

# we write about the things we build and the things we consume



written by Chris Jackson on 27 January 2011 in joining us, MetaBroadcast

## no agencies: do you support the jobs tax?

We've ended up taking quite a stance on this, as it's become clear recently just how much harm it does our industry. As a startup looking for permanent team members we simply don't feel that a recruitment agency's 15-20% of salary fee is a reasonable cost.

All our job ads are clear that we don't work with agencies. But we still get calls from hopefuls. Until now we've often been fairly polite, but it's started to waste too much of our time. The politeness ends now. This morning I described recruitment agencies as **a tax on the tech industry**. It's equivalent to the company, or the potential recruit paying their VAT, or their income tax a second time, depending on who's end you think the money comes out of.

Even if we found the cost reasonable, I still think it's unlikely we'd use recruiters. They're simply poor value for money:

If we had a budget of 15-20% of salary to spend on recruitment, and we wanted to hire more than 4 people per year, then we could afford to hire a new team member who focused on just recruitment. They would get to know exactly what we're after, and pinpoint their searches to find our ideal candidates, not the ones they happened to know already. I'd expect that person to do a whole lot more than just find candidates. They should co-ordinate the assessment process too, and make sure that our new colleagues have everything they need to make a great start.

Cost isn't the only issue here. If we got candidates from agencies we'd lose a vital filter. As a small and fast-moving team we need people with initiative. If they find us via [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [stackoverflow](#), [Techcrunch](#), [Google](#), or their own network, then they've already shown a chunk of initiative. Likewise if we find them through a thoughtful blog post, or comments on Twitter. Granted, most of these tools aren't designed for recruitment, but with a bit of thought anyone can use them to quickly find good jobs or good candidates.

Ultimately, we want to meet real, exciting people with a bit of get-up-and-go. CVs are a great starting point (and research has shown that **lack of interviewing leads to better decisions**) but they don't show much about the personality of the person, and are very rarely furnished with what we need to know: how does the candidate think? How does (s)he solve problems? How do they get along with our current team? What's the awesomest code they've written, seen, used, re-factored, evangelised? What are they doing amazing that ISN'T coding? What are their thoughts on online video, TV consumption, metadata and, for that matter, the future of humanity? Everything **our carefully crafted recruitment process** allows for, and everything the agency and their candidates are not looking for.

We hope to be able to avoid using agencies for ever, and our policy is a firm one

for now. Can we hold it? We certainly hope so. But this depends on you.

Do you support the jobs tax? If so, sit back and let an agency find you your next job, and let your new employer spend 15-20% of your salary on the agency rather than giving it to you or using it to grow your team. Don't put a few hours of effort into searching for the job that's truly right for you. If you're an employer, by all means continue to hire from a pool of people who have shown almost zero interest in your company.

Do let us know what you think below. And if you're looking for a new challenge we hope you'll take a look at our [list of current vacancies](#), and contact us directly.

Thanks to [@ishra](#), [@ashok](#), [@belgiano](#), [@thegareth](#), [@glen\\_ford](#), and [@grabcocque](#) for intentionally or unintentionally helping refine this argument via Twitter this morning.

Full disclosure: Both [Mirona](#) and I were once convinced by an agency to apply for jobs we weren't aware of—which explains being polite to agencies so far. But thinking about it again, it's irrelevant we got those jobs, as none of them took us interesting places. Why waste the time of candidates, or ours?

*Update, 9 November 2011: Despite what some might think, this post is NOT an invite to recruiters to use comments or our contact details to try to convince us otherwise and advertise their USP in the process. Such attempts have been, and will be marked as SPAM.*

*Update, as of 3 August 2015: Agencies and other recruiters should not in any way contact MetaBroadcast, attempt to intermediate a hire, or submit CVs to us. We are not responsible for any related fees.*