



# Dice<sup>®</sup>

The leading site for quality technology and engineering candidates.

Dice is pleased to present the first in a series of articles on tech recruiting by John Vlastelica, consultant and prior technical recruiting leader with Amazon.com and AT&T Wireless. [Bio](#)

## Beyond Referral Posters: Five Steps to Getting Quality Referrals for Technical People

By John Vlastelica, Recruitment Management Consultant, [www.RivieraAdvisors.com](http://www.RivieraAdvisors.com)

Yes, you can hire an ad agency to help you create award winning employee referral posters, or give out big awards to drive awareness. But, top technical recruiters and hiring managers know that it takes a lot more than big bonuses and attractive posters to get their referral pipelines filled. Below are time-tested, practical techniques you can use — today — to generate more quality technical referrals for your organization.

### 1

#### Solicit leads and referrals from top technical performers

Top performing recruiters make referral solicitation a regular part of their week; some even carve out several hours once a week, on their calendar, to help them focus. And, rather than sending out generic “please review our open jobs and refer great people” messages to the whole company, top recruiters make very targeted referral solicitations to the technology employees who are most likely to have relationships with their target candidate.

How do you know who to target? Ask HR or tech leaders for the names of top tech performers and keep a [spreadsheet](#) of all of the tech people your team has hired in the past year (including prior company names, prior job titles, prior school experience, and any association affiliations). Then, make — via email or in-person — personalized referral solicitation requests. Let them know why they’re uniquely qualified to help identify top talent, e.g.

*Top recruiters make very targeted referral solicitations to the technology employees who are most likely to have relationships with their target candidate.*

“Based on your prior experience working at XYZ Inc...I imagine you would know someone who’d fit this profile...Who do you know that’s good at...”

Be sure to talk about more than what’s simply on the job posting — discuss why it’s critical that we hire someone with a specific background, why this position is especially challenging and interesting, and how you’ll personally reach out to anyone that they endorse or pass along.

**2**

## Reposition the way you talk about employee referrals

Yes, money can be a motivator. But it's not the only motivator. Sometimes, you can get tech people to invest more time in referrals by speaking to their sense of ownership, and their personal interest in working with quality people. Try leveraging a theme like...“Help hand pick the people you work with.”

It speaks directly to their desire to work with quality tech people that they respect and can learn from. And it reinforces the culture of recruiting ownership and accountability that great companies strive for.

**3**

## Move beyond New Hire Orientation Announcements

New Hire Orientation is overwhelming. It's fine to talk about your employee referral program and bonus eligibility. But it's not really the best time to generate quality referrals. Brand new employees are in information-overload mode, and don't know the organization — or its culture — well enough yet to make great referrals. So, what can you do?

Try scheduling a monthly — or quarterly — meeting with all of the recent tech hires. Get your tech VP to send out the invitation — and include “free pizza” — so that attendance is high. The agenda should include:

- an organizational overview by the VP,
- a discussion of critical technology projects in the coming year,
- critical recruiting goals,
- general Q&A about the company, and
- an introduction to the role each employee can play to help build the company.

*Schedule a monthly meeting with recent tech hires to get referrals.*

You co-lead this meeting, and come armed with a [“leads and referrals” request form](#) that you hand out to each attendee. Be sure to ask each employee to differentiate whether they're making a referral (someone they endorse) or passing along a lead (someone they know by reputation only). Additionally, find out whether you can use their name when making contact.

Once the tech VP finishes introductions (and learns where each person worked) and finishes talking about the organization and key recruiting goals for each department, you jump in and talk about how each person can help to build a great company. Promise to follow up with each employee after they complete their form to talk about the best way to approach these leads and referrals.

**4**

## Encourage your tech employees to leverage their own networks

How? First, you can ask to be a guest speaker at tech departmental staff meetings. Bring a list of some of the places you've hired people from...specific industries, companies, schools. Then ask the team to think about their current networks, and — just as important — what they're doing to grow their networks. Ask people whether they regularly:

- attend user group meetings,
- participate in alumni networks,
- use tools like linkedin.com,
- attend conferences, or
- read or write technical blogs

Help them to think about how they can leverage their relationships outside of work to generate quality tech leads and referrals.

Second, arm them with the tools they need. Create a template email that they can send to their network, which includes:

- a quick company overview,
- a description of critical tech jobs,
- an overview of the meaty tech challenges that exist here,
- links to articles on the web that highlight why your company is great, and
- your personal contact information.

Make it easy for them to help, and they will.



## Reward good referral behavior and performance

We need to take the lead to publicly recognize employees who make quality referrals that get hired. Beyond the bonus your company may offer, find ways to reinforce employees who make time to help build the company.

Ideally, get your tech VP a list of all of the referrals made each month, and shadow-write a “thank you” note that he or she can send out to the employee and the employee’s direct manager. Or, when it’s performance review time, send a note to top-referring employees and their managers, recognizing the extra effort they put in over the past year to help recruit great people.

The key is to reward good behavior, publicly. Send a message that people who make time to refer quality employees are not only making money, but they’re doing their jobs and spending their time wisely.

*Companies that employ these techniques regularly see more than 1/3 of their hires from employee referrals.*

## Summary

Outside of \$50 for pizza, none of the tips above require you to spend additional money. Yes, it may take a few hours each week to generate additional quality referrals. But, it’s time well spent. Companies that employ these techniques regularly see more than 1/3 of their hires from employee referrals. The key is to focus on those efforts that generate quality — not just quantity — referrals.



Copyright: John Vlastelica, Recruitment Management Consultant, Riviera Advisors, Inc.  
Redmond, Washington john@rivieraadvisors.com 800-635-9063 [www.rivieraadvisors.com](http://www.rivieraadvisors.com)

Riviera Advisors is a group of like-minded, nationally-focused corporate recruitment management consultants. We help corporate staffing teams improve their in-house recruiting capabilities through the design and deployment of best-in-class recruiting strategies, processes, tools, and training.