
Choosing the Right Tech & SaaS Recruiter

A Guide for Founders and Hiring Leaders at Series A
Through D Tech, SaaS, and Startup Companies

ABOUT

About Good Work Recruiting



Good Work Recruiting is built and led by Nicole Anderson. Before founding the firm, Nicole spent 14-plus years across in-house recruiting and career coaching, including a run as Director of Talent Acquisition at PE-backed and Series D companies. That means she's made these exact hires from your side of the table, not just sourced candidates from the outside looking in.

The focus is intentionally specific: tech, startup, and SaaS companies from Series A through D, across the U.S. and Canada, analyst through executive level, specializing up to SVP.



The Tech & SaaS Talent Crisis

If you're a founder, CEO, or Head of People at a Series A through D tech or SaaS company, you already know what keeps you up at night. It's not the product roadmap or the next fundraising deck. It's finding the people who can actually execute against both.

Here's what makes 2026 different from a few years ago: the market isn't a bidding war anymore. Tech hiring overall is running below 2025 levels, and for most roles, you're not fighting off six competing offers to land a candidate. That sounds like it should make hiring easier. It doesn't.

What's actually happening is a two-speed market. AI, infrastructure, and other scarce technical skills are seeing real premiums and fast-moving competition. Everything else, product, GTM, tech enablement, the roles that make up most of what a growing company actually needs, has gone the other direction: more candidates in the pool, but a much harder job finding the signal in the noise. A flood of applicants who all look similar on paper doesn't make your search easier. It makes the difference between a real specialist and a generalist reading resumes even more important.

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And the candidates who can actually do the work you need done still aren't applying to job postings. Research from Workable shows that 37.3% of the U.S. workforce are passive candidates, employed, not actively looking, but open to the right opportunity if someone they trust brings it to them. Data from Employ Inc.'s 2025 Hiring Benchmarks Report puts the average time from job posting to accepted offer at 63.5 days. If you're relying on inbound applications, you're seeing a fraction of who's actually out there, and by the time your process finishes, the strongest people have usually already committed somewhere else.

For a company at your stage, the stakes are different than they are for a large enterprise. A mismatched hire at a 2,000-person company gets absorbed. A mismatched hire at a Series B company burns runway, stalls a roadmap, and costs you months you don't have before your next raise or your next board update. Every hire either builds toward what's next or sets you back.

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63.5 days

average time from job posting to accepted offer. (Employ Inc., 2025 Hiring Benchmarks Report)

This guide is built to help you tell the difference between a recruiter who genuinely understands that world and one who's simply added "tech" to their LinkedIn headline.

The Good Work Recruiting Summary

The short version, for founders too busy building to read the whole thing right now.

The recruitment landscape is noisy. Every recruiter in your inbox claims to specialize in tech and SaaS. They all promise networks, process, and speed. Very few can back it up. This guide gives you the questions that separate the two.

Large firms and generalists come with real trade-offs. Off-limits lists that quietly shrink your candidate pool. A junior recruiter running your search while the person who sold you the engagement has moved on. A knowledge gap that shows up as mismatched candidates and wasted interview time.

Ten questions will tell you what you're actually working with. Metrics, process, stage fluency, who's really on your search, off-limits, reporting, how they'll sell your opportunity, guarantees, and how they vet candidates for fraud and inflated claims before those candidates ever reach you.

Delay costs more than the vacancy itself. A single open role rarely stays a single open role for long. The team absorbs it, then the strain shows, then your best people start taking calls of their own.

The right partner changes the outcome, measurably. Faster time-to-fill, higher retention, fewer mis-hires, and a search process that gets smarter with every round instead of starting from zero.

Keep reading for the full frameworks, questions, and numbers behind each of these, or jump to the section that matters most to you right now.

The Reality of Today's Recruiting Landscape

Your inbox is full of recruiters who all claim the same thing: specialist in tech and SaaS, extensive network, proven process, fast turnaround. Everyone has a methodology. Everyone promises to be different from the last recruiter who didn't deliver.

The problem is that when every pitch sounds identical, it's genuinely hard to tell deep expertise from confident salesmanship until you're already three weeks into a search that isn't going anywhere.

Here's a version of the gap that shows up constantly in tech and SaaS recruiting specifically: a candidate's resume says they worked at a fast-growing SaaS company. That tells you almost nothing on its own. Did they build in an environment with real product-market fit, or were they coasting on a team that was carrying them? Did they operate with the ambiguity and resourcefulness a Series A actually requires, or did they have the infrastructure and headcount of a Series D the whole time? A recruiter who's never sat inside a growth-stage company can't ask the follow-up questions that actually surface the difference. They see "SaaS" on a resume and treat it as a qualification instead of a starting point.

That gap is exactly where mismatched candidates come from, people who interview well and look right on paper, then don't hold up once they're actually in the seat.

Why Large Firms and Generalists Aren't Always the Answer

This isn't about any single firm doing a bad job. Large firms and generalist recruiters deliver real results in the right circumstances. But the way they're structured creates trade-offs that are worth understanding before you sign a contract, not after.

Extensive Off-Limits Lists

Large firms work across hundreds of clients. Every company they've placed someone with in the past 12 to 24 months becomes off-limits for future searches. That's standard, and it exists to protect client relationships. It also quietly shrinks your candidate pool.

If a recruiter tells you they have "an extensive network" but can't recruit from half the well-funded startups in your category, it's worth asking exactly where your candidates are actually coming from. Some off-limits commitments are healthy, they're a sign a firm protects its clients, and they'd protect you the same way. The question is scale. A focused specialist might have a handful of off-limits companies. A large generalist firm can have dozens, including some of the exact companies where your ideal candidates currently work.

Lack of Personal Attention

At a large firm, you're one account among many. The person who sold you the engagement often isn't the person actually working your search. That falls to a more junior recruiter, juggling several searches at once, without the authority to adjust strategy when something changes.

Your search becomes a pipeline built for efficiency at scale, not responsiveness to your specific situation. When a candidate declines an offer or your priorities shift after a board meeting, you're asking for an exception to a standardized process instead of getting a partner who simply adjusts.

Representing the Candidate, Not You

Large firms build long-term relationships with candidates they can place repeatedly across multiple clients over the years. You represent a single fee on a single search. The candidate represents potential fees on future placements. That math shapes the relationship in ways that aren't always visible. When a candidate asks their recruiter to weigh your offer against a competing one, whose interest is actually being served?

The Tech & SaaS Knowledge Gap

This is the one that matters most. A generalist recruiter, even one working at a firm that markets itself as tech-focused, often doesn't have the depth your search actually needs.

They don't know why a Product Manager who thrived inside a mature, well-resourced product org isn't automatically the right fit for a company still finding product-market fit. They can't distinguish a candidate who's genuinely comfortable with ambiguity from one who's only ever operated with a fully built-out team around them. They don't understand equity structures well enough to have a real conversation with a candidate about what a grant is actually worth at your stage, or why a below-market base salary might still be a legitimate offer if the rest of the package is right.

They also miss a pattern that shows up constantly in fast-moving startup hiring: the candidate who's bounced between hot companies every 12 to 18 months, collecting recognizable logos without a track record of actually building or shipping anything durable. Familiarity with startup language gets mistaken for real performance.

The result is candidates who look strong in a screen and don't hold up once your team is actually working with them. For a founder trying to fill a role before a fundraise closes, every one of those mismatched interviews is time you don't have.

Key Questions to Ask Your Tech & SaaS Recruiter

Before you hand over a job description and sign a contract, these ten questions will tell you whether you're talking to a real specialist or a generalist who's added tech and SaaS to their pitch. What matters isn't a perfect answer to every one. It's the depth and honesty of the response. A recruiter who says "here's where we're still building" is often more trustworthy than one who claims to have it all figured out.

01 What Are Your Metrics?

Ask for real numbers from searches similar to yours over the past few years. Time-to-fill against whatever SLA they work to. Interview-to-hire ratio. Retention at one year. If a recruiter can't give you anything concrete, that tells you something about how they track their own performance. As a reference point: in-house, Nicole's average time-to-fill has run 49.7 days against a 60-day SLA at one company and 54 days against a 75-day SLA at another, 10 to 21 days ahead of target. That's the kind of specificity worth asking any recruiter to match.

02 What Does Your Search Process Look Like?

Ask to see the actual methodology, not a one-line summary. How do they map the talent market for your specific function and stage? How do they calibrate the candidate profile with you before the full search starts, rather than after you've already seen twenty resumes that miss the mark? What happens between a candidate saying yes to a call and you seeing them on your desk?

03 What Do You Know About Hiring at My Stage?

A Series A search and a Series C search aren't the same problem. Ask how they think about equity and comp structure at your stage, how they assess a candidate's tolerance for ambiguity and undefined process, and how they'd evaluate someone who's only ever worked inside a fully resourced team versus someone who's actually built something from a rough draft.

04 Who's Actually Working My Search?

At a larger firm in particular, the person pitching you and the person doing the work are often different people. Ask directly who will be sourcing, screening, and presenting candidates, and how much search experience that person actually has.

05 What Does Your Off-Limits List Look Like?

A focused specialist working a smaller client base will naturally have fewer conflicts than a large generalist firm. Some off-limits commitments are a healthy sign, it means they protect their clients. No off-limits list at all is worth questioning too. It means they're not protecting anyone, including you.

THE QUESTION MOST RECRUITERS CAN'T ANSWER

06 How Do You Vet Candidates for Fraud and Inflated Claims?

This is the question most recruiters won't have a real answer to, and it's one that matters more every year. Hiring fraud, from inflated resumes to fabricated experience to outright fraudulent identities, is a real and growing risk, and an under-prepared recruiter can pass a problem straight through to you without ever catching it. Ask what they actually do: background verification, LinkedIn and reference legitimacy checks, recorded video interviews. If the answer is a shrug, that's information too.

07 How Will You Report on Our Search?

At minimum, expect regular visibility into the pipeline, how many candidates have been approached, where they are in the process, and what the recruiter is learning about the market along the way, including compensation feedback and why people are actually considering a move. Without that, you have no way to tell whether your search is being actively worked or sitting behind someone else's priorities.

08 How Will You Sell Our Opportunity?

Ask the recruiter to pitch your company to you as if you were a candidate. Can they articulate what makes your stage, your mission, and your team genuinely compelling to someone with options? This is exactly what they'll say to every person they call on your behalf. A weak pitch doesn't just fail to attract the right people, it can quietly shape how passive candidates perceive your company, and you'll never know a strong candidate passed because the story wasn't told well.

09 Do You Offer a Guarantee?

Guarantees vary by engagement model, contingency search typically runs 30 to 90 days, engaged or retained search can run longer. What matters is understanding exactly what triggers it: voluntary departure only, or performance-based termination too, and what the replacement process actually looks like.

10 What Support Do You Provide After the Offer Is Signed?

The best recruiters don't consider the search finished when the offer letter goes out. Ask whether they check in with both the new hire and the hiring manager during the first 90 days, and whether they flag friction before it becomes a resignation. The first quarter is where cultural fit either holds or starts to unravel, and a recruiter who invests in that period is building a track record, not just collecting a fee.

The Cost of Delay

Understanding what a vacancy actually costs makes it clear why the recruiter you choose, and how fast they move, matters as much as it does.

The Daily Cost of an Empty Chair

Every day a critical role sits open has a real cost, and it extends well past the number on a spreadsheet. Someone on your team is covering the gap. Decisions get made by people without the full context, or they don't get made at all.

Research from the Society for Human Resource Management indicates lost productivity from a vacant role can reach 1.5 to 2 times the position's annual salary once you factor in the ripple effects across the team. For a \$150,000 Product Manager role, that's \$225,000 to \$300,000 in productivity impact over a drawn-out vacancy. That shows up as missed launch dates, a roadmap that quietly slips, and a team that's stretched thinner than anyone planned for.

The Cascade Effect

One open role rarely stays one open role for long.



What started as a single vacancy quietly becomes two or three. At a company your size, there's no bench deep enough to absorb that without it showing.

The Financial Reality

The U.S. Department of Labor estimates a bad hire can cost up to 30% of that employee's first-year earnings. Other research places the range between 50% and 200% of salary depending on seniority and role complexity. For a \$140,000 engineering hire, that's \$70,000 to \$280,000 in total replacement cost if it doesn't work out, recruiting spend, onboarding, ramp-up time, and the cost of decisions made during a learning curve a more experienced hire wouldn't have needed.

\$225K-\$300K

productivity impact of a drawn-out vacancy in a \$150,000 Product Manager role

\$70K-\$280K

total replacement cost if a \$140,000 engineering hire doesn't work out

Market Positioning Erosion

Startup and tech talent networks are small and tightly connected. When a search drags on for months, word travels. When a new hire leaves quickly because the role was oversold or the fit was wrong, that travels too, and it makes your next search harder before it's even started.

The Challenges You Face Without the Right Partner

The consequences of the wrong recruiting relationship, or trying to run tech and SaaS hiring without specialized support, tend to follow a predictable pattern.

- 1 Recruiting Is Getting More Selective, Not Easier.** Overall tech hiring has cooled, but the roles that actually move your business forward, product, revenue-critical GTM, technical leadership, are harder to fill than ever, because every company competing for the same narrow slice of real talent is feeling the same squeeze.
- 2 Quality of Candidates Isn't Meeting Expectations.** Without a specialist who can tell the difference between a resume padded with recognizable company logos and someone who actually built something durable, you end up interviewing people who look right and aren't.
- 3 Critical Roles Take Too Long to Fill.** The strongest candidates are typically off the market within days of actively engaging. If your process is taking 60-plus days, you're consistently arriving after they've already committed elsewhere.
- 4 Mis-Hire Risk Continues to Rise.** Months into a search, under pressure, with a board asking questions, "good enough" starts to look tempting. At a growing company, a cultural or capability mismatch doesn't just underperform, it creates friction that ripples through a small team fast, and it's usually more expensive than the extended vacancy would have been.
- 5 Your Process Lacks Continuity.** Without a consistent partner, every search starts from zero. No pipeline carrying forward, no institutional memory of what messaging worked or which almost-right candidate from the last search might actually be perfect for this one. A partner who knows your company gets more effective with every search, but only if there's continuity in the relationship.

Good Work Recruiting's Approach

Our Model

Good Work Recruiting was built around a combination most recruiters simply don't have: the rigor of a Director-level talent acquisition function, paired with career coaching insight. Before founding Good Work Recruiting, Nicole spent 14-plus years across in-house recruiting and career coaching, including a run as Director of Talent Acquisition at PE-backed and Series D companies. That means she's made these exact hires from your side of the table, not just sourced candidates from the outside looking in.

The focus is intentionally specific: tech, startup, and SaaS companies from Series A through D, across the U.S. and Canada, analyst through executive level, specializing up to SVP. The strongest fit is product management, tech enablement, SaaS sales and GTM, and business enablement, with a genuine specialty in mission-driven companies and edtech, drawing on a background in nonprofits, arts, and education.



The Process

- 1 Intake and Calibration.** Aligning on the must-haves versus the nice-to-haves early, locking in logistics and interview schedule up front so the rest of the search can focus entirely on talent and fit.
- 2 Candidate Profile Review.** Within days of intake, live presentation of 3 to 7 initial profiles, deliberately diverse in background, to pressure-test the profile and calibrate before the full search runs.
- 3 Sourcing, Screening, and Fraud Vetting.** Ongoing sourcing and phone screens throughout, paired with a multi-step fraud mitigation process, background verification, LinkedIn legitimacy review, and recorded video interviews, so a fabricated resume or a fraudulent candidate gets caught before it ever reaches your team.
- 4 Ongoing Candidate Communication.** Candidates stay engaged and prepped before and after every interview, dispositioned within the week so nothing sits in limbo.
- 5 Offer and Close.** Support through the verbal offer, negotiation, and the full stretch between acceptance and start date, when deals are most likely to quietly fall apart.
- 6 Onboarding and Post-Hire Check-Ins.** Checking in with the team once the new hire starts, because the search isn't actually finished until the placement is working.

Our Results

14+

years in career coaching and recruiting

49.7 days

average time-to-fill at Ntirety against a 60-day SLA, 10.3 days ahead

54 days

average time-to-fill at Passport against a 75-day SLA, 21 days ahead

\$1.3M

annual recruiting cost savings through a process redesign at Passport

500+

placements across SaaS, tech, aerospace, and higher education

5

screened candidates, on average, ready within the first week

What Our Clients Say

"You're doing a great job. Leaps and bounds better than before, so thank you. To hear that we have 40-plus applications in the first week is a huge improvement. We used to have to wait a long time to see any candidates."

HIRING MANAGER

"This is the best pull of resumes I've ever seen for a job I've hired for. I am excited about this slate of candidates."

DIRECTOR, SYSTEMS ENGINEERING

"Thank you so much for your hard work on this. I can tell that you really know what I'm looking for, and I'm impressed. I've been telling everyone about how great of a job y'all are doing."

CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER

What Makes Us Different

Good Work Recruiting isn't the largest firm, and it isn't trying to be. What it offers is harder to replicate: real operating experience inside the companies it now recruits for, and a genuine belief that recruiting works best as a two-way, respectful process, not a numbers game run against both sides.

That shows up in a few concrete ways. The combination of Director-level TA rigor and career coaching insight means candidates are evaluated on fit, motivation, and trajectory, not just a skills match on paper. A real, structured approach to catching candidate fraud and inflated claims before they become your problem. Genuine fluency in mission-driven and edtech hiring for founders building something values-led. And a working style that's direct, personable, and unmistakably not corporate, because the best candidates can tell the difference between a recruiter reciting a script and one who actually means it.

IN ONE SENTENCE

Good Work Recruiting saves growing companies from the cost of a bad hire by bringing both the rigor of a Director-level TA function and career coaching insight to every search, finding people who stay, perform, grow, and fit the culture long term.

Supplementary Resources

These tools are meant to help you evaluate your current hiring approach, on your own or as a framework for comparing recruiting partners.

A. Tech & SaaS Recruitment Self-Assessment

Rate your organization on each item from 1 (significant gap) to 5 (strong capability).

#	Statement	Score (1-5)
1	We have a clear, documented process for defining roles beyond a job description	
2	We can access passive candidates who aren't actively looking	
3	We assess culture fit and mission alignment with the same rigor as technical skills	
4	Our time-to-fill for key roles is under 45 days	
5	We have a structured interview process with scorecards and consistent evaluation criteria	
6	We conduct thorough reference and background checks as a non-negotiable part of our process	
7	We have a compelling employer story that resonates with the caliber of candidate we want	
8	Our first-year retention rate for key hires exceeds 80%	
9	We have a proactive talent pipeline rather than hiring reactively	
10	We have a consistent recruiting partner who understands our stage, culture, and market	

Scoring

40-50

STRONG

Your talent infrastructure is strong. You're well-positioned to compete for the candidates you actually want.

25-39

MEANINGFUL GAPS

Solid foundations, meaningful gaps. A specialized partner could help close them.

Below 25

PRIORITY RISK

Your hiring approach likely has real vulnerabilities worth addressing as a priority, internally or through partnership.

B. Recruitment Partner Decision Matrix

Criteria	Large Generalist Firm	Specialized Tech & SaaS Recruiter	Internal HR
Tech/SaaS industry knowledge	Limited	Deep	Varies
Access to passive candidates	Moderate (broad but shallow)	Strong (cultivated relationships)	Limited
Off-limits list impact	Extensive (many conflicts)	Manageable (focused client base)	None
Time-to-fill	60-90+ days	30-60 days	90+ days
Cultural fit assessment	Generic	Stage- and industry-specific	Internal knowledge
Cost per hire	High (premium fees, lower success rate)	Moderate (higher success rate offsets fees)	Lower direct cost, higher indirect cost
Candidate experience	Variable	Consistent and brand-aligned	Variable
Post-placement support	Minimal	Active support	Internal
Accountability/reporting	Standardized	Customized and transparent	Internal
Understanding of your stage and culture	Surface-level	Deep and authentic	Strong

C. The ROI of Specialized Tech & SaaS Recruitment

Factor	Traditional Approach	Specialized Approach
Average time-to-fill	60-90 days	30-60 days
Productivity loss during vacancy	\$50,000-\$150,000+	Minimized through faster placement
First-year retention rate	50-60% (industry average)	80%+
Replacement cost if hire fails	50-200% of annual salary	Significantly reduced through better assessment
Interview-to-hire efficiency	20-30% of candidates interviewed	Most submitted candidates receive interviews
Access to passive candidates	Limited to job board applicants	Full market, including the 37.3% who are passive
Employer brand impact	Risk of inconsistent candidate experience	Consistent, brand-aligned representation

The direct cost of a specialized recruiter can be higher on a per-search basis. Once you factor in faster time-to-fill, higher retention, and fewer mis-hires, the total cost of hiring typically comes down while the outcomes improve. The real difference shows up in who's actually on your team a year from now.

It's Time to Rethink Your Talent Strategy

Tech and SaaS hiring in 2026 isn't a bidding war, but it isn't easy either. The candidates who can actually do the work are still passive, still hard to reach, and mis-hires are more expensive than ever when runway is tight. You have three options: keep going with an approach that isn't delivering, spend time and budget testing multiple recruiters and hoping one works out, or partner with someone who already understands your world.

If you're ready for that third option, here are two ways to start the conversation.





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Talent Needs Call

For founders and hiring leaders who need to fill a critical role now. We'll talk through your open position, what's working in your current approach, what isn't, and whether a partnership makes sense.

Leadership Call

For tech and SaaS professionals considering their next move. Whether you're stepping into a bigger scope or looking for a role that's actually the right fit, we'll help you think through the landscape.

[Book Your Call](#)

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GOOD WORK
RECRUITING

Good Work Recruiting partners with founders and hiring teams at Series A through D tech, SaaS, and startup companies to find the right hire, not just fill the seat.