# HIRED

Scaling Recruiting for Hypergrowth Companies

Introduction

Every young company dreams of stardom. You work hard from day one to develop the best products, provide the best service and build a team of great people. But as you finally graduate from early-stage to growth-stage company, the rules begin to change. You have to break the mold you used to establish your early-stage company and evolve your thinking to prepare for hypergrowth.

And as every recruiter knows, quality of talent can drive the success of your organizational growth. Some recruiting efforts might be somewhat reactive during a company's inception due to inexperience or out of necessity. Now that you're expanding your business, recruiting must be structured to scale with the growing organization. That takes a proactive plan that will meet your business needs now and in the future.
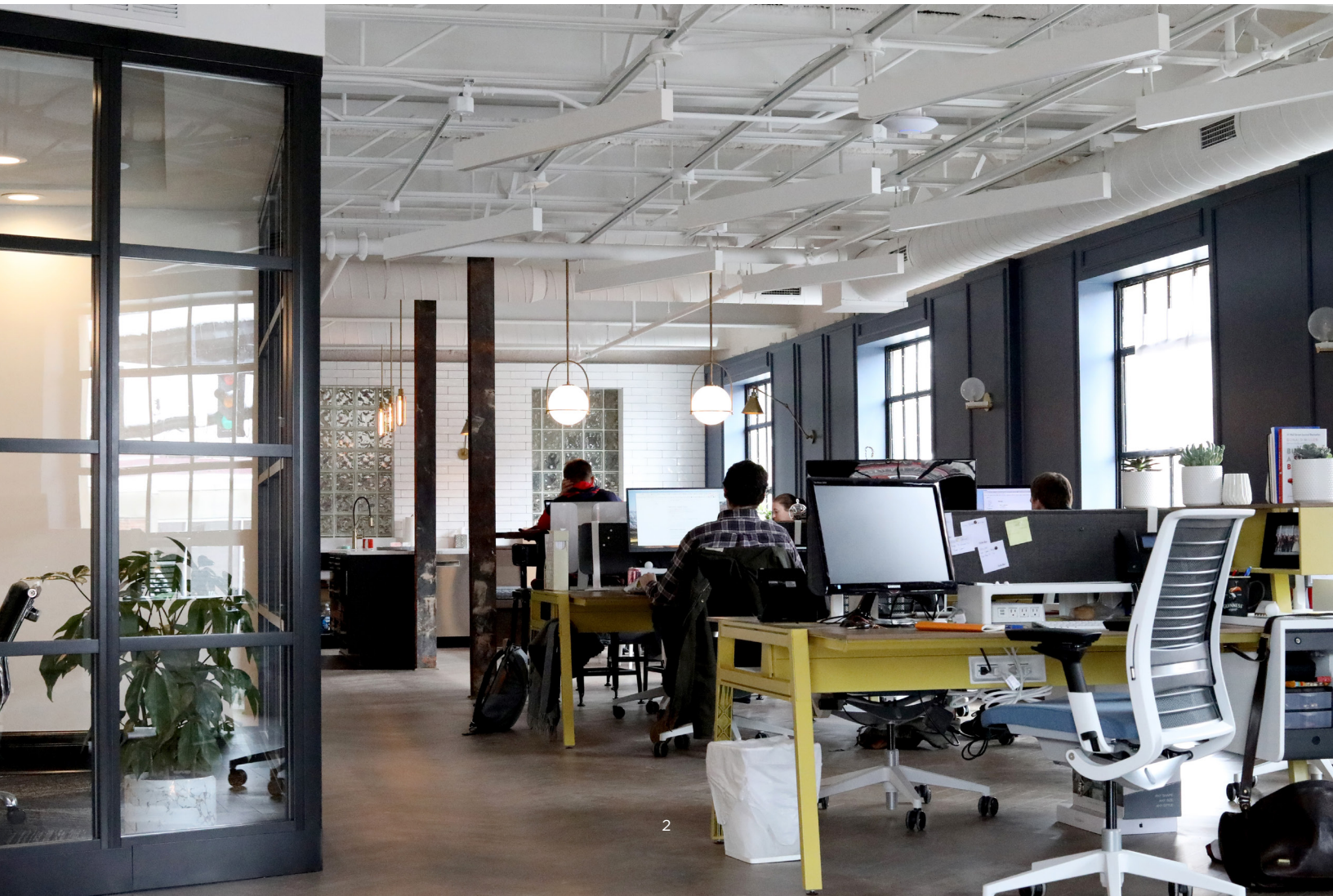
A Proactive Plan to Scale Your Recruiting Efforts

Follow these important guidelines to prepare your recruiting organization for hypergrowth.

01   **Establish a Talent-First Mindset and Structure**

In the early stages of growth, management teams are focused on the most impactful hires that will help them hit the ground running, such as product developers, business development professionals, and salespeople. And for these early hires, you might not have established a repeatable sourcing, evaluation and hiring process. This puts you in reactive mode that can linger, making it much harder to keep pace when hypergrowth hits.

It's critical to set the right structural foundation and talent-first mindset from day one. Anticipate where potential growth areas are and collaborate with department heads to see what roles you can predict will come into play in 6–12 months, and what the financial impact might be in terms of cost and salaries. Build and evolve best practices with your sourcing platform and interview process to ensure you're not spinning your wheels later. And establish a viable onboarding system early that can scale as you grow.

In other words, put as much effort into your long-term recruiting plan as you do for other mission-critical parts of your business. Once you build the talent-first foundation, you'll find it much easier to accelerate recruiting activities to keep up with hypergrowth.

Set Culture Standards Early and Stick with Them

Company culture is as vital as ever as a means to lock down top talent. In Hired's *2018 Global Brand Health Report*, company culture was cited as the #2 most important factor job seekers consider when applying for a new job, right behind compensation. While most early-stage companies do focus on creating and pitching an appealing work environment, company culture goes deeper. It includes other considerations that are just as important to candidates and employees, such as company values, founding principles and career mobility.

Establish a record of who you are, and who you want to be, early. Document your core values with input from your founders and key stakeholders in the organization and articulate those values to candidates. Operationalize your values to add substance and ensure that people see that these aren't just ideas, but tangible activities that drive the organization. Make values a key piece of your interviewing process too, with a goal of unpacking a candidate's mindset to see if they are a good fit. Create interview questions that focus on the "why" (not just the "what") to see how the candidate approaches various situations. Identify the values and principles that are non-negotiable, such as providing transparency of corporate objectives to the workforce, and protect those values at all costs as you expand.

Another key component of a growing organizational design is employee retention. Existing employees are tremendous assets to nurture for more senior roles as they become available. Establish a talent assessment and rewards process such as employee recognition, higher compensation and career mobility training to ensure that mature and impactful employees remain on board as you grow. You may not know exactly what roles you will need 12 months down the road, but you enhance your chances of filling them quickly when you have a pool of seasoned existing employees that may move into future pivotal roles.

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Speed Powers Growth

As your organization hits its stride and prepares for high-velocity hiring, nothing could be more important than speeding time-to-hire. The faster you can source and move candidates through your hiring pipeline, the more volume you can reasonably manage. That's especially important when you have unpredictable needs that always seem to arise in times of hypergrowth.

The challenge becomes how to identify the best candidates that can fill your pipeline quickly. And technical roles are notoriously hard to fill. Some recruiters like to target passive candidates in an attempt to cherry-pick top talent from elsewhere, but in hypergrowth mode, you simply don't have time for passives. You can spend long cycles spinning your wheels when your chances of landing a passive candidate is quite low.

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Fitbit's time to fill was recently under one month, a far cry from the multiple months it can take with passive candidates.

Active candidates on platforms like Hired are already pre-vetted to keep your pipeline filled up faster. Fast-growing company Braintree stands by this approach too. Because candidates have been pre-screened and are actively looking, the conversation is easy to start. "It's solid talent. We call it our cheat code," says recruiting manager Kyle Barbato. "To find qualified talent, and qualified talent that's looking, half the battle is already won."

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04 Leverage Your Employer Brand

A strong employer brand will go a long way in helping you position your company in the hiring market. The challenge for early-stage companies, however, is that they haven't yet reached the critical mass to build a brand that has real substance. It generally takes time to build an employer brand, and some companies at that stage are just too focused on other priorities.

That's why it becomes essential for growth-stage companies to elevate their focus on employer brand. Begin to share your employee experiences on social media. Leverage the work you've done on core values and incorporate it creatively on in an employer brand that really connects with passions of top candidates. Developing a strategy that leverages your employer brand can do a lot of the heavy lifting for you. Once it's established, you don't have to spend cycles highlighting it for candidates; it will already have given you the mindshare you need to speed the recruiting process.

Remember, too, that employer brand can and should be a fluid thing. When you enter a new stage of growth, people's perceptions of your organization can change. Employer brand can help teach the public how you've changed over time, and it can win over technical candidates that are looking for the same things. Your brand should continue to evolve and reflect your changing story as a growing organization.

05 Hire Tech Workers with Broad Skill Sets

Companies in hypergrowth mode must find innovative ways to fill hiring needs that might be unpredictable or not immediately recognizable. One solution is to pursue individuals with broader skill sets and those who excel at general problem solving. As an example, Percolate is one of the fastest growing companies in the enterprise software space. VP of engineering, Zach Haehn says that his company wants to hire engineers with curious, open minds, and a collaborative attitude. "At our size, we're still growing and figuring out where we are in the market. We look for people with really good problem-solving skills and analytical minds, who have the capacity to learn, the desire to build something really cool, and the elasticity of thinking to go along for the ride."

Another strategy is to pursue multi-skill professionals such as full-stack engineers or DevOps professionals who can apply talents up and down the product development lifecycle. These additions to your fast-growing workforce give you better flexibility to keep pace with rapidly changing resource needs, and they can often single-handedly meet the requirements of multiple less functionally dynamic individuals. And when you're building your tech team, don't forget to hunt for multiple individuals with rock-star potential at the same time. Filling your whole tech team with top talent when you find them at once will save you time when it matters the most.

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Conclusion

In spite of best-laid plans, anything can happen in a company's hypergrowth stage. Build a recruiting plan and infrastructure that are pliable enough to grow seamlessly with your organization. Lay the groundwork early and learn from your successes and failures to better prepare for tomorrow's challenges. Keep your teams focused on closing great talent fast, and create a working environment that will keep you existing workers content and allow them to serve as tomorrow's brand ambassadors.