



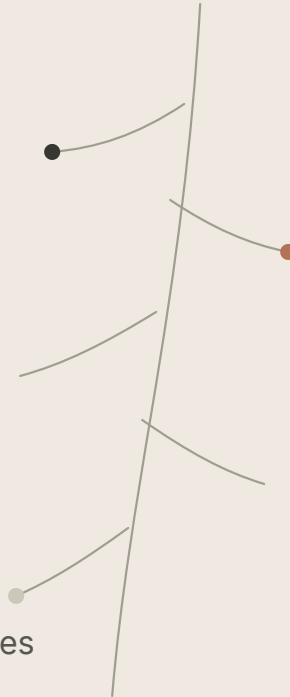
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FOR FOUNDERS

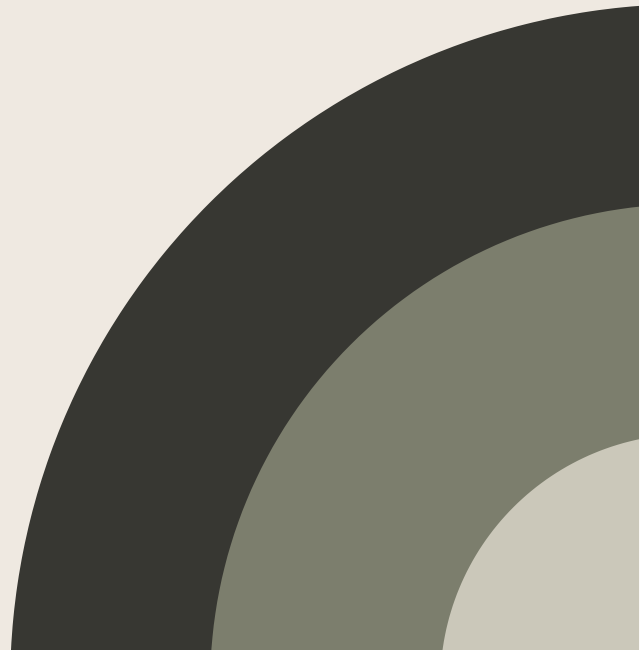
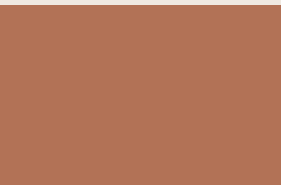
Five Hiring Myths That Break Early- Stage Companies

What founders learn when building the team becomes
as difficult as building the technology.



Developed by Terra Talent, April 2023.

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Every one of these sounds obviously right.

That is what makes them expensive.

01

Myth: my job is to build the product

THE TRUTH

Your job is to build the company that builds the product.

The company has two jobs: build something that wins, and win customers who then succeed because of it.

A founder can personally carry an extraordinary amount of the technical work at the beginning. The problem is that success eventually makes that model impossible.

The transition is from being a builder of technical systems to being a builder of people systems.

That is difficult precisely because the first skill got you here and the second is unfamiliar.

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

- ☐ Write down the capabilities the company must have twelve months from now.
- ☐ Separate the work that genuinely needs a founder from the work that needs a great owner.
- ☐ Treat recruiting time as part of the founder job, not as time stolen from it.
- ☐ Judge an early hire by what they allow the company to become capable of, not simply by how much work they remove from your plate.

Myth: we should recruit when a role becomes urgent

THE TRUTH

If an important role becomes
urgent before the search starts,
you are probably already late.

Sourcing and securing an exceptional hire can take months when the process is run properly.

Then the person needs time to leave their existing role, join and reach full contribution.

If you wait until the missing capability is painful, the company may be carrying the gap for far longer than expected.

Work backwards from when you need the capability, not from when the empty seat becomes uncomfortable.

Reactive recruiting asks:

Who can we hire quickly?

Deliberate team building asks:

What must the company be capable of by this date, and when does the search need to start for that to be realistic?

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

- ☐ Put capability dates beside company milestones.
- ☐ Work backwards through search time, candidate notice period and ramp time.
- ☐ Start mapping important talent markets before a requisition opens.
- ☐ Keep relationships warm with people you may need later.
- ☐ Distinguish “we need this person now” from “we should have started this search three months ago”.

03

Myth: the deepest domain expert is always the strongest hire

THE TRUTH

First-of-a-kind companies often need people willing and able to challenge the existing playbook.

Deep expertise is valuable and sometimes essential.

But a team assembled purely around established domain pedigree can reproduce assumptions that were created for a different problem.

That matters when the entire premise of the company is that the existing approach is incomplete.

People from adjacent industries can bring useful constraints, mental models and ways of solving problems that the direct market takes for granted.

The goal is not disagreement for its own sake.

It is a team capable of productive disagreement, first-principles reasoning and changing course when the evidence changes.

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

- ☐ Define which parts of the role genuinely require direct domain depth.
- ☐ Separate those from capabilities that can be imported from adjacent industries.
- ☐ Ask candidates for examples of changing their mind when the evidence changed.
- ☐ Test how they reason when precedent is weak.
- ☐ Build a team with enough shared language to work together and enough difference in experience to challenge the obvious answer.

04

Myth: a good hire is better than an empty seat

THE TRUTH

Some roles are important enough that the wrong good person is more expensive than waiting.

For many roles, filling the seat quickly is the correct decision.

But a small number of hires set direction, standard and culture for everyone who follows.

In those roles, “good” can be expensive if the company starts designing itself around the wrong person.

What you are looking for is not a particular pedigree.

It is repeated evidence of exceptional performance, learning velocity or problem-solving in the contexts the person has actually had access to.

That deliberately leaves room for unconventional backgrounds.

The signal is what somebody has done with their opportunities, not whether their CV resembles the people already in the room.

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

- ☐ Identify the small number of roles where the bar genuinely needs to be exceptional.
- ☐ Define the evidence required before candidates appear.
- ☐ Do not convert urgency into a lower standard without saying so explicitly.
- ☐ Challenge pedigree when it is acting as a proxy for capability.
- ☐ Keep the seat open when the available evidence is not strong enough.

05

Myth: extraordinary
individuals
automatically create an
extraordinary company

THE TRUTH

Talent without alignment
produces exceptional people
pulling in different directions.

If hiring exceptional people were sufficient, exceptional companies would be much easier to build.

The harder problem is turning strong individual judgment into coordinated company judgment.

That requires more than values written on a wall.

It requires a shared mission, clear decision rights, honest communication, recognition of the behaviours the company actually wants, and enough organisational rhythm that people understand what matters now.

Every founding team has its own essence.

The task is not merely to collect impressive people. It is to build a group whose strengths compound rather than cancel each other out.

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

- ☐ Make the mission specific enough to guide decisions.
- ☐ State the few operating principles that genuinely matter.
- ☐ Be clear about who owns which decisions.
- ☐ Build communication rhythms before context depends entirely on proximity to the founder.
- ☐ Hire for complementary strengths as well as individual excellence.
- ☐ Reward the behaviours that make the whole team better, not only individual heroics.

KEY PRINCIPLE

The through-line

All five myths share the same root: treating hiring as a task that supports the real work, rather than as one of the things that determines whether the real work is possible.



Building a team for
something that has not been
built before?

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Developed by Terra Talent, April 2023.



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