

It Takes Two to Make a Thing Go Right: Support for Junior Developers in the Workplace



Amy Vaillancourt-Sals

amy@thinkshout.com

@AmyVSHorn



Epicodus



Why Hire Junior Devs?



- Challenging to find senior developers
- Cost benefits
- Productivity benefits
- Seniors were once juniors too
- Consistent cultural environment
- Loyalty



“The bottom line is that for most products, seeking out rockstar senior engineers is like hiring Picasso to paint your apartment”

- Quote by Avi Flombaum

Dean of The Flatiron School
& CTO of Designer Pages



Questions for Mentors

- Are there things I do that make your job of managing/mentoring me easier?
- Is there more I can do to help make your job of managing/mentoring me even easier?
- Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Questions for Juniors

- Do you feel supported at work? Please elaborate.
- Do you have any suggestions for your mentors/managers on additional ways they can support you?

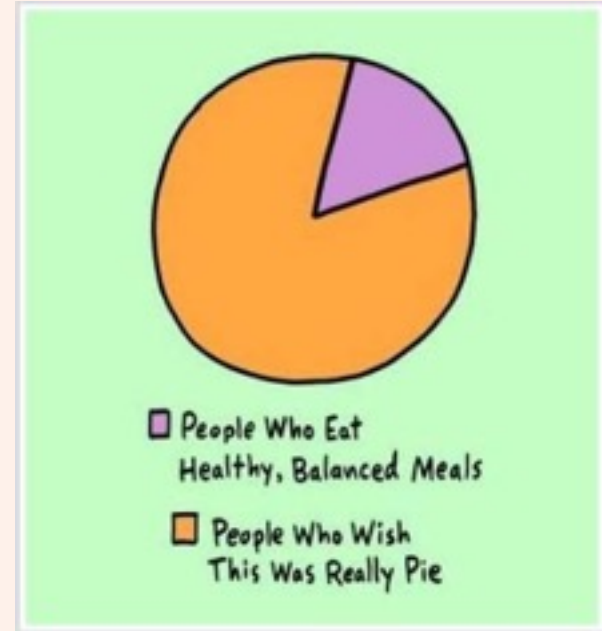
Feedback Stats

Employees in the company:

- Largest was 5000+ employees
- Next largest had 600+ employees
- Most were in the 20-50 and 50-100 range
- Two with less than 20 in the office

60% SaaS & 30% Agencies

1 entirely remote, a couple with remote mentoring, the rest work in the same location



5 Support Categories

1. Organizational Skills
2. Courage and Confidence
3. Golden Rule Techniques
4. Communication Practices
5. Question-friendly Environments



♪ It's Peanut Butter Jelly Time! ♪



Huh?



It's Not Easy Being Green



- “Too green” can be confused with lack of context.
- Misunderstanding around “common sense”
- Importance of details and sequential order
- Empathy and compassion for those who are learning.

It's Not Easy Being Green



Impostor Syndrome: A collection of feelings of inadequacy that persist despite evident success.

Decision fatigue: The deteriorating quality of decisions made by an individual after a long session of decision making.

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Organization Skills

Things **companies** can do:

- Have an on-boarding process
- Establish best practices



Organizational Skills



Things **juniors** can do:

- Take notes
- Keep a record
- Diligence to track time
- In-person follow ups

5 Support Categories

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2. **Courage and Confidence**
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Courage and Confidence

Things **mentors** can do:

- Be kind and approachable
- Opportunities for exploration
- Establish goals
- Inclusion
- Hire 2+ juniors at the same time



Courage and Confidence



Things **juniors** can do:

- Be positive and enthusiastic
- Practice patience with yourself
- Learn balance - when to struggle, and when to ask for help
- Help each other
- Share successes and failures
- Job ownership

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“Treat others the way ^{they} want to be treated”





“Different people learn very differently and it’s not always easy for mentors to determine what approach is best. If you know what works for you - it helps everyone to share that!”

- A ThinkShout mentor

Golden Rule Techniques

Things **both** mentors and juniors can do:



- Articulate your needs
- Practice patience
- Practice kindness
- Equal accountability

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4. **Communication Practices**
5. Question-friendly Environments



Communication Practices

Things **mentors** can do:

- Recurring one-on-one check-ins
- Communication tools



Communication Practices



Things **juniors** can do:

- Take initiative
- Be an active participant

Communication Practices



Things **both** mentors and juniors can do:

- Be open to feedback, and willing to grow
- Frequent check-ins for assurance that everyone's on the same page

5 Support Categories

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- 5. Question-friendly Environments**



Question-friendly Environments

Things **companies** can do:

- Assign mentorship roles to appropriate individuals
- Pair a senior with a junior developer
- Establish a company culture where asking questions is encouraged



“Continue to ask questions, there are no dumb questions; programming is huge and there is so much to know. Not one person, no matter how senior they are, knows everything. So, it can help them too to ask questions.”

- Anonymous mentor, from peer feedback

Question-friendly Environments



Things **juniors** can do:

- Practice courtesy and respect for other's time and attention
- Work to solve a problem beforehand
- Take time to reflect on what you've learned
- When in doubt, ask

“You have the opportunity to train exactly the programmers you want to work with for a lower cost than you might think. Which is a massive win for your company.”



- Justin, works in DevOps for Airbrake.io

(And a massive win for your juniors, too!)

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Confused Mark Wahlberg <http://giphy.com/gifs/confused-mark-wahlberg-11LWFP3gzYKxy>