

Acolyte Presents

CYBER SECURITY - PENETRATION TESTERS

Talent Directory – Candidate Profiling Paper 2020



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INTRODUCTION

Acolyte is revolutionising how HR & Talent Professionals access and use talent data to drive effective recruitment.

Whether your workforce strategy is focused attracting the strongest talent or retaining existing staff, Acolyte uses big data, analytics and human experience to give you a unique perspective on your talent landscape.

Acolyte helps HR leaders embed recruitment success throughout their business by providing, crystal clear insight, a fresh perspective, a clear roadmap, and actionable next steps.

Demand for talent has never been more competitive and the best candidates today behave more like customers.

The opportunities presented by on-line job boards, social recruiting and professional networking sites such as LinkedIn, have changed the way that talent interacts with the labour market to find work.

Our mission is to provide you with the insight you need to create competitive advantage in this new talent landscape.

The 'Talent Profiling' series is part of Acolyte's suite of intelligence products designed to help HR & Talent Professionals proactively and successfully attract and retain the talent their organisation needs.

Alastair Gorton
Founder & CEO

METHODOLOGY

Acolyte is an award winning talent consultancy and technology company that has been guiding the recruitment profession for over a decade.

Our analysis focuses on the 5 key areas that every candidate instinctively uses to assess potential opportunities - a proven mechanism for successfully interpreting the motivators of talent working in this sector.



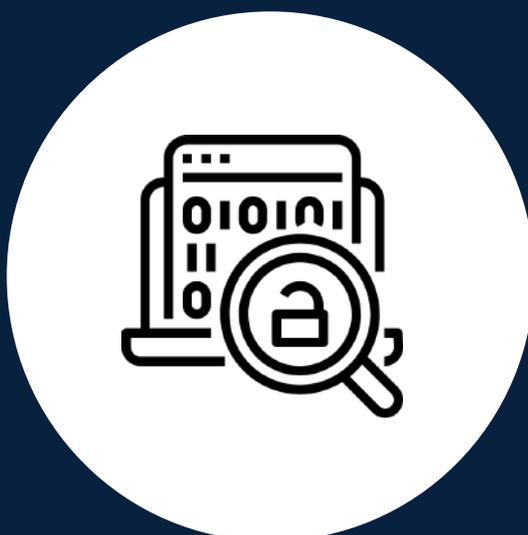
Sharing the perspective of the candidates you wish to recruit provides powerful insight into how talent in the market may perceive your organisation and your opportunities. This is intelligence designed to guide you as you develop your employer value proposition, helping you to communicate and emphasise the things that really make you stand out as an employer.

PENETRATION TESTERS

Penetration testing seeks to identify vulnerabilities in a computer system or network. The purpose of the discipline is to interrogate these systems from a security perspective and highlight weaknesses that an attack could potentially exploit.

The process involves scrutinising all the security features of the system or network being tested. As the name suggests, this is followed by the tester attempting to penetrate the system and infiltrate the network. The tester uses the same tools and methods as a real attacker. This is why they are often known as 'white hats' or 'ethical hackers'.

It is the responsibility of the penetration tester to report on any weaknesses in the system and offer suggested steps that should be taken to strengthen the system and make it more secure.



COMPANY & CULTURE

Penetration testers are passionate about their work and want to be part of an organisation that recognises the importance of cybersecurity. They also have a natural curiosity that makes them want to fully investigate any problem or situation from every angle. While they value their independence, the ability to collaborate and learn from their peers is very important to them.

Companies that demonstrate they value and prioritise cybersecurity and adopt a flexible culture which nurtures curiosity and encourages experimentation, will allow penetration testers to thrive. Embracing a collaborative ethos that actively promotes knowledge sharing will also increase motivation and engagement from these professionals.



Company Journey

Demonstrate that cybersecurity is a priority



Company Culture

Offer a flexible culture that supports curiosity and experimentation



Team & Peer Group

Promote a collaborative team environment that celebrates knowledge sharing

COMPANY JOURNEY

Penetration testers want to be part of an organisation that recognises the importance of cybersecurity. In a rapidly changing threat landscape, companies not only have to devote resources to technology, but they must be continually expanding their capabilities and investing in training and research.

Companies that demonstrate they prioritise cybersecurity as a discipline (whether through research and development, the nature of engagements or client base) will be attractive to strong penetration testers and will show that they share their values and passion.

COMPANY CULTURE

Penetration testers have a natural curiosity and will want to dig deep into the core of any problem. They also have the ability to 'think outside the box' and approach assignments in ways that have never been done before. Too much structure can inhibit the dynamic nature of true penetration testing.

Fostering a flexible culture that nurtures this curiosity and experimentation will not only allow penetration testers to flourish but it will also allow them to gain more knowledge and expertise than any textbook can provide.

TEAM & PEER GROUP

While penetration testers work independently, they will almost always work as part of a wider team - with each member having their own expertise in certain technologies. Penetration testers are inspired by working with like-minded peers and learning from industry experts - and may aspire to work with particular individuals or as part of a specific team within a company because of the knowledge and expertise they can gain.

A collaborative environment that allows knowledge sharing and stimulating debate through different perspectives is not only attractive to these professionals but is also key to getting the most out of the team.

CAREER & DEVELOPMENT

The chance to learn new skills and techniques is a key motivator for these naturally inquisitive individuals and many will study in their own time, in order to expand their expertise. Constant development of their technical abilities from a professional perspective is also a vital part of their role as they aim to stay ahead of the curve. They also enjoy learning from more knowledgeable team members, or those with a specific expertise.

Exposure to unique engagements which allow them to enhance their skills and techniques will be a substantial motivator for these professionals. Employers should also show they understand the need for ongoing professional development in this role by pro-actively supporting training and qualifications, as well as providing a supportive culture that allows these individuals to access more experienced and skilled team members.



Career Development

Provide access to unique engagements to expand on skills and techniques



Professional Growth

Proactively support ongoing training and qualifications



Access to Management

Promote a supportive culture with access to more experienced team members

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Continuing professional development not only comes naturally to penetration testers but is also a vital part of their career as they aim to stay ahead of new and ever-evolving hacking methods. There are a wide variety of qualifications and courses available for this purpose, and penetration testers are increasingly aware of the importance of this training to the work they do.

Penetration testers are inquisitive by nature and require constant challenge. Employers who encourage individual growth by providing opportunities to undertake industry-specific qualifications will not only further the knowledge and techniques of these professionals but also benefit from the retention of an engaged and highly-skilled workforce.

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

The strongest and most successful penetration testers in the industry have such a passion for their work that they will study in their own time by reading blogs, watching videos and building their own virtual networks. The ability to learn new skills and techniques is a key motivator for these individuals.

Giving penetration testers the opportunity to work on original engagements where they will learn something new or discover something interesting will demonstrate an understanding of the high value they place on their personal development. This is a powerful tool for attracting and retaining the best talent.

ACCESS TO MANAGEMENT

Penetration testers are highly determined and value their independence but are also keen to learn from more experienced individuals and will sometimes require input from those who are highly skilled in a specific area of expertise.

As penetration testers often work remotely from client sites or home, it is vital that employers promote a supportive culture that allows individuals to have easy access to, and seek input from, management or more knowledgeable colleagues – particularly for those new to the field.

RESPONSIBILITIES & EXPERIENCE

Penetration testers are excited by the challenge of discovering vulnerabilities and risks within technology systems, however, the follow-up paperwork is often viewed as tedious. There is also a danger of repetition in the tools, techniques and procedures used for each engagement, and so a key threat to their motivation is boredom. These professionals are highly aware of the value they can add to client's organisation and frustrations often occur when clients don't engage.

Employers should aim to balance the workload in favour of system testing, as opposed to administration. It is also important to vary client engagements between team members in order to avoid repetition of tasks performed by these professionals to mitigate the threat of monotony. Ensuring positive reinforcement of their contribution to an organisation's security will also enhance job satisfaction for these individuals.



Role & Responsibilities

Balance workload in favour of system testing, rather than administration



Experience

Avoid repetition in work performed by varying client engagements



Contribution

Ensure penetration testers receive positive reinforcement for their contribution

ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES

It is true that penetration testers are, in effect, 'ethical hackers', however, they also perform a variety of other tasks, which include writing lengthy reports, and interacting with clients through phone calls, e-mails, and debrief sessions. That said, the key motivator for any penetration tester is the the challenge of discovering vulnerabilities and the associated risks within technology systems. They also enjoy finding new ways to do things or putting together a series of minor looking vulnerabilities that have a major outcome.

To a penetration tester, the follow-up paperwork is often seen as a necessary evil. Overloading even the most passionate penetration tester with paperwork and administration will lower motivation and ultimately reduce their effectiveness. Employers that balance their workload in favour of system testing will demonstrate respect for their expertise, therefore, creating buy-in from a pool of engaged talent.

EXPERIENCE

Penetration testers are smart, analytical and meticulous which makes them great problem solvers. However, these characteristics, combined with the desire to learn, means that one of the biggest threats to their motivation is boredom. Without careful consideration and workload planning, they can be using the same tools, techniques and procedures over and over again and get a lot of the same findings.

Where possible, it is important to vary the workload and engagements amongst team members to avoid too much repetition in the tasks performed. No two client infrastructures will be the same so ensuring team members are rotated between clients will help provide this much needed diversity.

CONTRIBUTION

Penetration testers want to use their expertise and knowledge constructively to help organisations and to make the cyber world safer for everyone. Frustrations can often occur where they feel clients are not fully engaged with the process and, therefore, not taking advantage of their skills and experience.

To get the best out of these professionals, they need to feel that the work they are doing is valued and will have a significant impact for their clients. Managing the client engagement process so that positive feedback and actions are received by these individuals will go a long way to enhancing job satisfaction and employee motivation.

OFFICE & ENVIRONMENT

The nature of the penetration tester's role means they can work from anywhere and will often do so at home in their own time. However, it is vital they have the right technology to succeed in their role as well as the resources to effectively collaborate with teammates. Networking with their peers around the world is also regarded as an essential way to keep abreast of developments and new thinking in the field.

Employers will benefit greatly from having a flexible attitude towards the physical presence of these individuals in the office. Access to a diverse range of cutting-edge equipment along with appropriately resourced meeting spaces are essential for penetration testers to be successful and feel that they are valued. Proactively supporting them to attend a variety of conferences will also ensure successful attraction and retention of the best talent.



Location

Be flexible with regards to presence in the office



Premises & Facilities

Provide cutting-edge equipment and effective meeting facilities



Opportunities to Travel

Proactively support attendance at conferences

LOCATION

Locations are often varied and flexible for penetration testers – they can be working from the office, a client site, or from home.

To get the best from these individuals, this flexibility from the employee should be reciprocated by the employer. The stereotypical penetration tester enjoys the flexibility of working from home and will happily bury themselves in a project until they succeed in breaking the system. An employee who is trusted to get the job done is more likely to work on their own time than one who has to stick to a rigid structure of being in the office.

PREMISES & FACILITIES

Penetration testers not only need to collaborate with their peers and teammates in order to stay ahead of the game, but they also need top of the range equipment in order to do their job successfully.

By ensuring these individuals have access to the fastest broadband speeds available, a variety of laptops, tablets and phones for testing, and break out areas with sofas and whiteboards for discussion groups, employers will demonstrate that they are committed to providing the most effective working facilities for penetration testers to achieve their goals.

OPPORTUNITIES TO TRAVEL

In order to stay current with the latest cybersecurity developments worldwide, penetration testers will often attend conferences in various locations across the globe. This allows them to attend lectures with significant speakers and build their global network by engaging their peers in discussions and debates that allow them to learn and push the boundaries of their thinking.

Demonstrating an understanding of the value of these events and actively supporting attendance will have a highly positive impact on the attraction, loyalty and retention of the best talent in this area.

REWARD & RECOGNITION

Penetration testers value being part of a supportive community with learning and knowledge sharing at its core. They see the work that they do as a lifestyle and will often engage in hacking games and competitions in their own time. It is simply the thrill of the challenge, and overcoming it, that is the biggest reward for many of these individuals.

Supporting forums for penetration testers to engage with like-minded peers and encompassing hacking games and competitions in social activities will demonstrate a strong understanding of what drives this population. Penetration testers are delighted to be paid for what is, effectively, their hobby, but they are in demand and must be rewarded at market rate. Employers who recognise that these individuals are also incentivised by a collaborative ethos that is focused on constant learning will have the edge in a competitive market.



Atmosphere

Provide resources for structured discussion forums



Life Outside of Work

Understand the work of a pen tester is a lifestyle



Reward & Remuneration

Pay market rate but recognise the significance of investing in their development

ATMOSPHERE

The penetration testing community is incredibly supportive and highly focused on sharing knowledge as this field needs different perspectives to keep evolving and finding new methods to test vulnerabilities. This "learn by committee" style can result in new ideas which lead to success on future engagements.

Providing resources for penetration testers to establish such forums to discuss strategies or techniques with colleagues who share their passion is incredibly motivating to these professionals and will demonstrate that you understand their needs.

LIFE OUTSIDE OF WORK

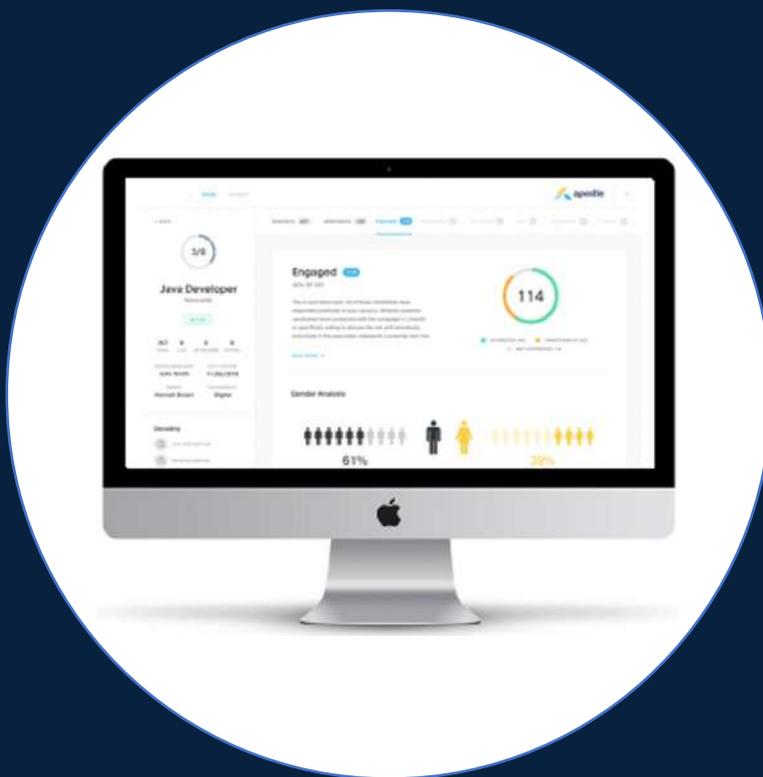
A strong penetration tester doesn't see what they do as just a job or as just a hobby - they see it as a lifestyle. Whilst they are natural introverts, many will hone their skills by getting involved in games and competitions outside of work.

Actively encouraging this from a workplace perspective, for example introducing gamification in smaller teams, will not only be beneficial in terms of employee satisfaction and belonging but also in enhancing the skillset of the team.

REWARD & REMUNERATION

The strongest penetration testers will do the job 'for the love of it'. The thrill of the challenge (and overcoming it) is the biggest motivation and reward for most.

While many feel lucky to have their hobby as their career and are delighted that people will pay them for it, their high demand means that they should still be paid competitively. However, employers who recognise these individuals are also incentivised by factors such as learning and development and access to unique engagements will be most successful at attracting and retaining high quality talent.



THE ACOLYTE TALENT PLATFORM

FIND

Choose from the best PASSIVE and ACTIVE talent. Search functionality that gives your team direct access to every candidate at every level in any sector or geography.

RETAIN

Immediately access key information that will maximise retention in your workforce. Including: Diversity & Inclusivity, Salary Benchmarking, Talent Hotspots, Competitor Activity & Candidate Sentiment Analysis.

HIRE

Campaign management that identifies, screens, qualifies & introduces you to exactly the right people. Improving hiring success and adding powerful diagnostic capabilities for every recruitment campaign.

GROW

Also benefit from access to Acolyte's suite of talent intelligence services which provide the customised, data driven analysis you need to inform strategic thinking and drive growth.

HIRE TALENT DIRECTLY

Acolyte's mission is simple:

To create a platform that offers employers the insight and recruitment solutions they need for direct, scalable and cost-effective access to the high-quality talent required to meet their business objectives.

We harness data, AI and the latest technology to energise hiring in your business and empower your in-house recruitment and HR teams to deliver direct hire strategies.

Success



"Professional, quick to deliver results & cost effective, In a trial between contingent agencies alongside Acolyte and the best and successful candidates always came via the Acolyte Platform"

