DOLBY

How A Technology Leader Recruits Top Talent: Dolby's Evolved Hiring Process

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Stephen Byrne

Lead Recruitment Manager,
Dolby Laboratories Australia

Stephen Byrne, the lead Recruiting Manager at Dolby Laboratories Australia, and his team of engineers were looking for a way to streamline their hiring process. At the forefront of creating and delivering one-of-a-kind entertainment experiences, Dolby attracts a wide pool of applicants – from fresh out of college to seasoned senior level engineers – and Stephen's group wanted a more efficient way to assess hard skills during the interview process.

"The people who work at Dolby are genuinely interested in their work and they're also motivated by the people around them. We want our employees to be engaged in evaluating candidates and do it in a way that doesn't take up a lot of time."

About Dolby

- Founded in 1965, Dolby was born out of its founder's passion for connecting science and art. The present-day company reflects the innovative and creative vision of its namesake. True to its origins, Dolby continues to produce cutting-edge audio and visual technologies that enhance and transform storytelling, entertainment and media.

- From the cinema to the living room, Dolby has transformed the entertainment experience. Today, Dolby technologies can be found in movie theaters, professional recording studios, video games, laser discs, DVDs, mobile media, digital broadcast TV, digital cable, and satellite systems.

- The 50-year story of Dolby Laboratories is defined by advancement in entertainment technology. As Dolby continues to lead and innovate on the cutting edge of technology, its need to assess and evolve its employee recruiting tools has never been more important.

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The Challenges of Scaling and Assessing Talent

A forward-thinking mentality is baked into Dolby's culture across departments and functions. From audio and video enhancement to recruiting and hiring, Dolby's willingness to experiment with different tools and technologies has led to breakthroughs not only across its major product lines but also in recruiting and retaining stellar talent.

Dolby is rigorous in how it evaluates candidates and live coding has traditionally been an integral piece of the initial screening. Figuring out the best way to engage engineers into the recruiting process while optimizing their time was critical.

"Dolby is somewhat niche in terms of the employee skill set – we recruit top-performing engineers who are passionate about audio devices and

we need tools to determine if they are skilled enough to work for Dolby." says Stephen.

"We used live coding exercises with engineers where candidates could interact with them in real-time. Of course, there was a tradeoff of time spent on that exercise."

While looking for tools that could take its tech hiring to the next level, the engineers on the Dolby Australia team discovered Codility and decided to give it a test run. Codility appealed to the team as a tool that could save time and streamline the assessment process.

"We had an initial trial, we gave it to our engineers and said to go and play with it, try to break it. We created a bunch of initial tests that we found useful as we began incorporating Codility into our hiring processes."
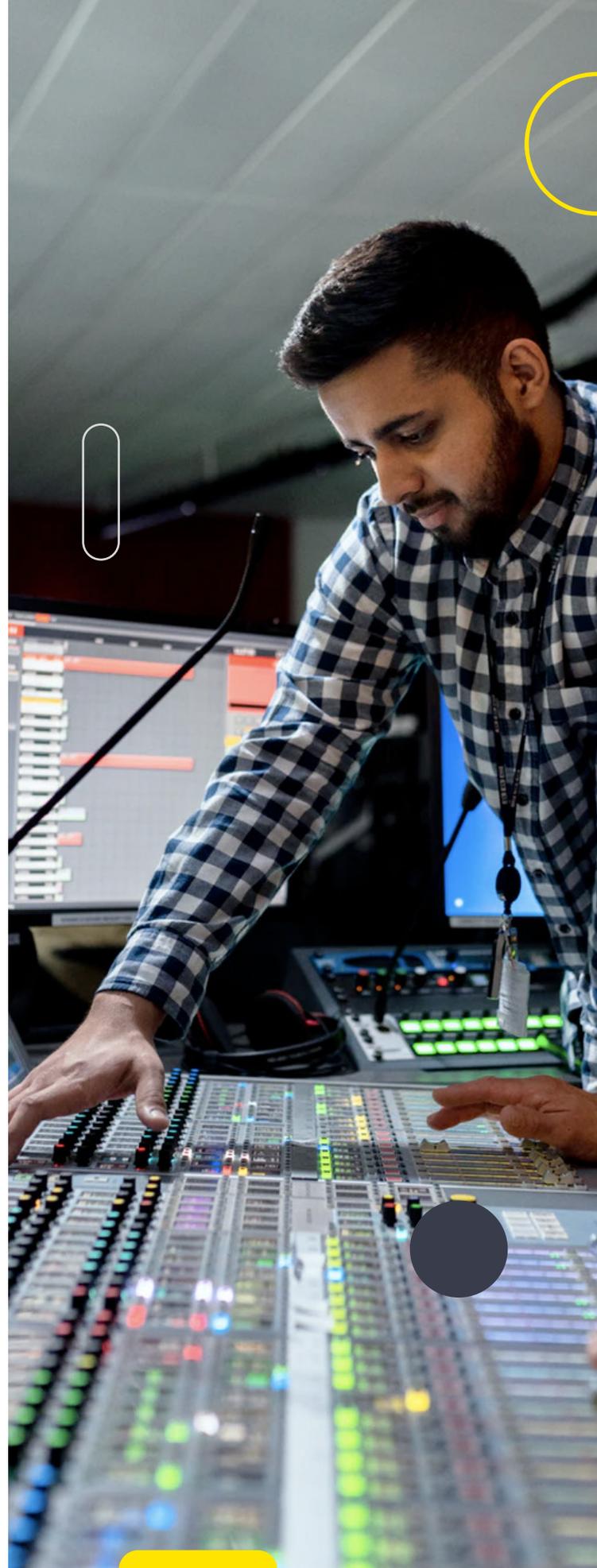
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Rolling out a new tool: challenges and learnings

01 With a high volume of applicants, ensuring engineers are engaged in the process is keys - alignment at the start leads to saved time

02 Adapting a new tool to existing processes and establishing new workflows at the early stages of the recruitment funnel

03 Removing personal bias from the hiring process by making sure that screening is based on data-driven decisions

04 Checking proficiency both in low-level and high-level languages was one of the key challenges to adapt to the new way of screening candidates

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What changed after implementing Codility?

First steps, setting up CodeCheck assessments

Dolby initially planned to send everyone a Codility test, look at results, compare candidates and pick the most promising ones. They learned that there were better approaches.

Getting a test straight out of the gate without any contact or context wasn't good from a candidate experience standpoint. "Let's use it when it does us the most good. We use it in conjunction with a phone interview now. It's important to have a strategy. It's easy to get it wrong without one."

Establishing good practices and fine-tuning tests

Is there a good correlation between Codility score and what a candidate brings onsite with him? There is, yet a test is not going to give you all the answers.

"Sometimes you have social factors when someone comes to the interview and has to code on a whiteboard; it's different than a code editor or development environment, which can be very hard for introverted people."

"Codility is an accurate representation of coding skills - it's more accurate than standing in front of different people coding on a whiteboard."

Dolby tends to focus their whiteboard sessions on more general, systems-based questions to see how they approach problems and how they solve problems and create workarounds. It's a representation of real life problems that they will face while working at Dolby.

"Codility has created another lens for us to assess candidates and therefore helps us to continue recruiting best-in-class engineering talent"

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Results

University recruiting and entry level recruiting was positively impacted once Codility joined forces with Dolby's internal hiring efforts - "it's amazing for high volume to filter out candidates, ultimately becomes a time vs numbers thing."

Another benefit is that you can uncover candidates without great resumes but who have the necessary skills - minimizing bias and being more fair in evaluation of candidates.

80%

Would recommend
Dolby as a great
place to work

81%

Are motivated to do
their best work here

88%

Are proud
to work here

"It's just a good time saver across the board. Saves engineering team time (they can focus on other things, have insights about candidates they can ask as well)." Stephen sums up.

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What's next in Dolby's plan?

01

Adapting to developer needs to attract the best talent

It's a very competitive marketplace. Really understanding your brand and telling a story is increasingly important to source talent in those areas. Remote being increasingly something that Dolby looks at. That's something that changed over the last few years. We are in the middle of that journey, there is a core team that is in the office and engineers in Sydney prefer to collaborate in-house but the need for flexibility is growing, we are exploring it more as a business.

02

Creating a diverse workplace by local engagement

A diverse and inclusive workforce is a core priority for Dolby. While statically women aren't well represented in the world of audio engineering, Dolby is working to change this throughout its organization. In Sydney specifically, the recruiting team is outreaching and partnering with universities, high schools and middle schools to promote STEM subjects and generate an interest in engineering at an early age.

"We have incredible engineering leaders who are women and we want to continue growing our pool of diverse talent. We want to empower female engineers across cultures to grow their careers at Dolby."
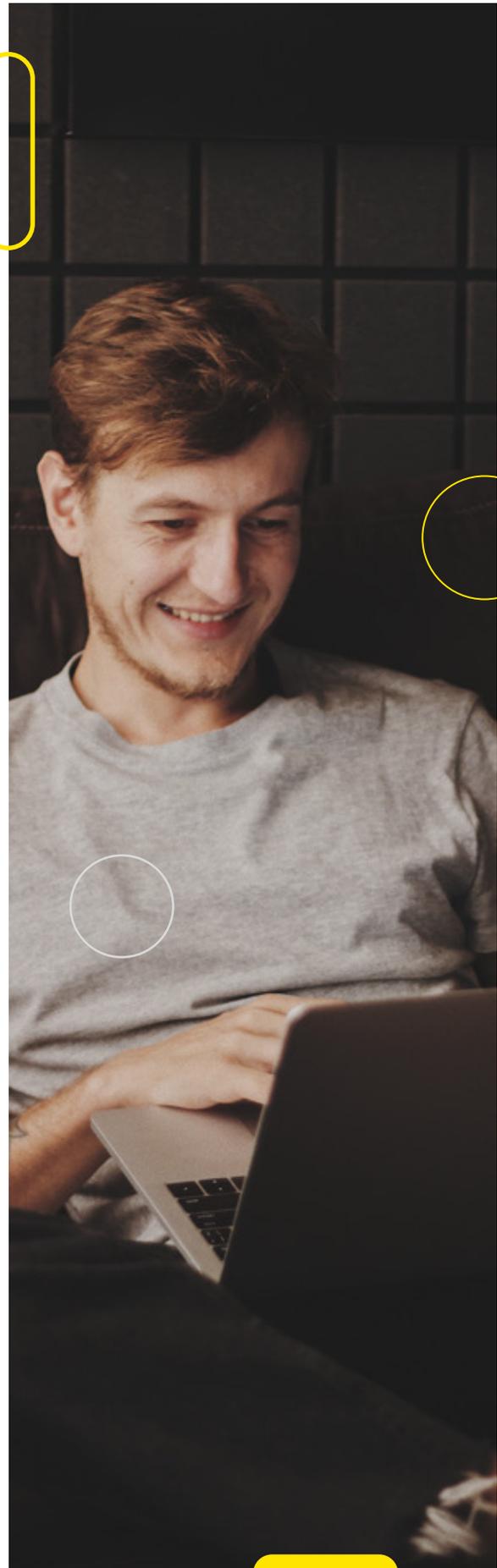
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# What are the biggest tech hiring trends that will come soon?

We asked Stephen about his predictions on how will tech hiring change in the coming months and years - this is what he thinks will be relevant to all companies hiring software engineers.

Dolby utilizes all of those technologies to create state of the art products and technologies, like Hybrik which provides media analysis and quality control to ascertain whether content coming into your workflows meets your standards and ensure that every file you deliver is perfect.

Cloud Computing, AI, Machine Learning and IoT skills

"One of the big trends here in Sydney is Cloud Computing, that's a big skillset sought after, AI and Machine Learning, IoT are key growth areas too, emerging tech trends are those I think. There are very exciting times, Dolby starts to dive deeper into those too."
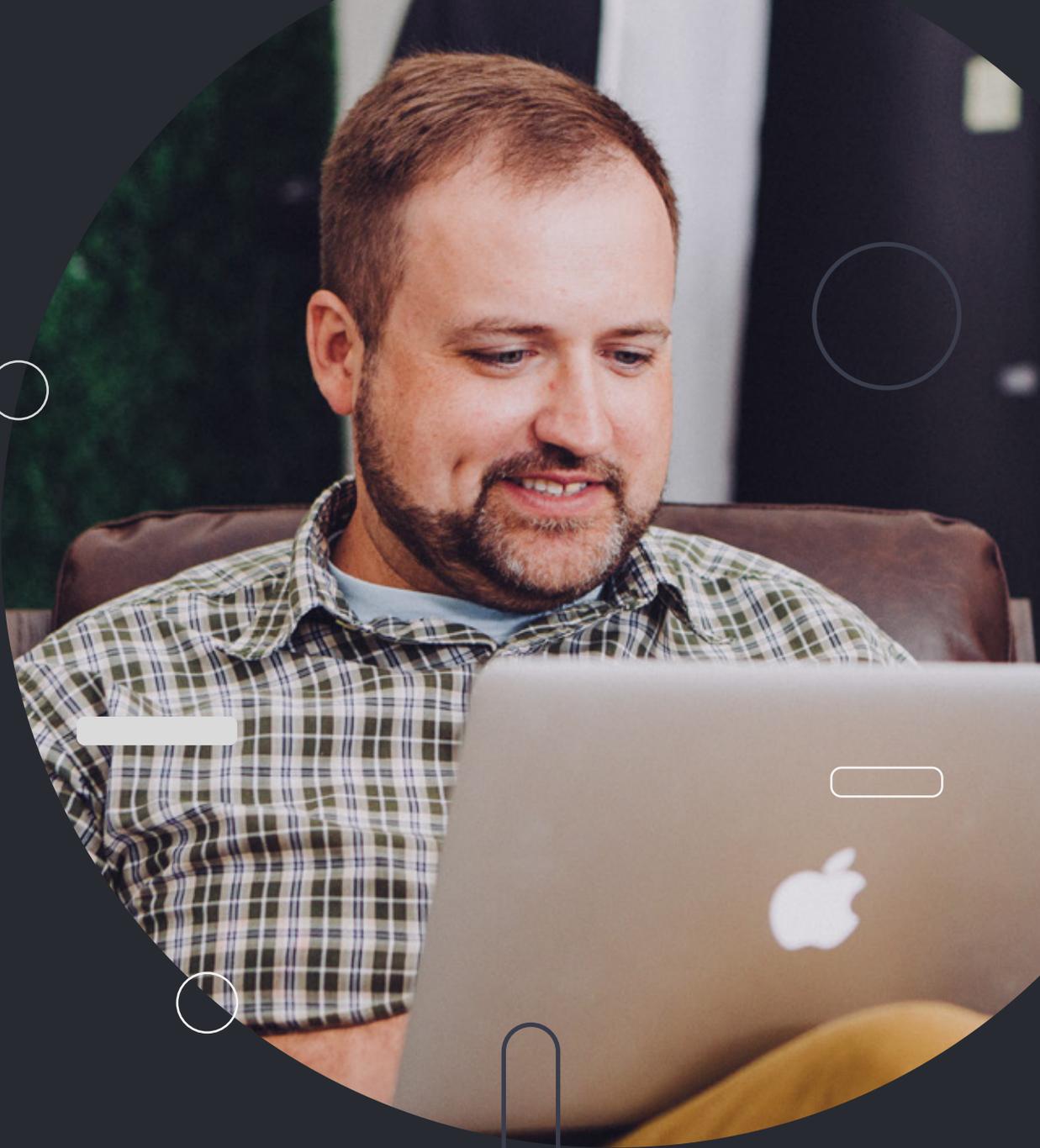
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You'll find more guides, case studies, and datasheets to help you refactor your tech recruiting on the resources section of our website

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