



numuun
TALENT = GROWTH

GUIDE TO HIRING A CTO

—

THE DO'S AND DON'TS

numuun.io

Launching a successful startup is hard

Founders have *more than enough* to worry about with getting their product and offering right, raising funds from investors, becoming profitable, moving fast enough not to miss a market opportunity, and a whole bunch of other stuff.

The reasons for startups failing are well documented.. Just hit a google search and you will find pages and pages of information on this.

Here at Numuun.io - we believe that well over 50% of the top 20 reasons startups fail *can be directly attributed to hiring the wrong team.*

The barriers to founder success are already significant and become larger still when you add...

finding the right people

&

building the right tech

That is why we started Numuun.io - to *help founders and tech company execs* navigate the path to hiring great people and building awesome and scalable platforms.

Hiring a CTO

Do's and Don'ts

“As soon as your startup starts feeling growing pains, or you need to make major technical decisions, hiring a CTO is in order... For startups, the difference between a great CTO and a poor one can be a make-or-break issue.” - Founders Network

This is great advice from the Founders network, however in a dynamic and rapidly growing market like the MENA region, good techies at all levels are in **high demand** and **short supply**.

Coupled with this, hiring positions such as a **CTO** for the first time can be an incredibly **daunting task** and many founders have trouble making sense of where or how to start.

Hiring is expensive, but making the wrong hire can set you back significantly, sometimes beyond rescue.

Here at **numuun.io** we have a deep understanding of the process for both hiring for **technical leaders** and building a **scalable tech platform**.

To help you on this journey, we have put together a short guide with some of the key considerations you need, to take that critical step of hiring a CTO to take your startup **to the next level**..

Hiring a CTO - WHY

A good CTO is essential for the ongoing success of your startup, however hiring a CTO at the wrong time, for the wrong reasons, or hiring the wrong person can damage a startups chance of success.

It's important to understand the difference between hiring someone to lead your current software development activities, and **hiring a true CTO**.

Key to this is really getting the bottom of what your current requirements are and making the right appointment to service that requirement.

Do's

- Understand the business case for tech and how it supports your startups continued development
- Understand the complexity of the tech platform you need to build, does it require a full time CTO now? If not now then when?
- Understand what your requirements are RIGHT NOW, versus where you want to be in 12-24 months
- Build a roadmap for technology and sequence your technical hires in line with your milestones

Don'ts

- Spend all your money on a good CTO
- Hire a CTO because someone told you to
- Hire a CTO to make your pitch deck to look good for investors
- Hire a CTO to fix problems with the business model
- Buy into the narrative that you MUST have a CTO

Hiring a CTO - WHAT

Once you have worked out **Why** you need a CTO, you can then work out **What** you need.

There are **many options**, but pragmatism should be a central consideration to how you solve your tech build.

Another essential element to work out the **What**, *especially if you don't have technical expertise* to the appropriate level in the business, is to **leverage expert advisors** to evaluate and validate the specific technical expertise and leadership qualities needed for your organization.

Other than hiring a CTO, your options include:

- Lead / Head of Engineering
- Fractional CTO
- Interim CTO
- Outsourced team

Do's

- Utilize advisors to help quantify your current and near future business needs
- Consider all options, weigh the pros and cons of each option against the other before making a decision
- Develop an understanding of the market, what type of talent is available, the cost and likelihood of successfully hiring your ideal candidate
- Consider interim or fractional options to bridge the gap until you can find or afford a CTO

Don'ts

- Hire a less experienced engineer and immediately give them a CTO title
- Hire the first engineer you meet
- Expect someone from a big brand (FAANG) to be a natural fit in an early stage company

Hiring a CTO - WHO

Once you have determined the **Why** and the **What**, you can move on to the **Who**.

From here, you can evaluate whether:

- a junior or seasoned CTO is the **right fit** based on the complexity of the technical challenges and the stage of your company's growth
- an engineer with some guidance from a fractional CTO or advisor is best
- outsourcing tech or using freelancer is the most practical approach
- Going all in on a full CTO hire for your startup is indeed the best idea

Do's

- It's unlikely you will find **or** afford exactly who you want. *Stack rank your requirements* - top 2-3 should be non negotiable, everything below that will be "nice to haves"
- Explore as many options as you can, build an understanding of the market and available talent
- Leverage expertise from advisors, mentors, skilled recruiters or other connections within the startup ecosystem

Don'ts

- Start an interview process without being able to objectively assess candidates
- Give away the CTO title too early
- Outsource without technical oversight or a technical advisor
- Expect to find the perfect candidate

Hiring a CTO - WHEN

Align the timing of hiring a CTO with the **growth stage** of your company, ensuring that the leadership team has the necessary support for current and future technical challenges and that you have sufficient runway.

A good CTO will take this into account before taking a decision on joining any business, so it's very important to make sure you are across this information, have a clear runway / path to profitability, and actually have enough work for a CTO to get into..

Do's

- Consider hiring a CTO when embarking on strategic initiatives, such as product launches, technology upgrades, or expansion into new markets
- Ensure the financial readiness of the organization, including having the budget for a CTO's salary and the necessary resources to support their initiatives

Don'ts

- Hiring an expensive option too early
- Leaving it too late, building too much technical debt
- Expect a CTO to come in and immediately fix ALL the problems with tech

Hiring a CTO - HOW

Recruitment agencies, executive search companies, internal Talent Acquisition teams, referrals, conferences, networking sessions, direct sourcing (hitting up people on linkedin) and serendipity are all valid channels for hiring a CTO.

Try to experiment with a few different modes, if you have time.

If time is a critical factor, often a good executive or tech leadership search partner will be able to give you a good understanding of the talent landscape both locally, regionally and globally.. as well as advise you on the price points and availability of different archetypes of candidates.

Do's

- Objective hiring process, based on Why, What and Who. Use competency & scenario based questioning, scorecards and technical advisors in the process
- Outsource technical assessment to an advisor, mentor, fractional CTO or consultant, if you don't have the skills to screen for that inhouse
- Define an interview process and stick to it
- Conduct thorough reference checks

Don'ts

- Start looking before you have answer all the above considerations
- Hire candidates without taking references
- Rely too much on gut feel or emotions
- Take too long to make a decision when you do find the right candidate
- Engage too many vendors at once
- Hire a junior recruiter as your Head of Talent and expect them to solve all your hiring headaches

Hiring a CTO - Fractional CTOs

One of the more recent trends in global startups is to hire **fractional leadership** to help you achieve business objectives, without over committing to expensive senior hires.

This can be applied to most business functions, and in the case of technology this is often one of the **most efficient** methods to ensure you are building the correct technology stack for your business, whilst managing your cost base and burn rate.

Hiring a Fractional CTO will allow you to trust that junior engineers or vendors are providing quality code, start building a long term technology roadmap and ensure reliability when you are going to market.

They can also provide reassurance to investors that tech is not a blind spot for the founding team and also be an indispensable part of the process to raise funds or hire a full time CTO.

Fractional leadership and hands-on advisory work is relevant to startups and scaleups at every stage of growth

They allow founders to make informed decisions, from an expert knowledge base, without having to over commit capital to access that expertise.

Hiring a CTO - Summary

Making the right decision for your company, whether it's hiring a CTO or any other position, is a *challenging task*.

However, there are many ways to solve for this and defining your rationale for...

Bringing great talent into your business

Quantifying the Why, What, When, Who and How

Exploring a variety of approaches

...will help you understand what is the best approach for your company.

**Running a startup is hard,
but you don't have to do it alone..
we are here to help at every step**

Numuun.io

Meet the Team

Sam Randall

CEO & Founder
sam@numuun.io



Sam has 12 years in Executive Search helping venture backed technology companies build great teams. He is also the co-founder of a successful B2B SaaS company in Singapore.

He launched Numuun.io to help startups in the MENA region navigate the tricky path to success.

Wael Zeenni

Co-founder
Fractional CTO
wael@numuun.io



Born and raised in the UAE, Wael started his path into technology at the early age of thirteen. He currently codes in over 10 languages, works in multiple cloud environments and has built and mentored teams of developers.

He has founded two tech startups (one exit) and it was during those years that Wael discovered his love of startups and co-founded Numuun.io to advise early stage companies on how to build fantastic products in the best way possible.

Numuun.io is an innovative tech and talent platform

We are HQd in the UAE with experience working with startups across APAC, MENA & Europe.

We combine expertise in **executive search** for startups, with **fractional technical leadership** and advisory to offer founders a pragmatic range of solutions to give you everything you need to crush -

finding the right people
&
building the right tech

Get in touch for a free,
1 hour consulting session.

sam@numuun.io

www.numuun.io