

PLAYDAWN

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Hiring robotics and embedded engineers in India: a primer for founders

For robotics, drone, automation and hardware founders and their hiring managers

Summary

Playdawn added robotics hiring in 2026, and our first lesson was simple: "robotics engineer" is not a job description. A robotics team needs people across mechanics, electronics, embedded software, perception, controls and field deployment, and each pool differs in size, pay and location. This primer explains how to write a brief that finds the right people, and how to assess them.

7
engineering roles in our robotics role map

82%
of Indian employers struggle to find skilled talent (ManpowerGroup 2026)

$480M
lowest published estimate of India's robotics market; others pass $2 billion

Our own robotics data is still small, so most of this paper is practical guidance. Where we use our experience, we say so.

01

The market

Published estimates of India's robotics market vary widely, from about $480 million to over $2 billion, depending on what is counted. We would not plan a hiring budget on any of them.

Across all sectors, ManpowerGroup's 2026 survey found that 82% of Indian employers struggle to find skilled talent.

02

The roles, and where the people come from

Role	What they do	Where good candidates often come from
Mechanical or mechatronics engineer	Mechanisms, actuators, enclosures, design for manufacture	Automotive, industrial machinery, consumer hardware

Role	What they do	Where good candidates often come from
Electronics or hardware engineer	PCB design, power, sensors, bring-up	Consumer electronics, automotive electronics, defence
Embedded software engineer	Firmware on microcontrollers and SoCs, RTOS, drivers, comms protocols	Automotive, medical devices, industrial automation, IoT
Controls engineer	Motion control, kinematics, stability	Aerospace, automotive, academic labs
Perception engineer	Cameras, lidar, sensor fusion, computer vision	Autonomous vehicle teams, research labs, drone companies
Robotics software engineer	ROS 2, planning, simulation, integration	Research labs, robotics startups, game and simulation engines
Field and test engineer	Deployment, calibration, failure analysis on site	Industrial integrators, service engineering

In a small team, one engineer may touch perception, hardware, embedded software, testing and field deployment within a single project. Hire for that breadth at the core, then add specialists.

03

What we learned from our first searches

- Specific briefs help. One brief needed embedded engineers with multi-sensor fusion, hardware synchronisation and integrated PCB experience. Writing those three things down, in place of "robotics engineer", took us to the right people quickly.
- Founders ask about technical depth. They want a recruiter who can tell an embedded engineer from a robotics software engineer in the first call.

04

Pay: why public numbers disagree

Public salary figures for "robotics engineer" in India vary widely. Much of the gap comes from definitions: a PLC technician in a factory and a perception engineer at a funded startup can both carry that title.

Our advice is to benchmark on the skill set (for example embedded C on an RTOS with sensor fusion), the sector the person comes from, and the city, and to ignore the title.

05

How to write the brief

01	What the robot does and where it runs: warehouse floor, farm, sea, operating theatre.
02	The stack: microcontroller or SoC family, RTOS, ROS 2 or not, simulation tools, languages.
03	The hard part: for example "sync six sensors to under one millisecond" or "bring up our second-revision PCB".
04	Must-haves, up to five: things you would reject a candidate for not having.
05	Field time: how much travel or on-site deployment.
06	The team today: who they will work with and report to.

06

How to assess

Structured interview questions

- Walk us through a board you brought up. What failed first and how did you find it?
- How do you handle timing between sensors running at different rates?
- Tell us about a bug that only showed up on hardware and not in simulation.
- What would you check first if the robot drifts during a long run?

Practical exercise, 90 minutes, live

- Embedded: review a short driver or interrupt handler with planted bugs and talk through fixes.
- Perception: given a short log of two sensors, explain how to align and fuse them.
- Controls: tune a simple simulated controller and explain the choices.

Reference questions that matter

- Did they ship hardware that ran in the field?
- How did they behave when a deadline met a hardware failure?

07

Telling candidates about the role

Strong robotics engineers often have stable jobs in automotive, aerospace or large tech companies. Tell them about these in the first message:

- the hard problem, and what they would own end to end
- your funding runway
- the lab equipment and test sites they would have
- any ESOPs, explained clearly

Sources

- ManpowerGroup Talent Shortage Survey 2026, India findings.
- Silicon Valley Robotics Center, published India market estimates, for the range quoted.
- Playdawn data: anonymised robotics briefs, 2026.

About Playdawn

Playdawn hires for games, interactive tech and robotics, and has done so since 2016. We find, assess and place specialists for studios in India and abroad.

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