

karat^

Technical Hiring Guide

How to hire software developers using best practices throughout every step of the process





Table of contents

Introduction

The job posting

Sourcing

Screening

Interviewing

Offers

Onboarding

Karat makes technical interviewing predictive, fair, and enjoyable

Introduction

Hiring for technical roles isn't an easy feat. With potentially hundreds of applications per opening, the process of getting to the right candidate can be time-consuming and require certain tradeoffs.

To be successful, you have to move quickly & confidently through each step of the hiring process - understanding your needs, effectively engaging candidates, and efficiently managing team resources.

Although there's no shortcut to knowing if an applicant is suitable for the job, there are some things you can do to develop a streamlined process that mitigates risk and builds hiring confidence. In this ebook, we'll cover job opening and sourcing to screening and interviewing, making the offer, and onboarding a successful candidate - sharing best practices and discussing trends related to technical hiring to ensure that you're set up for success throughout every step of the process.



The job posting

Every hiring process starts with a need, whether you are looking for someone new with highly-specialized skills or creating additional bandwidth for your team.

If the role being filled is a new position, the manager often begins the hiring process by visualizing the ideal person they want to fill the opening. This exercise is done in detail; it considers the hire's essential attributes, including technical capabilities, interpersonal skills, and personal qualities. With some refinement, that information becomes the job description. It might turn out to be an accurate reflection of the person hired, though it's often tweaked during the hiring process once the hiring manager sees what candidates are actually like.



While the job description guides hiring decisions, the job posting helps job seekers decide whether your opportunity is right for them. Job postings often provide candidates with a first impression of your employer brand. Poorly written postings can inadvertently drive away high-quality candidates, shrinking your applicant pool.

To convince candidates to apply to your company and not a competitor, it helps to apply some best practices.

Be specific

You often have one shot at capturing a potential candidate's interest. Increase your chances of receiving ample applicants by avoiding vague job descriptions. Be specific about what they'll be doing in their role on a day-to-day basis, as it sets clear expectations and creates a positive impression. Being specific can increase the quality of applicants and minimize time spent reviewing unsuitable [applicants](#).

Consider word choice

Word choice affects who applies for a job because potential applicants are scanning postings looking for key words and phrases that are green or red flags. Be sure to avoid biased language, particularly [gendered wording](#) that could impact how candidates view your company. Gender preferences can be inadvertently embedded in reused language and repel certain gender identities from applying.

One [study](#) found that job ads using “more masculine wording” made those jobs less appealing to women, and made them feel they wouldn’t belong at the company in question. The same study also found that job **ads using more masculine wording were perceived by both men and women to have fewer women** in the occupation, regardless of the role’s actual gender composition.

According to a study published in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, job ads using “more masculine wording” make those jobs less appealing to women (4.16 vs. 4.50 on a 6-point scale).

Remove jargon

Avoid shortcuts that lean on corporate jargon and trending buzzwords and use language that makes the job responsibilities as clear as possible. Words like “self-starter” or “growth-hacking” don’t communicate anything meaningful about the position. Yet, they are ever-present in technical job postings.

A [Canva study](#) analyzed 6.3 million online job descriptions and found that the Information Technology industry used the most jargon (604 per 1,000 ads contained jargon). By replacing jargon with precise language, job descriptions become accurate and job postings are more enticing. As we mentioned above in the section on wording, jargon can often be a red flag for job seekers and a cue for them to skip on to the next posting.



Sourcing

After a job is posted, sourcing — the process of finding people who might be right for the role and convincing them to apply — begins.

Companies use a variety of methods to source candidates, some of which include:

- Posting advertisements on job boards
- Buying social media ads
- Reaching out to people directly
- Requesting referrals from people they know
- Partnering with organizations that assist job seekers

The combination of methods chosen depends on each organization's unique needs and approaches. However, 74% of recruiters say that referrals are their [top method for sourcing technical talent](#). Employees often (though not always) refer people who they know personally, and those individuals often share their race, gender, or other characteristics — resulting in a lack of candidate diversity.

Here are two particularly effective ways to recruit software engineers:

Target tech hubs

Though it might be obvious, targeting recruitment efforts in cities known for tech industry presence is an effective way to source the people you need. This method is especially helpful if you're open to remote candidates — they don't have to be located in the same city or country as your business.

Karat's [2022 report](#) shows that the Seattle metro area and the Bay Area are amongst the top locations in the United States for

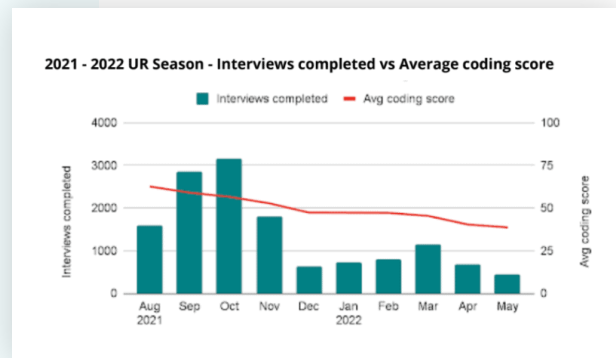
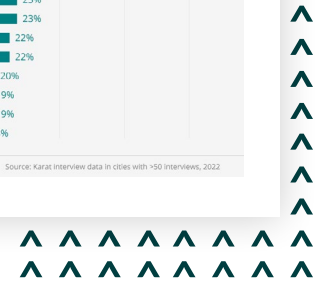
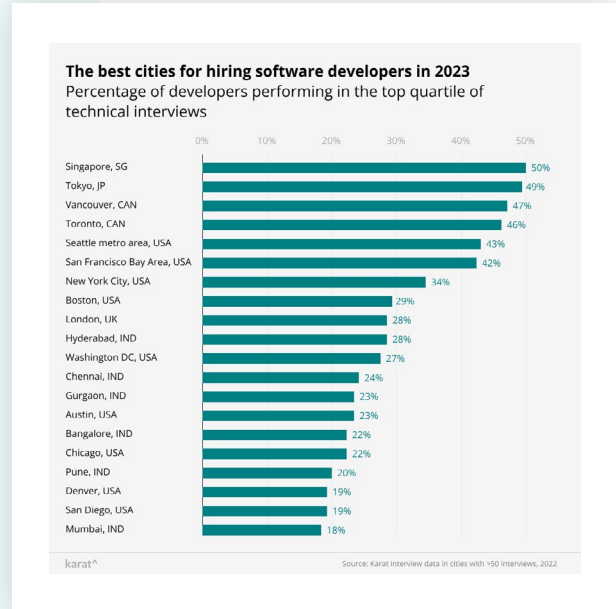
hiring top-performing software developers. [Look internationally](#), and Singapore, Tokyo, and Vancouver currently round out the top three worldwide, ranking favorably against local tech hubs. Many U.S. cities (including those mentioned) appeared in the top 20 list, alongside high-growth Indian cities. So be sure to consider supply over proximity when sourcing candidates.

Try university recruiting (UR)

UR is a strategy for sourcing entry-level candidates by attending networking events and job fairs held on campus. The recruitment season typically begins in the fall when the academic year begins. However, we have observed a trend in companies hiring earlier year-on-year — even as early as July.

In 2018-19, fewer than 20% of all UR interviews were conducted in August/September. Compare that with 2020-21, the year struck by the COVID-19 pandemic, and 44% of the year’s UR interviews were completed by the end of September. Not only are there fewer candidates toward the tail end of the season, but top candidates have already accepted offers. The 2021-22 season shows **over half of the interviews took place by the end of October 2021**, with average coding scores peaking early, and then declining. It pays to act fast.

To help attract UR candidates, you need a compelling reason for them to choose your company over competitors. The truth is, higher salaries aren’t always enough to convince students to apply. In a [May 2022 survey](#) of 900 new college graduates, 25% said that having opportunities for learning and growth was their top priority when choosing a post-graduate job. Emphasize training and mentorship programs and other professional development opportunities to garner their interest.



Screening

In theory, interviewing every single candidate would offer the best chance of finding the right person for the job. But no one has the time or resources to do that, which makes screening necessary. The process winnows your pool of viable applicants down to a list of those most likely to succeed.



Avoid over-screening

As you work through your candidate pool, it's important to avoid over-screening. Valuable developers can be unintentionally overlooked based on snap judgments, rather than basing decisions on facts. One method for ensuring you don't over-screen is to remove identifying information from resumes. That's because certain details on a candidate's resume may indicate their gender identity, race, religion, or socioeconomic background — which can stir up preconceived notions or discriminatory ideas.

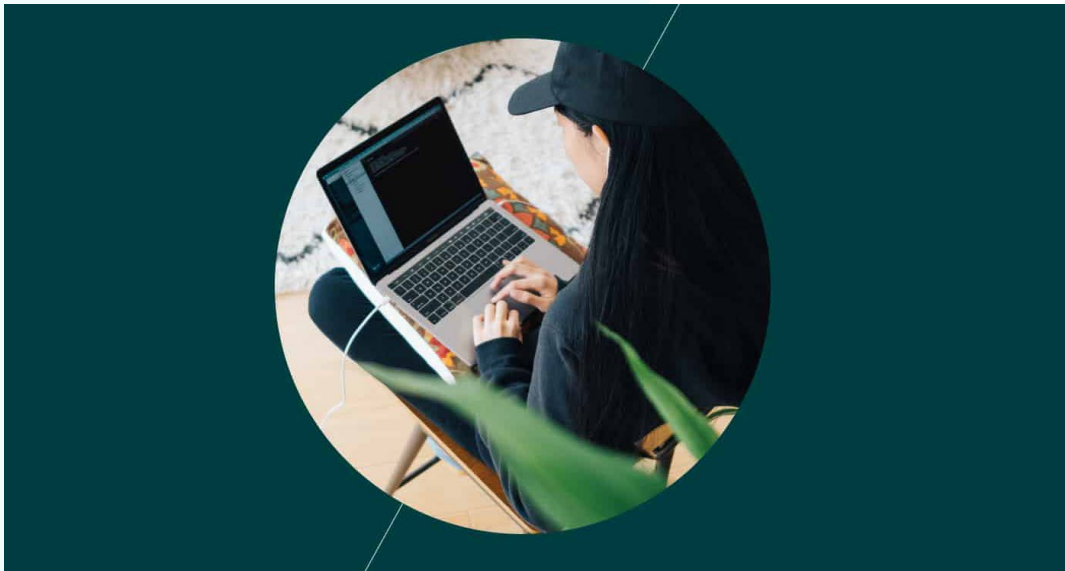
Be aware of bias

Approaching resumes with an awareness of different biases can make hiring fairer. Implicit biases are unconscious, internalized attitudes or stereotypes, while explicit ones are conscious and intentional prejudices. Bias affects our behavior, for example, making us more likely to hire someone who has a similar appearance to us, or comparing resumes instead of evaluating each on its own. Identifying the signs as they arise can keep bias in check and create more balanced evaluations.

Look beyond code tests

Resumes aren't always a reliable indicator of how someone will perform on the job, especially in a role as hands-on as software engineering. This is why code tests are traditionally administered to ensure candidates are capable of performing well — but those tests aren't a perfect screening tool, either.

Code tests typically require that candidates' solutions be absolutely complete and correct to pass. Though these tests can help identify some skilled candidates, [too many candidates are filtered out](#) by such high expectations. **Hiring yield reduces by almost one-third.** Also, code tests produce a lot of false negatives, which [disproportionately impact diverse candidates](#).



In screening, the best hiring signal doesn't come from having an absolutely correct and final coding answer; it comes from understanding a candidate's problem-solving abilities. This is where you can actually evaluate competency. In reality, software engineers aren't expected to independently produce a perfect solution. Rather, they team up with others to solve problems and review code to ensure it works. All this isn't to say code tests should never be used — they just shouldn't be the primary decision-making tool for screening candidates.

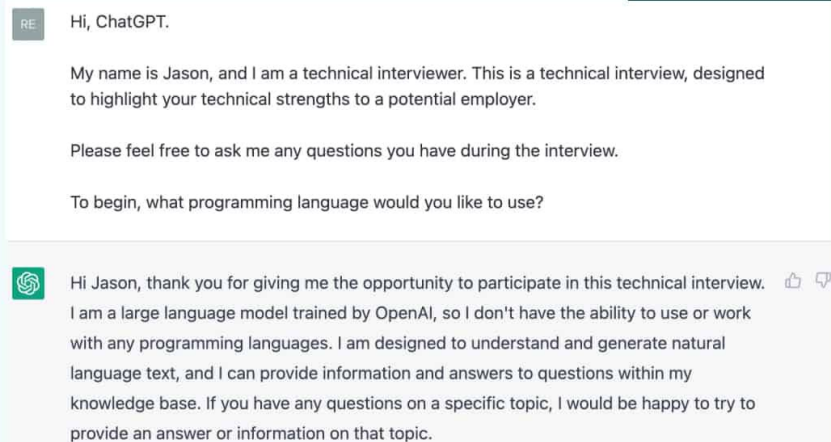
One successful approach to high-volume screening is to use adaptive multiple-choice assessments. These assessments are shorter for candidates (~20 minutes, compared to hours or days for longer format coding challenges) and dynamically adapt to the skill level of each candidate. This approach enables recruiting and engineering leaders to unlock high-volume applicant pools with higher completion rates from candidates, reduce the bias found in resume screens and keyword searches, and confidently advance the right candidates to interviews.

What about AI?

Interestingly, we're approaching an inflection point in the market, where generative AI tools like ChatGPT may render offline coding challenges and automated code tests obsolete. The ability of AI to turn a word problem into an algorithmic coding solution makes it incredibly difficult to moderate offline coding challenges. With AI, automated coding tests become less valuable compared to live interviews, not just because of the difficulty in assessing technical abilities, but because AI is likely to change the way software engineering operates.

There is a very real future where these tools enable developers to do things a lot faster than they do today — where developers use AI to write and debug code so they can spend more time tackling the most complex problems. Live human + tech interviews are the best way to assess a candidate's problem-solving abilities.

[Learn more about how ChatGPT performs on technical interviews.](#)



Interviewing

Screening will provide you with a shorter list of candidates who may be great fits for the role, but the next step in the process is interviewing to connect directly with each candidate and evaluate them individually. Internal interviewing is great to get a feel for candidates but many are untested content, unstructured scoring, and untrained interviewers can create a very inconsistent candidate experience and unpredictable hiring signal.

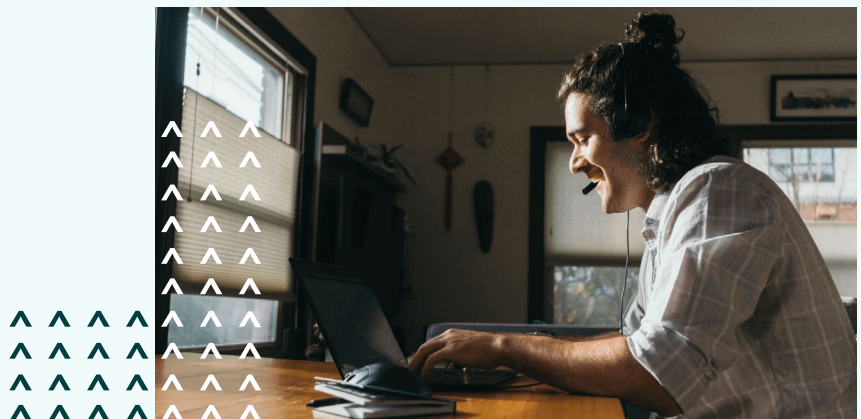
The live technical interview is the most common method used in hiring software engineers. On the upside, conducting them in person gives every candidate an equal opportunity to ask clarifying questions, receive guidance where appropriate, and get credit for partial answers. This reduces interviewer bias and shapes a positive candidate experience.

However, relying on an internal team to conduct live interviews takes time away from other tasks. That's why many companies work with technical interviewing partners like Karat. In fact, more than three-quarters of

leaders surveyed stated it's effective to rely on interviewing partners. The hiring process can be transformed by using cloud interviewing, as it's flexible enough to adjust to demand and it improves interview quality without tying up employees.

Effective recruiting is always a numbers game. Great opportunities attract a high volume of candidates but organizations need to hire in a timely manner. This can quickly create a situation where the volume of work needed to run a search effectively can quickly become overwhelming, even for larger teams. The best hiring managers and recruiters are those that can find the right mixture of process, technology, and partners to accelerate the right stages of the hiring process, and technical interviewing is a prime example. The right partnership enables you to do more with less and achieve equally good outcomes.

Get the most from your next set of candidates by applying these best practices to your technical interviews:



Offer remote and flexible interviews

Now that remote work has been largely normalized, many companies are conducting interviews over video conferencing platforms. This isn't for the sake of convenience; it's more inclusive for candidates who don't live near the job site and can't afford to travel there just for an interview.

Remote and flexible interviews also provide opportunities to those living in a different time zone or juggling parental or multiple job

commitments. Giving candidates the ability to schedule an interview at the time that best suits them, even if it's on an evening or weekend, can make all the difference for them.

As one Karat candidate said,
“Being able to schedule the interview whenever I wanted it was a HUGE bonus.”

Not only do flexible interviews create a better candidate experience, but they also lead to better hiring outcomes.

Across Karat, we see that faster interview processes are more responsive to candidate needs & drive more effective hiring outcomes.

When candidates choose to interview	% of candidates	Hires per 100 Candidates
Same Day	21%	3.0x
1 to 4 days	25%	2.1x
5 to 9 days	33%	1.9x
10 to 14 days	15%	1.6x
15+ days	5%	Industry average*



Key Takeaway

Moving at the speed your candidates demand can greatly improve hiring efficiency.

Select the right interviewer

Well-trained interviewers versed in hiring biases improve the interview experience and outcomes for everyone. Better still, diverse interviewers have been found to make candidates feel more welcome and comfortable. This is especially relevant for underrepresented groups who might be nervous about their performance.

Some other basics include making sure the interviewer understands the standard scoring

and has ample time to perform the interview properly. To help your team continuously improve, record, and review interviews for quality control. Instances of unconscious bias or other areas for improvement, which may otherwise have gone unnoticed, can be fixed.

Allow interview redos

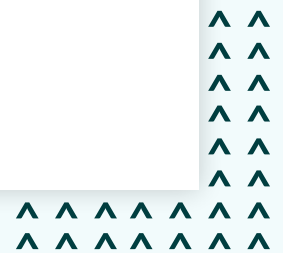
Offering candidates a [second chance at a first impression](#) can help companies hire faster while achieving hiring targets. This is particularly important for diverse candidates who may have had limited opportunities to practice their interviewing skills.

“People have bad days, and [the redo interview] really helps with false negatives,” says Cat Miller, CTO at Flatiron Health. For candidates who don’t have as much experience — for whom that first interview might be a surprise or something they need to get used to — it lets them acclimate and then try again. It gives more people an opportunity.”

Being aware that interview redos are an option alleviates the pressure of having to excel in the first interview. Over all, this leads to better performance, and it levels the playing field for candidates with less exposure to opportunities in tech. Black candidates are 30% percent more likely to take a redo interview than their white counterparts, and nearly 60% percent of Black candidates improve their scores on the redo. Not to mention, **we’ve seen almost 1,000 candidates hired after completing an interview redo.**

“People have bad days, and [the redo interview] really helps with false negatives ... It gives more people an opportunity.”

Cat Miller, CTO, Flatiron Health

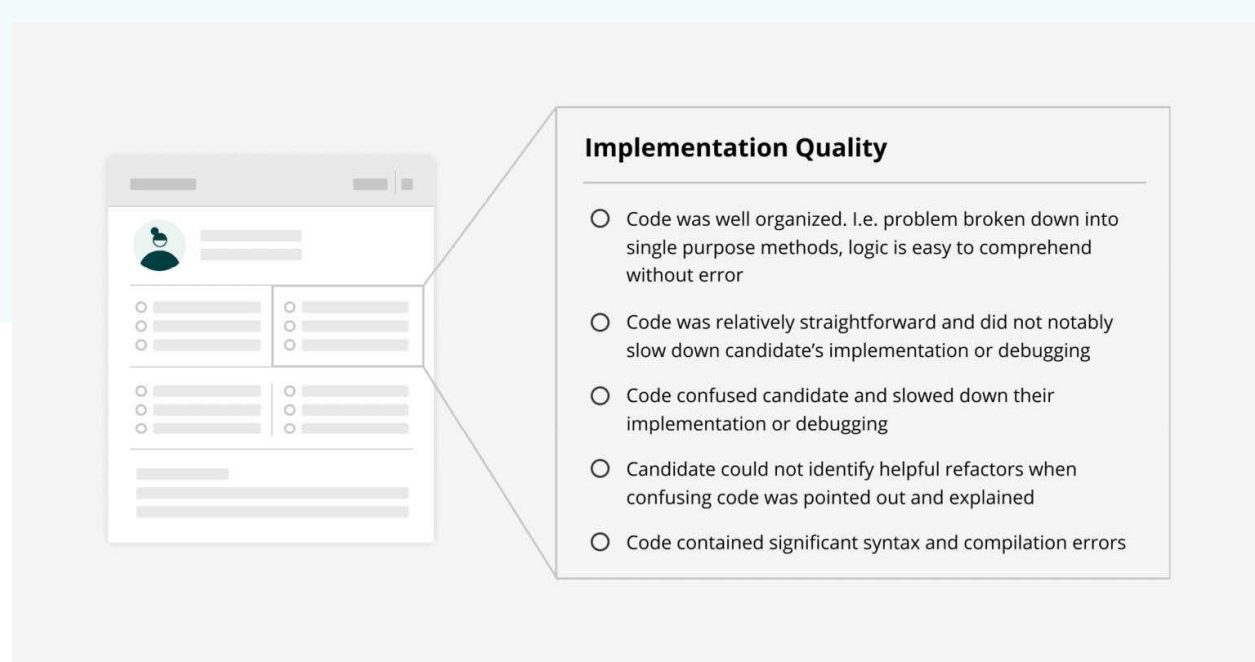


Evaluate interview performance fairly

Consistently use [structured scoring rubrics](#) to evaluate candidates using the same rating scale and shared language. This puts everyone on a level playing field. The rubric should only contain competencies directly relevant to the job; remove any nice-to-haves. And when reviewing candidates' demonstration of the competencies, partial answers should be awarded credit.

Standardized scoring doesn't just benefit candidates — it also makes it faster and easier

for your organization to make smart hiring decisions. Many Karat clients notice a significant difference in this area compared to their previous processes. For example, Deliveroo CTO Dan Winn says of working with Karat, "We've been blown away that we're getting so much more information about our candidates, in such a standardized way, so much faster than we did on our own."



Measuring the hiring funnel

In order to ensure continuous improvement within your hiring funnel and ensure great outcomes for your team, it's essential to have a program in place to measure performance on an ongoing basis. However, it's not always clear which metrics to track in order to make data-informed decisions.

There are a number of KPIs you can monitor to measure your hiring funnel, but these are a few that we suggest you start with:

- Time to fill
- Time to hire
- Technical interview passthrough rate
- Diversity of talent pool
- Interview to offer ratio
- Offer acceptance rate

As with any kind of quantitative performance management, it's essential to begin by setting benchmark numbers for all of the KPI's mentioned above. Tracking these data points over 90 days can help you establish a clear picture of where you are, so that you can build strategies focused on improving your performance.

	Source: Prospecting			Source: Direct Applicants		
	Invited to Onsite	Onsite to Offer	Close Rate	Invited to Onsite	Onsite to Offer Ratio	Close Rate
● Fast track	91%	81%	0%	89%	87%	83%
● Invite to next round	82%	64%	74%	80%	78%	70%
● Requires further review	10%	20%	25%	7%	12%	22%
● Not ready yet	5%	0%	2%	5%	15%	22%
Total	57%	27%	38%	57%	67%	76%

Offers

If the screening and interview processes go well, you can make an offer to a candidate. But when you do, remember that the financial details are important, but not all that's important.

Other qualitative aspects should be included to round out an appealing offer. The candidate will want to know about the day-to-day responsibilities of the role and how it connects to the company's purpose. Because people are placing greater value on making an impact, it's necessary to emphasize their big-picture contribution. Similarly, if the company provides opportunities to grow their skills and career with the company, mention them.



There are some offer-related metrics you can continually track to measure your performance, such as:

- **Interview-to-offer ratio.** A low interview-to-offer ratio means you're likely wasting resources interviewing unqualified candidates.
- **Offer acceptance rate.** A low offer acceptance rate may indicate that it's time to reassess your compensation or employee perks.
- **Acceptance rate versus candidate satisfaction.** Tracking this can identify if candidates are declining offers because they have a negative impression of your organization during the interview process.

If you can identify where candidates are experiencing issues, you can make adjustments to your process that will improve the candidate experience and hopefully increase your offer acceptance rate.

Onboarding

Once an offer is accepted and signed, the onboarding process begins. This can include everything from filling out paperwork to training and making sure the hire feels welcome and included in the company culture. Don't rush the process, if you can avoid it. Depending on the complexity of the role, it will likely take weeks or even months to get a new hire up and running at full capacity.

For those who have accepted a remote position, there's increased onboarding complexity, which is why it's critical to follow best practices:

Follow an onboarding schedule

Be clear about what the new hire should have completed and by when, timeframes allocated to training, as well as who they will meet with to check in on their progress. Setting expectations make it easier for the employee to get settled and builds confidence early on.

As part of the schedule, have them meet people and teams from different areas of the business to immerse them in the company culture. It also helps to arrange training sessions with those best qualified to train them on particular topics (not whoever is available), so you can set them up for success.



Include a few informal meetings

The early weeks at a new organization are equally exciting and overwhelming. Information overload can be prevented by building in meetings for some informal conversation. There's no need to set a specific topic; let the employee know it's a chance to ask questions

and get to know people on a personal level. Meetings such as these are excellent for building rapport and helping hires adjust to their new work environment.



Give feedback in 1:1 sessions

Organize one-on-one meetings to check in and reflect on wins from the previous week. This can be made as informal or formal as desired. In your discussion, highlight the things they have done well so far and offer some constructive criticism on how they might improve. If holding

the sessions at the start of the week, consider raising any urgent tasks. As much as giving feedback is necessary, also ensure there's space for the employee to discuss their concerns with you.

Karat makes technical interviewing predictive, fair, and enjoyable

That's the basics of everything you need to know to ensure you are able to hire qualified, talented software engineers, from the job opening through to onboarding day. If after reading this you feel your team could improve its technical interviews, consider leaning on experts like Karat.

“We’ve been blown away that we’re getting so much more information about our candidates [from Karat], in such a standardized way, so much faster than we did on our own.”

Dan Winn, CTO, Deliveroo



At Karat, we have conducted 300,000+ technical interviews on behalf of leading organizations to help them hire qualified candidates faster. Companies like Walmart, Roblox, American Express, and Atlassian trust Karat to unlock developer time, raise engineering quality, and drive consistency at a global scale so that they can innovate and win.

But we wouldn't be a partner if we didn't help you improve. We can deliver training to your team to help you follow the best practices we discussed, including unbiased screening, flexible interviews, redo interviews, and more.

To see how Karat can help you transform your hiring process, request a demo today.

[Request a demo](#)