



The CIO's Guide to Hiring an IT Staff

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The CIO's Guide to Hiring an IT Staff



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This content was adapted from EarthWeb's Datamation, IT Career Planet and CIO Update Web sites. Contributors: Katherine Spencer Lee, Rob Enderle and Joe Santana.



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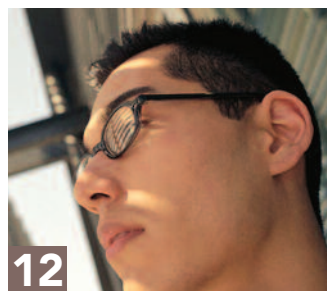
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The CIO's Guide to Hiring an IT Staff

If recent staffing surveys are correct, then IT hiring is a seller's market. In response, CIOs and their HR counterparts have to get more creative in their search for new talent.

To help with this challenge, Samuel Bright, a research analyst at Forrester, released a report that details new ways of finding and hiring sought after IT pros.

In his report Bright writes that recruiting in a tight talent market requires CIOs to shift their thinking about recruiting and broaden the places they look for talent. As part of this process, executives should:

Stop searching for a silver bullet solution. As talent becomes harder to find, many executives searching for a recruiting panacea are misjudging the level of effort required to attract and retain candidates in today's environment.

IT leaders must quit treating employment in IT as a great honor that others should instinctively understand. Competition for talent is scrappy and the most creative, tightly messaged, culturally aligned, people-focused IT organization will win in terms both of attracting talent and of retaining it over the long term.

Take charge of IT's recruiting destiny. Just as many executives who have recognized the complexity and uniqueness of technology purchasing have focused on vendor management, those who recognize this same theme in recruiting should focus on talent management as core to overall IT strategy.



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Tech executives cannot afford to entrust their talent needs solely to HR and staffing firms. Although these organizations play important roles in the recruiting process, CIOs must become more directly involved in reaching college students, networking with current IT professionals, and marketing IT careers to business professionals.

Approach recruiting from a global perspective. Leaders of multinational enterprise IT organizations need to think globally and act locally during workforce planning. As part of this process, they need to assess proficiencies, training demand, forecasted need, and the strategic importance of the skills possessed by their employee base in each region.

Based on the output of this skills assessment, they can

Tech executives cannot afford to entrust their talent needs solely to HR and staffing firms.

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prioritize their skill needs by locale and survey specific geographies to determine the availability of their high-priority skill sets. This process provides better inputs for deciding where to open new offices with IT staff.

Identify enterprise IT's brand. Reaching the passive majority of current IT and business professionals requires branding to communicate IT's cultural differentiators and spur interest in pursuing careers in enterprise IT. Similarly, college students and their influencers

react to a strong enterprise IT brand that entices them to pursue education in IT and assures them of career prospects in an enterprise IT organization after graduation.

CIOs need to identify IT's cultural differentiators and distill them into a brand and associated messaging that can be used to reach these audiences. ■

Subtle Recruitment Strategies That Get Results

By Katherine Spencer Lee

Bill Gates' testimony before the Senate in the spring of 2007 requesting support to allow IT staff from foreign countries to work in the United States reinforced what many technology executives have already recognized: It can be very challenging to recruit skilled talent in the current market.

A survey of CIOs by Robert Half Technology found that it takes an average of 56 days to fill a staff-level IT position and 87 days to bring a new manager on board.

As companies vie for the most qualified candidates, "How can our firm attract technology professionals?" has become the million-dollar question. Certainly, making sure your compensation and benefits package is competitive is a good start. But to truly enhance your recruitment tactics, you may need to broaden the scope of your efforts beyond money and perks.

Applicants will begin making judgments about your organization before they even submit an application. The overall impression they have of your firm can mean the difference between someone who is enthusiastic about joining your team and someone who writes off

the opportunity altogether.

Here are some strategies that can help tip the scales in your favor:

Build Industry Buzz

Draw candidates to your company by making it a place people want to work. If your business isn't a household name, do your part to develop recognition in the community.



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IT professionals seek to be a part of organizations they respect, particularly those doing interesting work. Speak to a local user-group meeting about your experience with a particular technology or talk to an IT association about a key project your department completed last year. Writing articles for

technology publications, websites or professional groups also can build interest in your firm as a prospective employer.

If your company has a public relations or marketing team, tap into their expertise. Get the word out through the media about unique endeavors your

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department may be engaged in. For instance, if your company is the first in its industry to use a new technology, you could offer to be profiled during the implementation process. You'll help to put your company in the spotlight.

Consider the Surroundings

Once you've drawn candidates to your firm, make sure you're ready to conduct the resulting employment interviews. That means more than preparing interview questions ahead of time.

Take an honest look at your department: What are job applicants likely to think of it on a first visit? If people have to walk by cubicles filled with old furniture and cables, desktop units and other tech gear spilling into the aisles, you may get a "Wow" for the wrong reasons. Prospective employees may doubt your firm's professionalism, organization or ability to get simple things done, like disposing of old monitors. You don't have to spend a lot of money to create an inviting work environment.

Offer a Warm Greeting

Make people feel welcome when they arrive at your company. Inform the receptionist of the candidate's name and appointment time. Then do your best to adhere to the interview schedule.

A late start can be particularly troublesome to applicants who may be missing work for the appointment, and tardiness suggests that the interview isn't a high priority to you. Also, re-read the person's resume before the meeting, so you're familiar with his or her background.

Be careful about scheduling appointments with candidates too close together. You don't want applicants to

feel that they're part of an assembly line of interviews.

Highlight Technology Investments

During the screening process, it's easy to get so caught up in evaluating candidates and their potential fit with the company that you don't adequately promote the job opportunity.

IT professionals will have a keen interest in the technologies your firm uses and any future plans for upgrades. Candidates want to know if they'll be stuck working with outdated products or whether your company is keeping up with trends. So, if your firm has made or expects to make any interesting IT investments, be sure to tout them to prospective employees.

Promote Your History

Many IT professionals either experienced the dot-com crash firsthand or knew colleagues who did and want to avoid similar job loss again. They'll be looking carefully for any warning signs of potential problems in your business.

Having financial success and a strong track record in your industry can be critical selling points. Talk about your organization's management team and hand out printed materials such as annual reports that reinforce your firm's stability.

Often it's the small actions you take that can set your company apart from the competition when recruiting IT professionals. Think beyond dollars and cents to what you truly can offer candidates: Why would someone want to work for you? Playing up some of the less obvious bonuses of joining your team may give you just the edge you need to secure the best employees. ■

Talk about your organization's management team and hand out printed materials such as annual reports that reinforce your firm's stability.

Recruiting Entry-Level Talent in Today's Market

By Katherine Spencer Lee

As competition in the field makes it more difficult to find, afford, and retain qualified mid-level staff, companies are turning to less-experienced employees and training them to fill more senior roles. At the same time, entry-level (or junior) talent is still needed, as has traditionally been the case, to fulfill basic IT responsibilities, such as troubleshooting computer problems, installing upgrades and creating new user accounts.

The biggest obstacle to successfully recruiting and hiring recent grads and other entry-level professionals is that you're assessing candidates with little or no real-world (that is, non-academic) work history. While you may be able to look at a seasoned worker's resume and identify relevant skills and experience for your job opening, the same isn't always true with someone just entering the IT field. Here are some ways you can determine whether an entry-level applicant is right for your organization:

Look at the Track Record

Even individuals with limited or no work histories will have some indicators that they possess the dedication

and aptitude to succeed. For instance, a high grade point average demonstrates a candidate has the ability to focus, set goals, and exceed expectations.

In addition to performance at school, consider other notable achievements. Someone who's received formal recognition at previous employers or assumed leadership roles in student groups, for example, is likely to be just as motivated to excel in his or her first IT job.

Give High Marks for Enthusiasm

Ask applicants what interests them most about their chosen path in technology. Why did they pursue training in this field? What do they look forward to most in this type of work? Look for a natural excitement about

starting a career in IT.

Also take note of how well candidates have researched your firm and industry. You want to hire people who are not only enthusiastic about technology, but who also have the same enthusiasm about joining your company.

Evaluate Prior Work Experience



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Even individuals with limited or no work histories will have some indicators that they possess the dedication and aptitude to succeed.

Give extra points to candidates who made the effort to pursue on-the-job work experience in IT before completing their education or seeking entry-level positions. People who worked part-time jobs in school, participated in internships, volunteered their IT expertise to non-profit enterprises or worked on short-term assignments, for instance, have taken proactive steps to gain practical job knowledge and enhance their marketability. Membership in professional associations and work toward certifications are other positive signs.

Even if someone has no formal work history in IT, you still can gain useful insights by considering the individual's background. Candidates should be able to explain how skills gained in previous positions relate to your job opening. For example, an applicant who was a waiter in college may have learned valuable multitasking, problem-solving, customer-service and time-management abilities, all of which are useful in any IT specialty.

Ask About Initiative

In a typical, busy IT department, you need self-starters who, when they see something needs to get done, do it. So, be sure to ask entry-level professionals to describe situations in which they demonstrated initiative. Examples could be as advanced as starting a tutoring business to help fellow students struggling with their computer science courses or as simple as straightening up messy shelves at a retail job. What matters most is that candidates have some history of

self-motivation.

It's a Two-Way Street

Finally, don't forget that recruiting isn't just about applicants impressing you; you also need to impress them. Entry-level IT professionals may be evaluating multiple job opportunities, so you need to make sure your organization stands out. Those just entering the IT field will likely be looking for learning and advancement possibilities, so be sure to highlight any mentoring or training programs as well as career paths within the company. Access to cutting-edge technologies also can be a major selling point. Additionally, note attractive benefits such as flexible work schedules, time-off policies that exceed the industry average, concierge services or gym memberships. Keep interest high by letting applicants know the timeline of your hiring process and when you'll be in touch next.

While you don't want to delay your ultimate decision and risk losing top applicants, do make sure you're diligent when assessing entry-level candidates. Talking to references such as former professors or managers can give you a better idea of whether the person's work style, character, and personality suit your organization. You'll make additions that not only fill critical needs in your department today but that also help prepare your group for the future. ■

Hiring IT Staff: Learning from Google's Mistakes

by Rob Enderle

Google, like most companies since the 1970s, has focused on grades as one of the key requirements for hiring. As a result, it probably not only lost out on good people, but also ended up with a lot of folks who were not the best the company could get for a given job. Google recently announced they are devaluing grades in order to focus more on personality and experience.

Google continues a heavy focus on interviewing but has also cut down on the number of interviews and forced a faster turnaround on decisions as they attempt to grow the company quickly. It isn't hard to remember an earlier fast-rising company, Netscape, which went down a similar path. And the decline of that company was, at least partially, attributable to the large numbers of unqualified people that resulted.

Google is to be admired for what it is attempting. But, unlike the company's other interesting ideas (most of which have worked out) they are now entering an area that has been deeply researched, and one they too should spend a little time on before they catastrophically break what may not be that badly broken.

Given that interviewing is known to be a very unreliable way to select employees, you would think the tech industry would apply some type of technical test to applicants that, in a short period of time, could assess by reviewing background, education, and personality

whether they come close enough to the ideal to be worth taking a risk on.

Previous Decades

Back in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s there was a lot of work done to do exactly that. Massive studies were used to develop and refine tests that applicants could be given that would assess their capabilities and best match them

to jobs. For many of us these tests started in high school as part of a process to help us pick careers we would find rewarding. While relatively unreliable at first, over time and with experience they increasingly were able to help parents work with their children to mold education plans to best match natural skills.

But the problem with testing was that it tended to preserve the status quo and put similar people together. This

probably reduced tension and increased productivity but it also tended to lock out ethnic diversity, which clearly was a major problem. As a result testing was tossed out and as companies grew up they focused largely on big-name schools and grade point average for selection. This didn't solve diversity problems either, so programs to ensure diversity were implemented, which often allowed lower standards for new hires. While some of these new employees should have had been offered more on-the-job training requirements, this was seldom done, and as the workforce became more diverse, social problems related to uneven skills



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and metrics sometimes resulted.

Grades as a Metric

Grades are often a poor metric of future on the job performance. "A" students often get their grades by gaming the system or by working very hard largely on their own as opposed to collaboratively. Courses are designed to provide an educational framework but seldom focus on the very real day-to-day tasks needed by a company. In short, the scores often have little or nothing to do with the employees' actual capability and they may not, depending on how the system was gamed, not even have anything to do with how hard the student actually worked.

This isn't to say grades have no value, only that they

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should be taken as just one metric and that -- without some due diligence -- may not even be reliable as that one metric. If you aren't careful, if you focus on "A" students you may simply end up with a lot of employees who are gaming the company and not doing much in terms of actual productive work. You see this in firms where it seems that accountability is lacking, meetings proliferate, and projects don't meet expectations or timelines. The employees are simply reflecting the skill set they were hired with and probably are being rewarded for.

Interviewing is Unreliable

The biggest problem with interviewing is that few are trained to do it well and there are a lot of ways to become expert at being interviewed. The second is that it is often used abusively and can either drive away a candidate and turn them against the company or result in resentments the candidate can carry into the job. If interviewing is to be used reliably it needs to be monitored, it needs to take place over a very short

Hiring the Right CIO

By Steve O'Connor

While there is pressure for today's CIO to master and stay current on computer technology, the more critical skills are related to more traditional aspects of business management. As head of perhaps the most complex operation in any enterprise, the CIO is responsible for what amounts to a sizeable and complete business on its own.

And so, this executive's success depends heavily on skills in finance, leadership, communication, strategic thinking and planning, and, perhaps most important, in understanding what customers want and how best to get it to them. Technical savvy is, of course, indispensable. The CIO must understand technology and its capabilities well enough to grasp how all of the computing services and products on which an enterprise depends fit and work together. Similarly, the CIO has to know enough to properly evaluate the stream of new products being promoted by outside suppliers, and filter their (sometimes exaggerated) claims.

On top of that, business skills greatly amplify the effectiveness and value of these technical skills. Ideally, the CIO will have previous experience in managing a large business unit and thereby developed an on-the-job understanding of various line-of-business functions, and the administrative aspects of running them.

Of particular importance is financial acumen. As much as the CEO and CFO, the CIO must truly understand the other business units in the enterprise, each with its own goals, metrics and end-customers. These are, after all, the CIO's direct customers. By understanding the financial drivers of those businesses, the CIO will have a much better chance of getting the right mix of services acquired, developed and delivered at the right price and with maximum value. Financial acumen is, in short, an

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period of time (one or two days) and it needs to be largely done by people who are actually trained to do it right. Otherwise there is little overall value to the process other than allowing the candidate and interviewer to meet and, for that a more informal setting might actually be more valuable.

Strong background checks are vastly more capable of helping determine whether an employee is a good hire but often, in the rush, background checks are either not done or done superficially shifting the weight of the review to interviewing, which won't take that weight. Timing is important as well. With good background information the trained interviewer can ask questions tailored to the candidate and, in a relatively short period of time, reach a decision that is backed up by both background facts and impression. Done the other way around, even a trained interviewer has nothing but a resume to work from and a generic question set which will reduce dramatically the effectiveness of their process.

Google vs. Microsoft

Both companies have had a heavy reliance on education as a foundation for their selection process, and employees and managers in both companies are complaining about the predictable result: reduced productivity and increased frustration.

Google is trying to fix their process by lowering the value of education as a metric, however there is no indication that they are providing the training needed to make interviewing more effective. Eric Schmidt's comments that he wants to increase the standards for new people so they are qualified for jobs two or three levels above where they are hired may actually create more problems than it solves. People who are overqualified for jobs are seldom happy in them and may focus more on getting out of the job than on doing it right. More important: can you imagine how hard it would be to lead a group of folks that thought they were better qualified for the boss's job than the actual boss is?

The underlying problem is that too few people have actually studied HR from a behavioral standpoint. That goes back to the loss of testing, because it was testing that drove this line of thinking. And once it died, HR largely became a compliance organization with little

Hiring the Right CIO

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absolute must for getting IT truly "aligned" with the business as a whole.

Unfortunately, many CIOs have come up through the ranks of computing and MIS without learning how to manage a full operating business. While fellow executives may be exposed to a range of other business functions over the course of their professional development, the typical IT executive may be confined to the somewhat narrow, albeit difficult and complex, world of IT. And, in the CIO post, the resulting skills deficit may suddenly become glaring.

IT's increasing importance is bound to make this mismatch even more glaring. Take the growing emphasis on customer experience, for instance the drive to make every interaction with customers as frictionless, distinctive, and compelling as possible. These days, with the Web, mobile devices, and automated call centers, and all such critical touch-points IT pretty much is the front office.

IT is critical to finance, product development, and manufacturing. Through technologies like CRM, IT is reshaping the sales process as well. Clearly, the CIO who doesn't understand these aspects of the business is the CIO who's likely to have trouble keeping IT "aligned" with that business.

Solving this problem is not as easy as just hiring a seasoned businessperson instead of a career technologist as CIO. Should such a person fail to learn and stay abreast of IT's fast-changing landscape, he or she will likely be unable to gain the respect and loyalty of IT managers, thereby limiting IT's effectiveness in delivering value to other business units.

The first step in hiring the right CIO is to focus on identifying the precise set of skills that will be required to be successful in this role. Then, all executives in the organization must agree on this set so that as each one interviews a

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ability or authority to focus on actual hiring quality.

One of the lessons here, and one Netscape learned rather dramatically, is that learning on the job -- particularly when it comes to something as critical as staffing quality -- can be an incredibly costly practice. While we admire Google for trying to do something about a problem that is clearly endemic to the technology industry, given that they are a search organization we would suggest they actually research the problem first before making decisions that could turn their high flying company into the next Netscape.

In this end, this is what you should take away from this: People truly are your most important asset. If you don't select them properly, train them adequately, and assure a good match between their skills and the job they are actually being asked to do, the end result won't be good for your company. And while you may be able to dodge the problem yourself for a while, in many cases it probably will come back to haunt you as well.

One rule I've generally found to be true is that if you take care of your people they will take care of you. If you don't, the same words apply but "take care" takes on a completely different, and very negative, meaning. ■

Hiring the Right CIO

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candidate he or she can evaluate them against a common set of criteria.

One possible source of candidates might be senior management at a technical services company, or perhaps a chief operating officer or general manager of a large business unit. The CIO's job has come to resemble that of a supply-chain manager in such a firm as they both struggle to match multiple, shifting sources of supply against complex and ever-changing customer demand.

Both call for a solid grasp of product development, customer delivery, and other operational issues. Both require some understanding of the financial drivers affecting suppliers and customers. Executives from technical services companies are familiar with this way of thinking and they're used to putting together effective portfolios of services. What's more, they're used to talking to customers.

It may not be possible to find people matching exactly this set of criteria. But it's important to be clear with whoever is hired that this set of skills is what's expected of him or her. And it's against these expectations that they will be judged. As a result, when any missing skills or competencies are identified a development plan must be quickly put in place. This might take the form of professional development courses, or perhaps mentoring from fellow line-of-business executives. Any variable compensation should be tied to this personal development. ■

Fully Engaging Your Top Talent

By Joe Santana

Engagement is defined as a state of full-strength, enthusiastic dedication to work in which an employee is passionately connected to her or his job. Another way of saying this is that engaged employees are their employers' raving fans.

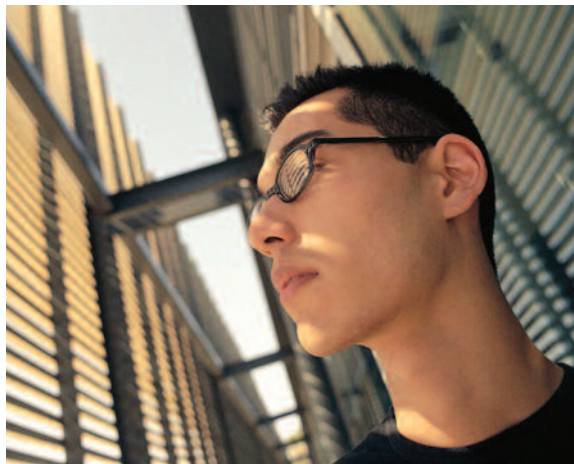
Engaged employees, according to studies, are not only highly productive in their workplace, they are also very likely to stay with your organization. Given the recent press that talks about low morale in IT, I decided to run a survey of my own. Through my network of global and U.S.-based IT professionals, I asked participants, among other things, to rate their levels of satisfaction with their jobs. Not surprising, only 9 percent indicated the high-level of satisfaction associated with full engagement.

For IT leaders, these results are a cause for concern. Specifically, because poor levels of engagement result in:

- Low team productivity
- Less than top quality output
- Less than optimal care for customer needs

- Higher likelihood that your best people will leave
- On the job retirement for many of the employees that do stay
- In our Internet connected world, bad press that can spread very quickly at the grassroots level and make it difficult for you to recruit top talent

Considering the pressure on today's IT leaders to produce more in terms of quantity and quality of services, anything short of the ability to recruit and retain an "engaged team" of top talent presents a big problem. The challenge for leaders is to determine how to make their teams and organizations more engaging, which in turn leads to being considered what some refer to as an employer of choice in their market.



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Addressing Engagement

So what is the path toward becoming an employer of choice? Many organizations run annual employee satisfaction surveys designed to determine what people dislike and like about the organization. Next, they zero in on any reasons for employee dissatisfaction and develop action plans for

Engaged employees, according to studies, are not only highly productive in their workplace, they are also very likely to stay with your organization.

addressing these dissatisfying factors.

The logic is that by removing the reasons for employee dissatisfaction, employees will be satisfied and the organization will become an employer of choice. The fact of the matter is that studies show that employee satisfaction does not spontaneously come into existence as a result of the systematic removal of causes of dissatisfaction.

Furthermore, becoming an employer of choice takes a lot more than just having satisfied employees. The true key is having engaged employees that are completely, passionately and enthusiastically dedicated to your organization as a result of your having an engaging environment.

Please don't misunderstand. Not addressing causes of dissatisfaction such as lack of training and low compensation will indeed keep you from becoming an employer of choice. The point is that addressing only these basic "hygiene" factors won't get you to the required level of engagement you need.

So, what do leaders and companies need to focus on in addition to removing causes of dissatisfaction in order to achieve the required state of employee engagement that we are talking about here?

Leigh Branham, founder and CEO of Keeping the People, Inc., a company based out of Kansas City that helps companies create and implement employer of choice strategies as well as the author of *The 7 Hidden Reasons Employees Leave*, uncovered seven key areas that need to be effectively addressed in order for leaders to attain the level of dedication and loyalty associated with engagement.

Specifically, these are:

- A job or workplace that is exactly what the employee expected when she or he was hired
- A job that makes the best use of the employee's natural talents
- An environment where leaders and managers provide an adequate amount of coaching and feedback
- A workplace that offers growth and advancement opportunities
- Leaders and managers that make employees feel highly valued and recognized.

- A workload that is balanced and enables employees to enjoy both their job and personal life
- Senior leadership this is trustworthy and inspires confidence

Before developing a strategy to increase your team or organizations level of engagement, however, you need to ask yourself a few basic questions: Are you getting high-marks on the general satisfaction surveys? If not what actions are you taking to address your basic "hygiene" items? If your company has annual employee satisfaction surveys, you can easily get a copy of the last report to tell you where improvement might be needed in order to remove causes of dissatisfaction. Once this is done, the next question is where does your team stand relative to the key factors that go beyond satisfaction and drive engagement?

Where Do You Stand?

I invite you to use the survey questions shown below to assess your present situation relative to engagement. Accompanied by a short note explaining your appreciation for their feedback, ask your team to rate the seven statements below as follows: 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Slightly Disagree, 4=Slightly Agree, 5= Agree or 6=Strongly Agree.

- My job/workplace is exactly what I expected it to be when I was hired
- My job is well matched to my talents and enables me to excel and enjoy my work
- I get an adequate amount of coaching and feedback
- My workplace offers me growth and advancement opportunities
- I feel valued and recognized in my workplace
- My workload is balanced and enables me to enjoy both my job and my personal life
- I have trust and confidence in my senior leadership

Combine the results of this exercise with the feedback collected in your corporate employee satisfaction survey to gain a better picture of where you currently stand. I also invite you to compare your results with the responses given by the participants in my survey.

Since the war for talent is heating up, it is prudent for IT leaders to take steps now to retain their top team members and to become the kind of environment that

attracts and holds on to more of the best people.

How did you do in the engagement survey? Would you say that based on those results your IT team is currently an "employer of choice for top talent?"

The good news is that, regardless of your results, if you are a manager of individual contributors or other managers, you will find the following tips of value to you in your quest to fully engage your top talent.

While this is by no means an exhaustive list, here are a few specific things you can do to set the foundation for increasing your positive score in each of the key engagement areas:

Strive to paint a true picture of your workplace to candidates and never stop recruiting. Did you know that 40 percent of turnover happens in the first six months, and that the primary cause is that the job was not what the employee expected when they were hired?

After that, some of the top reasons for talented people leaving an organization after a few years include a sense that they are being taken for granted or that the organization no longer cares.

Let's start by focusing on ways to improve the match between what your workplace offers and what new hires expect.

One way to do this is by being very honest in your recruiting process. It is good to sell your company, but make sure that the sell is based on value propositions that you can and plan to deliver.

Remember that your new-hire orientation is an extension of your recruiting effort. While giving your new hire information about your company, make sure that you are also building relationships and reinforcing their decision to join your team. As their manager, you should be personally involved in a large part of the orientation process.

Make sure you circle back to your new hires after 90 days and 180 days to find out if their experience to date matches what they expected. Listen carefully and either adjust the environment or change what you are telling people when you hire them.

Don't fit people into jobs; instead wrap jobs around talented people. Unfortunately, what some managers do is akin to hiring a chicken, telling them that the goal is to get to the top branch of a tree, pointing to a squirrel as the exemplar employee and asking the chicken to climb to the top like the "star" squirrel.

A better way is to tell the chicken the goal is to get to the top branch and let the chicken get there through a way that is more aligned with its abilities, (namely flying and hopping).

The bottom line is that as a manager, you do best by focusing on the results you need and providing the employee the freedom to choose how to achieve the results using their natural talents.

Become a more flexible manager. Some managers will boast about how they always manage everyone the same way. This is usually stated so as to convey the fairness and even-handedness of the manager. The fact is, however, that managers are most effective and engaging when they manage employees "situationally."

For example, under a variety of circumstances, any employee will require the manager to play any one or combination of teacher - someone who provides instruction and/or directions on how to get something done and/or coach - someone to provide feedback, support and/or encouragement toward higher levels of self-confidence and performance.

Depending on the tasks they are working on and the employee's level of mastery, a manager needs to adjust her or his "management mix" and style in order to provide each employee with what they need to succeed.

Managers therefore need to master more than one management style and develop the perceptiveness to know when to use which approach.

Find out where your team members want to go with their careers and help them get there. In almost every employee survey conducted, growth and advancement top the list of what employees most want.

The key to responding to this challenge is to expand the career discussion and plan beyond the confines of your organization. In other words, if the next most prac-

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tical move for a person is outside your organization, don't shy away from that fact. Recognize it and provide them with the opportunity to contribute to your organization while building the skills they need to realize their next role - even if it is outside your company.

Not only will your people continue to be engaged while working for you with a clear view to their future, some of them may return with an even broader portfolio of skills.

Do not let the smallest good deeds go unrecognized or without reward. We humans respond favorably to praise and recognition. Unfortunately, IT managers seem to be a bit stingy with feedback. In a survey I conducted only 40 percent of the respondents felt they received any form of feedback at all. Of these, only two percent felt strongly positive about the quality of feedback.

Giving reinforcing praise and feedback is a low-cost, high-return practice. With a little effort, we can quickly produce big results.

Focus work activities to produce top results and reduce the fruitless consumption of time. Everyone today feels the crunch of the ever-accelerating business pace. One thing that often adds insult to injury is when talent and time are squandered by managers who do not prioritize and thus end up throwing mountains of unprioritized work at employees.

The advices, therefore, is identifying profitable actions and create sustainable balanced workloads that enable employees to enjoy both their jobs and personal lives. Communicate honestly. Not long ago, I entered a posting on my blog that referenced an article by an author who claimed that ethics had no place in the IT organization. In fact, the author advocated lying to subordinates if needed in order to produce results.

The outrage in the notes that poured in as responses was clear as a bell. Nothing will disengage people more than the loss of trust and respect that result from the realization (or suspicion) that their managers are lying and/or deceiving them.

The common thread in all of these suggestions is that effective management practice involves managers caring and showing they care about their direct reports, which in turn results in their direct reports caring about the manager and the business.

So, the bottom line is that if you want to get beyond mere retention and get to loyalty, you must first be a truly caring manager. Such simple wisdom provides the most powerful tool for helping us reach success as effective managers. ■

This content was adapted from EarthWeb's Datamation, IT Career Planet and CIO Update Web sites. Contributors: Katherine Spencer Lee, Rob Enderle and Joe Santana .