

# Decoding Developers

A guide to attracting  
top tech talent



The  
**Updated**  
Edition



surround yourself with talent

# The search for tech talent is on....

As the talent partner to Tech Nation, we understand the challenges businesses of all sizes face when it comes to recruiting tech talent.

That's why we've created this guide to understanding, attracting and recruiting developers. Inside, you'll find information on how to identify the type of developer you want, how to connect with them and how to create a candidate experience that helps you stand out from the crowd.



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talent works

According to indeed

# 1 in 10 new uk jobs are in tech

Filling those vacancies is proving tough.

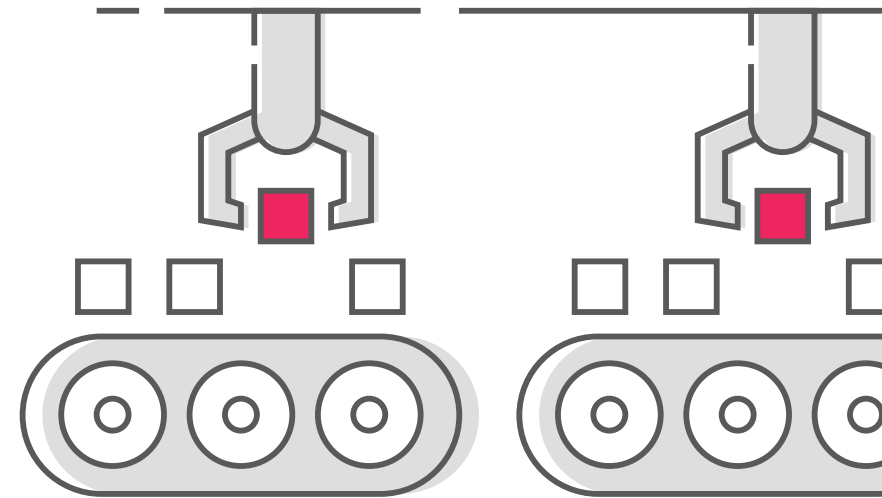


# The world is being automated

Every industry sector is being driven forward by some type of digitisation.

From financial services to the travel sector, from media to local government, everyone is seeking to deliver better, more innovative, more customer-centric digital interactions with products and services.

That means everyone wants to recruit the very best developers. But market forces mean that not everyone can. That's why we've created this guide, combining the expertise and knowledge we've gained over the last 10 years of helping global brands, scaling startups and everyone in between recruit tech talent.





# Navigating our guide

Unclear communication between employers and their target audience is one of the biggest factors affecting developer recruitment.

We've broken our guide down into four specific actions that employers can take to improve how they reach out to developers:

## Go beyond code

When it comes to engaging developers, it's not all about the latest tech.

1010  
0100  
0110

## Define your search

When it comes to developers, there isn't a 'one-size-fits-all'.



## Speak their language

Get the terminology right and say what developers want to hear.



## Create great UX

Because different types of developers need different candidate experiences.



1

# Define your...

search



Employers tend to think all developers are the same. The truth is, they aren't.

< Don't "stick"  
to the script; />



## Using a single catch-all job title to drive traffic to a careers site will only work if you're Google, Amazon or Facebook.

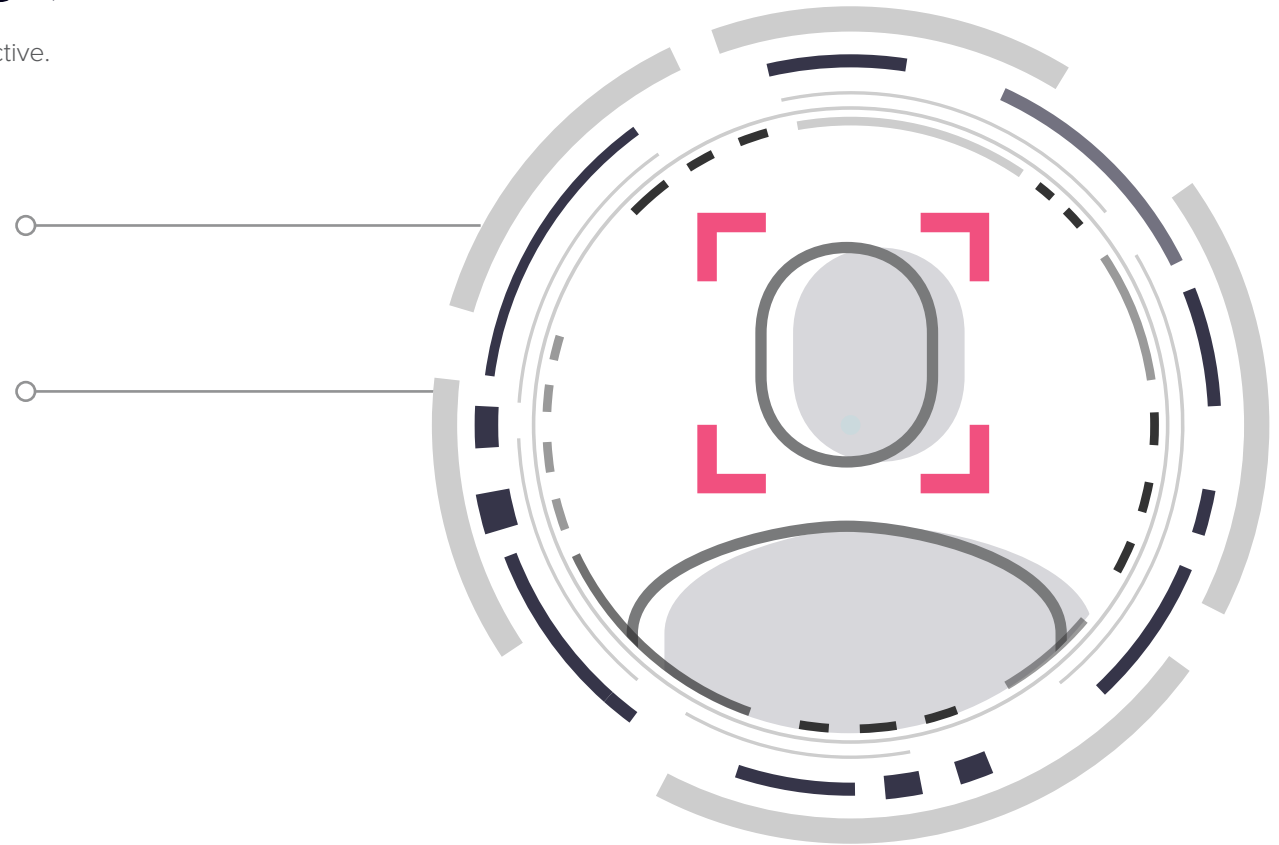
If you're not, keeping it generic isn't going to be very effective. Why? Two reasons:

### 1 Technologies keep changing

You need to define your tech stack - developers aren't going to want to dig around for the details.

### 2 Job titles keep changing

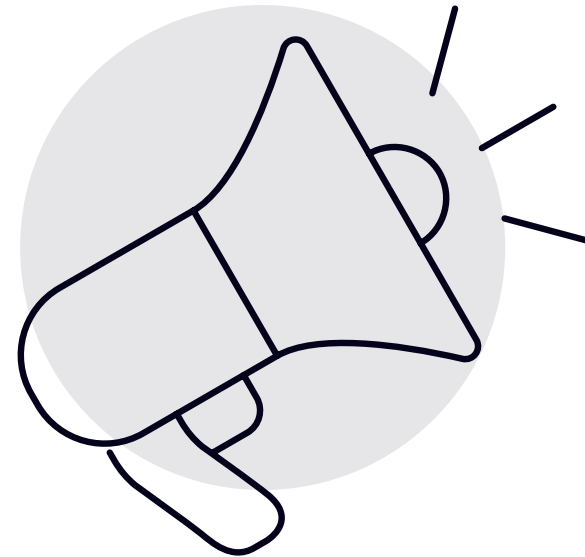
We've identified three clusters of developers, which can broadly be categorised Cloud/Full Stack, Application, and Frontend. Employers tend to use the same recruitment strategies for all three, assuming that they all have the same motivations and career goals. They don't - our research shows that they're all quite different.



# We get it. Employers want to be heard.

The market is crowded.

But by assuming all developers want to hear the same thing, nobody is saying anything different.

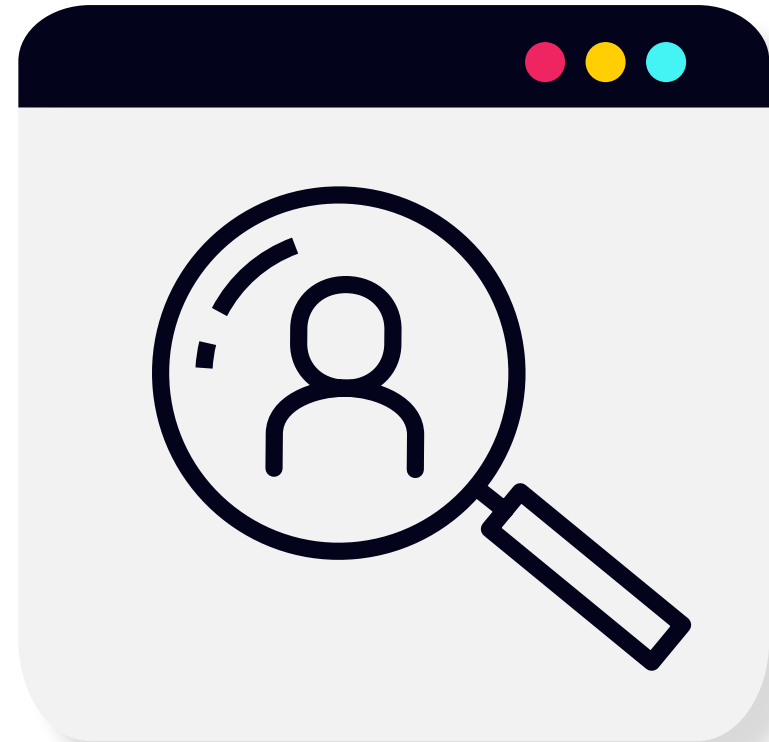




# The solution?

By defining your search criteria, you can cut through the noise and reach the people who want to hear what you have to say.

First of all, you need to be clear about the type of developer you want. This is about more than getting the job title right. As you'll see in Section 3, developers fall into different groups depending on personality type, aspirations and expectations from their careers and employers.



# 2 Speak their language

# Go beyond programming

Most employers will include a list of technologies in their recruitment advertising.

That's what developers want to know about, right? Sure, but our research also shows a clear and steady decline in Google searches based on programming languages. This is because:



## 1 Segmented communities

Sites like Stack Overflow give employers the opportunity to advertise to an already-segmented audience. Developers with specific skillsets are already gathered into loosely-formed online communities.

## 2 Shifting priorities

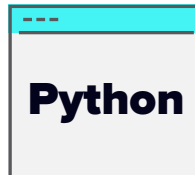
As developers become more multi-generational, they have priorities beyond just the technology. The Microserfs of 20 years ago are now prioritising flexibility and work-life balance.



# Know your facts



is the most in-demand language  
for 5 of the UK's top 12 tech companies.

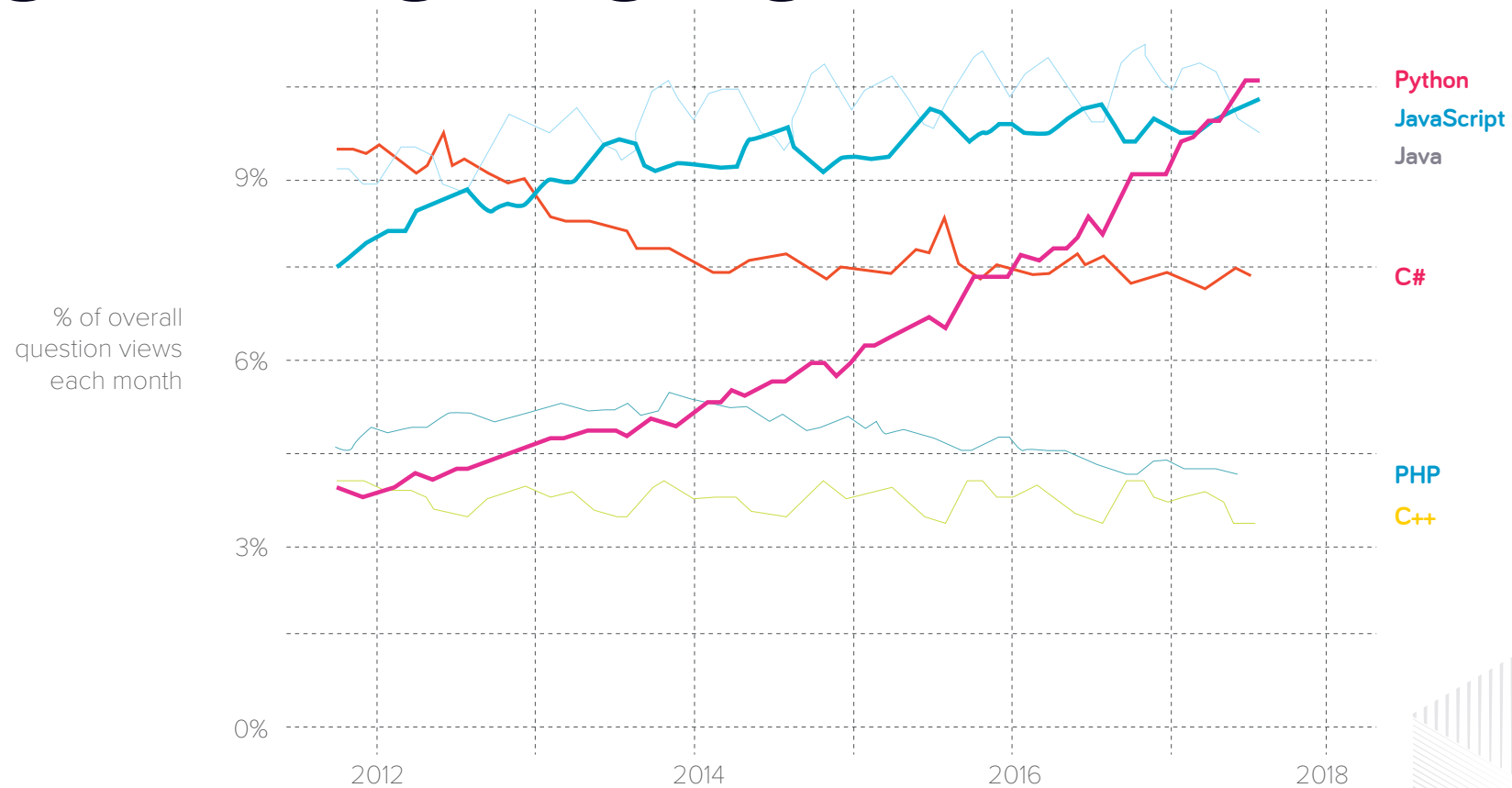


is the second most in-demand language  
for 6 of the top 12 companies.



is the third most in-demand skill,  
ahead of both C++ and C.

# Growth of major programming languages



\* Based on Stack Overflow question views in World Bank high-income countries



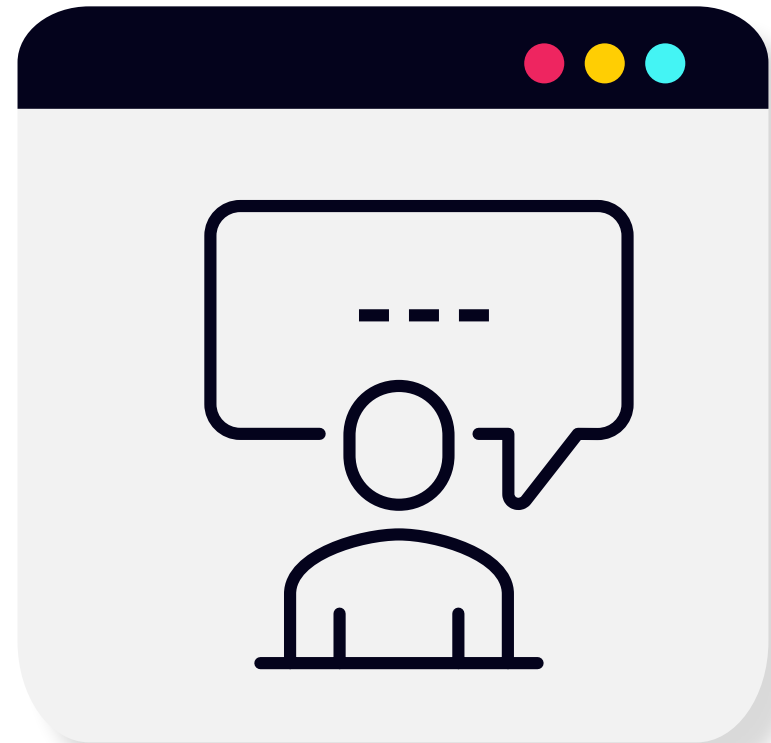
# The solution?

While technology still matters, employers need to talk more fully about the opportunity.

To really appeal to the right developers, you need some insight into their mindset. For example:

- Our research shows that Perl developers are the least likely to move. It will take something special to attract them.
- In 2019, nearly 40% of 'coding bootcamps' focused on JavaScript – expect a new generation of developers to be very specific about the language they want to write in.
- According to Indeed, demand for software engineers within machine learning and data science were two of the five fastest-growing categories within tech last year, with a 191% growth and 136% increase respectively since 2015.

The developer audience is changing fast and their career aspirations are changing too. Employers need to start having different types of conversations with that audience. Conversations that go beyond code.



# Python and Javascript

top the list of technologies  
that developers aspire to learn.

So hire for  
potential,  
and invest in  
great training.

# 3

# Go beyond { code; }

# Defining Developers

To get a better understanding of what they are looking for from employers, we surveyed 106 developers across the UK, covering everything from their ideal benefits package to the types of companies they prefer. As a result, we've managed to identify three key developer segments with very different requirements and preferences. Yet all but one of the recruiters we spoke to stated that they're using the same approach to target all developers.

The three developer segments we've identified are:

## Group 1

Tech driven, sceptics  
(Frontend developers)



## Group 2

Self-motivated,  
career-focused  
(Full stack, generalists,  
exaggerators)



## Group 3

Future worriers  
(Low-level language/  
app developers)



# Attracting the right Developer

Once you've identified your developer, how can you build a proposition to engage them?





# Attracting the right Developers

## 1. Tech driven, sceptics (frontend developers)

These developers are precious about their own time, prioritising work-life balance and flexitime above all else. A stuffy corporate culture where employees are expected to be present 9-5 won't cut it for this group – they are looking for flexibility, and tailoring the benefits and positioning to reflect this will be crucial to attracting them.

## 2. Self-motivated, career-focused (full stack, generalists, exaggerators)

Group 2 developers use a broader range of languages and are more confident in their ability (particularly in JavaScript and C#) with half rating themselves as experts. This group of developers is more interested in the technology used by a company, attracted to those that are cutting edge. They are more open to new opportunities than Group 1, perhaps because they are interested in being up-to-speed in terms of the tech they have the opportunity to use.

## 3. Future worriers (low-level language/app developers)

Group 3 is more focused on using Java, C++ and C, and are attracted to established tech companies. This group is more focused on obtaining staple benefits than the nice-to-have extras. They're concerned about continuously upskilling and would turn to their employer before funding their own training. This group is the most open to hearing about new opportunities, especially if the offer is increased salary or investment in the individual.

# The solution?

By understanding how different developers respond to employer conversations, you can create consistent, end-to-end attraction strategies.

For example, some developers gave a strongly adverse reaction to what they perceived as 'fad' language, while others welcomed the opportunity to hear about new technologies. Some developers were attracted by the idea of travel, while others preferred to stay in one place and build their skills in a single technology environment.

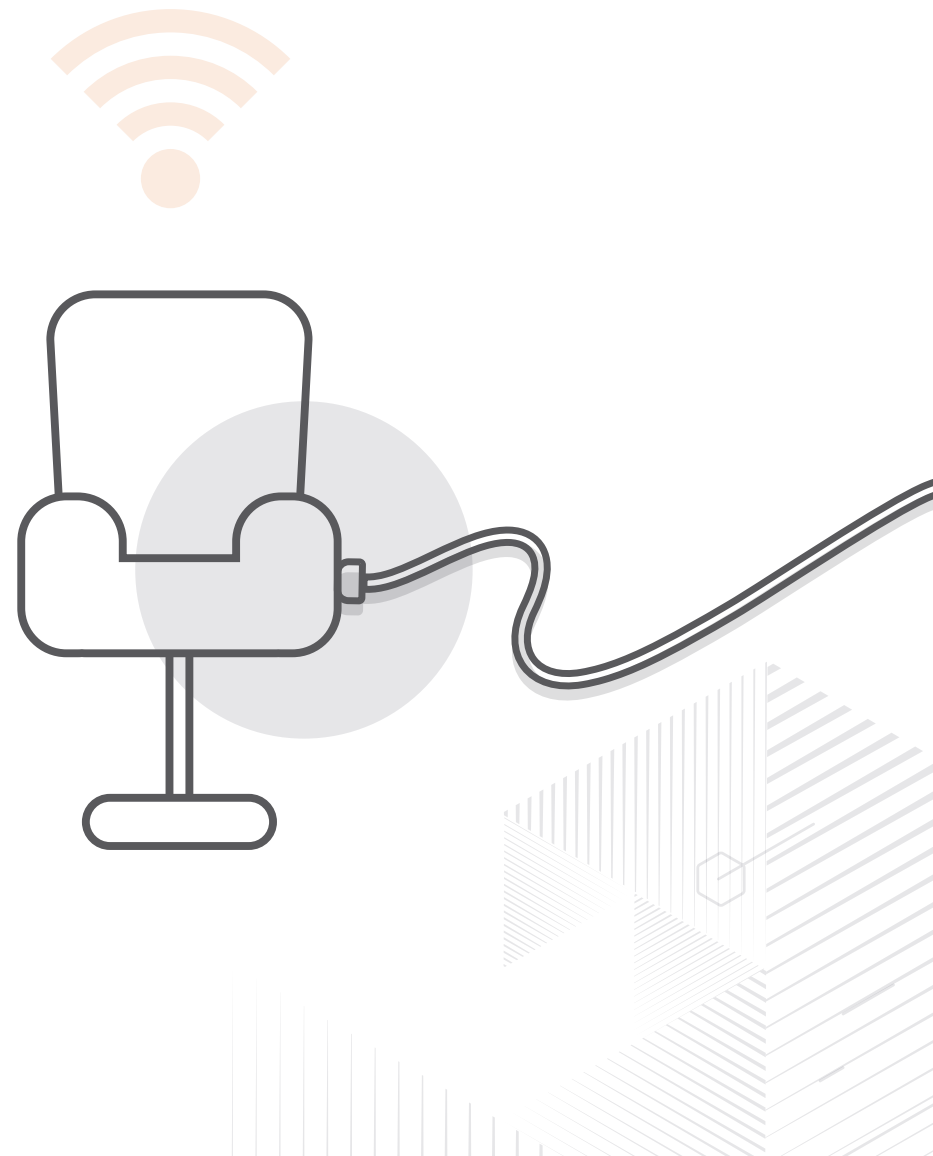


# 4 Create great UX

# Connecting Developers with vacancies

Employers assume developers will want to search and apply for roles online. Why?

Perhaps it worked well in past campaigns. But our research has shown us that the developer audience is changing fast, and what worked before won't necessarily work now.

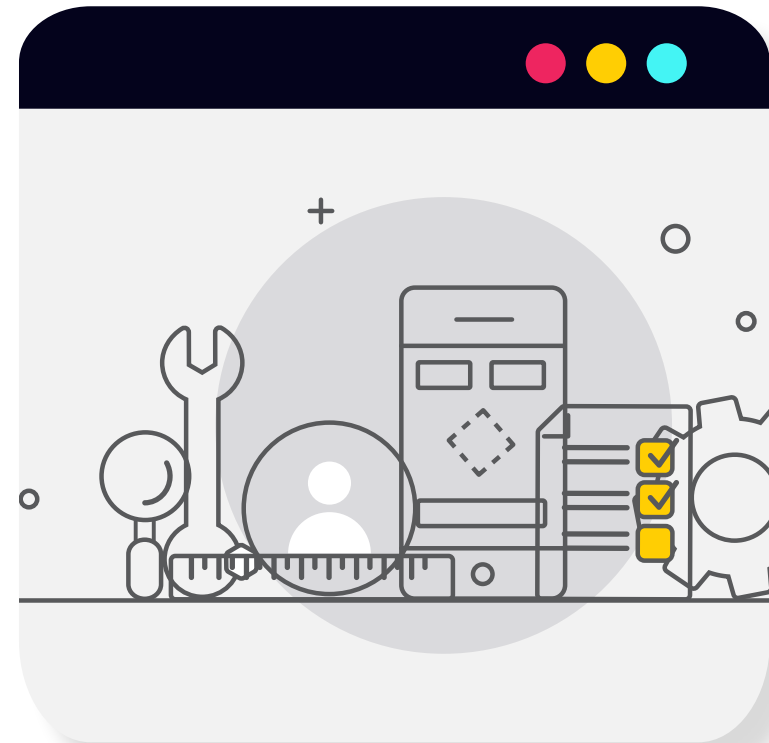


# The solution?

The candidate experience you create should be tailored to the type of developer you want to recruit, and it goes way beyond the initial attraction campaign.

It means thinking about the kind of environment your developers want (they don't all want to play ping pong and table football), the lifestyle they're looking for, and the learning opportunities they'd like in the future.

Finally, you need to think about the best way to communicate these opportunities. It's worth remembering that many of the developers we surveyed told us they preferred to be contacted by email, rather than search for opportunities themselves.





# Our Methodology

In the full report, we use market data, survey feedback from 106 developers across the UK, and interview feedback from 8 internal recruiters, to explore how the three developer types differ and the challenges faced when recruiting developers.

# Our Methodology

## **We have mapped the developer talent market**

We have quantified the demand and any projected changes in demand, for developers. We have quantified current demand by different sectors and different industries e.g. Fintech. We have also looked at factors e.g. political events (notably Brexit) and how that will drive demand and supply.

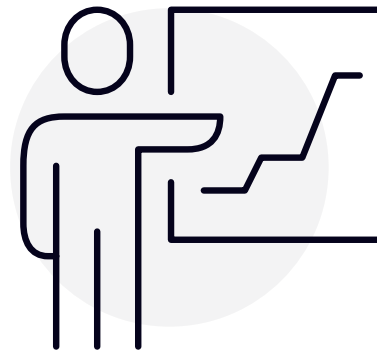
LinkedIn profile searches for employees at each of the top 10 tech companies over the last 3 years have also been undertaken to better understand the mobility of developers. Figures on the number of currently advertised developer openings have also added to our understanding of demand and have enabled us to look at demand by sector and other employer categorisations.

## **We have profiled the developer talent market**

Who is the developer candidate? What programming languages are they skilled in? How did they acquire their skills? What's their personality type? What type of employer do they aspire to work for? How do they prefer to be approached about vacancies? We have obtained answers to all these questions to provide the evidence that shows how the three developer groups differ.

## **We have explored the recruitment strategies currently employed to attract developers**

Market mapping has been supplemented with qualitative feedback from internal recruiters on their perceptions of the demand for different developer types and their understanding of what developers look for in an employer. We have also explored what changes they foresee in the developer market and what plans they have in place to keep up with those changes.



# More about Talent Works

We're changing the conversation, challenging conventional thinking and propelling organisations to new heights in the race to deliver the best talent. Working with startups, scale-ups and established brands, we deliver ambitious hiring plans through our people, in partnership with yours.

Our fully-integrated suite of services includes research and insight, creative and digital, sourcing and a full, agile RPO offering, delivered from three main office hubs: Northampton, Manchester and Boston, USA.

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For enquiries, please use our [contact form](#) or [email](#) to find out how we can help you today.

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