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30-hour weeks: Cliniko's way to hire developers

Michael Bailey

Joel Friedlaender's solution to Australia's software developer shortage appears absurdly generous, but the Melbourne founder of medical bookings service Cliniko says it's increased his profits.

Still bootstrapped despite having 20,000 paying users of his software-as-a-service product, Friedlaender can't match the salaries of the big tech names. Instead he offers his team of 20 developers and support staff an eye-popping range of conditions: 30-hour weeks, unlimited annual leave, a "work when you feel like it" policy, a free organic fruit box each week, no management and no meetings.

It's important not to set any probation before staff can access these benefits, Friedlaender told this month's SouthStart conference for South Australia's burgeoning startup ecosystem.

"I recently hired a guy who worked with me three days, then he took two or three weeks' leave to help look after his newborn, fully paid," he says.

"You've got to trust people from the start, otherwise it ruins my whole system, where I put the goodwill out there and know that it will be returned."

Only once in the six-year history of the startup behind Cliniko, Red Guava,

has Friedlaender had to sack somebody for taking advantage of their freedoms. "Take away all these Industrial Revolution rules, and you discover most people just want to do their best," he says. "Cliniko's average response time to a customer email is now seven minutes, and it was the support team that organised themselves to be able to do that, I had no input whatsoever."

The founder recruits globally to increase average candidate quality.

Friedlaender got more than 200 applications for a software developer role he advertised this month. Apart from the perks, he says his secret is a willingness to hire remote workers.

"The Silicon Valley giants are surprisingly not that innovative when it comes to hiring. They can pay a lot but they usually still want you to come into an office," Friedlaender says.

The founder recruits globally to increase average candidate quality, and eschews Seek for tech job boards.

For the current hire he used We Work Remotely, Slack at Work and GitHub Jobs.



Joel Friedlaender, founder of Melbourne's Red Guava, which built medical bookings platform Cliniko.