Even in a fast-paced startup, it's worth taking the time to make the right hire

During the pandemic, my co-founder and I were advised to lay off our entire team. Doing so, we were told, would allow us to save costs and preserve our runway as we looked to weather the storm.

Temps de lecture : minute

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Thankfully, we ignored the advice, our team weathered the storm together, and we were able to navigate our path to Seed funding and the foundations of the 150-strong workforce across Britain, the U.S., and Asia that I have the privilege of leading today.

The experience reinforced my conviction that talent should be the top priority for every founder. It's incredibly difficult to grow your business quickly unless you surround yourself with exceptional people.

Despite the relentless pace of the tech ecosystem, there's little value in rushing your hiring decisions. And once you've found the right people, you need to do everything in your power to hang onto them.

As a founder, you'll always see your business as under-resourced, because resourcing will always be playing catch up to your ambitions. And yet, hiring the right person with the right experience can be 100 times more impactful than simply filling the role with the right skills.

For example, in complex markets like the legal industry, where we operate, companies and practices have been around for decades, if not

hundreds of years. Hiring based on skillset alone isn't enough to gain traction in these industries. Instead, we actively look for people who have spent time on the ground and, ideally, who have navigated similar growth journeys before.
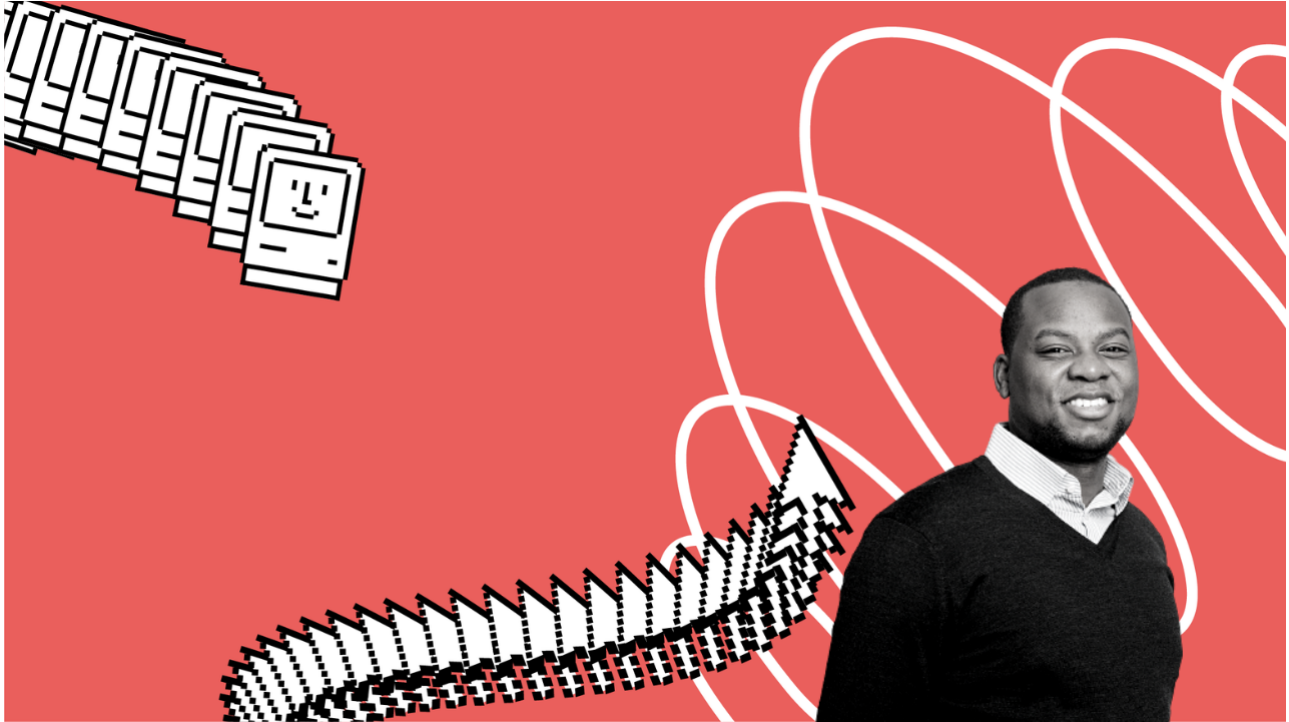
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Your best bet for building strong teams is hiring people who are themselves magnets for talent, and who have built teams before.

Having just a few of these individuals on the payroll can have a pronounced impact on your ability to gain traction and pay dividends across every business function, from sales to engineering.

Hiring can be extremely challenging, but it's a learning process, and over the past few years I've established three principles to guide our recruitment and give us the best chance of finding the high-impact talent we desire.

1. Treat recruitment as the most important thing in your diary

If, like me, you believe that talent is the crucial factor in the success equation, you need to over-invest your own time in the recruitment process and be fully involved, even when it's a hire outside of your domain expertise. As an entrepreneur, you'll have a unique perspective of who is going to fit in the business, who meets your cultural standards, and who seems most likely to drive your business forwards. Treating hiring as your top priority is an attitude that will rub off on everyone else in the recruitment process – as well as making you more attractive to candidates.

2. Don't just take candidates' word – test their skills

We give every candidate a technical assessment that simulates the work they would do if they joined the company. These assessments are based on actual work we've had to do recently, giving us a clear sense of what good or bad looks like. It's a process we've put in place to guard against candidates who have spent their careers accruing shiny logos on their CVs without necessarily advancing their skills or learning from their experiences. If you want to ensure you're recruiting true quality, you need to get a sense of how candidates – especially those vying for leadership roles – perform in real-world scenarios.

3. Be thoughtful, but don't overthink

Be rigorous, but don't waste either party's time — there's never a guarantee that your chosen candidate will end up being the right fit, so

that tenth interview has diminishing returns.

Remember, hiring always involves risk, and getting people in the door is the best way of assessing how they'll perform as part of your team.

Building and scaling a successful company is incredibly difficult, and it's the execution, rather than the original idea, where the challenge lies, which makes talent by far your biggest determiner of future success.

Richard Robinson is the CEO and founder of _Robin AI._

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Article écrit par Richard Robinson