

How Flatiron Health hired at scale, while staying focused on diversity

A case study with Flatiron

Challenge

Flatiron Health, an independent affiliate of the Roche Group, is a market leader in oncology-specific electronic health record (EHR) software, and a pioneer in curating and developing real-world evidence used to advance cancer research. There is an opportunity at every phase of drug development and cancer care to do better. To get drugs to patients faster and cheaper. To give clinicians back time with patients, and help them keep up to date with a changing treatment landscape. Flatiron works globally to help do these things better – accelerating R&D and access to care by harnessing new approaches to generating evidence-based data, making research more inclusive and healthcare more sustainable.

To keep pace with their rapid business growth, the Flatiron talent acquisition and engineering teams have always worked closely to interview and hire technical talent, with a focus on diversity and inclusion. In 2014, when Flatiron was in its earliest stages of growth, the company “only had eight engineers, and interviewing was straightforward,” said Cat Miller, Vice President Engineering at Flatiron Health, who was in charge of engineering recruiting efforts from 2016-2021. “We had a lot of shared context and understanding, so it was easy to make hiring decisions together. Then, as the company and the number of interviewers grew, that process hit its limit. New interviewers introduced noise into the system, and it became harder to make decisions.”

To address this, Flatiron developed an interviewer training program. This equipped their engineering team with consistent interview questions and scorecards mapped to specific critical competencies. The approach successfully increased their interview signal quality and decreased the potential for bias in hiring decisions, supporting their growth into 2018 when Flatiron was hiring 20 to 30 engineers annually. Then in April of that year, Roche completed their acquisition of Flatiron, which provided the capital needed to accelerate product development.

To reach their new product goals, Flatiron’s team needed to hire 100 software engineers by the end of 2019. As the engineering and talent teams developed their plans to meet this goal, they realized they needed to rethink their interviewing process as they confronted the time trade-off in front of them. Only 50 of their current engineers had the expertise and bandwidth to conduct interviews. Yet the acceleration of their product plans made it imperative to free up as much interviewing bandwidth as possible to reinvest in productive engineering time.

Case study in brief

▲ CHALLENGE

In 2019, Flatiron Health needed to hire 100 engineers in just over a year, while rapidly scaling product development.

Flatiron continues to need to hire at scale during university recruiting season while keeping DEI at the center of their efforts.

🔍 SOLUTION

Karat conducts technical interviews on behalf of Flatiron. It provides predictive, detailed recommendations to increase hiring yield across all roles.

▬ RESULTS

100,000 incremental engineering hours generated in 2019

2,000 university interviews conducted since then, freeing up over 6,000 productive engineering hours

54% improvement in close rate for female university candidates

91% positive candidate experience

“Engineers aren’t interviewing machines. But you need engineers in order to hire other engineers.”

Cat Miller, Vice President Engineering, Flatiron Health

Knowing they couldn’t slow their pace of hiring, Flatiron needed to scale an interviewing and hiring process that they trusted while reclaiming necessary engineering capacity. To do that, they turned to Karat and their highly-experienced Interview Engineers to conduct technical interviews on their behalf, providing unlimited interviewing capacity with a consistent process and data-driven recommendations.

Solution

To shift Flatiron’s technical interviewing to Karat, the two companies worked closely together to identify the core competencies and skill levels that the Flatiron engineering team required, and their technical hiring bar for each role. This process of Alignment Engineering improves onsite-to-offer ratios by calibrating Karat’s recommendations to Flatiron’s hiring bar criteria for advancing candidates to the final round of interviews.

Once Karat’s Interview Engineers began conducting technical interviews and delivering actionable recommendations, the Flatiron engineering and talent teams quickly saw the benefits of Karat’s Interviewing Cloud. The strength and clarity of the interviewing signal gave them confidence they were moving the right candidates forward to maximize the investment of engineering time in final round interviews.

“I trust Karat’s screens as much as I trust screens done by our internal team, and that’s very high praise given the strength of our team and the work we’ve done to improve our process over the years.”

Cat Miller, Vice President Engineering, Flatiron Health

As Flatiron continued to scale their technical hiring while accelerating product development, they also increased their commitment to diversity and inclusion, a core value that has always been closely-held by their engineering and talent teams. Three key components of the Karat solution helped them continue to build this into every step of their recruiting and interviewing processes.

First, Karat’s capacity allowed them to invite more candidates with a broader range of backgrounds for technical interviews. When interviewing capacity is constrained, even the most well-intentioned teams give those limited slots to candidates who have more traditional backgrounds.

“Even the best resume doesn’t fully convey a candidate’s quality or potential. Karat’s ability to conduct interviews we trusted, at a volume we could never do, allowed us to give more candidates that opportunity to highlight their true skills.”

Cat Miller, Vice President Engineering, Flatiron Health

Second, Karat's interviews are rigorously structured and consistently conducted to minimize bias. Karat's scoring rubrics and algorithm generate data-driven, highly-predictive recommendations that accurately reflect the interview performance of candidates from all backgrounds. Because the recommendations are calibrated to Flatiron's hiring bar, this has given Miller and her team the ability to nudge how firmly they hold that bar and test what impact adjustments have. "We know that people from the top schools who get the best preparation are going to do the best on an interview," she said. "But that doesn't mean that people who score a little lower initially won't end up as equally strong engineers. It's hard to tell our large internal team to just give the bar some wiggle room and have that happen consistently. With Karat, we can more rigorously measure the impact of adjustments to our bar."

Finally, Karat uniquely offers a Redo interview, which allows candidates to request a redo within 24 hours of their first interview if they feel they haven't done their best. Because candidates from nontraditional backgrounds have often interviewed less frequently, they sometimes lack confidence in their ability to succeed, creating interview anxiety which can then impact performance. Karat's [Interview Access Gap](#) research, surveying more than 300 Black CS students and alumni from HBCUs, proves this point:

- Just 39 percent of the respondents who had never taken a practice interview believed they were somewhat or very likely to succeed in a technical interview.
- Among the respondents who had >3 practice interviews, that number climbed to 79 percent believing that they were somewhat or very likely to succeed.
- Of those respondents with >3 practice interviews, 55 percent had an engineering internship, compared to just 9 percent among those who never had a technical interview

Redo interviews give candidates the opportunity to build on the first interview and show-off their true strengths, with many candidates indicating that just knowing they would have that option increased their confidence and decreased their anxiety during the first interview.

The end result for Flatiron has been a scalable interviewing and hiring process that they trust to deliver a consistent, predictive interview signal. They've reclaimed engineering hours to invest in core work and accelerate product development, given more candidates the opportunity to join the team, and increased the efficiency of their final round interviews. Most importantly, the depth of Karat's recommendations and hiring funnel analytics mean both teams continue to have the shared context and understanding they need to make hiring decisions together.

"It's critical for our teams to speak the same language when it comes to interviewing and hiring," said Lily Li, Flatiron's Head of Recruiting. "We're all moving quickly to meet our goals, and knowing we're moving in the same direction with the same values has empowered us to build an engineering team we're incredibly proud of."

Results

“We accelerated hiring by 4x and met our hiring target of 100 engineers in June 2019 – six months earlier than we planned. This generated 100,000 additional productive engineering hours to invest in our product. Working with Karat made it possible to achieve the level of consistency and hiring quality we needed at this scale to move the business forward faster.”

Lily Li, Head of Recruiting, Flatiron Health

Flatiron’s engineering team has grown steadily since 2019, and they’ve built out a robust university recruiting program as a primary source of talent for today and the future – across apprenticeships, internships, and new-graduate hires. The two companies have continued working together into 2022, and Flatiron’s level of trust in Karat’s recommendations, coupled with Flatiron’s continuous improvement of their full interviewing and hiring processes, has made their university technical hiring more efficient every year. By freeing up more recruiting and engineering time that previously went to reviewing results and deciding which candidates to move forward, both teams have been able to focus on other strategic initiatives.

After the initial hiring goal of 100 engineers was met 6 months early in 2019, Karat has since conducted almost 2,000 university interviews for Flatiron including redos with a 99% passthrough rate to final round interviews for top-scoring candidates, and a 91% positive candidate experience rating. Flatiron’s onsite-to-offer ratio has become more efficient, reaching 49% during the 2022 university recruiting season. They achieved this by streamlining their resume review and sourcing processes at the top of the funnel, which allowed them to optimize the impact of Karat’s recommendations during final round interviews. They’ve made 65 university hires during their partnership with Karat, and in their 2022 university hiring cycle they increased their close rate for female candidates by 54%.

“Our team is still involved in every step, but Karat really maximizes our engineers’ time. Once we worked together to fine-tune the calibration of Karat’s recommendations to our needs, we built a well-oiled machine. This has increased the time we spend on our diversity efforts and allowed us to invest more time into our products. This is really the bigger impact of working with Karat, and it’s a virtuous cycle.”

Cat Miller, Vice President Engineering, Flatiron Health

Karat and Flatiron partnership by the numbers



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2,000 university interviews conducted since then, freeing up over 6,000 productive engineering hours



54% improvement in close rate for female university candidates



91% positive candidate experience

ABOUT FLATIRON

Flatiron Health is a healthtech company dedicated to helping cancer centers thrive and deliver better care for patients today and tomorrow. Through clinical and data science, we translate patient experiences into real-world evidence to improve treatment, inform policy, and advance research. Cancer is smart. Together, we can be smarter. Flatiron Health is an independent affiliate of the Roche Group.

flatiron.com
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ABOUT KARAT

Karat created the world's first Interviewing Cloud to solve the multi-decade global shortage of software engineers. The Interviewing Cloud is an always-on, scalable, and consistent human + tech solution for conducting predictive, fair, and enjoyable technical interviews 24/7. Karat's global network of Interview Engineers, unparalleled market intelligence, and purpose-built interviewing infrastructure opens the pipeline for engineering talent, limits pedigree bias, and provides access for underrepresented candidates. The fastest growing and largest enterprises such as Roblox, American Express, Intuit, Compass, and Wayfair trust Karat to expand hiring capacity, unlock developer time, and raise engineering quality so they can innovate and grow.

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