



Speak Helps Companies Hire Underrepresented Talent To Achieve Entrepreneurial Goals

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Austin, TX based WeAdvertiseYourBusiness.com has published a new interview with Andrea Guendelman, the co-founder of Speak. Speak seeks to help underrepresented talent make it through the initial hiring rounds at potential employers, and this will benefit both candidates and companies alike. In a bid to raise seed funding, Speak passed the \$1 million mark in only three months, and WeAdvertiseYourBusiness.com is eager to help their community understand how Guendelman's team achieved this laudable milestone by addressing a crucial issue in the tech industry.

According to Guendelman, people who might be perfectly suited for certain roles, especially in the tech industry, are likely to be rejected during the initial stages of the interview process. In fact, she contends that the overwhelming majority of underrepresented talent is unfairly rejected. She explains that this is often due to the fact that, "the talent either disqualifies themselves or they're not given the opportunity to even take a technical interview ? or when they take the technical interview, they don't pass it, because they haven't been given that many opportunities.?"

To counter this, Speak has come up with a novel but simple solution that gives talent the space they need to demonstrate their capability: to run practice interviews with candidates ahead of their meeting with a potential employer. She says, "we are giving the talent the opportunity to practice and fail within a safe environment so they can get the skills to actually pass the interview. The more you can fail practicing, the better your chances. If you're not given the opportunity or you're not told, what are you going to be asked? Other people are given that information because they get it from friends and referrals." This method is more humane and inclusive, she says. It also gives employers a better opportunity to hire underrepresented talent.

Given her background and exposure to multiple communities, Guendelman realized that many people – especially women – avoid trying to get into recognized universities for reasons that have little to do with their aptitude in their respective field. For instance, many women shared with her that they did not attempt to get into a more prestigious and well-known institution because they wanted to stay close to their family. Cultural, personal reasons led these talented individuals to choose lesser known options, but that does not mean they were unqualified.

"But when I moved to Boulder, Colorado," she says, "and I kind of got immersed in the innovation economy and I saw there were no Latinos whatsoever involved in that, I realized there was a mismatch of opportunities and talent."

It is crucial for employers to see that Speak's method is no less stringent than their own. Their methodology has more to do with giving candidates an even field to express their talent and give a fair accounting of themselves. The results are the same: a pool of incredibly skilled individuals that are capable of pushing industries forward through sheer skill and passion. Furthermore, Speak does not participate in recruiting on behalf of any commercial clients or organizations. Their mandate is simply to prepare candidates, giving them the same information their peers have received due to cultural or sociological differences. Instead of making it easier for candidates to get through the interview process, Speak seeks to eliminate the handicaps they would otherwise have interviewed with – handicaps which would unfairly get them rejected out of hand. In addition to denying them a rewarding career, it would deny the business in question an opportunity to consider a candidate who may be perfect for their team.

"We source talent, like any recruiter, right?" Guendelman points out, "But we prepare them to back the interview. What we've seen is that many of the underrepresented talent go through these problems with imposter syndrome basically. And so that's where we come in at different stages in the process and work on the topic of imposter syndrome."

Speak's success at raising seed funding illustrates the fact that many are cognizant of the gaps in the interview process, and companies are eager to hire diverse engineers wherever possible. The advantage, for all parties, is easy to see, and Speak is well on their way to making their vision the industry's standard approach.

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