

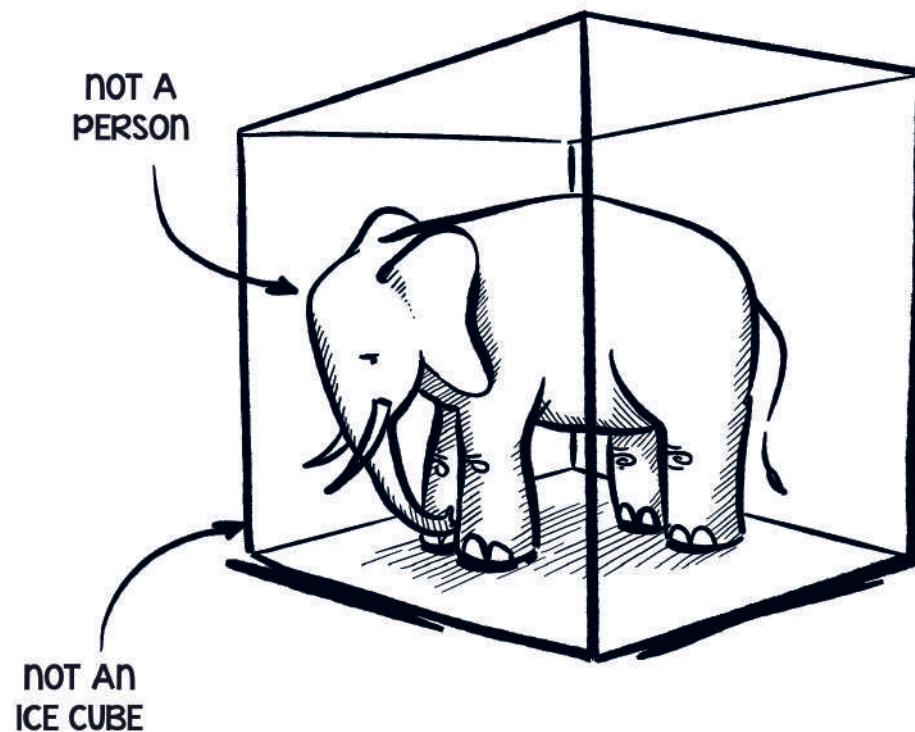
Issue 2 . Apr 22

Tiny Tales from the Frontline

—
A collection of thoughts
inspired by our ~~work~~
experience of trying to
recruit people

**We need to talk
about people...**

THE PEOPLE ISSUE,
LITERALLY!



HYPR



Thank you so much for the fantastic reaction to Tiny Tales #1. We were moved. So let's move on!

Our second issue of *Tiny Tales* is devoted to the issue of people – finding, recruiting and growing them better. The thoughts came from our people as a result of the recent experiences we've had trying to recruit new ones.

(To all the organisations that can say at the end of this, 'we're already doing these things', we applaud you. We'd love to hear how you're going and learn from you).

But first, some stats!

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The NZ Government estimates that the additional NET growth requirement in the IT sector is 4,500 people per year to 2023 and 3,300 per year from then until 2028. (We think this is an underestimation).

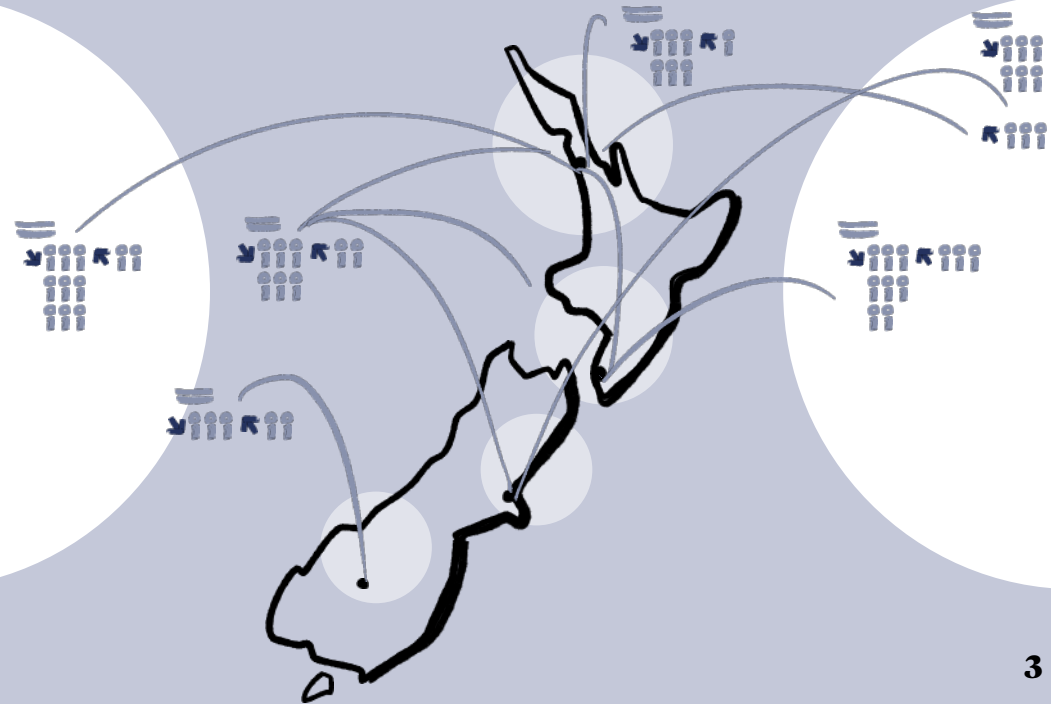
The NZ education system (in all its forms) is barely developing enough technologists to replace those that exit the sector each year (through retirement, working remotely for firms outside NZ, OE, etc.).

So it's starkly obvious that employment growth in the sector has been reliant on inbound migration. In the five years prior to COVID, 27,057 people blessed us by moving here to work in IT. COVID stopped this flow (and will restrict it for some time to come).

We are at least 10,000 people shorter than we ever were. And counting.

That's the very big elephant in a tiny room called 'New Zealand'.

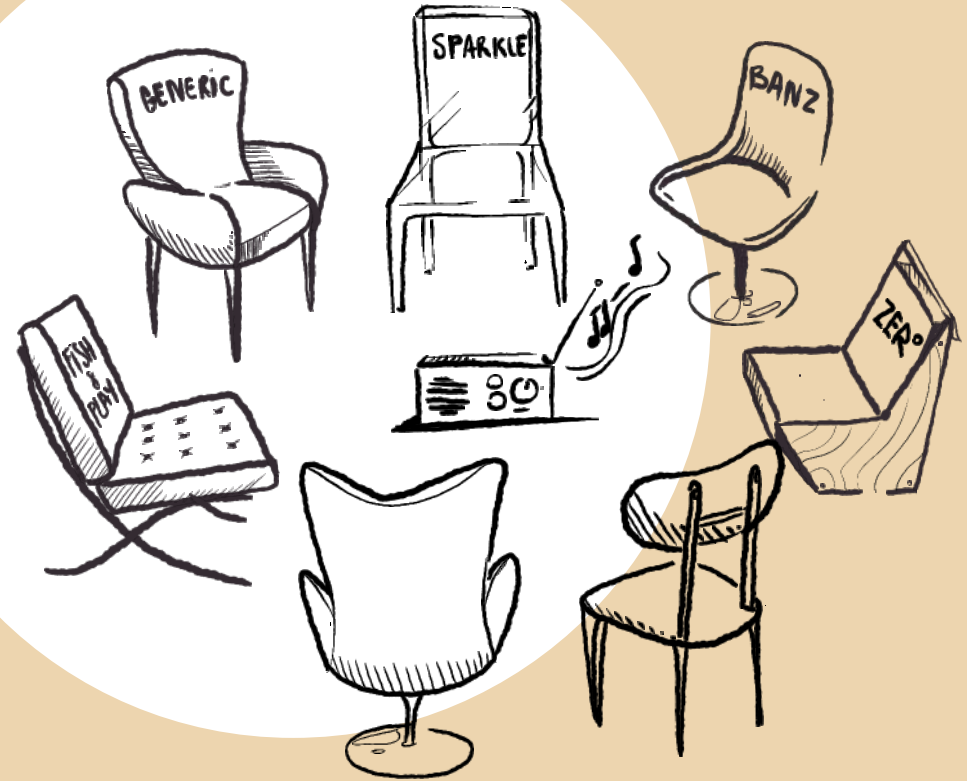
(We worked this out from a number of sources including MBIE, Stats NZ, NZ Immigration, NZTech, FigureNZ, AbsoluteIT and the Tertiary Education Commission)

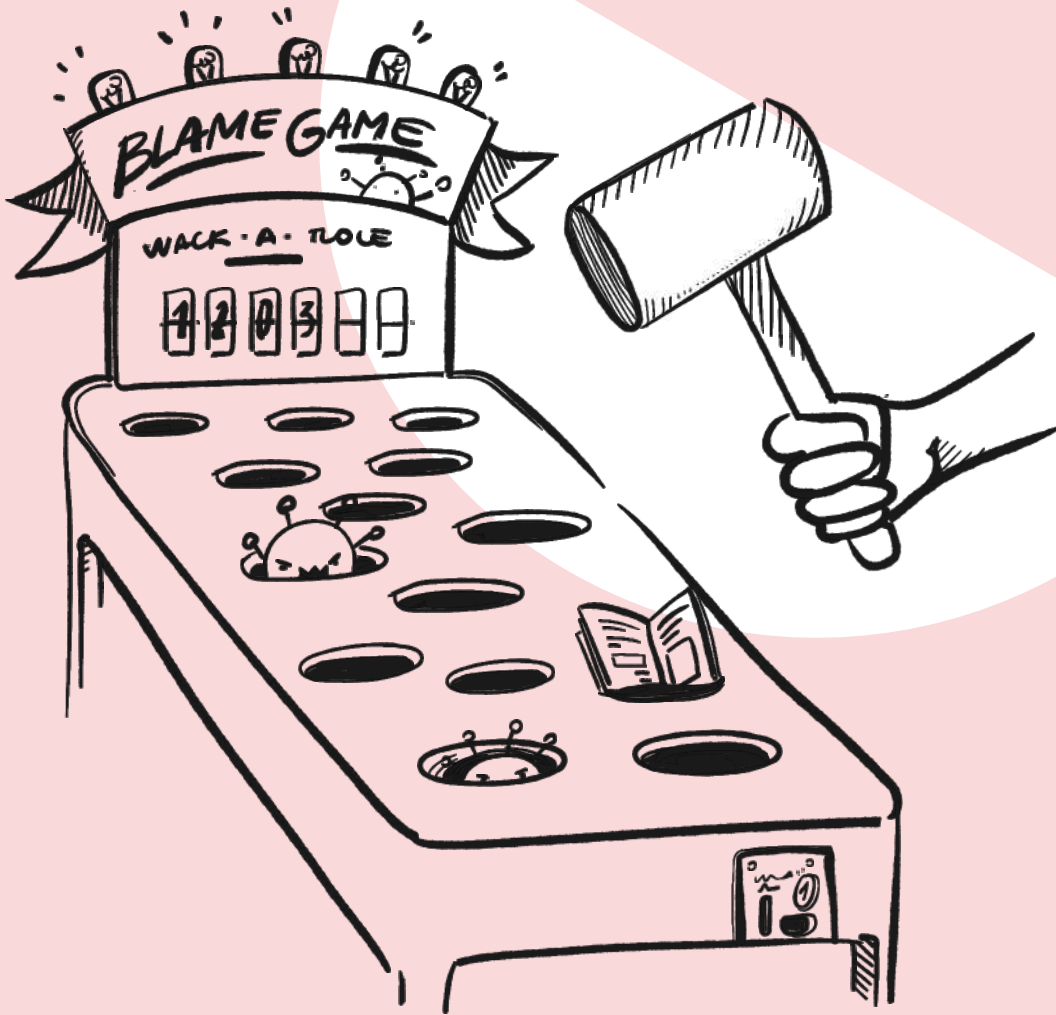


A game of musical chairs?

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We hear – and we’re sure you do too – that growth will prove challenging because of the shortage of skilled people. Salaries are on a steep rise too. Maybe we’re all trying to hire the same people – and we’re all participants in that game of musical chairs. How do we stop the music?





How did we get here?

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It's easy to blame things that seem out of our control. COVID, for example. Or the education system. Or greedy workers punting for higher salaries. But it's always worth taking a good, hard look at... *ourselves!* Are we all doing enough to *grow people?*

“Organisations used to grow people. Now they just hire the right ones”

-

Stories of the junior who started in the post room and worked their way to the top seem lost in another age. Today, organisations prioritise growing shareholder returns rather than people. *But they still need people...* and always the ‘right people’. Are you always looking for only the ‘right people’?



By the way, who are 'the right people' anyway?

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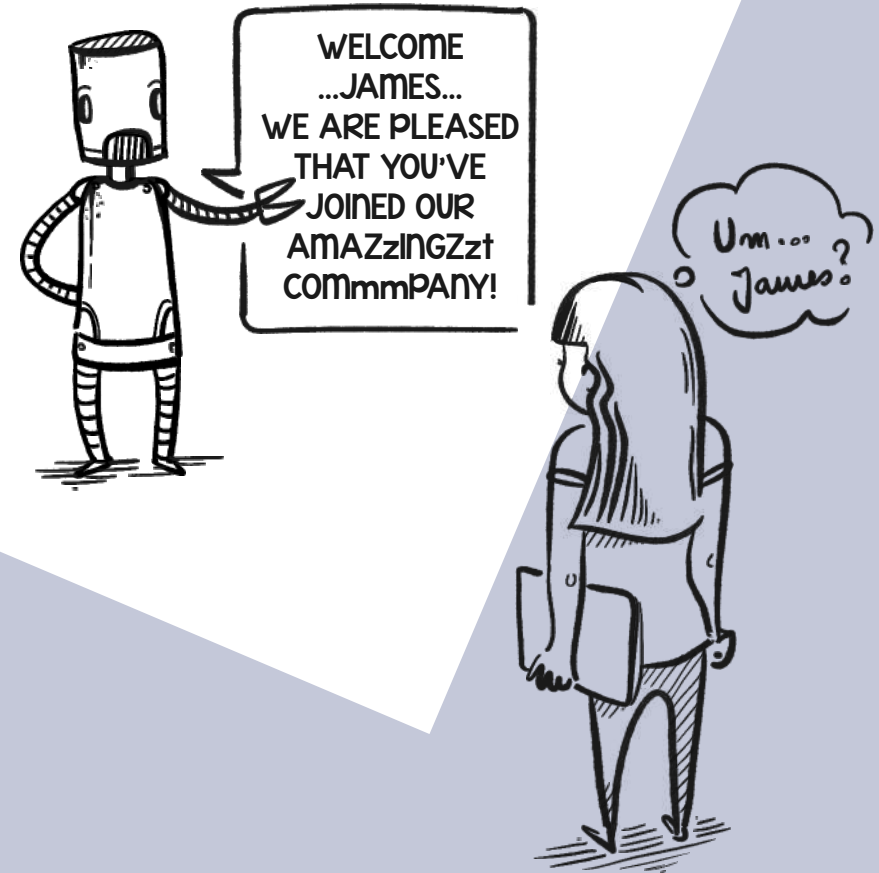
The 'right people', right now, seem to be 'senior this' and 'senior that'. The kind of people who are perceived to be able to make instant impacts (that protect shareholder returns, no doubt). As if seniors have all the answers...

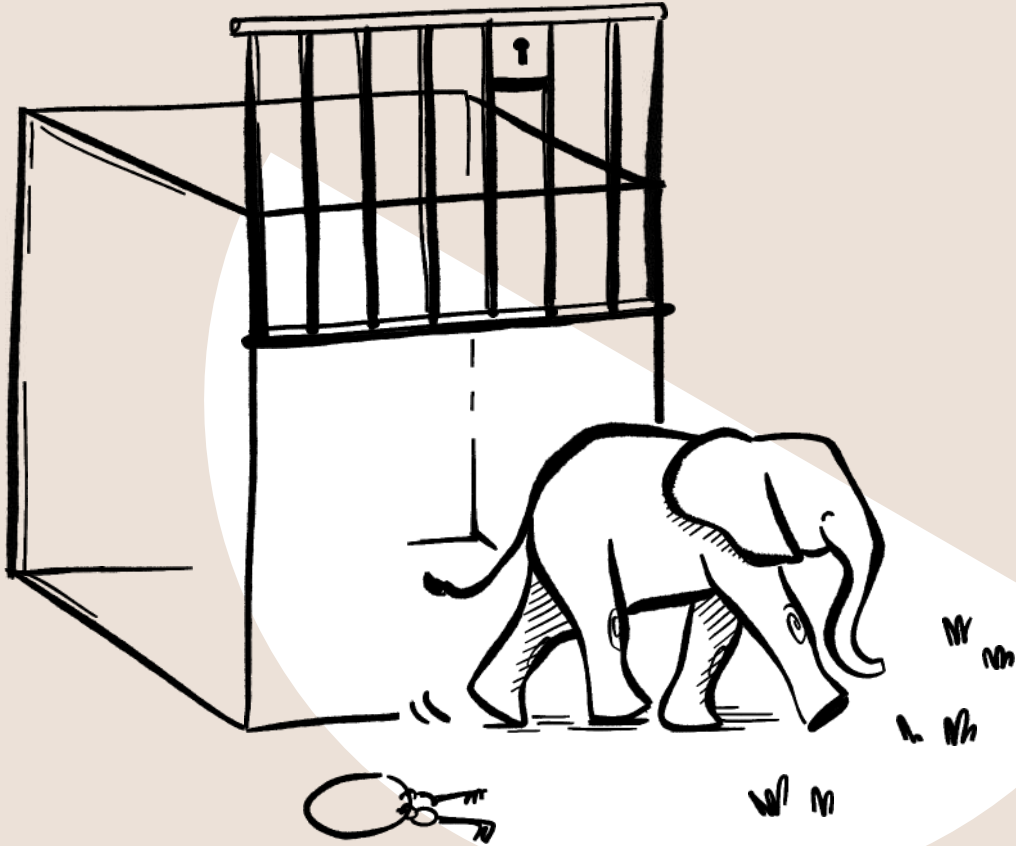


You can learn so much from juniors

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Our latest junior helped us learn something incredibly valuable. Their feedback on our onboarding and early mentoring process indicated that it did not feel really 'intentional'. That word struck a major chord!





‘Intentional’! It’s the one word that really matters

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We can’t tell you what ‘growing people’ looks like in your organisation. But everything about a growth programme should, of course, be absolutely intentional.

Commitment from leadership, funding, alignment to business need, co-designing with your people... you *know*!

Then, we thought, you might be able to free the elephant – by making an intentional change in recruitment...



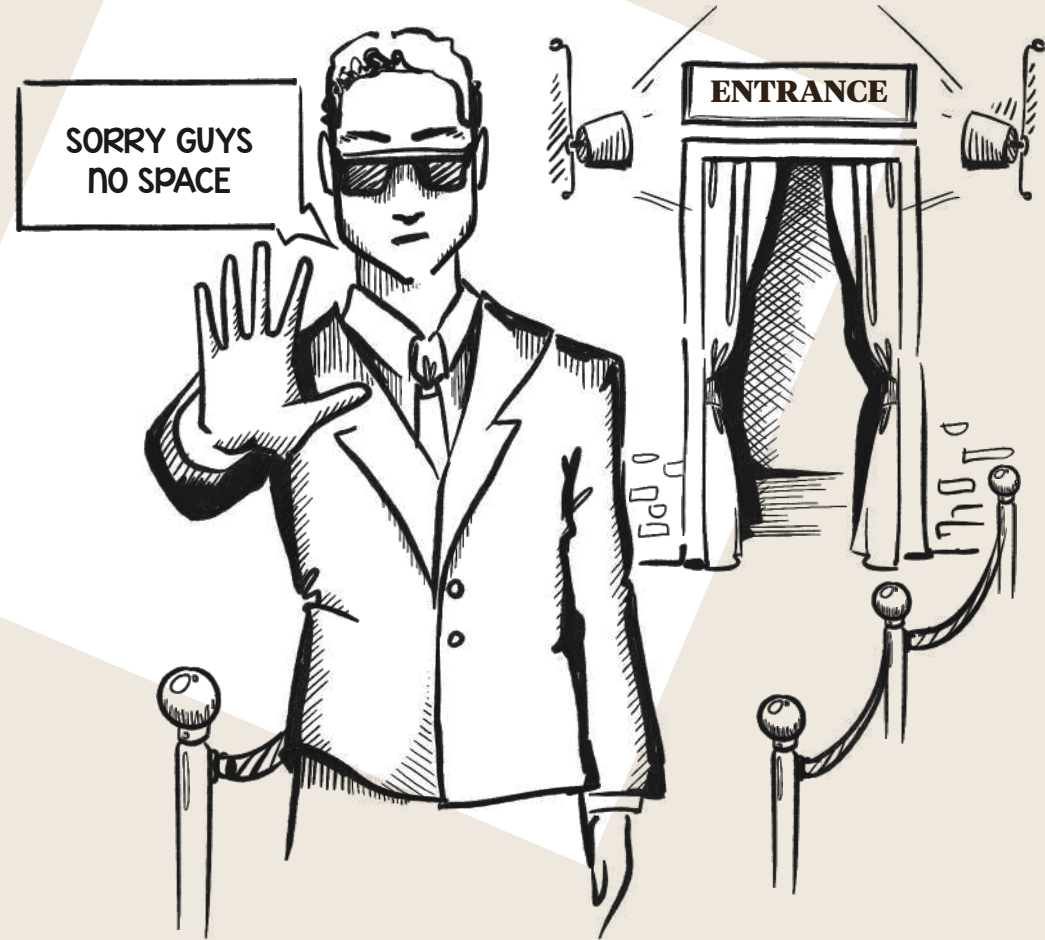
Disrupt your hiring criteria

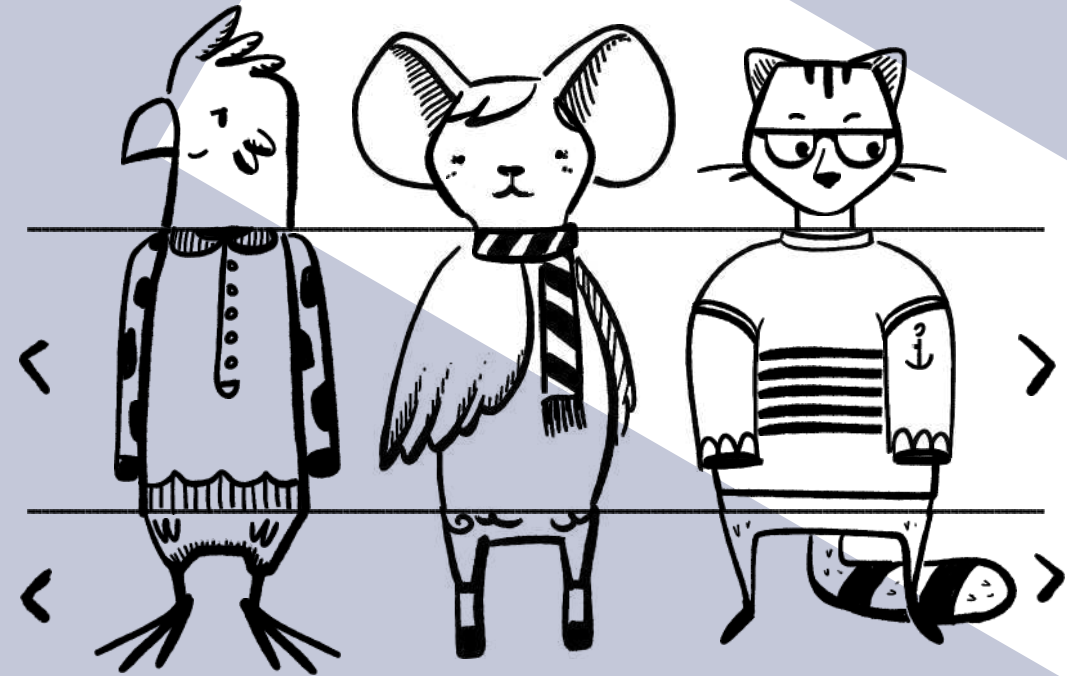
Throw the hiring template away. Filter applicants on who they are, not on how they match a minimum set of attributes. Embrace imperfect people who are an imperfect fit, yet feel like the people you really want. Look for people who have something important and interesting to contribute, who seem nice. We think there are many more of them than there are fully-grown, perfect matches. Do you?

Potentially, it's revolutionary

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We've passed on too many really good people who didn't quite have the senior skills and experience we were looking for. Simply put, we had no space for them. A proper growth programme could *create the space* to employ more junior people whose potential is too hard to ignore...





**Surely it's easier to shape potential
than change a leopard's spots?**

-

Our team thought that if we recruited juniors who are eager to grow, we could shape them to become the best they can be at what we *need*. That should be better than trying to edit a new senior who's had years being something that other employers needed.



The people you want are the people who love to grow

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A promise to grow people shows that you want them. It's a beautiful way to repay their favour in wanting to work for you. And the people who recognise the value of personal and professional growth are surely the people you'd rather hire in the first place!

Here's lookin' at you

A developer of ours previously experienced “a disconnect between the kind of people who want the job and the people who do the hiring”. Nothing turns off a super-relevant recruit more than a recruiter who's not properly in the loop. Do you ask why people turn you down? And act on it well enough? (By the way, the developer applied to join us because the technology we listed in our ad was the leading-edge tech he was most interested in).

18k



Sebastián Ramírez
@tiangolo

I saw a job post the other day. 🤖

It required 4+ years of experience in FastAPI. 🧑

I couldn't apply as I only have 1.5+ years of experience since I created that thing. 😅

Maybe it's time to re-evaluate that "years of experience = skill level". ♻️

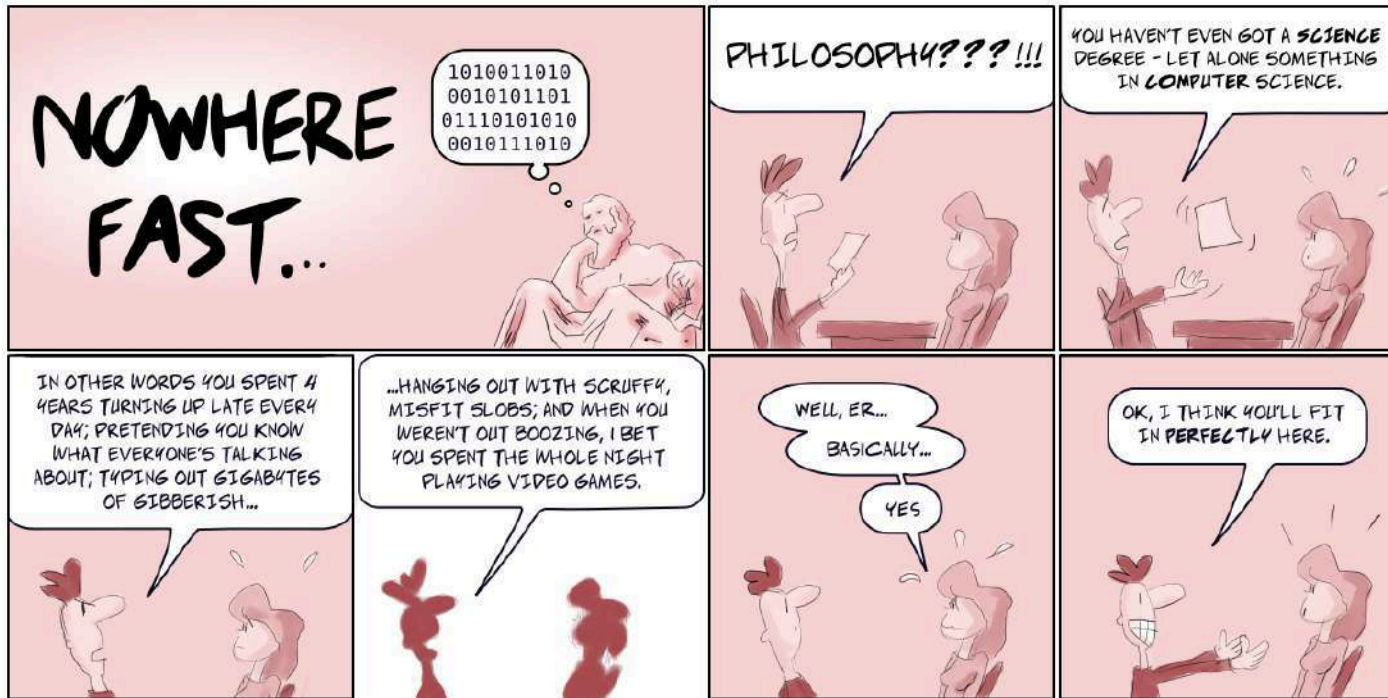
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Do all good software engineers come with a Computer Science degree?

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No! Because people from all walks of life have changed their futures by entering the tech industry.

They took part-time courses, self-trained, went to bootcamps and immersed themselves in the community. These people have passion, not a BSc. They may be rough diamonds, but they are precious and, hey, New Zealand needs them! Could you create space in your growth programme to hire and polish them?





Awesome storytellers you can learn from

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Juniors may not have the skills to solve complex problems on their own, but they often have a fresh take when talking about the problem, the experiments they performed and the mistakes they made. These are stories that help everyone learn and improve how they might learn.

Learner becomes teacher

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We're lucky in that we have a team eager to learn and eager to teach. We're trying to get principals to teach seniors, seniors to teach intermediates and intermediates to teach juniors.

Along the way, we hope our people will grow and become great teachers. What if everyone who joined your organisation was given a plan to grow and a plan to teach too?



Your people will take care of you

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If you're helping people flourish and they in turn are helping others flourish, it could do wonders for your culture. People will stick around. They'll be glowing about *their* organisation. They will help you find more good people. They will dramatically enhance your reputation in the recruitment market and your recruitment costs will drop. Isn't that worth it?



We've made a start. But what might we do together?

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Our experience and learning from actively trying to recruit people to support our growth shone a torch on the elephant. We couldn't ignore what we saw so we acted and invested in some things (see right). But it's just a start. We think, above all, that it's something we could do together.

What might that look like? How might it work? What are you doing now? We'd love to compare notes and ideas. Please contact our 'Free the Elephant' advocates...

Ajay Blackshah

Don Smith



This year, we've invested in:

A new **Development Framework** to provide pathways for our people to learn.

A new **Coaching and Mentoring programme** that gets team members helping other team members to grow through the Framework.

A **Personal Training Fund** for every client-facing employee.

A dedicated **Induction Programme** aimed at 'creating the space' for us to recruit juniors with potential and grow them fast.



CONTRIBUTIONS AND CONTACT

This issue was inspired by Laché Melvin, Don Smith, Rob England, Benji Stephenson, Noah Cantor, Tony Luisi, Mat Horner, Ajay Blackshah, Vicky Price, Gillian Clark, Gareth Evans and Nick Allan. See longer versions of some of these tales on [Rob's blog](#).

Tiny Tales from the Frontline was edited by [Siân Hoskins](#).

Illustration and design by HYPR's Creative Director, Anne-Amelie Berdugo.

The Nowhere Fast cartoon character was created three decades ago by Robbie Kirkpatrick. We're so happy to meet him again through Robbie's (much older) pen.

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