

'Old' developers are in demand at this tech company. You'll never believe the job post.

After a year of hiring freezes and layoffs, companies have ramped up hiring in recent months and developers are in high demand. An active job post for a software developer has stirred up a conversation surrounding ageist hiring practices in the tech sector; specifically, and not-so-subtly, calling out Silicon Valley. Turns out, one company is looking for experienced developers regardless of age; yes, even the "old" ones.

"Older workers often get left behind, especially when it comes to fast-changing tech roles as very few organizations actively engage this talent demographic," said Jamie Kohn, research director in the Gartner HR practice.

Calling all "old" developers: Experience desired

On Wednesday [August 25], Fast Company reported on the job post and the resulting community conversation on a news forum. Initially, the job post seems innocuous enough, but the kicker comes at the end, as the company notes the importance of experience and anti-ageist practices: "Unlike Silicon Valley, we do not discriminate based on age. Experience matters. We hire old people. (And young people, too.)"

The post has stirred up quite the conversation on the forum with plenty of fanfare to boot.

"I cannot stress how important the message RelevantDB is sending in this job post is in today's world," said Michael LaPlaca, senior talent acquisition partner at Envoy Global.

"I've worked with software engineering teams in almost every major market in the US, but even here in the Midwest, I personally know developers that feel like they're the oldest person in the company, much less the oldest person on the developer team," LaPlaca continued.

So, what motivated the company to make a point of highlighting Silicon Valley hiring practices with an impetus on experience regardless of age in the job post?

"I wrote the ad. Holy cow, I didn't expect to be #1 on Hacker News. Will answer any questions. Here's one you might ask: Why? I'm pushing 60 and I've attempted to interview for developer jobs over the last year. Got nowhere despite 40 years of experience. Getting really, really tired of this industry's attitude toward people like me," wrote ccleve on the forum.

Next, ccleve provides further clarity on the post and provides a personal testimonial related to the application and hiring process in the tech sector.

"Earlier this year I had a personal referral into Facebook for a developer position. They do hiring centrally," ccleve posted. "A very young person in the HR department spoke to me, put me in the central database, and apparently shopped my experience around to a number of different groups. No takers. No one wanted to interview me, so the application died. Never did a tech assessment."

"So now I've started a new group, and I expect this thing is going to generate a lot more money than any work at Facebook ever would. So Facebook did me a favor. Still, it rankles," the post continued.

TechRepublic reached out to RelevantDB to understand why the company chose to mention hiring "old" developers in this job listing. Chris Cleveland CEO of RelevantDB said that "older developers are undervalued" and "often excluded for cultural reasons or for reasons of 'fit'."

"This presents a market opportunity for us. We care about a developer's ability to write code. If we can pick up good coders that other firms reject, then we have a competitive advantage," Cleveland said.

"We do not discriminate, and will hire people of any age who can do the work well. Silicon Valley does discriminate, blatantly and often openly. So much the better for us," Cleveland said.

Rankings and market advantages aside, how does the average age of a tech sector employee compare to other industries?

Citing Gartner research, Kohn, the HR analyst, explained that one-quarter of websites for the S&P 100 included "content specifically intended for later career professionals," compared to 89% with "content for university students."

"This sends a powerful signal that older workers are not valued equally," Kohn continued.

Similarly, a 2017 Visier report determined that "the average tech worker is 38 years old, compared to 43 years old for non-tech workers" and there are similar trends on the managerial side. For example, the average tech industry manager was 42; five years younger than averages in non-technology industries, according to Visier.

"Ageism in the tech industry is no new phenomenon. Our research uncovered that although technology companies rated Gen X and Baby Boomers workers' performance higher than their non-technology counterparts, tech organizations' hiring decisions still favor Millennials," said Paul Rubenstein, chief people officer at Visier.

To help companies onboard top talent and reduce the risk of ageism in a company's hiring practices, Rubenstein outlined a series of steps to keep in mind, this includes reviewing "workforce data to understand the ongoing state of age equity."

Additionally, he said companies could incorporate "a version of the Rooney Rule for age," specifically among teams or positions with less age diversity. For each open position, he suggested considering at least one older candidate or "candidates that will help create a more diverse team, in general."

Developer hiring trends and retirees

Software developers have been in high demand in recent months. A portion of CompTIA's latest Tech Jobs Report for August details hiring trends for tech positions across industries. Overall, software developers topped the list with 99,012 positions as of July, and this total increased by 3,451 from June to July.

Amid a tight labor market and speculated Great Resignation, employers are pulling out all of the stops to meet staffing needs. Interestingly, there may be a new pool of experienced talent for hiring managers to consider as remote work has piqued the interest of some retirees. A survey published in March found that nearly half of retirees (45%) had applied for remote jobs or gigs and 29.5% rated the prospect of remote work as very appealing.

"Companies should not overlook older workers as overqualified or out of touch. Older workers have a wealth of transferable skills," Kohn said. "Not only do they know how to get things done, but they know how to work with other people. They've also shown they can pick up new skills and build on them throughout their career."

Looking for a software developer job?

For those seeking employment, the RelevantDB job post says the company is "developing a new way to search data" and is seeking developers with "knowledge of Postgres internals and experience writing extensions or modifications to Postgres itself."

The post says potential candidates "must have sample code in C that [the company] can look at," noting that if all of a person's sample code is proprietary, RelevantDB "may have you write some code" for them. The position will also "involve mentoring us and getting us up to speed on this very large and complex codebase."

Remember, the company says it does not "discriminate based on age" and the post also discourages recruiters. Contact information is noted in the listing.

Region	August 2020	July 2021	August 2021	Percentage Point Change	
				1 month	12 months
San José–Sunnyvale MSA	8.2%	5.0%	4.8%	- 0.2	- 3.4
San Francisco MD	9.1%	5.1%	4.8%	- 0.3	- 4.3
California	12.3%	7.9%	7.5%	- 0.4	- 4.8
United States	8.5%	5.7%	5.3%	- 0.4	- 3.2

Sector — August 2021	San Jose MSA	San Francisco MD	Combined Region	Percentage Change (Combined Region)	
				1 month	12 months
Total Nonfarm	1,099,700	1,100,000	2,199,700	+ 0.6%	+ 5.0%
Construction	50,600	42,500	93,100	+ 0.2%	- 2.9%
Manufacturing	173,500	37,200	210,700	+ 1.1%	+ 2.2%
Retail Trade	72,300	67,700	140,000	- 1.3%	+ 2.2%
Information	110,600	111,800	222,400	+ 0.6%	+ 4.1%
Professional & Business Services	243,500	292,600	536,100	+ 0.3%	+ 4.9%
Educational Services	39,400	27,600	67,000	+ 1.4%	- 0.6%
Health Care & Social Assistance	134,900	114,900	249,800	- 0.9%	+ 4.7%
Leisure & Hospitality	77,700	104,100	181,800	+ 2.1%	+ 35.2%
Government	87,100	119,500	206,600	+ 1.5%	- 4.1%

Note: San José MSA (San José–Sunnyvale–Santa Clara Metropolitan Statistical Area) = Santa Clara and San Benito Counties
San Francisco MD (San Francisco–Redwood City–South San Francisco Metropolitan Division) = San Mateo and San Francisco Counties

Source: California Employment Development Department, LMID

9-County San Francisco Bay Area	Labor Force			Employed			Unemployment		
	August 2020	August 2021	Change	August 2020	August 2021	Change	August 2020	August 2021	Change
California	18,690,500	19,024,400	+ 1.8%	16,390,600	17,600,200	+ 7.4%	12.3%	7.5%	- 4.8
Alameda County	803,800	807,100	+ 0.4%	718,900	757,000	+ 5.3%	10.6%	6.2%	- 4.4
Contra Costa County	534,100	538,500	+ 0.8%	477,900	503,500	+ 5.4%	10.5%	6.5%	- 4.0
Marin County	128,100	133,600	+ 4.3%	118,100	127,700	+ 8.1%	7.8%	4.4%	- 3.4
Napa County	68,400	71,000	+ 3.8%	62,000	67,100	+ 8.2%	9.3%	5.5%	- 3.8
San Francisco County	546,600	557,500	+ 2.0%	493,700	529,600	+ 7.3%	9.7%	5.0%	- 4.7
San Mateo County	424,600	438,000	+ 3.2%	389,400	417,700	+ 7.3%	8.3%	4.6%	- 3.7
Santa Clara County	1,009,000	1,024,200	+ 1.5%	927,000	975,500	+ 5.2%	8.1%	4.8%	- 3.3
Solano County	200,400	203,500	+ 1.5%	178,500	188,600	+ 5.7%	11.0%	7.3%	- 3.7
Sonoma County	243,400	248,700	+ 2.2%	222,300	235,500	+ 5.9%	8.7%	5.3%	- 3.4
SF Bay Area (sum)	3,958,400	4,022,100	+ 1.6%	3,587,800	3,802,200	+ 6.0%	9.4%	5.5%	- 3.9

Note: Totals may not add correctly due to rounding

Source: California Employment Development Department, LMID

August 2021 Layoff Events	Company	Location	# Affected	WARN SUMMARY	
				Events YTD †	3
<p>No reported layoff events in August 2021</p>				Individuals Affected YTD :	337
				Individuals Previous YTD ‡:	4,956
				<p>* WARN: Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (notice of mass layoff or closure)</p> <p>† YTD: Year to Date (Program year: July 1–present)</p> <p>‡ Previous YTD: (Same date range as YTD, one year prior)</p>	

Source: California EDD, CalJOBS: WARN data