups to pitch their roles to great candidates'.

'Like everyone who studies economics, I was forced down the route of banking or consulting. I chose consulting because I thought I'd hate it less', Matthew Sarre, founder of Jumpstart tells me. Whilst we can never know if he would have hated banking more, 3 years of strategy consulting at BCG didn't hit the spot. Moving to a startup with a wholly different working culture proved to be a revelation, as well as making him question why on earth more people weren't doing the same.

This question led Matthew to found Jumpstart 3 years ago. Since then, they've managed to place 270 odd people in junior roles within startups, across ops, sales, marketing and their niche: the founder associate role. Matthew tells me Jumpstart began life as a kind of graduate scheme for startups, targeting smart grads who were yet to take their first steps into the world of work. They've now

expanded the programme to include second and third jobbers too.

Jumpstart works like recruitment in reverse. Applicants first apply directly to one of Jumpstart's cohorts, out of which Matthew and his team pick the entrepreneurial crème de la crème. This generally equates to 1% of applicants, or roughly 40 individuals who are then signed up and given basic training.

'Now this is where it begins to get interesting' Matthew tells me about the next stage: the job hunt. From here, applicants are pitched over Zoom by startups, something which Matthew describes as an 'awesome experience'. The pitch taking place this week for founder associate roles consisted of 42 startups meeting 41 candidates. Each Jumpstarter gets two bites of the cherry; the hope is they jump before they get pushed. The odds are pretty good, with Matthew telling me his record from one cohort was getting 40 candidates into gainful employment. Once at a startup, Jumpstart continues to provide support to its members in the vein of a grad scheme; mentorship, a community slack channel etc.

I ask about the four roles they recruit for (ops, sales, marketing, founders associate) and Matthew tells me it's a split between generalist – founder associate and ops – and more the more specialist sales and marketing, the latter of which require more experience than the former to hit the ground running.

Predominantly working with pre-seed, seed and Series A stage startups accounts for Jumpstart's niche with founder associates (a junior equivalent to *the Chief of Staff*). 'What founders at this stage do is constantly flip between different departments, which is really time consuming especially if you're trying to fundraise – that's why they need another generalist like a founder associate to come in.' Matthew recalls recent conversations with founder associates where they described role as 'the third arm of the founder'.

I'm keen to zoom out and get Matthew's take on startup hiring trends, amidst endless chatter about the relentless pursuit of purpose and impact for a generation of disillusioned grads. 'I think this shift [towards startups] has been gradually happening since the financial crisis – in part because the startup ecosystem has exploded, but also because banking [and other corporates] have become less sexy – partly because of increased regulation and the fact bonuses are slightly lower – but also because of the perceived lack of impact you can have in these environments'.

We move onto whether startup working culture has softened from its mythologised bootstrapping, sub-desk sleeping origins. 'It's too cluttered to tell', Matthew says, citing examples at either end of the spectrum. Honing in on the fanfare surrounding the 4-day week trial I ask how this has been received. He name checks another recruitment startup, Otta, who do currently offer a 9-

day fortnight. His personal opinion is that such an arrangement may well be more productive, and its benefits in increased applications are also well worth it. 'I reckon if you offered to pay people 10% more – the equivalent of giving them a 9 day fortnight – that would be less attractive than the day off'.

I also want to understand what sort of applicants are making the cut at Jumpstart, and what the common threads are. He tells me the two key attributes: 'the first is that they're smart and good at problem solving. The second is that they have the right attitude. This means don't allow the work to go to them, but they go towards the work. This could mean they founded their own business at university, or led their debating team to UN on a summit on climate change'. Easy.

Jumpstart's unique mode of matchmaking, where (once-vetted) it's a candidate-first market stands in stark opposition to the reality of most junior hirings. 'I can't think of many multi-billion-pound marketplaces where people have such a horrid experience on both sides', Matthew tells me, saying he sees applications for this model far beyond the early-stage startup scene, pointing to the fact a) people hate hiring and applying to jobs, b) three Jumpstart copies have already sprung up and c) for early stage hires there are only jobs boards (not enough money for recruiters), and we all know jobs boards aren't really up to scratch: you get no sense of the company, you get ghosted etc.

'The job hunt hasn't kept pace with the way consumers like to participate in activities', Matthew offers as a closing thought. 'People used to go to their town hall billboard and see if there were any jobs going. All job boards have done is put that online'.

Speaking of which, we have our very own digitalised-townhall-billboard, replete with a range of positions. Check them out [here](#).