

## Re: Questions about hiring .NET developer

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- *From:* "Smithers" <A@xxxxx>
  - *Date:* Fri, 24 Aug 2007 12:26:13 -0700
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RE:

<< I need to know if there's anyway to get a good estimate of time on how long it should take to finish the almost complete new .NET intranet site >>

You should not make any assumptions about the state of the new .NET intranet site. If you think that it is "almost complete" which is what you wrote, then you are likely setting yourself up to get screwed again. Here's why: chances are that you have been hiring incompetent developers. If you finally get someone in there who knows what he/she is doing, then he/she will almost certainly want to start over from scratch and get it right from the outset... rather than building on a bad foundation. Furthermore, if you hire someone who is very good, and he/she tells you that he/she should start over, then let that happen. Odds are that they will finish much more quickly than if they were required to "leverage" the crappy prior work, and you'll have a better product in the end.

Finally, about estimates: creating good estimates requires YOU [the customer/end user] to do a good job of communicating the requirements clearly and decidedly. Whenever you change the requirements (which happens all the time), then any prior estimates automatically become invalid. This is such a typical scenario: You ask me how long I'll take to accomplish X, Y, and Z. I tell you N hours. Then you later modify Z or add new requirement K. You then expect N hours to still hold true. Sounds stupid doesn't it? Happens all the time.

Sorry if all of the above sounds negative or even ridiculous... but it's what I've seen for the past 14+ years as an independent consultant. I've made a TON of money over that period cleaning up after screw-ups. Here are a few lessons/rules, heck "Laws" of IS hiring that I believe to be totally true. You should pay attention.

You get what you pay for. It's actually worse than that: The cheaper-by-the-hour programmer is BY FAR the most expensive person you could hire. Get a screw-up in there at \$20/hr and watch him fritter away 100 hours on a project and never quite gets it right (i.e. never \*finishes\* the job). Then hire someone truly competent at \$80/hr and watch him/her \*finish\* the same project in 15 hours. Just with those numbers alone the competent developer is DONE at \$1200 AND sooner than the screw-up who has cost you

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\$2000 and STILL isn't done! Yes – those numbers are realistic. The costs of the screw-up go WAY UP beyond his/her immediate costs if their crappy product gets into production where it will likely perform slowly and suffer data integrity problems. You then have to add [to the total costs of the screw-up] the lost productivity of your employees. And, if your data is truly important, then you will eventually need to hire a competent developer to come in and redo everything from scratch. But you won't get away for that initial 15 hours because; rather than starting out at "ground zero", you are starting out the competent developer somewhere BELOW ground zero. That is, you would then have to pay your competent developer to [at least] clean up the problematic legacy data in addition to creating the replacement solution.

Let's review

Option 1 – hire competent developer initially:

Cost 15 hours – DONE (and with a good and reliable solution)

Option 2 – hire a "junior programmer" (i.e., \*guaranteed\* to be a screw-up)

Costs:

100 hours (the point at which you stop the bleeding) project still not done

+

Lost productivity costs (if the crappy project made it into production)

+

Data cleanup effort (at least) on the part of the replacement competent programmer

+

New project from scratch (if done by a competent developer would be FAR cheaper than trying to "leverage" a pile of crap left behind by the screw-up (I mean junior programmer).

Again, this is what goes on ALL the time. Given your post here, I suspect you already know what I'm talking about.

About your hiring decision (to finally answer your specific question):

There is no magic bullet for you. But you might consider doing a variation of a scenario I went into in 1999. I was interviewed for a contract position with a Big Bank. The group in the bank was nervous in a way like you apparently are. Same scenario. They had recently gotten rid of the 2nd person hired to extend an existing system in some very specific ways. They didn't want to get screwed again. So after I went through 4 separate interviews (from technical to "is this guy a good fit for the team" sorts), I was offered a TWO WEEK gig. Specifically, they told me that there were two known bugs in the production system. I had two weeks to (1) find both bugs, (2) satisfactorily remediate each, and in a way that would pass technical review (with flying colors) with other developers on staff. IF I was able to do that, then I was to get a 3-month contract to extend the system per the new requirements that the prior two developers had choked on.

You could do something like that. Maybe not as intense, but make 'em perform before getting too far with them.

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-HTH

BTW: Prior to getting my interview with Big Bank, I had one headhunter tell me I was too \*unqualified\* to work for Big Bank and that I would need more years on my resume. Another headhunter got me the interview. After the 2-week gig I nailed the 3-month contract and ultimately waltzed out of Big Bank nearly 6 years later... serving in the role as "technical lead" for the last 4+ years of my time there. Lesson for you: What's in a resume can be meaningless... whether it makes the candidate look overly qualified or overly green. The upshot: Make 'em perform – actually do something and evaluate that result.

-S

<egaskill@xxxxxxxx> wrote in message  
[news:1187979390.235430.298940@xx](mailto:news:1187979390.235430.298940@xx)

So we have a fairly small internal company application written in PHP, it interacts with a MySQL DB and all it really does is create new orders, edit existing orders, and prints reports based on different variables in data. I don't know why this project has turned into such a huge ordeal, but every developer we've hired so far to take care of this project has come up short on the deadlines they themselves have put forth. The last guy we hired came in and started rewriting the PHP site in .NET and we have since had to let him go.

Now, we aren't a huge company, we have 35 employees total and maybe 10 of which use the company intranet simultaneously, so it's not really in need of any crazy layers yet. I've been interviewing new developers for this, and they all seem to say "Oh this is a really small project", but I'm just worried (mainly for the sake of my job) about hiring another guy that says that then won't be able to finish it. I need to know if there's anyway to get a good estimate of time on how long it should take to finish the almost complete new .NET intranet site and how to pick out a guy that isn't going to screw us over again (is all I have to go by references and qualifications?).

Also, any tips on managing a developer would be appreciated.