
Career Insight: Nick Halla on the Culture and Hiring Inside a Silicon Valley Startup

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Impossible Foods is a company in Redwood City, Calif., that develops plant-based meat and dairy products made without animals. The company's first product for consumers, the Impossible Burger, is creating lots of buzz because it's made entirely from plants for people who love meat — in other words, it doesn't taste like your average veggie burger. The company has already developed first prototypes of plant-based fish, chicken, steak and cheese, though these creations have yet to hit the market. Be sure to check out the [podcast interview](#) we did at Impossible Foods during a recent trip to Silicon Valley.

During that visit, Nick Halla, the company's chief strategy officer, talked about the culture and hiring philosophy of an innovation-inspired startup like Impossible Foods. Here, Halla shares what it's like to work with passionate employees who believe in the corporate mission — and understand their own strengths and motivations.

When I first talked to Dr. Pat Brown [founder of Impossible Foods], we connected a lot on how we wanted to build a team. One of our core principles at the company is to be kind. We want to work with people who we enjoy being around. We are going to work some late nights here and we're going to travel together. I want to enjoy being around the people that I spend the majority of my time with. We've rejected a lot of job candidates just on that core principle.

We all sit in one room at Impossible. The labs are open. The office is open. There are no doors. It's really good for collaboration. Our team is very passionate. Everybody has a different reason for why they're here. For me, it is almost all environmental. I want to have an environmental impact and leave a footprint on the world that enables us to leave less of a footprint on the world. Some people are here for animal welfare. People are here for solving hard challenges. How do you take a new product to market? Everybody has his or her own reasons. And there is never a dull moment.

We do get a lot of job applications, because people gravitate to the mission we're behind. We have to be very selective. We want people who are kind, candid, take initiative and are behind the passion and the mission.

When it comes to getting a job at a company like ours, the more you can be yourself, the better you are in an interview. You're going to be more comfortable when you're not trying to put on an image. Also, you should understand why you are interviewing for a company and why you're attracted to it. Why would you want to come work for Impossible? I've had several job candidates come to me and say, "I love what you're doing. It's such a great mission." So, I'll say, "Well, what do you want to do?" And they'll say, "I'll do anything!" That doesn't work. That turns me off, because I can't quite figure out where they want to go and what they want to do. If they come in and say, "I really enjoy journalism and writing," then I can tell them who to connect with to see if there's a fit at the company. The more specific you are about what you want to learn, the better.