

Hiring Confidential: Is There A Secret To Landing The Right IT Guy?

There's an IT position to be filled, and with recruitment being an elaborate, expensive exercise, you wouldn't want to end up with a costly hiring mistake. Which steps can you take to ensure that you identify the right candidate?



LOOKING FOR MR RIGHT

“There is something that is much more scarce, something rarer than ability. It is the ability to recognise ability.” Robert Half, *Global Professional Recruitment Specialists*

With IT budgets in 2011 showing a record increase as compared to the previous year, more are planning to hire IT staff, according to a recent Spiceworks survey conducted on more than 3,000 IT professionals.¹ For Small- and Medium-Businesses (SMBs), this is sensational news. However, for the hiring managers of these companies, they have less reason to be excited as they will be presented with a hardly enviable task – to scour through endless piles of unfamiliar resumes in search of an ideal candidate to fill up the critical vacancy.

Like in any courtship, most potential suitors will turn up on the first date, appearing equally impressive with their sparkling CVs and dazzling work experience. We have also heard all the horror stories about hiring the “perfect” candidate, only to discover a less-than-perfect on-the-job reality. Moreover, IT is also a highly specialised vocation which offers truth in the notion, “you have to be in it to know it”. For a non-technical hiring manager who is trying to uncover bona fide candidate qualities amongst the routine chocolates and roses or textbook model resumes, this will be an uphill task, simply because he or she does not have the necessary tech experience or background to arrive at a calculated decision. Moreover, with the IT function intricately intertwined with the business side of things within the organisation, hiring the wrong IT guy for the job may render serious impact on your organisation. You may be able to afford a bad ex, but your business can't – place a bet on the wrong guy and you may suffer damages far greater than just to your emotional bottomline.

How then, can you ensure that your next IT hire will be the right guy for the job?

¹ *IT Budgets and Hiring Plans Rise to Highest Levels in 18 Months, Demonstrating Growing Confidence in IT Sector, Spiceworks Research, March 2011*
<http://www.spiceworks.com/news/press-release/2011/03-30/>

ROMANCING THE STARS

According to a recent recruitment article, if your hiring manager does not possess the necessary expertise, you should instead, hire a staffing company which specialises in technology to lead your recruitment drive.² However, if you have decided not to outsource, there are various guidelines you can follow during the recruitment process.

Step 1 - Prepare

Trend Spotting

Before you even embark on your candidate search, “knowing what others in the similar industry is doing” will hold you in good stead towards achieving recruitment success. For example, a recent presentation by Robert Half International at a career conference would provide you with various insights such as the salary benchmarks, most in-demand IT skill sets, IT certifications and soft skills desired in IT employees.³ Having a firm grasp of the latest industry and hiring trends can help you prescribe your recruitment criteria and arrive at a better candidate selection.

Top IT Skill Set	
1	Programming - .NET, Java, MySQL, PHP, Silverlight, SharePoint
2	Technological Proficiency - Knowledge of ERP packages
3	Business Mindset - Project management skills, general business knowledge
4	Security - Compliance, new security technologies, dealing with complex threats
5	Infrastructure Support - Help desk, PC technician, esp. skilled with supporting a mobile workforce
6	Networking - Virtualization and cloud
7	Electronic Health Records - IT to install and support medical record software

Source: *IT Hiring and Compensation Trends 2011*

Step 2 - Identify

Job Analysis

Whenever there’s a vacant position, especially in IT, one highly debated question is whether that specific function can be satisfied better by a full-time permanent in-house employee or outsourced to an IT vendor. According to the Robert Half presentation, one current prevalent trend is that companies are increasingly using consultants and contractors for projects. By first identifying the specific tasks and responsibilities required for the job, you may discover such alternative solutions, or even realise that the open position may be unnecessary after all, with responsibilities possibly shared amongst current existing employees.

Step 3 - Define

Employment Criteria

Employment criteria is defined as the mixture of functional qualifications, skills and character traits that the candidate must have to successfully fulfil the position.⁴ This will include elements like work

² *Hiring An IT Guy*, Steven Nichols
<http://ezinearticles.com/?Hiring-an-IT-Guy&id=3764105>

³ *Top skills and IT hiring trends for 2011*, 18 Feb 2011
<http://www.windowstpro.com/article/training-and-certification2/top-skills-and-it-hiring-trends-for-2011>

⁴ *Hiring Advice*, Robert Half Singapore
<http://www.roberthalf.com.sg/hiring-advice>

experience, educational level, professional references, specific IT skills sets, certifications or personal characteristics. By determining the criteria, you can filter through a large number of unsuitable candidates and select only the right ones for the job.

Top IT Certifications	
1	Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP)
2	Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer (MCSE)
3	Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA)
4	Cisco Certified Internetwork Expert (CCIE)
5	Project Management Professional (PMP)
6	Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL)
7	VMware Certified Professional (VCP)
8	Citrix Certified Enterprise Engineer (CCEE)
9	Citrix Certified Integration Architect (CCIA)
10	Citrix Certified Administrator (CCA)
11	Microsoft Certified Technology Specialist (MCTS)
12	Help Desk Institute's Desktop Support Technician (DST)

Source: *Top IT Certifications In Demand Today*⁵

Job Description

The job description will not only help you attract desired, suitable candidates, but also state clearly the most important job tasks and responsibilities expected of the candidate. Effectively developed job descriptions will help you define the job title, job role, salary and other soft skills and characteristics desired in potential candidates.

Top Soft Skills	
1	Leadership
2	Customer service
3	The ability to work under pressure
4	Written/verbal communication
5	Being able to align business and IT goals

Source: *IT Hiring and Compensation Trends 2011*

Recruitment Method

Top employers hire the best talents by pre-qualifying a pool of potential candidates for the job. There are many options you can use; such as advertising the job, utilising a database agency or consulting a recruitment headhunter. In addition, recruitment specialists suggest tapping on your existing employees' networks of friends and associates to discover candidates of superior quality⁶, looking first

⁵ *Top IT certifications in demand today, Linda Leung, Dec 2009*
<http://www.globalknowledge.com/training/generic.asp?pageid=2416&country=United+States>

⁶ *Recruiting stars: top ten ideas for recruiting great candidates, Susan Heathfield*
<http://humanresources.about.com/cs/recruiting/a/candidatepool.htm>

at in-house candidates and providing them with promotional or lateral opportunities which can boost morale and recognition or current employee members⁷, or using your organisation's resources such as websites to attract potential talents.⁸ By defining a suitable, cost-effective recruitment method, you can increase your chances of matching the right candidate for your job and eliminate significant time and effort "locating a needle in a haystack".

Step 4 - Evaluate



This is the most critical step of your recruitment process. This will prove vital towards matching the new employee with your existing team. A recruitment article suggests three essential evaluation techniques to determine the right candidate selection: competency modeling, effective interviewing process and techniques, and comprehensive candidate assessment⁹.

Competency Modelling

This step involves determining the actual core competencies necessary for success in this position.

This will go beyond the job description by clearly describing the unique and special requirements of the position and the behaviours and cultures required by candidates to 'fit in' successfully. Core competencies will include the following categories:

- 1) **Abilities and Aptitudes**
- 2) **Knowledge and Experience**
- 3) **Personal Profile**
- 4) **Motivational Qualities**
- 5) **Professional and Personal Values**
- 6) **Emotional Intelligence**

Effective Interviewing Process and Techniques

After you have listed the core competencies you desire in your candidate, going through an effective interview will help evaluate accurately the potential candidate's qualifications and "fit" for the job. Interviews should be a two-way process whereby interviewers should present a comprehensive overview of the company's performance, future strategy, as well as how employees can develop their careers within the organisation. An effective interviewer should:

- Create a relaxed environment, which enables the candidate to present him/herself in the best light.
- Gain valuable insights from the candidate's personal and professional history.
- Make important observations from the face-to-face meeting.

Comprehensive Candidate Assessment

A Cambridge study revealed that a complete assessment process, which includes testing and a comprehensive interview, is the most accurate method of evaluating candidates. The use of

^{7,8} *Top ten recruiting tips, Susan Heathfield*
<http://humanresources.about.com/od/recruiting/a/recruitingtips.htm>

⁹ *Ensuring an effective recruitment process, Collingwood*
<http://www.collingwoodsearch.co.uk/about-us/collingwood-search/latest-news/256-ensuring-an-effective-recruitment-process.html>

assessments have been gaining popularity amongst top employers in their acquisition of quantitative data such as the candidate's analytical, conceptual, verbal and numerical abilities, as well as a profile of the candidate's traits, attributes, temperament and various personal characteristics.

PERFECT MATCH

There are no secrets to discovering your ideal IT talent; it's simply a matter of doing your homework. By following the guidelines listed above, not only will they help you uncover your right IT guy, but more importantly, lay the groundwork for a solid future employer-employee relationship to come.

KEY SUMMARY

More SMBs (31 per cent) are looking to hiring IT staff in 2011, according to a recent Spiceworks report.

Many hiring managers are not versed with technical knowledge and expertise, making it a challenge for them to gauge the real quality of IT candidates.

There are four steps in the recruitment process: Prepare, Identify, Define and Evaluate.

Acquiring the latest IT industry and hiring trends will help employers define job and employment criteria more clearly.

More companies are outsourcing projects to consultants and contractors, according to a recent recruitment report.

An effective interview process consists of a two-way communication between the interviewer and potential candidate.

A Cambridge study revealed that a complete assessment process, which includes testing and a comprehensive interview, is the most accurate method of evaluating candidates.

INSIGHT

New Face On The Recruitment Block

Job and recruitment boards, watch out. Facebook is taking over.

According to a recent survey¹⁰, more businesses and job recruiters are looking towards the household social media heavyweight as a new staple to quench their talent thirst.

According to The Wall Street Journal, the use of Facebook as a job recruitment tool is small, but growing slowly and surely. The main reason for this paradigm shift is largely due to Facebook's ubiquity, which has stretched its reach to more than 750 million users to date.

This is but another example of how social media tools are spilling into the business space. Although it is still early days to tell the significance of the impact the social networking giant may project in the business recruitment circle, many job boards are already leveraging on Facebook, rather than compete with it. For recruiters, it's simply a matter of "if you can't beat them, join them". For business owners, the next time you have a job vacancy, just 'Book it!

¹⁰ Job recruiters increasingly using Facebook to find candidates, ZDNet, 8 Aug 2011
<http://www.zdnet.com/blog/facebook/job-recruiters-increasingly-using-facebook-to-find-candidates/2373?tag=nl.e550>

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