

**CASE  
STUDY**



el toro

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# THE FUTURE OF HIRING

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Identifying A Talent Source  
with The Software Guild



SOFTWARE-GUILD

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## Executive Summary

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In 2015, [\*\*The Software Guild \(TSG\)\*\*](#) connected with El Toro, a leading technology and marketing company that needed a steady source of development talent. The Louisville firm was challenged by the city's skills gap — regional universities were not producing enough developers to fill local jobs, and competition for new hires was strong. El Toro found itself hiring outside of the region and paying for new recruits to relocate.

TSG approached the company about potentially hiring graduates of The Software Guild's bootcamp. A TSG employer network manager met with the CEO, worked to get a sense of their company culture and identified soon-to-be graduates who might be good matches for the prospective employer. After building a win-win partnership, El Toro initially hired six graduates. The Software Guild has steadily supplied El Toro with well-trained, culture-appropriate job applicants ever since.

# THE CHALLENGE:

## Facilitating Growth Through Talent Development

A leading advertising technology firm located in Louisville, Ky., El Toro has experienced rapid growth in recent years. El Toro is revolutionizing programmatic media with IP Targeting, their patented approach of matching physical addresses to IP addresses. El Toro's products are 100 percent cookie-free and connect with real people hyper-accurately, eliminating ad fraud. El Toro ranked No. 13 on Deloitte's Technology Fast 500, a ranking of the fastest growing technology, media, telecommunications, life sciences and energy tech companies in North America.



Developers are the company's largest department. "They are creating the products we're selling," El Toro's Director of HR & Operations, Maurice Zakhir said. "They're keeping our products efficient and they're making them easier to use daily. So, it's a task that will never be done because they can always be better. But that's their challenge, to constantly make our system easier to use, so we can get more out of it, and so our clients can get more out of it."

Although Louisville is home to several universities producing graduates who can tackle a sophisticated web development job, those graduates are in high-demand. Smaller companies are competing with corporate behemoths like Humana and YUM! Brands. The tech skills gap in Louisville has even attracted the [attention of Google](#), who offered the city a \$100,000 grant to help address the problem.

As El Toro drew national acclaim, Jacob Knight, employer network manager for TSG, recognized El Toro's hiring challenges and knew The Software Guild could help.

Knight learned that El Toro had been paying recruiters to attract out-of-town candidates, and also paying new hires to relocate to Louisville. "There's not enough talent in the city," Knight said.

Zakhir said El Toro's CEO has worked with The Software Guild in the past. "We already knew what kind of partnership we could make by working with their students, and hiring students from there," El Toro's Zakhir explained.

## THE SOLUTION:

### A Productive Staffing Pipeline Partnership

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"We met and discussed what they do, how they're looking to grow the team, and what they're looking for in an employee," Knight said.

The fact that TSG is local offers a huge benefit to El Toro. "Knowing (we) already have a group of qualified candidates, that we could reach out to and bring in for interviewing or interning, and having the school be close – it just so happens that we're just down the street – it makes it very easy to have that communication." Zakhir said.

Knight said, "The more I can learn about the team, the environment, the kind of people they already have and the kind of people they're looking for. It's a critical piece. When I go and see our apprentices, I can nail down El Toro's type, because I've talked to them and know the kind of people that do well there."

El Toro needed a steady source of new dev hires, who are adaptable to a fast-paced environment, with critical thinking skills, and a diverse set of talents.

"What type of people do we choose?" Zakhir said. "The unique ones."

Software Guild graduates differ from traditional computer science students and self-taught students, Knight said.

TSG graduates are equipped with professional tools. "We use Jira and Git, working in repositories with team members, checking code in, and making sure that there are no merge conflicts. That kind of experience is not something typically found in a traditional computer science program," he said.

✦ **"ONE OF THE MAIN ADVANTAGES THAT WE HAVE OVER A TRADITIONAL COMPUTER SCIENCE DEGREE, OR SOMEBODY WHO'S TAKEN SOME CLASSES, IS THAT [OUR GRADUATES] HAVE MORE OF THE PROFESSIONAL TOOLS."** ○

– JACOB KNIGHT, TSG EMPLOYER NETWORK MANAGER





*When asked what one of the best skills that TSG graduates possess, **El Toro's Zakhir** said:*

**“WORKING IN TEAMS. WE DON’T HAVE MANY SILOS ANYMORE BECAUSE WE WORK RIGHT NEXT TO EACH OTHER...YOU’LL SEE A LOT OF PEOPLE HUDDLED OVER SOMEONE’S COMPUTER.”**

The Software Guild's interactive approach involves teamwork to solve real-world coding problems, class discussions, reviewing job-relevant cases and other learning aids. By actively learning, practicing and applying knowledge together in the classroom, students have been proven to retain information far better than through individual, passive online learning. In addition to the classroom, TSG reinforces instruction with a comprehensive, on-demand video library that employees can reference when incorporating new skills on the job. Graduates are part of an ongoing community with access to a common Slack channel and Guild events.

When asked what the best skill is that TSG graduates possess, El Toro's Zakhir said, “Working in teams. We don't have many silos anymore because we work right next to each other.” He said graduates learn to communicate with their team. He encourages team members to communicate face-to-face when possible, rather than messaging. “Hit them on the shoulder, say 'hey, is this right?' You'll see a lot of people huddled over someone's computer.”

Knight said that the emphasis on teamwork during bootcamp is intentional. “You have people from different backgrounds, who have been trained to work as a team, with the ability to replicate that experience within a corporate environment.”

The Software Guild also teaches soft skills to prepare graduates for the job search. Students learn resume writing and interview skills during their 12-week bootcamp. Zakhir said not all developers are introverts. “You don't really have your typical developer anymore.” Zakhir said. “We've had so many students that are communicative and vocal. We have natural leaders in the teams, just because of their charisma.”

**THE REFLEXIVE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN TSG AND EL TORO ALLOWS MASTER INSTRUCTORS TO HELP STUDENTS HONE THEIR SKILLS IN SUCH A WAY THAT CAN ADDRESS THE INTERESTS OF THE TECH FIRM.**

# THE OUTCOME:

## Skills for the Future of Work, Talent for the Future of Companies

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After the intense bootcamp, the instructors and employer network managers are able to identify those graduates who are best suited for the firm's unique culture. The Software Guild's high-touch, hands-on training creates talented junior software developers ready for the professional world.

Zakhir praises the talents of TSG graduates that have been hired by El Toro. "They're ready to start working. They're finished, all the information is still in their head and they're ready to just go."

Unlike traditional staffing agencies or other means of recruiting, The Software Guild puts graduates through a vetting process at no cost to hiring partners to assure candidates are a good fit. The Software Guild also regularly hosts events for prospective employers to interview and get to know TSG graduates. "We have an obligation to the apprentice just as much as we have an obligation to our partners to make sure we end up with a win-win situation," Knight said.

Since the beginning of El Toro's partnership with The Software Guild, the company has hired 10 TSG grads.

El Toro will likely hire more TSG graduates in the future. Zakhir explained, "We've got great confidence in what [The Software Guild provides] as far as graduates go."

# Partner with The Software Guild

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More than 450 businesses have trusted The Software Guild to deliver the software talent they need to compete. Partner with us to acquire a skilled workforce that can achieve your business goals as technology evolves. We'll help you identify, obtain and retain a team of skilled software developers via custom upskilling, reskilling, onboarding and staffing solutions. As a Software Guild partner, you'll gain access to our nationwide talent network, empowering you to quickly match job-ready programmers with your business challenges. Contact us to take the first step to a better workforce.

## About The Software Guild

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The Software Guild creates talented software developers through corporate training programs designed to enhance your workforce. Through immersive hands-on coding education, The Guild provides expertise in upskilling, reskilling, onboarding, and staffing. In partnership with companies who are active in workforce development, we help align corporate goals, design education solutions, and deliver student outcomes. The Guild has more than 450 companies in its employer network, boasts a stellar job placement rate for bootcamp graduates, and offers master instructors who have an average of 10 years of industry experience. The Guild has on-ground locations in Louisville, KY and Minneapolis, MN. The Guild also offers courses in partnership with universities and companies across the country. The Software Guild is owned and operated by leading education technology solution provider The Learning House, Inc.