

Microspeak: Headcount, req, and related personnel terms

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For some reason, there are a lot of Microspeak terms related to personnel. (Maybe you folks can tell me how common these terms are outside Microsoft.)

We start with a term that is not actually used much outside the personnel world: The *Position Control Number*, or PCN. The PCN represents a place where an employee could be hired. If somebody is actually hired for the position, then the PCN is *filled*; if not, then it is *unfilled*.

The term you are likely to hear outside of the personnel world is *headcount*. (Pronounced as the two words *head count*, accent on the first word.) This is a filled PCN, and it is often abbreviated to just *head*.

Another term you are likely to hear is a *req*, short for *requisition*, and pronounced like the word *wreck*. A req is a requisition to recruit; in other words, it is permission to look for somebody to fill a position.

| We have an open req to find somebody to frob the whatsit so it can futz the doodad.

An *open req* is a req that has not yet been filled. This sounds redundant to me, because a req by definition is unfilled, isn't it?

Yet another personnel term you may encounter is *backfill*. This refers to hiring someone to take over a position that has been vacated by somebody who left the team. You will sometimes hear the term used in a metaphorical context.

| Who is the backfill for Bob while he is on vacation?

Bob has not actually left the team; the person merely wants to know who is covering Bob's responsibilities while he is on vacation.

The last term I'm going to expose you to is the *ROP*, or *Recruiting Only Position*. A ROP is permission to interview someone for a position that doesn't exist yet. You open a ROP with a particular person in mind, and once obtained, you have permission to interview them. You

can think of a ROP as unapproved headcount, since if you decide to hire the person, you still have to find a PCN to put them in. And if you decide not to hire the person after you interviewed them, you close the ROP.

I have no idea how useful these terms are for people not in the personnel world, but I figured I'd write them down for my own benefit, so I have something to refer to when I run across them.

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