DuckDuckGo Culture: How We Hire

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How We Hire

Growing our team is crucial to advancing our vision of raising the standard of trust online.
We have a unique opportunity to show the world that protecting privacy is simple and drive a major change in how the Internet is used. There is so much we want to build! To accomplish this, we need to add to our team of hardworking, self-motivated people who share our vision.

We know hiring works best when it's a two-way street — we want you to be able to make a well-informed decision (along with us). That's why our hiring process includes touchpoints that help you get to know our company culture and envision what to expect in your future role at DuckDuckGo.

Our hiring process generally consists of six stages, including two paid projects (or up to three for higher level roles), and usually takes anytime from several weeks to a couple of months, depending on how fast each stage is completed:

What are test projects?

Test projects are role-related assignments that simulate work you'd actually do at DuckDuckGo. They reveal the kinds of challenges you can expect to face on the job and provide an opportunity to showcase your best work. At DuckDuckGo, we know that job satisfaction impacts overall happiness and well-being, and test projects can also help you assess role fit to make the right job decision with high confidence.

All test projects are paid, role-specific, and completed asynchronously on your own time. We won't ask you to perform tasks under the stress of live interviews (e.g., live coding), assign general brain teasers, or ask you to solve purely academic puzzles, all of which often set candidates up for failure.

Why do you use test projects?

We view hiring decisions as long-term investments in our team, and test projects enable us to make these decisions with high confidence. Research indicates that traditional interviews are extremely prone to bias and unreliable predictors of future employee success or satisfaction. In contrast, work-sample tests are reported to be more accurate predictors of future performance.

We're proud of the long-term outcomes of our hiring process. As of February 2021, team members retain at an average rate of 95% annually. In a 2020 company-wide survey, team members reported a level of engagement at 88%, 16% above our industry's benchmark.

How do you create and evaluate test projects?

Test projects are designed to evaluate skills, competencies, and essential functions required to succeed in a given role. Many are inspired by scenarios that team members have encountered in the past, but all test projects represent the types of challenges you can expect to face in your role at DuckDuckGo.

For example, every engineering candidate's first test project includes sharing an example of a significant project they led or contributed to. Because all roles at DuckDuckGo require autonomous project management, no matter how impressive a candidate's engineering skills are, DuckDuckGo wouldn't be the best fit if they struggle with project management.

Once we receive your test project submission, we'll pass it to an appointed group of reviewers for evaluation. Reviewers evaluate your submission against a clearly defined rubric of role-specific competencies and broader skills required to succeed in a given role. This approach further reduces bias and ensures reviewers can assess your work objectively.

How do I get paid for the test projects?

When you receive the test project brief, we'll include the compensation amount you can expect upon completion and delivery. You'll work independently to complete each test project without any oversight from us. Within 30 days of each test project's timely submission, we pay a one-time, flat fee via PayPal.

While we offer compensation, test project work and completion of test projects do not create an employment relationship between you and DuckDuckGo or guarantee employment with DuckDuckGo.

What happens at other stages of the hiring process?

We strive to conduct an initial review of all applications within 7 days, and we always get back to you with our decision.

If your application meets our requirements for the role you applied for, you'll meet over Zoom with one of our Talent Acquisition Managers for 20-30 minutes. During the call, we'll provide more context about the role you applied for and about DuckDuckGo in general. You'll have the opportunity to tell us about your career trajectory and interest in DuckDuckGo. We may ask you some standard role-related questions, and we'll answer any pressing questions you may have.

If your first test project passes our requirements, you'll usually meet with another member of the DuckDuckGo team to discuss your project submission, your professional experience, and answer any more questions you may have.

Should you continue through the hiring process to the final round of interviews, you'll meet with a member of our leadership team you'd likely interact with regularly once you join and — when applying for leadership roles — with Gabriel (our CEO & Founder). These conversations allow you to get to know our leadership and ask any outstanding questions that will help you make a well-informed decision. They also enable everyone (both candidates and DuckDuckGo) to validate alignment on mutual expectations.

What timeframes to expect?

Depending on the role, candidates can anticipate investing 5-10 hours to complete their first test project over 7 days. Completing the second test project may require an additional 5 to 20 hours over another 7 to 14 days.

We understand that investing time in test projects on top of other work or personal obligations can be daunting. In line with our core value of building trust, we strive to give you the information you need upfront to help you decide whether you should invest the time.

Prior to your initial chat with Talent Acquisition, we'll share compensation for the role you applied for, and we'll address any other critical questions in that initial conversation. We're also happy to accommodate individual circumstances that may justify or warrant timeline adjustments for each hiring stage (within reason), e.g., extending a test project deadline. It's also within your discretion to take breaks between process steps; for instance, we'll give you the option to decide when to begin each test project (within a project window).

After each stage of the hiring process, we'll usually deliver a decision within 2-3 business days. If time is a determining factor for you (e.g., you have another offer on the table), it's possible to breeze through the entire process within three weeks by turning around test projects swiftly and running interviews in parallel. Just as we allow flexibility to extend the timeline when such extension is warranted, we'd love for you to let us know if you'd prefer to expedite the process. That said, we do not skip stages, in order to ensure that the hiring process remains fair for all candidates.

Join our team!

We hope this gives you insight into how we approach growing our fully distributed team. If you have questions, or need a reasonable accommodation to participate in our hiring process (e.g., due to a disability) please reach out to us at careers@duckduckgo.com. Excited about the prospect of joining our team? Head to https://duckduckgo.com/hiring#open and submit your application!

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