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Startups Find Innovative Ways to Attract Top Talent

Instead of traditional hiring methods, startups adopt newer ways of recruitment

Brinda Dasgupta & Richa Maheshwari

Bengaluru: Speed is of the essence if you want a job at data driven startup Stylumia Intelligence Technology. The company's website directs candidates to a time-regulated page with five multiple-choice questions. Those who answer all questions correctly within 20 minutes get a call for a face-to-face interview.

The company, founded by Ganesh Subramanian, former chief operating officer of fashion e-tailer Myntra, is among an increasing number of startups that have given the traditional hiring methods a go-by. TravelTriangle, Treebo Hotels, Letscorp and BankBazaar are some of the

other companies that have adopted newer ways of recruitment. "We saw a lot of time and effort wasted with traditional search methods. After internal discussions, we decided to use technology and started this process in January. Until now, 176 candidates have applied, out of which only nine have cleared the test," said Subramanian.

Ram Prakash H, Stylumia's chief scientist said, "If a candidate can get through five questions that test the basic qualities of good engineers, we are more certain to have shortlisted someone who is worth calling for an interview."

At TravelTriangle, two of the three co-founders, Sankalp Agarwal and Sanchit Garg, have seen to it that their love for quizzes and puzzles has permeated into the interview process. "People being hired for senior positions are given a specific story problem. The best part about this is that there's no right or wrong answer, but it inadvertently highlights the basic traits of the interviewee no matter how much they may try to portray a certain personality type," said Agarwal.

How to Find The Right Talent

Making candidates take a time-regulated multiple-choice test prior to an interview

Asking candidates to do a short internship and solve real-world problems

Using a search and recommendation platform to discover potential candidates who are passively open to new opportunities

Using a professional and personal happiness index and an occupational suitability index to recruit talent

For an investor, the business idea and market potential are the two most important factors, followed by the team. Startups, therefore, know that having the right talent on board not only helps them with funding but also moving forward in their area of expertise

POOJA GUPTA
 Head - portfolio HR at Kalaari Capital

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Technology-enabled budget hotel brand Treebo Hotels, on the other hand, asks potential candidates to do an internship with the company for a week or two and solve real-world problems. The trial period helps the company judge the skill set of the candidates and understand whether they would fit in with the rest of the team.

"Defining concrete short-term projects - along with mentors - for potential hires before taking them on board full time is a model that's worked very well for us, especially in our business development and engineering teams," said co-founder Kadam Jeet Jain. "Seeing someone in action is the best way to know whether someone will be a good fit, profession-

nally and culturally," he said. Candidates who are already in full-time jobs can work with the startup for a couple of weekends, said Jain. Treebo Hotels gives stipends to all potential recruits, he added. News app Inshorts conducts a similar, but much shorter, two-day trial for shortlisted candidates.

"Afterwards, we exchange notes with the prospective recruit on their experience and our feedback, providing both sides clarity on the way forward," said chief executive Azhar Iqbal.

Pooja Gupta, head - portfolio HR at Kalaari Capital, said that an absence of a big brand name may be pushing startups to devise new ways to hire talent that can bring the right skills to the team.

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At BankBazaar, casual interactions are conducted to evaluate candidates for their personality and attitude towards work and life. The process is not restricted to just immediate or senior managers. Junior members can also be part of these interactions, so that everyone in the company is sure of the ability of the candidates to work with the rest of the team.

"The interviewing panel, too, is not

restricted to a particular team and often comprises experts from the length and breadth of the organisation, for better visibility and evaluation," said the company's HR head Sriram Vaidhyanathan.

Talent acquisition startup Be-long uses its search and recommendation platform to analyse thousands of profiles across the internet to discover potential candidates who best fit in with the company's culture and skill requirements. "The technology helps us gain verified insights into whether these candidates are passively open to new opportunities," said co-founder Vijay Sharma.

Similarly, HR solutions provider Letscorp uses HappiNex, a self-designed professional and personal happiness index, and Occupational Discovery Test, an occupational suitability index across levels and roles, to recruit professionals internally.

CouponDunia has added a fun element to the Careers page on its website with the announcement, "Apply now for 20% easier interview questions". The coupon is a hyperlink that drafts a mail on a candidate's behalf to the team.