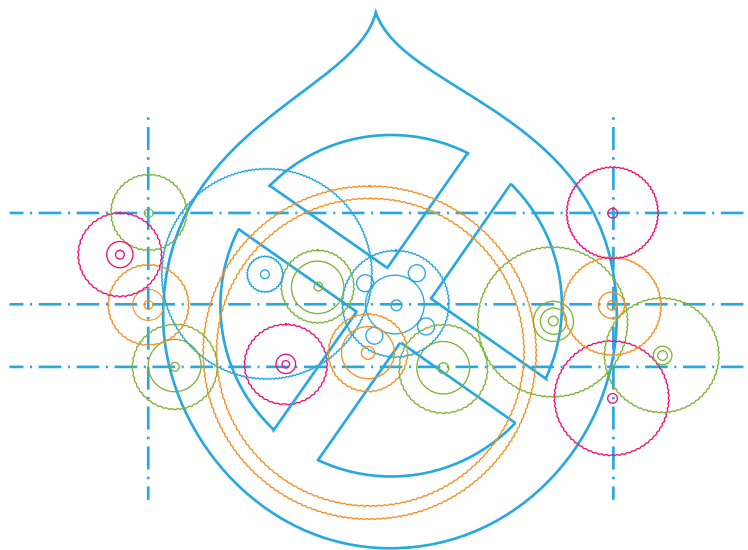


Building a Great Drupal Team

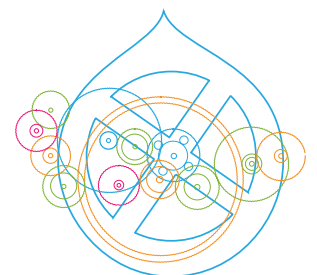


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TECHNICAL HIRING GUIDE

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Introduction

The web has seen rapid growth over the last 15 years. In addition, specialization of roles and job definitions has increased over the last five years. Meanwhile, these shifts and changes make assembling a great technical team especially difficult. Employers in the field of web development are competing to attract the brightest talents.

Hiring in all fields of **technology is a major challenge**, and the Drupal community is no different. It's definitely a job seeker's market.

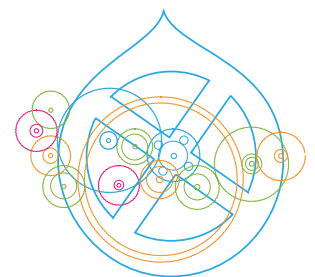
You are probably hiring and growing your Drupal team if you are

- An experienced digital agency but adopting Drupal for the first time
- Bringing Drupal development in-house for the first time
- Looking to leave freelancing behind and run your own Drupal company

To create a great digital experience with Drupal, you need a great Drupal team. In this ebook, we share our recommendations for building your great Drupal team.



Heather James has worked with Acquia for several years, creating learning content. She earned her Masters of Science focusing on learning and technology to support learning. She works with partners as well as the Learning Services team in delivering the training program across the globe.



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Step 1: Define Roles and Skills

When assembling a great team, you must think about the composition of the team: roles, job titles, and the specific skills you need to complete a Drupal project.

The positions you need to hire will depend on your existing team members' skills and the limitations of the training needs you can meet. Consider the following questions:

- What is the complexity of the projects?
- Are you client-facing or working on internal projects?
- What existing team members and skills are in place now?

Typical Implementation Teams

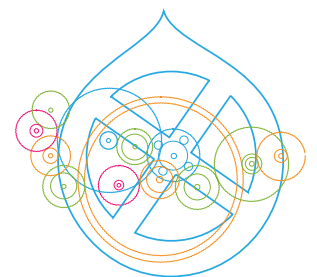
The varying features and functionality of Drupal projects dictate team composition and size. The difference between small and large teams is more than a matter of numbers. To understand what type of team you need, you need to understand the composition of each.

Small Teams: Where Everybody Knows Your Name

Small teams are appropriate for straightforward development projects involving a single site, limited custom development, and little or no systems integration. On a small team, every member of the team is aware of all aspects of the project, and roles might be blurred. Communication and coordination is relatively easy as a result.

A small implementation team consists of two to five people. Roles on a small team may include:

- Technical Lead (required)
- Project Manager (required)
- Junior Developer
- Themmer
- Quality Assurance Specialist



Large Teams: Scale to Meet Complexity

Project teams grow in size to accommodate more complex projects. Large teams are equipped to handle complex custom development projects involving one or more codebases.

Large teams often have more than one person filling a role and a hierarchy of responsibility. Roles on a large team may include:

Project Management Team

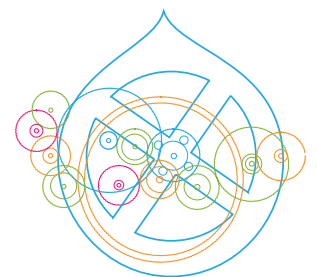
- Engagement Manager
- Project Manager
- Quality Assurance Specialist

Technical Team

- Technical Architect
- Technical Lead
- Senior Developer/Developer
- Junior Developer
- Themer



“Character sheet” by Jason Ernst (CC BY-ND 2.0)



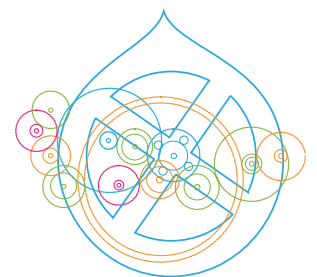
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Drupal Roles

If you've never built a Drupal team before, familiarize yourself with the following typical roles.

- **Project Manager.** The role of project manager is to deliver projects on time and in budget. They manage project timelines, delegate tasks, and track project resources. They need excellent communication skills and should be highly organized. We strongly recommend knowledge of Agile methodology and one or more project management software packages. Our [Drupal for Project Managers course](#) covers the project lifecycle from discovery to maintenance.
- **Visual Designer.** The role of visual designers is to create the look and feel of your site. On larger teams, designers don't necessarily touch Drupal. However, if they understand "The Drupal Way," they will be able to create more efficient designs that are easier to implement. Designers can achieve the level of Drupal knowledge they need in a [Drupal in a Day course](#).
- **Site Builder.** Multiple people might be completing the site building tasks on any given project. Site building is the most essential requirement for all Drupal development roles. Team members responsible for development should know the configuration of the most popular modules; content types and views; roles and permissions; navigation, menus, taxonomy; and actions and workflows. They should be able to compare the best approaches in any given situation. The learning objectives in our [Drupal Site Building course](#) provide an outline of the skills required. In areas where multiple languages are required, site builders should also have a good grasp of [multilingual Drupal development](#).
- **Front-end Developers.** The task of the front-end developers is to take the visual designer's work and turn it into a webpage or interface. They program interaction with JavaScript and/or a library, such as jQuery, YUI, or Prototype. They test cross-browser, cross-platform, and/or cross-device compatibility for inconsistencies.
- **Themer.** Themers are front-end developers with specialist knowledge of the Drupal theme layer. They create sub-themes on common base themes and can create custom themes. This might not be a distinct role on many teams. Instead, a developer on the team might have this expertise. This role requires knowing how to code Drupal themes and how to configure Drupal layouts. Our courses [Drupal 7 Layout and Theming](#) and [Drupal 7 Panels](#) cover the essential skills for front-end developers to become competent themers.
- **Back-end Developers.** The task of back-end developers is to modify existing code and write new custom code to power the functionality of a Drupal site. Junior developers should be able to handle small changes in markup output. Integrations or new functionality in custom modules require the skills of senior developers. We teach the essentials of [module development](#), but senior developers learn the nuances of best practices with mentoring and experience.
- **Technical Leads and Architects.** Technical leads and architects are back-end developers with broad Drupal experience. They understand how to analyze and set requirements. They establish the high-level development strategy through module selection and configuration. They focus on site-wide concerns such as integration, scalability, performance, and security.

However, even these highly experienced experts can't be expected to know everything there is to know about Drupal.



→ **Specialist Roles.** These roles might include user experience specialists, quality assurance specialists, applications testers, accessibility compliance specialists, and other roles specific to your project. Not all the roles on your team need to know Drupal inside and out. Arguably, some of the roles, such as quality assurance, don't need to know Drupal at all, although a base level of understanding through a free three-hour **"Hello Drupal" course** would improve internal communication.

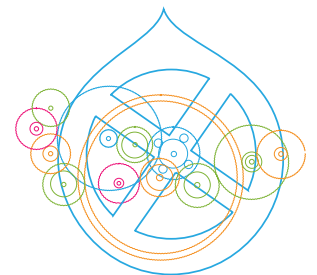
Create Your Skill Matrix

A skill matrix will help you plan a team based on the technical skills that your project requires. Following are two skill matrix templates for you to use. One is Drupal-specific; the other is related to the underlying technologies for Drupal development. Your matrix might include JSON for exchanging data on a specific project; or you might need someone who knows .NET in addition to PHP to write integrations with existing systems.

Drupal-specific Skills

The following table shows the Drupal-specific skills for the Beginner 1, Intermediate 2, Advanced 3, and Expert 4 developer.

Key	Project Manager	Visual Designer	Junior Developer	Developer (Front End)	Developer (Back End)	Senior Developer/ Technical Lead	Technical Architect
Beginner 1							
Intermediate 2							
Advanced 3							
Expert 4							
Drupal Community Involvement	1	1	2	3	3	4	4
Content Modeling and Site Building	0	1	3	3	3	4	4
Theming	0	2	2	2	2	3	3
Architecture and Planning	0	0	1	1	2	3	4
Custom Module Development	0	0	0	1	2	3	4
Performance and Security	0	0	1	1	2	3	4



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Web Development Skills Not Specific to Drupal

The Drupal community maintains a list of transferable skills that would be useful in assessing potential candidates.

→ [Front-end web developer skills](#)

→ [Back-end web developer skills](#)

The following table provides a rough idea of the typical skill levels of each job title—of course keep in mind that the roles in web development are constantly changing.

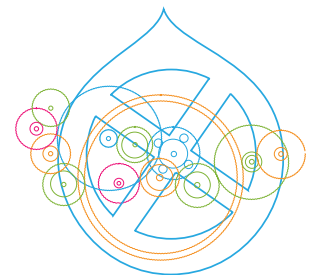
	Project Manager	Visual Designer	Junior Developer	Developer (Front End)	Developer (Back End)	Senior Developer/ Technical Lead	Technical Architect
PHP	0	1	2	2	3	3	4
HTML	1	4	3	4	4	4	4
CSS	0	4	2	4	2	2	2
JavaScript	0	2	2	3	2	2	2
Version control	1	0	1	2	2	3	4
MySQL	0	0	0	2	3	3	4
Infrastructure**	0	0	0	0	1	3	4

** Infrastructure includes server configuration, such as Apache, Nginx, and multi-server environments; and cache tools, such as Varnish and Memcache.

Mentoring and Team Development

As you can see, there isn't a clear cut "dream team" for Drupal.

The skills matrix can help you nurture junior developers to become the senior developers on your teams. Involve your colleagues and employees in creating their own skills matrix and identify areas they would like to improve.



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Step 2: Define Your Requirements

Now that you have a good idea of the ideal skills required for key positions on your team, you can define your requirements, which is the next step in preparing your job description. This is where you clarify what are absolute “must have” skills or experience versus merely “desirable.”

Building a Drupal Dream Team—Case Study

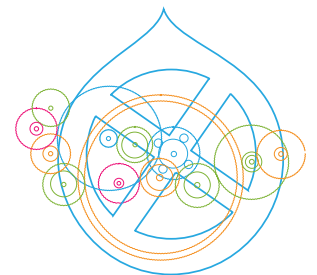
Will Huggins, founder of [Zoocha](#), has spent four years trying to find out the formula for a Drupal Dream Team. He said, “One person can’t know everything they need to know. For example, the chances of any average developer having JavaScript expertise is pretty rare.” Will described the roles that are cornerstones of a successful Drupal team, each with their own specialty.

- **A Drupal configuration expert.** “This person doesn’t need massive amounts of coding experience, but they do need to be comfortable using all the tools available with Drupal.”
- **A senior developer, who acts more like a solutions architect.** “They are involved in planning. They research possible solutions and play around. When they provide demos to the client, they discover those little ‘hidden requirements’ the client didn’t mention.”
- **Drupal theming.** “This can be split into three tiers. Someone who is comfortable with manipulation of popular base or starter themes; someone who can manage custom theming; and someone who is a pure front-end expert.”

Training is an important component of professional development at Zoocha. To develop skills in working with Agile methods, Zoocha brought in a professional scrum trainer who trained Zoocha and a client together. In this way, they learned not only Agile methodology, but also how to work with a client using Agile methods.

How does Zoocha plan on managing the conversion over to Drupal 8? Will said, “Our current site was built on Wordpress in 2009,” typical of the cobbler’s shoes problem of course, “We’re relaunching the site in Drupal 8; this is a complete refresh.” Overall the move to Agile project management has helped Zoocha become more efficient and free up capacity so its team can afford to play and learn together.

Getting access to information like this is difficult for agencies that are just starting out in Drupal. With the [Partner Program](#), Acquia helps guide teams to best practices and processes that will make projects more successful.



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Are You Scaring People Away?



Unicorn—Full Speed, by Rob Boudon (CC BY-ND 2.0)

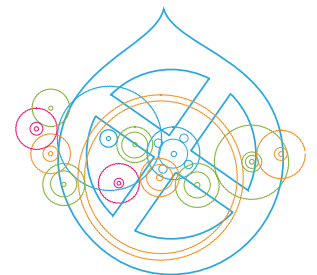
As in the case of Zoocha, you're not going to find a unicorn that fits all your needs, and yet employers still post the most unlikely job descriptions. Adding more skills, qualifications, and specifications doesn't widen your potential pool of applicants—just the opposite.

The most qualified candidates might be actually put off by too many requirements. Jesse Beach, front-end developer at Acquia, found a job posting recently that listed requirements including “expert level skills in HTML/CSS, PHP, Drupal, and JavaScript”; and “expert on Apache, Linux, MySQL, Varnish, Memcache, NGINX, etc.” Jesse is one of the most active contributors to Drupal, is very knowledgeable and experienced, and even she was put off.



Such “puffed up” job descriptions can affect the diversity of your applicants pool. A respondent to Jesse’s tweet, Buffy Miller [@buffym](#), pointed out that Hewlett-Packard found that “women only apply for jobs for which they feel they are a 100% match; men do so even when they meet no more than 60% of the requirements.” (“[The feminist mystique; What must change for women to make it to the top](#)”, [Economist, March 2013](#)).

It’s important to have a realistic requirement of years of experience and specify what elements are the truly expert skills or experience you require.



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Correlate Years of Experience to Job Titles

When reviewing recent job descriptions posted on the [official Drupal job listing](#), the level of “rank” seems to correlate to the number of years of required work experience.

- Senior Drupal engineer or team lead equals about five to seven years minimum web programming experience; two to five years of Drupal.
- Drupal developer equals about three years PHP development; two to three Drupal.
- Junior level equals about one to two years experience.

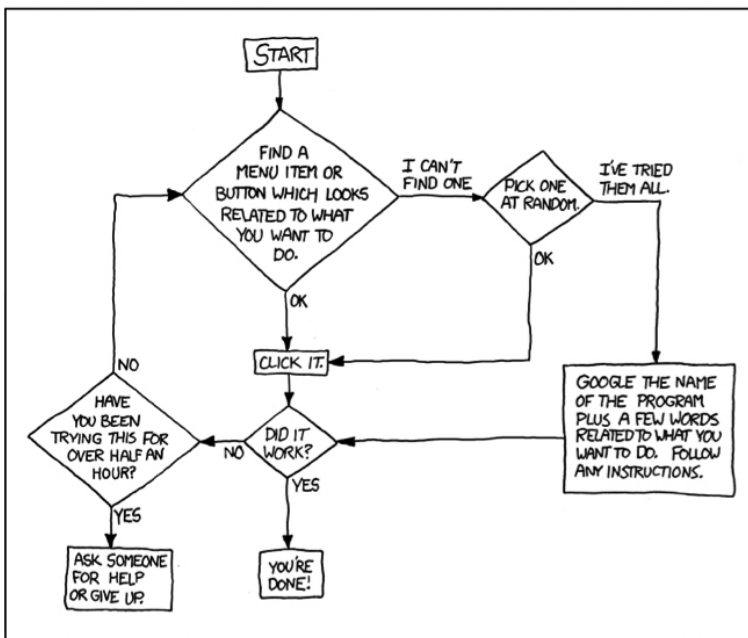
Be realistic. If you are filling a mid-level paid position and you’re asking for seven years of experience, you have to accept that your responses will be low.

What Expertise Do You Need?

As you prepare your requirements, be careful using phrases such as “Requires expert knowledge of...” Often, employers specify they want “expert familiarity” and “expert knowledge,” which are vague concepts in any knowledge domain. It’s worse with web technology where knowledge and familiarity can be wiped out with a new version of software or a new specification.

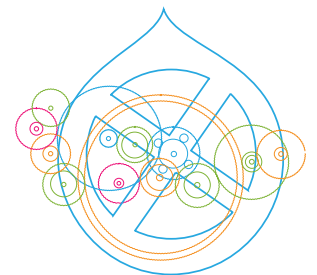
DEAR VARIOUS PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS, CO-WORKERS,
AND OTHER “NOT COMPUTER PEOPLE.”

WE DON’T MAGICALLY KNOW HOW TO DO EVERYTHING IN EVERY
PROGRAM. WHEN WE HELP YOU, WE’RE USUALLY JUST DOING THIS:



PLEASE PRINT THIS FLOWCHART OUT AND TAPE IT NEAR YOUR SCREEN.
CONGRATULATIONS; YOU’RE NOW THE LOCAL COMPUTER EXPERT!

XKCD’s “[Tech support cheat sheet](#)” (CC BY-NC 2.5)



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XKCD's diagram has some truth to it! Expertise is more likely the ability to learn and adapt, which is demonstrable by flexibility to learn something new, ask questions, take risks, and play.

Define your requirements using words that specify what skills you're expecting to see demonstrated on the job. **Bloom's taxonomy** defines measurable learning objectives and is a useful tool for defining your skills requirements. Try using the following verbs to clarify the kinds of tasks you expect your prospective employee to be able to undertake in their role:

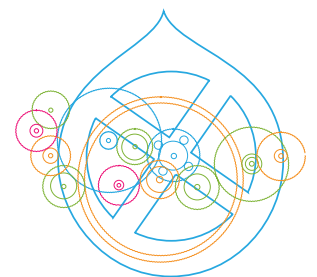
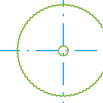
- Develop
- Construct
- Produce
- Interpret
- Analyze
- Evaluate

As you define your requirements, be clear on what is a “must have” versus merely “desirable.” Our partner, PreviousNext, does an excellent job of this. In one of its [recent job postings](#), the word “expert” doesn't appear even once.

Here are the example headings:

- **Responsibilities include.** This identifies the day-to-day tasks that the role carries out. Although these are the job requirements, it leaves the possibility that individuals could be trained for certain tasks.
- **Candidates will need to demonstrate.** This outlines the previous experience that PreviousNext expects to find in the qualified candidates.
- **Desirable.** This outlines capabilities or experience that would set apart a candidate from other applicants.

With this approach, PreviousNext widens its net and increases the chances of finding someone who matches the most important requirements. It also helps applicants understand how they can set themselves apart from the rest with outstanding and desirable skills or experience.



Step 3: Widen Your Net with Your Job Listing

Until now, we've focused on the research and preparation of defining the skills and experience you require for a position. Now you can start to put together your job listing.

Tips for Writing Job Descriptions and Job Listings

Eric Gaffen, Global Manager of Talent Acquisition at Acquia, constantly gets requests for new hires from the Acquia leadership. The job listings on our [open positions careers page](#) have a lot of variety.

Eric offers managers some guidelines on writing job listings:

1. Start with the “30-second elevator pitch.” Why this job and our company is great.
2. Define the roles and responsibilities.
3. List the must-have skills.

What skills should you list? A games start-up company recently received [backlash](#) for posting a job listing that was deemed as “[insulting](#)” due to the laundry list of qualifications and skills they require for apparently low pay.

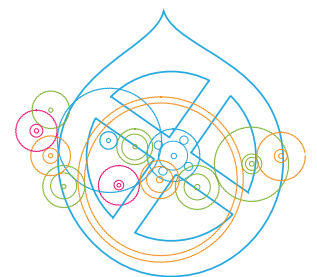
“We are quite literally looking for a person that can do four jobs: Web Development, Software Development, Sys Admin, and the (dreaded) GENERAL IT for us here...”

You should avoid that kind of situation. Writing more in your job listing doesn't increase your chances of finding a good match, it decreases it. Put away the laundry list and focus on what is important.

What Qualifications Do You Really Need?

While it's a common inclusion in job descriptions, a Computer Science degree doesn't necessarily indicate understanding of practical web development skills. Even asking for a “related degree” can limit your options. Many of the senior and most experienced people in web development are self-taught. At Acquia, we have people on staff who were formerly artists, dancers, and physicists. That kind of creative diversity can be a positive.

Programming as a discipline is valuable, prior experience for senior levels on the team, and knowledge of the software development lifecycle is very useful. However, you should be aware that very little from other languages or frameworks in Python, Java, or .NET really applies to Drupal, and experience with a custom PHP application does not mean that someone can develop in Drupal. In fact, our partners and clients have found the most egregious errors from some of the most talented programmers.



Although many job descriptions require Computer Science degrees and formal programming qualifications, listing those qualifications isn't necessarily going to help you attract the right candidate.

Transferable Skills

Some skills are transferable, and you should look out for them. Drupal is written in widely used languages—PHP, MySQL, JavaScript, HTML, and CSS. Developing in Drupal requires the same skills and toolchain that any other framework or CMS requires for development and maintenance. You might very well be able to build a crack team of Drupalists by finding people who are experienced with other frameworks and CMSs, then training or mentoring them in Drupal development. The Drupal community maintains a list of transferable skills that is useful when assessing potential candidates.

- [Front-end web developer skills](#)
- [Back-end web developer skills](#)

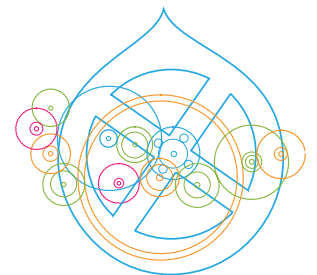
For example, a front-end developer who is experienced in cross-browser testing or user testing will be able to apply that knowledge even if not experienced in Drupal. Knowledge of HTML, CSS, JavaScript, and so on will be applicable even if the developer is new to Drupal.

You could use these skill inventories in your job description, as our partner Annertech did in its [job listing](#).

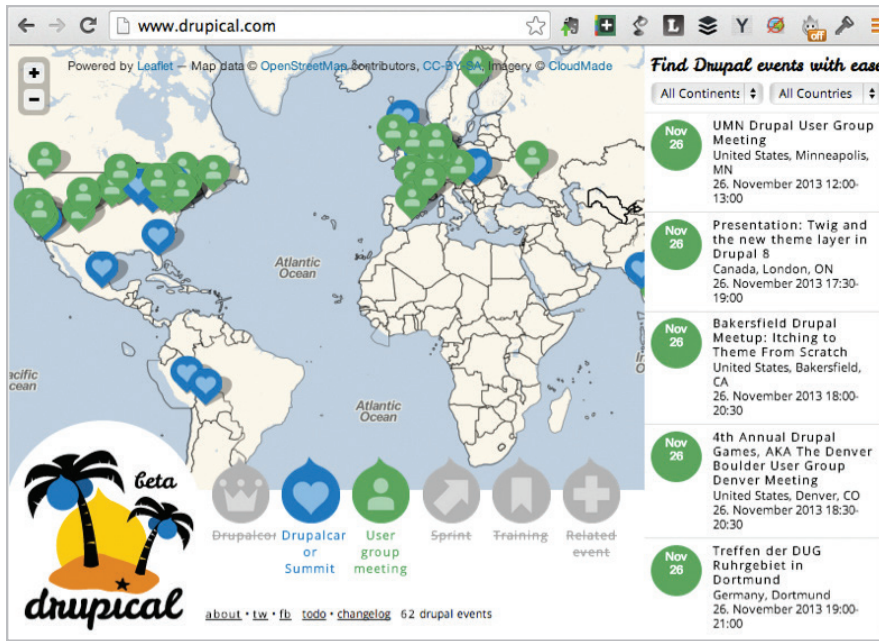
Stand Out by Talking about Your Work

Finding someone who matches your culture is really important. Some of our established clients and partners have strict dress requirements and conservative cultures; yet others are just starting up and creating a diversified environment. However, by attracting more diverse candidates you increase your chances of finding great talent and colleagues who bring a different perspective to projects.

To really stand out, write and speak about your current work; this helps potential candidates see what kinds of projects they'll be able to work on. For example, proposing a case study presentation at a local DrupalCamp would be a great way to raise your profile and communicate what it's like to work with you. You can find an up-to-date listing of DrupalCamps and meet-ups at [Drupical.com](#).



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You can transmit your culture through your job description and on your careers page. Be careful to consider people's different backgrounds in your job descriptions. If you want to be more inclusive, transmit your company culture in a way that is open to people with different backgrounds. Although some applicants might think it's cool that you have "free beer flowing on tap," others might find this excludes them and be put off from applying to your company.

Consider what elements of your culture are most important. You might get increased responses from saying you have flexible work hours; emphasize the elements of your company which will attract the right kind of candidate. Square, Inc. includes videos of staff interviews on its [careers page](#) that emphasize a sense of purpose behind what they do. On their careers page, Rapid7 makes a point of simply saying "[We're not for everybody.](#)"

Just a warning: Don't include the words killer, ninja, or rockstar. We've been able to transmit our sense of fun and our culture by listing "No limitations on hairstyles" and "Casual office and dress" as benefits on our [open positions page](#) to help potential employees know a bit more about what it's like working for Acquia.

Casting the Net Wider

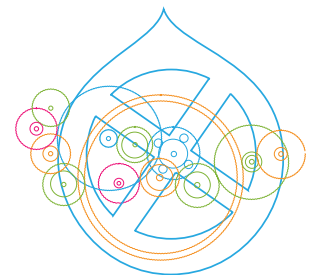
Be sensitive to other people's backgrounds in your job descriptions and in how you portray your company. Open the opportunities for people who have had less formal education in programming; you'll open the way for a more diverse team.

Although talking with young adults about job opportunities long before their working age might seem strange, these may well be the people you'll want to hire in a few years. You might find an article about [inspiring Drupal internship programs](#) useful. Here at Acquia, we work with our partners to help them arrange programs, and we provide learning materials for use. Please contact us if you're setting up an internship program; we can help.



BENEFITS

- Stock ownership by every employee
- Health & Dental Benefits
- 401K plan
- "Take it as you need it" Vacation policy
- Casual office and dress
- No limitations on hair style



Step 4: Get Your Job Postings Noticed

Once you have created the perfect job posting, you have to get it noticed. How do you drive traffic to your posting?

Listing Your Job in the Community

You might already be thinking of the obvious places to post your job—on job search networks, LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, and so on. However, the Drupal community provides some opportunities as well. There is a great [guide on Drupal.org](#), suggesting where you can advertise your jobs.

Drupal Jobs

This is one of the most active job listings for Drupal sit contains a mix of full time positions, free lance contrac tasks.

To post a job, you must first join the groups in which y groups do not allow job posts, so make sure you read t posts your jobs to the [Drupal Jobs group](#).

[Add job](#)

Organic groups
Boston

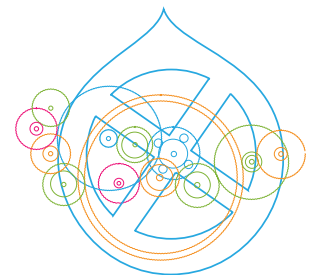
Employment type **Telecommute**
✓ <Any> <Any> [Apply](#)

Group	Position
ieCrowd	Web Developer Position
Friday Media Group	Drupal Developer
Stoode	Drupal Programmer in Peru

<http://groups.drupal.org/jobs>

The first place to start is by posting your jobs to Drupal's community website job listing at [Groups.Drupal.org/jobs](#). For your job to appear on the official job listing, it must be posted within a group. It's likely you have a local or regional group available ([search here](#)), although you can add your job to the [Jobs group](#) if you can't find a relevant group. (Note: You'll need an account to be able to login and see the "create a job" link.)

Some regional groups also provide a listing, such as the [Jobs available in the UK group](#). Other groups invite individuals and companies to list their availability for work, such as in the [Ireland Drupal Developers available for hire](#) group.



But be careful. Don't post jobs to groups that don't want job listings! Often working groups don't like job postings, whereas regional ones will invite job postings. Be a good community member and follow the guidelines for each group.

Community Websites

Popular Drupal community websites, podcasts, and services also offer “Place your job ad here” options. For example, the popular newsletter “The Weekly Drop” has a circulation of over 3300 subscribers. You can get a placement there for only \$40 USD. Check out the [archive](#) of this useful newsletter, and [sign up to post your job](#).

Sponsoring to Raise Your Profile

You can get your company listed on the [Marketplace on Drupal.org](#), which has a [set of guidelines](#) to follow—there isn't a direct cost associated with this listing. After you get your organization listed on Drupal.org, ensure that your employees link back to your organization in their profiles. The high volume of the listings means your profile might not be discovered. You need do a bit more to get noticed.

Sponsoring your local and regional DrupalCamps would likely make the biggest impact for hiring. Sponsorship helps people become familiar with your company. Some camps offer sponsors speaking spots; other camps offer job fairs where those hiring and those seeking work can connect. You can find a list of events for the year at [Drupical](#).

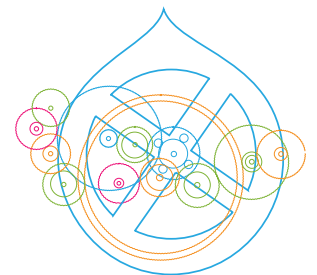
If you haven't already, join the Drupal Association as an organizational member! That costs \$200 USD. This gets your company listed in the [member directory](#).

Earning Trust in the Community

Michael Brown, Senior Technical Recruiter at Acquia is responsible for all US, APAC, and EMEA technical recruiting. In addition to reviewing all candidates, he also directly sources candidates. He does extensive online review of someone before contacting them, so it's clear that robust online profiles will make a significant impact. “My goal is to get to know them before we talk with them.”

Acquia grew fast, and we learned the hard way about establishing and maintaining trust with candidates. We had a very small human resources team with no specialization in recruitment. Résumés and CVs came in and were funneled right to the hiring managers on extremely busy teams. Candidates were understandably upset when they didn't hear back from us.

Now things are different. Michael keeps in direct contact with candidates throughout the process, “I like to keep the connection alive.” Acquia has an internal service level agreement (SLA) in place to respond in 72 hours, “We then encourage the referrer to keep in touch with the candidate,” Michael says. Recently, he was able to place a candidate in a professional services role in about eight days, but sometimes the process takes longer, even up to six months.



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That kind of attention to detail isn't always possible, so an alternative is to use a recruitment agency. The quality of the agency lies directly in the recruiters and their contacts. Good recruiters keep those relationships after they have placed someone in a position. If that person becomes a hiring manager themselves, they will turn to the recruiter. When you're considering a recruiter, consider these two things:

- How open is that person with me?
- How much do I think they know my world?

Where Are the Job Seekers?

The Drupal community maintains a list of people who are [Available for hire](#). But considering the high demand for people in the web development field, people might get placed before they even embark on a traditional job search. Offering a job seeker's perspective, Karen Leech pointed out she gets really good response from using Twitter and her own networks. This makes referral much easier, after [28 re-tweets of a recent post](#), she had several suitable opportunities referred to her.

[Stack Overflow's Careers 2.0 hiring site](#) is a good place to find job seekers. Stack Overflow is part of [StackExchange](#) a network of open Q&A websites where the signal to noise ratio is improved through a series of tools. Good questions can be modified; good answers get "voted up" to the top; and individuals get ratings and badges based on their contributions. Stack Overflow focuses entirely on programming. There is also [a site for Drupal](#).

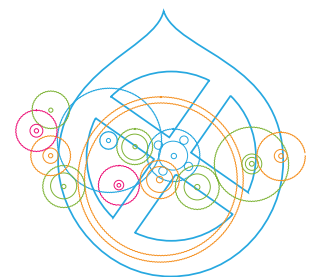
Although posting jobs or making profiles is free for participants, profiles on Careers 2.0 are by invitation only. Will Cole, Product Manager at Careers 2.0, explained the simple mechanics based on trust: "You can prequalify by having a certain score on Stack Overflow, meet certain metrics on GitHub, or be invited by someone at Stack Exchange or another programmer already in the Careers database. This is to ensure that everyone is a programmer and that companies don't have to weed through irrelevant profiles."

The Premium Candidate Search service on Careers 2.0 allows companies to look through candidate profiles, and get in touch with potential employees directly. At this point, a personal touch works best. Will Cole said, "A message that points out previous projects, answers on Stack Overflow, or comments on a previous position the candidate held, has a much higher chance of being responded to than a generic template." Will recommends that recruiters focus on information that will attract high-quality candidates.

- What is the company culture?
- Will I be working with smart people?
- Are you building something interesting?

Again, this goes back to aspects of writing your job description and job listing (See [Step 3](#)) Of course this is useful advice no matter what recruitment tool you're using.

So make sure you're posting your jobs within your own networks, and invite your employees to help recruit. One way to motivate people to make referrals for you is to offer a bonus if their referral is hired.

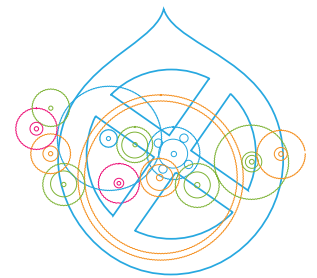
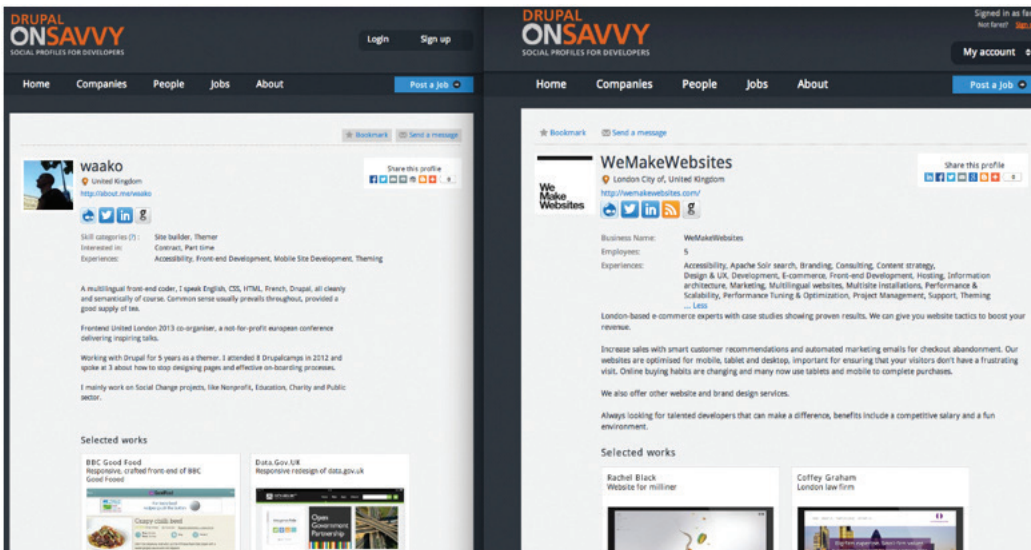


OnSavvy.com – Connecting to Freelancers

Many companies opt to use freelancers when they can't find a full-time employee to fit their needs. Nicole Mauloni (designer and developer) and Farez Rahman (developer) are freelancers who are building [OnSavvy.com](#) to help companies communicate their culture and opportunities to potential employees and contractors. The current live site has proven a valuable prototype, and trends and patterns are starting to emerge.

When asked why so many developers are choosing to stay freelance, and what companies should do to attract them into full-time employment, Nicole said that people move out of full-time paid employment when they “end up in a position of maintenance.” She said, “As a freelancer, your skills are changing and growing; there's more variety; you have access to more knowledge and opportunity.”

Nicole recommends that companies offer creative opportunities for staff such as “research and development days.” A recent client of Nicole and Farez, [WeMakeWebsites](#), designates one day a week for staff to build something. Farez said people “want to be challenged, and in an environment where you're learning and growing your career.” You should seek ways you can transmit your company culture. Nicole and Farez say more companies should develop content-rich careers sections on their sites, but few have time to devote to this; that is precisely what Nicole and Farez are going to help them with. This is a Drupal-focused service now, but they intend to extend to other technologies to widen the network.



Step 5: Evaluate Applicants

In the previous steps, we worked on itemizing skills and requirements that will be useful components in your evaluation. Most importantly, when looking for qualified candidates you need to look at the big picture. There is no single data point that is going to clearly say: Hire me!

Use a Variety of Methods

A variety of data points are available for evaluating potential hires:

- Interviews
- Code review
- Portfolio review
- Community involvement
- References

Taken individually, each method for evaluation has a weakness. Using references might be a good source of information, but it does have weak points. “It’s human nature to be nice when talking about someone else,” says Ian Shaw, engagement manager who also acts as a hiring manager here at Acquia.

Instead, employ a variety of techniques in your evaluation process. Ian says, “If you think about breadth and depth; I prefer to go with breadth... Interviews are so far removed from everyday life,” says Ian, “I’m in favor of getting as close to the real thing as possible.” Giving people practical problems to solve lets you see how they approach a problem.

Interview Techniques to Bring Out the Best in People

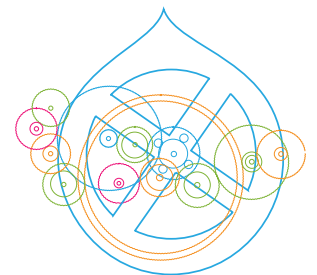
Meagen Williams, a program manager and also a hiring manager at Acquia, is responsible for vetting technical candidates. Meagen advocates taking “an inquisitive approach, rather than an inquisition.”

You could ask questions about a particular feature of a site in their portfolio and ask questions that give you insight into how they approach projects. Meagen suggests asking questions such as

- Explain to me why you made this choice as opposed to that choice.
- What were the other options?

These open-ended questions give you a chance to gain insight into their breadth of knowledge or decision-making process.

In this way, you can follow a pattern of digging deeper and deeper into a topic, without resorting to yes/no or right/wrong answers. You begin to see at what point their thinking breaks down, or they reach some technical dead end. If they are very experienced, you probably won’t find an end. This technique lowers tension in the interview.



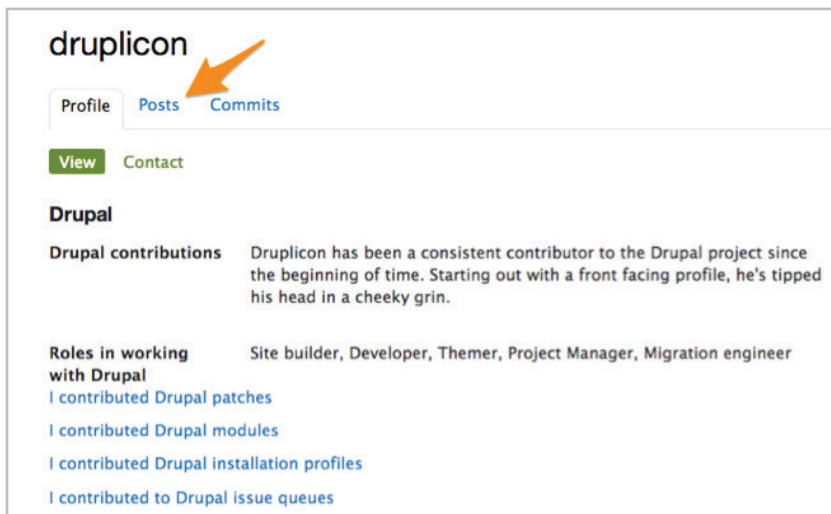
Provide Case Studies and Problems to Solve

Another approach during interviews is to prepare case studies on which to have interviewees give feedback. At Acquia, when we hire technical consultants for our Professional Services team, we use a detailed scenario-based interview. We use scenarios based on our own experiences, for example on change control, ask the candidate to “Imagine you’ve got one week left on a project,” and then introduce your problem. This helps a hiring manager see how candidates articulate themselves under pressure and how pragmatic or diplomatic they are, in addition to technical knowledge.

The more you tailor your scenarios to ones you face day to day, the easier it will be for you to evaluate responses.

Understanding Community Involvement

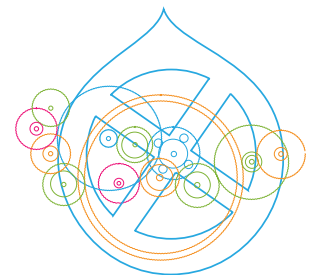
Involvement with the community and contributions are good indicators of not only passion, but also knowledge of best practices. So make sure you ask applicants to give you their Drupal.org profiles. However, don’t let that limit your choices, many great developers haven’t been able to develop their profiles.



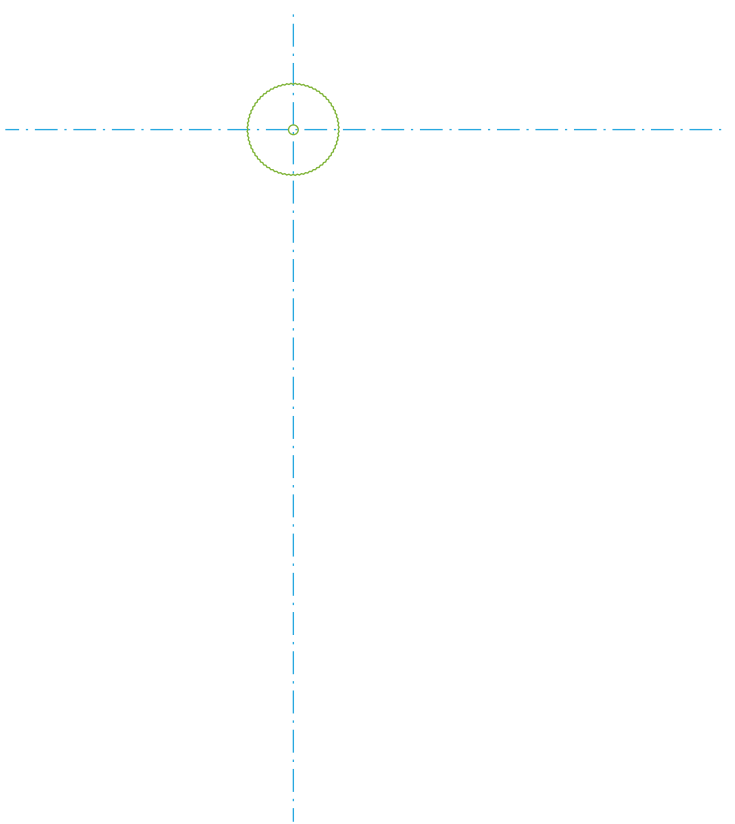
Sometimes candidates will give you their user ID, rather than a link. Profile links on Drupal.org will be structured like <http://drupal.org/user/1> (put the ID after user/).

When you review profiles for candidates, you can look at available data.

- Click the Posts tab of their profile, which shows how much interaction they’ve had on the site. You might be able to see if they posted only a few questions, or if they’ve helped others.
- Review their list of projects. If you’re hiring for a senior developer or team lead, you might be able to see some of their projects here.
- Under History, check Documentation statistics. This shows the number of edits they have contributed to documentation.
- Look at their attendance at events, are they actively participating? Ask if they were volunteering or speaking at various events.



Personal information	
Full name	Mr Druplicon
First or given name	Druplicon
My website	http://www.drupal.org
Interests	Drupal , Drupal , Drupal
Gender	male
Country	Belgium
IRC nick	druplicon
Twitter url	http://twitter.com/drupal
Work	
Job title	Mascot
Current company or organization	Drupal.org
Companies worked for	The Drupal community
History	
Member for	12 years 7 months
Documentation	Over 100 edits
Projects	
	Drupal.org (1,000,000+ commits)



Having a robust profile makes it easier to review. With that said, even at Acquia we've hired many really great people who didn't have robust Drupal.org profiles when we hired them.

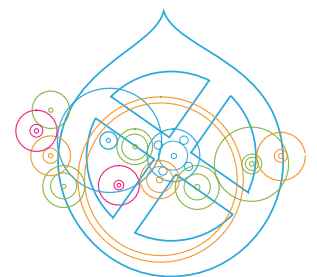
Many times, people don't have the opportunity to contribute either due to restrictions with former employers or lack of personal time. If you limit yourself to only people who have high levels of contribution, you could be excluding many great candidates. Researcher, Ashe Dryden, who focuses on diversity in the workplace, explained why we see so little diversity in open source communities, "Marginalized people in tech... have less free time for a few major reasons: dependent care, domestic work and errands, and pay inequity." ([Ethics of unpaid labor in the OSS community, 13 Nov 2013.](#))

As with most things, you want to look at the whole picture. And of course, when you do bring on new staff, give them time to develop their expertise through contribution. Overall, it will raise their profile and your organization's profile in turn. This can make finding and researching future hires much easier.

Grit Over Experience

It's understandable that you need to hire experts who have specific knowledge and experience to bring to your project, particularly if you're hiring for more senior roles. As detailed in "Step 2: Define Your Requirements," make sure you're not scaring people away with your extensive requirements.

Impostor Syndrome is rife in the field of web development. This affects very skilled people who feel that at any point they'll be "found out" as being frauds. There is simply too much to know,



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and the technology is changing constantly. It's difficult for even the most talented web developer to say with confidence "I'm an expert" in anything. It's something we also encounter at Acquia. "We look for the best of the best, and that scares people... they have some modesty," says Eric Gaffen, Global Manager of Talent Acquisition at Acquia.

Eric points out that Malcolm Gladwell's book *Outliers* posits that it would take about 10,000 hours, or 7 to 10 years, to master a skill. "When's the last time a technology lasted that long?" Eric asked.

Instead, Eric says it's worth looking at someone with two years of experience, "Consider where someone is on the continuum of becoming a great technologist", Eric says.

Eric believes the single biggest factor in success is an internal motivation and desire and drive. He looks for these qualities during the initial interviews:

- Strong drive
- Energy and enthusiasm
- Self-starter

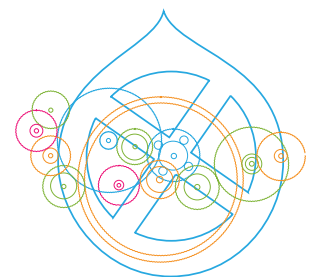
During the interview, dig for examples of when they have faced failure because they learned from that failure. Eric said, "I want to hear persistence, who isn't going to give up, and stay focused." He looks for people who are willing "to try different things and be adaptable."

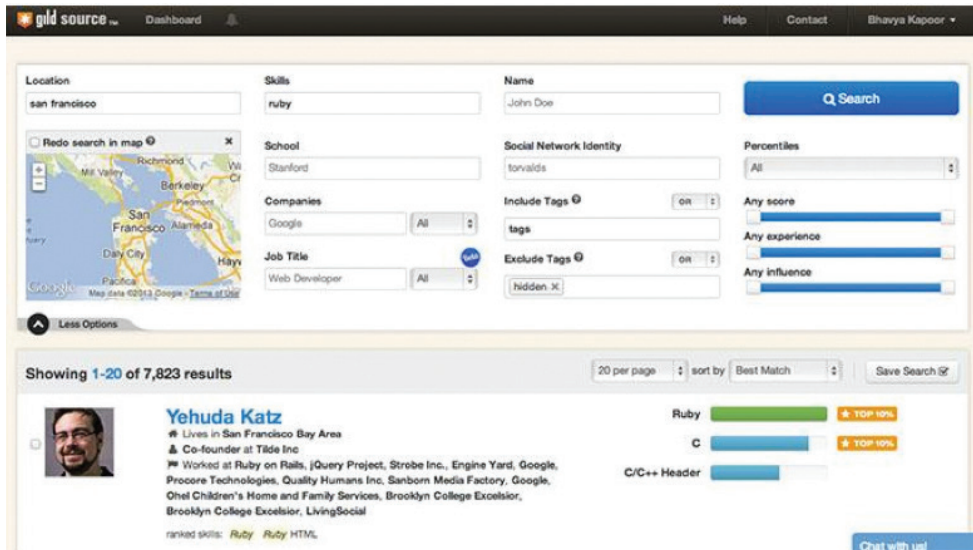
Tools for Evaluating Candidates

One method for evaluating technical skill is to do a review of existing work; for example, look at sample code. Numerous sites are available where you can review a candidate's contributions and activity, such as GitHub or social media profiles. If you don't already have someone expert on your team and have limited time, these options pose a challenge.

You could use Acquia's [Instant Insight](#) check on an applicant's site. This will give you a high-level overview and raise any obvious alarm bells.

[Gild.com](#) offers a tool that collates relevant information about a candidate's technical skills. There is a powerful search tool for subscribers to identify candidates. "The traditional markers people use for hiring can be wrong, profoundly wrong," says Vivienne Ming, the chief scientist at Gild. She thinks "that talented people are ignored, misjudged, or fall through the cracks all the time." ([NY Times, April 2013](#))





www.gild.com/2013/04/brand-new-gild-source-user-interface/

Gild is also aggregating data and helping employers “cast aside preconceived and wide-spread biases,” such as what universities people went to, and increase the chances of talented people finding their dream job. (*Gild best practices, November, 13 2013*).

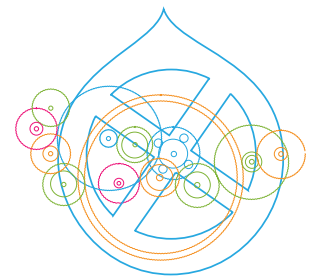
Evaluating Technical Expertise

If you do have someone technical on your team, you have a few more options for evaluation, but there are ways nontechnical hiring managers can evaluate technical expertise.

Program manager, Meagen Williams, likes to ask technical candidates questions such as ‘What does beautiful code look like?’ From this she can get a sense that “this is somebody who is thinking about the code they create,” Meagen said. “I’m a relatively nontechnical person, and they should be able to explain it to me... I’m not shy about saying ‘I don’t know.’ ”

An alternative approach is to give applicants a short code sample and ask them to review it, for example to spot patterns, best practices, or errors. Then you can mark how many of the elements they pick up. However, on-the-spot coding tasks or **whiteboard coding** are notorious for not yielding an accurate representation of how developers code, let alone solve problems.

Instead, you could pair the candidate up with someone on your team. Using pair-programming techniques they can work together on a problem. You can then see what kinds of questions they ask, and how they approach the problem. Ashe Dryden, researcher in more equitable hiring practices, suggests that this **Pair as an interview** approach also helps create a more level playing field for individuals who have been unable to provide code samples due to NDAs or otherwise.



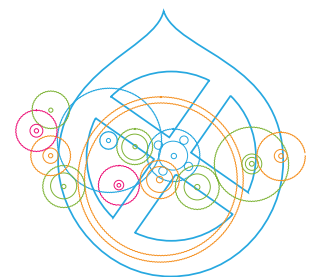
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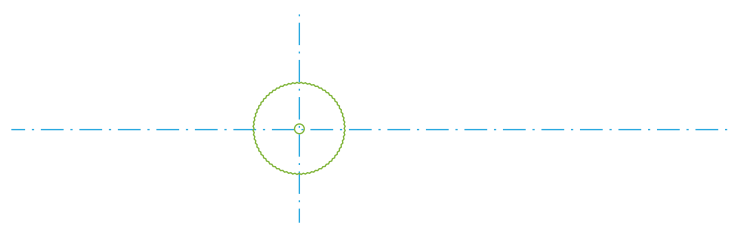
Looking at the Big Picture

Experience is a good indicator of quality and dedication. With that said, you should also consider the possibility that hiring someone with less experience but a strong willingness to learn is going to widen your pool of candidates and offset the costs of on-boarding or training. Good communication and willingness to collaborate are qualities that are difficult to develop.

Technical skills are only one aspect of an employee's performance on a Drupal team. "Drupal is about open source, community, and collaboration. This lends itself to an agile way of doing things: expect change," says Ian Shaw, Engagement Manager here at Acquia. "Communication is important when there are so many things going on at the same time."

"I worked on a project where the client preferred working with a junior developer who was more likely to ask questions, even if it took him a little longer; rather than a senior developer who they felt was too arrogant to ask questions," Ian said. As it turns out, having the bravery to simply say "This might be a stupid question... but..." can save money down the line; communication is key. Personal qualities like that are difficult to develop, whereas technical skills can be improved.





Conclusion

We hope this guide has helped you get a better idea of how to build your Drupal team. The steps we've outlined provide a process that will help you find the right individuals.

Throughout this guide, we've emphasized widening your net and making opportunities for the right person rather than simply the right experience. If you start with the right people, you can invest in professional development and give your staff time to develop technical mastery. We've learned plenty at Acquia through our own successes as well as our mistakes, and we've put those lessons into the advice we've shared. By following this advice, you'll be on your way to developing your own great Drupal team.

Call us and let's talk about how we can get your first site up and running—today!

888-922-7842

Learn more
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LET'S TALK

Acknowledgements

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- Balázs Dianiska, Technical Consultant
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