

Facebook's Hiring Process

Online social media company Facebook recognizes the importance of hiring top talent, especially for its technical positions including software engineers and product managers. The company is consistently rated a top place to work and receives hundreds of thousands of applications each year for its job openings. Consistent with its entrepreneurial spirit and flat organizational structure, Facebook looks for self-starters who don't need a lot of direction. Because employees are expected to work in teams, teamwork skills are also important.

The most successful employees understand Facebook's product and the company's vision. The company knows that applicants with established and active Facebook accounts tend to be good fits, and engineers who have interesting, working products or apps they can demonstrate also tend to be good hires. The company wants to hire people who can make a real impact, solve challenging problems, and help to make the world more open and connected. Imagine that Facebook asks you for advice on how to best evaluate its applicants for both job and cultural fit. After studying this chapter, you should have some good ideas.

In evaluating job applicants Facebook tries to understand a person's abilities as both a professional and as a colleague. To execute its innovation strategy, the company wants people who are curious, self-motivated, innovative, and who can understand complex ideas. Because teamwork is important, person-team fit is also evaluated.

After being screened by a recruiter to evaluate previous work experience, leadership roles, and what the applicant has built in the past, candidates are given a phone interview with a potential coworker to assess job fit, skills, interests, and motivation. If that stage is passed, multiple interviews are conducted by the members of the candidate's potential work team during an on-site visit to the Facebook campus. The focus of these interviews is on evaluating both job skills and culture fit. Candidates do a lot of coding during their interviews. Technical skill challenges are presented, and candidates are asked to write code on a whiteboard. Facebook looks for people with strong technical skills who fit the group and put the user first. Because culture fit is so important, being referred by a Facebook employee also helps. Facebook ultimately lets each work group make a collective decision on who to hire.

Facebook's internship program helps to evaluate talented students, and it also invites top talent to apply. Facebook also created a programming challenge that invites potential software engineering applicants to take a timed challenge. If their code passes the test, a recruiter contacts them. To deter code sharing, code that is too similar to that of another applicant disqualifies both applicants.

Questions

- a. Do you think it's appropriate for Facebook to require candidates to write code on a whiteboard during its assessment process? Why or why not?
- b. What are the advantages and disadvantages to Facebook of asking software engineering applicants to do so much coding during the initial assessment process?
- c. Identify two other assessment methods you think Facebook could use to assess applicants' fit with the company's culture of innovation and smart risk taking.