

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/the-soft-side-of-hard-skills>

When Honeycomb is interviewing a candidate for a software engineering job, co-founder and CEO Christine Yen focuses on their ability to collaborate and solve problems as much as on their raw coding chops. Especially in an early-stage startup, she emphasizes, people who can make proactive decisions to maximize the user experience are more impactful than people who can perfectly execute a discrete task.



## Transcript

- What's critical, obviously, is recruiting and hiring really great talent, you're only good as your talent.. And tell me a little bit about, what do you value more, pure, raw engineering talent or domain expertise? How does your sort of recruiting process work and how you reconcile those two items? - That's a great question.. I honestly would probably say neither one is the most important for us when hiring.. Raw engineering talent is important, but not the most important thing.. I think we actually have some posts on our blog about our hiring process.. We would much rather understand how someone thinks.. And constructing technical interviews is a topic that I'm sure, if you wanted to, you'd get a panel up here and take like three hours discussing the merits of, but there are so many dimensions of building software, shipping software as part of a team that whiteboard interviews simply don't capture.. I will call out Stripe as another example of a really great company that does their engineering interviews in a slightly different way, where they accept that, we accept that software engineering is about reading code, probably more than about writing code.. It's about pairing with someone to talk through a problem.. It's about understanding the architecture of the problem and, especially for us, for a product engineer, we want them to be thinking about what the experience is for the user..

We're a small startup.. Right now, we're still in a stage where we are able to embrace people who aren't just, "Give me a, give me a spec, and I'll execute on it." We love people who can begin their technical problem, but make those trade-offs and make those incisions based on what they think the best user experience is.. So it's, domain expertise is something that can be learned.. Again, as a developer tool, we have the additional leg up of lots of people come in naturally with domain expertise because they've had to deal with production incidents on the job.. And raw engineering talent is something that engineering ladders can address and, ideally, is already happening on the job.. But it's the, there's an element of curiosity, and openness, and kind of acceptance that you have a different skill set than I do, but we can work together and pair and build something awesome.. That is, I think, what gets us much more excited about an engineering candidate..