Demystifying Tech Talent: Top Takeaways

As Canada's tech sector continues to grow the issue of how to attract and retain top talent becomes more pressing. To begin carving out new answers to this question we debunk the idea that finding and keeping the right talent requires a secret recipe. This brief document looks at how to demystify the process of acquiring and keeping tech talent by highlighting what Canada's leading tech employers in Toronto and Waterloo are saying about their own journeys towards finding, retaining and developing tech talent.

WHAT SKILLS ARE TECH SCALE-UPS LOOKING FOR?

+ These are common skill areas that technology companies end up recruiting for:

  — Software Development
  — Data Science
  — Artificial Intelligence
  — Sales + Marketing

  — Product Management
  — User Experience
  — Technology Business Management

+ Candidates that possess a balance between strong technical and soft skills represent ideal hires for tech companies in Toronto and Waterloo. They are in very high demand.

+ A 'growth mindset' continues to be cited as one of the most valuable and essential aptitudes an employee can bring to a company.

> "The people we have are constantly reskilling. We present the problem because of where the market is headed, and they're teaching themselves new technologies [to solve it]." - HR Lead at a Scale-up Company

HOW ARE JOB-SEEKERS ENTERING TECH SCALE-UPS?

+ The most common way into a technology company is by recruiting through employee referrals and recent graduates, which creates limitations in reaching new talent.

> "An employer referral program is a good way to find talent but can reinforce hiring trends of finding people that are too like-minded. This can harm goals of meeting diversity and inclusion goals. We are trying to rethink our program to better meet these goals". - Vidyard

While promising, current models of rapid retraining for tech workers are not aligned with industry needs. As tech companies scale, they recognize there is an opportunity to look into other sources of experienced talent in adjacent industries.

> "We look for people with relevant experience for our size of business not necessarily our industry. In sales for example, this can mean having sold deals of our size before. Even though the products are not necessarily similar, you understand the deal flow and how the decisions are made by clients. You are also more process-driven and can help build these processes as we scale." - Fiix

HOW ARE EMPLOYEES ADVANCING IN THEIR CAREERS AT TECH SCALE-UPS?

+ Technology companies encourage horizontal movement of employees within a company more so than vertical growth. There is some professional development infrastructure such as performance reviews, onboarding and leadership training in place to support employee growth in this respect, however much of it is either ad hoc or externally sourced.

> "We think about development much more broadly than formal training courses and most of our learning happens on the job. If there is a business case for external training that is relevant we find a way to accommodate it, but internally there are countless opportunities to work on new things with experts who are the best in their field". Thalmic Labs

+ Many tech scale-ups rely on mentorship programs that pair senior-level employees with new hires to get them up to speed.

THIS SUMMARY DRAWS ON **OVER** OVER 70+ TECHNOLOGY SCALE-UPS IN THE TORONTO AND WATERLOO REGION, THIS SUMMARY PRESENTS THE MOST IMPORTANT AND FINDINGS IN THE *UNDERSTANDING THE TALENT GAP: LESSONS + OPPORTUNITY FOR CANADA* AND *BREAKING INTO TECH REPORTS*.