



The Complete Guide To Hiring a Ruby DevOps



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The Ruby on Rails framework is a no-brainer for small teams that have 10 to 20 servers. It's startup-friendly and flexible. It contains ready-made plug-ins and modules that enable developers to build apps without boilerplate code. And its language enables teams to express things quickly and efficiently. Need proof? Teams build apps 30 percent to 40 percent faster with Ruby than with other languages.

Despite its many benefits, there are downsides for small teams using Ruby. Even with the right technical know-how, building an infrastructure requires resources. Once apps or websites are live, many teams may not have the bandwidth to perform patch updates or maintain an environment in a healthy state. So, what's a startup to do?

For most teams, the next step is to hire more people. However, most startups cannot afford such a luxury. To grow your app, you need more resources. And many small teams simply lack the money and time it takes to hire.



Even if teams do have the resources, the actual hiring process isn't even necessarily the hardest part. Finding talent is the real issue. There is a major talent shortage in the Ruby on Rails world. It's not that there aren't capable candidates out there—you just need to know how and where to find them.

This guide provides a glimpse into the hiring process for DevOps positions. We'll lay out a five-step process that includes identifying candidates, creating and posting job listings, screening resumes, and interviewing candidates. We'll discuss common mistakes that employers make. And we'll outline any associated risks.



Hiring DevOps Pain #1: Time to Hire

Screening, posting, interviewing, references, background checking...it all takes a long time. The more complex the job, the longer it takes. For example, the average software engineer takes 35 days to hire.





But First, Let's Ask: "What Exactly Is DevOps?"

It seems as if everyone is talking about DevOps these days. While the term has become commonplace, it still poses a problem for teams looking to hire. There's technically no such thing as a "DevOps" person. Instead, you'll find developers with experience as a system administrator. Or system engineers with programming knowledge. Or software engineers with experience in operations. Or...well, you get the point.

The term is technically a compound of "development" and "operations" and aims to unify the two departments. When you're hiring to fill these positions, you're really looking for developers who know how to deploy their code or system administrators who know how to dive into code. Be careful to not get caught up in the semantics of the buzzword, as many people have different interpretations.

Looking to hire your first DevOps resources can be overwhelming. You might not know where to start. This guide will help. Keep reading if you're looking to expand your team.



Hiring DevOps Pain #2: Time to Hire

Once hired, it takes time to onboard new employees. Underestimating how long it will take you to get them up to speed is a common mistake.



Hiring DevOps Pain #3: Costs

While adding new DevOps employees comes with a relatively controlled fee, it brings with it myriad costs. Consider the technology overhead. Plus, if hiring remote workers, it costs extra to manage their workloads.

1

Identifying Ideal Candidates

Before you begin the hiring process, it's important to outline your needs. What are you looking for in a candidate? What specific skills must he or she bring to the table? How will they integrate into your current organizational structure? There's a reason you're bringing on new resources. Be sure you outline core competencies and soft skills you'd like your candidate to possess.



Hiring DevOps Pain #4: Ramp-Up Time

How long will it take to get them to be productive? While the standard 30-/60-/90-day plans suffice for most cases, sometimes you may need to dedicate more time to new hires.



Core Competencies

Let's open with the "hard stuff," or the core competencies. For starters, a bachelor's degree in computer science, or equivalent project-based experience, is a necessity in most cases. Remember: You're hiring a developer—and any developer worth their salt should prove their open-source chops. As you begin to vet candidates (more on this later), ask to see a list of projects on their GitHub profiles or something similar.

Candidates should have at least two years of Ruby on Rails experience. You may want to look for an AWS certification, depending on your environment. They'll also need to have a familiarity with certain automation tools, whether it's Chef, Ansible, or Puppet. From there, they should possess knowledge of React, Coffee Script, or another language complementary to back-end Ruby applications. Finally, a background in an open-source project or cybersecurity, including a CISSP certification, is a huge plus.



Soft Skills

Qualifications are important, but cultural fit is equally important. Candidates must embrace the community-first viewpoint and identify with your company's mission and vision. Ask yourself if innovation and forward thinking are important to your business (as a bootstrapped startup, they probably are). If so, you want your candidates to not only be well-versed and educated in Ruby but also up to speed with trends. They must also display a desire to stay in the know.



Hiring DevOps Pain #5: Attrition and Turnover

The realities of attrition and turnover haunt any startup or small-business environment.



2

Creating a Job Description

Job descriptions are generally the first interactions that candidates will have with your company. As with most communication (like emails and phone calls), it's important to make your efforts engaging and informative while staying concise. You want to draw your readers in while still providing details of the job.



Introduction

This is the time to introduce the role. It's wise to mention some ideal traits you're looking for. However, it should be reiterated that this should be a general overview of the position. There's no need to dive deep into responsibilities or required skills. That will come later.

Consider asking questions to draw candidates in:

- "Do you have a passion for the latest cloud technology and strategies?"
- "Do you thrive in challenging environments with complex systems?"
- "Are you a DevOps engineer with an aptitude for challenges?"



Key Responsibilities

This section details the day-to-day responsibilities. Candidates will pay close attention to this section, so it's important to provide context. Consider listing this section in bullet format and using strong verbs to display actual actions that candidates will perform.

Below are some examples of well-worded key responsibilities:

- Perform a wide variety of technical and administrative duties in overall systems design, development, and delivery.
- Work with IT, engineering, and business groups to understand functionality, scalability, performance, security, and integration requirements.
- Develop and maintain an in-depth understanding of the application, systems, and database architecture to maintain data integrity.
- Develop, improve, and document operational practices and procedures.
- Drive operational cost reduction through service optimizations.

Required Skills and Experience

This section is arguably the most important part of your job description, as it lists your required skills and experience levels. This section sets expectations for candidates and outlines whether or not they're qualified. When properly written, it should weed out under- or overqualified individuals. Again, it's good practice to list requirements in bullet format.

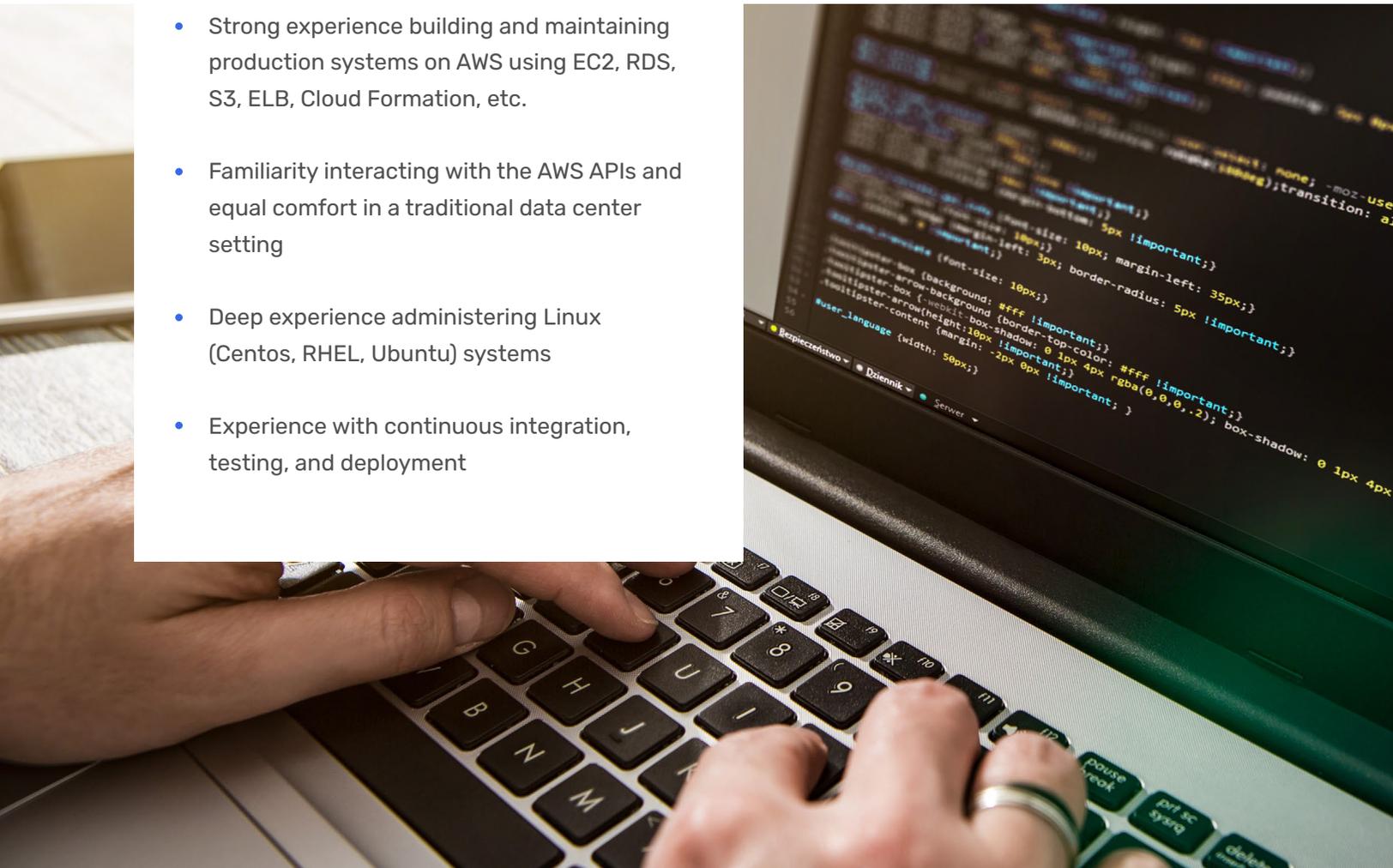
Let's review some examples:

- Proficient in Ruby, as well as script environments like Bash
- Strong experience building and maintaining production systems on AWS using EC2, RDS, S3, ELB, Cloud Formation, etc.
- Familiarity interacting with the AWS APIs and equal comfort in a traditional data center setting
- Deep experience administering Linux (Centos, RHEL, Ubuntu) systems
- Experience with continuous integration, testing, and deployment



Hiring DevOps Pain #6: Attrition and Turnover

Relying on one person means there's no redundancy. For example, if he or she goes on vacation, there's no one to handle your DevOps needs.



3

Posting Your Job Description

You've identified ideal candidates and written your job description; now it's time to post it. While the actual process of posting your job description is painless (hello, copy and paste), it's important to know where to list your jobs. Let's review some common places.

LinkedIn

In recent times, LinkedIn has become the top business networking platform. It's also become a premier platform for job posters and seekers. Ruby-related groups are a great place to find relevant candidates. Posting on the platform, however, cost \$495.00 for a 30-day listing.

Indeed

While some recruiters may write off sites like Indeed and Monster, they still serve their purpose. Many classified sites are relatively affordable. For example, Indeed offers a pay-per-click posting model in which costs range from \$0.10 to more than \$5.00. Confident in your ability to manage your account? It doesn't hurt to post to these platforms.



WebOps Weekly

As a preferred favorite for many developers, WebOps Weekly targets hyperspecific candidates who likelier to be qualified than not. Including its sister publications, the newsletter reaches more than 300,000 software developers and costs roughly \$89.00 per day.

Social Media

In addition to LinkedIn, there are other community channels for developers. Slack, for example, has channels that target developers. Reddit also has numerous subreddits dedicated to DevOps jobs and hiring. Finding candidates on these platforms may require some vetting to avoid an onslaught of irrelevant applicants.

Ruby Newsletters

Like WebOps Weekly, it can be assumed that candidates who subscribe to Ruby Weekly—a weekly newsletter from Ruby Inside—have at least a general understanding of your job qualifications. Ruby Inside runs a job board that costs \$299.00 for an ad covering 45 days.

Your Website

Your company's website can be a great place to post jobs. Not only is it free, but once candidates are on your site, it's likely that they'll poke around to learn more about your company. The caveat, however, is that you must already have high traffic to your website—otherwise, candidates won't locate your job postings in the first place.

4

Screening Resumes and Interviewing Candidates

Once you've posted your job and received (what we assume to be) a slew of responses, it's time to screen resumes and move forward to the interviewing process.



Screen Resumes

The biggest challenge of screening resumes is volume. In fact, an average job posting receives 250 resumes with only 12 percent to 25 percent of these candidates considered qualified. Recruiters can spend up to 23 hours screening resumes for one hire. Thus, it's vital to screen based on work experience, education, skills, and personality traits.

Consider implementing a tier-based process in which candidates advance based on

qualifications. Establish a threshold for minimum and preferred requirements to expedite the process; if candidates meet the latter, they move forward to the next step. From here, determine how many candidates are shortlisted for an interview.

Below are some examples of well-worded key responsibilities:

- 12 percent for application to interview
- 17 percent for interview to offer
- 89 percent for offer to acceptance

This means for every 100 candidates you screen, you should shortlist 12 to interview. Two will receive an offer. And one candidate will accept.



Common Mistakes Made When Hiring DevOps #1:

Hiring a friend who isn't quite the best fit and doesn't really have the qualifications



Common Mistakes Made When Hiring DevOps #2:

Not vetting candidates (i.e., checking references or background checks).



Interview Top Candidates

Once you've determined top candidates, it's time to interview them. As mentioned earlier, it's important to remember that you're hiring a developer. So, speak specifically and in your shared language. Ask your candidate about his or her favorite patterns and recipes. Ask them about any scripts they're proud of. Probing questions can help illustrate past experiences.

Here are some to get you started:

- What's been your most challenging deployment, upgrade, or migration?
- What technologies are you excited about learning in the future?
- What's the most complex system architecture you've managed?
- What's the best way to tear down the wall between development, QA, and system administration?

Because many DevOps positions are remote, it's also essential to consider logistics. Don't overlook things like internet connection, punctuation, communication skills, and language barriers. Discuss issues like time management and deadlines. Finally, to wrap up the interview, it may help to augment the process with a questionnaire, take-home work, aptitude test, or other assessment.



Common Mistakes Made When Hiring DevOps #3:

Going with the cheapest developer instead of the one who's the right fit. You often get what you pay for!



5

But First, Let's Ask: "What Exactly Is DevOps?"

Once you've identified ideal candidates, it's important to see if they're as reliable as they are qualified. To ensure a candidate can be trusted with important product and infrastructure data, it's essential to conduct background checks. This can entail a variety of measures, but it's recommended to perform a criminal history and reference check.

Reference checks are an essential part of the recruitment process—and one that shouldn't be overlooked. Regardless of a candidate's resume or interview skills, reference checks provide real-life context to the hiring process. Speaking with former employers, managers, and colleagues validates your candidate's skills and competencies and provides insight into his or her personality and work habits.

As a rule of thumb, it's important to conduct at least two verbal reference checks. Jumping on a phone call with a candidate's references is far more effective than an email or other digital survey. Ask these references questions that provide insight into previous project-based experience. Not properly vetting candidates is a common, and potentially disastrous, mistake that many companies make.



Common Mistakes Made When Hiring DevOps #4:

Placing too much emphasis on the buzzword "DevOps." Remain open-minded.



Common Mistakes Made When Hiring DevOps #5:

Not outlining goals of the position before you get started.



Conclusion

Whew...hiring sounds like a lot of work, doesn't it? It is. From creating job postings to screening candidates, adding new DevOps people is more than simply interviewing and hiring the first seemingly qualified developer. And when you consider the time and money associated with adding new people, for many, hiring becomes an expensive, time-consuming headache.

Hiring new staff is always risky—as we've reviewed above. In the end, you get what you pay for. Putting in the work yields the best candidates. But often, teams don't have the time or capacity to do so. A safer alternative is using a full-stack Ruby on Rails provider to handle your infrastructure needs. Outsourcing your DevOps needs to a trusted expert enables teams to deploy rapidly without additional people.

Much like hiring new DevOps, choosing a provider is a decision that should not be taken lightly. You'll be trusting your vendor with the health and sustainability of your Ruby on Rails production. That's why it's important to select a proven, trusted company.

Engine Yard enables your team to focus on building applications instead of hiring.

Not only does this address the reality of your team's resource shortages, but outsourcing means that your app or website can scale up and down without the administrative costs of hiring new in-house DevOps. Headcount is not based upon just building infrastructure. And because you're not required to drain resources, you can reallocate that money and hire elsewhere. This, compared with the realities of staff turnover and attrition, illustrates how outsourcing is a far less risky venture.

As an Engine Yard customer, you get a virtual extension of your operations team. Engine Yard enables development teams of any size to focus on their applications instead of their infrastructure, thus making them more productive and providing more bang for the buck with development dollars spent. The time saved on tasks like issue response, applying security patches and upgrades, and keeping components up to date means that teams can apply resources in other, more critical areas.

Engine Yard is the leading Ruby on Rails full-stack services company specializing in provisioning, managing, monitoring and controlling applications on AWS. Engine Yard specializes in deep partnerships with customers to provide mission-critical support and uptime. Engine Yard has thousands of customers across 58 countries and is headquartered in Austin, Texas.

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